POINTER

Editorial Board

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Editorial

We are pleased to continue with our next compilation of essays from the students of the Command and Staff Course (CSC) of the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College (GKS CSC). These essays are taken from two of the modules under the CSC: Analysis of Defence and Security Policies (ADSP) and the Evolution of Strategic Thought (EST). Both of these modules are conducted by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) under the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

The first of the CSC essays, 'The Viability of Deterrence Strategies for Non-Nuclear States' is written by LTC Harris Tan Nan An. In this essay, LTC Tan explores the viability of conventional deterrence strategies for non-nuclear states. In particular, he examines whether non-nuclear states can employ conventional military forces as an effective deterrent against state and non-state actors. LTC Tan begins his essay by providing an overview of the theoretical concepts of deterrence, and its different forms of strategy. Thereafter, he sets out to make three arguments. First, conventional deterrence failures can be overcome. Second, conventional deterrence strategies remain useful despite their limitations. Third, non-nuclear states can enhance their security by complementing deterrence with other forms of statecraft. In this discussion, LTC Tan highlights that cyber threats are excluded, given the issues of attribution and the lack of retaliatory capabilities on the part of most states.

LTC Benson Chian wrote the next essay, 'Challenges to Regional Security and Co-operation in the ASEAN Region'. According to LTC Chian, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been a resilient regional, intergovernmental organisation for many decades. However, he feels that intra-regional and extra-regional challenges to regional security and co-operation are significant and require ASEAN's member states to work closely together in overcoming them. While some of the challenges are structural in nature, LTC Chian believes that there are issues which pertain to history, culture and most of all, territorial integrity. Faced with seemingly intractable challenges, ASEAN needs to maintain unity in order to avoid eroding the organisation's long-term centrality in resolving common problems. Notwithstanding the range of challenges, LTC Chian believes that the ASEAN region has achieved past successes in solving common security threats through like-minded approaches and shared awareness. As ASEAN looks forward to the next lap, there are opportunities to progress towards a 'security community' architecture and leverage on soft power to reinforce the organisation's value as a 'catalyst' for regional peace. In conclusion, LTC Chian stresses that ASEAN must exploit these opportunities to retain its centrality in regional affairs and convince extra-regional actors to trust the organisation's ability to shape a friendly strategic environment for sustained peace and prosperity.

The essay, 'The Non-Viability of A Non-Offensive Defence Strategy' is written by Lt. Col. Mark E. Enriques, an International Officer. In this essay, Lt. Col. Enriques argues that Non-Offensive Defence (NOD) is ineffective as a national defence strategy. According to Lt. Col. Enriques, the conditions required for a complete NOD posture are too limited for a realistic application to national security strategy. From his brief analysis of New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland, Lt. Col. Enriques highlights that Switzerland seems to be the only real example of a successful NOD in practice. Though each state's force structure meets NOD's posture, he feels that only Switzerland is capable of sustaining a deterrence-by-denial strategy. If NOD only works for one state with very specific geography, neutrality, and homogeneity, Lt. Col. Enriques considers that it has little value in the field of security policy. By analysing the application and limitations of NOD, Lt. Col. Enriques concludes that NOD has little practicality as a defence strategy.

In the essay, 'Airpower – A Universal Solvent of Modern War or An All-Purpose Glue That Makes Combined Armed Operations Possible?' ME6(DR) Reuben Lim explores the idea that airpower should not be viewed as polar states of 'universal solvent' versus 'multi-purpose glue', but rather a continuum that spans both and the proportion of each is dependent on the context of the employment. When operating as combined arms in joint operations, airpower plays important roles, not just for kinetic effects by agile precision firepower but in a wide range of non-kinetic ones as well. In irregular war, it is clear that land power has a dominant role in being 'up close and personal' to both the insurgents and the civilian population in

shaping political outcomes. Nonetheless, ME6(DR) Lim considers airpower a key enabler for Counter-Insurgency (COIN) and Counter-Terrorism (CT) efforts by creating favourable conditions amidst 'malleable and complex' situations. With the growth of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) and its developments in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and autonomous vehicles, the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres are being blurred. As technology advances in accuracy and autonomy of drones and munitions, geographical limitations by each service is reducing. The conventional equipment, doctrines and mindset of the services may become irrelevant as technology dominates the outcome in war. ME6(DR) Lim concludes that in the end, technology may well be the 'universal solvent' that dissolves the relevance of land, sea and airpower as separate entities.

The final essay in this compilation is entitled, 'Time – An Important Element For A Successful Insurgent Campaign?' and is written by MAJ Tan Lih Soon. In this essay, MAJ Tan analyses time as an importance element of a successful insurgent campaign. He emphasises that time is the most important factor in determining insurgency victories but, only when viewed as an interaction between 'duration' and 'timeliness',

and as an opportunity-maker for other factors contributing to successful insurgencies. In his essay, MAJ Tan defines the key terms, namely 'Insurgency', 'Duration', and 'Timeliness', and then elaborates on the various factors for a successful insurgency. Using the Chinese Communist Revolution as a case study of a successful insurgency, MAJ Tan then examines how time—in terms of duration and timeliness—enabled the critical factors to be achieved to allow the Communist Party of China (CPC) to accomplish its goal. To provide a holistic discussion, he also discusses the Malayan Emergency to determine how duration and timeliness, or the absence of it, had contributed to the failure of the insurgents. MAJ Tan concludes by highlighting how time remains the most important element to an insurgency campaign despite the different environments today.

At this juncture, POINTER would like to bid farewell to Ms Melissa Ong, a key member of the POINTER Editorial Board. We thank Ms Ong for her full support of POINTER and wish her the very best in her next posting.

We would also like to extend our warmest welcome to Ms Christina Kwok who joins the POINTER Editorial Board. Welcome, Ms Kwok!

The POINTER Editorial Team

THE VIABILITY OF DETERRENCE STRATEGIES FOR NON-NUCLEAR STATES

by **LTC Harris Tan Nan An**

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the author seeks to examine the viability of conventional deterrence strategies for non-nuclear states. In particular, he explores whether non-nuclear states can employ conventional military forces as an effective deterrent against state and non-state actors. The essay begins by providing an overview of the theoretical concepts of deterrence, and its different forms of strategy. Thereafter, it sets out to make three arguments. First, conventional deterrence failures can be overcome. Second, conventional deterrence strategies remain useful despite their limitations. Third, non-nuclear states can enhance their security by complementing deterrence with other forms of statecraft. In this essay, cyber threats are excluded, given the issues of attribution and the lack of retaliatory capabilities on the part of most states.

Keywords: *Deterrence; Strategy; Denial; Adversary; Security*

> *"Nobody is driven into war by ignorance, and no one who thinks that he will gain anything from it is deterred by fear."*
>
> - Hermocrates of Syracuse[1]

INTRODUCTION

The concept of deterrence has been part of military strategy throughout history. It predates not only the Cold War, when deterrence became synonymous with nuclear weapons, but also the modern era itself.[2] Yet, it was during the Cold War, when the advent of nuclear weapons threatened incalculable damage, that deterrence was elevated to the forefront of national security.[3] As Henry Kissinger succinctly observed, 'the nuclear age turned strategy into deterrence.'[4]

Proponents of nuclear deterrence have argued that the magnitude of nuclear threats are simply much more significant, and therefore, more reliable and effective than conventional threats.[5] They also point out that history has demonstrated the impotence of conventional deterrence.[6] This essay contends that such Cold War underpinnings of deterrence are not useful for states without recourse to nuclear weapons. They also unnecessarily limit one's options in a complex security environment where threats may fall below the threshold of a nuclear response.

This essay seeks to examine the viability of conventional deterrence strategies for non-nuclear states. In particular, it will examine whether non-nuclear states can employ conventional military forces as an effective deterrent against state and non-state actors. The essay begins by providing an overview of the theoretical concepts of deterrence, and its different forms of strategy. Thereafter, it sets out to make three arguments. First, conventional deterrence failures can be overcome. Second, conventional deterrence strategies remain useful despite their limitations. Third, non-nuclear states can enhance their security by complementing deterrence with other forms of statecraft. Cyber threats are excluded from this discussion, given the issues of attribution and the lack of retaliatory capabilities on the part of most states.

DEFINING DETERRENCE

Deterrence, in the broadest sense, is the attempt to influence another actor's assessment of its interests. It is a 'state of mind brought about by a credible threat of retaliation, a conviction that the action being contemplated cannot succeed, or a belief that the costs of the action will exceed any possible gain.'[7] Based on this interpretation, the desired effect of deterrence is psychological. Therefore, success of deterrence depends on the potential adversary being 'reluctant to act for fear of failure, costs and the consequences.'[8]

Inherent in deterrence theory is the assumption that both the attacker and defender are rational. The course of action ultimately chosen will be one that promises the greatest gain, or the smallest loss, after careful consideration of the relative costs and benefits of the available options, and the chances of success or failure of those options.[9] That said, cultural, political, historical and linguistic differences can lead defenders to view their adversaries quite differently than they actually are. According to Adam Lowther, 'limits in rationality and understanding can lead to a lack of situational awareness, poor signalling, misinformation, and the misreading of signals.'[10] This implies that deterrence is also relative, not absolute.[11] Deterrence can only work if the opponent reluctantly agrees to be deterred.[12] Should he miscalculate, conflict may still ensue. This suggests that any deterrence strategy pursued must be flexible to adjust costs and consequences.

DETERRENCE THEORY

Credible Intent, Credible Capability

In 1958, William Kaufmann noted that deterrence comprised two key parts. First, the 'expressed intention to defend a certain interest'; and second, 'the demonstrated capability' to defend the interest in question, or to inflict such a cost on the attacker that it would not seem worth the effort to achieve his end.[13] Put simply, deterrence requires the 'credible capability to harm', and the 'credible intent to carry out this harm.'[14]

According to Lawrence Freedman, credibility is therefore the 'magic ingredient' of deterrence.[15] For deterrence to be credible, however, an opponent has to be convinced that the defender has both the military capability and political resolve to carry out its threat.[16] Credible intent is comparatively harder to achieve, as it is based on both the defender's reputation for honouring commitments, as well as an assessment of the value held by the defender of the interest at stake. On the former point, Thomas Schelling's observation– 'what one does today in a crisis affects what one can be expected to do tomorrow'—is insightful.[17]

Credible capability, on the other hand, is determined by performing a net assessment of both the defender and challenger's forces. In general, this involves an evaluation of aggregate forces and power-projection capability.[18] Given the contestable nature of

Singapore's request for 12 Lockheed Martin F-35Bs had been approved by US Congress on 9th January, 2020, which will complement Singapore's stance on deterrence.

conventional forces, Richard Harknett argued that it was the defender's capability rather than its will to inflict costs that would most likely be challenged by an opponent.[19] Conventional deterrence, more than nuclear deterrence, therefore, requires a demonstration of capability.

For deterrence to be credible, however, an opponent has to be convinced that the defender has both the military capability and political resolve to carry out its threat.

DETERRENCE STRATEGIES

Deterrence By Denial, Deterrence By Punishment

Kaufmann's conception of deterrence also includes two forms of deterrence strategy. The first, to 'defend the interest in question', is essentially the strategy of deterrence by denial, or counter-force deterrence. This strategy seeks to deter aggression by convincing the adversary that any attempt to achieve his aims through force would be defeated or prolonged such that the losses sustained would not justify any gains. In its purest form, a denial strategy suggests that the challenger is not punished. Instead, it is concerned with territorial defence, and the use of non-offensive capabilities.[20] The second form of deterrence articulated, the threat to inflict costs, refers to deterrence by punishment, or counter-value deterrence. This strategy seeks instead to impose an unacceptable cost on the society or government of the adversary.[21]

Dynamic Deterrence

Cold War deterrence theorists have generally associated nuclear deterrence with punishment strategies, and conventional deterrence with denial strategies. In practice, however, states rely on both forms of strategies for effective deterrence. With the renewed interest in conventional deterrence post-Cold War, a third form of deterrence strategy–dynamic deterrence—emerged. While it contains elements of punishment and denial, there are distinct differences in their application. Its proponents argue that punishment need not be societal and can be tailored to target items that the adversary values.[22] In addition, denial should be offensive rather than defensive, for instance, through the use of force projection capabilities.[23] Unlike traditional conceptions of deterrence, advocates of dynamic deterrence also view the 'credible use of force as essential to deterrence, not merely as a sign of failure.'[24]

Ultimately, it is the interests at stake and the available means for deterrence that will conform to the design of strategy. In general, the greater the interest at stake, the more prominent a role punishment will play in deterrence strategy.[25]

Reassurance

At this juncture, some thought should be given to reassurance as a component of deterrence strategies. Reassurance that the threat will not be carried out, as Schelling argued, provides the opponent the incentive to comply with deterrent demands.[26] Related to this discussion is the concept of the security dilemma, where steps taken by the defender to enhance his deterrent capability leads to the opponent feeling insecure. The opponent, consequently, is obliged to undertake similar measures, which in turn makes another increase in the defender's capabilities necessary. The outcome is that one's initial efforts to promote deterrence backfires, which reinforces the importance of reassurance in complementing deterrence.[27]

OVERCOMING CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE FAILURES

According to John Mearsheimer, conventional deterrence fails when the attacker thinks that it is possible to win a quick and decisive victory.[28] In this regard, history demonstrates that most states show a clear preference for 'rapid, blitzkrieg-style wars rather than protracted wars of attrition.'[29] This preference is encapsulated in the belief that blitzkrieg enables a quick return to regular day-to-day life, minimise casualties, and reduces the likelihood of third-party involvement. By contrast, long wars have the potential to severely

undermine one's economy and political stability.[30] From this viewpoint, conventional deterrence against an aggressive state actor is 'best served when the attacker believes that his only alternative is a protracted war.'[31]

Mearsheimer's view that the 'bedrock of conventional deterrence' is the 'threat of a war of attrition' is primarily based on the deterrence by denial strategy.[32] Such a strategy, however, may not be appropriate for small states such as Israel and Singapore. In the case of Israel, its leadership has long recognised that Israel's ability to shoulder the cost of a war of attrition in terms of casualties and damage to the economy, is significantly lower than that of its adversaries.[33] In former Israeli Chief of Staff David Elazar's words, 'nothing is worse than a war of attrition in which 300 Egyptians and four Jews fall in battle each day.'[34] Its military capabilities, therefore, would be based not on 'staying power and defence', but on achieving a 'short and forceful war' through offensive action.[35] Similarly, as Singapore's military policies matured in the 1980s, the island state shifted its defence strategy from a poisonous shrimp policy to a more offensive porcupine posture characterised by increasing, albeit limited, power-projection capabilities.[36] In both cases, primarily offensive conventional deterrence strategies have been effective in deterring aggression from state actors.

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Freedman argues that denial, however, has a key advantage over punishment—reliability. He reasons that should conventional deterrence fails, deterrence by denial offers the defender more control by virtue that its force posture would have been designed to defeat,

or at minimum, deny the adversary his objectives. In essence, the opponent is left to decide how much more to take with punishment. Denial ensures that this choice is removed.[37]

THE CASE FOR CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

Credible Counter-Value and Counterforce Capabilities

In the years following the Cold War, the confluence of advances in surveillance, information and targeting technologies contributed to what was called the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). For modern militaries, the RMA manifested in the ability to gain information dominance, employ precision weaponry, and conduct integrated joint operations. This has held important implications for conventional deterrence.

A THAAD interceptor is launched from a THAAD battery on Wake Island during Flight Test Operational (FTO)-02 Event 2a where two air-launched ballistic missile targets were successfully intercepted in November 2015.

Together with information dominance, precision weaponry has enabled conventional forces to attain significant counter-value capabilities. Compared to nuclear weapons, precision-guided munitions confer two major advantages. First, they provide conventional forces with the means of making highly surgical and lethal strikes on a wide range of targets. By contrast, the destruction caused by nuclear weapons is more indiscriminate; they encompass large areas and impose long lasting devastating effects.[38] In short, precision-guided conventional weapons limits collateral damage. More significantly, they limit the 'resultant moral, legal and political dilemmas associated with the loss of life.'[39]

Then-Second Minister of Defence, Mr Ong Ye Kung, receiving a brief on the Heron-1 UAV, used by the Republic of Singapore Air Force for UAV operations.

Second, precision weaponry has reduced the likelihood of casualties for the defender.[40] This contributes to the effectiveness of conventional deterrence in two other ways. On the part of the defender, it lowers the threshold to engage in operations where the state is not directly threatened. The adversary, on his part, is affected psychologically by his inability to inflict harm to the defender's forces, when the threat is carried out. To illustrate, Serbia's inability to inflict costs on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) air forces during the Kosovo Conflict prevented Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic from disrupting NATO's cohesion and shoring up popular morale at home.[41] This, amongst other factors, eventually contributed to his decision to capitulate.

Increasingly, Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) have demonstrated the ability to obtain these advantages for conventional forces. In addition, unmanned aircraft have the advantage of persistence over manned aircraft. Compared to cruise missiles, they are also less costly and more effective in striking time-sensitive targets. Consequently, UAS have qualitatively enhanced the deterrent effect of conventional weapons.[42]

The revolution in military technologies has also enhanced conventional counterforce capabilities. Today, improved sensors and surveillance systems, as well as networked communication systems support highly accurate and automatic responses to attacks, such as countering enemy artillery fire and missiles. Examples of strategic and operational-level counterforce systems include the United States' Terminal High Altitude Aerial Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile system, and Israel's Iron Dome air defence system. At the tactical level, Singapore's Artillery Hunting Radar (ARTHUR) Weapon Locating Radar, which provided early warning of insurgent mortar fire, and informed coalition forces' counter-fire in Uruzgan comes to mind.

However, it is worth noting that technology is a double-edged sword. While technology has served as a force multiplier for modern conventional forces, its adversaries can equally exploit advances in weapon technology. This fact also applies to non-state actors,

which has increasingly relied on commercial off-the-shelf systems as cost-effective means of attacking the militaries and interests of state actors.

Conventional Threats Are More Credible

History suggests that adversarial state actors are not necessarily deterred by an opponent's nuclear capabilities.[43] For instance, US' nuclear capabilities did not prevent China's involvement in the Korean War. Similarly, nuclear weapons did not dissuade Argentina from contesting British's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands in 1982. This has been, in a large part, due to the political and moral aversion toward the use of nuclear weapons, particularly against non-nuclear states.[44] As William Huggins observed, nuclear weapons represent 'a virtually inviolable threshold.'[45]

Two observations can be made here. First, nuclear-armed state actors are self-deterred from employing its nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states and will rely on conventional forces in a conflict. Consequently, non-nuclear states can deter nuclear-armed states' aggression by the threat of a war of attrition. Second, no equivalent taboo applies to the employment of conventional weapons. This makes their use more of a certainty, and therefore, a more credible deterrent than nuclear weapons. That said, the destructive power of conventional weapons is finite, and may be contested.[46] Consequently, they may be insufficiently destructive to deter the 'most risk prone and desperate of adversaries.'[47]

Deterring Non-State Actors

Compared to state-actors, the task of deterring non-state actors is far more complex and difficult. Most non-state actors do not exercise control over a specific territory. They also lack clear identifiable centre of gravities, which makes targeting what they value difficult.[48] Yet, most non-state actors are rational—they seek tangible worldly objectives.[49] As a result, they can be deterred. According to Paul Davis and Brian Jenkins, 'even hardened terrorists dislike operational risks and may be deterred by uncertainty and risk.'[50]

Lowther proposed that for states to effectively deter non-state actors, its strategy will need to include aspects of diplomacy, information, military and economics.[51] Within this strategy, conventional military

forces can play a useful, albeit limited role. As part of deterrence by denial, many military forces today complement and reinforce homeland security efforts to harden key installations and strengthen security at points of entry into the country. In deterrence by punishment, however, the military performs a more active role. In this area, UAS has demonstrated its effectiveness. According to former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director Leon Panetta, UAS strikes were not only 'very effective', but also 'the only game in town in terms of confronting or trying to disrupt the Al Qaeda leadership.'[52] Nonetheless, while such strikes may have some deterrent value, its legitimacy remains in question.

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COMPLEMENTS TO DETERRENCE

While the essay has established that conventional deterrence, as a strategy, is relevant and effective, it also acknowledges its limitations. It is thus essential to recognise that deterrence is not the magic bullet—it is but one strategy to be augmented by others in the national security toolbox.

Given the security dilemma that states face, defence diplomacy is necessary as a complement to deterrence, in order to establish a climate of trust and confidence. As then-Singapore's Minister for Defence, Mr Goh Chok Tong noted a defence strategy based on deterrence alone would lead states to 'misread' one another. The result was 'suspicious thoughts' that ended up 'very often in punches.'[53] To have lasting peace, in Mr Goh's view, states needed to foster 'common interests and understanding based on mutual respect, intertwined interests and shared destiny.'[54] This requires the workings of diplomacy—frequent dialogue

between leaders and the willingness to work together. According to Mr Goh, good diplomacy is also a prerequisite to good relations with neighbours. In difficult times, this ensures that there are sufficient channels of communications open to reduce uncertainty and miscalculation.[55]

To strengthen one's security, states can also engage in co-operative security. According to Richard Cohen, co-operative security is a 'strategic system which forms around a nucleus of democratic states linked together in a network of formal or informal alliances and institutions characterised by shared values, and practical economic, political, and defence co-operation.'[56] In this system, the security of individual states is linked by four reinforcing rings of security—individual security, collective security, collective defence, and the active promotion of security in the regions surrounding the system.

While NATO is at present the only institution to embody all four rings of security, other communities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are also observed to practise limited forms of co-operative security. While ASEAN member states engage in neither collective security nor collective defence, and at times maintain different positions on security issues, they have demonstrated the ability to deal with security issues constructively and co-operatively.[57] Disputes are generally solved by consensus, and 'among friends', not outsiders.[58] This approach, arguably, has helped guarantee peace among the collective of non-nuclear states since 1964.

CONCLUSION

In closing, it is worthwhile to reiterate the key arguments of the essay, of which there are three. First, conventional deterrence failures can be overcome, contrary to claims of its impotence. Second, deterrence strategies based on the employment of conventional military forces remain relevant and useful despite their limitations. Nonetheless, in deterring non-state actors, a more limited role is performed by conventional forces. Third, deterrence should not be used in isolation. In this regard, diplomacy and co-operative security arrangements are its useful complements.

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CHALLENGES TO REGIONAL SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN THE ASEAN REGION

by **LTC Benson Chian**

ABSTRACT

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been a resilient regional, intergovernmental organisation for many decades. In this essay, the author highlights that intra-regional and extra-regional challenges to regional security and co-operation are significant and require ASEAN's member states to work closely together in overcoming them. While some of the challenges are structural in nature, he feels that there are issues which pertain to history, culture and most of all, territorial integrity. Faced with seemingly intractable challenges, ASEAN needs to maintain unity in order to avoid eroding the organisation's long-term centrality in resolving common problems. Notwithstanding the range of challenges, the ASEAN region has achieved past successes in solving common security threats through like-minded approaches and shared awareness. As ASEAN looks forward to the next lap, there are opportunities to progress towards a 'security community' architecture and leverage on soft power to reinforce the organisation's value as a 'catalyst' for regional peace. In conclusion, the author states that ASEAN must exploit these opportunities to retain its centrality in regional affairs and convince extra-regional actors to trust the organisation's ability to shape a friendly strategic environment for sustained peace and prosperity.

Keywords: *Co-Operative Security; ASEAN; Intra- and Extra-Regional tensions; Historical; Unity*

INTRODUCTION

Formed in 1967, ASEAN has since overcome significant difficulties over the past 50 years and fostered peace in a region once characterised as 'the Balkans of the East.'[1] Considering that other established regional institutions such as the European Union (EU) face uncertainties amidst 'Brexit' challenges, ASEAN's achievements and her member states' firm support are noteworthy. However, the ASEAN region is situated within a volatile neighbourhood that remains marked by historical tensions and major powers' rivalries. In recent years, such tensions and rivalries have re-emerged and posed challenges to regional security and co-operation. Notwithstanding the ASEAN region's relative peace in the past decade, this essay argues that there are existing intra-regional and extra-regional, as well as emerging geopolitical challenges which could undermine the peace and stability in this region. If mismanaged, these challenges will heighten tensions and adversely affect the friendly, but fragile, strategic environment. To examine the potential challenges to regional security and co-operation, the essay will first define the ASEAN Region (including establishment of the ASEAN institution) and the scope of regional security challenges. The subsequent analysis will be divided into two parts: (1) existing and emerging challenges which will challenge regional security and co-operation; and (2) past successes and ASEAN's enduring resilience. As part of the way ahead, the essay will discuss opportunities for ASEAN to manage these challenges and play a decisive role in shaping the region's strategic environment.

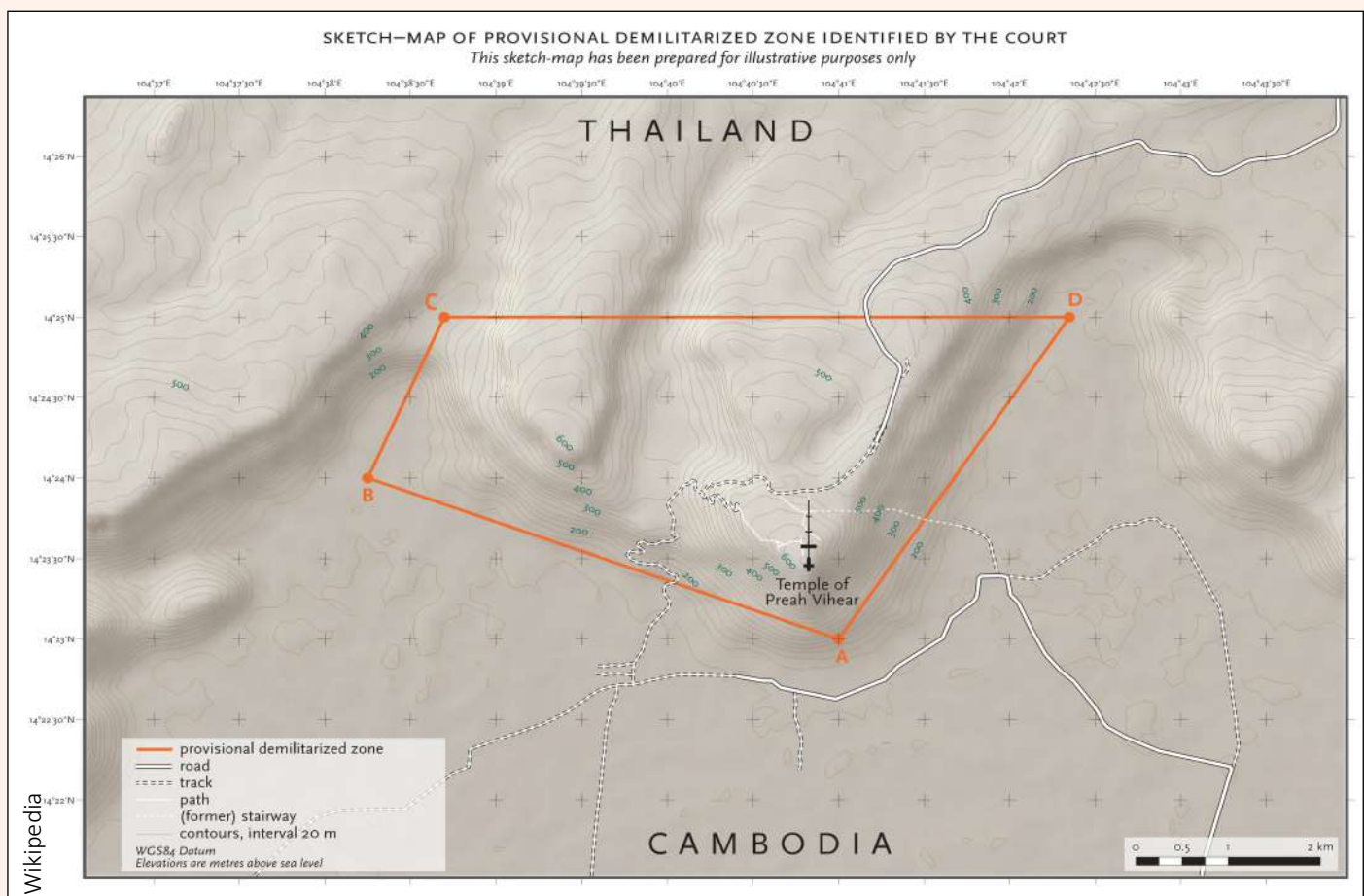## DEFINING THE ASEAN REGION AND CONCEPT OF SECURITY

ASEAN Region

In defining the ASEAN region, it is necessary to

retrace ASEAN's historical developments. When the association was first formed, it only comprised five member states who shared the aim of forging regional co-operation in Southeast Asia. Over the years, ASEAN's membership gradually expanded to ten states, and has since developed from an association previously driven by the objective of 'regional reconciliation' to today's 'diplomatic association' for co-operation that focuses on 'conflict avoidance and management'.[2] Over the past 50 years, ASEAN's key achievements include preserving peace in this volatile and diverse Southeast Asian region, and balancing relations between major powers, such as the United States (US) and China, who hold vested interests in regional matters. As such, the ASEAN region broadly comprises the ten member states, and extra-regional powers such as the United States (US) and China, as part of its strategic landscape.

The ASEAN institution is based on a 'co-operative security' model which focuses on conflict avoidance and management between member states. Here, 'co-operative security' is broadly defined as a 'set of principles, rules and norms' that regulate behaviours between member states and guides the conduct for regional co-operation.[3] In this model, there is an absence of economic and military sanctions to enforce rules, and members prefer dialogues to discuss regional matters, resolve their differences, and build confidence.[4] The consultative nature of the ASEAN institution has led to a gradual development of the 'ASEAN Way' as a diplomatic mechanism to resolve issues. Dr. Ralf Emmers defined the 'ASEAN Way' as a 'distinctive and informal process of interaction' through which ASEAN's member states reach but also avoid common decisions.[5] Dr Mely Caballero-Anthony further identified that the 'ASEAN Way' is premised on the practices of '*musyawarah*' (process of meeting and consultation), and '*muafakat*' (decision by consensus through the process of *musyawarah*).[6] Such practices have guided ASEAN's conflict resolution processes and met with varying degrees of success. Besides consensus building and conflict avoidance, salient characteristics of the 'ASEAN Way' include respecting state sovereignty, and non-intervention in each member state's domestic matters.[7]

A sketched map of the provisional demilitarised zone determined by the International Court of Justice by its Order dated 18th July, 2011. The zone lies between the territory of Thailand and that of Cambodia. The two countries are ordered by the Court to remove their military officers from the zone and refrain from all military activities in the zone, until a judgment is rendered.

Concept of Security

The post-Cold War milieu has witnessed a broadening and deepening conceptualisation pertaining to the concept of 'security'. Of note, Professor Barry Buzan has argued for expansion in the traditional scope of security to include political, military, economic, societal and environmental issues.[8] Professor Sir Steve Smith also suggested that the concept could be deepened to include threats to human security, including non-traditional areas such as transnational terrorism and refugees.[9] To provide a comprehensive discussion of the challenges, the essay will therefore analyse the impacts of both traditional and non-traditional security challenges to the ASEAN region. The analysis will be further classified as intra-regional and extra-regional challenges to differentiate between the actors.

CHALLENGES TO REGIONAL SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION

ASEAN's Institutional Weaknesses and Intra-Regional Challenges

While ASEAN's 'co-operative security' model has delivered peace to the region, there are two key institutional weaknesses which will limit the institution's effectiveness to enforce security and co-operation in the longer term. In examining ASEAN's institutional weaknesses, Dr Amitav Acharya has first identified that ASEAN remains a 'security regime' rather than a 'security community.'[10] There are important differences between the two institutional frameworks. While a security community has formal rules, institutions for conflict resolution and long-term prospects for avoiding war, a security regime only has rules which regulate the behaviours of member states on a reciprocal basis.[11] Members of a security regime still engage in 'competitive arms acquisitions' and 'contingency planning' aimed at other members, and war avoidance tends to be a short-term prospect.[12] Of note, the member states' interests in a security regime are also usually ambiguous and divergent in nature.[13] One prominent manifestation of such divergence can be discerned from the recent trend of arms acquisition among regional states, where the need for increasingly high-end armaments (such as modern submarines) is not always clearly established. Mr Richard Bitzinger

goes as far as to characterise this trend as an 'arms competition', which could significantly erode the regional security environment if left unconstrained and unbounded.[14] Building on Bitzinger's recommendation to resolve the ongoing 'arms competition' and stem its deleterious effect on regional security, the subsequent analysis of ASEAN's institutional framework will illustrate the security regime's limitations in overcoming intra-regional tensions and forging co-operation.

Of note, the member states' interests in a security regime are also usually ambiguous and divergent in nature.

In terms of traditional security challenges, tensions have manifested in political and military realms where rivalries and flashpoints continue to mark bilateral relations. For instance, Singapore and Malaysian relations were tested when Malaysia and Indonesia conducted, as part of their bilateral military exercise, *Malindo Darsasa 3AB*, an airborne assault exercise in Johor on Singapore's 26th National Day.[15] Singapore subsequently responded by conducting large-scale mobilisation of its armed forces. More recently, Malaysia and Indonesia have engaged in naval confrontations over Ambalat in 2005 and 2009, while Cambodia and Thailand fought in a border dispute between 2008 and 2011 over the Preah Vihear temple. As for non-traditional security challenges, haze pollution remains a contentious matter between member states. To begin with, Indonesia took 12 years to ratify the *ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution* due to the perception that it would be blamed for the forest fires. Despite ratification, the then-Indonesian Vice President Muhammad Jusuf Kalla's remark, 'for 11 months, they enjoyed nice air from Indonesia and they never thanked us', and the then-Coordinating Minister for Politics, Legal and Security Affairs Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan's comment on Singapore's offer of only 'one aircraft' to help quell hot spots, indicate simmering tensions still exist over environmental management and intra-regional co-operation.[16] The Rohingya Crisis has also emerged as a potential flashpoint between Malaysia and Myanmar. While Malaysia has accused Myanmar of genocide, Myanmar counter-accused

Malaysia of breaching the 'non-intervention' policy and politicising the issue for domestic support in upcoming elections.[17] Due to such tensions and incompatibilities, the ASEAN member states have historically avoided advancing and formalising the organisation as an alliance. As such, the members' collective preference for the status quo has diminished ASEAN's ability to resolve intra-regional tensions.

The second weakness pertains to the advocacy of the 'ASEAN Way' as a diplomatic mechanism, which has contributed to ASEAN's limitation in driving the 'pacific settlement of disputes'.[18] By adopting an informal and consultative approach towards conflict resolution, member states have eschewed the organisation's dispute settlement mechanism—the High Council—to resolve interstate tensions. In the absence of established dispute resolution mechanisms, Dr Emmers noted that ASEAN is often paralysed by observance of non-interference principle in member states' domestic matters.[19] Professor Kishore Mahbubani and Mr Jeffery Sng also argued that ASEAN's biggest weakness laid in having 'no enforcement of decisions, no monitoring of compliance, and no sanctions.'[20] Accordingly, ASEAN does not have institutions which are capable of leading the region, and this task instead rests upon strong individual leaders to forge regional co-operation.[21] One key example was ASEAN's diminished role during the Cambodian-Vietnamese War from 1978 to 1989. Despite facilitating initial diplomatic talks through the Jakarta Informal Meetings (JIM) [I and II], ASEAN was eventually bypassed in the regional peace-making process, and instead relied on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to drive the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement. ASEAN also did not participate on a 'collective basis' when the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established for peace-making operations between 1992 and 1993.[22] Such paralysis thus affects ASEAN's ability to forge effective regional security co-operation between member states and leaves the region's strategic environment susceptible to extra-regional pressures.
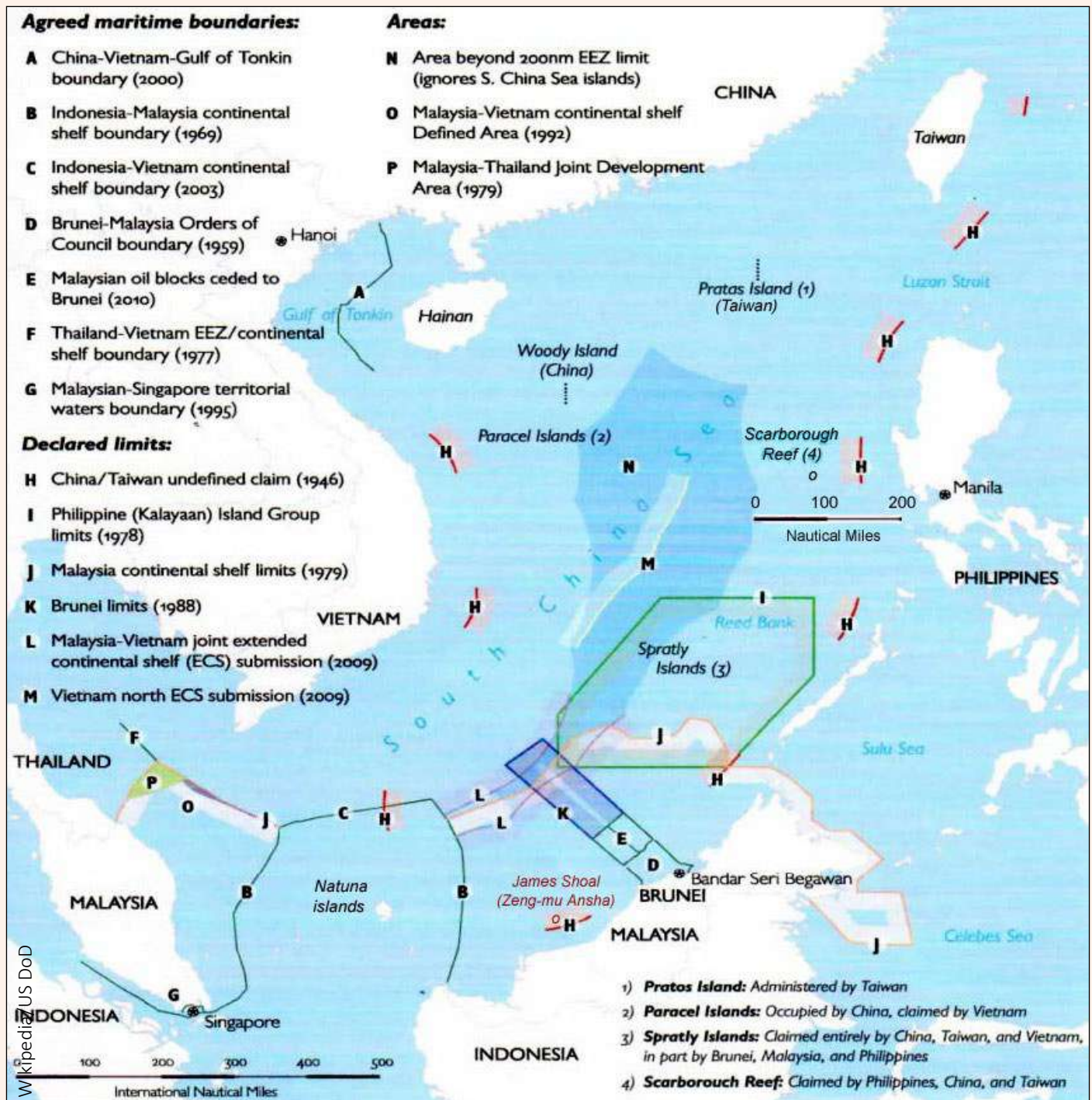
EXTRA-REGIONAL CHALLENGES

China's rise and ensuing competition with the US will challenge and transform ASEAN's regional landscape. Hitherto, the US had been the ASEAN region's resident power and held influence over the member states' political, military and economic development. With China's rapid growth and entry into the region, there will be inevitable competition between the two superpowers and the stability of US-China relations will bear a direct impact on the entire Asia-Pacific region. Following the 2016 US presidential elections, President Donald Trump's mercurial inclinations, including challenging the 'One-China Policy', could introduce further instability and unpredictability to the US-China relationship. Depending on the competition's trajectories, ASEAN could be embroiled in the power contest and be forced to pick sides. On US-China relations, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong remarked, 'all Asian countries hope that US-China relations will be positive. No country wants to choose sides between the US and China.'[23] PM Lee's sentiments accurately depict the ASEAN member states' current dilemma, and the implications to the region's longer-term security and co-operation. Furthermore, ASEAN's 'co-operative security' model lacks military co-operation and is unable to provide effective counterweight against major powers. Without an effective counterweight, ASEAN's limitation thus remains greatest at the extra-regional level as the shaping of regional order is often beyond its control, and the organisation is reduced to mere 'collective diplomacy.'[24]

> With China's rapid growth and entry into the region, there will be inevitable competition between the two superpowers and the stability of US-China relations will bear a direct impact on the entire Asia-Pacific region.

With China-US relations set to dominate the ASEAN region in the coming years, China's growing influence over regional states such as Cambodia and Laos could further undermine ASEAN's unity and security co-operation.[25] Given that China's White Paper has warned small and medium sized states not to 'take sides' among the big countries, such language has

Agreed maritime boundaries:

A China-Vietnam-Gulf of Tonkin boundary (2000)

B Indonesia-Malaysia continental shelf boundary (1969)

C Indonesia-Vietnam continental shelf boundary (2003)

D Brunei-Malaysia Orders of Council boundary (1959)

E Malaysian oil blocks ceded to Brunei (2010)

F Thailand-Vietnam EEZ/continental shelf boundary (1977)

G Malaysian-Singapore territorial waters boundary (1995)

Declared limits:

H China/Taiwan undefined claim (1946)

I Philippine (Kalayaan) Island Group limits (1978)

J Malaysia continental shelf limits (1979)

K Brunei limits (1988)

L Malaysia-Vietnam joint extended continental shelf (ECS) submission (2009)

M Vietnam north ECS submission (2009)

Areas:

N Area beyond 200nm EEZ limit (ignores S. China Sea islands)

O Malaysia-Vietnam continental shelf Defined Area (1992)

P Malaysia-Thailand Joint Development Area (1979)

1) **Pratos Island:** Administered by Taiwan

2) **Paracel Islands:** Occupied by China, claimed by Vietnam

3) **Spratly Islands:** Claimed entirely by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, in part by Brunei, Malaysia, and Philippines

4) **Scarborouch Reef:** Claimed by Philippines, China, and Taiwan

Sovereignty Claims in the South China Sea.

signalled China's desired intent to reshape the regional security architecture.[26] The on-going territorial disputes over the South China Sea (SCS) is a pertinent example of China's influence interfering with ASEAN's centrality in regional issues. With four ASEAN states disputing China's claims in the SCS, there have been notable maritime encounters between their respective navies, coast guards, law enforcement agencies and fishermen (including China's 'fishing militia') over the contested waters.[27] To that end, China has also undertaken maritime lawfare efforts to exploit international and domestic laws in advancing her claims and denying rival claimants of operational freedom in these contested

waters.[28] In analysing the SCS situation, Kaplan postulated: 'just as German soil constituted the military front line of the Cold War, the waters of the South China Sea may constitute the military front line of the coming decades.'[29] Kaplan's pessimistic assessment of the region's strategic environment is reinforced by two prominent instances of ASEAN's diplomatic setbacks on the SCS issue. The first instance occurred with the failure of the 45th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) in 2012 to issue a joint communique due to the Cambodian Chair's refusal to consider mention of the SCS issue, out of concern that it would offend their Chinese patron.[30] Mr Bilahari Kausikan went as far as to

describe the incident as the 'nadir' of ASEAN's regional security role.[31] A similar controversy occurred during the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2016 where ASEAN issued a sternly worded statement on the SCS but had to retract it hours later.[32] Such setbacks repeatedly demonstrate ASEAN's limitations in presenting a united front against China. Over time, the consistent erosion of ASEAN centrality over the SCS issue will drive a wedge into member states' unity and severely undermine regional security and co-operation.

PAST SUCCESSES AND ASEAN'S ENDURING RESILIENCE

Despite the intra-regional and extra-regional challenges confronting the region, ASEAN has achieved notable past successes and progress in addressing non-traditional security challenges and advancing defence diplomacy. In particular, the region's demonstration of unity in co-ordinating expedient responses to common threats suggest that ASEAN is capable of overcoming challenges, when required. Such close co-operation have manifested in ASEAN's response towards recent non-traditional security threats. For example, during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Crisis in 2003, ASEAN organised a meeting at an 'unprecedented pace' and invited China and Hong Kong under the 'ASEAN Plus Three framework' to work together in combating the epidemic.[33] Through close co-operation, the ASEAN states, China and Hong Kong established measures such as information sharing, and a 'hotline' for communication in emergencies, which aided in ending the SARS epidemic by late 2003. Similarly, during the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, nearly all ASEAN states contributed to the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts in Indonesia, and Thailand, with aid money and military assets.[34] Besides addressing security challenges, ASEAN also increased defence diplomacy engagements to reduce mutual suspicions and tensions between regional states. Dr Bhubhindar Singh and Dr Tan See Seng observed that 'security co-operation' was only introduced into ASEAN's fourth summit in 1992, but has since increased in scope and depth of Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs).[35] Professor Evan A. Laksmana also highlighted that from 2000 to 2009, ASEAN organised 15 defence diplomacy-related meetings (on average) annually to address security challenges.[36] ASEAN's

growing emphasis on defence diplomacy has therefore facilitated the conduct of strategic dialogues (eg. Shangri-La Dialogue) between key leaders, and field exercises between militaries (e.g. ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+) Maritime Security and Counter-Terrorism Exercise 2016) to forge closer defence relations.[37] Such rapid progress since 1992 augurs well for the ASEAN region in precipitating closer co-operation between member states, and extra-regional actors, to resolve common security challenges.

Working level representatives from the Republic of Singapore Air Force signing the enhanced ASEAN Air Forces Standard Operating Procedure for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations at the 5th ASEAN Air Forces Education and Training Working Group meeting.

In particular, the region's demonstration of unity in co-ordinating expedient responses to common threats suggest that ASEAN is capable of overcoming challenges, when required.

While the region has weathered significant setbacks and differences between member states over the past 50 years, ASEAN has displayed enduring resilience with sustained growth and expansion in trade and diplomatic ties. Amidst uncertainty and tensions over regional flashpoints, the volume of intra-ASEAN trade, investment and tourism has continued to soar in the past decade, and such growth has indicated that ASEAN member states' economies are growing.[38] At the 2015 World Economic Forum (WEF), the then-

Malaysia's Minister of International Trade and Industry, Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed, predicted ASEAN will likely overtake European Union (EU) in the next 10-15 years, given that ASEAN will continue to grow at 5% per annum while Europe's growth will be less than 2% over the next decade.[39] In explaining ASEAN's development through the years, Dr Mahbubani likened her progress to a crab's movement: 'two steps forwards and one step backwards.'[40] Despite ASEAN's tendencies to sidestep uncomfortable issues (such as alleged human rights violations in Rohingya, Myanmar) and wait out security challenges, the organisation has overall achieved significant progress in stabilising a volatile region. As such, ASEAN's longevity could largely be attributed to its enduring resilience—a product of the region's inclination for the slow, but steady, 'ASEAN Way' of '*musyawarah*' and '*muafakat*' to 'collectively' resolve regional challenges.

OPPORTUNITIES

Building on ASEAN's past successes, and resilience, there are emerging opportunities for ASEAN to exploit and establish stronger mechanisms to meet future challenges. To begin with, the adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2007 precipitated the strengthening of ASEAN's institutions. Riding on this momentum, ASEAN leaders (in 2015) proclaimed ASEAN as a 'community' and promulgated the 'ASEAN Community Vision 2025', which envisioned the establishment of an 'ASEAN Political-Security Community' (APSC) by 2025. In essence, the significant features of the "ASEAN Political-Security Community" include: (1) a rules-based community and (2) conflict resolution by peaceful means, such as restraint from the use of force, adoption of peaceful dispute resolution measures while strengthening CSBMs.[41] Such features are in line with Dr Acharya's description of a 'security community' and indicate that member states recognise the value of progressing towards a 'security community' construct.[42] With stronger identities and institutional frameworks, ASEAN's institutions could develop a unique regional dynamism and create new avenues of co-operation for ASEAN states.[43] In the longer term, the establishment of an ASEAN Security Community will enable closer regional co-operation against security threats and

Representatives from the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) countries at the opening ceremony of the ADMM-Plus Maritime Security Field Training Exercise (ADMM-Plus MARSEC FTX) in Busan, Republic of Korea (ROK).

enable ASEAN to project a stronger voice against major powers. A strengthened ASEAN will thus be less susceptible to external pressures and assume a more decisive leadership figure in shaping Southeast Asia's strategic environment.

Besides 'hardening' ASEAN, it is timely to exploit ASEAN's hidden soft power to reinforce her value proposition to major powers. Professor Joseph S. Nye Jr. briefly defines 'soft power' as the 'ability to shape the preference of others.'[44] While ASEAN does not have the same military strength as US or China, its key achievement has been to maintain peace and prosperity in Southeast Asia. This peace has consequently contributed to China's rise over the past two decades, and it would remain in China's and US' interests to maintain ASEAN unity and not force member states to pick sides.[45] By hosting regular diplomatic channels such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN provides safe and secure platforms for major powers to interact with one another. Correspondingly, increasing interaction opportunities between major powers also helped to defuse hostilities and tensions. For example, when China-Japan relations broke down, their leaders met at the ASEAN meetings to restore ties.[46] Given the importance of regional stability for the major powers, ASEAN can further exploit its soft power through the conduct of regular high-powered meetings to entrench its value proposition as a 'catalyst for peace' and influence the major powers' strategic calculus.[47] Encouraging their long-term acceptance of ASEAN centrality in regional affairs will provide ASEAN with greater leadership and influence in maintaining a friendly strategic environment.

CONCLUSION

The intra-regional and extra-regional challenges to regional security and co-operation are significant and require ASEAN's member states to work closely together in overcoming them. While some of the challenges are structural in nature, there are issues which pertain to history, culture and most of all, territorial integrity. Faced with seemingly intractable challenges, ASEAN needs to maintain unity in order to avoid eroding the organisation's long-term centrality in resolving common problems. Notwithstanding the range of challenges, the ASEAN region has achieved past successes in solving common security threats through like-minded approaches and shared awareness. ASEAN should continue building on the established diplomatic mechanisms and CSBMs to reduce mutual hostilities and tensions. As ASEAN looks forward to the next lap, there are opportunities to progress towards a 'security community' architecture and leverage on soft power to reinforce the organisation's value as a 'catalyst' for regional peace. ASEAN must exploit these precious opportunities to retain its centrality in regional affairs and convince extra-regional actors to trust the organisation's ability to shape a friendly strategic environment for sustained peace and prosperity.

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THE NON-VIABILITY OF A NON-OFFENSIVE DEFENCE STRATEGY

by **Lt. Col. Mark E. Enriques**

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the author discusses Non-Offensive Defence (NOD) as an ineffective national defence strategy. He feels that the conditions required for a complete NOD posture are too limited for a realistic application to national security strategy. From his brief analysis of New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, the author considers Switzerland to be the only real example of a successful NOD in practice. Though each state's force structure meets NOD's posture, the author highlights that only Switzerland is capable of sustaining a deterrence-by-denial strategy. If NOD only works for one state with very specific geography, neutrality and homogeneity, it has little value in the field of security policy. By analysing the application and limitations of NOD, the author concludes that NOD has little practicality as a defence strategy.

Keywords: *Non-Offensive Defence; Deterrence-By-Denial; Strategy; Security; Offence-Defence*

INTRODUCTION

In this essay, the author challenges the viability of NOD as a strategy for national security. He first presents a short overview of the security dilemma and the offence-defence theory which provide the basis for the NOD theory. Next, he outlines the limitations of the assumptions and characteristics of NOD theory. This is followed by a discussion of the military capabilities of New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland as case studies to examine their NOD force structures. Lastly, he evaluates each state's credibility to support a deterrence-by-denial strategy.

These arguments conclude that NOD is not a viable national security strategy. The author highlights that the assumptions the theory requires are weak and the conditions under which it can work are too limited for practical application. In addition, the lack of successful, real-world NOD implementation further supports these points. Of the three states analysed, Switzerland is the only state for which the strategy seems to work. The author then concludes that if the NOD theory only works for one state, it has little value to security policy studies.

THE SECURITY DILEMMA AND OFFENCE – DEFENCE THEORY

A proper understanding of NOD warrants a short explanation of the security dilemma and offence-defence theory since NOD rests on their foundations. The simplest explanation of the security dilemma is when defence planning inadvertently undermines security.[1] A classical, expanded definition of the security dilemma is 'when actions taken by one state solely for the purposes of increasing its own security simultaneously threaten another state, decreasing its security.'[2]

Offence-defence theory describes a balance to the security dilemma. It reasons that war is more likely when the offence has the advantage and less likely when conditions favour the defence.[3] Advocates see offence-oriented planning as provocative, as it encourages preventive or pre-emptive action if the balance shifts towards the adversary.[4] On the other hand, a defensive advantage reduces the security dilemma, likelihood of war and risk of arms race.[5]

NON-OFFENSIVE DEFENCE

NOD represents the defensive extreme of the offence-defence balance. In the framework of offence-defence theory, NOD makes the assumption that defensive weapons are distinguishable from offence, and that defence is the stronger form of war. It dictates a defensive-only posture which removes the possibility that adversaries could perceive one's military as a threat. Therefore, even amid political tensions, NOD could reduce 'risks of mistakes, miscalculation,

misperception and worst-case analysis' associated with traditional, offence-oriented defence mentalities.[6] Finally, and perhaps the most attractive for security studies, NOD 'can be undertaken by any country at any time without risk, without having to wait for others to do the same.'[7]

Therefore, even amid political tensions, NOD could reduce 'risks of mistakes, miscalculation, misperception and worst-case analysis' associated with traditional, offence-oriented defence mentalities.

The inability to conduct offensive operations means states which adopt a NOD posture surrender the option of deterrence-by-punishment. Consequently, the only alternative is deterrence-by-denial. Using this strategy, a state demonstrates the capability to deny an adversary of territory and the associated strategic objectives.[8] The credibility of this deterrence strategy comes first from the questionable assumption of defence superiority. Next, the military posture must be purely defensive yet formidable enough to communicate serious consequences to the would-be attacker. Based on these principles and A. Butfoy's definition, this essay defines NOD as 'a military structure unable to conduct strategic offensives but credible in supporting a deterrence-by-denial strategy.'[9]

In defining NOD, it is also prudent to differentiate it from Non-Threatening Defence (NTD). According to A. Butfoy, NOD is structural in terms of analysing capability, whereas NTD is perceptual, focused on intent. NOD reflects a force unable to conduct offensive operations, while NTD reflects 'defence planning which is not seen as threatening.'[10] The merits and limitations of NTD are beyond the scope of this discussion.

THE LIMITATIONS OF NOD

Challenging Offence – Defence Theory

Since NOD theory builds on offence-defence theory, one must first assume the validity of offence-defence in order to evaluate NOD. However, this is not a foregone conclusion. Offence-defence theory fundamentally relies on the difficult premise of rational actors who would attack only if they held the strategic advantage. The 'expected utility theory,' adopted from economics, proposes that rational actors 'weigh potential risks, costs, and benefits and then make decisions based on that cost-benefit calculus.'[11]

Yet even economists dismiss the theory as inadequate because empirical evidence shows individuals and groups do not always act rationally. Concerning deterrence theory, rational behaviour can vary widely based on psychological, ideological, cultural, religious or domestic factors.[12] Saddam Hussein's Invasion of Kuwait, which made no strategic sense, warns policymakers to consider 'how adversaries may perceive situations fundamentally differently.'[13] Similarly, the gross over-exaggeration of offensive advantage prior to World War I (WWI) highlights the significance and challenges of perception on deterrence.[14]

Defence – Superiority

NOD assumes defence as superior to offence for several reasons, namely geography, technology affecting firepower, and nationalism. Barriers to movement, distance and cover are geographical factors favouring the defence. Attackers have historically been disadvantaged by firepower innovations because they must advance into fortified or concealed defences. Examples of this include machine guns, anti-tank weapons and precision-guided munitions.[15] Finally, defenders may have 'more to fight for, and more to lose,' thus increasing their combat effectiveness.[16]

Critics argue that technology does not always favour the defence. The precision-guided munitions which NOD advocates as champion in cheaply countering offensives were quite effective in destroying the Iraqi military in 1991.[17] Moreover, technological advancements are not limited to firepower. Any development which increase mobility favours the offence.[18]

Defence planners 'prepare for what happens when peace breaks down, or it is not seen as being in the national interest.'[19] Therefore, they must consider

several caveats before accepting an extremely defensive strategy. First, if diplomacy or deterrence fails, a state that is unable to project force beyond its borders means the battlefield will be at home. This perspective could prove problematic for elected officials if the population believes NOD posture places them at greater risk.[20] Second, if defence is indeed the superior form of war, is it also the preferred form? Defensive advantages historically prolong war once it begins. G. H. Quester reasons, 'Peace is preferable to a six-day war; but a six-day war is preferable to a six-year war. If the tank had only been perfected by either side in 1915, a great number of lives might have been saved.'[21] Finally, the lack of offensive capability diminishes the protection of and from allies. World War II (WWII) illustrates how 'the lack of offensive capabilities against Germany enabled Hitler to conquer France's East European allies in a piecemeal manner.'[22]

Defensive Geography

The expectation of denying an adversary territory requires defensible geography. To leverage on the defensive advantages of geography, a state must have most, if not all of: strategic depth, secure borders and barriers to impede movement. Small states such as Singapore or Israel do not have the strategic depth that NOD requires.[23] On the other hand, large states with lots of depth need mobility to move their formations internally. This mobility is a counter to NOD because it means a state is also capable of projecting power beyond its borders. Similarly, secure borders are more conducive to holding territory and thus, are more common in smaller states without the strategic depth.

> First, if diplomacy or deterrence fails, a state that is unable to project force beyond its borders means the battlefield will be at home.

The maritime domain also challenges NOD theory because it lacks the advantages of defensible terrain and maritime assets are hard to definitively categorise as defensive.[24] The full spectrum of maritime operations requires multi-role platforms.[25] In this way, the perception of capability plays a more significant role in assessing the NOD posture of naval forces. Therefore, in places where the maritime domain has great strategic

MINDEF

Republic of Singapore Navy and Royal Thai Navy ships sailing in formation as part of Exercise Singsiam 2018.

The Battle of Golan Heights, 9–10 June, 1967, during the Six Day War.

importance, such as Southeast Asia, NOD strategy faces greater scepticism.

Politics By Other Means

A. Butfoy presents perhaps the simplest and most convincing argument against NOD: 'military planning does not cause war... (because it) reflects politics—not vice versa.'[26] Theorists often justify defensive strategies by blaming the 'cult of the offensive' for the strategic instability which led to WWI. They claim the offensive military doctrines adopted by France, Germany and Russia provided their governments with the bias that offensive solutions were the most effective.[27] However,

A. Butfoy argues otherwise. While he acknowledges that the offensive strategies do not help in destabilising the crisis, he also suggests they 'were created by the political cultures of the time.'[28]

As a less-dated example, D. Fischer uses the Six-Day War as evidence that offensive weapons 'invite war rather than deterring it.'[29] He explains how Egypt's belief that a strong air force increases security brought about the opposite: 'When tensions rose in 1967, Israel felt compelled to destroy the Egyptian Air Force (EAF) in a pre-dawn surprise attack, before it could destroy Israel's Air force (IAF).'[30] Yet he failed to emphasise the key piece of his argument: 'tensions rose.' Attacking the

IAF on the ground was a military objective. Political conflict—going back at least to the 1948 establishment of the Israeli state—invited war, not the perceived offensive posture caused by Egypt's bomber fleets.[31] To be fair, military advantage can make war an attractive solution to political crisis. But Clausewitzian reasoning remains valid nearly 200 years later: 'war as policy by other means (implies) that military force should be understood in the context of the purposes it serves.'[32]

> But Clausewitzian reasoning remains valid nearly 200 years later: 'war as policy by other means (implies) that military force should be understood in the context of the purposes it serves.'

EXAMINING THE NOD SUCCESS STORIES: NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY AND SWITZERLAND

Having discussed NOD's limitations, an analysis of living examples of NOD serves to evaluate how its theory translates into practice. Three states commonly cited as NOD success stories are New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland. First, Jane's data suggests each country's force structure lacks the offensive capabilities which NOD proponents suggest eliminating or minimising: mobility, attack, long-range strike, armour and landing craft.[33] Second, the credibility of each country's ability to deter-by-denial is examined to determine NOD's role in promoting peace.

Offensive Military Capabilities

According to Jane's World Armies, Norway and Switzerland each operate variants of the Leopard 2 Main Battle Tank (MBT).[34] They have 54 and 134 MBTs estimated in service, respectively.[35] Some NOD advocates suggest that a purely defensive posture should be absent of tanks, which is true for New Zealand. However, conservative assessors should reason that the size of these armour formations are insufficient for employing successful offensive operations beyond these countries' borders.

As for air forces, Jane's World Air Forces indicates the 3 countries have no bomber or tanker aircraft, and only a small number of transport aircraft. New Zealand has zero combat aircraft, five C-130s, and two Boeing 757 transport aircraft. Norway has 55 F-16s, four F-35s, and four C-130s. Switzerland has 31 F/A-18s, five F-5

Wikipedia/US DOD

The North Atlantic Council convened in 2010 with a defence/foreign minister configuration.

fighter aircraft and 19 light transport aircraft. The types and quantities of aircraft in each country meet a strict NOD posture.[36]

The difficulty in differentiating naval offensive from defensive assets was previously discussed. Land-locked Switzerland poses no threat at all. Neither of the other countries have aircraft carriers. New Zealand poses little threat, if any, with only six patrol vessels and two frigates.[37] Norway has six attack submarines, five frigates, and six corvettes. The ambiguity of these platforms' offensive capabilities makes it difficult to confidently accept Norway's naval posture as NOD. Additionally, similar to tanks, proponents of strict NOD posture might consider landing craft beyond the need for defensive operations. No rational state, however, is likely to find Norway's 16 landing craft provocative.

Are NOD Postures Working?

By a pragmatic view of force structure, New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland all have NOD postures. But can we be sure these countries' force postures actually reduce threats and enhance peace? Before attempting to export NOD elsewhere, prudence dictates such an analysis.

In the case of New Zealand, its military does not seem credible in denying an adversary of territory. As mentioned above, they have no fighters, submarines, tanks, and have only two frigates and six patrol vessels. Additionally, they only have 74 artillery pieces, hardly enough to adequately defend over 268,000 square kilometres of land and over 15,000 kilometres of coastline.[38] New Zealand is unlikely to reduce or increase others' perceptions of security with any significant change in their military posture. Therefore, other factors, not its NOD posture, are actively maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Norway's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) membership makes it a questionable case for NOD. Are would-be-adversaries deterred by the threat of territorial denial, or by the invocation of NATO Article Five? With respect to NOD, collective defence can be problematic for two reasons. First, defensive alliances must be perceived as such, despite the traditional view that alliances create opposing alliances and are thus destabilising.[39] Second, defensive alliances require the kind of mobility which NOD seeks to eliminate. Fixed defences do little good in delivering the kind of mutual aid in such arrangements. Given the hegemony of the United States (US) and us-versus-them mindset of collective defence, it appears Norway's NATO membership allows its defensive posture, not any credible territorial defence strategy.

Switzerland makes the best case for practical application of NOD. In addition to neutrality under international law, the 'Swiss system… connotes deterrence-by-denial… in that it attempts to deter attack by setting a high price for invasion.'[40] Switzerland leverages on defensive advantages in its alpine terrain and nationalism. Swiss deterrence-by-denial diverges somewhat from NOD's aim to deny territory. Rather, its strategy involves ceding territory, destroying its own critical infrastructure, and having its trained citizens conduct guerrilla warfare and resistance operations.[41] In this way, their strategy is compatible with NOD since it deters an invader through the threat of denying key strategic objectives. Since it is hard to prove why something did not happen, it is hard to know if Switzerland's defence strategy deterred German invasion in WWII, rather than its neutral banking system or lack of raw materials.[42] Still, the Swiss defence strategy seems credible in convincing an adversary it would be better if left alone.

As this section discussed, despite New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland NOD force structures, only Switzerland seems to have the credibility to support a deterrence-by-denial strategy. This analysis should also highlight the difficulty of NOD in practice, given its lack of success among the European states for which it was designed. While the cases of New Zealand and Norway offer points of study, they appear to be less of a success story than situations to which seem to heed NOD requirements. In this way, much of NOD debate seems to be 'a cure in search of a disease.'[43] If Switzerland is indeed an actual example of NOD, it represents just one state in the world. As such, NOD has little utility in security studies.

Looking Deeper Into Switzerland's Defence Strategy

Since Switzerland seems to be the best example of NOD in practice, a more in-depth analysis of their military strategy informs policymakers of the risks they

must accept in following suit. Traditional Swiss deterrence-by-denial strategy included preparations for infrastructure destruction and civil and military resistance.[44] The Swiss prepared infrastructure for demolition by integrating explosives in construction or storing them in nearby caches.[45] Implementing this approach today could be difficult for public assurance and costs of security in the face of transnational terrorism.

Military and civil resistance operations require strong public support which Switzerland's homogenous society allows. 'Most Swiss men are reservists who, under the Swiss militia system, are required to keep their military-issue gear at home, including their rifle.'[46] Popular governments can arm and organise their citizens without risking uprisings.[47] As a caution, it is important also to note this strategy in WWII presented a degree of the security dilemma. Some viewed the rallying of the Swiss population to prepare for resistance operations as outwardly provocative towards Germany.[48]

In contrast, states without strong institutions and governance may find the Swiss resistance strategy incompatible with national security interests. Such a strategy can create conditions which are conducive to revolution. The disintegration of Yugoslavia warns against the dangers of adopting NOD in weak states. Formerly cited as an example of a working NOD policy, the Yugoslav Army's non-offensive structure nonetheless proved 'excellent for fighting an internal war.'[49] Yugoslavia illustrates both the inability for NOD to prevent internal war and the trouble weak states could face in suppressing independence movements.

Beyond civil war, Yugoslavia also depicts 'the terrible costs that territorial defence inflicts on the defenders'.[50]

CONCLUSION

Offence-defence theory is contentious since it relies on the difficult assumption of the rational actor. Even so, looking for ways to shift the offence-defence balance towards defence is praiseworthy since such measures, even if unsuccessful, are unlikely to worsen the security dilemma. However, NOD represents an impractical extreme of the offence-defence balance and has little, if any, viability for national security strategy. NOD theory incorrectly assumes that defence is always superior to offence and exaggerates the importance of military planning over geopolitical affairs. It also requires defensible geography, which negates small states as well as large states which require internal mobility. Furthermore, NOD theory is inconclusive about the ambiguity of maritime capabilities and collective defence.

The conditions required for a complete NOD posture are too limited for a realistic application to national security strategy. A brief analysis of New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland showed that Switzerland seemed to be the only real example of successful NOD in practice. Though each state's force structure meets NOD posture, only Switzerland is capable of sustaining a deterrence-by-denial strategy, a requirement based on this essay's definition of NOD. If NOD only works for one state with very specific geography, neutrality, and homogeneity, it has little value in the field of security policy. National security strategists must look elsewhere for solutions to their security dilemma.

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AIRPOWER—A UNIVERSAL SOLVENT OF MODERN WAR OR AN ALL-PURPOSE GLUE THAT MAKES COMBINED ARMED OPERATIONS POSSIBLE?

by **ME6(DR) Reuben Lim Chi Keong**

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the author explores the idea that airpower should not be viewed as polar states of 'universal solvent' versus 'multi-purpose glue', but rather a continuum that spans both and the proportion of each is dependent on the context of the employment. When operating as combined arms in joint operations, airpower plays important roles, not just for kinetic effects by agile precision firepower but in a wide range of non-kinetic ones as well. In irregular war, it is clear that land power has a dominant role in being 'up close and personal' to both the insurgents and the civilian population in shaping political outcomes. Nonetheless, the author feels that airpower is a key enabler for Counter-Insurgency (COIN) and Counter-Terrorism (CT) efforts by creating favourable conditions amidst 'malleable and complex' situations. With the growth of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) and its developments in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and autonomous vehicles, the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres are being blurred. As technology advances in accuracy and autonomy of drones and munitions, geographical limitations by each service is reducing. The conventional equipment, doctrines and mind set of the services may become irrelevant as technology dominates the outcome in war. The author concludes that in the end, technology may well be the 'universal solvent' that dissolves the relevance of land, sea and airpower as separate entities.

Keywords: *Airpower; Operation; War; Strategic; Enabler*

INTRODUCTION

The above thematic statement describes the utility of airpower in war and several claims can be inferred from the dissection of this statement. To begin with, the figurative analogy of a 'universal solvent' gives an imagery of airpower's dominance in war. It implies that airpower is single-handedly decisive in achieving victory in war, independent of land and sea power by delivering a 'clean slate' or the destruction of the adversary and is capable of 'dissolving' or overcoming all type of challenges. In contrast, the analogy of the 'all-purpose glue' portrays airpower as a multi-faceted enabler.

It can flexibly support land and sea power to perform a wide spectrum of combined arms operations. The subtle pairing of 'universal solvent' with 'modern war', and 'all-purpose glue' with 'combined arms operations' is not lost. It hints that airpower itself is an instrument for war at the strategic level but functions as an operational or tactical tool when used in combined arms. This suggests that airpower is somewhat subordinate to surface powers as it is the 'glue' and not the decisive apparatus in operation.

These inferred claims on the utility and effectiveness of airpower however are not new and has been contested since aircraft was used in the Italo-Turkish War in 1911.[1] The contestation of such claims by airpower theorists and military leaders alike is not

A suite of precision munitions is being utilised at Exercise Forging Sabre 2019, including the GBU-10 and GBU-12 Laser Guided Bombs, and the GBU-54 Laser Joint Direct Attack Munition.

purely academic as it plays an important role in rationalising the place of airpower within a nation's military.

As aptly phrased by renowned strategic thinker, Colin Gray, should airpower be 'in' the national military team or is it 'the' national military?[2] Based on the inferred claims, the thesis of the statement is that airpower should not be the sole military instrument but as a team player in the conduct of joint warfare. In this light, this essay discusses the validity of the thesis by examining the truth or fallacies of the inferred claims based on their contribution in modern war.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AIRPOWER AND THE CONTEXT OF MODERN WAR

When Sir Hugh Trenchard said, 'I believe the air is one and indivisible', he infers that the air domain has no boundaries above the other two geographies and provides access to anywhere on earth.[3] Operating in this domain, aircrafts are endowed with range, speed, elevation and mobility. These attributes yield capabilities unique to airpower in the conduct of war. Mobility allows projection of force, troops, equipment and supplies rapidly and globally. Elevation gives high situational awareness and surveillance to influence

ground activities through direct application of force from the air. Speed and range allows airpower to rapidly mass at a selected time and place to concentrate firepower for higher lethality.[4] The advancement of Command, Control, Communications, Computers (C4) Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) (C4ISR), Stealth, Precision-Guided Munition (PGM) technologies further increases the effectiveness of these capabilities to dominate the battles in all domains of land, sea and air.[5] Airpower is not without limitations though. Unlike land and sea power, aircraft could not remain in their domain indefinitely and must land to refuel and rearm. This limits the persistence which airpower has and its reliance on surface infrastructures. Lastly, airpower is limited by weather, though this has been mitigated somewhat by technology.[6] The capabilities of airpower, however impressive, must have strategic value for it to be useful as 'war is an instrument of policy.'[7]

Notably, the capabilities have to translate to strategic value on land as people ultimately live on land and conduct political struggles on it.[8] In this light, strategy theorist Colin Gray revised Billy Mitchell's definition of airpower to be 'the ability to do something (strategically useful) in the air.'[9] Gray's nuance is

noteworthy as it focuses on the value of airpower activities in war rather than the capabilities itself. In this essay, the contribution by airpower in war at the operational and tactical level is explored as well.

The capabilities of airpower, however impressive, must have strategic value for it to be useful as 'war is an instrument of policy'.

Gray further emphasises that 'Context Rules!' as the value of airpower is meaningless without first looking at the context of modern war that it is used in.[10] Since the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century, the paradigm of war is that of the 'Interstate Industrial War.'[11] It is characterised by conflicts between states and involves mass manoeuvre of forces. Both World War I (WWI), World War II (WWII), and the Persian Gulf War are typical examples of interstate wars.[12] Following the 1990s, the wars occurring has changed its face and are being replaced by irregular wars.[13] Sir Rupert Smith famously described it as the 'war amongst the people' where conflicts between states has changed to confrontation between states and non-state actors.[14] Soldiers have to confront insurgents, terrorists and guerrilla fighters who literally fight 'amongst the people'. Instead of a decisive war, there is a protracted conflict of varying intensity as the irregular forces seeks to attrite their adversary and erode their will. Most notably, the military instrument of airpower is no longer decisive but serves to create favourable conditions in 'malleable and complex' situations relative to the adversary.[15] The 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq, are such 'war amongst the people' in recent times. Despite the paradigm shift, interstate wars remains very much relevant as the military remains a tool for states to advance and defend their interests.[16]

'UNIVERSAL SOLVENT': THE PROMISE OF STRATEGIC AIRPOWER

Reaching back to Clausewitz, 'war is an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfil our will.'[17] In interstate industrial war, polities direct the military from capital cities and sustain them with their industry,

resources and the general populace as described by the Clausewitzian trinity.[18] The cities, industries and people are 'Centre(s)-of-Gravity' (CoG) typically situated well behind the borders and heavily defended. Before the age of airpower, the army has to fight tactically to advance in the frontline with the operational goal of breaking into the vital interior to yield the strategic effect of compelling the adversary.[19] The prolonged war of attrition fought in the trenches of WWI exemplifies this.[20] As a surface force, the Navy is subjected to similar limitations as amphibious assaults are still tactical fights while blockade of Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) to cripple the enemy economically takes too long and are seldom successful.[21] Airpower changed this paradigm when Giulio Douhet first theorised 'strategic airpower' where aircraft is used for bombardment of the enemy's population centres to break their will to fight.[22] By compressing the line between the strategic and tactical levels, air bombardment allows the war to be decisively concluded in shorter duration, which is highly desirable as it reduces losses in both materiel and bloodshed.[23] In the 1930s, Billy Mitchell extended the theory to strategic bombing of key nodes in the enemy's industrial web to cripple their ability to wage war.[24] More recently, John Warden's 'Five Ring' model emphasises the targeting of the adversary's leadership and essential systems to impose command paralysis upon them.[25] Albeit the variants in targets, the fundamental concept behind these theories is that airpower is able to reach and strike the adversary's CoG directly by bypassing the enemy's hard military defence. In this light, the strategic airpower theory embodies the inferred claims of 'universal solvent' where airpower alone can overcome all obstacles to deliver decisive strategic success through the destruction of the adversary.

The theory of strategic airpower however, proved to be as volatile as the solvent in the analogy. The theory was heavily adopted in WWII where intensive bombing campaigns were used in German and Japanese cities to raze the transport, communications nodes and military industrial complexes.[26] Tactically, the practice of high-altitude daylight precision bombing,

necessitated by the need to acquire targets while avoiding ground-based air-defences, was anything but precise. Ironically, strategic bombing became a war of attrition as huge fleets were employed to compensate for precision with mass bombardment at high loss rates.[27] More importantly, the civilian population proved resilient to the strategic intent when national survival is at stake and their economies also proved to be resilient. The resilience of the population against bombardment will again be proven in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.[28] The weakness of inaccuracy and vulnerability to air defences was largely overcome during the Persian Gulf War in the 1990s. Advances in technologies in communications and reconnaissance satellites allowed near real-time command and control and highly accurate intelligence. Together with advancement in stand-off precision munitions and stealth, the cost of collateral damage and risks to combatants has further reduced significantly.[29] This is seen in the success of Operation Desert Storm where allied airpower established air dominance and neutralised the Iraqi warfighting capability to naught within 100 hours.[30] While this seems to redeem the strategic airpower theory, it should be noted that allied ground forces are still required to eliminate dug-in defensive positions held by the Iraqis which were resilient to airpower.[31] At the operational level, airpower is able to prevent the adversary from exercising their will, but it is unable to secure contested territories, nor police the surrender for strategic effect.

As concluded by Colin Powell, 'airpower will be overwhelming in every war, but it's the infantry man who have to raise the flag of victory.'[32] Arguably, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) air campaign against Serbia over Kosovo in 1999 was the closest in which airpower alone was single-handedly decisive in achieving the political intent. Nonetheless, the threat of an imminent ground invasion was controversially the cause of capitulation by Milosevic.[33] Strategic airpower thus can play a very dominant role in conventional war, but it is not single-handedly decisive as the right conditions for coercion alone to work is difficult to achieve.[34]

At the operational level, airpower is able to prevent the adversary from exercising their will, but it is unable to secure contested territories, nor police the surrender for strategic effect.

While airpower alone is at best strategically important but not decisive in conventional interstate war, its performance in irregular war is decidedly worse off. In irregular wars, the strategic airpower theory is

Yugoslav Anti-Aircraft fire at night.

Wikipedia/Darko Dozet

categorically made irrelevant due to asymmetric warfare. To begin with, insurgents and terrorists negate the lethality of air bombardment by blending into the civilian population or entrenching themselves in terrain that provides for natural defence.[35]

They do not have a defined CoG for airstrikes to target effectively as they operate in small cells that are too small and dispersed.[36] In the clash of wills, Douhetian's approach to targeting the civilian backfires in drumming support against the insurgents, but instead increases hostility towards government forces.[37] Furthermore, coercion by airpower has little effect against a terrorist who is prepared to be a martyr. In addition, with the growth of media reports, politicians will even limit the ability of airpower, so as to avoid international outcry against civilian collateral damage and not to be seen as the 'bully' against the 'hapless' insurgents.[38] Lastly, the conditions for victory is ill-defined as the insurgents wins simply by not losing.[39]

These constraints of strategic airpower in irregular wars can be seen from the Second Lebanon War in 2006. In the conflict against the Hezbollah, the Israel Defence Force (IDF) relied solely on strategic bombing, with the Israeli Air Force (IAF) given command of the operational theatre for the first time.[40] The IDF's objective was to disarm Hezbollah and to pressure the Lebanese government to curb the Hezbollah. Israeli's airpower was able to destroy a significant amount of Hezbollah's medium range missile, the Hezbollah headquarters and the communication node. However, they were unable to eradicate the thousands of small and concealed short-range rockets which were launched into cities in northern Israel.[41] Notably, the Hezbollah has built fortified positions against bombardment and they have a network of underground tunnels through which they were re-supplied by Syria and Iran.[42] The over-reliant use of Precision Guided-Munitions (PGMs) emboldened air planners to strike missile sites situated near civilian buildings, one of which resulted in 50
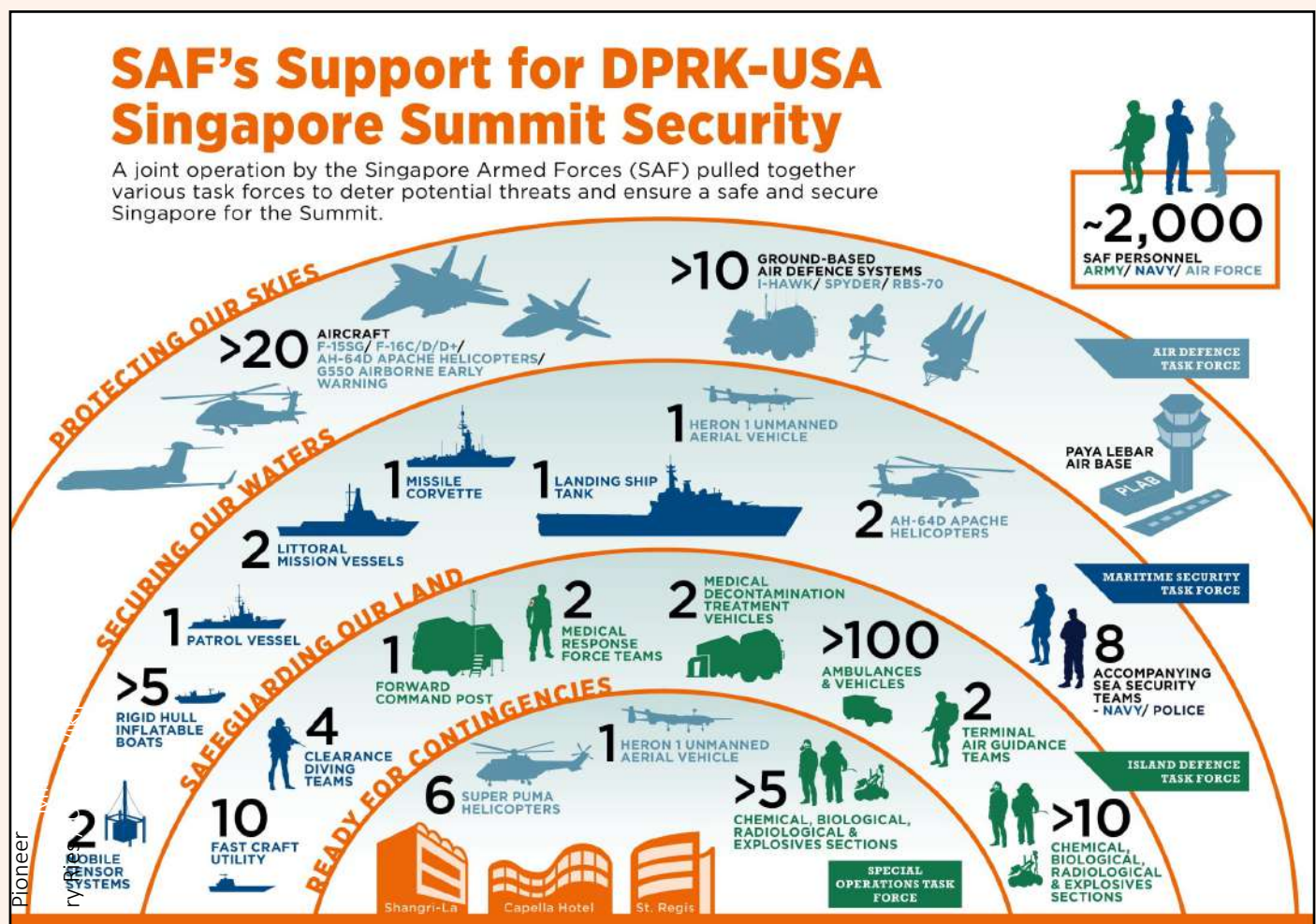

Wikipedia/Henry Ries / USAF

Berliners watching a C-54 land at Berlin Tempelhof Airport, 1948.

civilian deaths. The collateral damage took its toll as international communities condemned the attack. As the war dragged on with increased rocket attacks, Israel realised that air power alone could not provide a decisive victory and they sent troops into southern Lebanon to secure territory before defining that event as a military victory.[43] At the point of ceasefire, the victory claimed by the IDF was not well-received by even their own public as the perception that lingered was that Hezbollah had succeeded by surviving the IDF's offensive.[44] The strategic airpower 'war on terror' in the Second Lebanon War is not without its silver lining as a weaponised drone was apparently used for the first time in that conflict and has grown ever since.[45] The development of such weaponised drones has somewhat overcome the persistence limitation and allows prolonged surveillance of insurgent activities. Coupled with higher accuracy of PGM, smaller ordnances can be used to reduce collateral damage.[46] True to the Warden approach, United States (US) drone strikes have reportedly been used in targeting terrorist leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2004.[47] The strategic

effect of such drones in being decisive however remains to be seen against a backdrop of debates on the legality, morality and ethics of drone killings.[48]

'THE UNIVERSAL GLUE': ENABLER AND ENABLED FOR FULL SPECTRUM OPERATIONS

When aircraft was first used in the Italo-Turkish War in 1911, its first role was reconnaissance to spot targets for land artillery and the first bomb was dropped in the following year.[49] Such a support role by airpower in the operational theatre continued to grow in wider applications. The 'multi-purpose glue' analogy is apt here in describing the indispensable role airpower plays in enabling ground forces to perform a full spectrum of operations in modern warfare. In both conventional and irregular war, the key enabler for airpower in combined arms is in its mobility and power projection to create favourable conditions for surface combatants in both kinetic and non-kinetic applications.[50] To begin with a quote from Air Marshal Arthur Tedder, 'Air superiority is a condition for all operations, at sea, in land, and in the

The Singapore Armed Forces working as a whole to ensure smooth success of the Trump-Kim summit in 2018.

air.'[51] The condition for air superiority is first sought in any battle as it enables friendly forces on land and sea to conduct any of their operations without harassment by enemy air forces. Airpower compensates for the limitation of speed through the mobility of surface forces by enhancing their reach and firepower through close air support and interdiction to impede enemy's troop movement.

Such close tactical co-operation was already practised in WWII where German armour and mechanised troops was supported by the Luftwaffe to great effect in their 'Blitzkrieg' across Europe.[52] With its speed, range and firepower, airpower has a shorter Observe, Orientate, Decide, Act (OODA) cycle which allows it to flexibly hit targets across the battlefield as required by ground commanders.[53] This is a force multiplier as different aircrafts can perform various missions within the operational theatre and mass together rapidly to concentrate firepower when required. Underpinning such air-land integration operations is the control and communication network which allows the complex co-ordination between the different war fighters. In non-kinetic support, airpower's roles are essentially in surveillance, intelligence gather and airlift; both logistics and medical evacuation. The most strategic airlift operation occurred in West Berlin in 1948 after the Soviet blockaded all surface access in an attempt to cripple the country. In staunched support, the US deployed a massive operation and airdropped food, medicine and other essential supplies to not just the US forces based within Berlin, but to the civilian population as well for over 10 months.[54] This prevented the coercion of the city by the Soviets and the city remained free. More unique to irregular war, NATO's airlift platforms were instrumental in enabling disaster relief and humanitarian support operations in the aftermath of the 2010 avalanche in northern Afghanistan in support of the federal government. This airlift capability was even used in support of distribution and collection of election boxes in September of the same year.[55] Airpower thus can indirectly contribute towards the political intent of stabilising a country.

The overall effectiveness of airpower as an enabler of combined arms in irregular war can be seen in the 2008 Gaza War where the IDF saw more success after learning the lessons from the 2nd Lebanon war. In the Gaza conflict, the IDF deployed ground forces that had organic attack helicopters and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for close air support while strike aircraft was on standby for air interdiction when required.[56] In doing so, assets suitable for immediate tactical fights are directly controlled by the ground commander while the IAF retained control over deep strike capabilities to hit targets of higher strategic value deep into the Hamas' territories. Notably, IAF advisors are attached to ground commanders to provide a good understanding of air operations and allowed for more synergy in integrated operations.[57] Such joint operations also included the Israeli Navy, which supported the campaign by blockading the coast of Gaza and co-ordinated attacks with naval standoff weapons.[58] In the non-kinetic front, the IAF flew over Gaza and distributed leaflets as part of an information campaign to issue warnings to civilians, with the larger intent of shaping international perception and denying Hamas the narrative of being the 'victim' in the conflict. Towards the end, the air campaign was even preceded with 'sound bombs' to scare civilians away from targeted areas without causing damage.[59]

> Airpower compensates for the limitation of speed through the mobility of surface forces by enhancing their reach and firepower through close air support and interdiction to impede enemy's troop movement.

Airpower's flexibility allows it to be an enabler in a wide spectrum of operation. However, this does not necessarily imply a subordinate role. The narrative of airpower being subordinate to surface powers can be attributed to its late entry in military history. In its infancy, airpower has often been relegated to subordinate roles in close surface battles that does not

maximise the potential of airpower or worse, misuse.[60] This is often lamented by pioneering airpower advocates who push for the air force to be established as an independent service and there is sound rationale for it.[61] Notably, battles are fought on three distinct geographies: land, sea and air. To operate in these geographies requires unique equipment, doctrine, training and mind set, and it is for these reasons that the Army, Navy and Air Force are established as separate services.[62] It should be noted that despite the concerted development of each service, there will still be inherent limitations that technology and doctrine cannot overcome—airpower's limited persistence, sea power's limited reach onto land and land power's limited range and speed are some examples. Although there are three geographies, there is only one war. As such, the solution to overcome the limitations is to work jointly as combined arms to minimise weakness and exploit strength towards the strategic outcome of the war.[63] More importantly, joint warfighting integrates unique capabilities of each service synergistically such that the resultant capability is greater than the sum of its parts.[64] It is thus erroneous to view airpower solely as an enabler as it is also enabled by surface powers. The extent of each service depends on the context of its employment. In the operational theatre of the Pacific in WWII, the US Twentieth Air Force was able to incinerate Japanese cities only because the US Navy (USN), Marine Corps (USMC), and Army had leapfrogged their way across the Pacific islands and succeeded in seizing the Mariana Islands, from which airpower can be projected. In those island campaigns, amphibious landings were supported by airpower which was in turn supported by naval aircraft carriers.[65] Each thus played a role in enabling and being enabled in the operational theatre. At the tactical level, the same symbiotic relationship could be seen as well. Airpower would force the enemy to disperse, but was unable to target them individually. Ground forces, however, had the advantage in confronting a dispersed enemy which obliged them to

mass together to fight as a unit. This 'hammer and anvil' effect caused a conundrum faced by the enemy as they then revealed themselves as targets for airpower and this made combined arms operations much more lethal.[66] Such tactics had been commonly adopted in conventional war, but had also seen success in flushing and cornering insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan.[67]

CONCLUSION

From this study, airpower should not be viewed as polar states of 'universal solvent' versus 'multi-purpose glue', but rather a continuum that spans both and the proportion of each dependent on the context of the employment. In conventional war, airpower is not single-handedly decisive in delivering victory, but superior airpower often does decide which belligerent will win.[68] When operating as combined arms in joint operations, airpower plays important roles, not just for kinetic effects by agile precision firepower but in a wide range of non-kinetic ones as well. In irregular war, it is clear that land power has a dominant role in being 'up close and personal' to both the insurgents and the civilian population in shaping political outcomes. Nonetheless, airpower is a key enabler for COIN and CT efforts by creating favourable conditions amidst 'malleable and complex' situations. Lastly, airpower should be 'on' and not 'the' national military instrument as warfare is a team effort. Looking forward, the 4IR is sweeping the world with advancements in ICT and autonomous vehicles, especially in a fusion of technologies that is 'blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres.'[69] As technology pushes forward in accuracy and autonomy of drones and munitions, geographical limitations by each service is reducing. The conventional equipment, doctrines and mind set of the services may become irrelevant as technology dominates the outcome in war. Towards this end, technology may well be the 'universal solvent' that dissolves the relevance of land, sea and airpower as separate entities.

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TIME — AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT FOR A SUCCESSFUL INSURGENT CAMPAIGN?

by **MAJ Tan Lih Soon**

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the author explores time as an importance element of a successful insurgent campaign. He emphasises that time is the most important factor in determining insurgency victories, but, only when viewed as an interaction between 'duration' and 'timeliness', and as an opportunity-maker for other factors contributing to successful insurgencies. In the essay, he first defines the key terms: 'Insurgency', 'Duration', and 'Timeliness', and elaborates on the various factors for successful Insurgencies. Using the Chinese Communist Revolution as a case study of a successful insurgency, the author then examines how time—in terms of duration and timeliness-enabled the critical factors to be achieved to allow the Communist Party of China (CPC) to accomplish its goal. To provide a holistic discussion, the author also discusses the Malayan Emergency to determine how duration and timeliness, or the absence of it, had contributed to the failure of the insurgents. The author concludes by highlighting how time remains the most important element to an insurgency campaign despite the different environments today.

Keywords: *Insurgency; Duration; Timeliness; Space; Legitimacy; Support*

INTRODUCTION

In *On Protracted War*, Mao Zedong's philosophy was simple: 'bid your time when militarily overwhelmed.'[1] Placing emphasis on delaying the enemies' victory by any means necessary—including ceding territory temporarily—Mao focused on prolonging the war to gain the necessary resources to eventually mount a conventional assault on his countrymen's belligerents.[2] While the lectures were delivered during the Japanese occupation, Mao's philosophy proved to be a successful strategy for several insurgencies, including the Chinese Communist Revolution in China, which resulted in the victory of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the downfall of the ruling Kuomingtang (KMT) as well as the Viet Cong's victory over the technologically-superior United States (US) and South Vietnamese forces.[3]

In other words, the lack of time would provide the insurgents with lesser opportunities to gain influence and foothold to launch what Mao termed as the 'People's War.'[4] In the Malayan Emergency, for example, quick reactions by the British stemmed the communist threat early in their campaign, thus enshrining it as a model example of a successful

counterinsurgency campaign (COIN). However, the emergency did span more than a decade. Why, then, was this particular insurgency a failure after a decade? Were there other factors, beyond time, that contributed to the failure of the insurgency?

Given the above reasoning and the differing context to the various insurgencies, it is tempting to conclude that time may simply be an auxiliary factor when determining the success of insurgencies. However, this essay posits that time is the most important factor in determining insurgency victories, but only when it's viewed as an interaction between 'duration' and 'timeliness', and as an opportunity-maker for other factors contributing to successful insurgencies. In other words, despite initial weaknesses in insurgencies, duration and timeliness together can allow these shortcomings to be overcome—and without time, the weaknesses will prove to be the Achilles' heel of the insurgency.

This essay first defines the key terms, namely 'Insurgency', 'Duration', and 'Timeliness', and elaborates on the 'Critical factors for Successful Insurgencies'. Using the Chinese Communist Revolution as a case study of a successful insurgency, the essay will

highlight how time—in terms of duration and timeliness—enabled the critical factors to be achieved to allow the CPC to accomplish its goal. To provide a holistic discussion, the Malayan Emergency will also be examined to determine how duration and timeliness, or the absence of it, had contributed to the failure of the insurgents. The essay will conclude by highlighting how time remains the most important element to an insurgency campaign despite the different environment today.

Despite initial weaknesses in insurgencies, duration and timeliness together can allow these shortcomings to be overcome—and without time, the weaknesses will prove to be the Achilles' heel of the insurgency.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

To lay the foundation for the ensuing discussion, this section will define the key terms that form the basis of the essay, namely 'Insurgency', 'Duration', and 'Timeliness'.

Insurgency

In this essay, insurgency is defined as 'a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities, in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g., organisational expertise, propaganda and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate or sustain the basis of one or more aspects of politics.'[5]

While insurgencies are sometimes simply defined as 'an armed revolution against the established political order,' the lack of focus on 'armed conflict' must be highlighted.[6] Insurgencies are not simply conventional wars between revolutionaries and the ruling political entity or else, 'Being Strong' will always be the best strategy to defeat insurgencies.[7] Examples such as the

Chinese Communist revolutionaries in the 1920s.

Chinese Communist Revolution have demonstrated that military might is not the most important factor in determining the success or failure of insurgencies. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that insurgencies represent a contest for political power through any means necessary—be it propaganda, terrorism, or even the development of alternative political institutions.

Duration

Duration refers to the length of time in which an insurgency is on-going, from the first action that the ruling authority takes to: 1) defeat the insurgents, either through the complete elimination of the insurgent's organisation and leadership or, by reducing their political power such that they hold little to no sway over the population; or 2) defeat the ruling political entity, with the insurgents being successful and thus taking over as the new ruling body of the sovereign entity.

Timeliness

Timeliness refers to how opportune strategic decisions are made, which then results in the success, or significantly improves the odds of victory for an insurgency. Timeliness is especially important when the critical factors of an insurgency are met. If no action is taken, the insurgents could lose their temporal advantage which could eventually erode in a protracted conflict, consequently leading to their downfall.

CRITICAL FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL INSURGENCIES

When is it timely for insurgencies to move towards the next step, then? Mao put forth the three phases for successful insurgencies.[8] First is the build-up phase where insurgents are outmatched by the enemy. In this phase, a head-on conflict against the ruling authority would definitely result in the failure of the insurgents. Rather, the insurgent should identify safe havens to blend into the civilians' environment and conduct guerrilla warfare to wear the enemy down. The insurgents should pick battles that are guaranteed to succeed, cede territory as required to preserve precious resources, and gradually involve the populace in a 'people's war' against the authorities, by invoking their sense of shared dissent.

The second phase is where the insurgents and the authorities are similarly matched in political sway and power. In this phase, the insurgents focus further on moving towards a 'people's war' via methods such as propaganda. Labelled as 'legitimacy' by some scholars, this phase serves to create the popular support for the insurgency, thus, tipping the political power wielded by the insurgents past the control that the authorities held over its populace.[9]

Finally, the third phase is the culmination to a conventional war. At this point, the enemy should be worn down, and is, thus, qualitatively and quantitatively weaker as compared to the insurgents.[10] The insurgents can, thus, conduct an all-out conventional war to secure a quick and decisive victory.

Through these phases, we see three key factors for success—'Space', 'Legitimacy', and 'Support' of the people. 'Space', which refers to geographical terrain, is extremely important for the insurgents as it allows them to manoeuvre and avoid being forced to make a last stand with the more-formidable adversary. 'Space' will also include safe haven in the midst of the populace.[11] As highlighted earlier, 'Space' allows the insurgents to regroup and wait out for another opportunity to strike. In Katzenbach and Hanrahan, Mao was quoted to have famously said how his forces had 'retreated in space but advanced in time.'[12]

'Legitimacy' and 'Support' of the people are interwoven. Insurgency is after all a political competition for legitimacy and the key to it is to gain populace recognition of the insurgents' cause. The recognition will also lead to the support of the populace, which can come in the form of logistical aids or they could join in as combatants, which would, nonetheless, strengthen the political power of the insurgents.[13]

Through these phases, we see three key factors for success— 'Space', 'Legitimacy', and 'Support' of the people

Notwithstanding, time—in terms of duration and timeliness—remains the most important element. Duration provides opportunities to build legitimacy via propaganda and reputation, and thus support from the people to effectively fight a 'people's war', while timeliness ensures that the insurgents maintain their comparative advantage, through prompt and appropriate actions throughout the three different phases of insurgencies as outlined by Mao.[14]

For the purpose of the essay, it is also important to highlight, at this juncture, that the lack of any of the three critical factors, articulated above, constitutes weakness in an insurgency.

With the key definitions and factors outlined, the essay will go on to explore time's role in the success— and failure—of insurgencies, using the Chinese Communist Revolution and the Malayan Emergency, as case studies.

SUCCESSFUL INSURGENCY — THE CHINESE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

The Chinese Civil War between Mao's CPC and Chiang Kai-Shek's KMT, with the Japanese Occupation as an intermission, is a prime example of an insurgency that succeeded because of space, legitimacy, and support that are enabled by duration and timeliness.

Space

The general strategy of the CPC was to avoid head-on confrontations at all cost, and this strategy required the insurgents to be willing to cede territory to their enemies when the situation went disarray. The most striking example is the *Long March or* termed by Anthony James Joes as the 'Long Retreat'.[15] In the face of having a much smaller force and possible defeat, following Chiang's strategy to strangle the CPC's communication and supply lines, Mao's decision to relocate its primary base of operations from Kiangsi to Shensi, and cede their central base of operations to the KMT, is the epitome of the strategic use of 'space'.[16] In Mao's terms, ceding territory was temporary. Mao was confident that his work in that territory had won the hearts and minds of the people. Thus, KMT had only gained physical ground but not the critical support.[17]

Legitimacy and Support

Mao understood the importance of popular support to legitimatise the CPC's climb to power. He also knew that the peasants had previously been ill-treated by KMT troops (who had become corrupted, ill-disciplined and low on morale after years of fighting the Japanese) and generally expressed disdain towards soldiers.[18] As such, Mao sought to differentiate CPC

Wikipedia

A CPC cadre leader addressing survivors of the Long March.

soldiers by regulating their behaviour and actions. He implemented the 'Three Rules of Discipline' and 'Eight Points of Attention', in 1957, to uphold the stature of the Red Army soldiers, thus, helping them to gain the support in villages that they often depended on for cover, food and sustenance.

Mao's effort in winning the 'Hearts and Minds' was extended to the counter insurgents as well. The captured adversary soldiers were treated humanely and many were even released to help convey CPC's graciousness and the Red Army's honourable acts to the public. KMT forces felt compelled to grant support to Mao upon surrender.[19] In fact, many would-be prisoners of war (POW) converted to the CPC's side. This act of benevolence allowed CPC to build up its reputation and legitimacy as a credible entity to govern China.

Duration

The achievement of the success factors did not happen overnight. Mao had been working on building popular support across decades—bidding his time for the perfect opportunity to strike. The *Long March* was evidence of his willingness to fight a protracted war.

Even through the Japanese Occupation, Mao was focused on fighting his true adversary—the KMT.[20] The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) had even remarked that they faced no real threat from the CPC, simply because the CPC allowed the IJA to gain territory with the belief that the Japanese Occupation would be temporary.[21]

The prolonged war allowed Mao's forces to slowly win the hearts and minds of the peasantry—using time to show that the Red Army was trustworthy, reliable, and above all, worthy to rule China as compared to the corrupt KMT. In essence, duration had helped to mature the conditions for the insurgency's success, and eventually gave rise to the opportunities for the CPC to overcome their foe.

Timeliness

The golden opportunity arrived long after the first Civil War. Mao's legitimacy, popular support, and people's loyalty towards the CPC, showed clearly when the second Chinese Civil War started after World War II (WWII). Judging that the KMT was sufficiently weak, Mao launched his third phase of insurgency—conventional war—against KMT and raced Chiang to the

Headline on page 1 of The Straits Times of 1952. Chin Peng: Public Enemy No.1

recently liberated Manchuria.[22] Here, Mao correctly judged that the KMT was indeed weakened by corruption and worn out from years of fighting the Japanese. KMT's ill-disciplined soldiers had also eroded the confidence and support of the populace. Had Mao not acted upon this opportunity, it is difficult to tell whether the CPC would have won the war eventually given the American's support for KMT and their fervent opposition towards communism.[23]

Mao's retreats, although seen as defeats in the immediate period of time, panned out to be strategic master strokes when the entire insurgency is viewed as a whole. The retreats allowed the CPC to live and fight another day, and it was the protracted duration of the insurgency that provided Mao and the CPC with the chance to strike at the enemy when they are weakened. In short, the duration of the insurgency had helped the CPC bolster their weaknesses—lack of support from the people, and a much weaker military compared to the KMT—but it is the 'timeliness' which Mao had acted that led to the eventual success of the CPC in claiming the governing rights to China.

UNSUCCESSFUL INSURGENCY — THE MALAYAN COMMUNIST

Insurgency

To provide a holistic discussion, the following segment will examine the failed Malayan Communist Insurgency, which took placed from 1948 to 1960. It will showcase how the denial of duration by the then-British administration and the 'untimeliness' of the actions of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) had caused its failure despite having an advantage in Space, Legitimacy and Support, initially.[24]

Space

From the onset of the insurgency, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had targeted Chinese squatters who lived on the outskirts of jungles and forests.[25] By gaining control of these squatter settlements, the MNLA was able to tap on the 500,000-odd population for food, shelter and new recruits.[26] In addition, the MCP was able to harness the Chinese's resentment towards the Malayan government to support their cause as the Chinese were barred from acquiring Malayan citizenship.[27]

Sir Gurney's grave at Cheras Christian Cemetery.

The MNLA's camps were also built deep in the jungles of Malaya, thus, providing MNLA insurgents the concealment and safe bases to operate from. The safety of these bases was enhanced by the fact that only some of the locals knew where the insurgents were operating from. In other words, the safety of MNLA's operations was tied to the loyalty of the locals towards the MCP.[28]

The British COIN operations were unsuccessful initially because they had relied on 'large-scaled military operations to fight a political war.'[29] The large, conspicuous, slow-moving operations allowed the insurgents, which are organised in small cells, to escape and evade easily. Eventually, Lieutenant-General (Lt. Gen.) Sir Harold Briggs formulated the Briggs' Plan, which among other goals, focused on cutting off contact between the MNLA and the Chinese squatter settlements. This involved the relocation of the squatter settlements[30] to heavily-guarded 'New Villages', with promises of employment and better living conditions for the villagers.[31] This move starved the MNLA of the precious space that it needed to manoeuvre, denied them precious resources that will allow them to protract the conflict and reduced the opportunities to recruit new members for their cause.

To the insurgents, being defeated in a battle does not equate to them losing the war.

Legitimacy and Support

MCP's legitimacy and support from the populace were bolstered by British's errors in several occasions. During the COIN operations, the British forces had reportedly abused and had killed Chinese villagers by accident, due to their difficulty in differentiating insurgents from villagers.[32] The most notable incident was the 'Batang Kali massacre', where 24 villagers were killed by British forces. The Chinese in the 'New Villages' were also unhappy to learn that they had lost their freedom as curfew was imposed on them. Nonetheless, it is important to note that MCP's support mainly came from the ethnic Chinese who were the minority in the Malay-majority Malaya. The Malay community had preferred a British administration to one controlled by the MCP.

Duration and Timeliness

Given the slow traction of support towards the MCP across the Malay Peninsula, would a protracted insurgency had helped MCP gain support eventually? After all, the British had the intention to grant Malaya independence. As such, it was plausible for the British to abandon Malaya, should losses be too great, leaving it without a strong leadership and thus allowing the MCP to fill this power vacuum.

However, the MCP made a grave mistake on 6th October, 1951. A random MCP attack accidentally killed the popular British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Lovell Goldsworthy Gurney, stirring an outright rejection of the MCP by the Malayans.[33] It was the assassination that stirred Field Marshal Sir Gerald Walter Robert Templar, the successor to Sir Gurney, to grant ethnic Chinese the right to vote.[34] With the principal grievance of the Chinese rectified, the British was able to consolidate its effort to deal more effectively with the MNLA. Coupled with the prompt and timely change in British COIN *modus operandi*, enabled through intelligence solicited using handsome rewards, MCP found itself losing space, legitimacy and support. Because of their failure to act—or in this case, 'not' act—strategically, the MCP eventually lost the insurgency, and retreated across the Thai border, marking the end to the Malayan Emergency.

Despite the lack of support from the majority–Malays in Malaya, the MCP insurgency did possess comparative advantage at the start. However, MCP's untimely murder of Sir Henry, coupled by the timely change of the modus operandi by the British, lessened the impact the MCP had made in shoring up support and legitimacy.

CONCLUSION

From the examples, it is clear that there are many variables that can contribute to the success of an insurgency. However, time—defined as duration and timeliness in this essay—remained the most important element, as it enabled the insurgents to attain the favourable conditions gradually. Legitimacy and support are gained through the trust of the populace and that

takes considerable time. A protracted war will also allow the insurgents, which are typically of smaller force, to build up its forces over time, and find solutions to their weaknesses as well. More importantly, the insurgents must act timely upon the attainment of favourable conditions. As we have seen, Mao's strategic use of protracted war allowed him to seize the correct opportunities to defeat the KMT after decades of waiting. On the other hand, the MCP was denied a protracted campaign by prompt British actions and that contributed to their failure.

This essay also unveils another important fact. To the insurgents, being defeated in a battle does not equate to them losing the war. As evident in the Chinese Civil War and the Malayan Emergency, both groups of insurgents saw the need to retreat and regroup after being overwhelmed. However, the need for timeliness is reinforced in this juxtaposition between the two communist insurgencies—CPC acted only when they had the entire country's support and the military might to genuinely fight a 'people's war', while the MCP acted without the necessary populace support, leading to their demise. It is important for duration to breed the necessary conditions for a successful insurgency, but the timeliness in which to act upon these advantages is more important.

To this end, the essay recognises that the above examples are insurgencies which took place decades ago. Notwithstanding, it can be argued that time remains the most important element of insurgency today, even in new domains, such as Cyberspace. As Cyberspace transcends geographical boundaries, insurgencies which are proliferated via this domain would require collective COIN efforts from all the affected countries, which in turn, could be laborious and result in a protracted campaign. With the speed and reach of the internet, the insurgents would also be able to time their actions surgically to obtain the desired effect more easily.

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