

Chapter 4

Southeast Asia

Challenges of Government Selection and Governance

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China's active exercise of force to defend its territorial claims in the South China Sea, including missile tests and government and fishing vessel activities in the sea, stands out among the developments in Southeast Asia in 2019. The negotiations on the Code of Conduct (COC) between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China made progress in the drafting process. But what this actually shows is Beijing's attempt to create a framework for enclosing the South China Sea militarily and economically via ASEAN and denying the access of extra-regional countries.

There were key events that have security implications for intra-regional countries. Namely, national elections held in 2019 incited and manifested changes in existing social structures and in relations between ethnic and religious groups. In Thailand, following a general election held in March for the first time in eight years to transition to a democracy, Prayut Chan-o-cha, who was the interim head of the military government, was nominated prime minister, and the second Prayut administration was inaugurated in July. Civil-military relations in Thailand stand at a major turning point due to the enthronement of the new King Vajiralongkorn, the king's coronation in May, and the establishment of the new government. In the Indonesian presidential election in April, the incumbent candidate Joko Widodo won, and his second term commenced in October. Despite concerns that electoral agitation would cause social polarization, the nation is expected to return to calm with Widodo's rival, Prabowo Subianto, joining the cabinet.

As regards major domestic conflicts in the region, the peacebuilding process made progress, including the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in Mindanao in the southern Philippines and the launch of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) in February. On the other hand, the conflict in Patani, the three southernmost provinces of Thailand, another protracted insurgency in a Muslim settlement, did not see strides toward peace.

In Southeast Asia where terrorist threats persist, fighters of the remnants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are working with intra-regional domestic terrorists in an attempt to set up cells in the region. Governments have stepped up their measures to deter terrorist attacks, and as part of this effort, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia established a special operations command in their respective militaries.

1. The South China Sea Issue and ASEAN

(1) Southeast Asian Countries' Struggle with China's Exercise of Force

By transforming its artificial islands into militarized outposts, China continued to strengthen its control over the South China Sea, a body of water claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and China. From the end of June to early July 2019, China conducted several test launches of anti-ship ballistic missiles into these waters. The missiles fired were reportedly the DF-21D or the DF-26. Admiral Philip Davidson, Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command, stated that six missiles were launched, including the JL-3 submarine-launched ballistic missile.¹ This was said to be China's first missile test in the South China Sea. A situation in which Chinese missiles could pose a threat to freedom of navigation in the sea is increasingly turning into a reality.

There were noticeable cases of Chinese fishing and government vessels clashing with other claimants in their asserted exclusive economic zones (EEZ). In Vietnam, on March 6, a Chinese maritime surveillance vessel chased and sprayed water cannons at a Vietnamese fishing vessel that was anchored near Discovery Reef of the Paracel Islands, rammed the fishing vessel into the reef, and sunk it. Beginning in mid-June, Chinese maritime surveillance vessels and Coast Guard patrol vessels were deployed to the vicinity of a gas field that Vietnam is developing through joint ventures with Russia and India in the continental shelf of Vietnam's EEZ and interfered with the activities. In addition, from early July, Chinese maritime surveillance vessels, accompanied by Coast Guard patrol vessels, carried out oil exploration activities near Vanguard Bank of the Spratly Islands and were embroiled in a standoff with Vietnamese authorities for several weeks. The Chinese side left the area in early August but resumed surveys in the middle of the month. In the Philippines, in April, a large number of Chinese fishing vessels swarmed around Thitu (Pag-asa) Island—an island that is part of the Spratly Islands and under the effective control of the Philippines. This was followed by similar intermittent incidents. On June 13, a Philippine fishing vessel sunk after colliding with a Chinese fishing vessel near Reed Bank. Protests erupted over this collision incident in the Philippines on account of the Chinese side not rescuing and abandoning the 22 Filipino fishermen who were thrown into the sea.

As these incidents reveal, other claimants lack the ability to compete with China's use of enhanced military force and law enforcement capabilities. Under such conditions, the Philippines appears to have increasing expectations for the role of the US forces under the US-Philippines alliance. On March 1, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who was visiting the Philippines, provided reassurance to the country saying, "Any armed attack on Philippine forces, aircraft, or public vessels in the South China Sea will trigger mutual defense obligations under Article 4 of our Mutual Defense Treaty."² The joint military exercise *Balikatan* 2019 held in April conducted landing operation training at a naval base in Zambales Province near Scarborough Shoal that is effectively controlled by China. The amphibious assault ship USS *Wasp*, with the F-35B fighter aboard, took part in the *Balikatan* exercise for the first time.³ Under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), facility improvements will be made at five bases of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to which the US forces are permitted access. The first projects were completed in 2018, and 12 more projects have been approved for implementation for 2019 to 2020.⁴ Meanwhile, in July 2019, President Rodrigo Duterte said as follows regarding territorial issues: "If America really wants to drive away China, which I can't do, I'll ask for its help. I want the whole of the Seventh Fleet of the Armed Forces of the United States there" and "Fire the first shot, and I'd be glad to do the next."⁵ The President's remarks seem to be in response to criticisms over the Philippines' weak position toward China in the fishing vessel sinking incident in June. The remarks embody a complex sentiment of his country's powerlessness, coupled with banter that the actions of the United States, the only country that can compete with China with force, are suppressive. While President Duterte's vehement criticisms of

the United States since the start of the current administration have subsided, his reservations about Washington likely remain.

The US Navy conducted Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) at least eight times in the South China Sea in 2019. In early May, the naval forces of the United States, Japan, India, and



ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise (US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Greg Johnson)

the Philippines held joint training in the South China Sea.⁶ In September, the first ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise was carried out. This exercise, co-led by the navies of the United States and Thailand, kicked off in the Sattahip Naval Base in Thailand on September 2. During the five-day exercise that ended in Singapore, trainings such as visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS), maritime domain awareness, division tactics, and maritime asset tracking were conducted in the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea. ASEAN's participation consisted of vessels from Brunei, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The remaining countries of Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, and Malaysia sent observers.⁷ This exercise represented a new display of US posture to maintain presence in Southeast Asia. At the same time, for ASEAN, having held the ASEAN-China maritime exercise for the first time in October of the previous year, it was a critical event for keeping balance between the United States and China.

As far as the US forces are concerned, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore, who was visiting the United States, and US President Donald Trump agreed on September 23 to extend a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that permits US forces' access to facilities of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) by another 15 years until 2030. This MOU, concluded in 1990 and renewed for the second time, enables rotational deployment of the aircraft, vessels, and troops of the US forces to SAF bases. This agreement has contributed to strengthening Singapore's defense and security by deepening military cooperation between Singapore and the United States, combined with serving as a collateral for supporting the US forces' access to Southeast Asia following the withdrawal of US bases from the Philippines. On the one hand, it is rumored that Chinese forces will establish more bases in Southeast Asia (see next subsection); on the other hand, there are limits to the recent military relations between the Philippines/Thailand and their ally the United States. Under such circumstances, Singapore's moves have significance also for ASEAN countries in maintaining the presence of the United States for sustaining regional balance.

(2) Are ASEAN Members Leaning toward Bilateral Negotiations with China?

No significant change is seen in ASEAN's attitude on the South China Sea issue. In the initial stage of Thailand's ASEAN chairmanship in 2019, the close

relations between the Thai military government and China raised speculations that ASEAN would once again shift closer to China, similar to 2017 when the Philippines was the Chair. As it turns out, ASEAN maintained a consistent posture against the backdrop of Chinese government vessel activities in the EEZs of Vietnam and the Philippines, respectively, and of China's missile tests. Regarding the South China Sea issue, the Chairman's Statement of the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok on June 23 states that ASEAN members "took note of some concerns on the land reclamations and activities in the area, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and may undermine peace, security and stability in the region."⁸ The wording is the same as in the Chairman's Statement of the previous Summit in Singapore in November 2018. On the other hand, the Joint Communiqué of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Bangkok on July 31, 2019 uses the wording, "concerns were expressed by some Ministers on the land reclamations, activities and serious incidents in the area."⁹ Without explicitly saying so, ASEAN appears to have raised its level of concern over Chinese moves, such as the missile tests and maritime surveillance vessel activities that occurred following the Summit.

Later on in November, a series of ASEAN meetings were held in Bangkok. The Chairman's Statement of the ASEAN Summit dated November 3 kept the same wording as the Chairman's Statement of June.¹⁰ In contrast, at the East Asia Summit (EAS) on November 4, countries expressed one after another a desire to rein in China's behavior in the South China Sea, and the draft Chairman's Statement mentioned grave concern over ongoing militarization, according to reports.¹¹ Nonetheless, the final version of the Chairman's Statement released on November 5 uses the same wording as the previous EAS Chairman's Statement of November 2018 (which is the same wording as that in the aforementioned ASEAN Summit Chairman's Statement).¹² This outcome is attributed to the Thai Chair's considerations given to China's protests.

There were developments in the negotiations for concluding the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) between ASEAN countries and China. At the ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Bangkok on July 31, 2019, it was confirmed that the first reading for distilling the demands of each country was completed, based on the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text compiled in the previous year. The first reading was to be completed by the end of 2019, as of the ASEAN Summit in June. In his press conference, Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of

China, stressed that the first reading was completed early thanks to the sincerity and resolve of all parties in the consultation, and said it marks an important step toward concluding the negotiations within three years' time (as advocated by China since November 2018).¹³ During the visit to China by President Duterte of the Philippines in August 2019 (discussed later), Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of China, stated that China hopes COC negotiations can be concluded during the Philippines' tenure as country coordinator of China-ASEAN relations (until 2021).¹⁴ The Chairman's Statement of the ASEAN-China Summit in Bangkok on November 3 welcomed the commencement of the second reading and notes, "We welcomed the aspiration to conclude the COC within a three-year timeline as proposed by China or earlier." It suggests that the three-year target, while not official, was shared with the ASEAN side.¹⁵

Though the content of the negotiations has not been made public, a report cites a diplomatic source as saying: at the first reading, China advocated that the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Law of the Sea will not apply, that joint military exercises with extra-regional countries will require the prior consent of relevant countries, and that resource development will not be conducted with extra-regional countries.¹⁶ If so, it appears China is attempting to create a framework for enclosing the South China Sea militarily and economically via ASEAN and denying the access of extra-regional countries, including the United States. In light of China's actions backed by force, such as the activities already noted, it can be inferred that China seeks to become a *de facto* rule-setter under this framework and establish its territorial sovereignty by the so-called nine-dash line.

The negotiations on the second and later readings will review the validity of each party's individual claims. ASEAN countries are unlikely to acquiesce to China's proposals, such as those noted above, and the drafting process is expected to face challenges. Meanwhile, it seems China is looking to use non-COC channels with ASEAN to achieve substantive benefits. Such channels refer to bilateral negotiations.

In particular, with regard to the Philippines, President Duterte visited China in August for the fifth time in his tenure. At the summit meeting on the 29th, President Duterte and President Xi Jinping agreed to launch an intergovernmental body for the implementation of their November 2018 agreement on joint natural gas development in the South China Sea. According to a statement by the

Presidential Palace of the Philippines, the two leaders held candid and open exchange of views on the South China Sea issue, including the 2016 arbitral award by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) (that denied China's territorial sovereignty over the South China Sea).¹⁷ On September 10, after returning to Manila and speaking to reporters, President Duterte revealed Xi Jinping's offer of a 60% stake in the joint development by the Philippines if it sets aside the arbitral award and its territorial claim. Duterte did not say if he agreed to Xi's offer but said he would "ignore" the part of the arbitral award that pertains to the EEZ in order to promote economic activity. His aides were left to paper over the President's remark. The next day, September 11, Teodoro Locsin, Philippine Foreign Secretary, noted that the joint development agreement does not compromise the legal position of either side and thus the arbitral award's involvement would be unnecessary, and that the arbitral award is final and legally binding and cannot be ignored.¹⁸ On the 12th, the presidential spokesperson said that the President has not abandoned the arbitral award.¹⁹

As regards Malaysia, Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah visited China in September. At the foreign ministers' meeting on the 12th, the two countries agreed to establish a bilateral consultation mechanism on maritime issues to address the South China Sea issue appropriately.²⁰ Following the inauguration of the Mahathir administration, Malaysia reviewed its economic relations with China, including cancelling the East Coast Rail Link project, which was a large-scale economic project between the two countries. However, in July, Malaysia decided to resume this project and is reconsidering projects that it had put under review. Foreign Minister Saifuddin said in an interview that the new mechanism framework would not change Malaysia's existing position on China and that the South China Sea issue should be discussed by ASEAN as a single group.²¹ As these examples attest, ASEAN parties to the territorial dispute are wavering on the strength of China's bilateral orientation.

As for Cambodia, a July news report stated that it signed a secret agreement allowing China exclusive use of the Ream Naval Base for 30 years, according to US and allied government officials.²² The naval base is located in Sihanoukville in which China has invested heavily. Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia strongly denied the report, saying that hosting foreign military bases is against the Constitution. Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of China, concurred it was fake news.²³ On the other hand, Army Brigadier General Joel B. Vowell, Deputy Director

for Strategic Planning and Policy, US Indo-Pacific Command, commented it has information that China will begin construction of facilities on the base in the following year (2020).²⁴ If the Chinese forces acquire a new outpost in the Gulf of Thailand that connects to the South China Sea, it could have a positive impact on Chinese forces' operations in the South China Sea and on improving deployment capabilities to the Straits of Malacca, the Natuna Islands, the Sunda Strait, and elsewhere. In this regard, its implications for defense of Southeast Asian countries and regional security should be monitored closely.

As was seen above, China has sought to use economic development as a bargaining leverage to resolve substantive issues bilaterally and implement policies that are favorable to China. At the same time, such bilateral approaches may lead to softening the claims made at the ASEAN forum by other claimants to the South China Sea or other ASEAN member states. In this way, it is considered that China aims to relativize the importance of the COC and turn it into a symbolic achievement of ASEAN-China cooperation. Amidst such moves, whether or not ASEAN will be able to maintain a unified response on creating the COC will be key to reaching an agreement that is effective, i.e., contributes to maintaining regional security and freedom of navigation that is also open to extra-regional countries.

The ASEAN meetings in November put a spotlight on one more matter: the fading of the US presence. On October 29, US President Trump announced that Robert O'Brien, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, would attend the ASEAN-US Summit and the EAS in Bangkok as a Special Envoy, and that Trump would not attend.²⁵ President Trump attended the ASEAN-US Summit in Manila in November 2017 but returned to the United States just before the EAS that followed and has not attended either meeting since then. Although the 2018 meetings in Singapore were attended by Vice President Mike Pence, the 2019 meetings were attended by an official who was not at the state leader level. This is thought to have been a big disappointment for ASEAN. While no ASEAN leader officially expressed criticism, the heads of government of ASEAN countries did not attend the ASEAN-US Summit on November 4, except for Thailand, which was the Chair, Vietnam, which is the 2020 Chair, and Laos, country coordinator for the United States. This was reportedly done in retaliation for the US move, according to a Thai diplomatic source.²⁶

While it is clear that President Trump has a general tendency to avoid

multilateral diplomacy, there is nothing concrete suggesting that he belittles ASEAN. At the meetings, Assistant O'Brien and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross who accompanied him underscored the ASEAN-US partnership under the Trump administration and the United States' commitment to ASEAN. On the other hand, the long absence of the President who leads such efforts has aroused concerns among ASEAN leaders over whether US engagement in the future is certain and whether ASEAN will be affected by the US-China deal. This is expected to compound to ASEAN's difficulties of keeping a balance between the United States and China in the face of the latter's increasing influence.

Announcement of the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific”

The ASEAN Summit in June 2019 adopted a document entitled, “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” (AOIP).²⁷ It was made to serve as guidelines for promoting intra- and extra-regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions. Its main principles are ASEAN centrality, inclusiveness, complementarities, a rules-based order anchored upon international law, and commitment to advancing economic engagement in the region.²⁸ Based on ASEAN's principles, cooperation will be implemented by making use of existing ASEAN-led mechanisms (e.g., EAS, ASEAN Regional Forum [ARF], ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus [ADMM-Plus], Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum [EAMF], and relevant ASEAN Plus One mechanisms). Specifically, AOIP vows to promote cooperation in wide-ranging areas, including the four major areas: (1) maritime cooperation, (2) connectivity, (3) UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs), and (4) economic and other possible areas of cooperation.

As can be seen, AOIP did not set forth ideas or new policies which are different from ASEAN's existing ones. ASEAN in fact distilled and unveiled the Indo-Pacific concept so as to conform with the existing ASEAN framework. The Indo-Pacific concept had been driven by extra-regional countries, such as Japan, the United States, India, and Australia. AOIP's announcement of the concept had the meaning of redefining it so that it is implemented at ASEAN's initiative and further meets the interests of member states, as stated in the Chairman's Statement of the Summit: “We encouraged external partners to support and undertake cooperation with ASEAN on the key areas outlined in the Outlook as their contribution to maintaining peace, freedom and prosperity in the region.”

2. Election Results and Structural Changes in Political Dynamics

(1) The Thai General Election and the Second Prayut

Administration: From Interim Prime Minister to Democratically Elected Prime Minister

There were key events that have security implications for Southeast Asian countries. For one, elections were held to choose governments in Thailand and Indonesia in 2019. While the leader was not replaced in either election, the election process exposed structural political and social issues facing both countries as well as clashes over the changes in the issues. Furthermore, the armed conflicts in Mindanao in the southern Philippines and in southern border provinces of Thailand constitute critical issues for the security of intra-regional countries. Progress has varied between the two conflicts; the former made significant strides in the peace process, whereas the latter's peace talks are in a stalemate.

In Thailand, a general election was held for the first time in approximately eight years on March 24, 2019. Since 2006, Thailand has experienced a spate of political unrest and clashes between social classes. After some five years of military government, the points at issue in the election were unlike previous ones. The military coup d'état on May 22, 2014 suspended the Constitution. Over the course of the five-year military government that followed, the parliament was abolished and political party activities were banned under the rule of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), whose members included military heads who led the coup d'état. The military government, which wished for stable royal succession and retention of influence after the election, postponed the general election many times. In turn, anti-military junta parties and people stepped up their calls for a general election. However, the establishment of a new Constitution and the designing of an election system were in the hands of the military junta, and issues of freedom and fairness remained in transitioning to a democratic government. As a result of the election, a new government was established by democratically elected prime minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, a retired army general who was prime minister in the military government. On July 16, 2019, the second Prayut government was inaugurated. Members of

the military junta have stayed in many key cabinet posts, with Prayut himself concurrently serving as prime minister and defense minister. The cabinet was formed in alliance with 19 political parties, and this weak coalition is expected to create unstable rule.²⁹

Since 2006, Thailand has seen lobbying through street protests and non-democratic means, including government overthrow by judicial intervention, as well as military coups d'état (September 2006, May 2014). Some analysts describe this situation as a “collapse of the democratic system.”³⁰ They are conflicts between the rural population and urban lower classes, who have gained political influence in national politics due to election system changes accompanying democratization, and the urban middle and upper classes, who, conversely, lost their previous political clout. The two sides enhanced their group unity, and class cleavages deepened. Moreover, class conflicts embed cleavages over supporting election or non-institutional direct action, i.e., methods of political decision-making.³¹ When the unrest could not be diffused, the military conducted political intervention.

Based on his strong rural population support, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra who was appointed to office in 2001 portrayed himself as a prime minister with a firm backing testified by elections. Achieving coexistence between democratization and the monarchy posed as a challenge. As such, previous political unrests were orchestrated over “pro-Thaksin vs. anti-Thaksin” and were conflicts between the social classes that supported the respective sides. The 2019 election, however, was unlike elections up to the previous one largely characterized by a rivalry between two major parties: pro-Thaksin political parties (e.g., Pheu Thai party) and the anti-Thaksin Democrat party. The recent election was fought between supporters and opponents of military rule. Consequently, the election result was fragmented without a clear winner, with 86.8% of the seats shared among the top five parties.

A record 80 political parties took part in the election. They can be classified mainly into three groups: pro-military rule, anti-military rule, and fence-sitting. The Palang Pracharat party (PPRP), comprised of cabinet members of the military government and others, was formed as a pro-military rule party and supported interim Prime Minister Prayut for the prime ministerial nomination. The party was named after a socioeconomic policy known as “Pracharat” implemented by the military government. PPRP aimed to gain supporters among

existing Thaksin supporters through a redistributive policy for the poor, which the military government had put particular efforts into. Anti-military rule factions included pro-Thaksin parties, such as the Pheu Thai party, and the newly formed Future Forward party (FFP) and New Economics party. The Democrat party and the Bhumjaithai party adopted a fence-sitting approach and did not announce if they were pro- or anti-military rule before the election. After the election, they ultimately joined the coalition of the new government.

In the recent election, no party—not just pro-Thaksin parties that normally have a strong showing—garnered a majority. One of the reasons was the introduction of the Multi-Member Apportionment (MMA) electoral system, which was designed to keep major parties from holding most of the seats.³² Additionally, the new Constitution set forth five-year transitional provisions stipulating that 250 NCPO-appointed Senators and 500 Members of Parliament (MP) shall jointly vote for the prime minister. This meant that PPRP only needed 126 seats in the House of Representatives to obtain the majority required to be named prime minister. Furthermore, non-PPRP parties, especially anti-military rule parties, incurred restrictions on election campaigning and dissolution rulings, which had a significant impact on the election results. On February 8, 2019, the Thai Raksa Chart party officially registered Princess Ubolratana as its prime ministerial nomination with the Election Commission (EC). Princess Ubolratana is the elder sister of His Majesty the King, and she had relinquished her royal titles. This was an unprecedented development in Thai politics. However, at late that night the King issued a proclamation stating that her nomination was “inappropriate,” and the Constitutional Court’s ruling to dissolve Thai Raksa Chart was followed.³³ Two days before the general election, Princess Ubolratana attended a wedding of former Prime Minister Thaksin’s daughter in Hong Kong, and photos were released. On the previous night of election day, the King issued a rare statement urging Thai voters to “elect ‘good people’ to rule the country.”³⁴ In Thai political context, “good people” is understood as code for anti-Thaksin groups and politicians.³⁵

The election results show changes in the voting behavior of voters as well as changes in past regional voting tendencies.³⁶ The EC’s official announcement of the general election results was mired in problems. The official election results were not released until May 8, after the King’s coronation ceremony in early May, creating a void for approximately one and a half months following

the election. The anti-junta camp, centered around the Pheu Thai party and FFP, announced the formation of a coalition three days after the election. Based on the seat allocation criteria announced in advance, the camp was expected to attain a majority in the House of Representatives. However, the EC abruptly unveiled a new vote calculation method. Under the new formula, anti-junta parties, primarily FFP, received seven fewer seats than the initial calculation.³⁷ The cap for the total number of votes obtained, which determined seat allocation in constituencies, was lowered. Accordingly, there were more than ten small parties that were granted just a constituency seat. Moreover, the EC announcement on May 28 changed the total number of votes obtained and increased the final count of total valid votes.³⁸ The number of parties with seats rose to 26, the most in Thailand's history. With so many small and medium parties joining the parliament, it became critical for parties to form a coalition. When it came time to name a prime minister, 254 MPs from 19 parties expressed support for Prayut, just barely exceeding the majority of the House of Representatives. This led to the emergence of internal battles over the appointment of cabinet members among PPRP and the coalition parties. A close eye needs to be kept on the administration of the National Assembly, where ruling and opposition parties contend over matters including budget deliberations conducted at the first reading on October 19.

Clashes between the government and opposition parties also merit attention. On November 20, the Constitutional Court ruled to disqualify Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit as MP for having shares in a media company when applying to become MP. Thanatorn is the leader of FFP that won the third largest number of total votes in the general election and was recommended by the opposition coalition as a challenger to Prayut in the prime ministerial nomination. On the matter of FFP's acceptance of a loan of 191 million bahts from its leader Thanatorn due to lack of campaign funding, the EC said that it would conduct hearings for alleged violation of the Organic Act on Political Parties. On December 11, the EC decided to refer the dissolution of FFP to the Constitutional Court. In response to these moves, Thanatorn called on his supporters to stage a rally in central Bangkok on December 14, and the largest anti-democracy rally since the 2014 coup d'état was held. As such examples show, the people's political activities have intensified compared to during the military rule.³⁹ (Addendum: On February 21, 2020, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling to dissolve FFP and ban its executives from political activities for ten years.)

In Thailand, following the demise of His Majesty King Bhumibol (King Rama IX) in 2016, His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn (King Rama X) ascended to the throne and was crowned in May 2019. The realignment of the military under King X in particular sheds light on the changing government-military relationship. Those from the 2nd Infantry Division known as “Eastern Tigers,” which occupied leadership positions in the army since 2007, including executing coups d’état for protecting the monarchy under the King IX’s reign, and the 21st Infantry Regiment, which is the Division’s core regiment for protecting the queen, lost key posts such as Army Chief. In place of the 2nd Infantry Division, the army’s 1st Division was reinstated.⁴⁰ Prime Minister and Defence Minister Prayut, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon, and Interior Minister Anupong Paochinda who led the 2014 coup and the military government belonged to the 2nd Infantry Division. While they still have influence on cabinet members appointed by the military government and Senators, some analyze that their control over the armed forces is weakening.⁴¹ Aside from inter-faction fighting, it is noteworthy that appointments to senior military positions are connected to loyalty to King X,⁴² in particular, the rise of a faction known as “*kho deang*.” *Kho deang* traces its origin to the shirt with a red neckline worn by members of the royal guard forces, who have completed a three-month training in the style of that of the King’s Royal Rachawallop 904 Special Military Task Force (904 Special Task Force) responsible for “training officers whom the King can trust.”⁴³ Current Army Chief Apirat Kongsompong is a former guard of the 1st Division. He concurrently serves as Commander of the 904 Special Task Force, which has enhanced *kho deang*’s influence in the military.⁴⁴ In short, political intervention for “protecting the monarchy” by an army controlled by the Eastern Tigers⁴⁵ has ended, and direct interactions between the King and the military are on the rise.

Following His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn’s accession, units engaged in guarding the King were expanded and reorganized. In 2017, in placing five entities such as the Bureau of the Royal Household under the direct supervision of the King, the Royal Security Command was placed under the direct control of the King and became independent from the Ministry of Defence.⁴⁶ The Royal Security Command oversees planning, command, and all other tasks related to guarding the royal family, including the King. Its operational units are the King’s close bodyguards.⁴⁷ The 1st Infantry Regiment, which is the King’s Guard regiment under the 1st Infantry Division, and the 11th Infantry Regiment,

are assigned as regiments of the King's close bodyguards. In April 2019, the term "*Ratchawanlop*" was specially added to the names of both regiments, and they were renamed the King's close bodyguards.⁴⁸ On September 30, 2019, it was decided by emergency decree that the two regiments' personnel and budgets would be detached from the army and transferred to the Royal Security Command.⁴⁹ Albeit opposition from the opposition party FFP, this decree was later approved by both the House and the Senate by October 20.⁵⁰ In 2017, His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn introduced a new military salute and a short hairstyle of the type worn by the King's guards in his efforts to unify disciplinary practices. Leading this effort is the aforementioned 904 Special Task Force. Those selected from around 30 brigades nationwide are required to undertake a training program supervised by the King.⁵¹ Upon completing the training and returning to their respective duties, they must strictly adhere to the discipline, dress, hairstyle, and public demeanor which they acquired in the training.⁵² There is an increasing likelihood that Narongpan Jitkaewthae, who serves as deputy commander of the 904 Special Task Force alongside Army Chief Apirat, will be appointed the next Army Chief, according to reports.⁵³

The 1st Division, one of the main units of the 1st Army Area with jurisdiction over the metropolitan area, was also reorganized. According to reports, following the King's accession, key units of the 1st Division were relocated from Bangkok to neighboring provinces under Army Chief Apirat.⁵⁴ Some observers say that the relocation was meant to transfer units that orchestrated past coups d'état as well as the army's key units away from Bangkok and prevent a coup d'état against the King.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the government reinforced the 11th Infantry Division in Chachoengsao, located east of Bangkok, in order to maintain troop strength in the metropolitan area. Furthermore, 60 M1126 Stryker armored personnel carriers procured from the United States (of which 23 were provided as a grant) are to be deployed mainly to Chachoengsao.⁵⁶ In this way, the King and the military have strengthened their ties, giving greater influence to the armed forces that are under the direct command of the King. At the same time, while it is noted that the military's support of the government has declined due to Prime Minister and Defence Minister Prayut's decreasing influence on the armed forces, Army Chief Apirat has expressed his support for the Prayut government since its initial inauguration.⁵⁷

As examined above, while a general election for a democratic transition was

held in Thailand, it was a limited transition that kept the same faces as the military government. Unlike during the military junta when military forces carried out political intervention based on a strong support base, there is now greater unity between the King and the military under a new monarch. Although backed by the King and the military, the government has lost its previous strong support base and continued attention must be paid to government-military relations. Moreover, conflicts between social classes are unresolved, and the question remains as to how the monarchy will co-exist with calls for more institutional democracy.

(2) Developments Related to Indonesia's Presidential Election Results

The Indonesian presidential election in April 2019 was a contest between incumbent Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto, former Commander of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (KOSTRAD). After legal amendments in 2017, the following condition was imposed in Indonesia: a party or a coalition of parties that nominates a presidential candidate must have at least 20% of the parliament seats or have won at least 25% of the votes in the most recent national election. As a consequence, the presidential election saw changes in party alignment.

Joko was backed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and its ruling coalition party. They included the Golkar Party and the United Development Party (PPP), which supported Prabowo in the 2014 presidential election. Prabowo was backed by opposition parties, such as his Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), the largest opposition party, and the Democrats Party. The opposition parties also included the National Mandate Party (PAN), which had been part of the ruling coalition party right until the start of the election campaign, and which had a ministerial seat. Thus, the political dynamics of a presidential election were extremely opportunistic; to put it another way, political compromises were feasible between parties.

In Indonesia, it is generally said that a politician's political stance is assessed based on whether he is a pragmatic nationalist or an Islamist. In this context, Prabowo projected himself as a former senior military officer with strong leadership skills and emphasized his pro-Muslim position to the masses. In the lead-up to the election, both camps engaged in negative campaigning. The General Elections Commission (KPU) declared the Joko camp's victory in the final results released in May. Dissatisfied with this result, the Prabowo

camp appealed to the Constitutional Court that the election was rigged. In addition, Prabowo supporters staged street protests against the election results. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Court dismissed this case in late June due to lack of evidence. Furthermore, the violent May rallies in Jakarta, which are considered to have been instigated by members of the Prabowo camp, failed to garner broad support from the masses.⁵⁸ After the Prabowo camp had demonstrated its resistance to society, PDI-P leader Megawati Setiawati Sukarnoputri encouraged reconciliation between the Joko and Prabowo camps.

As this exemplifies, elite politicians understand the ways in which confrontation can be diffused following an intense election. The ways include allocating cabinet posts and other institutionalized methods of accommodating and distributing interests. However, the two camps' widespread use of radical rhetoric during the election campaign had the potential of creating cleavages in the civil society. Especially in times of confusion, people are exposed to a tsunami of information, making it easy to instigate the masses. Therefore, the government restricted some social media services in Jakarta when the radical rallies were held in May. The government implemented this measure out of fear that fake news and hate speech would spark public riots.

Before Joko's second term inaugurated in October, party leaders began to approach President Joko to gain a seat on the cabinet. Alongside this, they began playing a political game setting their sights on the next presidential election. This is because a president cannot be elected three times under the Constitution of Indonesia. First, in August, former President Megawati was reelected leader of PDI-P, and is thought to have enhanced her influence as kingmaker. She stressed to the people that she reconciled with Prabowo, the leader of Gerindra, and with former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), who she fought against in past presidential elections and who supported the rival camp in the latest presidential election.⁵⁹ One of the objectives of such political maneuver campaigns was presumably to ensure a stable parliament administration under the next Joko administration. There was supposedly another objective: to make the name of Prananda Prabowo—Megawati's younger son and an executive member of PDI-P—known among the people and promote him as a next-generation leader candidate to succeed her.⁶⁰ As was the case for President Joko, establishing a reputation as a local political leader is one of the leading ways to become a presidential candidate. For this reason, the media has reported on several

candidates for the next presidential election, including Anies Rasyid Baswedan, former Minister of Culture and Primary and Secondary Education and Governor of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, and Ridwan Kamil, Governor of West Java Province who reformed Bandung city and led its development effort. Known as a media king, Surya Paloh, leader of the National Democratic Party (NasDem), met with Governor Anies in September and stated that he could become the next presidential candidate. This is considered part of the psychological game being played in the ruling coalition party in relation to the kingmaker.⁶¹

In September, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), which is the parliament in Indonesia, debated two bills amending the Criminal Code and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) Law, respectively. The bills were subject to criticism by some citizens. Students and others staged protests around MPR. Some protestor groups clashed with public security forces, resulting in casualties. The bill to amend the Criminal Code risked impeding personal rights and freedom of the press and could stir strong opposition from President Joko's core supporters. President Joko hence requested MPR to postpone the vote. On the other hand, the bill to amend the KPK Law was revised and passed by MPR on the grounds that the existing law may be utilized for political purposes.

In October, the cabinet members of the second Joko administration were announced. President Joko identified economic growth as his top policy priority and appointed many experts to his cabinet. Meanwhile, the appointment of Prabowo, Joko's rival in the presidential election and leader of Gerindra, as defense minister came as a surprise to the media. It has been said that this appointment was made based on a request from PDI-P leader Megawati, or to have Prabowo by Joko's side to rein in Megawati's power. Either way, the largest opposition party joined the ruling party group, resulting in the ruling coalition party accounting for approximately 75% of total seats.

Such bargaining between political leaders had the effect of restraining political movements that deepen social cleavages. Nonetheless, many structural political issues remain looking at the nation as a whole. In particular, the SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and other social divisions) matter and delays in economic development on the outlying islands or in the periphery are still not completely resolved. As an outcome, a sensitive issue related to SARA emerged in Papua. In Surabaya in the province of East Java, Papuan students were provoked by nationalists and received unequal treatment by the police. This began a series of

protests by Papuans in August 2019 across the nation, including Papua province, West Papua province, and the capital city of Jakarta. In the September 23 protests in Wamena in Papua province, radical groups set government and other buildings on fire. Approximately 20 people died in this incident. The present provinces of Papua and West Papua were incorporated into Indonesia as West Irian province in 1969. Pro-independence groups questioned the legitimacy of this political process and continued to hold rallies. This area was designated the Military Operation Area (DOM) for approximately 20 years until 1998. Recently, pro-independence groups have stepped up their activities, deteriorating the security situation in this region. In December 2018, an armed group that calls itself the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB), believed to be a faction of the Free Papua Movement (OPM), attacked a camp of road construction workers in Nduga regency in Papua province. This attack killed 19 workers who had come to work from other provinces and one Indonesian soldier who went to the scene. In March 2019, TPNPB attacked the Indonesian Army forces while they were on guard duty, and three Army personnel died. In response, the national armed forces deployed approximately 600 additional personnel to the region. Under these circumstances, Papuans conducted protests. The government feared that the protests would resonate with separatists or would instigate them and develop into a violent insurgency. Thus, the government immediately admitted that its response had been inappropriate.⁶² The government has explored dialogue with leaders of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), the political arm of pro-independence groups. However, as the government has no intention to put on the agenda an independence referendum demanded by ULMWP, a formal meeting between the two sides has not been realized.⁶³ Meanwhile, the government continued to restrict connections to communication services out of fear that fake news would spark public riots.

As the above analysis shows, there were concerns that the election campaign would polarize Indonesian society. Following the election, however, major political parties formed a coalition. From the outside, it looked like the second Joko administration was inaugurated based on a stable political foundation. On the other hand, the Indonesian society continues to face political issues that could turn into a security problem, including disputes in Papua. If government responses to them are inadequate, they will likely have adverse impacts on national unity and democratic practices. As far as Indonesia's foreign policy

is concerned, a Chinese fishing vessel escorted by a Chinese Coast Guard patrol vessel conducted illegal operations in the EEZ claimed by Indonesia in December. This act may have implications for the country's diplomatic strategy for the South China Sea and the "nine-dash line" advocated by China. Attention is focused on how the new administration's security policy and diplomatic stance on China will or will not change.

(3) Two Domestic Conflicts and Peace Processes: Bangsamoro and Patani

This subsection discusses the conflict in Mindanao in the southern Philippines and the conflict in Patani in southern Thailand. Both are clashes between anti-government Islamic forces and the government over the expansion of an autonomous region or independence, stemming from religious and ethnic nationalism. However, in 2019, whereas the Mindanao conflict saw significant progress by way of the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the Patani peace process is in a stalemate.

Mindanao in the southern Philippines and Patani in the deep south of Thailand are home to armed conflicts in which prolonged daily violence has resulted in casualties, including many civilians. The death toll in Mindanao has reached at least 100,000 to 150,000 people in 40 years⁶⁴ and in Patani more than 7,000 in 15 years.⁶⁵ In Mindanao, Muslims have been marginalized under the Christian resettlement policy of the Philippine government in place since the US rule of the Philippines. In southern border provinces of Thailand, border demarcation with British Malaya led to Thailand's annexation of some territories of the former Patani Kingdom, a Malay sultanate, which was followed by the government of Thailand's implementation of an assimilation policy. Against this historical backdrop, the problems have grown more complex as national governance and the people's religions and ethnicities diverged. While nationalism was a critical element of the separatist and independence movements in both conflicts, the two cases differ with respect to the government's perception. Unlike the Malay Muslims in Patani, the Moro people are not a single ethnic group.



Mindanao plebiscite (Kyodo News)

Comprised of 13 ethnolinguistic groups in total, they are indigenous people who have existed prior to the Spanish rule of the Philippines. An existing domestic law stipulates that the Moro people have the right to identify themselves as “Bangsamoro” (meaning the lands and peoples of Moro), irrespective of whether they are of mixed or full blood.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the government of Thailand has not acknowledged the ethnic identity of Malay Muslims in Patani and the existence of insurgent groups. Both regions are geographically distant from the nation’s center of power and are located at the southern tip of national territory where the central government’s direct control and influence cannot reach. In addition, both are considered poor regions where development has lagged behind other parts of the nation, and separatist and independence movements have unfolded since around the 1970s. As shown, the two regions have much in common. Nonetheless, significant differences are seen in the progress of their peace processes, owing partly to the differences in the government’s political will and the nature of the insurgent groups.

The Mindanao conflict made historical strides in its peace process with the holding of a referendum or plebiscite in January and February 2019. As a result of the plebiscites, a majority ratified the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Its predecessor the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was dissolved in stages, and the creation of a larger autonomous region was approved. BARMM territory was decided upon, extending over the five provinces of ARMM, Cotabato City, and 63 barangays (smallest administrative unit) in North Cotabato Province. BTA will govern the region until the Bangsamoro regional government is inaugurated upon elections in June 2022. Murad Ebrahim, Chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), will serve as interim Chief Minister, and President Duterte will select the 80 members of the BTA launched in late February 2019. The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) stipulates that a majority of the BTA members be appointed by the MILF.⁶⁷ The BTA held its first session on March 29, 2019. On November 30, 2019, BARMM’s first budget, the budget for FY2020 equivalent to PHP (Philippine peso) 65.3 billion, was approved. In the draft budget, the education department received the largest allocation of PHP 19.0 billion, marking an important step for the sustainable development of BARMM which includes the poorest areas of the Philippines.⁶⁸ The government of the Philippines and the MILF began peace negotiations in 1997. On March 27, 2014,

the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was concluded under the Benigno Aquino III administration. The agreement approved the creation of an autonomous Muslim entity across a part of Mindanao, paving the way for power sharing with the MILF for autonomous governance. At this time, however, there was little political support from politicians and the public for Congress to pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law needed to implement the CAB. In particular, their opposition increased after the counter-terror operation in Mamasapano that killed over 30 police officers in 2015.⁶⁹ President Duterte, who is the first President from Mindanao and has Moro blood, has repeatedly stated that the conflict in Mindanao is the result of a “historical injustice” that the country must correct, and had demonstrated his ambition for the peace process since his presidential campaign.⁷⁰ BOL, the amended Bangsamoro Basic Law, was passed by Congress and signed by the President in July 2018 and was then passed in the plebiscites. While the peace process made remarkable strides, the start of BARMM marks no more than the beginning of the peace process. Close attention must be paid to the possibility of peace being hindered by the administrative capacity of the MILF’s interim self-government authority and by violence from other decentralized insurgent groups.

In 1976, the MILF, a leading actor in the Mindanao peace process, split from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which was founded in the late 1960s, due to disagreement with the government over peace policy. The MILF needs to change itself from a “liberation front” to a political party, in order to strengthen its leadership in the peace process and reduce fighting in the new autonomous region and Mindanao. By 2022, the MILF plans to decommission the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), an MILF unit with 40,000 combatants and 7,000 weapons. In September 2019, 1,060 combatants and 940 weapons were decommissioned under Phase 2 of the plan.⁷¹ At the same time, the martial law in Mindanao was lifted on December 31, 2019, and accordingly, suspects can no longer be arrested without a warrant. However, application of a state of emergency to the region and deployment of the Armed Forces of the Philippines are still in effect (see Section 3). As can be observed, the peace process that includes a ceasefire agreement with armed forces is pursued in parallel with administering the interim autonomous government.

The deep south of Thailand called Patani refers to three provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat and four districts of Songkhla province on its southern

border. Insurgencies have worsened particularly from 2004 due to the Thai government's heavy-handed repression. Compounded by frequent changes in government, lack of political will for a resolution, and the structural complexity of secret insurgent groups, a formal peace process was long absent in this region. The turning point came on February 28, 2013 when Thai government representatives and the National Revolutionary Front (BRN), the largest insurgent group, agreed to commence peace talks under the Yingluck Shinawatra administration. However, the peace talks were suspended amidst political protests that were later held aimed at overthrowing the Yingluck administration. In December 2014, it was agreed that peace talks would be convened under Prayut's military government. Critical changes were made to the composition of the insurgent side. On June 5, 2015, an umbrella body of six insurgent groups known as "MARA Patani" was formed and became the principal party to the peace talks with the Thai government. Four years passed without tangible achievements in the peace talks between MARA Patani and the Thai government, which questioned the appropriateness of MARA Patani as a negotiation partner and which gave priority to a partial ceasefire agreement. In the meantime, the Malaysian government's facilitator for the peace talks was replaced following the general election in Malaysia in May 2018, and the members of the peace talks also changed. Udomchai Thammasarorat, former Commander of the 4th Army region who served as the Thai delegate to the peace talks from October 2018, was appointed Senator and was replaced with Wanlop Rugsanaoh, Secretary-General of the National Security Council, in September 2019. While Sukree Hari, who served as MARA Patani's delegate to the peace talks since 2015, is said to have announced his resignation in May 2019,⁷² MARA Patani's acceptance of the resignation has been on hold. In late November 2019, amid suspended peace talks between the Thai government and MARA Patani, Thai government representatives and the BRN reportedly met in Berlin.⁷³ Wanlop, the Thai government's delegate to the peace talks, speaking to a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand, refrained from referring to the BRN by name but showed confidence that the insurgent group, which has significant influence on the conflict, would engage in direct talks.⁷⁴ This remark was made in light of the fact that the BRN as a whole has not joined MARA Patani, and that focus has always been paid to whether the insurgent side's delegate to the talks can command local combatants.

The number of incidents in the deep south in 2018 was the lowest ever on

record since 2004, and the number has consistently decreased in recent years. However, on November 5, 2019, the largest attack since the latter half of 2001 occurred in Lam Phaya in Mueang Yala District, Yala Province, killing 15 village defense volunteers. Outside the southern border provinces, on August 2, bombs exploded in Bangkok during its hosting of ASEAN meetings, injuring five people. Thai security authorities made comments that suspected links to insurgent groups in Patani.⁷⁵ As to where the peace process in Thailand's Patani region currently stands, the key elements for resuming peace talks are: confidence building by the Thai government and MARA Patani, moves of the BRN—the largest insurgent group, and the involvement of third parties including Malaysia, the facilitator. As the above examined, while the Mindanao and Patani cases have many commonalities, there are significant differences in the progress of their peace processes. Given the difficulty of short-term resolutions, there are many lessons to be learned from individual cases for ensuring that the local civil society has space for discourse and for raising the political will of the government and insurgent groups toward making progress in the peace process.

The situations of the countries discussed in this section are intertwined with their inherent governance systems as well as with their underlying complex structural circumstances attributable to relations between ethnic and religious groups, central and local governments, and political elites and citizens. Leaders in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, face the common challenge of addressing social polarization and prolongation of domestic conflicts by dealing with these structural issues, mitigating social instability, and implementing measures that lead to dialogue.

3. Establishment of Special Operations Commands and Enhancement of Counter- Terrorism Measures

(1) The Philippines: Increased Terrorist Activity and Strengthened Responses of the Armed Forces

Terrorist threats in Southeast Asia persisted in 2019. Remnants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which took a devastating blow in Syria, seek to establish outposts in areas of Southeast Asia that are not under close watchful eyes. This is thought to be strengthening ties between the globally networked

ISIL and homegrown violent extremists who are under its ideological influence. This situation is compounded by the existence of transnational terrorist and crime organizations, which in turn has further heightened the risk of terrorist attacks in this region. Governments have enhanced their counter-terrorism measures to prevent terrorist attacks and the establishment of outposts by international terrorist organizations. This section provides an overview of the cases in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, which have recently established special operations commands as part of their institutional strengthening efforts. Whether the risk of concern is of a terrorist attack occurring in urban areas or of an organized armed uprising occurring in the periphery varies by country. The relations between the military and local communities also vary by country. This section hence focuses on the differences in the composition of the special operations command and its role and outlines the trends of terrorist organizations, the reason for reinforcing military arrangements.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) established the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in April 2018. The establishment was based on the lessons learned from the attack in Zamboanga in Mindanao conducted by the Nur Misuari faction of the MNLF in 2013 and from the Maute Group's siege in the Islamic City of Marawi in 2017. SOCOM is headquartered at Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation in the Province of Nueva Ecija.⁷⁶ It oversees various units in an integrated manner, including the Joint Special Operations Group under the direct control of the AFP General Headquarters, the Special Operations Wing of the Air Force, the Naval Special Operations Group of the Navy, the Army's Scout Ranger Regiment, the Special Forces Regiment, and the Light Reaction Regiment. This has created a system that can address more diverse environments and situations. Meanwhile, the terrorist and crime organization Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is active in the southern Philippines as well as the leftwing guerrilla group New People's Army (NPA) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a MILF splinter group, in an adjacent region. Therefore, continuous security operations are required in addition to responding to temporary incidents, and the Army plays a central role in carrying out constant surveillance duties.

In December 2018, to deal with ASG and other threats, the Department of National Defense of the Philippines announced that it plans to establish the Army's 11th Infantry Division in the Sulu Archipelago, where several units had

been deployed previously, and that the Division will be given full capabilities by 2022. Moreover, in the same month, it was reported that the AFP activated the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT) capable of responding flexibly to situations, such as terrorist attacks and insurgencies.⁷⁷ The 1st BCT is expected to fulfill the role of a rapid deployable unit. Considerations have been given for the team to contribute to developing operation concepts and strategies through practice. Like SOCOM, it is headquartered at Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation and will be temporarily placed under tactical control of the Training and Doctrine Command. The 1st BCT is comprised of two infantry battalions and one mechanized, engineer combat, and field artillery battalions, respectively, as well as signal, intel, medical, and service supports as sustainment units. The 1st BCT took part in Salaknib, a joint exercise with the US forces, soon after its establishment in March 2019 and in the joint exercise Balikatan 2019 in April and enhanced its skills. In May, it was dispatched to the Sulu Archipelago as a rapid deployable unit and engaged in counter-terrorism duties.

Terrorist organizations in the Philippines conduct intense attacks in the Sulu Archipelago. At the end of July 2018, a car bomb attack occurred at a checkpoint in the suburbs of Lamitan, Basilan island. The attack, believed to involve ASG, targeted the Civilian Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) and killed at least ten people. In January 2019, just before the plebiscite on joining BARMM, bomb attacks occurred at a Catholic cathedral on Jolo island in the Sulu Archipelago, killing more than 20 people including 14 soldiers who were on guard and 2 police officers. ISIL released a statement claiming responsibility for the attacks. ASG members who pledged allegiance to ISIL are thought to have supported the terrorists behind the attacks. President Duterte visited the site and once again instructed ASG's destruction. In May 2019, it was announced that the 1st BCT consisting of 1,500 personnel would be deployed to the Sulu Archipelago. In June, the 6th Infantry Division and the Marine Corps' Battalion Landing Team 7 were also deployed to the region.



US-Philippines bilateral exercise Salaknib (US Army photo by Sgt. Ariel J. Solomon, 128th MPAD)

Nevertheless, on June 28, a terrorist group carried out a suicide bombing attack in Indanan on Jolo island against a camp where the 1st BCT's front command post is stationed. This attack killed at least 7 people, including 3 soldiers, and injured 22 people. In the case of previous suicide bombing attacks in the Philippines, the attack in Lamitan was conducted by a Moroccan and the attack at the Catholic cathedral on Jolo island was conducted by Indonesians. Accordingly, it was believed that foreign nationals carry out suicide bombings. One of the perpetrators of the June attack, however, was a Filipino national, and observers noted that the risk of homegrown terrorism had become a reality. The AFP spokesperson admitted that AFP needed to adapt its tactics. Regarding its responses going forward, he unveiled that AFP will strengthen collaboration on information sharing with countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the United States, and Australia, and continue to engage in the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism that includes regional development policy. At the same time, the spokesperson commented on the need to amend the Human Security Act, including extending the period of detention of suspects.⁷⁸

(2) Malaysia: Increasingly Complex and Non-Transparent Activities of Terrorist Organizations and Role Separation between the Military and Security Authorities

In 2016, Malaysia formed the National Special Operations Force (NSOF) under the National Security Council. NSOF was composed of the armed forces, the police, and the maritime enforcement agency and specialized in combating terrorism. This force would swiftly respond to all terrorist incidents that occur in the country, according to the explanation. This reshuffle was made in response to the situation at the time, which saw the rise of ISIL and the intensifying activities of terrorist organizations that sympathize with ISIL in Southeast Asia. However, the new government that was inaugurated in June 2018 dissolved NSOF. Then, at a meeting held in January 2019, a plan was announced to establish a special operations command—a unified command of only the special units of the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF), such as the Special Service Group (GGK), the Naval Special Warfare Forces (PASKAL), and the Royal Malaysian Air Force Special Force (PASKAU). Law enforcement functions were detached from the command. The units under the command are said to be deployed for operations to secure Malaysia's national and strategic interests, and have jurisdiction over

developing special operations trainings and doctrines in cooperation with other countries. The units are equipped with not only conventional special operations capabilities to deal with sudden attacks and disturbances, but also counter-terrorism capabilities similar to NSOF, including hostage rescue. Going forward, the command is expected to be operated effectively as a function-based joint unit.

The deteriorating security situation in the Sulu Archipelago in the Philippines was a factor in Malaysia enhancing its capabilities to counter insurgencies and terrorism. There is a perceived growing risk that Sabah on the island of Borneo on the border with the Philippines will become an outpost or a transit point for terrorist organizations. Kidnappings attributed to ASG have taken place in the eastern coast of Sabah in succession in September and December 2018 and in June 2019. In response to this situation, at a National Security Council meeting held in May 2019, Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu stressed the importance of the role of the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCom), which has jurisdiction over the security of Sabah's eastern coast, and proposed the strengthening of its capabilities. In addition, Chief Minister of Sabah Mohd Shafie Apdal requested the reinforcement of the military's presence by moving the Lok Kawi Army Camp located in the vicinity of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah to the eastern coast.⁷⁹

On the other hand, the Malaysian economy actively welcomes foreign capital. Many foreign nationals travel to and out of Malaysia, including people from Arab countries, and the country has well developed infrastructure. There is thus strong likelihood that international terrorist organizations will establish logistics bases in Malaysia. For this reason, its security department continued to search proactively for terrorists. In February 2019, the Special Branch Counter-Terrorism Division (SB-CTD) announced that it detained nine terrorist suspects, including six Egyptians and one Tunisian, in the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur and Sarawak. According to reports, in March, 12 Filipino and Malaysian suspects believed to be members of ASG and the Maute Group were detained, and in September, 16 ISIL sympathizers, primarily Indonesians, who were thought to have been expanding their organization in Malaysia were detained. Such stern crackdowns have been effective; no large-scale terrorist attacks have occurred in Malaysia. However, Ayob Khan, principal assistant director of SB-CTD, states that this does not mean international terrorist organizations have diminished in strength, and warns that the risk of terrorist attacks is still high in the region.

Furthermore, ISIL continues to actively recruit members in Malaysia, even after the annihilation of ISIL forces in Syria in 2019. Recruitment methods have shifted from human solicitation to remote methods via dark web and other tools, and women and young people are among those who are targeted. As organizational structures have also transformed from groups comprised of many fighters to lone wolf-type groups consisting of one or few people who engage in radical activities voluntarily, surveillance and crackdowns by counter-terrorism units have become increasingly challenging.

(3) Indonesia: Globalized Terrorist Networks and Expanded Role of the National Armed Forces

The Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) also reorganized the command of its special forces that deal with terrorist attacks and insurgencies. In July 2019, air chief marshal Hadi Tjahjanto, TNI Commander, announced the establishment of the Special Operations Command (KOOPSUS). It is a unified command of the counter-terrorism special forces of the three military services, namely: the 81 Special Detachment (Gultor), which is the anti-terrorism unit of the Army Special Forces Command (KOPASSUS); the Jalamangkara Detachment (Denjaka) of the Navy's Marine Corps; and the Bravo 90 Detachment (Denbravo) of the Air Force's Special Forces Corps (Korpaskhas). KOOPSUS is to undertake specialized responses to terrorist incidents and insurgencies, including overseas missions. In other words, unlike the Philippines and Malaysia, KOOPSUS is not comprised of all special forces of the three military services but is a headquarters that commands only their counter-terrorism units in an integrated manner. As of the end of 2019, the Defence Ministry is constructing facilities for and strengthening the capabilities of KOOPSUS and the Joint Defence Area Command (KOGABWILHAN) launched in September 2019. In an interview, TNI Commander Hadi explained that KOOPSUS consists of approximately 500 personnel, around 400 of which will provide supports and around 100 of which will combat terrorist acts directly. He emphasized that for direct acts against terrorist organizations, the TNI will coordinate with the National Police and the National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT), and that KOOPSUS will be deployed only when necessary. There is a reason for stressing this: in the past, the TNI and its special force have conducted a counter-insurgency operation that led to human rights abuses. Some people expressed lingering concerns over the

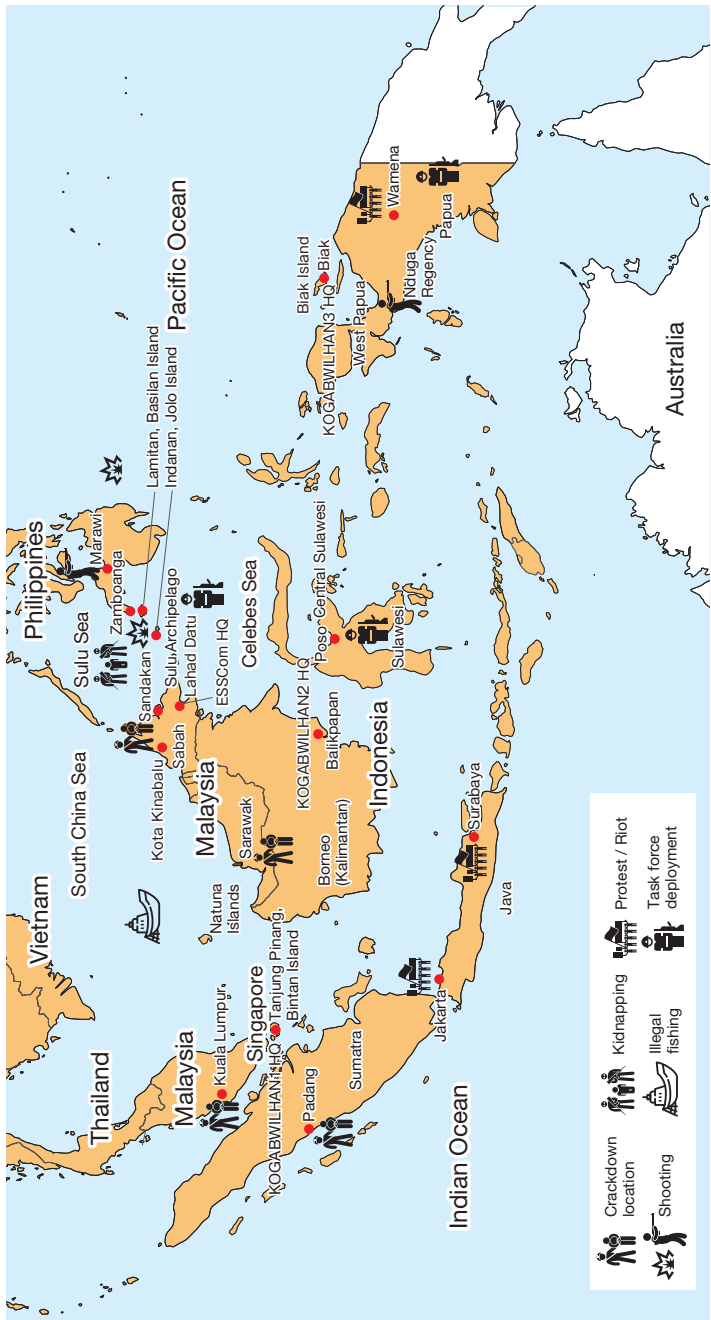
TNI's resumption of domestic security duties, and the government needed to dispel such concerns. In fact, Presidential Chief of Staff Moeldoko had proposed the establishment of a joint command for special operations in 2015 when he was TNI Commander. However, a series of terrorist attacks occurred in 2018 (see *East Asian Strategic Review 2019*, Chapter 4, Section 3), and the proposal was reportedly not considered until the anti-terrorism law was revised. That KOOPSUS was structured to command not all special forces but only forces specializing in counter-terrorism was thought to be appropriate for obtaining the understanding of the people and the international community. On the other hand, coinciding with the TNI's expanding role in counter-terrorism, international cooperation programs have been under way for building up the capacity of Indonesia's special forces. Since 1998, the United States had declined to carry out exchanges with Indonesia's special forces due to human rights concerns, but in May 2019, sought to improve the relations. In 2020, KOPASSUS, including the 81 Gultor, and the US special forces are scheduled to conduct joint exercises related to human rights protection and emergency medical response.

In a country like Indonesia that stretches across a vast territory, it is rational to make use of the capabilities of the TNI and its counter-terrorism units for maintaining security in the face of the increasing risk of terrorist attacks. Law enforcement units, such as the special detachment of the National Police counter-terror unit (Densus 88), have taken proper responses to terrorism in urban areas. In rural areas, however, especially in jungles and mountainous areas, the Mobile Brigade Corps of the police alone cannot deal with hidden terrorist organizations and separatists. The TNI, having better emergency deployment and reinforcement capabilities, was in fact frequently requested to assist search activities and security operations in outer island areas, such as Central Sulawesi and Papua.

It has come to light that international terrorist organizations have penetrated across Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, and are developing transnational networks. In July 2019, security authorities announced findings from their investigation of a suspect detained in West Java by Densus 88. The suspect, who was plotting terrorist attacks on Independence Day, was a member of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an Indonesian terrorist organization influenced by ISIL. He also had links to a network of violent extremist organizations in the Philippines and was plotting to make contact with a sleeper cell of former ISIL

fighters hiding in Afghanistan. In addition, investigation by intelligence has revealed that JAD's operation funds were wired from five countries by 12 people suspected to have links with ISIL. This has confirmed once again that a personnel and financing network is being formed globally among terrorist organizations. Former ISIL fighters in Afghanistan are believed to be the ones primarily behind the creation of this network, which likely supported the suspects of many recent terrorist attacks in Indonesia. The Indonesian perpetrators of the terrorist attack at the Catholic cathedral on Jolo island in the Philippines are thought to have received financial assistance from the JAD suspect.

Figure 4.1. Security situation in the Southeast Asian island region



Note: ESSCom HQ (Eastern Sabah Security Command HQ), KOGABWILHAN1 HQ (Joint Defence Area Command 1 HQ), KOGABWILHAN2 HQ (Joint Defence Area Command 2 HQ), and KOGABWILHAN3 HQ (Joint Defence Area Command 3 HQ).

Source: Compiled by the author based on media reports, including *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *Kompas*, *Benar News*, and *New Straits Times*.

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