
SECURITY DYNAMICS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE ROLE OF THE UK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON REGIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract: Post-Brexit, the UK completely overhauled its foreign policy framework by adopting the 'Global Britain' strategy to demonstrate global leadership. The UK said that there had been geopolitical and geoeconomics shifts, including the rise of China's power and the increasing importance of the Indo-Pacific for global prosperity and security as well as the potential for new markets to emerge and the growth of the global middle class. In realizing the UK's existence in the world, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, the UK considers the strategic position of the Southeast Asia region which is included as part of the four pillars of British foreign policy. Southeast Asia has become an arena for the struggle for the influence of global powers, especially China and the United States. Changes in British Foreign Policy, which focuses on the Southeast Asian region, will certainly have strategic consequences in the region, especially regional security, especially the South China Sea Dispute which involves most of the ASEAN member countries. The problem raised in this study is how the dynamics of security in the Southeast Asia region after the change in the focus of British foreign policy to Southeast Asia and its impact on regional security. The writing of this article uses qualitative research methods to write to describe the complexity of regional security through patterns of relations between countries in the region and countries outside the region, as well as the role of global powers.

Keywords: UK, Foreign Policy, Geopolitics, Regional Security, Southeast Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is one of the most strategic and economically important regions in the world. Geographically, Southeast Asia is flanked by two oceans, namely the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. This strategic position is very advantageous because it is right at the intersection between the concentration of industry, technology, and military power. With a total population of 681 million people and abundant natural resources, Southeast Asia certainly has a bargaining position in a world that is economically a large market and a destination for foreign investment.

The global and regional political constellation has undergone major changes as a result of the end of the cold war and the spread of globalization. The direction of geostrategy and

geopolitics is considered to have changed to the Asia Pacific region. This causes the Asian region, especially Southeast Asia, to have an important role, making Southeast Asia not escape the interests of global powers. The loss of polarity in the international system also makes regional security dynamics more important.

Post-Brexit, the UK completely overhauled its foreign policy framework by adopting the 'Global Britain' strategy to demonstrate global leadership. The UK's national interest at this time is to show its role in changing the world, especially in national security and the international environment. The UK said that there had been a geopolitical and geoeconomics shift towards the Southeast Asia region, marked by the rise of China's power and the potential for the emergence of new markets and the growth of the global middle class in the region (HM.Government, 2021). On this basis, the UK intends to play an important role in the Southeast Asian region and join as ASEAN's 11th Dialogue Partner.

In addition, Southeast Asia has become an arena for the struggle for the influence of global powers, especially the United States and China. Britain's entry into the region will have strategic consequences, especially on regional security. Moreover, the UK previously had quite close relations with two ASEAN member countries, namely Malaysia and Singapore as well as two other ASEAN Dialogue Partner countries, namely Australia and New Zealand within the framework of the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) collective security institution which initially aimed to provide protection for Malaysia and Singapore against security and military threats and develop into cooperation in the field of defense and security. Southeast Asia is also a fairly dynamic region with various security conflicts, one of which is the South China Sea Dispute which involves most of the ASEAN member countries and has not yet found a bright spot. So, this raises the question of how the dynamics of security in the Southeast Asia region after the change in focus and intention of Britain's active role in the Southeast Asian region? Then, what is the impact on ASEAN and the security of the Southeast Asian region?

This paper answers these questions by dividing the paper into three parts. The first part describes the background of the research and the research methods used to understand the security dynamics of the Southeast Asian region after Britain decided to focus its foreign policy on the region. The second part discusses the security dynamics of the Southeast Asia region, including the UK's role in the region and relations between countries in the Southeast Asia region after the change in the focus of British foreign policy to the Asia Pacific region by using the complex theory of regional security to show the pattern of relations between countries in the region. and countries outside the Southeast Asian region. This is followed by discussing the possible implications of Britain's involvement in the Southeast Asia region for ASEAN and regional security. The final section of this paper will briefly discuss the security

dynamics of the Southeast Asia region as a conclusion from the answers to the questions in this paper.

METHOD

In this study, the author uses an explanatory descriptive research method that aims to explain the dynamics of security in the Southeast Asian region, especially after the change in British foreign policy to Asia and Britain's intention to play an important role in the Southeast Asian region. The type of data used in this research is secondary data with data collection techniques through library research and internet research, namely based on books, other recent scientific works, and trusted internet media. Then, the data analysis technique used by the author is qualitative by analyzing relevant information and reviewing previous documents to explain and describe the data based on existing written sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Foreign Policy and Britain's Role in Southeast Asia

Post-Brexit, the UK completely changed its policy framework by adopting the 'Global Britain' strategy to show its global existence and leadership again. Based on the policy documents listed on the official UK government website (HM.Government, 2021), four main policies are currently the focus of the UK, including (1) maintaining strategic advantage through science and technology, (2) shaping an open future international order, (3) strengthening security and defense at home and abroad, (4) build resilience at home and abroad. Specifically, the UK stated that in its policy of establishing an open future international order, the Indo-Pacific region would be its main focus. The UK explained that the Indo-Pacific region is very important where the region may grow very rapidly in the economic aspect. The Indo-Pacific region is also the center of geopolitical competition with various international disputes that have not been resolved so that it becomes a focal point for negotiations on international laws, rules, and norms to be able to enforce international rules and norms for security stability and demonstrate the UK's global leadership.

To achieve this, the UK declared its action to establish intensive cooperation, especially in the Southeast Asia region by applying to become an ASEAN Dialogue Partner as the only international organization in the region in facing global challenges and supporting ASEAN's role in realizing regional stability and prosperity by taking steps its first substantive mission in 2019 was to establish a special mission for ASEAN led by an ambassador (Storey, 2019). In a move to expand bilateral ties with all countries in Southeast Asia, the UK and Singapore stepped forward in a bilateral partnership in January 2019 covering the areas of the digital economy, business and sustainable innovation, security and defense, as well as education, youth and culture which was then continued. with the signing of trade cooperation with Vietnam (Mishra, 2021). In addition, the UK is also continuing to strengthen defense and security cooperation, building military bases and increasing engagement and training with FPDA partners. In this case, Britain

has maintained its military force in Brunei Darussalam through the framework of the Commonwealth of Nations. Then to support the FPDA, the UK maintains a naval logistics facility in Singapore. In addition, China's dominance and rise in the region have also attracted Britain's attention to make China a strategic partner that is mutually beneficial in economic, political, and security aspects as long as China does not violate international regulations.

In the context of the South China Sea, the UK has also increased the presence of the Royal Navy in the region by exercising its freedom of navigation and overflight rights in 2018-2019. It will be followed up in 2021 with the presence of the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, which will lead a fleet of naval vessels through Asian waters to East Asia to carry out joint exercises with the United States and its allies. This is done by the UK based on freedom of navigation and overflight as one of the main pillars of a rules-based international order. This action was also called by the United States and its allies to support freedom of navigation in the South China Sea which is a major dispute in the Southeast Asian region.

Southeast Asia Regional Security Dynamics

Security issues have long been an important issue for countries in the region, especially Southeast Asia, both traditional and non-traditional security issues. After the end of the cold war, most of the Southeast Asian countries experienced a period of colonization, except Thailand. This has resulted in the Southeast Asia region having the potential to become an area prone to various kinds of conflicts, both among countries in the region and outside the region. In addition, the role of global powers such as the United States and China, and Britain, which have recently started to play a role again in the region, has also resulted in quite complex regional security. It is also inseparable from the South China Sea conflict, which until now has not found a bright spot adding to the complexity of regional security.

Regional security has become one of the main security focuses after the end of bipolarity in international politics. The international community ultimately shifted the focus of global security to regional security. In this case, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever explain the dynamics of regional security through the Regional Security Complex theory. In this theory, a region is defined as a sub-system in a separate and significant relationship, which exists among a group of countries related by geographical proximity to one another. Regional Security Complex is a regional security theory that allows a country to understand and explain the development of countries in a region. This theory emerged as a concept to understand the dynamics of international security structures and patterns of relations between countries before the cold war, during the cold war, and after the cold war. Regional Security Complex theory is a theory that combines constructivism and Neo-realism approaches to observe the complexity of regional security. The constructivism approach is used to observe and identify the amity and enmity patterns that make up the complexity of security in the region. While the Neo-realism approach is the role of power distribution and geographical factors in the region (Buzan & Waever, 2003).

In identifying the security dynamics of the Southeast Asia region and the inclusion of the UK's role in the region, the Regional Security Complex theory is explained based on the complexity of regional security that describes the region's internal security conditions; the complexity of regional security with regional neighbors that describes the pattern of regional relations with the surrounding area, as well as the complexity of regional security along with the influence of global powers in the region (Buzan, *The Southeast Asian Security Complex*, 1998). All three are explained through complex regional security variables consisting of boundaries in the regional security structure; social construction as well as amity and enmity patterns of countries in the region; anarchic structure in the regional system; and the polarity or distribution of forces within the region (Buzan & Waever, 2003).

Southeast Asia Regional Security Complexity

The internal structure of the security complex in the Southeast Asia region can be said to be quite complex. Where the structure is determined by the pattern of relations among middle power countries in the region. The eleven Southeast Asian countries have different characteristics in terms of economy, politics, culture, religion, and history. The differences that exist in the Southeast Asian region provide a relevant reason for the existence of ASEAN which until now continues to transform following changes that occur in the international system. In the Regional Security Complex theory, it says that insecurity is created by threats that don't come from countries that are far apart but instead come from countries that are close together, in other words within the same region. The existence of ASEAN so far has been sufficient to reduce conflicts between countries that have arisen as a result of these differences.

Southeast Asia consists of ten countries that experienced a period of colonization and gained their independence at the end of the second world war including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Brunei Darussalam, Timor Leste, and one country that did not experience the colonial period, namely Thailand. Post-cold war, the countries of the Southeast Asian region have a major concentration related to domestic policies in terms of economic growth and development. Although the course of economic growth is not the same, countries in this region have succeeded in increasing their economic growth (Alagappa, 1991).

Entering the 21st century where globalization and information technology are expanding, security issues in the region are increasingly complex. Countries in the Southeast Asia region have experienced many security problems due to various threats such as separatism, radicalism, terrorism, and domestic political instability due to internal problems that occurred. Almost all countries in Southeast Asia face the threat of terrorism, as well as a transnational crime. Southeast Asian countries have similar domestic security conditions. Indonesia is facing separatism carried out by the Free Papua Organization. Malaysia faces radicalism by the transnational movement Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia. Then Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam are being hit by a human rights crisis that has resulted in domestic political instability.

In Myanmar, there have been human rights violations against the Rohingya, followed by a military coup against the government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The Philippines is facing a political crisis due to public discontent with the Duterte administration, which is accused of violating human rights due to its mission to fight drugs. Furthermore, Thailand and Vietnam experienced a human rights crisis over the demands of democracy to the government.

Observing the dynamics of regional security in Southeast Asia, of course, it cannot be separated from the institutions that accommodate the region. ASEAN is the only international organization that has an important role in Southeast Asia in terms of economy, politics, as well as defense, and security. The establishment of ASEAN is a testament to the pattern of cooperative relations among Southeast Asian countries. As mentioned by Buzan, the issue of national security cannot be separated from regional security. ASEAN cooperation is formed based on the awareness of countries in the Southeast Asia region that the region is prone to conflict growth, as can be seen from the various problems and domestic security conditions that occur. And this cooperation is important to maintain regional stability. Under the framework of the ASEAN international organization cooperation which was originally formed to stem the communist ideology in the region, now the amity pattern continues to develop, especially the cooperation formed in overcoming regional security problems in this modern era. Then, under almost the same political conditions and problems, at least no one country in the region can easily dominate and threaten the security of the internal region. The multipolar power structure in the region is the easiest to adapt to any existing developments so that a single rigid relationship pattern does not exist in the region as happened during the cold war.

Meanwhile, post-Brexit, Britain is trying to play an active role again since its last active role in the post-World War Two and Cold War regions. Britain tried to open a pattern of amity with ASEAN which was welcomed by becoming the 11th Dialogue Partner. This was followed by visits to countries in the region, especially Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the economic and defense sectors. (Dunst, 2021). However, so far this has not resulted in a change in the security structure of the region.

The Complexity of Security in Southeast Asia with Neighboring Regions

The Southeast Asian security complex borders the South Asia, East Asia, and South Pacific regions. The South Asian complex is dominated by India, which has the largest population and great power in the region. India has been transformed quite significantly by having the potential for strong economic, political and military power in the region, marked by becoming the fourth country in the world with the largest military budget behind the United States, Russia, and China in 2021. (Global Firepower, 2021). The pattern that occurs in these two regions is more of a pattern of cooperative relations. India as the dominant country in the South Asian region is one of the ASEAN Dialogue Partners. Through the Act East Policy, India also sees Southeast Asian countries as very important partners.

In contrast to the complex in the East Asia region, which is not dominated by one power alone, but by several major powers such as Japan, South Korea, and China. As a result, this region has a complex regional security complex where political and economic frictions often occur between countries in the region. Japan and South Korea are often seen as seeing China as their regional rival. As a result, the pattern of relations between Southeast Asia and East Asia forms a complex regional security complex. The pattern of relationships that occur changes according to the development of the situation. In terms of economy, these two regions form an amity pattern in which many cooperative interactions occur. In this regard, the three countries are ASEAN Dialogue Partners. Japan itself is playing a role in the Southeast Asian region by sending diplomatic activists and the Free and Open Indo Pacific policy (Koshino, 2020), as well as South Korea through the New Southern Policy (NSP). Furthermore, China, which until now has been aggressively implementing infrastructure development and development through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) together with Southeast Asian countries. However, it is undeniable that these two regions also have a pattern of enmity that can threaten regional security stability. Especially in the biggest border conflict that has occurred in the region which until now has not found a bright spot, namely the South China Sea conflict. China's aggressiveness in defending and expanding its territorial claims forms a strong pattern of engagement with countries involved, especially with the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia. This will certainly threaten regional security stability if the conflict escalates and does not find a bright spot. Especially in this conflict, China does not care about international rules and even rejected the decision of the Arbitration Court in the 2016 South China Sea conflict.

Meanwhile, what happened in the South Pacific region, the regional security complex is dominated by Australia and New Zealand, where there are rarely significant frictions between regions that form community relations. However, when reviewing the history and dynamics of regional security, what is happening today can lead to security dilemmas and divisions within the region. Countries in the South Pacific region already have amity relations with two Southeast Asian countries, namely Malaysia and Singapore and the UK in the form of a collective security institution called the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA). Initially, FPDA was formed to provide protection for Malaysia and Singapore against security and military threats after the independence of the two countries. But now FPDA has transformed into a security institution that pays attention to regional security stability, especially in the field of unconventional security such as maritime and terrorism.

The Complexity of Security in the Southeast Asia Region with Global Powers

The Southeast Asia region has become a very important region in the world with its various potentials. The existence of a very strategic Southeast Asia region can never be separated from other regions. As a region that has strong links with other regions, as well as a dynamic region that has a strategic geopolitical and geo-economic position, the Southeast Asia region is not spared from the interests of global powers. Southeast Asia has become an arena for the struggle

for the influence of global powers vying for dominance within the region. The rivalry between the superpower United States and the rise of new global power from China is very visible in this region. This is evidenced by the significant presence of the United States and China in the region from the economic, political, and security aspects. The United States and China are present as very important ASEAN Dialogue Partners, where the United States is the main partner in terms of the economy, especially foreign investment, both bilaterally and multilaterally. China occupies the position of the largest trading partner in the Southeast Asia region and is also rapidly developing towards investment in infrastructure development through the Belt and Road Initiative policy. The rivalry between the United States and China has also sharpened the South China Sea conflict. As the country with the largest territorial claim in the conflict, China continues to show an aggressive attitude that triggers regional tensions and attracts the attention of the United States and other major powers.

Britain's entry into the Southeast Asian region, which is explicitly stated in its post-Brexit foreign policy, reaffirms that many global powers' interests are centered in this region. The rise of China in Asia also caught the attention of Britain and provided an opportunity for Britain to strengthen its post-Brexit position on the international stage. In 2021, the UK officially becomes ASEAN's 11th Dialogue Partner and also specifically appoints an Ambassador to ASEAN based in Jakarta (Parker, 2021). Then post-Brexit, the UK is committed to increasing its role in the FPDA through increasing military capacity with the implementation of joint annual military exercises. In 2019, the FPDA held the Lima Joint Exercise in Malaysia involving around 3000 military personnel, more than 12 ships, and 100 aircraft from five countries. Then continued in April 2021 holding the Shield Joint Exercise which was held in a virtual format due to Covid-19 (Abke, 2021). When the rivalry tensions between the United States and China occur, Britain has been in a strong position by demonstrating the military capabilities it has to offer to its partners, especially the United States and its allies. This was followed by the sailing of the Royal Navy's main ship HMS Queen Elizabeth to Indo-Pacific waters in June 2021 through the disputed waters of the South China Sea and in October 2021 anchored in Singapore. (Dunst, 2021). Not only that, the formation of a new trilateral defense pact agreed by Australia, Britain, and the United States (AUKUS) has the potential to pose a threat to stability, security, and peace in the region, especially in the Southeast Asia region. The main agenda of this defense pact is to strengthen military cooperation between the three countries to maintain stability, security, and peace in the Indo-Pacific region, which focuses on the development of nuclear power submarines. This defense pact agreement is assumed to be a response to China's aggressive attitude in the region, especially in the disputed South China Sea which has become a threat to the United States as a superpower that also has strategic interests in the region. Post-Brexit and changes in foreign policy as well as the increasingly active role of Britain in the Southeast Asia region, it seems that this region is entering a new chapter in the struggle for the influence of global powers. In the end, the rivalry between the United States and China as well as the inclusion of Britain in playing

an active role in the region will certainly lead to the increasing complexity of security in the Southeast Asia region.

ASEAN's Response and Implications for Regional Security

Seeing the situation in Southeast Asia, which is surrounded by the struggle for the influence of these global powers, makes regional security conditions more complex and can have implications for the threat of regional security stability. The rivalry between the United States and China and the increasing role of Britain in Southeast Asia has implications for narrowing the choice of security strategies in Southeast Asia. The region is faced with a choice between Western or Chinese support. Where the United States is a security partner and foreign investment partner in Southeast Asia. While China has a position as the largest trading partner of Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Britain's presence in the region that provides a neutral offer seems only to be Britain's strategy to get the attention of Southeast Asian countries. The emergence of the AUKUS agreement and the increasingly active role in the FPDA has shown Britain's attitude also regards China as a threat and a rival in the region.

So far, ASEAN has played a significant role in maintaining regional stability, especially in overcoming regional security threats through various forums and frameworks for political and security cooperation. To create political stability and security in the Southeast Asian region, ASEAN has established the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) which has so far been signed by 43 countries, with the last 3 countries, namely Colombia, Cuba, and South Africa, whose signing was carried out in November 2020. Furthermore, the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) which is the highest consultative mechanism and defense cooperation in ASEAN was formed to strengthen defense cooperation in the region to increase transparency, openness, and mutual trust between ASEAN member countries. Then, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is a dialogue forum related to political and security issues in the Asia Pacific region which was formed to support the process of integration and development of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). (ASEAN-Indonesia, 2017)

In addition, ASEAN can do things in the security dynamics of the Southeast Asia region, among others, ASEAN must strengthen its centrality. One of them is by managing the areas that are in the spotlight in regional conflicts, especially the disputed areas of the South China Sea. Awareness of the importance of security stability in one country will affect the security stability of other countries in the region, and the dominance of global powers in the region that will threaten regional defense and security that can trigger tensions and conflicts in the region, are two things that form the basis for ASEAN to strengthen its centrality. Then ASEAN seeks to improve relations with middle powers such as Japan, India, and others to merge the influence of polarity in the region. Followed by the role of Southeast Asian countries that emphasize and prioritize the importance of a rules-based international system. The countries of the Southeast Asian region must view the regional rivalry between the United States and China, not as two options, one of which must be chosen, but also in another frame, in which the principle is one

with the rule-based world. This can suppress the escalation of the conflict to involve military forces.

According to the Regional Security Complex theory, three possibilities occur based on the variables that make up the structure of the regional security complex from time to time. Among them, the first is the persistence of the status quo in which there is no significant change in the regional security structure. Second, the occurrence of internal transformations or changes within the region, such as changes in polarity, changes in relationship patterns, or changes in the anarchic structure within the region. Third, the occurrence of external transformations such as changes due to regional mergers or regional divisions (Buzan & Waever, 2003). The pattern of relations in the dynamics of security in the Southeast Asia region occurs quite dynamically depending on the situation that occurred at that time. The pattern of relations between countries in the region shows a pattern of amity, especially through ASEAN in various strategic fields, especially the economy, but it cannot be denied that there can be changes in the pattern of relations due to the polarity of global powers and alignments if there is an increase in conflict tensions in the region. The possibility that occurs after examining the existing variables so far is still in the persistence of the status quo where there is no significant change in the regional security structure. ASEAN still stands firmly in its role in maintaining regional security stability. In addition, the polarity of global powers in the region has not shown a significant change where in terms of rivalry between the United States and China, Britain tends to show support for the United States, and both show competition with China.

CONCLUSION

The security dynamics of the Southeast Asian region after the change in British foreign policy to the Southeast Asian region did not experience significant changes. Where ASEAN still has an important position in maintaining regional security stability. However, the regional security situation has become more complex with the many roles of global powers in the region, including the United States, China, and Britain. This can have implications for the threat of regional security stability, especially regional conflicts in the region involving these global powers. In this case, ASEAN is expected to continue to maintain neutrality and strengthen synergies between member countries to continue to be committed to maintaining regional security stability.

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