



Government Collaboration in Enhancing National Defense

Eko Sugiharto^{a*}; Lalu Pardede Gita Prahara^a; Atep Priatna^a; Rizky Mugia Priatna^a

^aSekolah Komando Angkatan Darat (Seskoad), Jl. Ciledug Raya No.2, RT.1/RW.4, Cipulir, Kec. Kby. Lama, Kota Jakarta Selatan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 12230, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Security dynamics in the Southeast Asian region have increased, influenced by many factors, ranging from internal member states, regional situations, to security dynamics in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. This article will review the security conditions of the ASEAN region through a government collaboration literature study approach. As a result, the implementation of joint military exercises of ASEAN countries plays an important role in creating regional security. There are at least several benefits obtained: First, joint military exercises can improve state defense capabilities and regional security. Second, through joint exercises, the forces of ASEAN countries will be better prepared and able to respond to any threats that disrupt regional security and sovereignty. Third, joint military exercises provide a space for productive discussions and consultations to discuss the security situation of member states and the Southeast Asian region, resulting in a common formula in maintaining regional security. Fourth, joint military exercises can serve as a mediation platform for ASEAN countries in conflict with other ASEAN countries to find a constructive middle ground for regional security stability.

Key word: ASEAN, Security Stability, Regional Security, Collaboration Government

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: ekosugiarto08@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Regional security is an important issue for ASEAN countries, especially as the armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia continues to expand and involve several European countries and even the United States. Many people predict that the conflict could trigger World War 3, which would include many countries in Europe and the Asia Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is a socio-geographical area that extends from East Asia to Southeast Asia and includes the Pacific Basin regions of Oceania, North America, and South America. The region is known for its rapid economic growth, which facilitated the emergence of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as a forum for economic cooperation in the region (Borthwick, 1992). In detail, McDougall (1997) maps the Asia-Pacific region as consisting of East Asia, Russia (bordering the Pacific Ocean), Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (including South Pacific countries), the United States, and Canada.

Based on this mapping, it stands to reason that the Ukraine vs. Russia armed conflict has the potential to expand and involve many countries, not only those in the Asia Pacific region but also Europe and the United States. On the other hand, security in the ASEAN region is also strongly influenced by territorial disputes in the South China Sea involving countries in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as countries outside the Asia-Pacific region (Kaplan, 2015). Scott (2020) said the conflict has grown and caused security instability and competition between two major powers, China and the United States.

53rd This China-US rivalry in the Asia Pacific region encouraged ASEAN countries to hold an online ASEAN *Foreign Ministers* (AMM) meeting on September 9, 2020, which was followed by meetings between ASEAN and speaking partner countries, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, ASEAN China, ASEAN-US, and so on (Roza, 2020). Apart from the issue of the South China Sea conflict, the trilateral cooperation between the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia on September 15, 2021, which resulted in the AUKUS agreement, also warmed up security stability in the Asia Pacific region, including Southeast Asia, which is the region of ASEAN countries. Brooke (2021) said the main purpose of the AUKUS agreement is to deepen diplomatic, defense, and security cooperation between the 3 countries, specifically to explore the integration of science, industrial base, technology (cyber & artificial *intelligence* capabilities, quantum technology), defense supply chain, and new undersea and distant attack capabilities (Brooke, Curtis & Holland, 2021). The AUKUS agreement is a reaction to the hegemony state, which aims to use a threat strategy to deal with China so that it does not dominate and becomes the 3rd most powerful country in the international world (*Global Fire Power*, 2022).

The development of China as a country with economic and military power harms security stability in the Asia Pacific region, including the Southeast Asia. China's dominance in the LCS has encouraged the Philippines to strengthen its military relationship with the US through the *Visiting Forces Agreement* (VFA) cooperation as a form of US legitimacy to operate in the country's territory (Saputra, 2021). Vietnam has also responded by building and modernizing its military forces and conducting joint exercises with India (Mitra, 2016).

The security stability of the ASEAN region is not only influenced by China's increasingly strong hegemony in the Asia Pacific region, border conflicts between countries in the Southeast Asian region also often occur. Disputes over island ownership, territorial claims, border disputes between countries, threats of state collapse, and domestic separatist movements. In addition, in the relationship between two or more countries, disharmony and distrust arise between one country and another (Swaine et al., 2015).

Such as the Sipadan-Ligitan island claim that led to the Indonesia-Malaysia conflict (Djelantik, 2015), the Sabah territory claim involving the Philippines against Malaysia (Fernandez, 2007) and the

LCS that still disturbs the security stability of the Southeast Asian region (Kaplan, 2015). Furthermore, separatist movements with various independence struggles have emerged in several regions of Southeast Asian countries, including Papua in Indonesia, Mindanao in the Philippines, Pattani in Southern Thailand, Thailand, and Rohingya in Myanmar (Miller, 2012).

In other words, if left unchecked, conflicts of interest can arise, and competition becomes far more dominant than collaboration. This could lead to instability in the ASEAN region. That means security cooperation agreements are essential to address security challenges in the region. Establishing regional security institutions is a crucial issue in maintaining regional security. With this cooperation, the escalation of regional conflicts and disputes between regional countries can be more easily resolved (Tang, 2009, 589-590). Based on the abovementioned problems, the author is interested in examining ASEAN regional security issues through this article. Hopefully, this article can provide an overview of the security situation of the Southeast Asian region, especially the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which is still vulnerable and not well protected. In this article, the author emphasizes increasing joint military exercises as an effort to create conduciveness and stability for ASEAN regional security.

Joint military exercises are a form of defense cooperation carried out by the Ministry of Defense and the TNI, both individually and in operational units, with other countries, both bilateral and multilateral (Anwar, 2014: 88).

Joint military exercises are cooperation in defense to strengthen defense and security forces, both the countries involved in it and regional security. Strength is built from within and through relationships with outside countries or international cooperation (Mahan, 2004).

Defense cooperation can be distinguished based on the number of countries involved, namely bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation. Salim (2016) predicts that in the future, the trend of multilateral defense cooperation will be preferred over defense cooperation involving only two countries (Salim, 2016).

According to Mangindaan (2013), defense cooperation is part of defense diplomacy because it is closely related to the field of defense, including cooperation in support of defense interests. Joint military exercises are a form of defense diplomacy for Indonesia, both bilaterally and multilaterally (Salim, 2012).

Angstrom and Widen (2015) explain that joint military training involves a military strategy that combines two or more forces to achieve greater effectiveness than a single armed attack. In this warfare strategy, the leader divides his troops into specific groups. This classification refers to the ability of troops in the field to achieve maximum results in creating unit synergy with strength. *Joint Military Exercise* is a forum for strategic interaction and is often used in the international system (Vito D'Orazio, 2013).

D'Orazio (2013) says joint military exercises provide deep insights into the nature of internationally observed relationships. Unique alliance systems and other indicators of military cooperation are commonly used in arms transfers. Politically, joint military exercises are a favorable foreign policy option and do not require long-term commitment.

In its development, joint military exercises have not only limited themselves to military operations for war but also to military operations other than war. This is because natural disasters always plague countries in the Southeast Asian region. So, joint military exercises are sometimes aimed at increasing the preparedness of military soldiers to deal with natural disasters, both in their countries and those that occur in the region.

In addition to improving disaster preparedness, cooperative joint military exercises enhance international aid coordination capabilities. It is also important to regional security posture amid

traditional security threats (Roza, 2013). That means joint military exercises must be managed properly to create regional security stability, especially for disputed countries.

Buzan (2003) describes Regional Security Complex Theory as a regional security theory that allows a country to analyze the development of regional countries. Regional security theory is a new concept in international security architecture that serves as a bridge to connect patterns of life between countries in international relations.

According to this theory, the countries' security concerns are closely related. This theory states that national security cannot be achieved without considering regional security, meaning that relations between countries in a region will always reach a state of harmony due to various factors such as power, alliances with other countries, and the entry of outside forces in the area.

Therefore, Buzan (2003) defines regional security as a security problem of a group of countries that is closely related to the national security conditions of each of these countries and cannot be separated from one another. Regional security cannot be separated from various security threats in it, both threats from countries within the region, as well as the intervention of global powers that influence the dynamics of regional security (Hough, 2018).

Thus, regional security is the security condition of a group of interrelated countries, so solving it must be done together and cannot be separated from one another. This indicates regional security is a long-lasting pattern of friendly relations (*amity*) and *enmity* (*enmity*) in sub-global, geographically interdependent security conditions.

2. METHOD

This literature review discusses the security conditions of the ASEAN region and the importance of joint military exercises of ASEAN countries as a form of cooperation to create security in the Southeast Asian region. This study has several stages, namely data inventory, which involves collecting literature data from books related to the focus of the study. Then, data classification and research preparation are carried out.

This study's data sources are journals, articles, and reporting documents directly related to this research. The analysis technique classifies or describes the various meanings that exist in the object under study. Furthermore, it discusses conceptual and important issues regarding the meanings used. From these different understandings, integration is carried out to obtain a systematic framework and understanding, resulting in a new understanding of the object of study (Bakker, 1986; Wee & Banister, 2016).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

ASEAN Regional Security

The ASEAN region is a region that is mostly inhabited by countries that border the sea and small islands as their territory. Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia are the member states that have the largest maritime and archipelagic areas among ASEAN member states, so there are often various issues related to sea and island issues with these ASEAN member states.

Southeast Asia has been a region of intense trade for hundreds of years. Southeast Asia is located between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean so it has a very strategic location. Many large ports were established and served as stopover ports for traders from various parts of the world. It is no exaggeration that Southeast Asia has always played an important role in world trade. With the wealth of natural resources, the potential of the tourism industry and a large population, making the ASEAN region a world investment destination.

As a potential region with a wealth of natural resources, the security dynamics of the Southeast Asian region always experience fluctuations that affect relations between the countries of the region. Disputes over island ownership, territorial claims, border disputes between countries, threats of national disintegration, and domestic separatist movements are potential threats to Southeast Asian countries. As a result, relations between Southeast Asian countries have become disharmonious and suspicious of each other (Swaine et al., 2015).

Border conflicts between Indonesia and Malaysia, the Philippines and Malaysia over Sabah, separatist movements in Papua that Indonesia has not yet succeeded in extinguishing, Mindanao-Philippines, Patani-Southern Thailand with Thailand, Rohingya-Myanmar (Miller, 2012), are escalating security threats that continue to disrupt security stability in the Southeast Asian region.

This condition is further exacerbated by the People's Republic of China's (PRC) unilateral claim to the South China Sea (SCS). Heintzig (1976) describes the South China Sea as an archipelago, one of which is the Spratly Islands bordering China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia. The Spratly Islands, which are the source of the LCS conflict, have natural resources in the form of oil and gas as well as marine biota sources, thus triggering disputes and conflicts (Maulaya, 2022).

The Spratly Islands are directly adjacent to Southeast Asian countries and China. The west is bordered by the Philippines, the south by China and Taiwan, the southeast by Vietnam, and the north by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam (Kaplan, 2014).

In the conflict in the LCS region, there are six countries that openly claim ownership of the Spratly Islands, namely China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei Darussalam (Kaplan, 2014). Four of the six claiming countries are members of ASEAN, which of course the conflict has the potential to disrupt the security stability of the Southeast Asian region.

Wardhana said (2021) these conditions encouraged the formation of the *ASEAN Regional Forum*, which is a multilateral security cooperation forum with countries in the Asia Pacific region. This forum aims to build a comprehensive relationship to maintain security stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF focuses on regional security issues related to traditional and non-traditional security.

In East Asia, where the interests of major powers converge, China, Japan, South Korea and North Korea are vying for political and economic influence in the region. This condition is further exacerbated by the active participation of the United States by forming a trilateral military alliance with Japan and South Korea. As a result, the region's security is unstable and has the potential to become an open armed conflict.

In other words, economic factors are one of the triggers for open armed conflict in the South China Sea, Korean Peninsula, East Asia Sea and in several *hot spots* that are disputed (Butler, 2003). This condition is further aggravated and affects the escalation of regional security with the involvement of the United States, France, Russia and India, which *in fact*, these countries are outside the region (Thoker & Singh, 2018; Wright, 2022; Ziegler, 1994).

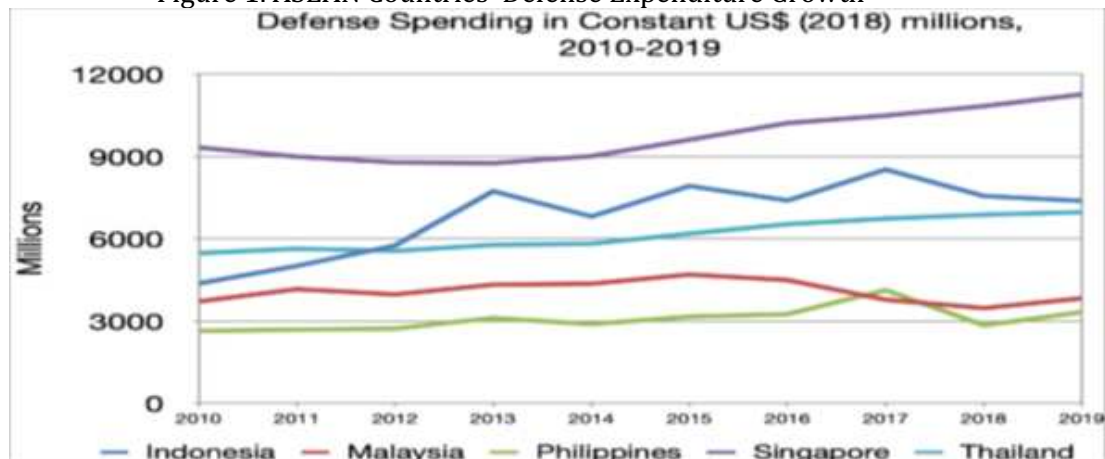
This condition certainly has the potential to drag and impact the security situation of the Southeast Asian region. Moreover, the involvement of four ASEAN countries, namely Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam in the South China Sea conflict has the potential to cause regional security instability. The wider range of interactions has implications for conflict as a result of the friction of interests in these interactions (Lai, 2013).

In response to these conditions, ASEAN countries continue to strive to improve the defense and security forces of their countries. This can be seen from the increasing budget spent by ASEAN countries for the defense sector. Apart from strengthening defense and security, the size of the defense budget is one of the aspects that affect *economic growth* and monetary stability of world countries (Rooney, Johnson, & Priebe, 2021).

According to the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* (SIPRI), countries in Southeast Asia spent 34.5 billion dollars on defense spending in 2019. The value increased by 4.2 percent compared to 2018 (Wezeman, 2019).

In 2019, Singapore spent the most among Southeast Asian countries at \$11.2 billion, followed by Indonesia at \$7.7 billion, Thailand at \$7.3 billion, Malaysia at \$3.8 billion, and the Philippines at \$3.5 billion.

Figure 1. ASEAN Countries' Defense Expenditure Growth



Source: (Abuza, 2020)

The graph above shows an increasing trend in the defense budgets of ASEAN countries. The budget has increased since 2018. The defense budget in 2018 was IDR 106.8 trillion, increasing to IDR 127.35 trillion in 2020. Indonesia's defense budget in 2021 reached IDR 137.2 trillion (Effendi, 2021).

This value continues to increase every year, as released by *Global Fire Power*, Singapore is still the largest country for its defense budget in Southeast Asia in 2022, amounting to 11,560 million US Dollars. Next, Indonesia US\$9,300 million, followed by Vietnam with a defense budget of US\$6,238 million, the Philippines with US\$4,390 million, Malaysia with US\$3,793 million in its defense budget, Thailand with US\$2,933 million, Myanmar with US\$2,286 million, Cambodia and Laos being the last Southeast Asian countries with defense budgets of US\$632 million and US\$38 million respectively.¹

The increase in the defense budget of ASEAN countries shows that the security conditions of countries in Southeast Asia, including regional security, have escalated, along with various conflicts that occur within and between ASEAN countries. On the other hand, the dynamics of the Asia Pacific region are experiencing turmoil and have an impact on the development and intervene in the security situation of the ASEAN region.

In addition to strengthening defense, countries in the ASEAN region also compile various programs to deal with various threats to regional security disturbances. Such as the *Program to Implement the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime* (ASEAN, 2017).

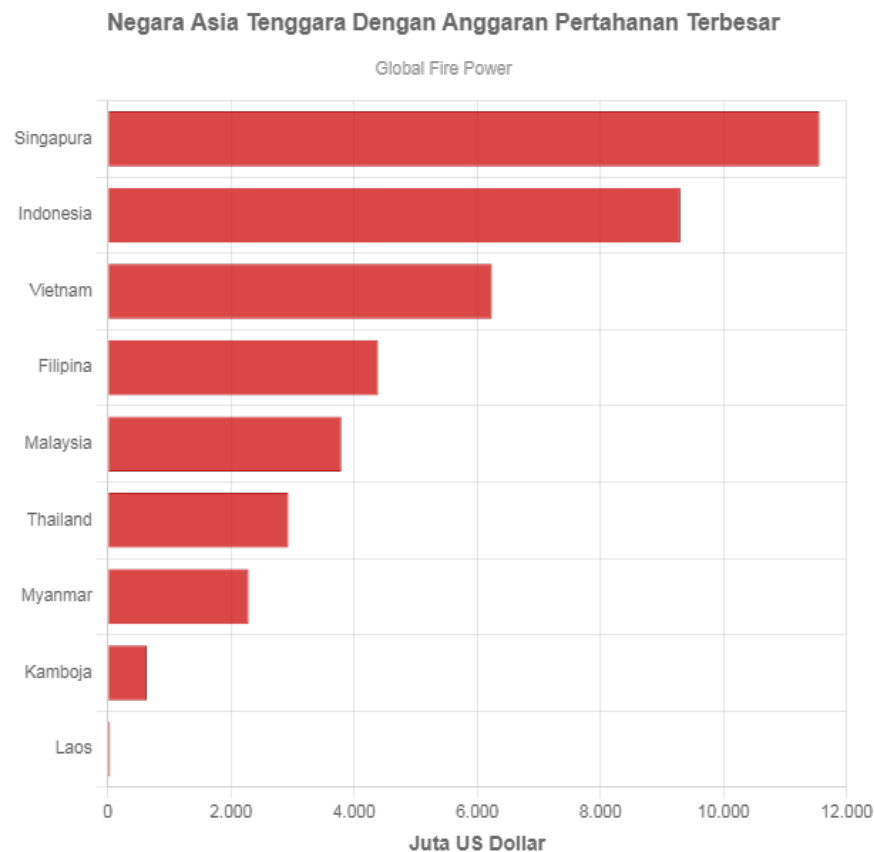
In its implementation, the program does not specifically address maritime security issues in the region, but addresses all forms of transnational crime, including, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, human trafficking, piracy, terrorism, crimes against international banks, and even cybercrime (MoD, 2015).

To strengthen ASEAN countries' cooperation and create regional security, Indonesia also initiated the establishment of the *ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC)* which aims to accelerate

¹ <https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/negara-asia-tenggara-dengan-anggaran-pertahanan-terbesar-JgfGz>

political and security cooperation in ASEAN in realizing regional and global peace. The ASEAN Political-Security Community is open based on a comprehensive security approach and is not intended to establish defense agreements, military alliances, or a common foreign policy.

Figure 2. Defense Budget of ASEAN Countries in 2022



Source: <https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/negara-asia-tenggara-dengan-anggaran-pertahanan-terbesar-jgfGz>

The ASEAN Political-Security Community blueprint consists of three main characteristics, namely: a) *A rules based community with shared values and norms*, b) *A cohesive, peaceful and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security*, c) *A dynamic and outward looking region*.

Joint Military Exercise

During the establishment of ASEAN in 1967, countries in the Southeast Asian region have never held joint military exercises with all ASEAN member countries. Joint military exercises are usually only held and involve two ASEAN countries, such as the Indonesian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Navy (TLDM), or joint military exercises between Indonesia and Singapore, or other countries in the Southeast Asian region. Only in 2023, all countries incorporated in ASEAN held joint military exercises. The Joint Military Exercise named ASEAN Solidarity Exercise (Asex-01) Natuna was opened by TNI Commander Admiral Yudo Margono on September 19, 2023, taking the training location Batam to Natuna (Ranai), Riau Islands, Indonesia.

The joint military exercise with the theme *Promoting Regional Peace and Stability through ASEAN Military Cooperation*, is very relevant in addressing today's geopolitical and geostrategic dynamics. Security tensions in the Asia Pacific region that have escalated due to the Ukraine vs Russia

war, have an influence on regional security dynamics. Likewise, the LCS conflict with several countries in the Southeast Asian region.

In another sense, joint military exercises of ASEAN countries are part of defense diplomacy to create a conducive climate for the security stability of the Southeast Asian region. Besides of course, joint military exercises will increase preparedness and cooperation between troops from ASEAN countries. So that it can be more effective in the implementation of regional defense and security.

In the complex and dynamic geopolitics of Southeast Asia, joint military exercises play an important role in enhancing regional security stability. With joint military exercises, ASEAN is in a stronger position to play its role in achieving peace and security in the Southeast Asian region. In another sense, joint military exercises of ASEAN countries can strengthen defense cooperation and prepare ASEAN countries' forces to respond to various threats and security emergencies together.

In the context of Indonesia's geopolitics and geostrategy, joint military exercises with ASEAN countries reflect Indonesia's efforts to maintain security stability in the Southeast Asian region in order to meet the country's defense needs in facing potential threats. Through joint military exercises, the regional security situation and conditions can be analyzed, so as to produce a joint solution in addressing the escalating security dynamics.

As a country that has a vast maritime area, joint military exercises can help improve Indonesia's surveillance and defense capabilities in its national waters, especially in the North Natuna Sea and throughout the archipelago. On the other hand, joint military exercises with ASEAN countries can also be used to maintain a balance with the two major powers playing in the Asian region, such as China and the United States. Joint military exercises with ASEAN countries are an important part of Indonesia's geostrategy in an effort to maintain security stability and sovereignty of countries in the Southeast Asian region.

Joint military exercises of ASEAN countries also have a positive impact on the complex geopolitics of ASEAN, where ASEAN member countries face potential conflicts and wars in the geopolitical and geostrategic context of the Southeast Asian region or the world. This means that one of the important things to be achieved in joint military exercises is a consultative and cooperative approach for ASEAN countries in conflict resolution. Such as the conflict between Cambodia and Thailand over the Preah Vihear Temple, or the Malaysia-Philippines conflict over the Sabah islands, as well as various security threats that hit member countries, such as separatist movements and terrorism.

In the context of ASEAN geostrategy, the existence of the Malacca Strait as the main shipping route to the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean, ASEAN countries play an important role in maintaining security in the region in protecting world trade.

Thus, joint military exercises of ASEAN countries are very important in maintaining regional security stability. Not only for member states, but also for global interests. In this position, the existence of ASEAN can be the key to world peace. That means, joint military exercises of ASEAN countries must be improved, both in quality and quantity.

This is important to do considering that the security escalation in the Asia Pacific region has developed quite alarmingly. The presence of major military powers in the region has the potential to trigger friction of interests that lead to open warfare. Moreover, the Ukraine vs Russia war, which continues to expand and involve European and American countries, can be a trigger to trigger armed conflict in the Asia Pacific region, including the Southeast Asia region. With the existence of joint military exercises, the dynamics of the development of the regional security situation can continue to be analyzed and consulted with member countries, so as to prevent the emergence of open armed conflicts between ASEAN countries. The commitment to zero conflict in the

Southeast Asian region can be an important asset for ASEAN countries in maintaining regional security stability.

4. CONCLUSION

Southeast Asia as part of the Asia-Pacific region is prone to security disturbances, both in the region and within member countries. Various potential conflicts can occur between countries in Southeast Asia. Starting from territorial disputes, boundary claims, territorial claims to the issue of separatist movements are serious threats that must be addressed together with member countries.

This condition is further aggravated by the involvement of several ASEAN member countries in the South China Sea conflict which is unilaterally claimed by China. The LCS conflict in fact is not only a conflict between China, Taiwan and four ASEAN member states, but has also become a world concern, thus inviting other countries to be active and intervene their forces in the region. Such as the United States building its military base to support and strengthen the Philippine military which is in conflict with China in the LCS. Even other ASEAN countries are allied with world military powers.

The Ukraine vs Russia war also has the potential to destabilize the security of the ASEAN region. The expansion of the war to involve European countries and the United States has the potential to provoke alliance countries in the Southeast Asian region to get involved in the conflict. So the possibility of widespread open-arms conflict is not impossible, especially when there is friction of economic interests between countries in Southeast Asia.

In short, Southeast Asia's security situation is not good. The escalation of armed conflicts in other parts of the world has the potential to invite various sentiments and friction of interests of many countries. Including countries in the Southeast Asian region.

For this reason, the existence of joint military exercises with ASEAN countries plays an important role in maintaining regional security stability. There are at least several benefits obtained through joint military exercises of ASEAN countries. First, joint military exercises can improve the country's defense capabilities and regional security. Second, through joint exercises, ASEAN forces will be better prepared and able to respond to any threats that disrupt regional security and sovereignty. Third, joint military exercises provide a space for productive discussion and consultation to discuss the security situation of member states and the Southeast Asian region, resulting in a joint formula to maintain regional security. Fourth, joint military exercises can be a mediation platform for ASEAN countries that are in conflict with other ASEAN countries, so that a constructive middle ground can be found for regional security stability.

Thus, joint military exercises with ASEAN countries need to be improved, both in quality and quantity. Through this effort, it is expected that the security situation and conditions of the Southeast Asian region can be more stable and ready to face various threats and security disturbances.

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