

Research Outline for Discussion
Cluster on “Great power rivalry and maritime order in Southeast Asia”
7 September 2019
PRN-SEA Meeting, RSIS, Singapore

I. Background

Great power rivalry has changed the “seascape” of maritime order in Southeast Asia. Until quite recently, China and some Southeast Asian countries are only players in South China Sea. The US under then the Barak Obama administration has gradually stepped in the conflicts with the notion of freedom of navigation, though it repeatedly stated that the US maintains a neutral position over any territorial disputes. The great power rivalry between Washington and Beijing have added another layer in the maritime disputes. Maritime order covers the varieties of issues such as territorial disputes, freedom of navigation, piracy and sea robbery, marine environmental problems, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing and so on.

II. The Research

Because of the great power rivalry, the number of stakeholders have increased and the issue areas have expanded. What are the impacts of the US China “trade war” on maritime order in Southeast Asia? Considering Trump-led US diplomacy, is international legal approach still relevant? What can we expect from ASEAN or other regional and multilateral institutions to manage maritime order? What are the roles of ASEAN dialogue partners in the region or broader regions of East Asia and Indo-Pacific? How do the countries in the region craft their foreign policy with various bi-lateral, regional and multilateral mechanisms?

In this cluster, we study the impact of the great power rivalry on maritime order in Southeast Asia with special focus on domestic politics and foreign relations (c.f. Baviera 2012). In the first three chapters, the authors will study several issues which set up common grounds of discussion for the following part of country case study. The first chapter sorts out general implication of the great power rivalry on maritime order in Southeast Asia. The second chapter introduces critical issues to scrutinize maritime order in the regions and examines the current status of each issue. The third chapter revisits the concept of ASEAN centrality to characterize decision making process and examines the possibility and limitations of foreign policy making in the regions. The second part of the book discusses rather detailed account of country cases.

III. Tentative Structure of the Book

Overview I. [Introduction to Great Power Rivalry]

Bhubhindar Singh (RSIS)

Overview II. [Introduction to Maritime Security in Southeast Asia]

Jane Chan (RSIS)

Overview III. Great Power Rivalry and Southeast Asia: Revisiting “ASEAN Centrality”

Yusuke Takagi (GRIPS)

Abstract

ASEAN centrality has been an issue whenever outside powers discuss a new regional framework or expansion of existing ones. After the Asian Financial Crisis, the ASEAN leaders discussed it in the context of possible transformation of ASEAN plus Three into East Asian Summit or making of a new East Asian Summit including outside powers such as Australia, China, India, and Japan. At the ASEAN summit in 2019, they have reconfirmed ASEAN centrality in their outlook on Indo Pacific. How can we understand the ASEAN centrality in the context of great power rivalry? In this chapter, the author revisits the nexus of ASEAN centrality and tradition of civic nationalism in Southeast Asia, which should be distinguished from ethnic nationalism some are provoking. He argues that ASEAN centrality is resilient not only because it is sustained by ASEAN leaders but also because it is rooted in history of nation building in Southeast Asia.

Country case study I. [Indonesia]

Shafiah Muhibat

Country case study II [Malaysia]

Shariman Lockman

Country case study III. [the Philippines]

Aileen S.P. Baviera

Country case study IV [Vietnam]

Vo Xuan Vinh

Country case study V. Japan’s Approach to Southeast Asian Maritime Security

Hideshi Tokuchi (GRIPS)

IV. Timeline

September 2019

Kickoff meeting among the team and decide on the research concept and direction

October 2020

Second meeting among the team

Draft (7,000 – 10,000 words) are expected

February 2021

Presentation at Tokyo Forum

V. The Team

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References

Baviera, Aileen. 2012. "The Influence of Domestic Politics on Philippine Foreign Policy: The Case of Philippines – China Relations since 2004" RSIS Working Paper, 241.