

Section 5 Southeast Asia

1. General Situation

Southeast Asia is encompassed by the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea, occupying a key position for traffic by linking the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and is an important region for Japan. The countries in this region are making efforts to achieve political stability and steady economic growth, and lately have realized overall economic development to varying degrees. Such economic development has deepened the relationships of interdependence within and outside the region. However, this region still has destabilizing factors, including the territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands, ethnic minority issues, separatist and independence movements, and Islamic extremist groups. Moreover, there are incidents such as piracy by which the safe passage of ships is obstructed. In order to cope with these problems, the countries in the region are working to build sufficient military forces not only for traditional national defense but also to address the new security issues such as anti-terrorism and piracy. In recent years, against the backdrop of economic development, they have been modernizing their military forces, particularly that of the Navy and Air Force.

In this region, the United States is developing relationships of confidence with Southeast Asian countries and working to strengthen their readiness through numerous joint military exercises, such as the multinational military exercise Cobra Gold, and CARAT¹⁴⁹, the provision of military technology and military assistance. (See Fig. I-2-5-1)

2. Defense Policy of Each Country

1. Singapore

Singapore identifies diplomacy and deterrence as the twin pillars of national defense for maintaining peace and stability, and in particular, it strengthens dialogue, confidence building and cooperation with armed forces in the region and beyond and promotes Total Defense¹⁵⁰. Since the country needs to appropriately and flexibly respond to wars, terrorism, peacekeeping activities and humanitarian crises, it is working on the transformation of the Third Generation Singapore Armed Forces¹⁵¹ to implement effective responses with limited resources.

Singapore makes efforts for regional cooperation based on friendly cooperative relations with other Southeast Asian countries. Also, aiming to contribute to the stability and development in the region, Singapore supports the United States' presence in the Asia-Pacific. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding in 1990 permitting the United States to use military facilities in Singapore. This allows U.S. forces to promptly respond to an emergency in the Middle East and Africa. The United States ranks Singapore as a Major Security Cooperation Partner. In July 2005, the two countries signed the Strategic Framework Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Singapore for a Closer Cooperation Partnership in Defense and Security to further strengthen cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism, prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, joint military exercises and training, and policy dialogues.

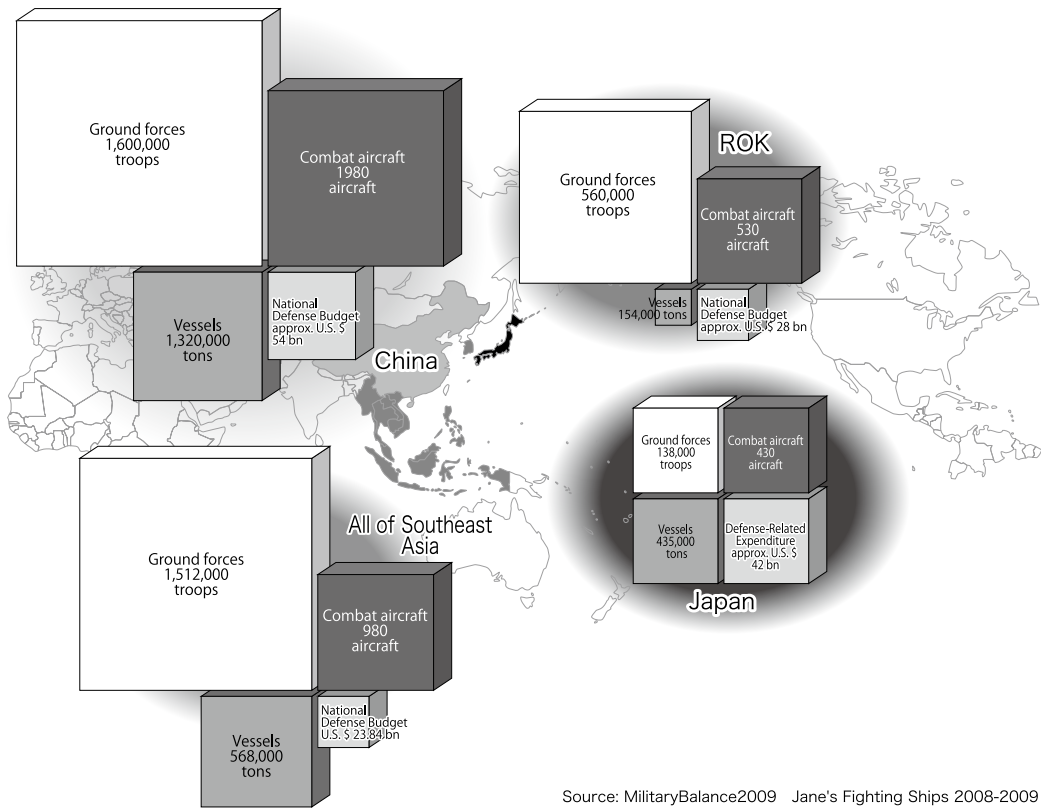
2. The Philippines

The Philippines perceives terrorism by domestic anti-government armed groups as the most serious threat to national security. Since 2004, the country has been implementing reform programs in the areas of defense planning, improvement of operational and training capabilities, reform of military structures and modernization of forces in accordance with a defense reform program called the Philippine Defense Reform (PDR).

The Philippines and the United States have a history of a close relationship and maintain a long-standing, tight military cooperation relationship¹⁵². The two countries still maintain the cooperative relationship, with the

Fig. I-2-5-1

Comparison of Force Strength and Defense Budget between Southeast Asia and Japan/China/Korea 2008



Source: MilitaryBalance2009 Jane's Fighting Ships 2008-2009

Note 1: The size of each block indicates relative size using Japan as the base size

Note 2: For Japan, The force strength shows the actual strength of each self-defense force as of the end of FY2008, the number of combat aircraft is the sum of the number of combat aircraft of JASDF (excluding transport aircraft) and that of JMSDF (fixed-wing aircraft only).

Note 3: The national defense budget of China is from the Finance Minister's Budget Report to the National People's congress in 2008.

Note 4: The national defense budget of the ROK is from the ROK National Defense White Paper 2008

Note 5: The national defense budget of each country is expressed in U.S. dollars and is calculated at exchange rates of 113 yen to the dollar, 15 yen to the yuan, and 12 yen to 100 won.

continuation of the mutual defense treaty and military assistance agreement, even after the eviction of U.S. forces in 1992. They have been conducting the large-scale annual joint military exercise Balikatan since 2000¹⁵³ as counter-terrorism measures against terrorist groups including the Abu Sayyaf Group. The Philippines and United States have also conducted other joint exercises, including Balance Piston and Talon Vision.

3. Thailand

Under its flexible omnidirectional diplomatic policy, Thailand pursues association with other Southeast Asian countries and coordination with major countries, including Japan, the United States and China. The national defense strategy of Thailand consists of three concepts: Security Cooperation, United Defense, and Active Defense. Thailand promotes close security cooperation with neighboring countries, the building-up of defense capabilities and reform of the armed forces and the Defense Ministry.

Thailand has established a good relationship with the United States and has maintained a cooperative relationship with the United States through continual cooperation since the Cold-War era. Thailand concluded the Military Assistance Agreement with the United States in 1950, and has maintained the relationship. Thailand and the United States launched the joint military exercise Cobra Gold in 1982. Cobra Gold became a multinational exercise in 2000, and includes non-combat missions such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief¹⁵⁴.

In 2003, the United States designated the Philippines and Thailand as Major Non-NATO Allies¹⁵⁵, since the United States appreciated their proactive participation in the U.S.-led War on Terror. The United States also views them, together with Japan, Korea and Australia, as the cornerstone of peace and security in Asia¹⁵⁶.

4. Indonesia

Indonesia emphasizes cooperation with the other ASEAN states and pursues independent and active diplomacy as a principal diplomatic doctrine. Indonesia promotes Total Defense through each effort of Military Defense and Non Military Defense under the doctrine that the whole Indonesian population protect and secure their independence, national sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. Furthermore, it is implementing military reform, which includes the prohibition of the involvement of military officers in politics and business and the separation of military and police roles.

With respect to the relationship with the United States, military exchanges were temporarily suspended due to disputes over the activities of Indonesian forces in Timor Leste¹⁵⁷. However, in November 2005, the United States decided to resume arms sales to Indonesia, and military exchanges between the two countries resumed. In addition, on his February 2008 visit to Indonesia, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates held dialogue with President Yudhoyono and Minister of Defense Juwono Sudarsono, where they agreed to strengthen military cooperation and counter piracy and terrorism. In January 2009, the Indonesian Navy and the United States Navy conducted a joint exercise of their Special Forces in Java island. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Indonesia as part of her first visit to Asian countries as the top U.S. diplomat and reached an agreement with the Foreign Minister Hassan to build a comprehensive partnership in various areas, including security cooperation, and to further strengthen the bilateral relationship.

5. Vietnam

Vietnam pursues an omnidirectional diplomatic policy and is particularly engaged in the expansion of friendly relations with neighboring countries in the Asia and Pacific region. It intends to carry out a foreign policy of independence, diversification and multilateralization to build relationships of trust with countries striving for peace, independence and development. Vietnam considers the followings as vital national interests; to maintain a peaceful environment and stability for socio-economic development, and to carry out industrialization and modernization in the direction of socialism. It advocates a posture of all-people's national defense, whereby the whole population takes part in building a national defense. Vietnam consistently advocates neither joining any military alliance nor giving any foreign countries permission to have military bases in Vietnam.

Regarding relations with the United States, the two countries concluded an agreement on International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program¹⁵⁸ in June 2005 and major progress was seen regarding military cooperation. In June 2006, then U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited Vietnam, and agreement was reached to expand military exchanges between the two countries. Many U.S. defense-related personnel, including the Defense Secretary and Commander of U.S. Pacific Command, visited Vietnam between 2006 and 2007, and in April 2007, the United States partially lifted its arms embargo on Vietnam¹⁵⁹.

3. Military Modernization in the Region

In recent years, Southeast Asian countries are modernizing their militaries against a backdrop of economic

development and other factors. In regards to air forces, in 2004, Vietnam imported Russian Su-30 fighters and Indonesia imported Russian Su-27 and Su-30 fighters. In 2005, Singapore concluded a contract with the United States to purchase U.S. F-15 fighters. In 2007, Singapore concluded a contract to purchase additional F-15s, Malaysia imported Su-30 fighters, and Thailand decided to import Swedish JAS-39 fighters.

In regards to naval forces, Malaysia, which had not previously possessed submarines, concluded a contract in 2002 to purchase Scorpène-class submarines, which were jointly developed by France and Spain. The first submarine went into commission in January 2009. In 2005, Singapore signed contracts to purchase Swedish Västergötland-class submarines. In 2007, Singapore commissioned a French Formidable-class frigate, and a total of six of these, including those produced domestically, were commissioned by January 2009. In 2007, Indonesia commissioned two Sigma-class Corvettes, and plans to commission a total of four by the end of 2009. Moreover, in September 2007, Indonesia and Russia agreed to strengthen military technology and defense cooperation. The two nations signed a statement of mutual agreement concerning the procurement of Russian weapons on the scale of \$1 billion through government loans, and this agreement is reported to include weapons such as two Kilo-class submarines.

Some point out that the military modernization of these countries can be attributed to economic growth following the Asian currency crisis, and continued tensions and rivalries in this region. Although the military modernization does not yet amount to an arms race, in some cases, it can be observed that some Southeast Asian countries watch their neighbors' defense programs and react to them¹⁶⁰.

4. Relations with China

There are currently territorial disputes between Southeast Asian countries and China over the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands¹⁶¹. At the ASEAN-China Summit Meeting held in November 2002, ASEAN member countries and China signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea¹⁶², which aims for a peaceful settlement of the territorial issue. However, no major development has been seen in the drafting of a Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea¹⁶³, which would provide more concrete behavior and possess legal binding force. Movements observed in recent years with regard to the relationship with the Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands include an increase in activities of neighboring countries claiming their ownership¹⁶⁴ and subsequent protests against these claims.

In recent years, China has actively pushed the related countries to give priority to the development of resources in the waters surrounding the Spratly Islands, setting aside the territorial issue. For example, in September 2004, China and the Philippines agreed on a joint oil field exploration in the waters of the Spratly Islands, and in March 2005, China, the Philippines, and Vietnam reached an agreement on the launch of a joint exploration of oil and natural gas in the South China Sea. However, the Philippines did not agree to the renewal/extension of the agreement and withdrew from the agreement in July 2008.

In recent years, China has been making efforts to develop cooperative relations with Southeast Asian countries by such means as visits by government officials via bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

In the defense sector, senior military officials have made visits between China and Southeast Asian countries, and the first joint search and rescue exercise was conducted with Thailand in 2004, the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. A joint patrol was launched in the Gulf of Tonkin with Vietnamese and Chinese Naval vessels in April 2006. In 2007 and 2008, the special forces of China and Thailand came together to conduct a combined counterterrorism military exercise¹⁶⁵. In addition, in November 2007, China donated patrol ships to Cambodia as a means for assistance. At the China-ASEAN Summit Meeting in November 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao expressed China was prepared to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN countries in the sector of unconventional security, and it was ready to provide funds for such uses as marine surveying training on the Straits of Malacca.

5. Regional Cooperation

Southeast Asian nations utilize ASEAN as a multilateral security framework for the region. In addition to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a dialogue forum on the political and security sectors in the Asia-Pacific region, the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting has been held once a year since 2006¹⁶⁶. Furthermore, at the 13th ASEAN Summit in November 2007, the ASEAN Charter was adopted that contains the basic principles for establishing ASEAN community by 2015¹⁶⁷, and entered into force in December 2008 after completion of the ratification procedures of all member states. The ASEAN Community Blueprints covering the ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC) were adopted at the 14th ASEAN Summit held in February 2009, marking steady progress in the creation of the ASEAN Community.

In the Southeast Asian region, multilateral cooperation, also in frameworks other than ASEAN, is being promoted in order to deal with a wide variety of security issues such as transnational problems including terrorism and piracy.

In July 2004, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore started the Trilateral Coordinated Patrols for vigilance against pirates in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. In this effort, the naval forces of the three countries patrol their own territories in cooperation with each other. Subsequently, in September 2005, the countries launched their joint coastline airborne patrols codenamed Eyes in the Sky. In September 2008, Thailand joined these schemes. As another counter-piracy measure, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP)¹⁶⁸, proposed and led by Japan, entered into effect in September 2006, promoting the sharing of information concerning piracy and establishment of cooperation systems.

Since 2004, Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand have conducted joint exercises including maritime interdiction training within the framework of the Five Powers Defense Arrangements (FPDA).



The 3rd ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting, February 2009
[Singaporean Ministry of Defense]

6. Regional Issues

In Southeast Asia, while intra-regional cooperation is in progress, some unstable factors remain.

Cambodia registered the Preah Vihear Temple in the World Heritage List in July 2008. The temple is situated in the area where the precise location of the border has yet to be worked out between Cambodia and Thailand. This intensified the tension between the two countries. The opposing forces exchanged gun fire in October 2008, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries. Later, the field commanders of both sides held talks and agreed to conduct joint patrols near the temple, in an effort to alleviate the situation. However, in April 2009, gun fights took place once again between the two sides.

In the Philippines, armed conflict between government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has been intensifying since August 2008, and local residents were forced to flee the affected area. Malaysia, as major member of the International Monitoring Team (IMT)¹⁶⁹, acted as a mediator between the Philippine government and MILF but withdrew from the IMT at the end of November 2008, resulting in growing concerns over the deterioration of future security conditions.

Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, and Malaysia dispatched their troops to the International Security Forces to Timor Leste in April 2006 in response to a worsening security situation¹⁷⁰, and subsequently in August 2006,

the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor Leste (UNMIT) was established.

In February 2008, Timor Lesteese President Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Gusmao were attacked by armed groups. After that the political and security situation saw some improvement and is currently generally calm; however, it is still unstable. The mandate of UNMIT was extended to February 26, 2010¹⁷¹. In the meantime, Timor Leste aspires to gain accession to ASEAN by 2012.