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## MILITARY STRENGTH COMPARISON BETWEEN INDONESIA AND THAILAND IN MAINTAINING NATIONAL SECURITY

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**Abstract** : It is no question that national security is an important aspect of any country's existence in the world. A country must have a vital foundation to increase the nation's progress, resilience against problems and an effective preparedness against any situation that may arise in the future. The focus of discussion in this paper is to compare the military strength of Indonesia and Thailand as both countries in Southeast Asia and ASEAN and a comparison of their national security objectives. This paper uses qualitative research methods to research the equipment, strength, and soft and hard factors that impact the strength of Thailand and Indonesia's military strength and National security policies which will be analyzed descriptively and explanatively. It is no question that Thailand and Indonesia have differing national strategies considering that the geographical characteristic of each country is quite vastly different with differing economical capabilities, internal challenges, military equipment. Both countries try to match their national strategies with their military's capabilities. Where their differences in national security policy end in between the two countries is the continued cooperation between the two countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries using integrated Military and Non-Military components (economy, culture, identity) in order to safeguard, protect and maintain their and other countries in ASEAN's national interests.

**Keywords**: National Security, Military Strength, Indonesia, Thailand, ASEAN.

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### INTRODUCTION

It is no question that national security is an important aspect of any country's existence in the world. It is important that a country has a vital foundation to increase the nation's progress, resilience against problems and an effective

preparedness against any situation that may arise in the future. The security condition in Southeast Asian region have been relatively safe and peaceful. There has never been direct confrontations or head-to-head wars between countries in the region, there had been only minor confrontations between Indonesia and Malaysia in 1963-1966, but none other than that. During the cold war era, security in Southeast Asia was guaranteed by the two superpowers, the United States, and the Soviet Union. But when the Cold war ended, European countries began to reduce their military expenditure, while the opposite is true in Asia. (Shiddiqy, 2019: 318-340) Different to the situation before ASEAN was formed, various tensions, conflicts and confrontations colored the region. In this case, ASEAN has experience in managing good neighborly relations among its members. The security situation in Southeast Asia after the Cold War is considered uncertain. Unlike in Europe, the main arena of the Cold War, where the end of the Cold War was accompanied by pressures about the need for a reduction in the military budget and demands for the benefits of peace, in Southeast Asia and generally in the Asia-Pacific the opposite development occurs. The Economist newspaper in its February 20, 1993 edition noted that Asian countries were now involved in the process of building military power. Military analyst Klare (1994) has predicted that the arms race will take place intensively in the Asia Pacific. Likewise, in the 1998-1999 edition of the Institute for Defense and Strategic Analyses (IDSA) report on military expenditure and weapons acquisition, Asian countries experienced an increasing trend. Specifically for Southeast Asian countries, the results of a study conducted by Acharya Amitav (1994) also showed the same symptoms.

To give a brief background about the two countries the writers will be comparing, during their early years as a constitutional monarchy under the reign of King Bhumibol, Thailand experienced rapid economic development, while continuing to try to stabilize political instabilities. When King Bhumibol ascended the throne in 1946, the country was in a very weak position. Its economy was devastated after the Second World War, and the Monarchy was severely weakened by the 1932 revolution, which stripped absolute power from the king and his aides. (Rappa, 2017: 117-118) The Monarchy was faced with enemies on the right and left and could only rely on a few supporters from other powerful countries. After the 1932 revolution, the United States began to gradually fortify the political legitimacy of the palace as it sought to make Thailand a bulwark against communist expansion in Southeast Asia. In practice, this meant strengthening Thailand's military and paramilitary capabilities, and building a strong paramilitary capability in Thailand, and establishing extensive security partnerships with the country's rulers. And that military growth has continued until today with the advent of Chinese relations with Thailand.

As for Indonesia, since its independence, the Indonesian military has been involved in various conflicts and military operations at home and abroad. Some of them are the DI/TII Rebellion in West Java, the confrontation with Malaysia in the 1960s, and the conflict in East Timor before its independence. In the period between 1950-1959, it saw the Indonesian government adopt a parliamentary democracy system. This government system affected the life of the TNI. The effects of politicians who influenced in the internal matters of the Indonesian Army led to the events of October 17, 1952, which resulted in a rift within the Army. Since then, the Indonesian military has continued to rebuild and restructure themselves.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *National Security Theory*

National security means the strength of a nation in protecting its country against threats or dangers both from within and outside the country. The scope of the post-World War II security concept only includes "the protection from external invasion, an attitude primarily driven by war." This definition emphasizes a special understanding in terms of its object, so that national security does not only cover all aspects of security within a country but also focuses on threats to the state and national vital goals.

In terms of security itself, as explained by Saragih (2018) States strive to increase power to create security. States strives to increase power to deal with any threat. To achieve national interest which includes national security, states act rationally by prioritizing power, especially by increasing defense power.

One aspect that Indonesia and Thailand often share are national security threats from their borders. For example, from a research by Yuli Firdaus (2022) he explains that Indonesia and Malaysia still often experience problems around the border of Malaysia and Indonesia, precisely in the East Kalimantan area, include regional isolation, basic infrastructure, and community economic welfare. In this case, he also explains that managing regional borders is a work that never ends as long as the country exists. Naturally, border areas require an integrated and sustainable management mechanism because, in the border space, there will always be friction or interaction with neighboring countries, both positive and negative. Due to this, a good national security with proper doctrines, equipment and strategy is vital in a country's defense.

Malia DuMont (2019) explains that there are certain core elements that are common to all national security strategies, which without them the strategy is incomplete or incoherent which are:

1. *Endorsement by the head of government.* For a national security strategy to have the gravitas essential for its implementation, it must have the unambiguous imprimatur of a senior government official who has formal authority for overseeing national security matters, usually the head of government.
2. *Accurate reflection of national values.* National security strategy must take into account and reinforce a nation's values in order to appropriately prioritize threats and interests.
3. *Clear articulation of national interests.* In the hierarchy of national security strategy elements from broad to more precise, national interests lie below national values and above national security goals. National interests are specific ideas that both derive from and support the broad concepts contained in national values.
4. *Declaration of strategic vision.* This declaration is a concise summary of the overall effect the government wishes to achieve with the national security strategy.
5. *Identification and assessment of future challenges.* National security strategies are by nature forward-looking documents intended to enable governments to prepare to manage issues that may arise in the future.
6. *Risk assessment.* It is not necessary or feasible for a national security strategy to identify every risk that a nation will face over the longer term. Indeed, national security strategies that attempt to do so dilute their own meaning by turning the strategy into a laundry list of problems instead of a clear plan of action.
7. *Overview of required resources.* Relevant national security strategies must take available resources into account but should not be defined by them; strategies that are tied to and defined by the resources that are already available inevitably become a restatement of current efforts rather than a proactive outline for how to effectively shape the future.
8. *Effective time frame.* The Goldwater-Nichols Act requires an annual "report" on national security strategy, but recent Presidential administrations have not produced a full-blown national security strategy every year.
9. *Measures of effectiveness.* For the President and his Administration to ensure accountability and implementation, measures of effectiveness should be either stated outright or contained within the goals of the strategy. In order to be viable, measures of effectiveness must be quantitative to some degree and should also have the potential to be monitored within a specific time frame.

10. *Basic implementation guidance.* The details of how a national security strategy will be implemented are usually highly sensitive, and thus specific implementation guidance is often included in classified companion documents.

## METHOD

The focus of discussion in this paper is to compare the military strength of Indonesia and Thailand as both countries in Southeast Asia and ASEAN and a comparison of their national security objectives. This paper uses qualitative research methods. According to Sugiyono (2019:17): "Qualitative research methods are often also referred to as naturalistic research methods because the research is conducted in natural conditions (natural settings); also called ethnographic methods, because initially this method was more widely used for research in the field of cultural anthropology; referred to as qualitative methods, because the data collected and analyzed are more qualitative in nature."

Therefore, this method is suitable for analyzing the data which will be presented, namely the equipment, strength, soft and hard factors that impact the strength of Thailand and Indonesia's military strength and National security policies which will be analyzed descriptively and explanatively. With the Qualitative method, researchers can be freer in describing and explaining the factors and their impacts. (Somantri, 2005)

The data collection technique used in this paper are literature studies obtained from scientific journals with similar topics, international relations books, electronic print medias and trusted military data sites namely Global Fire Power (2023) and The Military Balance (2023). Then, the data obtained are analyzed into scientific generalizations or obtain new scientific knowledge and can also be useful as a complement to the information that has been collected by the author themself. In the end, these data can strengthen existing findings or knowledge.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the main functions of the military presence in a country is to fill the role of defense and maintain regional sovereignty. The ranking of military forces conducted by Global Fire Power is based on an assessment of eight indicators of military strength, there are: 1. Personnel 2. Armaments System 3. Maritime Power 4. Logistics Strength 5. Natural Resources 6. Geographic Strength 7. Financial Strength 8. Others (Supporting). Each indicator has several sub-indicators that will form the core strength of the battle. Maritime power is separated from the power of defense equipment (point number 2). This is related to the political background of defense

in a country in the form of offensive or defensive in which the entire surface of the earth is more covered by territorial waters. Military and defense strategies will later combine all these elements to become a force to support political attitudes, including if it is decided to declare war with another country. Of the 8 key military forces of a country, then made into 8 elements that will directly affect war decisions, there are: 1. Personnel Strength 2. Air Power 3. Land Strength 4. Naval Strength 5. Logistics Strength 6. Strength of Natural Resources 7. Financial Strength 8. Geographic Superiority. Air, Naval and land power is the most important thing because it will play a role in the recovery of military decisions and strategies in the short term (Sudden War). The comparison of military strength to be reviewed below is based on 8 key military forces that have a role in making war decisions.

As previously explained in the introduction, the military data for this research is based on Global Fire Power and The Military Balance 2023. The data used for this research is made sure to be as recently as possible to this paper's writing. Of which, Global Fire Power is used to seek pure numerical data, and The Military Balance 2023 is used to seek soft and hard factors in military equipment and precise military effectiveness.

### ***Personnel Strength***

	Indonesia	Thailand
World Rank	13	24
T. Population	277,329,163	69,648,117
Available manpower	135,891,290	36,217,021
Fit for service	112,872,969	27,859,247
reaching mil. Age annually	4,714,596	1,114,370
Active Personnel	395,000	350,000
Reserve Personnel	400,000	100,000

With its support of the largest population, Indonesia at first glance seems to have the upper hand in comparison to Thailand's military. But it is important to remember that Thailand has a smaller geography in comparison to Indonesia and has to protect four times less people and due to Indonesia's geography, we are able to presume that a lot of the soldiers stationed in the outer islands of Indonesia are not numerous in comparison towards Thailand which may be able to integrate their soldiers better due to its geography of not being an archipelago country.

**Air Power**

	Indonesia	Thailand
World Rank	25	23
Total aircraft	466	488
Helicopters	176	182
Servicable Airports	673	101

From pure numbers alone, it can be said that Thailand has a stronger air force in comparison to Indonesia's air force. With around 122 combat capable aircraft in Thailand's hangars in comparison to 104 combat capable aircraft in Indonesia's hangars. In this case, Indonesia may be quite disadvantaged due to it having aircraft from two differing origins, namely American F-16 *Falcons*, Russian SU-27, and Su-30 Fighters which may cause logistical problems for Indonesia. Combat capable fighter aircrafts can be classified in two types, air superiority fighters which are responsible for eliminating air targets such as enemy fighter aircraft or bombers to maintain or reclaim air superiority in case of a battle and fighter-ground attack which are able to carry air to air and air to ground weapons. In this case, Indonesia is once again disadvantaged due to it only having 9 air superiority fighters which are A & B type F-16 *Fighting Falcons* and a total of 40 Fighter-ground attack aircraft which are C & D type F-16 *Falcons* and SU-27s and SU-30s. Of which, Thailand's air force owns 75 air superiority fighters of which 50 of them are A and B type F-16 *Falcons* and the rest of them are F-5 *Tigers* which are close to being obsolete by now, and in Thailand's hangars are also a total of 13 Swedish Saab Gripen fighter-ground attack fighters. An important note as well is Indonesia's lack of close air support and ground attack aircrafts of which Thailand owns 16 AU-23 *Peacemakers* which may be obsolete and slow but are important for helping ground infantry.

**Land Power**

	Indonesia	Thailand
Tank Strength	314	587
Total vehicles	12,008	39,808
Self-Propelled Artillery	153	50
Towed artillery	414	256
Mobile Rocket Projectors	63	22

There are 10 keys to measuring or knowing the (potential) ground forces in a battle. It contains all forms of land weapons systems, including logistical vehicles. Overall,

it will be very much needed in a ground battle that will face both land enemies and enemies from the air. In this case, Thailand has an advantage in numbers in comparison to Indonesia, owning more infantry fighting vehicles, armored personnel carriers, engineering, and logistical vehicles, in comparison to Indonesia. An important note is Thailand's Main Battle Tanks are mostly United States' surplus M60A1, M60A3, and M48A5 of which although they are upgraded to retain their usability, they are outdated in comparison to the German supplied Leopard 2A4 and Leopard 2RI of which Indonesia owns.

### ***Naval Power***

	Indonesia	Thailand
World Rank	6	8
Fleet Strength	324	292
Aircraft/Helicopter carriers	0	1
Submarines	4	0
Destroyers	0	0
Frigates	10	7
Corvettes	21	6
Patrol vessels	202	49
Merchant Marine	10,427	839

Naval power is the key to every battle victory that determines the course of history. 10 elements make up naval power according to the GFP version as seen in the image above. Although both countries lack ownership of missile carrying Destroyer vessels, they have a good number of frigates and while Thailand has a lack of submarines, it makes up in its ownership of a single Helicopter carrier which although may be obsolete can still turn the tides in a battle when used correctly. One thing to note is the comparatively low number of merchant marine available to Thailand which is an important asset to have in case of war.

### ***Logistic Strength***

	Indonesia	Thailand
Labor forces	130,000,000	40,000,000
Roadway coverage	496,607	180,053
Railway coverage	8,159	41,127



The logistic Strength included in the list above is all kinds of resources that can be immediately prepared to support direct combat. Indonesia can be said to have an advantage in the aspect of logistical strength by looking at the highest number of labor forces which can be utilized in supporting the way be it by conscription or working as factory labor. While on paper it can be said that Indonesia has an advantage of having more roadway and railway coverage, it is important to remember that Indonesia has almost 4 times the territory that Thailand has. So, in this case, Thailand seems to be more integrated in comparison to Indonesia.

### ***Natural Resources Strength***

	Indonesia	Thailand
Oil Production (bbl/day)	845,000	440,00
Oil Consumption (bbl/day)	1,650,000	1,280,000
Proven oil reserves	2,500,000,000	252,800,000

Every battle will require natural resources (energy), especially for the needs of everyday community needs. The war situation will cause the orientation of meeting the energy needs of civil society to be diverted for military purposes. This is where one of the key strengths in battle, which is the power of the state in controlling its natural resources. Even though Indonesia is said to have the most oil reserves, the population is quite large, reaching over 260 million people with daily consumption above 1 million barrels. But if calculated, Indonesia will survive long enough if there is a war situation with abundant natural resources and enormous oil reserves. Thailand may have to conserve their oil usage and reserves considering it has a lot less proven oil reserve.

### ***Financial State***

	Indonesia	Thailand
Defense budget	\$8,800,000	\$5,860,000
External debt	\$400,000,000,000	\$170,000,000,000
Foreign reserve	\$130,200,000,000	\$202,600,000,000
Purchasing power	\$3,130,470,000,000	\$1,200,000,000

War or its preparation requires many costs and requires adequate national financial management capabilities. There are 3 elements in financial strength, there are the defense budget foreign exchange reserves and gold and purchasing power. The

elements that need the most attention are foreign exchange reserves and defense spending. Of these two elements, Indonesia may have a larger defense budget in comparison to Thailand, but Thailand has a larger number of foreign reserves which allows it to prepare for war and finance it much better and although Indonesia has a larger purchasing power in comparison, it requires time and political mechanisms that are not as easy as transferring financing such as foreign exchange reserves and defense spending.

### *Geographic superiority*

	Indonesia	Thailand
Square land area	1,904,569 km <sup>2</sup>	513,120 km <sup>2</sup>
Coastline	54,715 km	3,219 km
Waterways	21,579 km	4,000 km
Shared border	2,958 km	5,673 km

One of the military strengths needed in warfare is geographical superiority. These advantages can be a defense gap or otherwise used as a defense base. As the largest archipelago in the world, Indonesia is superior in having a wide area of waterways and coastline. Military strength data released by the GFP is based on data, facts, and statistics compiled by the CIA. It is still too abstract to know a concrete picture of strength because it is only based on a quantitative approach. All the elements that make up military power in a country are not just about the quantitative aspects, but the qualitative aspects. In this case, it can be said that Indonesia and Thailand have its own advantages and disadvantages, and both are able to make use of their experience and capabilities to suit their geographics.

## DISCUSSION

### *National Security Aspect*

National security means the strength of a nation in protecting its country against threats or dangers both from within and outside the country (Peter Salim, 2002). The scope of the post-World War II security concept only includes "the protection from external invasion, an attitude primarily driven by war." This definition emphasizes a special understanding in terms of its object, so that national security does not only cover all aspects of security within a country but also focuses on threats to the state and national vital goals. The national security between Indonesia and Thailand lies in:

### 2.1.1 Aspects of Indonesian National Security (Kementrian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2017)

The General Policy on National Defense and National Security is structured as a unified direction regarding the implementation of national defense which includes:

#### 1. Integrative Defense Policy

The Defense Doctrine and Defense Strategy are designed to synergize the performance of the Military and Non-Military components in order to safeguard, protect and maintain Indonesia's national interests. The Military Doctrine is Tridimensional Nusantara (Army, Navy, Air Force) while the Non-Military Doctrine is Dwidarma Nusantara in terms of reserve components and supporting components. Based on the factors that influence the global, regional and national levels, a defense strategy for the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is prepared in the form of a Deterrence strategy, namely:

- a. A multi-layered defense with a center of gravity of popular support for the role of the Indonesian National Armed Forces as the main decisive force on land, at sea and in the air.
- b. It is an integrated total defense between the Military and Non-Military components to deal with every form of threat.
- c. At the national level, in the form of an integrated network between regions, especially in border areas and remote areas, which is based on awareness of national identity and the spirit of defending the country.
- d. At the regional level in the form of a network of cooperation between the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries using integrated Military and Non-Military components (economy, culture, identity) in order to safeguard, protect and maintain Indonesia's national interests.

#### 2. Strength Building Policy

The Policy for Development of the Defense Force is essentially the Enhancement of the State's Defense Capability. The National Defense Capability Enhancement Policy is prepared based on the actual problems faced in the implementation of National Defense. The development of the Defense force includes the development of national capabilities in the field of defense at both the policy and operational levels. At the policy level in the form of increasing the capacity of the government bureaucracy (Ministry of Defense and other related Ministries/Institutions) in formulating political

decisions related to the management of National Defense, while at the operational level in the form of building the strength of the Defense Component, which consists of the Main Component/Indonesian National Army ( TNI), Reserve Components, and Supporting Components. The development of the Defense Component is prioritized on the development of the Main Component, while the preparation of the Reserve Component and Supporting Component is carried out in stages according to the capability of the available resources. Its implementation makes maximum use of the ability of national resources in an integrated manner as one form of Sishankamrata. For this reason, it is necessary to immediately take steps to accelerate the realization of the independence of the Defense Industry.

### 3. Deployment Policy and Defense Force

The deployment and use of defense forces is based on the Sishankamrata doctrine and strategy which is carried out based on consideration of the threats facing Indonesia. Based on the strategic environmental analysis, the military threat from other countries (traditional threats) in the form of an invasion is unlikely. However, the possibility of this threat cannot be ignored and must be considered. The more likely traditional threats are limited conflicts related to territorial violations and/or border issues. Non-traditional threats are threats made by non-state actors against territorial integrity, state sovereignty, and the safety of the Indonesian nation. Non-traditional threats are factual threats currently faced by Indonesia. Included in this threat are armed separatist movements, international and domestic terrorism, radical acts, theft of natural resources, smuggling, transnational crimes, and various other forms of large-scale illegal acts. Therefore, the defense force, especially the TNI, is also prepared to carry out Military Operations Other Than War (OMSP) to deal with non-traditional threats.

The organizational structure of the TNI is designed as a strong organization, has high mobility, and has complete personnel and equipment capabilities to deal with emergencies. With such characteristics, the TNI is prepared to be able to assist the state in carrying out emergency response actions in dealing with the consequences of natural disasters. Besides that, the TNI can also be deployed to assist the implementation of other state tasks, such as overcoming disease outbreaks, overcoming riots, maintaining public order, and so on. These tasks are part of the OMSP.

#### 4. International Defense Cooperation Policy

International cooperation in the field of defense is part of foreign policy, so it does not lead to a Defense Pact. International cooperation in the field of defense is carried out both in the framework of force development as well as the deployment and use of force

Nevertheless, to meet the needs for strength development, the use of domestic products is a priority. Meanwhile, the deployment and use of force in international defense cooperation is carried out as part of efforts to build trust and diplomacy, and to solve security problems that need to be handled together. In order to actively participate in realizing world peace, the sending of peacekeeping troops is carried out only at the request and mandate of the United Nations.

#### 5. Defense Posture Development Policy

The development of defense posture is motivated by strategic environmental conditions and the ability to support the defense budget, as well as the urgent need to deal with national security threats. In order to realize a defense posture that has sufficient capability, it is necessary to have a priority scale in the development plan which includes the Development of Defense Equipment, Spatial Planning for the Defense Area, Development of Civil Defense, and Structuring of Organizational Structures. Indonesia's Defense Posture was designed based on the Strategic Defense Review (SDR) and the Grand Defense Strategy which was compiled as a result of cooperation between the Civil Society and the Military.

#### 2.1.2 Aspects of Thailand's National Security (Kiba, 2022)

The current National Security Policy and Plan 2019-2022, drafted by the Office of the National Security Council (2020) and approved by the Cabinet in September 2019, sets its goals: maintaining the monarchy, national sovereignty and independence, national security, and the preservation of public order. The above document discusses the current situation in the light of (1) changes in the global security environment (external and traditional threats) and (2) domestic security problems (internal and non-traditional threats) as follows.

##### 1) National Unity and Maintenance of the Monarchy

First comes the long-held value that maintaining the monarchy is crucial for preserving the unity of the nation-state as the ultimate goal and that the Ministry of Defense and the military should play a primary role to that end. The

official name of the Thai military is the Royal Thai Armed Forces; even after the constitutional revolution of 1932, the safeguarding of the monarchy has remained one of the most vital tasks of the military. It has become more so as the across-the-country "Royal Projects" for creating jobs for livelihood were implemented effectively under the initiative of the Thai military during the period of communist expansion in the 1960s and 1970s. This same policy remains unchanged after the demise of former King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) in 2016. Since 2020, student-led demonstrations demanding royal reform, stirred up by internet postings openly criticizing the current king (Rama X), have taken place in succession across the country. The military looks upon these moves as a national unity crisis and as a priority issue to address.

At this moment, many factions exist in the Thai military. At present, the factions' chief concerns are appointments to high positions and posts after retirement. Reportedly, there was a feud around the 2014 coup over the successor to the then living King Rama IX, between the mainstream faction supporting the current king, the then crown prince, and another faction that wanted to nominate the crown prince's sister (princess). At present, there are no cadres who oppose upholding the monarchy and national unity as a military mission. In this sense, military cohesion remains intact.

## 2) Absence of Reference to the US-Thai Alliance (United States International Trade Administration, 2022)

Secondly, the National Security Policy and Plan 2019-2022 includes no explicit reference to the US-Thai Alliance. Thailand is a treaty ally of the United States, and US military advisors are stationed in Thailand. Every year the two countries jointly hold one of the largest multilateral military drills in the Asia-Pacific region, "Cobra Gold." In addition, the US military frequently stops by the U-Tapao military airport. Nevertheless, the document contains no assessment of the alliance nor any description of the line of future cooperation with the United States.

In 2012, discord among ASEAN members over the South China Sea issue became apparent; around 2015, Southeast Asian countries began to express their unwillingness to be sandwiched between the United States and China. Since much before that, Thailand has, in security-related official documents, emphasized peaceful coexistence with neighboring countries and respect for ASEAN, making no reference to the United States, out of consideration for its neighbors, especially Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos.

### 3) Heighten Presence as a Regional Power

Third, while mentioning that Thailand respects the ASEAN and UN frameworks, the "Immediate Policy of the Minister of Defence for the 2021 Fiscal Year" is explicit on its intention of acting as a primary regional power that will take the lead in various ASEAN frameworks.

Thailand, taking a pro-US stance during the Cold War era, was quick to pursue regionalism amid crucial environmental changes, such as decreasing British and US military engagement and the socialization of the three Indochina countries. It positioned ASEAN as a key regional forum. In the wake of the 1997 Asian currency crisis, Thailand became involved in the launch of the Chiang Mai Initiative, a symbol of Asian regionalism, as the host country. In July of the same year, Thailand supported Myanmar's accession to ASEAN. In 2008, Thailand became the first chair country after the ASEAN Charter came into effect. Unfortunately, the ASEAN Summit in Thailand was postponed and then canceled due to the Thai political crisis. Since then, however, Thailand has steadily played up various ASEAN platforms: the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

The Thai Ministry of Defense has a strong incentive in leading security cooperation among ASEAN members. Especially regarding non-traditional security, Thailand is inclined to demonstrate its rich expertise and capabilities to other members in various scenes of defense diplomacy. On the other hand, Thailand is rarely unreserved in its statements regarding political and security issues in the region at ASEAN summits or foreign ministers' meetings. As for the South China Sea issue, it refrains from making any diplomatic statement more than "Following the spirit of Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), all the countries concerned should restrain from behavior that may increase tensions, and aim for the early conclusion of the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC)." In 2012-2015, when Thailand served as a country coordinator to China, it contributed little to substantive discussions on the formulation of the COC.

Thus, the Thai inclination to stay out of political and security discussions in ASEAN and to, on the other hand, make its peculiar contributions as a "regional power" is also apparent in responses of the Prayut Chan-ocha administration to the Myanmar junta after the February 2021 coup d'état.

### 4) Responses to Non-Traditional Security Threats in Border Areas

Fourth, the "Immediate Policy of the Minister of Defence for the 2021 Fiscal Year" emphasizes responses to crimes committed by non-state actors (human trafficking, illegal drug trafficking, illegal gambling, etc.) in border areas.

The length of the borders that Thailand shares with its neighbors is: Myanmar: 2,401 km; Cambodia: 798 km; Laos: 1,810 km; and Malaysia: 647 km. Currently, Thailand has few military tensions with neighboring countries, 11 while cross-border activities of the non-state actors are a headache for the Thai government. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the governments of neighboring countries is under exploration to strengthen surveillance through immigration bureaus, customs, and police and prevent crimes. However, no substantial cooperation scheme has so far failed to be established.

As for the Thai-Myanmar border, which is the longest of Thai borders, the 1st Thai Cavalry Division maintains a military base along the border, serving as a border guard. But the relationship between the two militaries is not very tense. For public opinion control and information gathering purposes, they conduct joint activities to protect and support agricultural workers who cross the border daily. What matters most for the Thai military now are not their Myanmar counterpart but Myanmar's ethnic armed groups in the border areas; crimes perpetrated by unchecked non-state actors; illegal immigration; and unregistered migrant workers. The influx of ethnic minority refugees from Myanmar estimated at 150,000 also poses a grave security problem. Thailand does not officially receive refugees; however, there are actually many refugee camps in northern Thailand, where international organizations and NGOs are providing assistance. As the COVID-19 outbreak has spread since 2020, unregistered foreign workers and displaced people entered and exited Thailand through routes unknown to the Thai authorities, resulting in cluster infections in the border areas. The Thai military practices strict border controls.

##### 5) Roles of the Thai Military in Maintaining Public Order in the Thai Deep South

Fifth, the National Security Policy and Plan 2019-2022 refers to the maintenance of public order in the Thai Deep South, where about 60% of the Muslim population of Thailand inhabit. In this region, organized armed activities originating from religious and nationalist movements advocating secession from Thailand or autonomy has taken place since the 1960s; terrorist incidents have also occurred.



The issue of the Thai Deep South originated from the occupation of the Malay Muslim Kingdom of Pattani by the Thai Kingdom at the end of the 18th century. The Thai government's assimilation policy invited a backlash from the local people, and repeated clashes between the Thai military/police and local armed forces have engendered deep mutual distrust among the local inhabitants.

On top of the secessionist movements by the armed forces, struggles and turf wars frequently take place among local gangster groups in the Thai Deep South. The Thai government has made several different decisions on whether the Ministry of Defense and the military or the Ministry of Interior should be in charge of security activities in the Thai Deep South. Currently, an organization under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior is fundamentally responsible for regional development. But the Ministry of Defense considers it a mission for the military to win over the people through civilian assistance such as regional development and income generation.

#### 6) Declaration of Reform by the Ministry of Defense and the Military

What warrants our attention is constant reference since FY2020 to the governance reform of the Ministry of Defense and the military. While the National Security Policy and Plan 2019-2022 mentions promoting good governance and cracking down on corruption in the government agencies. But it fails to touch on the security sector governance of the military, including the procurement of equipment.

Given that Thailand's security interests center around the maintenance of public order and non-traditional security and that a momentum for reform of the Ministry of Defense, including the transparency of procurement process, is gathering, albeit temporarily, other countries like Japan and China may be able to cooperate, through the dispatch of experts to improve security sector governance in Thailand, on support for capacity building in both the military and civilian sectors and for law enforcement agencies.

## CONCLUSION

It is no question that Thailand and Indonesia have differing national strategies considering that the geographical characteristic of each country is quite vastly different with differing economical capabilities, internal challenges, military equipment. Both countries try to match their national strategies with their military's capabilities, of which Indonesia focuses on a multi-layered and integrated total

defense between military and non-military components to deal the threats may face as Indonesia often sees border struggles with its neighboring countries and most recently China where Indonesia's Navy played its role in defending Indonesia's sovereignty in the South China Seas. Meanwhile Thailand focuses sets its goals on maintaining the monarchy, national sovereignty and independence, and national security. The reason being is the Thai has a long-held value that maintaining the monarchy is crucial for preserving the unity of the nation-state as the ultimate goal for Thailand as internal struggles often happen in Thailand and border struggles also often quite often with its neighboring countries namely Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia which their struggles are not against their neighboring countries' military but their ethnically armed groups which creates a lot of problems to Thailand namely; illegal immigration; and unregistered migrant workers to which Thailand's military has been working with its neighboring countries' military, namely Myanmar's military to tackle. Where those differences in national security policy end in between the two countries is the continued cooperation between the two countries in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries using integrated Military and Non-Military components (economy, culture, identity) in order to safeguard, protect and maintain their and other countries' in ASEAN's national interests.

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