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**MINILATERALISM SHAPING ASEAN CENTRALITY:
THE CASE OF SULU-SULAWESI SEAS PATROL**

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18 October 2023

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Acceptance Page

This thesis titled “**MINILATERALISM SHAPING ASEAN CENTRALITY: THE CASE OF SULU-SULAWESI SEAS PATROL**” is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Management and Development Studies, U.P. Open University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of ASEAN Studies.

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Biographical Sketch

The researcher was born in 1990. Her name, inspired by the highest mountain pass in Switzerland, has always been a good icebreaker with strangers.

She earned her bachelor's degree in Political Science-Economics from the University of the Philippines Visayas in 2011. She previously worked for nine years as a research analyst in the security sector dealing with the country's national security situation. This played a role in her interest in pursuing a study in security cooperation.

Outside work, she is passionate about writing. One of her published articles in the Youngblood column of The Philippine Daily Inquirer was included in "Young Blood 7" launched in 2019. Someday, she dreams of submitting her work to the Palanca Awards.

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- Nuelene

Abstract

Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (INDOMALPHI) formed the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP) to confront the Abu Sayyaf Group's (ASG) abduction of ship crews in said areas. SSSP is categorized as minilateralism and was formed inside ASEAN. This study was conducted to understand how minilateralism will shape ASEAN centrality and how it will support ASEAN multilateralism. Data from the key informant interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality is a process that takes form in the series of meetings to launch SSSP. The normative purpose of ASEAN centrality which is linked to ASEAN's fundamental beliefs guided the INDOMALPHI states in implementing the SSSP. However, the language barrier between Indonesia and the Philippines affects the negotiation. Still, it can be addressed by the right mechanism.

Relatedly, the norm against regional defense cooperation which was deemed as a basic practice in ASEAN by Noordin Sopiee (Acharya, 2009, p.91) is the primary factor that push INDOMALPHI states to engage in a minilateral arrangement.

The success and effectiveness of SSSP present a new approach for ASEAN to consider when solving problems at the ASEAN level is not possible. Hence, minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism is about exploring other mechanisms and supplementing what is not feasible on the regional scale. With this, the study recommends strengthening the informal diplomacy or "*barkadahan*" concept to offer other options for member states in addressing their issues/concerns.

Keywords: *Minilateralism, ASEAN centrality, INDOMALPHI, Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol*

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The increase in non-traditional security (NTS) threats, namely terrorism, transnational crime, cybercrime, and climate change (Walsh, 2011) posed a challenge to the regional security of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Caballero-Anthony, 2017). Criminal groups exploit territorial and international waters, threatening the stability of different countries' economies and the civilian population in the region (Dabova, 2013). For instance, the ASEAN member states situated near Malacca Strait and Sulu-Sulawesi Seas faced the threats of piracy and kidnappings, respectively.

The Sulu-Sulawesi (Celebes) Seas became notorious in 2016 due to the abduction of ship crews by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). The 2016 annual report of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combatting Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) shows that the ASG executed 10 abduction incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas that resulted in 48 ship crews being abducted. The Sulu-Sulawesi Seas which are bounded by the states of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (INDOMALPHI) are similarly known for their maritime traffic (Rustam et al., 2022) just like the Malacca Strait. The sea lanes of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas function as a link between the three countries. Similarly, international trade that moves among Australia, Southeast, and Northeast Asia utilizes the said route (Storey, 2018).

Supertankers that weigh more than 200,000 tons choose to pass through the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas than the Malacca Strait (Rustam et al., 2022) due to the latter's depth constraints. This is particular to supertankers coming from East Asia and the Middle East (Febrica, 2014). The situation presented an opportunity for ASG to carry out abductions of ship crews and subsequently demand ransom in exchange for the crews' freedom (Rustam et al., 2022).

On 19 June 2017, the INDOMALPHI states launched the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrols (SSSP) to confront the ASG abductions (Hutchison, 2009). According to Storey (2018), the SSSP was modeled after Malacca Strait Seas Patrol (MSSP) or Operation MALSINDO. From 2016 to 2020, a total of 18 abductions of seafarers and fishermen in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas were carried out.

The initiative has helped curb the occurrence of abductions in the said area (Albek, 2021) with no more than three incidents per year as compared to 10 incidents in 2016, a year before SSSP was inaugurated. The SSSP and MSSP were categorized as minilateralism and formed inside ASEAN. According to Kahler (1992), minilateralism involves a small number of states cooperating with each other to ease impediments.

In line with this, this study is anchored on the research of Patrick (2015) who asserted that there is a likelihood that minilateralism will jeopardize the legitimacy and effectiveness of international organizations. Notably, the existence of SSSP within ASEAN could highlight how it shapes ASEAN

centrality and how its existing practices can strengthen ASEAN multilateralism. This study also discussed the factors that pushed ASEAN member states in engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP.

Due to a gap in research regarding minilateral arrangements within ASEAN, the researcher explored the factors surrounding the creation of SSSP. The existing practices of SSSP were also studied in connection with ASEAN multilateralism.

Statement of the Problem

In Southeast Asia, the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas play an important role in international sea trade. Supertankers coming from East Asia and the Middle East (Febrica, 2014) that cannot be accommodated in Malacca Strait due to its depth constraints choose to pass through the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (Rustam et al., 2022). Annually, around 3,900 ships with an estimated value of \$40 billion value of trade ply the maritime route. This situation has presented an opportunity for groups like the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) to abduct ship crews and demand ransom in exchange for the crews' freedom (Rustam et al., 2022).

Piracy is included in the 1997 ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crimes as one of the targeted crimes and is one of the priority areas listed in the plan of action of ASEAN (2016-2025) to fight global crimes (Beckman, 2022). Despite this, the 2016 ReCAAP annual report shows that the ASG executed 10 abduction incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas that resulted in 48 ship

crews being abducted. In line with this, in 2017, the INDOMALPHI states launched the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrols (SSSP) to confront the ASG abductions (Hutchison, 2009).

Also, prior to the spate of abductions in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, the Strait of Malacca was equally infamous due to piracy attacks in the early 2000s. Based on the International Maritime Bureau (2007), a total of 75 actual and attempted attacks transpired in 2000, a steep increase from only two attacks in 1999. As a result, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia established the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP) codenamed Operation MALSINDO (Southgate, 2015) on 20 July 2004.

General Question

This study asks: How can minilateralism involving the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas support ASEAN minilateralism?

To answer this general question, this study has sought to answer the following specific questions:

1. How does minilateralism shape ASEAN centrality?
2. What factors have given rise to minilateralism between and among the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas?

3. How can minilateralism between and among the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia support ASEAN multilateralism?

Research Objectives

As a contribution to ASEANOLOGY, this study aims to determine how minilateralism shapes ASEAN centrality and how its existence within ASEAN supports multilateralism in Southeast Asia. It also aims to strengthen informal diplomacy or minilateral groupings in the region.

This study's results are intended to help ASEAN explore new approaches to security cooperation before implementing a full regional mechanism. Hence, this study aims:

1. To describe how minilateral arrangements influence ASEAN centrality;
2. To identify the factors that drive the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia to participate in minilateral arrangements, and;
3. To identify the existing practices related to minilateralism that can support ASEAN multilateralism.

Significance of the Study

This study will open an opportunity to explore new approaches to security cooperation before implementing a full regional mechanism in dealing with NTS threats. It will also help in strengthening informal diplomacy or minilateral groupings in the region. The study's outcome will be helpful to the following sectors in understanding how minilateral arrangements influence ASEAN centrality and how the current practices related to minilateralism strengthened ASEAN multilateralism.

ASEAN Secretariat

This study's findings present an opportunity to explore alternative approaches in addressing issues that only affected selected ASEAN member states. This can serve as a groundwork for a broader security cooperation mechanism.

Students of ASEAN Studies

This study provides the graduate students with an overview of how minilateral arrangements within ASEAN can serve as an alternative approach in addressing the NTS threats in Southeast Asia without undermining ASEAN's legitimacy.

Researchers

This study contributes to the knowledge of researchers on the state of minilateralism in Southeast Asia particularly its influence on ASEAN centrality and how it supports ASEAN multilateralism.

Security Sector

In the field of maritime and defense diplomacy, the study identified the best practices which can further enhance the confidence-building measures with other neighboring countries while being responsive to the concerns on the grounds.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter examined the related literature on the history of piracy in maritime Southeast Asia, abduction incidents in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, the norm against regional defense cooperation, minilateral arrangements within ASEAN, and ASEAN centrality.

A. History of Piracy in Southeast Asia

The trend of piracy is nothing new in Southeast Asia. Based on scholars, modern-day piracy in the region might have been influenced by the “culture of piracy” dating back to the late 1300s. The Western hegemonic powers pertained to the people who engaged in slave-raiding as pirates (Liss, 2003).

Shown below were the geography of INDOMALPHI states and their historical society with highlights on piracy as well as the modern livelihood in coastal communities.

1. Philippines

Geography

The Philippines occupies the eastern part of Southeast Asia with its eastern part bordered by the Pacific Ocean, Sulawesi (Celebes) Sea, Indonesia to the southern part, and the West Philippine Sea to the west. It has 7,107 islands, making the Philippines an archipelagic state (Mahiwo et al., 2013). The country is geographically divided into three groups of islands: Luzon to the

north, Visayas in the middle, and Mindanao to the south (United Nations, n.d.). Sulu geographically belonged to the Mindanao Island Group and is one of the five provinces under the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) (Bangsamoro Information Office, 2019).

The island of Sulu has four bays. Jolo Bay, a shallow indentation near the shore can be found northwest of the island. Maymbung (Maimbung) Bay is narrower and shallower compared to Jolo Bay but with deeper indentation. Si'it Bay and Tu'tu' Bay are in opposite directions of the island, with only six kilometers of land linking the middle and eastern areas of Sulu Island. Marshlands covered with mangroves characterized Tu'Tu Bay. It was also shallow just like the other bays surrounding the island (Saleeby, 1908).

Historical Society and Livelihood in Coastal Communities

Prior to or during the 13th century, Sulu engaged in trade with the Malay peninsula and Indonesia using the Malay language as the *lingua franca*. The language was also heavily utilized in the courts of Sulu. However, the arrival of Spaniards during the 17th century resulted in Sulu's gradual isolation from Malay and Indonesia. According to Cesar Adib Majul (1979), the southern part of Sulu identified as the town of Maimbung was where the earliest inhabitants settled down. They were followed by the people from Basilan called *Tagamahas* who established themselves in Sulu's northern part. Another wave of settlers identified as *Baklayas* arrived and settled in the east of Jolo. The last group of settlers was Bajaos and Samals who can be found around the Sulu islands.

Muslim communities all over the world have common problems which stem from geography, associations with Muslims and non-Muslims as well as their historical past which include political and social influences. To further understand Filipino Muslims, there are seven (7) assumptions to consider. First, there are at least twelve ethnolinguistic groups of Filipino Muslims situated on various islands, mostly belonging to different political subdivisions. Second, they are considered a minority in a predominantly Catholic nation (Majul, 1976).

Third, their customary laws and how they adhere to *Shari'a* have certain differences. Fourth, their exposure to other Muslims in Southeast Asia has various levels, with Tausug and Samal as the most exposed given that they are deemed as sea people. Fifth, their economic orientation is also divided into two: maritime and agricultural. Sixth, Filipino Muslims were not once regarded as part of the Spanish colony. Lastly, religion still plays a dominant role in the life of citizens (Majul, 1976).

Sulu's strategic location plays a significant role in trade and commerce. The island is surrounded by Mindanao mainland to the east and Borneo to the west. It also serves as a natural division between the Sulu Sea and Sulawesi (Celebes) Sea. Further, the Sulu people are deemed to be innate seafarers, being involved in trading as early 13th century with the help of the pearl industry. They also traded with China and Japan the following goods: amber, porcelain, silk, silver, and scented wood. Other trading partners are the three main islands of the Philippines, Malacca, Brunei, Java, Moluccas, and

Celebes. The small boats called *sapits* served as the means of trade between Sulu and other places (Saleeby, 1908).

Southeast Asia experienced the might of Sulu slave raiders from the end of the 18th century to the mid-19th century. These large-scale brutal feats were implemented on Borneo's west coast, crossing the South China Sea going to the Malacca Strait and as far as the Bay of Bengal in India. The populated islands in Southeast Asia have further fueled the Iranun-Balangingi raiding. They utilized the Makassar Strait to raid the coastal communities in Java and traversed Borneo (Warren, 1981).

Looking for captives, Balangingi and Iranun threatened the Philippines by targeting the coastal communities with poor defense in Southern Luzon and Visayas. They even brought their warships towards Manila Bay, jeopardizing the maritime trading lanes in Southeast Asia. The term *Illanun* or *Iranun* was used by British people to pertain to 'Sulu pirates.' Relatedly, the Dutch people dreaded the *Illanun* due to their brutality, tagging them as the coastal people from Southern Mindanao, Sulu, and some coastal zones in Borneo and Sumatra (Warren, 1981).

When the Philippines became a Spanish colony, the frequency of piracy was reduced when Spanish authorities obtained steamships that are faster compared to those being utilized by Iranun. The American period during the early 1900s further minimized piracy due to the technological progress in naval navigation. However, the independence declaration in 1946 once again

led to an increase in piracy. This is due to the proliferation of military surpluses such as modern firearms and motorized vessels. In the 21st century, the maritime trade in the area remains thriving. However, the threat of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) affected the populace who mainly depends on the seas for their living (The Asia Foundation, 2019).

In 2015, Sulu has a poverty incidence rate of 49.6, making the province one of the eight in the country with the highest poverty incidence among families (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015). Sulu is predominantly a Muslim community. According to Hassan (1992) as cited in Alatas (2005), three-fourths of the Muslims worldwide can be found in economically-challenged countries, hounded by high inflation, slow economic progress, and high illiteracy.

According to The Asia Foundation (2019), aside from fishing, the populace in Sulu engages in cross-border trading of goods such as traditional clothing, rice, sugar, palm oil, noodles, canned goods, chocolate drink, bath soap, and cigarettes. Sugar and cigarettes are the most profitable which can earn a maximum of PhP12.5M and PhP13.5M, respectively. Although cross-border trading is profitable, it also needs substantial capital.

Hence, there are some traders who engage in illegal counter-trading of goods. These goods include dried seaweeds, south sea pearls, Yakan woven clothes, Tausug attire, wines and liquors, bench perfumes, and medicines. Reportedly, a market for Philippine products can be found in North Borneo,

particularly within the Filipino communities in the area. Also, the Sabah federal state earns from the transshipment of goods coming outside the territory and crossing its boundaries (The Asia Foundation, 2019).

2. Indonesia

Geography

Indonesia, the largest archipelago in the world, is situated in the southern part of maritime Southeast Asia. It is composed of 17,508 islands, of which 6,000 are inhabited. The country is classified into three categories: (a) Greater Sunda Islands composed of Java, Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Sulawesi; (b) Lesser Sunda Islands which include Nusa Tenggara Komodo, Padar, and Rinca; and (c) the Moluccas situated in the peripheral islands (Mahiwo et al., 2013).

Generally, mountain ranges characterize the major islands. Also, the mountains came from volcanoes with some of them remaining active. With around 400 volcanoes, of which 100 are still active, the country is prone to movements of tectonic plates. The country is separated into 30 provinces, two special regions identified as Aceh and Yogyakarta, and one special capital city region which is Jakarta (Frederick and Worden, 2011).

These provinces and special regions are further segmented into 349 regencies, 91 cities, 5,656 subdistricts, and 71,563 villages. The country's capital is Jakarta which can be found in Java. On the other hand, Indonesia experiences two seasons, namely dry and wet seasons. The dry season

occurred from March to August while the wet season is from September to March (FAO, 2011).

Indonesia has a total of 21,579 kilometers of rivers, canals, and inland channels that are open for navigation. Its deep-sea ports are in Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and Sulawesi. Other ports can be found in Java, Riau, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, and Sumatera. Out of these ports, a total of 127 ports supervise international shipping (Frederick and Worden, 2011).

Historical Society and Livelihood in Coastal Communities

From the end of the fourth century AD until the middle of the fifth century AD, the first stone inscriptions written in Sanskrit were found in the eastern part of Kalimantan and western Java using an early script from southern India. This was called the Pallava script. There were two significant powers that ruled during the period from the middle of the sixth century to the eleventh century. These were Srivijaya and Mataram. Srivijaya was a Buddhist trading kingship located in the current Palembang in Sumatera Selatan Province. Its superiority lies in controlling the trade in Malacca Strait. They collect tax rates from maritime traders as payment for providing services and protection while in the area (Frederick & Worden, 2011).

Meanwhile, Mataram dynasty has its origins in south-central Java, particularly in Kedu Plain and the southern part of Mount Merapi. Mataram was characterized by the rivalry of two factions: one was the Sanjaya, a supporter of Shivaist Hinduism and the other was the Sailendra dynasty, a Mahayana

Buddhism supporter that has trade and familial links to Srivijaya. At one point, these two opposing factions were united by marriage. During the development, they were known for building *candi*, stone structures with intricate carvings. The most famous construction was Borobudur which can be found in Yogyakarta (Frederick & Worden, 2011).

In the 12th century, the Majapajit Kingdom, considered to be the most extensive kingdom in Southeast Asia, was founded. Its authority which relied on its military might cover 20 Java polities as direct royal domain and tributary states identified as Java, Bali, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and the Malay Peninsula. It also maintained trade relationships with Maluku, Sulawesi, and present-day Cambodia, China, Thailand, and Vietnam (Frederick & Worden, 2011).

In the 16th century, every year, some of the Iranun went to Reteh in Riau, Lampong, and Java's southern coast to collect bird's nests found among the coastal rocks in these areas. They also went to Gelasa Strait targeting prahus going to Malacca and combing the Bangka and Billiton coastal zones for slaves. The Iranun repeatedly raided Bangka between 1792 to 1804 which prompted the coastal people to escape and submit themselves to the slave dealers in Makassar. The town was destroyed after the frequent attacks (Warren, 1981).

Two-thirds of Indonesia's total area is made up of water. As an archipelago, the bodies of water surrounding the country play a role in its economy. Although oil and gas are one of the major economic sectors in

Indonesia, Bailey (1988) argued that the fisheries sector is more significant. The marine sector employed an estimated 1.3 million Indonesians. However, many Indonesian fishermen belonged to the poorest among the poor. One of the reasons is the overfishing in the seas of Java, Sulawesi, and Sumatra (Bailey, 1988).

In Muslim countries like Indonesia, the state directly interferes in economic production. This form of capitalism is called *ersatz* since the state is involved in the development of the economy (Kunio, 1988 as cited in Alatas, 2005).

3. Malaysia

Geography

Malaysia is surrounded by Thailand and South China to the north, Indonesia to the south, Malacca Strait to the west, and Brunei Darussalam and Sulawesi (Celebes) Sea to the east. The country is divided into two regions: the Malay Peninsula and Malaysian Borneo (Mahiwo et al., 2013). The country's coastline borders the Malacca and Singapore Straits, the Andaman Sea, the Gulf of Thailand, the South China Sea, and the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (UN Environment Programme, n.d.).

The eastern shore of the Malay Peninsula is characterized by sandy formations and bays while the western coast has muddy formations with partially sandy shores. Malaysia's coastal zone covers 13 % of the country's total land mass. It has a crucial role in the country's socio-economy and

environment as it sustains most of the population and is where the core of economic activities transpired (Abdullah, 1993).

Historical Society and Livelihood in Coastal Communities

The *Tuhfat al Nafis* narrated how the Iranun arrived at the Malacca Straits and how the Dutch authority struggle to control the tin trade from the Buginese people who were from Sulawesi, Indonesia, and the decision of Malay Sultan Mahmud to ask the Iranun to help him in drive away the Dutch from Riau. After the attack against the Dutch garrison in May 1787, the Iranun settled down discreetly on Sumatra's eastern coast. They carried out raids starting in May targeting the coasts of Siam, Malacca Strait, and Kedah. During the shifting of monsoon, the Iranun crossed the South China Sea toward Tempasuk (Sabah) and Sulu (Warren, 1981).

The Iranun-led incidents affected the trade interests of British and Dutch people in the area. The higher authorities highlighted the need to deploy armed vessels to defend the prahus (small sailboats) that conduct trade against the Iranun. Selling their services to Malay rulers for political interest was also common during this time. For instance, Syed Ali who came from Siak nobility raided the Songkhla in Siam's southeast coastal zone in 1789. They burned the town and abducted a large group of the populace, inflicting damage on the land communication between Malacca Strait and South China Sea, and commandeered two junks from the Chinese (Warren, 1981).

Similarly, the Sultan of Kedah summoned the Iranun to expel the British from Penang with a contract stating the planned massacre of the garrison in exchange for 20,000 US dollars and guaranteed assistance in case of failure. The British were able to decipher and counter the plan. However, Iranun's presence near Penang created commotion and instilled fear in the area (Warren, 1981).

Since Malaysia is a Muslim country, its economy is directly managed by the state. With an economic system in the form of *ersatz*, the Malaysian state is deemed independent from the prevailing classes, an indication of its own interests (Alatas, 2005). Malaysia's coastal population is estimated at 29.9 million. In 2015, its marine fisheries generated an income of 2.1 billion US dollars, contributing 1.3 % of the country's gross domestic product. The ports and shipping have a Gross Value Added of 226.7 million US dollars (UN Environment Programme, n.d.).

B. Abduction Incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas

Bodies of water cover approximately 80 percent of Southeast Asia (Bradford, 2005). Aside from the Strait of Malacca which is known to be one of the most active naval transport lanes globally (Liss, 2007), the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas which are bounded by the states of INDOMALPHI are similarly known for their maritime traffic (Rustam et al., 2022).

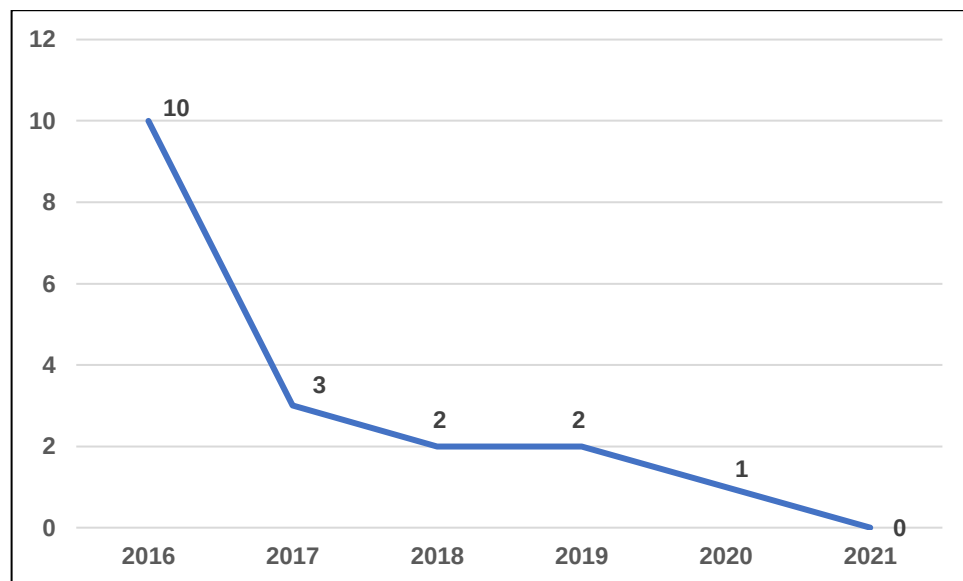
The Sulu Sea is estimated to be 100,000 square miles and is surrounded to the northwest by Palawan and by the Sulu archipelago to the

southeast, both parts of the Philippines; and to the southwest by Sabah, Malaysia (Storey, 2018). The neighboring Sulawesi Sea is around 110,000 square miles and is bounded by the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao to the north, Sabah and Kalimantan, Indonesia to the west, and Sulawesi, Indonesia to the south. The sea lanes of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas function as a link between the three countries. Similarly, international trade that moves among Australia, Southeast, and Northeast Asia utilizes the said route (Storey, 2018).

Annually, around 3,900 ships with an estimated value of \$40 billion value of trade ply the maritime route. Supertankers that weigh more than 200,000 tons choose to pass through the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas than the Malacca Strait (Rustam et al., 2022) due to the latter's depth constraints. This is particular to supertankers coming from East Asia and the Middle East (Febrica, 2014).

The situation presented an opportunity for ASG to carry out abductions of ship crews and subsequently demand ransom in exchange for the crews' freedom (Rustam et al., 2022). The 2016 annual report of ReCAAP shows that the ASG executed 10 abduction incidents in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas that resulted in 48 ship crews being abducted.

Figure 1. Number of Abduction Incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (2016-2021)



Source: ReCAAP Annual Reports: 2016-2021

In 2017, a total of 11 crews were abducted as the ASG perpetrated three abduction incidents. Three crews were abducted in 2018 while 11 crews were abducted in 2019. The last abduction was perpetrated in 2020 with a total of eight crews abducted. As of December 2022, all ship crews were already released and rescued (ReCAAP, 2022).

C. Norm against Regional Defense Cooperation

According to Acharya (2005), the regional interactions in Asia after 1945 which were shaped by normative forces had resulted in the absence of defense cooperation. This presented collective defense as a new form of intervention from great powers. Acharya (2005) further argued that there are three reasons why the defense cooperation, particularly the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) failed. First, this defense cooperation lacked

regional representation and participation as opposed to ASEAN. It made Thailand and the Philippines more insecure about their sovereignty and identity.

Second, countries in Southeast Asia were quick to abandon SEATO when ideas emerged showing more representation of the region. This is the reason behind the success of ASEAN, deemed as native to Southeast Asia when it comes to representation. Third, the norm against defense cooperation served as the foundation to diminish the legitimacy of attempting to create a successor to SEATO (Acharya, 2005).

Jawaharlal Nehru was one of the greatest critics of collective defense in Asia, claiming that these treaties implied power politics on a global scale. As he opposed the collective defense, he highlighted the principle of non-intervention and equality of states. Burma, Indonesia, and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) also opposed the idea of collective defense with Burma (now Myanmar) stating that it would be dominated by the larger power if it participates in the collective pact. Indonesia further stated that collective defense will challenge its independent foreign policy while Ceylon wanted to avoid giving the impression of siding with anyone during the Cold War (Acharya, 2011).

Relatedly, the so-called “Bandung injunction” urged the Southeast Asian nations to abstain from engaging in collective defense that served the interests of major powers. Although ASEAN dropped the intention of developing collective defense, its policies showed the norm against collective defense.

Similarly, the lack of threats could also be the reason why collective defense is not welcomed in Southeast Asia (Acharya, 2005).

Following the opposition against collective defense which was expressed during the Bandung Conference held in April 1955, the norm against regional defense cooperation shaped the regionalism in Asia. The injunction became a general norm against collective defense because of fear that regional defense cooperation might give the impression of another SEATO. Hence, collective defense was not mentioned in the founding documents of ASEAN (Acharya, 2011).

D. Minilateral arrangements within ASEAN

The growing concern in the Malacca Strait about piracy and abductions in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas amid Indonesia and Malaysia's rejection of security proposals from non-ASEAN countries have pushed them to engage in minilateralism (Huang, 2008; Raymond, 2009). Another reason is the fact that ASEAN lacks a definite apparatus to deal with piracy and abduction incidents in said areas (Beckman, 2022).

By no means can the term 'minilateralism' be considered a relatively new concept in international relations (Parameswaran, 2018). In 1992, Miles Kahler coined the term "minilateralism," defining it as informal groups, composed of a small number of states to ease impediments to cooperation. Also, these minilateral arrangements are formed inside established multilateral organizations. Subsequently, Moises Naim popularized the term

“minilateralism” in 2009 (Patrick, 2015) when he defined it as an excellent and more tailored way of grouping the least number of states (Naim, 2009).

For his part, Tow (2018) gave a more detailed definition, stating that minilateralism is an informal initiative with three to four states which intends to address security-related concerns. Relatedly, Tan (2017) viewed minilateralism as an issue-based collaboration among subgroups of prominent multilateral actions. It allows countries within geographically defined areas or regions (Vannarith, 2019) to go beyond the outdated frameworks of existing institutions and address their mutual concerns (Tirkey, 2021).

However, Attinà and Irrera (2010) claimed that for one to better grasp the notion of minilateralism, it should be studied as a nexus between unilateralism and multilateralism, placed at the continuum’s focal point. Minilateralism is a “form of collective action of small groups of states that accept compliance with worldwide multilateral principles” but either one time or frequently acting separately from international institutions. In other words, minilateralism is a multilateralism implemented by a small cluster of states limiting the membership intentionally (Attinà & Irrera, 2010, p.58).

The 21st century in Southeast Asia has witnessed a rise in minilateral arrangements, particularly among external powers such as the USA, the UK, Australia, Japan, India, and France (Chen, 2021). He (2019) pertains to this development as ‘contested multilateralism 2.0’, being led by external countries.

This made it distinct from the ASEAN-led multilateralism aside from the fact that the 2008 global financial crisis set off this phenomenon.

Multilateralism 2.0 has three characteristics: (1) it is led by a powerful non-ASEAN country, either the USA, China, Japan, South Korea, or Australia; (2) it deals with traditional and non-traditional security and economic threats in Indo-Pacific but mainly focusing on East Asia; and (3) it “coexists, competes and interacts” with ASEAN and other established institutions in influencing the regional order in Asia-Pacific (He, 2019, p.212).

The Quad formally called Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the defense partnership among Australia, the USA, and the UK (AUKUS) are examples of multilateralism 2.0. Their existence has influenced Southeast Asia’s strategic landscape (Djalal, 2021). However, as argued by Glosserman (2022), these groupings that are known as minilateral arrangements in Asia-Pacific are built on the following principles: (1) it recognizes that the current defense apparatuses are neither enough to serve as deterrence nor protect the region against an attack. Second, they consider the situation of entering a small coalition with like-minded members can overcome the gap and subsequently increase the membership.

Meanwhile, Koga (2022) stated that these minilateral defense cooperations developed due to China’s rising momentum and the absence of operational apparatus in the Indo-Pacific to address the said occurrence.

Within ASEAN, the trend of minilateralism is not new. Although ASEAN-led arrangements tend to be dominant, there have already minilateral arrangements been since the 1990s. These are the 1994 Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) and the 1995 Mekong River Commission composed of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam (Parameswaran, 2018).

The surge in the frequency of piracy attacks in Malacca Strait in 2000 and 2004 has led to international pressure from stakeholders (Raymond, 2009) to address the safety concerns in the area. Despite the littoral states being primarily responsible for maintaining security in the area (Bateman, 2006), Malaysia and Indonesia considered the piracy issue as domestic in nature. Notably, the two states jointly asserted their sovereignty over the Malacca Strait during the Ministerial Meeting of the Straits on 16 November 1971. Nevertheless, they acknowledged the use of passageways for international shipping (Leifer & Nelson, 1973).

For affected stakeholders, they anchored their concerns on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Article 43 of UNCLOS declares that user states can also cooperate with states bordering the area on concerns such as safety and environmental protection. In line with this, Japan proposed to establish a regional coast guard in 1999 but was met with opposition from China (Huang, 2008).

In 2004, the United States Pacific Command recommended carrying out patrols in the Malacca Strait by the US Marines as expressed in the US Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI). Despite Singapore expressing its support, the proposal was met with disapproval from Indonesia and Malaysia due to concerns over sovereignty intrusion in the area (Sittnick, 2005; Raymond, 2009).

Further, Indonesia perceived the initiative as too military-oriented (Febrica, 2014) while Malaysia said that it would not welcome the presence of the US military (Sittnick, 2005). Amid the difficulties in addressing the piracy problem, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia officially launched the Malacca Strait Patrols (Operation MALSINDO) in 2004 (Massey, 2008).

Such is also the case of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas wherein Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines are primarily responsible for securing the tri-border area. The notoriety of ASG every time the group abducts ship crews instilled widespread fear in the stakeholders and generated international condemnation and pressure. This subsequently resulted in the launching of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (Quilop, 2018; Storey, 2018) on 19 June 2017.

Initially, prior to the launching of SSSP, the Joint Declaration on Immediate Measures to Address Security Issues in the Maritime Areas of Common Concern laid out four objectives namely, (1) conduct patrols, (2) render assistance to people and ships in distress, (3) establish a national focal

point, and (4) communication hotline (Quilop, 2018). During the launch, the defense ministers announced that the three countries established maritime command centers in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi (Philippines), Tarakan, Kalimantan (Indonesia), and Tawau, Sabah (Malaysia). This was intended for easier coordination of patrols and intelligence sharing (Ikram, 2018). Last March 2022, the three countries once again expressed commitment to strengthen the Trilateral Cooperative Agreement (TCA), particularly the situation in Sulu and Sulawesi Seas (Vietnam News Agency, 2022).

According to Cooper (2023), there are several reasons why affected member states are engaging in minilateralism: (a) minilateral arrangements are more inclined to deal with a specific issue; (b) a smaller number of states as members suggest that it is easier to find common ground; and, (c) these arrangements are usually informal in nature which can adapt and convene depending on the situation. With these, the states can easily implement initiatives as compared to multilateral arrangements. Parameswaran (2018) also remarked that the existence of minilateralism is partly because higher institutions cannot timely and effectively resolve pressing issues.

Despite these reasons, it is undeniable that minilateralism also has its limits. Since minilateral arrangements mostly occur in an informal setting, they could deviate from the original goal since there is a lack of frameworks and organizing principles. Also, the lack of institutionalization could mean that these arrangements are short-lived. There could also be a problem in interpersonal relations especially if there is a change in administration. Less communication

among minilateral members could weaken the capability of minilateralism in the long run (Anuar & Hussain, 2021).

E. ASEAN centrality

The celebration of ASEAN's 50th year last August 8, 2017, has shown its evolution as a regional bloc since the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on August 8, 1967. During the post-Cold War era, ASEAN has been leading the confidence-building measures in the region through its neutral stance and consultative means (Baviera, 2017). Hoang (2017) maintained that ASEAN traditionally opted for informal arrangements. However, to catch up with regional integration, it has become more institutionalized.

With this, the ASEAN laid its plan contained in the document "ASEAN Community Vision 2025" to realize a community that is united, integrated, and sustainable (Caballero-Anthony, 2017). The said document and the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint 2025 showed ASEAN's aspirations to ensure a community that respects the rule of law and prioritizes and empowers its people in an orderly and secured environment with improved capability to deal with issues and concerns (ASEAN, 2015).

Maintaining harmony and security within the Southeast Asian region immensely supported the regional bloc in forming regional bodies and improving integration towards establishing the ASEAN Community. The subsequent developments led to the recognition of ASEAN in the global arena. Caballero-Anthony (2014) referred to this situation as the 'ASEAN centrality.'

Although the term is fundamentally used in discourses within regional security platforms (Caballero-Anthony, 2022) and in ASEAN official documents, Acharya (2017) remarked that the definition of ASEAN centrality is still vague. He also argued that the idea of ASEAN centrality is the most challenging transformation (p. 274) of ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Notably, the concept of ASEAN centrality took form after its opposing stance on Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia during the 1980s. It was followed by engagements in multilateral dialogues, with ASEAN expanding its membership to ten countries (p. 275).

The term ASEAN centrality can also be tracked during the 2nd ASEAN Regional Forum on 01 August 1995 where the previous ASEAN Chairman, Thailand, stated that “a successful ARF requires the active, full, and equal participation and cooperation of all participants. However, ASEAN undertakes the obligation to be the primary driving force” (Chalermpananupap, 2017, p. 12). On 25 July 2006, foreign ministers attending the 39th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting issued a joint communique that states their reiteration of the importance of preserving ASEAN centrality to assist the realization of the ASEAN community. This is the earliest official communication of ASEAN centrality (Chalermpananupap, 2017).

Relatedly, Ho (2012) argued that the ASEAN centrality is based on the premise that ASEAN is a “neutral platform” for external powers to avoid the hegemony of one state within the region. Laksmana (2020) also noted that ASEAN centrality is not an outcome but rather a process. In 2008, ASEAN

Charter defined the concept as being the “primary driving force” in shaping and influencing the regional bloc’s cooperation with external powers. Hence, ASEAN centrality is a constant process of engagement with non-ASEAN countries (Laksmana, 2020).

For Acharya (2017), the ASEAN centrality has two purposes, namely, strategic and normative. On strategic, external powers viewed the principle as convenient to establish and maintain a relationship in the region without opposing nationalism and developing apprehensions (Acharya, 2017). On normative, ASEAN centrality is directly linked to ASEAN’s identity and fundamental beliefs. By assuming that the kind of regionalism built on the so-called ASEAN way is “inclusive, open, and non-constraining” (Acharya, 2017, p.275), the regional bloc could project a secured platform to conduct confidence-building measures, discuss security concerns, and encourage the use of strategic restraint (p.276).

ASEAN centrality can be manifested in five forms (Caballero-Anthony, 2022). First is ASEAN’s leading role towards better institutionalization and diplomatic unity (Tan, 2017), as cited in Caballero-Anthony (2022). Second, ASEAN functions as the regional convenor and provides a “neutral” platform for dialogues and events, collectively pulling the states in the region, whether big or small.

Third, ASEAN is the core of Asia’s regional architecture, assuring that emerging regional groups will not be marginalized. Fourth, ASEAN serves as

the regional driver of progress, pushing for the implementation of goals and commitments including the launching of the ASEAN community's three pillars and creating roadmaps, among others. Lastly, ASEAN delivers a highly accessible and satisfactory venue for expanding multilateral cooperation in Asia (Tan, 2017), as cited in Caballero-Anthony (2022).

On the other hand, ASEAN centrality remains to be challenged by the weakening of cohesion within the regional bloc (Acharya, 2017) which can be attributed to divisive issues such as Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya and the South China Sea dispute. To note, Acharya (2017) argued that ASEAN centrality depends on the existence of unity among member states and the regional bloc's neutrality.

F. Research Gap

The researcher, guided by Miles' (2017) proposed framework on research gaps, identified the research gap in this study. It was found that there is a knowledge void in the prior studies concerning minilateralism in Southeast Asia. For instance, Chhang et al. (2022) only focused on minilateralism in Indo-Pacific involving Quad countries (Australia, India, Japan, and the USA) and ASEAN as well as its implications for a rules-based regional order. It also discussed the effects of Quad-led minilateralism on ASEAN centrality and unity.

Relatedly, Hoang (2022) highlighted the developments in minilateralism in Southeast Asia following the consolidation and formation of Quad and AUKUS (Australia, the UK, and the USA) in line with the USA's

strategy in the region. For their part, Jose and Prasetyo (2021) emphasized the role of Indonesia and ASEAN in ensuring the regional bloc's centrality while sustaining diplomatic relations with Quad and other countries.

On the other hand, Vannarith (2019) explored the two dimensions of minilateralism and its impacts on ASEAN centrality. It discussed the MSSP and SSSP, falling under the category of political-security minilateralism, and their impact on ASEAN centrality. However, this subject remains under-researched given that it was only in 2004 that MSSP was created and followed by SSSP in 2016.

This aspect should be studied to understand how minilateral arrangements influence ASEAN centrality; identify the factors that drive the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia to engage in minilateralism, and; how existing practices related to minilateralism can support ASEAN multilateralism.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the analytical and operational frameworks used in this study. It also describes the study's research design. Relatedly, this chapter organized the methods to be used to gather, analyze, and report data.

Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative case study design that discusses how minilateralism shapes ASEAN centrality and identifies the factors that have pushed the ASEAN member states to engage in minilateralism.

Qualitative case study research intends to enable the study of a phenomenon within its setting by employing several sources of data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to Gerring (2004), a case study is “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (p. 342). This is particularly used in the field of social sciences. The method is ideal when addressing “how” or “why” questions on phenomena that are out of the researcher’s control (Gray, 2004). The data sources utilizing this methodology include individual interviews, questionnaires, published documents, and other pertinent resources.

According to Yin (1981), evidence that is used in a case study can be gathered from observation, archives, verbal reports, fieldwork, or a combination of any of them. Also, the process in qualitative research includes developing inquiries and methods, information collected in the subject’s environment,

analysis of data inductively building from specific to common themes, and the researcher's interpretation of data (Creswell, 2009, p.4).

Relatedly, Creswell (2009) states that in case study research, the thorough report of either setting or an individual is followed by the analysis of data and themes.

Framework of the Study

The theory of constructivism guided this research in explaining why the affected ASEAN member states entered minilateral arrangements to confront the NTS threats. Wendt (1992) states that "a fundamental principle of constructivist theory is that people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis that the objects have for them" (p.396-397).

Constructivists believe that state behavior is based on beliefs, identities, and norms. They also view power as a crucial factor but in terms of diplomacy, centered on culture and dialogue (Mingst, 2003).

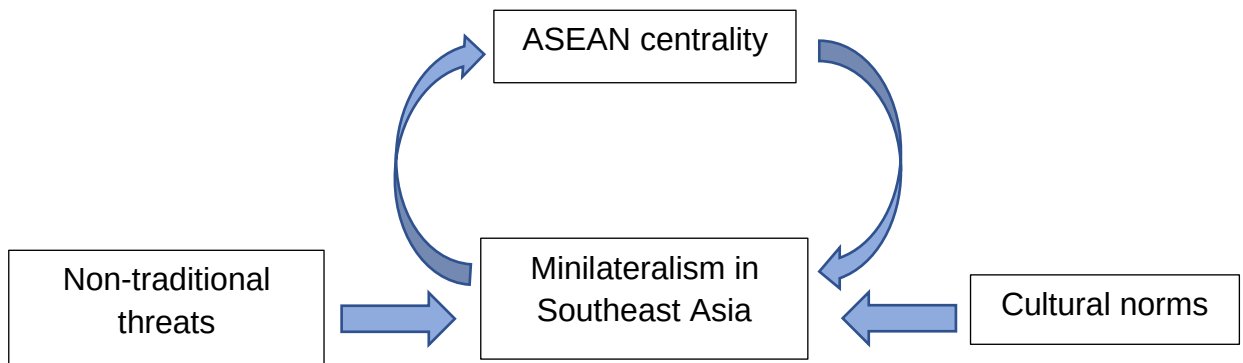
In international politics, constructivists believe it is based on common and established norms, ideas, and beliefs actors possess. State and non-state actors e.g., international, and non-governmental organizations participate in intersubjective interactions. They also believe that the international structure is based on social norms and law which can affect the identities and interests of actors and possible outcomes of negotiations (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012).

Driver (2018) argues that the norms relating to ASEAN were shaped to develop an appropriate institution and solve the pressing issues in the region. As the regional bloc persists in observing the prevailing norms, it is intended to reaffirm the member states' identities. Said identity has created cohesive values which were crucial in preventing aggression among each other (p.83).

An example of this norm is the rejection of collective defense in the region by Southeast Asian countries. This is evident in ASEAN's attitude towards defense cooperation which could have been influenced by fear of replicating another Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (Acharya, 2009, p.89). The refusal to enter collective defense cooperation was classified as a basic practice in ASEAN by Noordin Sopiee as cited in Acharya (2009, p.91). This was displayed in the rejection of the USA's proposal for the RMSI in 2004 (Acharya, 2009).

Instead, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia established the MSSP to handle the issue of piracy in the Strait. This was followed by the launching of SSSP in 2017, modeled after MSSP as agreed among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to address the abduction incidents in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (Storey, 2018).

Figure 2. Framework of the Study



The study framework focuses on (1) non-traditional threats such as piracy and abduction of ship crews in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas and (2) the cultural norms (in this regard, the norms against regional defense cooperation) that have pushed the INDOMALPHI states to engage in minilateral arrangements which have complemented ASEAN centrality and supported ASEAN multilateralism.

Operational Framework

As a guide in conducting this research, the researcher will follow four phases: (1) literature review and conceptual study; (2) development of research instrument; (3) collection of data and analysis; and, (4) completion of research as shown below:

Figure 3. Operational Framework

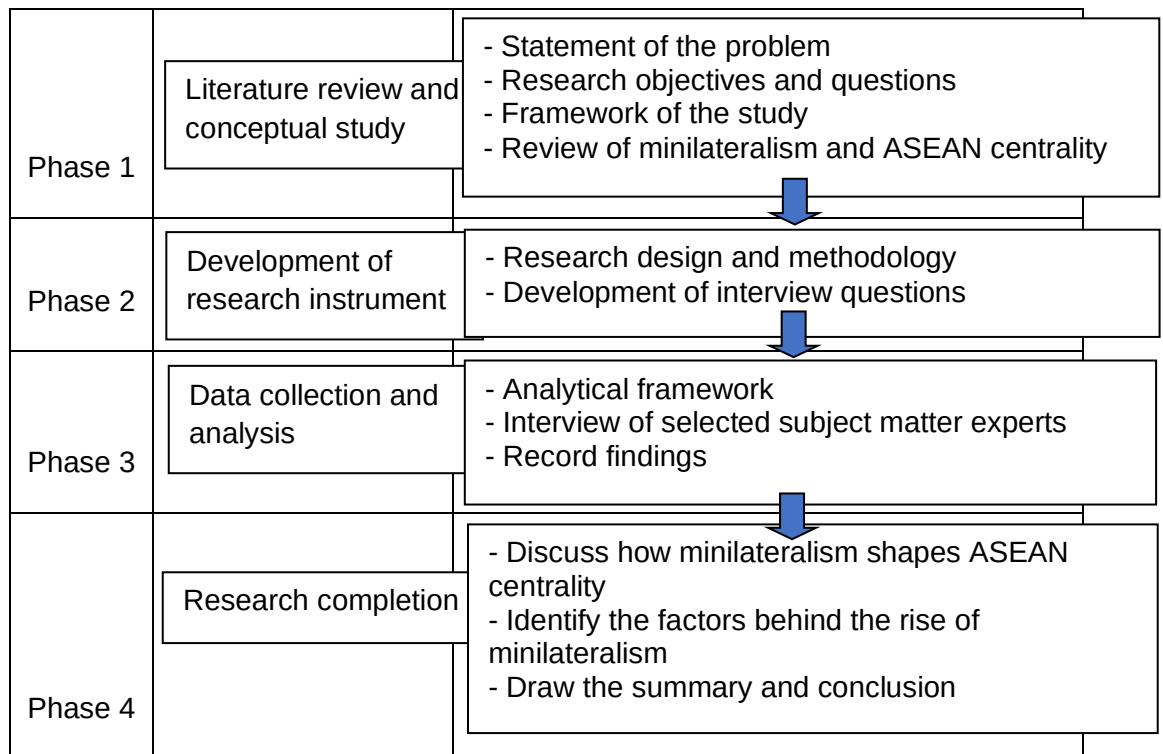


Figure 3 describes the four phases of this study. Phase 1 focused on a literature review and conceptual study. During this phase, the researcher developed the statement of the problem and identified the research objectives and questions. In addition, the researcher discussed the framework of the study; and reviewed the concepts of minilateralism and ASEAN centrality.

Phase 2 focused on selecting a research design apt for the study as well as the methodology. During this phase, the researcher developed interview questions for selected subject matter experts. Phase 3 concentrated on data collection thru interviews and subsequent analysis after the findings were recorded. During Phase 4, the researcher completed the study through the discussion of how minilateralism shapes ASEAN centrality; identified the

factors behind the rise of minilateralism, and; summarized the results followed by a conclusion.

Scope and Delimitation

This research study primarily focused on SSSP and how it has shaped ASEAN centrality; why the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia engaged in minilateralism; and how SSSP supports ASEAN multilateralism. The minilateral arrangements of non-Southeast Asian states in the Indo-Pacific region and their effects on ASEAN will not be included in the discussion since these have often been covered in previous research.

Definition of Key Terms

ASEAN centrality – According to ASEAN Charter, it serves as the “primary driving force” in shaping and influencing the regional bloc’s cooperation with external powers (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008).

INDOMALPHI – a contraction of the names of the three (3) ASEAN member states, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Minilateralism – An informal initiative with three to four states which intends to address security-related concerns (Tow, 2018).

Multilateralism – It refers to the institutional coordination of more than three states in accordance with general principles without considering the particular interest of each member (Ruggie, 1992).

Non-traditional security (NTS) threats – It has three characteristics: (a) they undermine economic progress and society's stability, (b) the traditional military and law enforcement capabilities cannot contain these threats, and (c) are perpetrated by non-state actors (Dabova, 2013, p 53). Examples of NTS threats include piracy and abduction of ship crews (Dabova, 2013).

Piracy – According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), it “is any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed: (i) on the high seas against another ship or aircraft, or against person or property on board such ship or aircraft (ii) against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any state.”

Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol – A cooperative framework between INDOMALPHI states launched on 19 June 2017 to address the ASG-led abduction incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (Storey, 2018).

Data Collection Methods

Key Informant Interviews

This study used a combination of online and email interviews as the primary data collection method and followed a semi-structured interview approach to gather the views and opinions of the key informants. Request letters were sent to key informants (See Appendix A). According to Ugwu & Eze (2023), online interviews can maximize time constraints because it does not require the researcher and the selected interviewee to be present at the same place and time.

In conducting these online interviews, research ethics were adhered to. According to Fujii (2012), ethics is significant in conducting political science research including ethnographies, surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, or field experiments. This is because research in this field involves “human subjects” (p.712). Sometimes, data obtained from subject participants in research may be “harmful, damaging, and embarrassing” to their privacy and other people who can be potentially implicated (Hackett et al., 2016, p.35). In other words, research ethics is intended to protect human subjects (Sieber & Tolich, 2012, p.1).

The researcher also prepared a consent form (Appendix B) to inform the key informants of the following: the objectives and manner of conducting the study; the right to ask questions; the non-disclosure of their personal information; and, the usage of the information collected (Hackett et al., 2016).

An email interview was also conducted as part of the data gathering method for the key informants who were not available for an online interview due to inconvenient schedules. Ratislavova and Ratislav (2014) stated that an email interview can be a concession for informants who prefer anonymity and those caught up in the workload of their current jobs.

Due to conflict in schedules and security concerns within the informants' jobs, the email interview was the best option for gathering data without compromising their anonymity. The researcher sent a structured interview questionnaire for the informants to answer during their free time. Included in the email were the Informed Consent Letter and the study's overview for their reference. The communication line was also kept open should there be additional concerns regarding the study. The informants sent back their answers through email.

Desk Review

For the secondary data collection method, this study utilized information from books discussing international relations; reputable academic journals from the e-libraries of JSTOR, Project MUSE, and Taylor and Francis Online dealing with the research topic, and essential published information coming from government agencies and non-governmental organizations (Ugwu & Eze, 2023).

Research Ethics

In conducting this study, the researcher made sure to get the consent of potential informants to be included in the personal/online/email interviews. After which, the request letter and Informed Consent Form were handed out and sent over electronic mail. The researcher also respected the demands of informants to maintain their anonymity. Similarly, it was made sure that the information revealed by the informants can be disclosed and will not in any way compromise the research ethics on confidentiality.

Research Instrument

The questions that formed part of the guide (Appendix C) during the key informant interviews were developed in line with the research objectives. The questions mainly focused on the advantages of SSSP, the future of minilateralism in Southeast Asia, and SSSP's best practices that can support ASEAN multilateralism. To increase the validity of the information, the researcher asked the key informants to review the synthesis of their interviews for their accuracy (Bashir et al., 2008). The key informants were asked to confirm what had been transcribed based on their answers and what they meant with their answers to avoid misinterpreting and generalizing the situation.

Data Analysis

Following the consolidation of the gathered data from the personal interviews, and online and email interviews of key informants, the researcher used thematic analysis. According to Merriam (2009), the approach of thematic analysis suggests that the collection of data and the preliminary analysis occurs

simultaneously. While the research develops, the analysis also becomes more extensive.

After the consolidation of data, the researcher engaged with the information by familiarizing the interview transcripts and taking down notes, and comments made during the interview. It was followed by generating initial codes from the data extracts. Next was searching for themes wherein the data were all re-read and the initial codes were combined to come up with potential themes before further filtering them. It was also checked if they were in line with this study's research objectives.

Subsequently, the researcher reviewed the themes to identify which of them can be discarded or merged with other themes. Next, the researcher defined and finally named the themes that likely revealed information and answered the study's research questions. Lastly, the researcher interpreted the data thru narratives.

Profile of Key Informants

Since this study focused on Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol as a minilateral arrangement within ASEAN, the researcher conducted interviews with individuals who are considered subject matter experts in defense cooperation and those involved in the implementation of SSSP. Their profiles were shown in the table below:

Table 1.

Profile of Key Informants

Category	Number	Gender	
		Male	Female
I	2	2	0
II	1	1	0
III	4	3	1
IV	1	1	0
Total	8	7	1

The category refers to the offices where the informants are or used to be assigned. These categories can be deemed as primary offices that deal with maritime concerns and defense cooperation.

Key Informant 1 was a former representative in the Ministerial Meeting on the INDOMALPHI Trilateral Cooperative Agreement (TCA) and occupied a key position in the Department of National Defense.

Key Informant 2 was a member of the Philippine defense delegation to Indonesia that discussed maritime issues and is part of the Joint Task Force (JTF) Tawi-Tawi stationed in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

Key Informant 3 is a member of the AFP intelligence community with expertise in the Abu Sayyaf Group and is currently assigned to Jolo, Sulu.

Key Informant 4 is also a member of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) intelligence community and works on maritime concerns in Southeast Asia.

Key Informants 5, 6, and 7 are all members of the AFP intelligence community and work on maritime and naval concerns.

Key Informant 8 is a member of the AFP with a doctorate in Peace and Development. He hailed from Sanga-Sanga in Tawi-Tawi.

Inclusion Criteria

A total of eight (8) key informants working or had been assigned to the Department of National Defense (DND), Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi, and the AFP intelligence community were interviewed. The key informant from DND has been involved with the negotiation of SSSP from 2016 to 2022 while the people from the AFP intelligence community have been dealing with maritime and naval concerns for five to 10 years.

Relatedly, the key informant from JTF Tawi-Tawi had been occupying the position for more than two years. However, their exposure and experience on the ground made them eligible to be interviewed for the study. As the discussion progresses, the key informant will be referred to as “K1”, “K2” and so forth.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents and analyzes the results of the data gathering, relevant to this study.

A. Minilateralism shaping ASEAN Centrality

In 2008, ASEAN Charter defined the concept as being the “primary driving force” in shaping and influencing the regional bloc’s cooperation with external powers. However, for Caballero-Anthony (2022), ASEAN centrality is maintaining harmony and security within the Southeast Asian region immensely supporting the regional bloc in forming regional bodies and improving integration towards establishing the ASEAN Community. Similarly, Acharya (2017) argues that the ASEAN centrality has two purposes: strategic and normative. Its strategic purpose deals with external powers while the normative purpose is directly linked to ASEAN's identity and fundamental beliefs.

To answer this study’s general question of how minilateralism shapes ASEAN centrality, the researcher focused on the normative purpose of ASEAN centrality. This study found that minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality is a process. This process takes form in the series of meetings of INDOMALPHI states that led to the creation of SSSP, considering the ASEAN principles of consensus and non-interference in the creation and implementation of said arrangement.

1. Series of Meetings of INDOMALPHI States

Prior to the launching of SSSP in 2017, the INDOMALPHI states had already conducted a series of meetings. On 05 May 2016, the foreign ministers of INDOMALPHI states released the Joint Declaration on Immediate Measures to Address Security Issues in the Maritime Areas of Common Concern. Said declaration was supported by their defense ministers during the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) when they met on the sidelines on 26 May 2016 in Laos (Quilop, 2018).

Although the defense ministers were not present during the release of the joint declaration, they agreed to instruct their respective armed forces to speed up the cooperation. On 20 June 2016, the defense ministers met in Manila. It was only less than a month after the first meeting which showed the three countries' commitment to realize cooperation. On 14 July 2016, the armed forces of the three countries signed a framework of arrangements that contained the same information from the joint declaration (Quilop, 2018).

On 02 August 2016, the three defense ministers met to finalize and implement the three standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the Trilateral Cooperative Agreement (TCA) as follows: (1) maritime patrol and rendering immediate assistance; (2) operating guidelines on information and intelligence sharing; and (3) combined communication plan (Ikram, 2018). In September 2016, Department of National Defense Delfin Lorenzana attended the third meeting which was held on the sidelines of the US-ASEAN Defense Dialogue in Hawai'i (Quilop, 2018).

In October 2016, the 4th meeting was held in Indonesia. During this time, the area of cooperation known as the “transit corridor” has been identified by the respective armed forces. The defense ministers discussed the conduct of joint exercises and the establishment of joint military command posts in INDOMALPHI states. However, the idea of joint command posts is difficult to be implemented (Quilop, 2018). In November 2016, the defense ministers finalized the SOPs on maritime patrols following the agreement of former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (PRRD) on SOP regarding hot pursuit operations in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (Ikram, 2018).

In August 2017, the defense ministers from the three countries during the Trilateral Intelligence Exchange (Intelex) in Manila, Philippines discussed the designation of combined military and police personnel from each country to serve as points of contact in the exchange of intelligence. Balut Island in Sarangani was agreed to serve as the inter-agency monitoring station covering the Sulawesi Sea. Meanwhile, the two countries were tasked to establish command posts in the borders of Sabah and Sarawak, both in Malaysia and Kalimantan in Indonesia (Guiang, 2018).

In September 2018, the three defense ministers met in Manila and highlighted the slight decrease in the crimes along the borders while pointing out other aspects of the cooperation that need improvement including the coordination among the command centers and information exchange, among others (Parameswaran, 2019).

In March 2022, the three defense ministers of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia met during the Ministerial Meeting on TCA in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to improve the following:

- a. Deploy a liaison officer to each country's maritime command center as part of efforts to optimize communication;
- b. Conduct of maritime exercises;
- c. Adopt an approach based on actionable intelligence in conducting surveillance operations; and
- d. Improve the structure of TCA to strengthen the commitment of each country (Da Costa, 2022).

Recently, Senator Loren Legarda (2023) argued during an international symposium in Singapore that minilateralism is crucial in improving maritime cooperation and security in Southeast Asia. The SSSP has been proven useful in information sharing and joint patrols targeting the piracy issues in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas.

2. ASEAN Principles

This study focused on the normative purpose of ASEAN centrality to highlight that centrality is not only about being the primary driving force in shaping and influencing the ASEAN's cooperation with external powers. ASEAN centrality as a principle is directly linked to ASEAN's identity and fundamental beliefs. By assuming that the kind of regionalism built on the so-called ASEAN way is "inclusive, open, and non-constraining" (Acharya, 2017, p.275), the regional bloc could project a secured platform to conduct

confidence-building measures, discuss security concerns, and encourage the use of strategic restraint (p.276).

The ASEAN way persuades the ASEAN member states to look for an informal approach to cooperation (Katsumata, 2004). Hence, to deal with the ASG-led abduction incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, the INDOMALPHI states crafted SSSP, taking into consideration the principles of consensus and non-interference which have been the guiding principles in implementing the joint/coordinated patrols in the concerned areas.

This was supported by the information from the five out of the eight key informants. K1 stated that since the INDOMALPHI states are ASEAN members, they strictly focused on the coordinated patrols and refrain from interfering with each other's domestic issues and concerns. There is also no dominance of one country over another.

Also, since the so-called ASEAN way is "inclusive, open, and non-constraining," the SSSP is open to ASEAN member states that wanted to participate. In the words of K1 (Appendix D), Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand offered support to communication aspect of SSSP to stop the possible spillover of terrorist activities in their respective countries.

"All three countries are part of ASEAN and they adhere to the ASEAN principle of centrality and non-interference in another member state's domestic problems, especially political and religious. That is why the trilateral partners focused their joint patrol in the common maritime area. No encroachment in another's territory. Cooperation and respect. The other close

ASEAN members like Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have offered assistance like communications and efforts to stop the terrorists inside their countries.” – K1 (Appendix D)

This could be intended to avoid repeating the history. To note, the three countries have histories of conflict with one another prior to the founding of ASEAN in 1967: Indonesia with its *Konfrontasi* policy against Malaysia over the creation of Malaysian Federation (Sutter, 1966) and the Sabah conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines in the late 1960s (Caballero-Anthony, 1998). Further, since the Sabah conflict is still unsettled, the issue was purposely avoided during the negotiations to avoid impediments to cooperation (Ong and Bandong, 2022).

Meanwhile, K3 (Appendix F), K6 (Appendix I), and K7 (Appendix J) stated that ASEAN has no direct role in the crafting of SSSP. Still, the principles of non-interference and consensus were evident in the dynamics within SSSP. Even in a minilateral arrangement, the three countries as ASEAN members strictly adhere to the principle of non-interference, drawing inspiration from the practice of ASEAN since its foundation (Ramcharan, 2000). Relatedly, the mere fact the defense ministers conducted their meetings on the sidelines of ASEAN meant that SSSP still considered the roles of the regional bloc despite engaging in minilateral arrangements.

Notably, during the ADMM meeting in Laos on 26 May 2016, the defense ministers of INDOMALPHI states met on the sidelines and expressed support for the Joint Declaration on Immediate Measures to Address Security Issues in the Maritime Areas of Common Concern. Said joint declaration was

previously released by the INDOMALPHI state's foreign ministers. Similarly, the third meeting prior to the launch of SSSP was held on the sidelines of the US-ASEAN Defense Dialogue in Hawai'i (Quilop, 2018).

B. Factors that pushed the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia to engage in minilateralism

To engage in minilateralism, there is a need to cooperate with two more states that are also affected by the same issue. In this case, the INDOMALPHI states cooperated with each other to address the abduction incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. Based on the themes generated from the key informants' interviews, information from three out of the eight key informants was interpreted and revealed that the pursuit for cooperation stemmed from the following reasons: shared norms, culture and border, national interests, small groupings are manageable, and pressure from ASEAN countries and affected stakeholders. These were further trimmed down and interpreted into four factors, namely, pressure from ASEAN countries, pressure from affected other stakeholders, shared norms, and similar cultures.

1. Pressure from ASEAN countries

The abduction incidents in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas as well as the bombing incidents in Sulu affected the people residing near the concerned areas, regardless of their nationalities. According to K1, the remaining ASEAN member states had voiced their concerns regarding the situation in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas particularly on bombing incidents, kidnapping, and piracy. They

further encouraged the three countries to address the issue immediately before it become uncontrollable.

“All other members have expressed concern about the increasing incidents of terrorist acts such as bombing, kidnapping and piracy. Short of telling us what to do they all encouraged us to solve the problem.” (Appendix D)

This only shows that the issue of ASG-led abduction incidents is not the sole problem of INDOMALPHI states. The remaining ASEAN countries are also concerned for fear that the incidents might spill over to their territories if they cannot be contained. In relation to this, Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand offered to help in the communication aspect as part of their efforts to contain the terrorist activities away from their territories.

“The other close ASEAN members like Brunei, Singapore and Thailand have offered assistance like communications and efforts to stop the terrorists inside their countries.” – K1 (Appendix D)

Relatedly, K3 (Appendix F) also said that the Philippines might have been influenced by Malaysia and Indonesia’s call for regional cooperation to address the abduction issues in the area. In this regard, Malaysia and Indonesia did not pressure the Philippines. Instead, because of diplomatic relations among the three countries, there is this so-called sense of belongingness that might have influenced the Philippines’ decision.

“As neighboring countries facing similar maritime security challenges, the Philippines' decision to join the initiative would have been influenced by Indonesia and Malaysia's advocacy and encouragement for regional cooperation.” – K3 (Appendix F)

On the other hand, the remaining six key informants believed that there was no pressure coming from other ASEAN member states because the membership has been voluntary. Although the information came from most of the key informants, this was the opposite of what K1 stated. This could be due to their exposure and position in the hierarchy. Notably, K1 has been directly involved in the negotiations of SSSP while K3 has been assigned in Jolo, Sulu. The remaining key informants, although exposed to maritime and naval issues for five to 10 years, they were more likely to work in the background given that they are members of the AFP intelligence community.

2. Pressure from other Affected Stakeholders

Given the fact that the ASG-led abduction incidents sowed fear among the public, it was expected that there will be a lot of affected stakeholders who will voice their concerns regarding the issue. According to K2 (Appendix E), other countries that are affected by the maritime issues in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas such as Australia maintained a liaison in the country for updates regarding the issue. Notably, Australia uses the transit corridor with their international trade (Storey, 2018).

“Other countries who are affected by the maritime issues in Sulu-Celebes Seas such as Australia maintained a liaison in the country to update with developments.” – K2 (Appendix E)

Meanwhile, K1 claimed that public opinion has also played a role in the decision of the Philippines to engage in a minilateral arrangement. From 2016 to 2020, the southern part of the country remained unexplored due to the abduction threats of ASG. It has affected the tourism industry in Mindanao which also hurt the reputation of the Philippines in the international community.

“Yes, the people of Mindanao as a whole and to a large extent the entire Philippines as the terrorists are giving the country a bad name. The terrorist threat likewise discourage tourism in the area.” – K1 (Appendix D)

K5 also supported K1’s claim that public opinion has a significant role in influencing the country’s decision regarding the issue and its subsequent participation. With the advent of social media platforms, it can put a considerable pressure in the decision-making process.

“Public opinion within the Philippines can play a significant role in shaping the country’s stance and participation.” – K5 (Appendix H)

K1 and K5 further stated that there was also pressure from local government units due to the fear haunting among the populace in these areas. It has affected the livelihood in the area as well as hinder the possible investments that can pave the way for economic development.

“Yes, from the officials of Sulu, Tawi-tawi and Basilan. Because the constant kidnapping has terrorized their localities and prevented them from developing.” – K1 (Appendix D)

“Local government units in the Philippines, particularly those in areas directly affected may engage in lobbying efforts to ensure that their concerns and interests are represented in the national government's decision-making process.” – K5 (Appendix H)

Given the widespread fear of abduction incidents perpetrated by ASG, members of grassroots communities were also active in voicing their concerns. This could have also played a role in considering whether to join the SSSP or not. K1 stated that members from almost all sectors of society in Sulu archipelago voiced out their concerns on the abduction incidents.

“Yes, their religious leaders both Christians and Muslims, the business owners, teachers, traders, etc.” – K1 (Appendix D)

According to K6 (Appendix I), the NGOs and civil society groups' lobbying efforts, awareness campaigns, and advocacy for regional cooperation may prompt the government to take part in initiatives that address maritime threats. For instance, local NGOs with foreign connections can use the international pressure coming from these groups. This can be similar with the experience of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia (MALSINDO) wherein a private international organization, the Lloyd's Market Association, specifically its Joint War Committee, conducted a risk assessment in Malacca Strait in 2005 and tagged the area as “high-risk zone” (Anderson, 2016) which prompted the MALSINDO states, along with pressure from countries such as USA and Japan, to enter cooperation with each other.

“Community-based organizations, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or civil society groups, focused on maritime security issues, can influence the Philippines’ decision to participate in the SSSP. Their lobbying efforts, awareness campaigns, and advocacy for regional cooperation may prompt the government to take part in initiatives that address maritime threats.” – K6 (Appendix I)

3. Norm against Regional Defense Cooperation

One of the apparent manifestations of the norm against regional defense cooperation is the so-called “Bandung injunction” which urged the Southeast Asian nations to abstain from engaging in collective defense that served the interests of major powers. Although ASEAN dropped the intention of developing collective defense, its policies showed the norm against regional defense cooperation. Similarly, the lack of threats could also be the reason why collective defense is not welcomed in Southeast Asia (Acharya, 2005).

The refusal to enter collective defense cooperation was classified as a basic practice in ASEAN by Noordin Sopiee as cited in Acharya (2009, p.91). This was displayed in the rejection of the USA’s proposal for the RMSI in 2004 (Acharya, 2009). Instead, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia established the MSSP to handle the issue of piracy in the Strait. Similarly, when former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (PRRD) suggested in 2017 that China should send its coast guard vessels to patrol the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, it apparently pressured Indonesia and Malaysia to fast-track the process of border patrols in the area.

Hence, in the same year, modeled after MSSP, the SSSP was launched as agreed between and among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to address the abduction incidents in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. However, the suggestion of the former PRRD remains unclear whether it was serious or not. (Storey, 2018).

The norm against collective defense cooperation can be considered to have a relationship with the colonial past of majority of Southeast Asian countries. During the heyday of SEATO and prior to the foundation of ASEAN, Burma and Indonesia opposed the idea of collective defense with Burma stating that it will be dominated by the larger power if it participates in the collective pact. Indonesia further stated that collective defense will challenge its independent foreign policy (Acharya, 2011).

4. Similar Culture

Another factor why the three countries entered minilateralism is the similarity in culture. K3 claimed that the historical ties and cultural practices as well as the shared language and religion played a role in the cooperation. However, it seems that K3 is expressing his views from the point of someone from the grassroots communities in the Sulu archipelago given that K3 is currently deployed in Jolo, Sulu. Hence, his views might have been influenced by his exposure to the community.

“Language, religion, historical ties, and cultural practices shared by participating countries can all help to improve communication and coordination.” – K3 (Appendix F)

Similarly, K4 stated that due to the linkage of INDOMALPHI states' maritime histories, it is easier for them to enter minilateralism. The presence of Filipino communities in Malaysia and Indonesia might have also played a role.

“Yes, since the three countries' maritime histories are intertwined. There are also Filipinos in Malaysia and Indonesia.” – K4 (Appendix G)

For his part, K5 said that although the areas surrounding the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas are home to different languages, there are linguistic similarities among the three languages. This can ease the communication between the three countries particularly on naval exercises and information sharing.

“While there are diverse languages spoken in the region, there are also linguistic similarities among the Malay, Indonesian, and Filipino languages. The linguistic proximity can ease communication and understanding among the participating countries' naval and law enforcement personnel during joint operations and information sharing.” – K5 (Appendix H)

K8 (Appendix K) who hailed from Sanga-Sanga in Tawi-Tawi, further added that there are Filipinos in coastal areas in Malaysia and Indonesia that can speak Bahasa, and Malaysians and Indonesians are trying to learn the Filipino language. This shows that there are efforts on the grassroots level to communicate with each other, whether in terms of interpersonal relationships or trading purposes.

Similarly, K8 said that his province shared the same culture with Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly Islam. Noticeably speaking from the point

of view of a local, K8 stated the practice of Islam and the common fishing grounds contributed to the motivation of participating in a minilateral arrangement.

“Tawi-Tawi has a similar culture to Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly in the practice of Islam. There are also the same fishing grounds and the goal of patrolling the border. The coordinated patrols were meant to protect the people, apprehend the people who violate the maritime rules, and repatriate them afterward to their respective countries.” – K8

Relatedly, K1 (Appendix D) said that the three nationalities shared similar physical features. This could be the reason why Filipino authorities eventually released apprehended Indonesian or Malaysian fishermen due to illegal fishing based on the interview of K8.

“Also, there are local fishermen who got apprehended by Indonesian or Malaysian authorities while Filipino authorities who caught Indonesian or Malaysian fishermen conducting fishing in the Philippine waters end up releasing them out of pity.” – K8 (Appendix K)

C. Advantages and Disadvantages of Defense Cooperation

Vannarith (2019) discussed the SSSP along with MSSP and categorized it under political-security minilateralism. Although there is a norm against defense regional cooperation, it seems that Malaysia and Indonesia are only opposed to major powers such as the USA and China. This is evident in their vehement refusal against the USA's proposal of the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) (Sittnick, 2005; Raymond, 2009); and the suggestion

of former PRRD to let China send its warships to Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. This has likely expedited the launching of SSSP (Storey, 2018).

Since the SSSP is a defense cooperation with only three members, dealing with non-traditional security threats such as ASG-led abductions followed by smuggling of goods and human trafficking in said area, other ASEAN member states have expressed support given that they also exerted pressure over the three countries regarding the ASG-led abductions (K1 – Appendix D).

“The other close ASEAN members like Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have offered assistance like communications and efforts to stop the terrorists inside their countries.” – K1

Aside from these sources of information, the researcher was able to generate two themes from the key informants’ interviews. These are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation. The defense cooperation *per se* is an advantage since it presents opportunities to showcase the following:

1. Confidence-building Measure

According to K2 (Appendix E) who has been able to monitor the activities of SSSP from the post in Tawi-Tawi, defense cooperation like SSSP serves as a confidence-building measure among the three countries by being open with communication lines to avert any tension. This also verifies the incidents and comes up with measures to address the abduction incidents. The

INDOMALPHI states also rendered assistance to each other which showed their sincerity towards the minilateral arrangement.

“With SSSP, the three countries were able to verify the reported incidents and be able to address the issues. It was able to render assistance to each other which means the arrangement in this aspect is effective.” – K2

K6 also added that the defense cooperation reinforced the diplomatic ties among the three countries and promote collective security. Regular meetings and joint exercises or operations help establish trust and resolve disputes in a diplomatic way.

“Cooperation in defense matters fosters meaningful relationships between participating nations. Regular meetings, exercises, and joint operations provide an opportunity for military and government officials to build trust, understand each other's concerns, and resolve disputes diplomatically.” – K6 (Appendix I)

To further foster trust among the three countries, they respect each other by collectively carrying out decisions and employ transparency with each decision. Also, according to K1, all members of SSSP are on equal status amid the level of military strength and naval capability.

“Everyone is on equal footing. No country is dominant and all decisions are collectively done. Respect of each other's unique tradition and customs. There is transparency among the members.” – K1 (Appendix D)

Relatedly, K3 stated that part of the confidence-building measure among the participating countries is to pool resources against the maritime security challenges. This way, the INDOMALPHI states can maximize their operational effectiveness.

“By pooling resources and coordinating efforts, participating countries can share the burden of maritime security challenges and maximize their operational effectiveness.” – K3 (Appendix F)

2. Specific Targets

The Joint Declaration on Immediate Measures to Address Security Issues in the Maritime Areas of Common Concern laid out four objectives namely, (1) conduct patrols, (2) render assistance to people and ships in distress, (3) establish a national focal point, and (4) communication hotline (Quilop, 2018).

Since only three countries are members of SSSP, it also means that the objectives are limited in scope. K2 (Appendix E) stated that SSSP only deals with the security interests of INDOMALPHI states, hence the decision-making process is easier as compared to the level of ASEAN. Hence, achieving the objectives is easier as compared to a multilateral arrangement.

“In a minilateral arrangement, only the security interests of the three countries are being pursued while other countries need to be considered at the ASEAN level.” – K2

If the issues are elevated to ASEAN, due to the principle of consensus, other ASEAN member states also need to input their comments

and suggestions regardless if they are affected of the issue or not. K3 (Appendix F), K4 (Appendix G), and K5 (Appendix H) has the same sentiments with K2, stating that minilateral arrangements in general have specific targets.

“SSSP is a specific defense cooperation initiative among a select group of countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines) targeting the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region.” – K3

“On a minilateral level, it is focused on a particular mission which is a good thing.” – K4

“The SSSP involves a smaller group of countries, typically those directly affected by a specific issue or region. In the case of the SSSP, it primarily includes Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The minilateral arrangement focuses specifically on addressing the security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region.” – K5

Relatedly, K8 (Appendix K) added that since the three countries are surrounded by waters, engaging in maritime minilateral arrangements means that there will be naval operations and exercises. This could be intended to likely show their maritime capabilities and act as a deterrent against ASG and other criminal groups operating in the transit corridor. This could be the reason why minilateral arrangements can deliver and implement their objectives despite the limited resources.

“Engaging in maritime minilateral arrangements means that there will be naval operations, vessels, naval exercises, and war games.” – K8

3. Venue for enhancing maritime capabilities and interoperability

The defense cooperation provides a venue for member states to enhance their maritime capabilities through training and exercises. According to K5 (Appendix H), *“This allows for the development of skills, knowledge, and capabilities necessary to address evolving security threats more effectively.”*

Relatedly, the member states can also increase their capabilities by addressing the shared challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea based on K3 (Appendix F). This will expose the three members to their best practices and apply them among their ranks. This can also boost the confidence of their military personnel, particularly those who are involved in military exercises and joint patrols. *“It focuses on enhancing maritime security and addressing shared challenges in that particular area.” – K3*

Also, K6 (Appendix I) and K7 (Appendix J) said that member countries can also improve their operational expertise and inter-agency coordination thru this venue. This can also lead to greater interoperability which allows seamless coordination during their activities. Hura et al. (2000) defined interoperability as the ability of forces to provide and accept services or support in order to operate together as well as effectively. By working together, the armed forces can readily address the evolving security threats such as piracy and abduction incidents in concerned areas. They can also share operational expertise and apply them outside the SSSP dynamics, subject to modification, depending on the threats to be confronted.

“Member countries can benefit from sharing best practices, training programs, and technological advancements in maritime security. Through defense cooperation, participating nations can develop their military capabilities, operational expertise, and interagency coordination.” – K6 (Appendix I)

“Defense cooperation promotes the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices between countries. This facilitates capacity-building and professional development within the armed forces, enabling them to better address evolving security threats. Through defense cooperation, countries can harmonize their military capabilities and procedures, leading to greater interoperability. This allows for seamless coordination during joint operations, exercises, and peacekeeping missions.” – K7 (Appendix J)

On the other hand, defense cooperation like the SSSP also has its own disadvantages such as language barrier, similar colonial past, and different levels of priorities and security interests.

4. Language Barrier

Although the physical features of Malaysian, Indonesian, and Filipinos are similar, there is a huge difference in language. Malaysia and Indonesia have similar languages which made it easier for them to communicate and identify with each other. However, it is different for the Philippines. According to K1 (Appendix D), Indonesians need an interpreter during negotiations which makes it difficult especially when discussing terms that need to have similar meanings.

“First, the language. Indonesia and Malaysia speak Bahasa hence they can talk to each other easily but not with Filipinos. The Malaysians are fluent in English while the Indonesians are not. Indonesians needs interpreter which makes it difficult for Filipinos to communicate with them.” – K1

In this situation, there might be apprehension that interpreters cannot appropriately convey the strictest meanings of the words which may start a disagreement during the implementation. This is particularly difficult given that it involves the defense and national security of each member state.

However, it is not a problem for Malaysia since both Filipinos and Malaysians are fluent in English. Meanwhile, Malaysia and Indonesia are Islamic countries which means that there is still this strong sense of identity that transcends the difficulty of a language barrier between the two countries. Relatedly, despite the language barrier, the series of meetings also showed the importance of minilateral partnerships to the INDOMALPHI states. According to K1, Malaysia and Indonesia are both important minilateral partners of the Philippines. Although there is a language barrier between Indonesia and our country, *“it is not insurmountable.”*

Since the Philippines is predominantly Roman Catholic as opposed to the Sulu Archipelago which is predominantly Islam, the negotiators sent to the negotiating table must tread carefully to avoid committing mistakes that might offend the two countries (K1 - Appendix D).

“The proximity of the three countries did not mean they share norms, cultures, and values. While their physical features are similar there are huge differences. Religion is another: The Indonesians and Malaysians are Muslims while the Philippines is Christian. While this matters little in the relationship it sometimes does not make working together smoothly.” -K1

The information revealed by K1 is vastly different from the remaining key informants who revealed that the three countries shared a similar culture which made it easier to cooperate. This could be due to K1's direct involvement in the negotiation which also highlights the difference between the point of view of those from the higher echelon versus those from on the grounds.

To note, K8 believes that Tawi-Tawi, Malaysia, and Indonesia share the same culture. However, it seems that K8 is equating Tawi-Tawi with the whole Philippines. Somehow, it shows that K8 is only looking from the point of view of someone who hailed from Tawi-Tawi. This reason together with his exposure to those who participated in joint exercises and from the members of local communities who experienced apprehension due to fishing outside the country's borders could have influenced his perception of cultures (K8 – Appendix K).

5. Similar Colonial Past

According to K1, the colonial past of the three countries also played a role in the cooperation. The Philippines was colonized by Spaniards, Japanese, and Americans while Malaysia was colonized by the British. For its part, Indonesia was colonized by the Netherlands or Dutch. Therefore, the three countries attached great importance to the influence of their culture. For example, the Philippines is attached to the USA while Malaysia is attached to the UK. This is the same for Indonesia.

“Influence of colonizers also plays some part in the relationship. We are more attached to the Americans while

Malaysians to the UK. The Indonesians to the Dutch. Each have their own unique cultures developed throughout their colonial past.” – K1 (Appendix D)

The colonial past played a role in engaging in minilateralism according to K1. With similar colonial pasts, the INDOMALPHI states likely have reservations regarding the SSSP, particularly on sharing of actionable intelligence. This is likely in line with sovereignty which is a sensitive issue for previously colonized countries. Similarly, Storey (2018) also noted that information regarding the SSSP and its related information that was released for public consumption was limited which could indicate how the three countries safeguard their security interests.

Further, the SOPs of SSSP are not published for public consumption (Ikram, 2018) which shows the three countries' apprehension on revealing too much about their cooperative agreement. This was also displayed in the reaction of Indonesia and Malaysia regarding the proposal of the USA to patrol the Malacca Strait as well as former PRRD's suggestion for China to send its warships to the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (Storey, 2018). This was further supported by the comments of K8 (Appendix K) stating that as a member of SSSP, there is a security risk due to naval operations and maritime intelligence activities.

“There is the factor of security risk given that it involves naval operations, geographic survey, maritime intelligence, and maritime surveillance.” – K8

This could also affect the way they perceive the neighboring countries. Diplomatically, the three countries can be considered as friends.

However, defense-related concerns are always deemed to be sensitive particularly when it comes to intelligence-related activities. In the words of K2, he observed that:

“A disadvantage of this arrangement is the exchange of information, particularly the actionable intelligence. The three countries are wary of the information to share without compromising their country’s national interests.” – K2 (Appendix E)

6. Levels of Priorities and Security Interests

Another disadvantage in defense cooperation like SSSP is the level of priorities of each member state. For example, K2 observed that Indonesia is not as participative as compared to the Philippines and Malaysia. Indonesia only participates in the defense cooperation since most of the kidnapped victims are Indonesians.

“Indonesia is not participative in activities. They only participate because most of the victims were Indonesian nationals. Only the Philippines and Malaysia can be considered true players.” – K2 (Appendix E)

Another possible reason why Indonesia was not keen on participating could be due to its military strength. To note, its military personnel and assets are the biggest among the three countries. According to Global Fire Power (GFP), Indonesia’s military strength is currently in 15th place worldwide (GFP, 2023). Relatedly, K3 claimed that participation in defense cooperation is determined by the security interests, capabilities, and political considerations of the members.

“The decision to participate in defense cooperation initiatives like SSSP is ultimately determined by the individual member states based on their specific security interests, capabilities, and political considerations.” – K3 (Appendix F)

This could be the case in the Philippines. Even though the ASG has been terrorizing the Southern Philippines and parts of Malaysia since the early 2000s with its kidnapping activities (Saiwongpanya, 2021), there was no immediate response from the governments of the two countries aside from denouncing said incidents and intensifying their own internal security operations targeting the ASG. It could also be that the Philippines lacked the capability of conducting patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas since it is a vast area.

However, when Indonesian fishermen fell victims to ASG-led abductions as well as the threat against international trade that ply said route, it can be said that the issue has been certified as urgent. The three countries acknowledged that it was time to engage in defense cooperation based on the statement of K1 (Appendix D) wherein other ASEAN member states had been voicing their concerns.

D. Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

For one to better grasp the notion of minilateralism, it should be studied as a nexus between unilateralism and multilateralism, placed at the continuum's focal point. Minilateralism is a “form of collective action of small groups of states that accept compliance with worldwide multilateral principles” but either one time or frequently acting separately from international institutions. In other

words, minilateralism is a multilateralism implemented by a small cluster of states limiting the membership intentionally (Attinà & Irrera, 2010, p.58).

This study has a preconceived notion that minilateralism can support ASEAN multilateralism without undermining ASEAN. Based on the key informants' interviews, the following are the reasons why minilateralism like the SSSP can support ASEAN multilateralism:

1. Creation of new minilateral arrangements

According to K1, there is a small chance that SSSP will expand its membership to other countries since the issues and concerns faced by other countries are different from the Philippines. However, there is a possibility that these ASEAN member states can form their own small groupings to deal with their own issues.

"I do not think so because the challenges faced by the other countries are dissimilar to the ones faced by the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The others may also form small groupings like the Malacca and Trilateral Patrols in the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas." – K1 (Appendix D)

This statement is based on the MSSP which serves as the model of SSSP. Both minilateral arrangements deal with maritime threats and can be considered successful based on the decrease in the number of piracy attacks in Malacca Strait and ASG-led abduction incidents in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. Hence, should there be emerging threats in Southeast Asia, it is possible that those countries primarily affected can cooperate with each other to address these threats.

K3 and K5 supported the idea of K1, stating that the success of SSSP and MSSP can encourage other countries or regions facing similar security challenges to adopt similar cooperative arrangements. Aside from this, there is a need to step up collaborative efforts since security threats are continuously evolving. Hence, minilateral arrangements will continue to be crucial in the pursuit of regional stability.

“It is likely that defense cooperation initiatives like SSSP will continue to exist. The success and effectiveness of such initiatives, including the SSSP modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol, can encourage other countries or regions facing similar security challenges to adopt similar cooperative arrangements.” – K3 (Appendix F)

“If these initiatives prove to be effective in addressing security challenges, other regions or countries facing similar issues may be motivated to adopt similar models of defense cooperation.” – K5 (Appendix H)

Based on this information, the possibility of creating a new minilateral arrangement will not undermine the legitimacy of ASEAN as an organization. Instead, ASEAN should take advantage of this situation by using these arrangements as an approach to solving issues at the soonest possible time.

Minilateralism is like a bottom-up approach wherein the minilateral members can deal with their own issues at their level. The effectiveness of the minilateral arrangement will dictate its future. If successful, it can be elevated on the ASEAN level for a full regional mechanism. If not, the issue or concern can be raised on the ASEAN level for consideration/decision of other member states.

Compared to a multilateral approach which is often associated with institutions, minilateralism is leaning more towards an informal approach. The informal approach to diplomacy creates a comfortable environment for the member states. This is a crucial prerequisite to multilateral dialogues in ASEAN (Katsumata, 2004). In this regard, it is sufficient to say that prior to a possible implementation of a full regional mechanism or an institutional approach in dealing with non-traditional security threats, ASEAN member states can engage in informal diplomacy first.

Notably, ASEAN as a regional grouping, also started with five members and used an informal approach to negotiate the founding of ASEAN. The Foreign Ministers of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, hailed as the founding fathers of ASEAN, met in Thailand in early August 1967, and discussed the would-be ASEAN Declaration through relative isolation and playing golf in a coastal town, southeast of Bangkok. This has been referred to as “sports-shirt diplomacy” (ASEAN, 2020).

2. Possible Expansion of Minilateral Memberships

One of the issues being faced by minilateral arrangements is the possible expansion of their memberships. According to K3, it is not certain if the remaining ASEAN members will become members of SSSP since the decision to join ultimately resides in the member states. In joining, one must consider their security interests, capabilities, and political considerations. Although Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand were invited as observers, to eventually join as a member, they still must assess the benefits they can get from the

minilateral arrangement, the alignment of interests, and the current political dynamics in their respective countries. K5 echoed the same sentiments.

“It is difficult to predict with certainty whether all ASEAN member states will eventually become members of SSSP. The decision to participate in defense cooperation initiatives like SSSP is ultimately determined by the individual member states based on their specific security interests, capabilities, and political considerations. While Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers, their decision to join as full members would depend on various factors, including their assessment of the benefits, alignment of interests, and domestic political dynamics.” – K3 (Appendix F)

“While it is conceivable that all ASEAN member states may eventually become members of the SSSP, it will depend on various factors such as the willingness of member states to join, their individual security priorities, and the practicality of incorporating additional members into the operational aspects of the initiative.” – K5 (Appendix H)

For K4, only Brunei can be considered as a future member since it is located near the concerned area. K8 (Appendix K) also agreed that Brunei can join as it is located near the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas.

“Yes, I think there is a possibility that SSSP can expand with Brunei joining the arrangement from being an observer since this country is located near the area.” – K4 (Appendix G)

“It is a possibility. Brunei is located near the area.” – K8

However, for K6, the mere fact that the three countries have been invited as observers means that it is possible for them to eventually join the minilateral arrangement.

“While there is no certainty, there is a possibility that all ASEAN member states could join the SSSP in the future, considering the favorable direction demonstrated by the invitation of Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand as observers.” – K6 (Appendix I)

As observers, Singapore and Brunei graced the launching ceremony in June 2017. However, the two countries have yet to contribute to SSSP’s naval or air assets. For its part, Singapore offered the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) at Changi Naval Base for the use of SSSP to exchange information on the situation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (Storey, 2018).

3. Continued Existence of Minilateral Arrangements

The continued existence of minilateral arrangements will depend on their effectiveness in achieving their objectives as well as the existence of perceived threats. Based on K5’s comments, the effectiveness will play a role in its future dealings as a minilateral arrangement. If proven effective, other countries will likely follow and create their own minilateral arrangements as an urgent solution to pressing problems. With this, minilateral arrangements might be a mainstay in the regional security architecture.

“The success and effectiveness of such initiatives will play a role in determining their prospects. If these initiatives prove to be effective in addressing security challenges, other regions or countries facing similar issues may be motivated to adopt similar models of defense cooperation. Additionally, as global interconnectivity continues to grow and security challenges evolve, the need for cooperative efforts in defense and security is likely to remain an important aspect of maintaining regional stability and combating threats.” – K5 (Appendix H)

Similarly, the existence of perceived threats will likely dictate the future and relevance of such arrangements. Security challenges continue to evolve, hence, there is a need for a grouping that can immediately and effectively respond as soon as possible to avoid compromising national security and public welfare. As long as the dynamics of minilateral arrangement do not contradict the domestic laws of the country, the Southeast Asian countries can create and participate in such groupings.

“Given the transnational nature of security threats, such as piracy, smuggling, and terrorism, it is likely that defense cooperation initiatives like the SSSP and MSSP will continue to be relevant.” – K6 (Appendix I)

“Whether defense cooperation initiatives like the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP) and the Sulu Sea Patrol (SSSP) will continue in the future depends on various factors, including the priorities and interests of the participating countries, geopolitical dynamics, and evolving security challenges. Governments will evaluate the effectiveness and value of such initiatives based on their objectives, national security strategies, and regional cooperation frameworks.” – K7 (Appendix J)

Aside from that, K2 (Appendix E) stated that minilateral arrangements will likely be a trend in Southeast Asia since the small number of members makes it more manageable as compared to multilateral groupings. This observation supports Ikram’s (2018) argument that minilateral arrangements like SSSP are expected to stay since there was a shift to an ad-hoc approach from an institutional approach in dealing with non-traditional security threats.

4. Existing Practices of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol

The SSSP started in 2017 which resulted in a decrease in the number of abduction incidents in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. The ReCAAP reports from 2016 to 2022 showed that 10 incidents in 2016 became zero in 2022. Based on the key informants' interviews, three existing practices emerged from the rest. These are rendering assistance to each other, information sharing, and regular joint patrols.

a. Rendering Assistance

One of the four objectives of the Joint Declaration on Immediate Measures to Address Security Issues in the Maritime Areas of Common Concern is to render assistance to people and ships in distress (Quilop, 2018). When ships (or fishing boats) from Indonesia and Malaysia are in distress, coast guard and military personnel extend help which shows the Philippines' commitment to the objectives of SSSP. K2 also revealed that this also becomes a platform for the three navies to interact with each other. Further, the presence of naval ships in the area served as a deterrent to ASG as shown in the decrease of ASG-led abductions in the area.

“I think one of the best practices includes rendering assistance to each other. Also, this becomes a platform where the three navies interact with each other. It has also reduced the spate of kidnappings in the area.” – K2 (Appendix E)

On the other hand, rendering assistance could also mean giving protection to the people and apprehending violators of the law. If they are from Malaysia or Indonesia, the Philippine government will repatriate them.

“The coordinated patrols were meant to protect the people, apprehend the people who violate the maritime rules, and repatriate them afterward to their respective countries.” – K8 (Appendix K)

b. Information Sharing

K3, K5, and K6 stated that information sharing which is done regularly is also one of these practices of SSSP. The practice improves people’s situational awareness and results in coordinated responses. This has also improved the communication between the three countries. Therefore, every member is updated on the current situation in the transit corridor.

Also, thru information sharing, the members can also be aware of the training programs which can be applied to their own personnel back home. Said practice is also in line with the joint declaration’s fourth objective. That is to establish a communication hotline.

“Regular information sharing. This helps enhance situational awareness and enables coordinated responses.” – K3 (Appendix F)

“By sharing information, conducting joint patrols, and coordinating responses, the SSSP helps improve maritime security and counter illicit activities such as piracy, smuggling, and terrorism.” – K5 (Appendix H)

Member countries can benefit from sharing best practices, training programs, and technological advancements in maritime security. – K6 (Appendix I)

Information sharing is not new in ASEAN. To note, the navies of ASEAN member states are members of the ASEAN Information-Sharing Portal (AIP), a platform for navies to share maritime security-related information (MINDEF, 2012). The INDOMALPHI states are also parties to two agreements, namely, 2002 Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures (AIEECP) and 2004 Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (MLAT).

Article VII of AIEECP states that a party to the agreement can refuse to share any information or intelligence if it will compromise the national security or public order/health. Similarly, Article 3 (1) (f) of MLAT states that a party shall refuse any information request from other parties if it will compromise the “sovereignty, public order, public interest, or essential interests.”

Hence, the information sharing on the level of SSSP will likely strengthen the resolve of members to intensify the monitoring on the grounds and share the information with other navies in Southeast Asia.

c. Regular Joint Patrols

Regular patrols, joint patrols, and coordinated patrols are all forms of maritime security cooperation. The coordinated patrol was inaugurated on 19 June 2017 (Yudha, 2019) in Tarakan, Indonesia. This was attended by

then DND Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Indonesian Minister of Defense Ryamizard Ryacudu, and Malaysian Minister of Defense Hishammuddin Hussein (The Philippine Star, 2017). This showed the commitment of INDOMALPHI states to address the ASG-led abduction incidents in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas.

The regular joint patrols/naval presence have curbed the possibility of ASG carrying out their abduction activities in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. Similarly, the smuggling of goods and human trafficking have been closely monitored in a bid to improve the maritime security in the area. This also showed that the SSSP is not purely ceremonial and that all three members are committed and sincere in enforcing its objectives.

“By sharing information, conducting joint patrols, and coordinating responses, the SSSP helps improve maritime security and counter illicit activities such as piracy, smuggling, and terrorism.” – K5 (Appendix H)

“For me, these are increased border patrols of navies; regular naval presence showed that it is not ceremonial. Also, this decreased the smuggled goods and human trafficking due to stricter border security.” - K8 (Appendix K)

According to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the objective of the joint naval patrols is to address the weak border security and prevent further abductions in the transit corridor. The AFP further added that the joint patrols would also allow hot pursuit operations in the Philippines waters and vice versa (The Philippine Star, 2017).

In conducting joint patrols, every member of ASEAN benefit from the stable environment in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. There will be no apprehension on the possibility that a violence might spill over to their own territories.

E. Challenge on the Ground

Based on the key informants' interviews, another theme was revealed which is the challenge that the people on the ground are facing. The challenges stemmed from the hierarchy of people involved in defense cooperation and the stereotypes of the people who are working within these spaces.

Since the three members of SSSP are also ASEAN members, the SSSP was created inside the regional organization, although ASEAN as an organization has no direct role in its creation. With this, the researcher asked the key informants, considering their exposure, if the people that are involved in the tactical part of the coordinated patrols, as well as the communities affected by the ASG infestation, are aware of ASEAN's role in defense cooperation.

With the exceptions of K5, K6, and K7, all the remaining informants claimed that only those who are in the upper echelon are aware of ASEAN's role, if any, and that those who are involved in tactical operations focused only on the orders of their superiors which is typical in a military setting. K1 acknowledged that only the higher echelon is aware of the role of ASEAN.

However, he believes that awareness does not matter if the cooperation among the members is good and effective.

“Not on the ground. But the higher level of command are. But it matters little for as long as the three countries and cooperating splendidly in securing their tri-boundaries and there is good cooperation of people (military) on the ground. After all it is the interest and security of the three countries that are at stake.” – K1 (Appendix D)

For his part, K2 also echoed the same sentiments as K1. However, he makes it a habit to educate the people under his command. The own efforts of K2 could be intended to boost the confidence of his men in case there is a maritime exercise.

“Only the boss is aware of ASEAN’s role because most of the people on the grounds are focused on tactical movements. If I have time, I educate them on the role of these organizations but on their own, this is unlikely.” – K2 (Appendix E)

Meanwhile, K3 argued that the level of awareness of individuals particularly those in the defense sector varies. It seems that it depends on the person’s level of involvement.

“While ASEAN’s reputation and role are well-known at the regional level, the awareness of ASEAN’s role in specific cooperation initiatives like SSSP may vary among individuals working in the field. Those directly involved in the SSSP, such as military personnel, government officials, and stakeholders in the maritime sector, are likely to have a better understanding of ASEAN’s broader role in promoting regional cooperation and stability. However, it is important to note that awareness and understanding can differ among individuals based on their specific roles, experiences, and level of engagement in regional affairs.” – K3 (Appendix F)

For K4, there were only a few people who are aware of the Trilateral Cooperative Agreement (TCA). He also noted that ASEAN's presence is not felt or seen on the ground. *"No. Only a few people are aware of the TCA. Meanwhile, ASEAN's presence is not felt on the ground."* – K4 (Appendix G) K4's comments supported the statement of Storey (2018) which stated that since the launching of SSSP, very few details of the defense cooperation have been made public which only shows how the three countries treated the issue and the exchange of information.

Meanwhile, K5, K6, and K7 (Appendices H, I & J) shared the same idea about the level of awareness regarding ASEAN on the grounds. The three key informants believed that military personnel, defense officials, or members of related organizations and institutions, are likely to be aware of ASEAN's role in promoting cooperation and addressing security challenges in the region. However, their knowledge may vary among individuals depending on their focus and area of interest.

Their comments also revealed that ASEAN activities and initiatives are often reported widely in regional media and platforms. However, it seems that this point of view is heavily stereotyped towards individuals who are exposed to social media platforms. Nevertheless, their comments were influenced by the environment where they are exposed which is different from K1, K2, K3, and K4 who have been involved and deployed on the ground.

To note, K5, K6, and K7 all worked in the AFP intelligence community but were likely to have limited exposure on the ground due to their positions and the security of their work. For his part, K8 has spoken from the point of view of a local from Tawi-Tawi as well as a member of the AFP.

“Only educated people are aware of ASEAN’s role in the pursuit of regional peace and stability. People from the grassroots communities have a limited idea about ASEAN while only those in the upper echelon of the military are aware of ASEAN.” – K8 (Appendix K)

In this regard, the views of the key informants regarding the challenge on the ground are heavily influenced by the environments they are exposed to.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter deals with the summary of findings, conclusion to justify the results of the study, and recommendations.

Summary

Piracy as a non-traditional security threat is included in the 1997 ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crimes as one of the targeted crimes and is one of the priority areas listed in the plan of action of ASEAN (2016-2025) to fight global crimes (Beckman, 2022). Despite this, the ASG abducted 48 ship crews in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas which pushed the INDOMALPHI states to launch the SSSP (Hutchison, 2009).

The SSSP is classified as minilateralism and was created within the multilateral ASEAN. In this regard, this study intended to: (a) describe how minilateral arrangements influence ASEAN centrality; (b) identify the factors that drive the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia to participate in minilateral arrangements, and (c) identify the existing practices related to minilateralism that can support ASEAN multilateralism.

This study adopts a qualitative case study design using key informants' interviews, desk review, and other pertinent resources. The information gathered from key informants was analyzed using thematic analysis. Based on the findings of the study, minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality is a process. This process takes form in the series of meetings of INDOMALPHI states that

led to the creation of SSSP. Relatedly, from a normative perspective, ASEAN centrality as a principle is directly linked to ASEAN's identity and fundamental beliefs. The so-called ASEAN way persuades the ASEAN member states to look for an informal approach to cooperation (Katsumata, 2004). Hence, to deal with the ASG-led abduction incidents, the INDOMALPHI states crafted SSSP, taking into consideration the principles of consensus and non-interference which have been the guiding principles in implementing the joint/coordinated patrols in the concerned areas.

On the reasons why the INDOMALPHI states engage in minilateral arrangements, four factors were highlighted. These are the pressure from (1) ASEAN member states, (2) pressure from other affected stakeholders, (3) the norm against regional defense cooperation, and (4) similar cultures.

The pressure from ASEAN member states was due to fear that the violence might spill over to their territories. On the other hand, the pressure from other affected stakeholders was due to economic concerns of countries using the transit corridor for their trade; negative effects on the economy and tourism industry in Mindanao which affected the local communities and local government units. The third factor which is the norm against regional defense cooperation showed that it is a basic practice in ASEAN due to the member states' colonial past.

They are naturally wary of major powers expressing concerns with the current situation in the concerned areas. Hence, the affected states created

their own minilateral groupings to address the issue. The last factor is the similar culture wherein the key informants claimed that the shared language, religion, and maritime histories played a role in the minilateral cooperation.

Meanwhile, the study also found that defense cooperation like the SSSP has its advantages and disadvantages. Its advantages include (1) serving as a confidence-building measure, (2) having specific targets, and (3) being a venue for enhancing maritime capabilities and interoperability.

The transparency among the member states, open communication, and verification of information form part of confidence-building which also foster trust and avoid escalation of misunderstanding. In addition, since only three countries are members of SSSP, it means that the targets are specific. Further, defense cooperation like SSSP provides the members a venue to enhance their maritime capabilities and interoperability.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of defense cooperation include (1) a language barrier, (2) similar colonial pasts, and (3) levels of priorities and security interests. The difference in the language between the Philippines and Indonesia makes it difficult to negotiate since the latter needs an interpreter. However, this difficulty is not insurmountable. For their part, Malaysians can speak English which makes it easier for them to communicate with Filipinos. The efforts of the three countries to negotiate among themselves despite the difficulty brought by different languages showed the importance of each other as minilateral partners.

Also, the similar colonial pasts made the INDOMALPHI states wary of sharing actionable intelligence. This is likely in line with sovereignty which is a sensitive issue for previously colonized countries. The level of priorities and security interest is another disadvantage of defense cooperation. The lack of immediate action against the ASG-led abductions from the side of the Philippines might have stemmed from the country's perception of considering the incidents as domestic concern.

On the general question of how minilateralism supports ASEAN multilateralism, it supports the latter when there is the possibility of creating new minilateral arrangements based on the effectiveness and success of previous minilateral arrangements; possible expansion of minilateral memberships in case of elevating the approach to a full regional mechanism; the continued existence of minilateral arrangements due to the perceived threats; and existing practices of SSSP that can be used in the multilateral level. These existing practices are rendering assistance to each other, information sharing, and conduct of regular joint patrols.

It was also revealed that despite ASEAN's existence of more than five decades, very few are aware of its role, whether direct or indirect, in the creation of SSSP. The ASEAN awareness is also based on hierarchy and position which can influence the people's exposure.

Conclusion

The previous chapters discussed the SSSP as a minilateral arrangement created by the INDOMALPHI states to confront non-traditional security threats

in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. As ASEAN member states launched a small grouping within ASEAN, it raises the question of how this minilateral arrangement will shape ASEAN centrality as well as support ASEAN multilateralism. In this regard, based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

First, from a normative perspective, ASEAN centrality as a principle is directly linked to ASEAN's identity and fundamental beliefs. The so-called ASEAN way persuades the ASEAN member states to look for an informal approach to cooperation (Katsumata, 2004). The process of how minilateralism shapes ASEAN centrality is manifested in the series of meetings of INDOMALPHI states that led to the creation of SSSP, taking into consideration the principles of consensus and non-interference which have been the guiding principles in implementing the joint/coordinated patrols in the concerned areas.

Compared to a multilateral approach which is often associated with institutions, minilateralism is leaning more towards an informal approach. The informal approach is also anchored on the ASEAN way which projects a venue that is "inclusive, open, and non-constraining" (Acharya, 2017, p. 275). Hence, this creates a comfortable environment for the member states. An environment where the member states can express themselves without the fear of judgment is a crucial prerequisite to multilateral dialogues in ASEAN (Katsumata, 2004).

In this regard, it is sufficient to say that prior to a possible implementation of a full regional mechanism or an institutional approach in dealing with non-

traditional security threats, ASEAN member states can engage in informal diplomacy first. Notably, minilateralism is like a bottom-up approach wherein the minilateral members can deal with their own issues at their level. The effectiveness of the minilateral arrangement will dictate its future. If successful, it can be elevated on the ASEAN level for a full regional mechanism. If not, the issue or concern can be raised on the ASEAN level for consideration/decision of other member states.

Second, the norm against regional defense cooperation precedes all other factors such as the pressure from other ASEAN member states and other affected stakeholders, and the similarity in cultures that pushed the INDOMALPHI states to engage in minilateral arrangement. The refusal to enter collective defense cooperation was classified as a basic practice in ASEAN by Noordin Sopiee as cited in Acharya (2009, p.91). This apparently started during the Bandung Conference in 1955 wherein the so-called “Bandung injunction” urged the Southeast Asian nations to abstain from engaging in collective defense that served the interests of major powers.

The injunction became a general norm against collective defense because of fear that regional defense cooperation might give the impression of another SEATO. Hence, collective defense was not mentioned in the founding documents of ASEAN (Acharya, 2011). Although ASEAN dropped the intention of developing collective defense, its policies showed the norm against collective defense (Acharya, 2005). Similarly, the norm was heavily displayed in the rejection of the USA’s proposal for the RMSI in 2004 (Acharya, 2009).

Notably, the United States Pacific Command recommended carrying out patrols in the Malacca Strait by the US Marines but the proposal was met with disapproval from Indonesia and Malaysia due to concerns over sovereignty intrusion in the area (Sittnick, 2005; Raymond, 2009). Further, Indonesia perceived the initiative as too military-oriented (Febrica, 2014) while Malaysia said that it would not welcome the presence of the US military (Sittnick, 2005).

Instead, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia established the MSSP to handle the issue of piracy in the Strait. Similarly, when former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (PRRD) suggested in 2017 that China should send its coast guard vessels to patrol the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, it apparently pressured Indonesia and Malaysia to fast-track the process of border patrols in the area. It only means that ASEAN member states will unlikely cooperate with external powers to deal with their own issues.

Third, the success and effectiveness of SSSP as a minilateral arrangement is an opportunity for ASEAN to explore other approaches in solving pressing issues that cannot be solved at the ASEAN level at the soonest possible time. It is about time that ASEAN to take the lead and act as the diplomatic representative of Southeast Asia while taking the backseat in dealing with local issues. Minilateralism is like a bottom-up approach wherein the minilateral members can deal with their own issues at their level.

The effectiveness of the minilateral arrangement will dictate its future. If successful, it can be elevated on the ASEAN level for a full regional mechanism.

If not, the issue or concern can be raised on the ASEAN level for consideration/decision of other member states. In the case of the South China Sea dispute, Lin and Lee (2023) suggested that the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brunei can also form a minilateral arrangement to address the issue.

Lastly, minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism is not all about the minilateral arrangement's expansion of membership. It is about exploring other mechanisms and supplementing what is not feasible on the regional scale. The security landscape is continuously evolving and there might come a time when ASEAN needs to be open to this kind of mechanism.

Notably, the findings of this study revealed that minilateral arrangements will likely be a trend in Southeast Asia since the small number of members makes it more manageable as compared to multilateral groupings. This observation supports Ikram's (2018) argument that minilateral arrangements like SSSP are expected to stay since there was a shift to an ad-hoc approach from an institutional approach in dealing with non-traditional security threats.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study and the generated conclusion, this study sets forth the recommendations that can contribute to ASEANOLGY and the security sector. It could serve as a guide for ASEAN to explore an alternative approach in addressing the NTS threats in Southeast Asia without undermining ASEAN's legitimacy.

Informal Diplomacy or “Barkadahan” concept

The so-called “sports-shirt diplomacy” in the 1960s can be termed today as the “*barkadahan*” concept wherein a small group of affected countries engages in informal dialogues to address pressing issues before moving to formal mechanisms. They could also use leisure activities to ease the atmosphere and make the potential members comfortable with each other. This informal approach is also anchored on the ASEAN way which projects a venue that is “inclusive, open, and non-constraining” (Acharya, 2017, p. 275) where the member states can express themselves without the fear of judgment is a crucial prerequisite to multilateral dialogues in ASEAN (Katsumata, 2004). In this regard, this study recommends strengthening the informal diplomacy or “*barkadahan*” concept to explore other mechanisms and supplement what is not feasible on the regional scale.

Notably, ASEAN as a regional grouping, also started with five members and used an informal approach to negotiate the founding of ASEAN. The Foreign Ministers of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore met in Thailand in early August 1967 and discussed the would-be ASEAN Declaration through relative isolation and playing golf in a coastal town, southeast of Bangkok. This has been referred to as “sports-shirt diplomacy” (ASEAN, 2020).

Bahasa Indonesia as part of the military school curriculum

The findings of this study revealed that during the negotiation on defense cooperation especially, SSSP, the language barrier between the Philippines

and Indonesia made it difficult to discuss since the side of Indonesia needs an interpreter. According to one of the key informants, although it was difficult, the issue was not insurmountable.

Similarly, based on the interaction of the researcher in military schools, the language offerings depend on the proposals every academic year. Hence, there might be offerings on Bahasa Indonesia for a specific academic year while for the next year, it will be Chinese Mandarin. In this regard, this study recommends for the security sector to make Bahasa Indonesia as mainstay in the language offerings of military schools as well as encourage the military and civilian personnel in learning the language as part of efforts to maintain a good minilateral partnership between the two countries.

Information Drive Campaign on ASEAN and SSSP

Similarly, this study recommends that the security sector refers to this thesis in crafting an information drive campaign that targets their personnel on the ground to broaden their knowledge of ASEAN and SSSP. To note, the key informants particularly those who were deployed on the grounds stated that the people on the ground are not aware of ASEAN's role in regional politics. On the other hand, those who were not exposed to the grassroots communities stated that ASEAN activities and initiatives are often reported widely in regional media and platforms.

However, it seems that this point of view is heavily stereotyped towards individuals who are exposed to social media platforms. Nevertheless, their

comments were influenced by the environment where they are exposed which is different from the key informants who have been involved and deployed on the grounds. Hence, this study would be helpful to the operatives to better understand the dynamics in minilateral arrangements.

Since this study only focused on the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol which is just one part of the Trilateral Cooperative Agreement (TCA), further studies are recommended on the combined air patrols and the exchange of information and intelligence to better understand the dynamics of minilateral arrangement.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO THE KEY INFORMANT

Dear Sir/Madam:

Greetings!

I am Nuelene N. Gallos, a graduate student from the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) currently taking up Master of ASEAN Studies. As part of the requirement of the said graduate program, I am conducting a study titled **“Minilateralism Shaping ASEAN Centrality: The Case of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP).”**

In particular, the study will focus on SSSP launched by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (INDOMALPHI) last 2017 and how it shapes ASEAN centrality. It will also identify the factors that drive the ASEAN member states to engage in minilateralism and the existing practices related to minilateralism that can support ASEAN multilateralism.

In line with this, may I kindly request your participation as one of the key respondents for the study in view of your knowledge of the subject? Your views and opinions on the subject matter are of utmost importance to accomplish the study's objectives.

Hence, I am requesting a personal or online interview via Zoom at your most convenient time. Should the two methods would not be feasible, you may provide your ideas and answers in the attached file.

Enclosed with this letter are the thesis questions and informed consent form. Rest assured that all information gathered will be kept at the highest level of confidentiality.

Your kind consideration will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Very truly yours,

Nuelene N. Gallos
MAS Student
UPOU

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Name of Respondent (optional): _____ Date: _____

Part I. Overview of the Study

Title of the Study: Minilateralism Shaping ASEAN Centrality: The Case of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrols

Name of Researcher: Nuelene N. Gallos

Email Address: nngallos1@up.edu.ph

Purpose of the Study

This study intends to describe how minilateralism shapes ASEAN centrality; identify the factors that drive ASEAN member states to engage in minilateralism and the existing practices related to minilateralism that can support ASEAN multilateralism.

The findings of the study will be helpful to ASEAN Secretariat, member states, and students and researchers to further understand the current practices of minilateral arrangements that can strengthen ASEAN multilateralism.

Selection of the Respondent

The respondent is requested to participate in the study in view of the knowledge and experience regarding the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol launched by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (INDOMALPHI) on 19 June 2017.

Procedures

A Zoom meeting invitation will be sent to the respondent once the online interview schedule has been finalized.

The list of questions will be sent to the respondent as a reference.

The online interview shall only take 30 minutes to 1 hour, based on the length of the discussion.

Should an online interview be not feasible, the respondent may provide his/her ideas and answers to the attached questions and send a copy to the researcher's email address: nngallos1@up.edu.ph

Results of the Study/Confidentiality

The researcher will document and interpret the information gathered from the online interview or the interview questionnaire.

Subsequently, the study results will be presented in a colloquium organized by the University of the Philippines Open University. This will be attended by faculty members. Hence, the respondents may refuse to share confidential information.

Part II. Authorization/Consent

Statement by the respondent

I have been invited to participate in the study “Minilateralism Shaping ASEAN Centrality: The Case of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol.”

I have read the abovementioned information and I have had the opportunity to raise questions on the said matter. Any questions I have raised were answered with satisfaction. I have consented voluntarily to participate in the study.

Name of Respondent (optional): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement by the researcher

I have provided the respondent with a copy of this consent form and ensured that the respondent understands the statements hereof to the best of my ability.

I confirm that the respondent was allowed to raise any questions on the study, and all questions have been answered satisfactorily.

I confirm that the respondent has not been forced to give consent, and the consent has been given willingly and voluntarily.

A copy of this form has been provided to the respondent.

Name of Researcher: Nuelene N. Gallos

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?
2. Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?
3. Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why?
 - Pressure from non-ASEAN countries
 - Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia
 - Public opinion
 - Lobbying from local government units
 - Pressure from community-based organizations
4. What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?
5. What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?
6. Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like this is here to stay?
7. It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?
8. From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?
9. What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Key Informant 1 (K1)

Former representative in the Ministerial Meeting on the INDOMALPHI TCA and occupied a key position in the DND

06 July 2023

Email Interview

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	Because the three countries share common sea borders the advantage is that we could pool our limited resources to address the problems and concerns common to all which is piracy and kidnapping at sea and the terrorists movement from one country to another Communication and coordination are also facilitated. No one country can patrol the vast seas between the countries therefore the best course of action is cooperation. I	Pooling limited resources to address piracy and kidnapping Communication and coordination are facilitated The best course of action is cooperation	Cooperation	Advantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
	do not see any disadvantages.			
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	The proximity of the three countries did not mean they share norms, cultures, and values. While their physical features are similar there are huge differences: First, the language. Indonesia and Malaysia speak Bahasa hence they can talk to each other easily but not with Filipinos. The Malaysians are fluent in English while the Indonesians are not. Indonesians need interpreter which makes it difficult for Filipinos to communicate with them. Religion is another: The Indonesians and Malaysians	Physical features are similar but huge differences in shared norms, culture, and values Malaysia and Indonesia have similar language Malaysian and Filipinos are fluent in English Malaysia and Indonesia are Islamic countries while the Philippines is Roman Catholic All three countries have been colonized	Different culture Language barrier Similar colonial past	Disadvantage in defense cooperation

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
	are Muslims while the Philippines is Christian. While this matters little in the relationship it sometimes doesn't make working together smoothly. Influence of colonizers also play some part in the relationship. We are more attached to the Americans while Malaysians to UK. The Indonesians to the Dutch. Each have their own unique cultures developed throughout their colonial past.			
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why?	a. Pressure from non-ASEAN countries. In a way yes not direct pressure but subtle hints like Vietnam whose 12 nationals (all crew members of a cargo	Pressure from non-ASEAN countries was expressed subtly. Vietnam also expressed its concern subtly.	Pressure from affected stakeholders	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
• Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local government units Pressure from community-based organizations	vessel) were kidnapped. The pressure that the Vietnam government exerted for the release of their nationals was subtly communicated. b. Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia. No pressure. It was a collective decision by the three countries. c. Public opinion. Yes, the people of Mindanao as a whole and to a large extent the entire Philippines as the terrorists are giving the country a bad name. The terrorist threat likewise discourage tourism in the area. d. Lobbying from local government units.	Participation of three countries in SSSP is a collective decision Various local stakeholders also exerted pressure to the Philippine government		

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
	Yes, from the officials of Sulu, Tawi-tawi and Basilan. Because the constant kidnapping have terrorized their localities and preventing them to develop. e. Pressure from community-based organizations. Yes, their religious leaders both christians and muslims, the business owners, teachers, traders, etc.			
What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?	All three countries are part of ASEAN and they adhere to the ASEAN principle of centrality and non-interference in another member state's domestic	INDOMALPHI states adhere to principles of ASEAN centrality and non-interference	ASEAN principles Offering of assistance Cooperation	Minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
	problems specially political and religious. That's why the Trilateral partners focused their joint patrol in the common maritime area. No encroachment in another's territory. Mutual cooperation and respect. The other close ASEAN members like Brunei, Singapore and Thailand have offered assistance like communications and efforts to stop the terrorists inside their countries.	Mutual cooperation and respect Other ASEAN members offered assistance to prevent terrorism from spilling to their countries		
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	All other members have expressed concern in the increasing incidents of terrorist acts such as bombing, kidnapping and piracy. Short of	The remaining ASEAN members expressed concern regarding the threats	Pressure from other ASEAN members	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI states to engage in minilateralism

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
	telling us what to do they all encouraged us to solve the problem.			
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like this is here to stay?	Definitely! Terrorism has not completely disappeared. There are still pockets or remnants of the terrorists that placed Marawi under siege and the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi. The trilateral patrol among Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia will continue into the future. The intensity of the patrol will depend on the perceived threat.	The intensity of cooperation activities will depend on the perceived threats Defense cooperation will still exist	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with	Not on the ground. But the higher level of command are. But it matters little for as long as the three countries and cooperating splendidly in	Only the upper echelon is aware of ASEAN The ASEAN awareness does not matter as long as the three countries	Hierarchy	Challenges on the grounds

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?	securing their tri-boundaries and there is good cooperation of people (military) on the ground. After all it is the interest and security of the three countries that are at stake.	continue to cooperate		
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	I don't think so because the challenges faced by the other countries are dissimilar to the ones faced by the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. The others may also form small groupings like the Malacca and Trilateral Patrols in the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas.	Other ASEAN member states do not face the same issue Other countries may form small groups to address their own issues	Forming new minilateral arrangements	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN minilateralism
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	Everyone is on equal footing. No country is dominant and all decisions are collectively done. Respect of each other's unique	There is transparency and respect No dominance of one country over the other	No dominant power	Minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality

Researcher	K1	Codes	Categories	Themes
	traditions and customs. There is transparency among the members.			

APPENDIX E

Key Informant 2 (K2)

Member of the Philippine defense delegation to Indonesia; part of JTF Tawi-Tawi stationed in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

25 June 2023

Zoom Interview

Researcher	K2	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	The spate of kidnappings occurred in the waters of the Sulu-Celebes Seas. Hence, the three defense ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines met with each other to discuss the joint patrols. With SSSP, the three countries were able to verify the reported incidents and be able to address the issues. It was able to render assistance to each other which means the arrangement in this aspect is effective. It serves as a confidence-	The kidnappings led the INDOMALPHI to discuss joint patrols Render assistance during distress Serves as confidence-building measure Indonesia is not participative as compared to Malaysia and the Philippines Exchange of actionable	Cooperation Difference in priorities	Advantage of defense cooperation Disadvantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K2	Codes	Categories	Themes
	building measure among the three countries. However, Indonesia is not participative in activities. They only participate because most of the victims were Indonesian nationals. Only the Philippines and Malaysia can be considered true players. This could be elevated to a bigger cooperation with other agencies. A disadvantage of this arrangement is the exchange of information, particularly the actionable intelligence. The three countries are wary of the information to share without compromising their country's national interests. The Joint Working Group has not finalized the	intelligence is difficult due to wariness of the three countries		

Researcher	K2	Codes	Categories	Themes
	protocols of the TCA yet.			
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	Definitely. Yes. The national interests of these countries also played a role.	Shared culture and values National interests	Cooperation	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why? • Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local government units	In terms of TCA, there was no pressure coming from other countries. Also, the efforts of the USA focused on terrorism/maritime security. Other countries who are affected by the maritime issues in Sulu-Celebes Seas such as Australia maintained a liaison in the country to update with developments.	No pressure from other countries Other affected countries closely coordinate with the Philippines regarding updates	Cooperation	Factors that pushed the Philippines to engage in minilateralism

Researcher	K2	Codes	Categories	Themes
Pressure from community-based organizations				
What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?	It depends. In a minilateral arrangement, only the security interests of the three countries are being pursued while other countries need to be considered at the ASEAN level. This is coming from a realist perspective.	Issues in minilateral arrangements are specific The ASEAN level is broad	ASEAN principle	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	On the level of ASEAN ministers' defense meeting. There are different levels of consensus. Also, there might be a chance to expand the cooperation.	Different levels of consensus Chance to expand cooperation	ASEAN principle	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like this is here to stay?	It will be a trend. A small number of countries are manageable.	Small countries groupings are preferred	Cooperation	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-	Only the boss is aware of ASEAN's role because most of	Only the higher echelon are	Hierarchy	Challenges on the grounds

Researcher	K2	Codes	Categories	Themes
known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?	the people on the grounds are focused on tactical movements. If I have time, I educate them on the role of these organizations but on their own, this is unlikely.	aware of ASEAN		
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	It is possible. However, the TCA is not yet implemented.	There is a possibility that Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand might be members	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	I think one of the best practices includes rendering assistance to each other. Also, this becomes a platform where the three navies interact with each other. It has also	Rendering assistance and navy interactions with each other	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K2	Codes	Categories	Themes
	reduced the spate of kidnappings in the area			

APPENDIX F

Key Informant 3 (K3)

Member of AFP intelligence community with expertise in ASG; currently assigned to Jolo, Sulu

15 June 2023

Email Interview

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	The possible advantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP) includes enhanced maritime security, strengthened regional ties and Shared burden and cost-effectiveness. By pooling resources and coordinating efforts, participating countries can share the burden of maritime security challenges and maximize their operational	Stronger regional ties and cost-effectives by pooling resources and coordinating efforts	Cooperations	Advantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	effectiveness. This can lead to more efficient use of limited defense budgets and resources. Meanwhile, the disadvantages will be on the sovereignty concerns, complex coordination and decision-making and unequal contributions that imbalances in capabilities, resources, and commitments among participating countries may arise, potentially leading to tensions or disagreements regarding the distribution of responsibilities and benefits.			

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	The similarities in norms, culture, and values between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines most likely aided in the expediting of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. These parallels lay the groundwork for mutual understanding and shared goals, which can help to streamline decision-making processes, foster trust, and facilitate cooperation. Language, religion, historical ties, and cultural practices shared by participating countries can all help to	Similar norms, cultures, and values expedite and improved the coordinated patrols	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	improve communication and coordination.			
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why? • Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local government units • Pressure from community-based organizations	Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia, among other options, most likely played a significant role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP. As neighboring countries facing similar maritime security challenges, the Philippines' decision to join the initiative would have been influenced by Indonesia and Malaysia's advocacy and encouragement for regional cooperation. While public opinion, lobbying from local government	The Philippines was influenced by the campaign of Malaysia and Indonesia to address the issues in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Other countries also exerted pressure on the Philippines	Pressure from affected stakeholders	Factors that pushed the Philippines to engage in minilateralism

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	units, pressure from community-based organizations, and pressure from non-ASEAN countries may all have an impact, direct and immediate pressure from neighboring countries will have a greater impact on the Philippines' decision to participate in the SSSP.			
What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?	SSSP is a specific defense cooperation initiative among a select group of countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines) targeting the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region. It focuses on enhancing maritime	SSSP targets specific issues ASEAN provides a platform for multilateral cooperation	Cooperation	Advantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	security and addressing shared challenges in that particular area. ASEAN, on the other hand, is a broader regional organization consisting of ten Southeast Asian member states. It covers a wide range of areas, including political, economic, social, and cultural cooperation, with the goal of promoting regional integration, stability, and development. While SSSP is a more specialized and focused arrangement, ASEAN provides a platform for multilateral cooperation across a wider			

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	spectrum of issues and involves a larger membership. Both types of cooperation can complement each other and contribute to regional security and stability.			
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	ASEAN did not play a direct role in the creation of SSSP. The Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol initiative was primarily driven by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines as the participating countries. However, ASEAN's principles of mutual respect, non-interference, and consensus-building, as	ASEAN has no direct role in SSSP SSSP considered the ASEAN principles on respect, non-interference, and consensus	ASEAN principle	Minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	well as its goal of promoting regional peace and stability, align with the objectives of SSSP. ASEAN's existing frameworks and mechanisms for cooperation, such as the ASEAN Maritime Forum, could potentially support and facilitate the SSSP's objectives by providing a platform for dialogue, information sharing, and coordination among the participating countries.			
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like	It is likely that defense cooperation initiatives like SSSP will continue to exist. The success and	SSSP will continue to exist based on its effectiveness	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
this is here to stay?	effectiveness of such initiatives, including the SSSP modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol, can encourage other countries or regions facing similar security challenges to adopt similar cooperative arrangements . As maritime security threats persist and evolve, collaborative efforts are often more effective in addressing them compared to individual actions. However, the specific form and scope of such cooperation may evolve over time based on the changing security			

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	landscape and the priorities of participating countries.			
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?	While ASEAN's reputation and role are well-known at the regional level, the awareness of ASEAN's role in specific cooperation initiatives like SSSP may vary among individuals working in the field. Those directly involved in the SSSP, such as military personnel, government officials, and stakeholders in the maritime sector, are likely to have a better understanding of ASEAN's broader role in promoting regional cooperation	On the higher echelon are aware of ASEAN	Hierarchy	Challenges on the grounds

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	and stability. However, it is important to note that awareness and understanding can differ among individuals based on their specific roles, experiences, and level of engagement in regional affairs			
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	It is difficult to predict with certainty whether all ASEAN member states will eventually become members of SSSP. The decision to participate in defense cooperation initiatives like SSSP is ultimately determined by the individual member states based on their specific	Participation is determined by the security interests of said observers.	Different security interests	Disadvantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	security interests, capabilities, and political considerations. While Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers, their decision to join as full members would depend on various factors, including their assessment of the benefits, alignment of interests, and domestic political dynamics.			
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	Regular information sharing. This helps enhance situational awareness and enables coordinated responses. Multilateral coordination	Information sharing, dialogue and coordination helps enhancing situational awareness	Cooperation	Advantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	and dialogue: Engaging in regular meetings, forums, and dialogues among the participating countries, as well as involving relevant regional organizations like ASEAN, to discuss common challenges, share best practices, and explore areas of further cooperation. Inclusivity and engagement: Inviting other countries as observers or partners to contribute to the SSSP's objectives, while also engaging with relevant stakeholders such as local government units,			

Researcher	K3	Codes	Categories	Themes
	community-based organizations, and non-governmental organizations to ensure their perspectives and contributions are considered.			

APPENDIX G

Key Informant 4 (K4)

Member of AFP intelligence community; works on maritime concerns in

Southeast Asia

27 June 2023

Zoom Interview

Researcher	K4	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	The launching of SSSP which focused on the tri-boundary area has lessened piracy, smuggling of goods, and maritime insurgency. It also shows that the three countries can work together. A disadvantage is the level of commitment of each country might not be on the same level. Also, the resources are limited.	SSSP lessened the NTS threats in the area Different levels of commitment and limited resources	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation Disadvantages of defense cooperation
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in	Yes, since the three countries' maritime histories are intertwined. There are also	The maritime histories of the three countries are connected	Similar culture	Factors that pushed the INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism

Researcher	K4	Codes	Categories	Themes
norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	Filipinos in Malaysia and Indonesia. Although a rapport has been established among the three countries thru SSSP, the Philippines has been left behind in terms of capability.			
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why? • Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local government units • Pressure from community-based organizations	There was no pressure since the Philippines volunteered to be involved. However, the people involved in illegal activities such as the smuggling of goods and human trafficking are against the implementation of TCA.	The country's involvement in SSSP is voluntary to deal with the NTS threats	Cooperation	Factors that pushed the Philippines to engage in minilateralism
What is the difference between engaging in	On the ASEAN level, maritime issues are not discussed. On	Minilateral arrangements	Cooperation	Advantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K4	Codes	Categories	Themes
minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?	a minilateral level, it is focused on a particular mission which is a good thing.	have specific targets		
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	I think the creation of SSSP is not sanctioned by ASEAN. This is not part of the ASEAN agenda.	ASEAN has no role in the creation of SSSP	Cooperation	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like this is here to stay?	Yes, I think this kind of agreement is the trend.	Defense cooperation will still exist	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of	No. Only a few people are aware of the TCA. Meanwhile, ASEAN's presence is not felt on the ground.	Only the higher echelon is aware of ASEAN	Hierarchy	Challenges on the grounds

Researcher	K4	Codes	Categories	Themes
ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?				
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	Yes, I think there is a possibility that SSSP can expand with Brunei joining the arrangement from being an observer since this country is located near the area.	Possible expansion of membership due to Brunei's proximity to the area	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	Para sa akin, it's is a shared responsibility.	Sharing with each other the responsibility	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

APPENDIX H

Key Informant 5 (K5)

Member of AFP intelligence community; works on maritime and naval concerns

13 June 2023

Email Interview

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	The Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP) is a multinational defense cooperation initiative aimed at addressing maritime security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region, which encompasses parts of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Like any defense cooperation initiative, the SSSP has its advantages and disadvantages. Let's examine them: Advantages of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP): 1. Enhanced Maritime Security: The SSSP fosters	Closer collaboration and cooperation Provides a venue to enhance maritime security capabilities	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	closer collaboration and cooperation among the participating countries in addressing common maritime security challenges in the region. By sharing information, conducting joint patrols, and coordinating responses, the SSSP helps improve maritime security and counter illicit activities such as piracy, smuggling, and terrorism. 2. Strengthened Regional Stability: Defense cooperation initiatives like the SSSP contribute to enhancing regional stability. By fostering trust, understanding, and cooperation among the participating countries, the SSSP helps prevent conflicts and reduces the			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	risk of misunderstandings or miscalculations that could escalate tensions in the region. 3. Shared Burden and Resources: Collaborative defense efforts, such as the SSSP, allow participating countries to share the burden and pool their resources to achieve common security objectives. This can lead to cost savings, as countries can jointly invest in maritime surveillance systems, share intelligence, and conduct coordinated patrols, rather than individually bearing the full cost of such efforts. 4. Capacity Building: The SSSP provides an avenue for participating countries to enhance their			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	maritime security capabilities through training, exercises, and information sharing. This allows for the development of skills, knowledge, and capabilities necessary to address evolving security threats more effectively.			
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	The similarities in norms, culture, and values among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region can indeed facilitate the implementation of coordinated patrols and contribute to the fast-tracking of such initiatives. Here's how: 1. Shared Cultural Heritage: The countries in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, share cultural	A shared cultural heritage that can foster familiarity and understanding	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	heritage, historical ties, and ethnic connections. These shared cultural aspects can foster a sense of familiarity, understanding, and trust among the participating countries. It can create a common ground for cooperation and facilitate communication and collaboration in addressing maritime security challenges. 2. Common Security Concerns: The Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region faces similar security challenges, including piracy, smuggling, and terrorism. The shared security concerns provide a strong incentive for cooperation and coordination among the countries. The recognition of these common threats helps build consensus			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	and facilitates the fast-tracking of initiatives such as coordinated patrols. 3. Linguistic Similarities: While there are diverse languages spoken in the region, there are also linguistic similarities among the Malay, Indonesian, and Filipino languages. The linguistic proximity can ease communication and understanding among the participating countries' naval and law enforcement personnel during joint operations and information sharing. 4. Existing Regional Mechanisms: The region has pre-existing regional mechanisms and frameworks that facilitate cooperation			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	among the countries. For example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides a platform for dialogue and cooperation on various issues, including maritime security. ASEAN's principles of consensus-building and non-interference can help overcome potential obstacles and promote cooperation among member states. However, it is important to note that despite these similarities, challenges still exist, including differences in legal frameworks, operational procedures, and varying levels of resources and capabilities. These factors need to be addressed and harmonized to			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	ensure effective implementation and sustained cooperation in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol and other collaborative defense initiatives.			
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why? • Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local government units • Pressure from community-based organizations	Public opinion within the Philippines can play a significant role in shaping the country's stance and participation Local government units in the Philippines, particularly those in areas directly affected may engage in lobbying efforts to ensure that their concerns and interests are represented in the national government's decision-making process.	The issues in Sulu-Sulawesi Seas were raised before the government thru public opinion and LGUs	Pressure from affected stakeholders	Factors that pushed the Philippines to engage in minilateralism
What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements	The difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as the Sulu-Sulawesi	The difference lies in their scope, membership, and objectives	Different priorities	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
such as SSSP and ASEAN?	Seas Patrol (SSSP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) lies in their scope, membership, and objectives: 1. Membership and scope: - SSSP: The SSSP involves a smaller group of countries, typically those directly affected by a specific issue or region. In the case of the SSSP, it primarily includes Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The minilateral arrangement focuses specifically on addressing the security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region. - ASEAN: ASEAN, on the other hand, is a regional organization consisting of ten Southeast Asian nations, including Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos,			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ASEAN covers a broader range of issues beyond security, such as trade, economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and political dialogue. Its membership and scope are more comprehensive and encompass the entirety of Southeast Asia. 2. Objectives: - SSSP: Minilateral arrangements like the SSSP usually have a specific objective in addressing a particular issue or region. In the case of SSSP, the primary objective is to enhance maritime security and combat transnational crimes, including piracy, smuggling, and terrorist activities, in the			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. - ASEAN: ASEAN aims to promote regional cooperation, peace, stability, economic integration, and collective security among its member states. Its objectives include maintaining regional peace, enhancing economic development, fostering social and cultural cooperation, and promoting dialogue and cooperation among member countries and with external partners.			
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	ASEAN did not directly play a role in the creation of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP). The SSSP was initiated and established by the participating countries themselves, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.	ASEAN played no role in the creation of SSSP. However, it may have facilitated some of the discussions	ASEAN principle	Minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	It was a collaborative effort among these nations to address the security challenges faced in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region, including piracy, smuggling, and terrorism. However, it is worth noting that ASEAN as a regional organization, through its principles of promoting regional cooperation and dialogue, may have indirectly facilitated the discussions and cooperation that led to the establishment of the SSSP.			
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like this is here to stay?	The success and effectiveness of such initiatives will play a role in determining their future prospects. If these initiatives prove to be effective in addressing security challenges, other regions or countries facing	The success and effectiveness will determine their prospects Other countries may adopt similar	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	similar issues may be motivated to adopt similar models of defense cooperation. Additionally, as global interconnectivity continues to grow and security challenges evolve, the need for cooperative efforts in defense and security is likely to remain an important aspect of maintaining regional stability and combating threats.	models of defense cooperation		
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?	ASEAN has established mechanisms and frameworks to facilitate regional collaboration on security matters, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), among others. It has also emphasized the importance of addressing non-	People working in the security sector are aware of ASEAN ASEAN activities are widely reported	Assumption about ASEAN	Challenges on the grounds

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	traditional security threats, including piracy, terrorism, and transnational crime, which aligns with the objectives of initiatives like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP) you mentioned earlier. Moreover, ASEAN's activities and initiatives are often reported widely in regional media and platforms. This helps in disseminating information about ASEAN's role and accomplishments in regional cooperation, including in the field of defense and security. As such, individuals involved in these fields, whether they are military personnel, defense officials, or members of related organizations and institutions, are likely to be aware of ASEAN's role in			

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	promoting cooperation and addressing security challenges in the region.			
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	Expanding the membership of the SSSP to include all ASEAN member states would align with ASEAN's overall goal of fostering unity, cooperation, and security within the region. It would contribute to enhanced regional maritime security by ensuring the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and leveraging the resources and expertise of all ASEAN countries. However, it's important to consider that ASEAN operates based on the principles of consensus and non-interference. The decision to expand the SSSP's membership will	Possible expansion of membership is in line with ASEAN's principles	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K5	Codes	Categories	Themes
	likely involve discussions and consultations within ASEAN, taking into account the interests and concerns of all member states. While it is conceivable that all ASEAN member states may eventually become members of the SSSP, it will depend on various factors such as the willingness of member states to join, their individual security priorities, and the practicality of incorporating additional members into the operational aspects of the initiative.			
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	Similar to my answer to the first question, the best practices include capacity building and sharing of resources to achieve their security objectives.	Sharing of resources to achieve their objectives	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

APPENDIX I

Key Informant 6 (K6)

Member of AFP intelligence community; works on maritime and naval concerns

13 June 2023

Email Interview

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	1. Enhanced regional security: The SSSP promotes collective security among participating nations within the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region. It allows for shared intelligence, joint patrols, and coordinated responses to security threats, leading to improved regional stability. 2. Combating transnational crimes: One of the primary objectives of the SSSP is to address maritime crimes like piracy, smuggling, and human trafficking. By sharing resources, information, and expertise, member countries can effectively tackle these transnational challenges. 3. Strengthened border security: Defense	Closer collaboration and cooperation The issue of sovereignty affects cooperation, especially in sharing intelligence	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	cooperation helps strengthen border control, preventing the illegal movement of goods, arms, and individuals. Joint patrols and intelligence sharing enable countries to monitor and secure their maritime borders more effectively. 4. Capacity building: Member countries can benefit from sharing best practices, training programs, and technological advancements in maritime security. Through defense cooperation, participating nations can develop their military capabilities, operational expertise, and interagency coordination. 5. Reinforcement of diplomatic ties: Cooperation in defense matters fosters meaningful relationships between participating nations. Regular meetings, exercises, and joint operations provide an opportunity for military and government officials			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	to build trust, understand each other's concerns, and resolve disputes diplomatically. Disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP): 1. Sovereignty concerns: Some countries may perceive defense cooperation as a threat to their sovereignty and national interests. They may feel uncomfortable with joint patrols or sharing sensitive information, fearing potential encroachment on their territorial integrity. 2. Unequal contributions: Smaller or less technologically advanced countries may feel overshadowed by larger and more developed nations within defense cooperation initiatives. This inequality could create dissatisfaction and hinder effective collaboration.			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	3. Complicated decision-making process: With multiple nations involved, decision-making in defense cooperation initiatives can become complex and time-consuming. Different countries may have divergent priorities, political considerations, and domestic constraints, making it challenging to reach consensus. 4. Limited scope: Defense cooperation initiatives often focus on specific security challenges or geographic regions. While they address specific issues, they may not comprehensively address all security concerns faced by participating countries. 5. Dependence on external support: In some cases, defense cooperation initiatives heavily rely on external powers or organizations for funding, equipment, or technical assistance. This			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	dependency could compromise the autonomy and self-reliance of participating nations in addressing their security challenges.			
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	The similarities in norms, culture, and values among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines do play a role in facilitating the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area). Here's how: 1. Common security concerns: The three countries share common security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region, such as piracy, smuggling, and terrorism. These shared concerns create a shared interest in addressing these issues and foster cooperation among the nations. 2. Cultural understanding: The proximity and historical interactions among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines contribute to a certain level of cultural	An interconnected maritime heritage that can foster familiarity and understanding	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	understanding and familiarity. Similar cultural norms, practices, and values can facilitate communication, trust-building, and cooperation among the countries. 3. Language similarities: In many cases, Indonesians, Malaysians, and Filipinos have a degree of linguistic similarity or may have some common languages, or at least shared terminology. This linguistic proximity can ease communication and reduce misunderstandings during joint patrols and other collaborative efforts. 4. Shared maritime heritage: The three nations have a shared maritime heritage due to their proximity to the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. This shared maritime identity can serve as a unifying factor and contribute to a mutual sense of responsibility in protecting the security and stability of the region.			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	5. Existing regional frameworks: There are pre-existing regional frameworks that promote cooperation, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN's principles of consensus-building, non-interference, and respect for state sovereignty can create a conducive environment for defense cooperation initiatives like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol. While these similarities in norms and values help facilitate the implementation of coordinated patrols, it is important to note that challenges and differences still exist, and successful implementation requires ongoing diplomatic efforts, trust-building, and effective communication among the participating countries.			
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines'	1. Pressure from non-ASEAN countries: Non-ASEAN countries, such as the United	The maritime issues transcend different	Pressure from affected stakeholders	Factors that pushed the Philippines to

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
participation in the SSSP and why? • Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local government units • Pressure from community-based organizations	States or Australia, might exert pressure on the Philippines to participate in the SSSP due to their interests in promoting regional stability and combating transnational crimes. Assistance, cooperation, or security agreements with these countries could influence the Philippines' decision to join the initiative. 2. Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia: As neighboring countries in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region, Indonesia and Malaysia could be influential in encouraging the Philippines to participate through diplomatic pressure, bilateral negotiations, or mutual security concerns. Joint efforts and collaboration with these countries can strengthen their collective security posture in the region. 3. Public opinion: Public opinion and societal pressure	sectors and can affect political will		participate in minilateralism

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	can also influence the Philippines' decision to participate in the SSSP. If the issue of maritime security is of high concern to the Filipino population, it could lead to public support for the government's involvement in multilateral initiatives like the SSSP. 4. Lobbying from local government units: Local government units (LGUs) situated in the coastal areas affected by maritime crimes might exert pressure on the national government to participate in the SSSP. These LGUs might witness the direct impact of transnational crimes on their communities and play a role in advocating for enhanced security measures and cooperation with neighboring nations. 5. Pressure from community-based organizations: Community-based organizations, such as non-			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	governmental organizations (NGOs) or civil society groups, focused on maritime security issues, can influence the Philippines' decision to participate in the SSSP. Their lobbying efforts, awareness campaigns, and advocacy for regional cooperation may prompt the government to take part in initiatives that address maritime threats. It's crucial to note that the actual weight of each of these factors can vary over time and depend on the specific circumstances, political dynamics, and priorities of the Philippine government at any given time. Multiple factors are often at play in the decision-making process.			
What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?	The difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	The difference lies in their scope, membership, and objectives	Different priorities	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	lies in their scope, membership, and objectives: 1. Membership and scope: - SSSP: The SSSP involves a smaller group of countries, typically those directly affected by a specific issue or region. In the case of the SSSP, it primarily includes Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The minilateral arrangement focuses specifically on addressing the security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region. - ASEAN: ASEAN, on the other hand, is a regional organization consisting of ten Southeast Asian nations, including Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ASEAN covers a broader range of issues beyond security, such as trade, economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and political			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	dialogue. Its membership and scope are more comprehensive and encompass the entirety of Southeast Asia. 2. Objectives: - SSSP: Minilateral arrangements like the SSSP usually have a specific objective in addressing a particular issue or region. In the case of SSSP, the primary objective is to enhance maritime security and combat transnational crimes, including piracy, smuggling, and terrorist activities, in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. - ASEAN: ASEAN aims to promote regional cooperation, peace, stability, economic integration, and collective security among its member states. Its objectives include maintaining regional peace, enhancing economic development, fostering social and cultural cooperation, and promoting dialogue and cooperation			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	among member countries and with external partners. 3. Decision-making and governance: - SSSP: Minilateral arrangements, like the SSSP, typically involve a more flexible and informal decision-making process among the participating countries. Decision-making mechanisms can vary, but they generally involve consultations, agreements, and joint operations focused on the specific issue or region at hand. - ASEAN: As a regional organization, ASEAN has a more formalized structure for decision-making and governance. It operates on principles of consensus, with decisions usually requiring the agreement of all member countries. ASEAN has established frameworks, regular meetings, and permanent bodies, such as the ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Ministerial Meetings, and			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	various sectoral bodies to facilitate decision-making and governance in different areas. In summary, minilateral arrangements like the SSSP are smaller-scale initiatives that focus on addressing specific issues in a particular region with a limited membership. On the other hand, ASEAN is a broader regional organization encompassing multiple countries in Southeast Asia, with a wide range of objectives, covering various sectors beyond security, and employing a more formalized decision-making process.			
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	ASEAN did not directly play a role in the creation of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP). The SSSP was initiated and established by the participating countries themselves, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. It was a collaborative effort among these nations to address the security	ASEAN played no role in the creation of SSSP. However, it may have facilitated some of the discussions	ASEAN principle	Minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	challenges faced in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region, including piracy, smuggling, and terrorism. However, it is worth noting that ASEAN as a regional organization, through its principles of promoting regional cooperation and dialogue, may have indirectly facilitated the discussions and cooperation that led to the establishment of the SSSP. ASEAN's emphasis on collective security and peace in the region may have provided a conducive environment for the participating countries to come together and address the maritime security concerns in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. Moreover, as ASEAN promotes regional cooperation and encourages member states to work together on various issues, the participating countries in the SSSP may have found inspiration or			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	guidance from ASEAN's approach to regional collaboration. While ASEAN did not directly play a role in the creation of SSSP, its principles and emphasis on regional cooperation may have influenced the participating countries' decision to collaborate in a minilateral arrangement like the SSSP.			
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like this is here to stay?	Given the transnational nature of security threats, such as piracy, smuggling, and terrorism, it is likely that defense cooperation initiatives like the SSSP and MSSP will continue to be relevant. These initiatives help enhance maritime security, promote information sharing, joint patrols, and coordinated responses among participating countries. The success and effectiveness of such initiatives will play a role in determining their future prospects. If these initiatives prove to be effective in addressing	The success and effectiveness will determine their prospects Other countries may adopt similar models of defense cooperation	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	security challenges, other regions or countries facing similar issues may be motivated to adopt similar models of defense cooperation. Additionally, as global interconnectivity continues to grow and security challenges evolve, the need for cooperative efforts in defense and security is likely to remain an important aspect of maintaining regional stability and combating threats. Nonetheless, the sustainability of defense cooperation initiatives depends on several factors, including the commitment and willingness of participating countries, political dynamics, regional developments, and evolving security challenges. Changes in leadership, shifts in priorities, or disagreements among participating countries could potentially impact the sustainability of these initiatives.			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	Ultimately, the future of defense cooperation initiatives like the SSSP and MSSP will depend on their continued relevance, adaptability to emerging security challenges, and the commitment of member nations to maintaining regional security and stability.			
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?	It is likely that individuals working in the field, specifically those involved in defense and security matters in the Southeast Asian region, are aware of ASEAN's role in promoting regional cooperation, including in defense and security initiatives. As a regional organization, ASEAN has been actively involved in fostering dialogue and cooperation among its member states on a wide range of issues, including security challenges. ASEAN has established mechanisms and frameworks to facilitate regional	People who are exposed to security issues are aware of ASEAN ASEAN activities are widely reported	Assumption about ASEAN	Challenges on the grounds

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	collaboration on security matters, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), among others. It has also emphasized the importance of addressing non-traditional security threats, including piracy, terrorism, and transnational crime, which aligns with the objectives of initiatives like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP) you mentioned earlier. Moreover, ASEAN's activities and initiatives are often reported widely in regional media and platforms. This helps in disseminating information about ASEAN's role and accomplishments in regional cooperation, including in the field of defense and security. As such, individuals involved in these fields, whether they are military personnel, defense officials, or members of related organizations and institutions, are likely to be aware of ASEAN's role in			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	promoting cooperation and addressing security challenges in the region. However, it's important to note that knowledge and awareness may vary among individuals and organizations depending on their specific areas of focus and interests. Not all individuals working in the field may have the same level of awareness			
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	Given the current trend of inviting Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand as observers to the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP), it is possible that in the future, all ASEAN member states may become members of the initiative. The decision to include these three countries as observers indicates a recognition of the regional importance and the need for broader collaboration in addressing maritime security challenges in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas. Expanding the membership of the	Possible expansion of membership is in line with ASEAN's principles	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	SSSP to include all ASEAN member states would align with ASEAN's overall goal of fostering unity, cooperation, and security within the region. It would contribute to enhanced regional maritime security by ensuring the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and leveraging the resources and expertise of all ASEAN countries. However, it's important to consider that ASEAN operates based on the principles of consensus and non-interference. The decision to expand the SSSP's membership will likely involve discussions and consultations within ASEAN, taking into account the interests and concerns of all member states. While it is conceivable that all ASEAN member states may eventually become members of the SSSP, it will depend on various factors			

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	such as the willingness of member states to join, their individual security priorities, and the practicality of incorporating additional members into the operational aspects of the initiative. Overall, while there is no certainty, there is a possibility that all ASEAN member states could join the SSSP in the future, considering the favorable direction demonstrated by the invitation of Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand as observers.			
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	The SSSP promotes collective security among participating nations within the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas region. It allows for shared intelligence, joint patrols, and coordinated responses to security threats, leading to improved regional stability. Member countries can benefit from sharing best practices, training programs, and technological advancements in maritime security. Through defense	Promote collective security among the SSSP members	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K6	Codes	Categories	Themes
	cooperation, participating nations can develop their military capabilities, operational expertise, and interagency coordination. Cooperation in defense matters fosters meaningful relationships between participating nations. Regular meetings, exercises, and joint operations provide an opportunity for military and government officials to build trust, understand each other's concerns, and resolve disputes diplomatically.			

APPENDIX J

Key Informant 7 (K7)

Member of AFP intelligence community; works on maritime and naval concerns

13 June 2023

Email Interview

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	Defense cooperation refers to the collaboration and mutual assistance between countries in matters of defense and security. While there are several advantages to defense cooperation, there are also some disadvantages to consider. Here are some of the key advantages and disadvantages: Advantages of Defense Cooperation: Enhanced Security: Defense cooperation allows countries to pool their resources and capabilities, leading to improved security for all participating nations. By working together, countries can deter potential threats and respond more effectively to security challenges. Cost Sharing: Defense cooperation enables countries to	Closer collaborative efforts and interoperability	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	share the financial burden of defense spending. By jointly developing and procuring military equipment and technology, countries can reduce costs and allocate resources more efficiently. Interoperability: Through defense cooperation, countries can harmonize their military capabilities and procedures, leading to greater interoperability. This allows for seamless coordination during joint operations, exercises, and peacekeeping missions. Knowledge and Expertise Sharing: Defense cooperation promotes the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices between countries. This facilitates capacity-building and professional development within armed forces, enabling them to better address evolving security threats. Diplomatic and Political Relations: Defense cooperation can strengthen			

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	diplomatic and political relations between nations. Collaborative defense initiatives can foster trust, promote dialogue, and build mutual understanding, potentially contributing to overall stability and cooperation. Disadvantages of Defense Cooperation: Loss of Sovereignty: Participating in defense cooperation initiatives may require countries to cede some measure of sovereignty over their defense policies and decision-making. This can limit a nation's ability to act independently in certain security matters. Political Constraints: Defense cooperation can be influenced by political considerations and interests of participating countries. Diverging political priorities and disagreements can impede effective decision-making and hinder the success of cooperative efforts.			

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	Technology Dependence: Collaborative defense projects often involve technology sharing and dependence on partner countries. This can create vulnerabilities, as access to critical defense technology may be compromised or limited in certain circumstances. Compatibility Challenges: Achieving compatibility between different defense systems, equipment, and procedures can be complex and time-consuming. Technical challenges and differing requirements can hinder the seamless integration and interoperability of forces. It is essential to weigh these advantages and disadvantages carefully when considering defense cooperation, as each country's inequality Among Partners: In defense cooperation, there can be disparities in resources, capabilities, and contributions among participating nations. This can lead to imbalances in burden-sharing and decision-making,			

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	potentially straining the relationships between partners.			
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	The similarities in norms, culture, and values among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have played a significant role in facilitating the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi seas. These similarities have fostered a sense of mutual understanding and cooperation among the countries involved, which has helped in fast-tracking the coordination efforts. The geographical proximity of these nations, along with the shared historical, linguistic, and cultural ties, has created a common ground for cooperation in various areas, including maritime security. The Sulu-Sulawesi seas, located between these countries, have faced challenges such as piracy, smuggling, and other illicit activities. Recognizing the need to address these common security concerns, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have	Cultural ties can foster mutual trust and respect	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	worked together to establish coordinated patrols in the region. The similarities in norms, culture, and values have facilitated effective communication and collaboration among the maritime enforcement agencies of these countries. They share a similar understanding of the challenges and threats in the region, allowing for coordinated responses and joint operations. Additionally, the cultural and historical ties have fostered trust and mutual respect, creating a conducive environment for cooperation. Moreover, the shared values of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member countries, such as respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and peaceful resolution of disputes, have further facilitated the implementation of coordinated patrols. ASEAN's principles of regional cooperation and consensus-			

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	building have provided a framework for these countries to come together and address common challenges collectively. Overall, the similarities in norms, culture, and values among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have indeed played a vital role in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi seas, enabling enhanced maritime security and cooperation in the region.			
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why? • Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local	I am not sure about these factors but I think a general factor could be the geographical location as well as the government's commitment to cooperation.	Geographical location and government's commitment	Cooperation	Advantages of defense cooperation

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
government units • Pressure from community-based organizations				
What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?	Minilateral arrangements, such as the SSSP and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), are both forms of regional cooperation but differ in their scope, membership, objectives, and decision-making processes.	The difference lies in their scope, membership, and objectives	Different priorities	Advantages of defense cooperation
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	The SSSP may have found inspiration in ASEAN's principles and may have influenced INDOMALPHI's decision to engage in said arrangement.	ASEAN principles could be the inspiration for creating the SSSP	ASEAN principle	Minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like this is here to stay?	Defense cooperation initiatives, such as modeling a program after another successful one, can be beneficial for countries looking to enhance their security and regional stability. These collaborations often aim to address common security concerns, promote information sharing, and develop joint operational capabilities. Whether defense cooperation initiatives like the	MSSP and SSSP continued existence will depend on the priorities and interests of members	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP) and the Sulu Sea Patrol (SSSP) will continue in the future depends on various factors, including the priorities and interests of the participating countries, geopolitical dynamics, and evolving security challenges. Governments will evaluate the effectiveness and value of such initiatives based on their objectives, national security strategies, and regional cooperation frameworks.			
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?	ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) has indeed established a reputation at the regional level due to its accomplishments and efforts in regional cooperation. ASEAN has made significant progress in promoting economic integration, political stability, and social development among its member countries. The people working in the field, such as government officials, academics, diplomats, and professionals involved in regional affairs, are generally	People who are exposed to security issues are aware of ASEAN ASEAN activities are widely reported	Assumption about ASEAN	Challenges on the grounds

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
	aware of ASEAN's role and its achievements. They understand the importance of ASEAN in fostering cooperation and addressing various challenges faced by the region, such as economic disparities, security concerns, and environmental issues. These individuals working in the field would typically have a good understanding of ASEAN's structure, mechanisms, and initiatives. They would be familiar with ASEAN's key documents, such as the ASEAN Charter, and the organization's goals and principles. They would also be knowledgeable about ASEAN's achievements in areas like trade facilitation, disaster management, cultural exchange, and people-to-people connectivity.			
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of	It's important to note that ASEAN has a policy of engaging with external partners through various mechanisms, including dialogues, partnerships, and cooperation frameworks. ASEAN	Engaging through different mechanisms	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K7	Codes	Categories	Themes
SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	has established partnerships with countries and organizations around the world, and it regularly invites external parties as observers to its meetings and activities. Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand are indeed ASEAN member states, and it is possible for them to participate as observers in certain meetings or initiatives within ASEAN or other regional forums. However, whether or not all ASEAN member states would eventually become members of any specific organization or framework would depend on the nature of that organization, the interests and priorities of the member states, and the consensus among the ASEAN member countries.			
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	Similar to my answer to the first question, I think collaborative efforts to deter potential threats and respond more effectively to security challenges is one of the best practices of SSSP.	Collaboration to effectively respond to security issues	Cooperation	Advantage of defense cooperation

APPENDIX K

Key Informant 8 (K8)

AFP member with PhD in Peace and Development; From Sanga-Sanga in Tawi-Tawi

19 June 2023

Zoom Interview

Researcher	K8	Codes	Categories	Themes
What are the advantages and disadvantages of defense cooperation like the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas Patrol (SSSP)?	The SSSP is still ongoing and not yet implemented. It has a wide scope. SSSP is a coordinated border patrol. It ensures the security of the border. The overlapping limits also contributed to the realization of joint maritime efforts. There is the factor of security risk given that it involves naval operations, geographic survey, maritime intelligence, and maritime surveillance. Although it is not fully implemented yet, it is topographically	SSSP is a coordinate border patrol As a member of SSSP, there is a security risk due to naval operations and maritime activities that involves intelligence	Similar colonial past	Advantage of defense cooperation Disadvantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K8	Codes	Categories	Themes
	appropriate and applicable.			
Given the proximity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, did the similarities in norms (culture and values) help in fast-tracking the implementation of coordinated patrols in the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas (tri-border area)?	Tawi-Tawi has similar culture with Malaysia and Indonesia particularly in the practice of Islam. There is also the same fishing grounds and the goal of patrolling the border. The coordinated patrols were meant to protect the people, apprehend the people who violate the maritime rules, and repatriate them afterwards to their respective countries.	Tawi-Tawi has similar culture with Malaysia and Indonesia Sharing the same borders	Cooperation	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism
Which of the following do you think played a huge role in the Philippines' participation in the SSSP and why? • Pressure from non-ASEAN countries • Pressure from Indonesia and Malaysia • Public opinion • Lobbying from local government units	The Philippines participated in SSSP due to security concerns, prevailing international regulations, and to implement security policy. Also, there are local fishermen who got apprehended by Indonesian or Malaysian authorities while Filipino authorities who	Aside from security, arrest of local fishermen who violated the border rules was also a problem	Pressure from affected stakeholders	Factors that pushed the Philippines to engage in minilateralism

Researcher	K8	Codes	Categories	Themes
Pressure from community-based organizations	caught Indonesian or Malaysian fishermen conducting fishing in the Philippine waters end up releasing them out of pity.			
What is the difference between engaging in minilateral arrangements such as SSSP and ASEAN?	Engaging in maritime minilateral arrangements means that there will be naval operations, vessels, naval exercises, and war games. At the ASEAN level, not all AMS are maritime so it will be hard to conduct naval operations with landlocked countries.	Differences in priority issues	Cooperation	Factors that pushed INDOMALPHI to engage in minilateralism
What role did ASEAN play, if any, in the creation of SSSP?	Not really a role but as we know, it is common knowledge that the Sulu-Sulawesi problem is also a problem of ASEAN.	Problem on a larger scale	ASEAN principle	Minilateralism shaping ASEAN centrality
Since SSSP was modeled after the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), do you think defense cooperation like	Actually, it depends on the situation. However, since Brunei is also located near the concerned	Possible expansion of membership	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN multilateralism

Researcher	K8	Codes	Categories	Themes
this is here to stay?	area, it might join the defense cooperation.			
It is common knowledge that ASEAN's reputation is well-known at the regional level due to its accomplishments albeit being burdened with different challenges. In this regard, do the people working in the field (grounds) aware of ASEAN's role in this kind of cooperation?	Only educated people are aware of ASEAN's role in the pursuit of regional peace and stability. People from the grassroots communities have limited idea about ASEAN while only those in the upper echelon of the military are aware of ASEAN.	Only those who are exposed to these security matters are aware of ASEAN involvement	Hierarchy	Challenges on the grounds
From your point of view, do you think there will come a time when all ASEAN member states will be members of SSSP since Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand have been invited as observers?	It is a possibility. Brunei is located near the area while Singapore and Thailand will serve as checks and balances.	Possible expansion of membership	Cooperation	Minilateralism supporting ASEAN minilateralism
What do you think are the best practices of SSSP?	For me, these are increased border patrols of navies; regular naval presence showed that it is not ceremonial. Also, this decreased the smuggled	Increased border security decreased the number of NTS threats	Cooperation	Advantage of defense cooperation

Researcher	K8	Codes	Categories	Themes
	goods and human trafficking due to stricter border security.			