

## New Security Trends in Southeast Asia and Europe

### KEYNOTE SPEECH

#### General Boonsrang Niumpradit

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to be invited to speak today on the new security trends in Southeast Asia and Europe. It is quite an uncommon topic because the two regions appear to be so far apart in terms of their developing historical background, cultures, and surrounding environment. But if we look back into the past, then we would see that our two regions have been closer to each other than meets the eye. We can witness this through the long-standing commercial relationships, considerable investments, and political, sociological and educational ties, all of which started when ships from European countries came to visit countries in Southeast Asia. These days, in the context of modern creations and information technology, the long distance between the two regions is being rendered increasingly meaningless. In fact, with the advent of globalization and the new international security landscape, the two different regions have been compelled to face similar challenges, both security and development.

Therefore, there is the possibility that Europe and Southeast Asia could learn from each other how they handle common issues and concerns. Furthermore, a possibility also exists that the two regions could strengthen their cooperation to deal more effectively with their common challenges. As all of you may know, the new century has brought tremendous new changes and adjustments. Peace and development remain the principle themes of the times. The pursuit of peace, development and cooperation has become an irresistible trend. However,

global challenges are on the rise and new security threats keep emerging.

On the front of security, countries are still struggling for strategic resources, strategic locations, and strategic dominance. The international system at large still witnesses hegemony, power politics, regional flash-points, as well as local conflicts and wars. In addition, new security threats including various forms of transnational crimes, such as terrorism, drugs, arms and human trafficking, piracy, as well as epidemics and climate change, also render the global community a more vulnerable place. On the economic front, the risk of financial turmoil, triggered by the United States subprime mortgage crisis is snowballing with grave impacts on different countries around the world. At the same time, evidence has shown that basic issues such as energy and food could become aggravated and create a serious problem worldwide. All of these incidents have highlighted not only the interconnected vulnerability of the world, different economies, but probably a deep-seated contradiction in the existing pattern of world economic development. Despite their different geographies, Southeast Asia and Europe have fallen under the same global environment. They have found themselves under the new international strategic landscape. They are being compelled by similar economic and development imperatives. They are struggling to respond to all these challenges, be it security or economic. They share similar objectives, and hence can learn from one another, as well as cooperate in areas of common concern.

Now, let us take a closer look at the two regions one by one. In the midst of the evol-

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ing global security and economic landscape, the Southeast Asia security situation is largely stable, while the economies of the region remain sufficiently dynamic. In this region, there exists a number of mechanisms for regional and sub-regional security cooperation which help maintain peace and development momentum. The conclusion of the ASEAN Charter has served as a new and important step for member countries to move towards deeper integration. ASEAN has also made a significant achievement in their cooperation with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, both individually and within the framework of ASEAN+3. This cooperation has also been extended to Australia, New Zealand, and India under the framework of the East Asia Summit with the aim to promote a deeper sense of community among regional countries. Despite a number of positive developments in the region, there still exist factors of uncertainty which could jeopardize Southeast Asian security. The drastic fluctuation in the world economy is affecting regional economic development and could cause political turbulence in some countries. Existing ethnic and religious disharmony in some places is running the risk of escalation to disputes and conflicts. Overlapping claims over land and maritime areas are rampant and are still causing tensions. In addition, terrorists, separatists, and extremists in the region are trying to strengthen their cooperation and trying to undermine and threaten the credibility and legitimacy of the states, while other non-traditional threats such as drugs, arms and human trafficking, piracy, economic and cyber crimes, as well as other challenges such as illegal migrants, natural disasters, and infectious disease have started to crop up to complicate the situation.

Last but not least, the fact that certain major powers have adjusted or consolidated their military alliance, deployment and capabilities in the region have created a sense of mistrust and suspicion. The key question therefore is whether and how regional cooperation mechanisms could be enhanced to deal more effectively with these security and economic challenges for the collective benefit of each and every regional country.

Looking way beyond Southeast Asia, one will see Europe trying to respond to similar security and economic challenges by means of bilateral and regional cooperation tied within the interconnected web of globalization. European countries are facing both classic and new threats that are not much different than those in Southeast Asia. Strategic realignment of the United States and Russia have created tensions in some European countries as well as the European continent at large. At the same time, many regional countries are also facing the serious threats of terrorism, separatism, extremism, as well as ethnic conflicts, illegal migration, economic and cyber crimes, and drugs, arms and human trafficking. Furthermore, the disparity in social and economic development in regional countries also constitutes conditions which propagate the aforementioned challenges. So the questions posed to Southeast Asia should also be applicable for Europe, and the possible answers [from Europe] could also have significant bearing on Southeast Asia. All in all, because Europe and Southeast Asia are part and parcel of a larger significant economic and security landscape, they are facing similar opportunities and challenges. Therefore, they should have in common objectives in managing towards the widest possible benefits, while dealing with the challenges in such a way that [harms could be attenuated].

Southeast Asia and Europe could learn many things from one another. The issues come to mind are for example: (1) How could regional cooperation mechanisms best handle relations among major powers and possible tensions among them? (2) How have individual countries and regional cooperation mechanisms dealt with non-traditional security challenges, particularly separatism, terrorism, extremism, illegal migrants, human trafficking? What are the differences across individual countries in dealing with these issues, and what are the roles of regional security mechanisms in this regard? (3) What are the roles of regional security mechanisms in dealing with the current economic crisis, and in the long-run, the disparity in social and economic development across regional countries? As these

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questions will have significant bearing on how Southeast Asia and Europe could manage opportunities and handle challenges to their own benefits, I hope that the discussion and exchange of views to come at this seminar will more or less touch upon these issues. More importantly, I believe that in answering these questions, Southeast Asia and Europe will have learned to understand each other better, increasing the possibility that they could further their cooperation in areas of mutual concern. Thank you.

### Audience Discussion:

Dr. Thitinan opened the discussion by asking General Boonsrang, who was Commander of the UN force in East Timor, why ASEAN been inadequate to address problems in Southeast Asia when they arise, as was the case in Cambodia and East Timor. He asked whether it is possible for ASEAN to have more of a military function or play a greater role in peacekeeping in the region. General Boonsrang suggested that to do so does not play to ASEAN's strengths as its original mandate did not focus on security. ARF, while still maturing, can handle conflicts, although the UN was more appropriate in East Timor (even though ASEAN and Asian countries had more troops stationed there than any other countries in the world). Some problems are appropriate for the UN, while some problems can be handled by two countries bilaterally. The different ministerial meetings every year now also contributed to this process. Dr. Canan asked whether Thailand trying to play greater role in Africa through its contribution of troops to the UN mission in Darfur. General Boonsrang explained that Thailand would play a greater role in UN missions but not in Africa in particular, and noted Thai military contributions to alleviating international conflicts, dating back to World War I. Thailand, he suggested, has also had an interest in taking care of foreigners because Thais see them as valuable because of the different experience they have, which Thais can learn from.

## PANEL I: NON-TRADITIONAL RISKS: NATIONAL PROBLEMS – REGIONAL /GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

### Presentation 1:

Dr. Rappa provided insight into the Singaporean assessment of non-traditional threats and risks by first emphasizing the particularities of the Singaporean situation as a small nation of 4.6 million people that has regional powers Malaysia and Indonesia as its neighbors. He suggested terrorism and religious extremism would remain threats that Singapore would have to face for some time. In addition, the economic crisis had led to a problem of attracting top talent to meet these challenges at a time when terrorist networks were working to build a pan-Asian caliphate using advanced information technology. Only an integrated, cross-ministerial approach had a hope of meeting these challenges. On the question of whether ASEAN should turn to NATO for assistance, Dr. Rappa suggested that cybercrime and trafficking were perhaps two potential areas of cooperation.

### Presentation 2:

Dr. Thitinan called attention to the 60th anniversary of NATO's founding and outlined similarities between NATO and ASEAN's historical development. While SEATO (as a forerunner of ASEAN) did not go nearly as far as NATO in becoming a collective defense pact, they both succeeded in diminishing tensions and achieving strategic objectives in the region. NATO succeeded in keeping "the Americans in, the Germans down, and the Soviets out," while ASEAN successfully diffused tensions between Indonesia and Malaysia. Both were rooted in the geopolitics of the time of their founding. As alternative forums for regional security, Dr. Thitinan suggested that ARF was problematic because it had evolved into a meeting of foreign ministers, rather than defense ministers with wide-ranging membership. On the other hand, ABMM had made a lot of progress in a short period of time but stood at a crossroads. It could either evolve to become the dominant regional security mechanism in its own right, or it could be-

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come a feeder for security discussions in ARF. Dr. Thitinan was more optimistic about the prospects for ABMM becoming its own distinctive entity but suggested the need for it to retain some exclusivity in terms of its membership in order for it to have value as a security mechanism that could function like NATO. One potential area for greater regional security cooperation that would not infringe too much on the ASEAN principle of non-interference would be maritime security. But as now, ASEAN lacked a military function. Peacekeeping and a rapid reaction force might be another area of cooperation if ASEAN could build a military function into its framework.

### Presentation 3:

Dr. Kamp provided an overview of NATO's threat perspective. He drew attention to the growing role of non-state actors in international security, in the broader context of failed states (numbering somewhere between 30 and 40 countries), cyber attacks, radiological attacks, proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction, and climate change. Amid all these challenges and a changing geopolitical landscape, NATO was trying to redefine its role, which is clear in cases such as supporting military and civil reconstruction in Afghanistan but much less clear on issues such as energy security and climate change. He predicted that by 2015 to 2020, three major issues would alter the security discussion — nuclear proliferation, climate change, and energy security. While NATO had been built to deal with one threat, it now had to deal with multiple threats without any clear solutions on some of them. He argued that it was important that: (1) NATO remains strong as the only treaty between the US and Europe and the only organization ensuring trans-Atlantic security, (2) NATO transition from a European defense force to a global security provider based in Europe but with a global horizon and new potential partners (but not members) such as Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and South Korea, (3) the role of the US as security provider continues, in spite of occasional political differences, since the world is a much safer space under American unipolar dominance.

### Audience Discussion:

Amnat Pookrisuk drew attention to the problem of water quality and affordability in villages in rural Thailand. Dr. Canan asked the presenters for the threat perception in Thailand and Singapore, to which Dr. Thitinan responded that the Muslim insurgency in the South was the most salient issue in the minds of the military, although food and energy security, climate change and drugs and human trafficking were other important issues. Dr. Rappa elaborated on water security issues in Singapore, which relies on Malaysia for its water supply and also operates very expensive desalination plants. On NATO's role in these issues, Dr. Kamp emphasized that NATO was not looking for new jobs but that Article 4 of the NATO treaty required non-military consultations, which served as a prime forum to air trans-Atlantic security issues of all kinds. Another audience member suggested that there were tensions between ARF's security cooperation aims and the ASEAN principle of non-interference, while another audience member asked panelists to consider the role of the US and China in ASEAN. While it was possible that the US could join the East Asian Security framework, Dr. Thitinan suggested that questions about the role of ARF and ABMM still needed to be resolved. Dr. Rappa reiterated the importance of remaining vigilant against terrorist sleeper cells. And Dr. Kamp explained the centrality of consensus-based decision-making in NATO. While the US certainly has more power than Germany (and Germany more than Luxembourg), consensus is necessary, he said, for decisions to go forward. This is why the organization took three years to act when violence in the Balkans erupted.

### PANEL II: SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

#### Presentation 1:

Dr. Khong offered some historical perspective on Vietnam's relationship with the regional security mechanisms. During the Cold War, Vietnam focused on building its army to enhance security and sought support from its "big brothers," China and Rus-

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sia. Since the Cold War ended, she said, Vietnam's approach to enhancing its own security has been a predominantly bilateral one, although it is beginning to be less suspicious of and even see value in multilateral approaches. She called attention to the ARF and ASEAN+6 frameworks and noted that Vietnam also recently began to play a role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. For the first time, she suggested that economic development was supplanting military security as the government's approach to security. The normalization of relations with the US and China, involvement in ASEAN and ARF, and preparation for its chairmanship of ASEAN next year, were all signs of this greater movement towards the country's engagement in international security arenas and arrangements.

### Presentation 2:

Mr. Kavi recollected some of his experience as a journalist in Vietnam in the late 1980's, recalling how the foreign minister had told him that Vietnam's accession to ASEAN was inevitable. Then he moved on to argue that the ARF process is insufficient, it moves too slowly, and is too narrow to cope with the crises in the region. Otherwise, competing frameworks will overtake it. Although the APC idea was rejected by Singapore and China, it was a good idea and an example of one type of process that could supplant it. ASEAN needs to be concerned with the rise of China and India. Fortunately for ASEAN, China's relationship with the organization has improved dramatically, moving from enemies to friends,

since experiencing early conflict with it. Mr. Kavi argued that ASEAN will be a bridge, rather than a barrier, to India. Hopefully though, Vietnam would help move ARF to the second phase when it becomes chair next year. Otherwise, other more responsive international cooperative frameworks, like the six-party talks over North Korea, will make ARF irrelevant. The ASEAN human rights body will come into effect in Bangkok by October, so we see that ASEAN is moving on some issues, but ASEAN needs to expand the scope and range of issues it

deals with to become relevant or else it will become unimportant.

### Presentation 3:

Colonel Saranyu discussed the overall level of military cooperation among ASEAN member states, noting that most military cooperation took place among armies, due to the fact that armies in the region are twice the size of navies or air force. He called attention to the recent 8th ASEAN Chief of Armies Multilateral Meeting (ACAMM) as an important regional collaborative security mechanism, as well as a number of other meeting points, ranging from regional rifle competitions to joint military exercises. Colonel Saranyu pressed the audience to think about military cooperation in terms of four different levels. Cooperation through training and other courses was the most basic. Joint or combined exercises required more intense cooperation. The signing of MOUs involved more formalized military arrangements, while actual military alliances are the most intense form of cooperation – and the rarest form in the region. Following this approach, the colonel showed that bilateral partnership among ASEAN countries in training and other courses in 46 of 90 possible collaboration points. Joint or combined exercises occurred in 34 of 90 possible collaboration points. MOUs between countries occurred in 21 out of 90 possible arrangements, while actual military alliance happened in only six of 90 cases (between Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia). The presentation provided some particular insight as to the level and kind of military cooperation among ASEAN member states, in spite of the fact that few actual ASEAN military collaborative arrangements exist.

### Audience Discussion:

Dr. Chulacheeb Chinwanno explained that the concept of security has expanded to include economic and human security since the Cold War. Collaborative military arrangements are now seen as useful tools to protect states. ARF is one such tool based on cooperation, consultation and confidence-building. Dr. Rappa praised *The Nation* as an excellent media source and the de-

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gree of press freedom in Thailand in general, while Mr. Kavi thanked him for the comment but argued that one problem with this freedom is that it means there can be a lot of bad journalism that generalizes too much and does not accurately reflect reality. Often, stories get sexed up to generate more reader interest, but this is something he hopes Thailand can improve on.

### PANEL III: ASEAN-EU SECURITY CO-OPERATION: PROSPECTS FOR PARTNERSHIP

#### Presentation 1:

Dr. Lamers offered some historical perspective on EU-ASEAN cooperation, which dates back to 1978. He suggested that current European and Asian analyses of security challenges were not far apart but that cooperation was absolutely vital for meeting them. Relations with the US remain important, but NATO is also seeking out new forms of cooperation in new areas of the world, like the Gulf region, and with other regional organizations, like the African Union. Several thematic issues are particularly ripe for enhanced inter-regional cooperation, including crisis cooperation, cooperation to prevent and investigate cyber attacks, and maritime security. He speculated that in the future ASEAN-EU Defense Force cooperation was not unthinkable. The EU had already made significant investments in the region in its operations in helping to stabilize Afghanistan, as the second largest donor after the United States, with priority investments in setting up good governance mechanisms in customs, the justice system, and rule-making bodies.

#### Presentation 2:

Mr. Satin suggested that it was problematic to classify security concepts into "new" and "old" types, since any threat to a person's security means that, by definition, they are not secure. We need to be more open in identifying root causes of insecurity, such as the current economic recession. He encouraged EU cooperation in the region, suggesting the need for greater engagement with ASEAN and not just bilaterally. Some formal

arrangements in the region, such as ARF and the ASEAN Charter, are important legal devices, though it remains to be seen just how effective they will be. At a recent ASEAN meeting in Manila, NGO representatives, for example, were left out of the meeting, even though they were supposed to be included. Dealing with these omissions and addressing the economic crisis will be important for ensuring security in the region.

#### Audience Discussion:

Dr. Kamp asked what the role of China should be in the region. Dr. Lamers observed that China is a big and important player in the region and increasingly the world, and that the EU needs China to play a role in helping to solve the problems of the world in such places as North Korea and Darfur. Mr. Satin suggested that it would be good for ASEAN to cooperate with China but it has historically looked at China in measured fashion, which was why Japan and South Korea were included in the ASEAN+3. Dr. Chulacheeb offered that China was more an opportunity than a threat. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization came about through engagement with China, and since then, China is beginning to see that multi-lateral relations can pay dividends. Another discussant pointed out the need for collaborative international engagement to pay attention to multiple levels of government, not just the central government, but also at the village level, working with chiefs. Not to do so, as in Afghanistan, was a mistake. Another discussant drew attention to the fact that while the EU had recently made gains in collaboration on common defense matters, the ASEAN nations still lacked a common voice. Dr. Lamers asked whether it would be possible for Thailand to send troops on behalf of ASEAN as a first step towards civil-military structures, like the European Union Defense Force. Mr. Satin agreed that ASEAN could not afford to wait to create such measures but recognized that ASEAN had done so in the past. Amnat Pookrisuk argued that individual countries had domestic problems to work out first, and then similar domestic problems would need to be worked out within the ASEAN

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family of nations. Dr. Thitinan identified maritime security as a common security interest that could be tackled without infringing on the ASEAN principle of non-interference. Mr. Satin suggested that fighting the global economic recession might be another area. A representative from the Ministry of Defense explained that the reasons decisions move slower in ASEAN than in the EU was that ASEAN decisions are based on consensus. Dr. Lamers argued that there was no reason that ASEAN member states could not handle both their domestic and regional issues at the same time. While some Thailand might have disputes with Myanmar, Germany likewise sometimes has arguments with France. Decisions in the EU are made by consensus like ASEAN as well.