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Globalization of Terrorism: A Transnational Threat in Asia

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of terrorism in Asia and how its implication is further linked to the global spread as well as fight on terror. The developmental challenges faced by many countries in Asia have led to socio-economic marginalization, unemployment, ethnic nationalism and religious extremism. Living in an ever changing globalised society, it has become ever so important for nations to find a common initiative in order to tackle the issue of terrorism. The lack of cooperation between major nations worldwide such as Russia, China, and the United States has presented a problem. With these nations possessing great soft power influence worldwide their opposition to one another in policy, ideology and rhetoric only allow for further issues such as terrorism to flourish. Many scholars have pointed to this East vs. West (Neo-cold war) syndrome as a major contributor to the issue of global terrorism. It is from conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya and other major conflict zones that these extremist fighters from Asia and the world over receive training and eventually return home were another battle has the potential to begin. This article focuses on and takes into account recent developments in Asia regarding the battle against terrorism and how a few selected countries that have been greatly impacted as well as those countries that have greatly impacted the fight against terrorism regionally have adjusted to the exponential growth of this 21st-century menace. The measures that nations of the region have taken to combat terrorism will be explored as well as prospects for a terror-free Asia. Furthermore, a synopsis of the battle of Marawi and the Philippine military response will be explored as a prime example of how terrorism has taken a globalized trend.

Keywords: Counterterrorism, Globalization, Coalition, Cooperation, ASIAN, Shanghai Cooperation Group.

Introduction

Many find it hard to see the connection between globalization and terrorism. Some scholars have pointed to the fact that marginalization and poverty, are all bi-products of globalization. East Asia is a region that has been most transformed by global economic forces over the last two decades. At present Asia is seeing a rise in terrorist activities that are not limited to just one particular state. After the September 11th terror attacks against the United States, the discourse in regards to international relations and global politics sharply changed. Prior to the September 11 attacks, the dominant issues revolved around geo-economics globalization and humanitarian issues which occupied the agendas of international summits and international

organizations. Of late geopolitics and security concerns have once again become the central issue and the "old language and institutions" of the cold war are shaping our thinking about global politics. It is truly ironic that global terrorism, the phenomenon of terrorists operating in and against several nations simultaneously was facilitated by globalization. Global terrorism inevitably depends on the success of globalization. In fact, one may come to the conclusion that global terrorism is a facet of the global culture resulting from globalization.

All Throughout Asia, there are a whole host of terrorist organizations, insurgencies, and revolutionaries of all kind. Yet what differentiates terrorist groups operating in Asia from in other regions is the intricate nature of cooperation amongst groups. Most groups do not share the same ideologies and objectives, yet their cooperation across national boundaries create an economy of scale for logistics, training, and safe havens. A prime example of this is the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) who have trained with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the camps in the southern Philippines. The smuggling of weapons has been a specialty of GAM with the Thai terrorist group Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO).

Transnational threats refer to the activities that threaten the national security of any nation (Reyes, 385). These activities may include terrorist operations, mass drug trafficking or the creation and dispersal of weapons of mass destruction. Terror activities have recently proven to be amongst the most critical transnational threats that are affecting the Asian continent. Terrorist groups have been growing and carrying out their activities regularly throughout the Middle Eastern countries, and this has posed a grave threat in the region. Transnational threats go across borders to threaten the political and social integrity of a nation, and not forgetting the safety and health status of the individuals in the country (Reyes, 385).

Terrorism in Asia did not end by the closing of the cold war, as a matter of fact, terror activities have intensified. This has been contributed greatly by the intensification of globalization and the inter-connectedness of terror groups' ideologies and resources worldwide with the sole ambition to cause havoc (Sandler, 7). Still, various terror groups have learned new tricks and tactics over time with the incorporation of new technologies in their activities. In Asia, a range of terrorist groups works together to supply each other with firearms and money used in carrying out the training of new recruits beyond any one particular border. Terrorism in Asia is usually accompanied by drug trafficking which has proven to be a major financing method in regards to their operations. The fight against terror has proven to be an uphill battle for a multitude of reasons. One of these reasons is due to the fact that human rights organizations do not advocate for extreme measures when dealing with terrorist groups or a terrorist individuals. The fact that many of these terrorist organizations operate beyond vast borders does not make things any easier.

In recent years terrorist attacks have occurred in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand. ISIS-affiliated operatives attempted but failed to conduct additional attacks in Indonesia, and a number of other terrorist attacks were foiled by the arresting or the deporting of individuals who were in various stages of attack planning in these countries, as well as in Australia and Malaysia. Terrorism has the propensity to create further conflict amongst

populations by initiating a situation in which internal conflict amongst people further destabilizes the countries safety (Lee, 173). When a terror attack has been carried out in a region, there is a destruction of life and property. The little resources that are left become a center of interest for everyone who is in that region. This potentially results in the dominance of some citizens over the few resources available. This does not go well with other citizens hence rivalry begins which may result in clashes between the people in the region. This affects the safety of the country. Furthermore, the government is forced into using more resources to fight these internal clashes thus slowing the growth of the country even more.

It has become common knowledge that terrorist attacks are conducted with the intention to have as many casualties as possible (Lee, 170). No person is immune to an attack by terrorists. Anyone can be a victim of terrorism. Terrorist attacks take place mostly in places where large numbers of people congregate such as shopping malls, markets, and public transport. It affects safety in East Asia in that people are afraid of being in places where there is a congregation of people. The fear of inhabiting places and locations that are not secure heightens public sentiment in regards to the topic of terrorism. Terrorism has further affected safety in East Asia by making some areas in East Asia unsafe for visits by tourists which eventually takes a toll on regional economies and their tourism sectors. A good example of this is the repeated Bali attacks from 2002 till as recent as 2017 that have claimed the lives of many local and foreign visitors and has greatly impacted Indonesia's tourism sector.

Measures for fighting terrorism in Asia

With the increasing global threat of terror attacks, Asian countries are continuously increasing measure to ensure they are well prepared to fight these attacks. Governments in East Asia and the Pacific continue to work to strengthen legal frameworks, investigate and prosecute terrorism cases, increase regional cooperation and information sharing, the addressing of critical border and aviation security gaps. Cooperation between domestic law enforcement and judicial authorities throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, resulted in high numbers of terrorism-related arrests and in many cases successful prosecutions. Despite these efforts, Southeast Asia remains a target for terrorist group recruitment. East Asian countries actively participate in regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. In recent years Australia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan have worked increasingly closer as partners in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Recently Australia and Indonesia concluded their co-chairmanship of the Global Counterterrorism Forum's Detention and Reintegration Working Group. Japan has also identified counterterrorism as one of its priorities for its G-7 presidency and joined the UN Security Council as an elected member in 2016-2017. The Japanese government has continued to participate in international counterterrorism efforts at global, regional, and bilateral levels.

China

With China being the second world's largest economy and the largest economy by far in Asia, the Chinese government has put forth a lot of effort in fighting terrorism. The primary focus of China's counterterrorism effort has been focused on the East Turkistan Islamic Movement

(ETIM); The ETIM has continually been accused of influence in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) these claims extend over responsibility for several domestic attacks leading to the heightening in security nationwide. ETIM was also accused of being linked to an attack on the Chinese Embassy in The Kyrgyz Republic. In July, the XUAR became the only provincial-level government to pass specific implementing measures of a new counterterrorism law. At present China continues to put forth concerns that Chinese citizens have recently traveled to Iraq and Syria to associate with known terror groups such as ISIS.

The Chinese government has continuously listed terrorism as amongst the "three evils." Along with terrorism separatism and religious extremism, the Chinese government made it clear that they intend to engage these issues so they may no longer pose a threat to domestic stability. China's counterterrorism efforts focus primarily on the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), an organization that advocates independence for the Uighurs, China's largest Muslim ethnic minority. In the past years, there has been an escalation of the Chinese security and surveillance in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). China's first comprehensive counterterrorism law came into effect on January 1, 2016. This law explicitly endorses China's longstanding counterterrorism efforts. This has proven to be a political hot topic in which some mostly western observers have openly claimed difficulty in the distinguishing of suppression of terrorist groups and or ethnic minorities, most often ethnic Uighurs who the Chinese Communist Party has previously deemed politically subversive (UNHCR2016).

In regards to countering the terror threat, China has implemented a multitude of regional and global moves which include the proposal of working together with many groups. Some of the groups include ASEAN trade group of which China is a member as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Group. The collaboration of China with this group will deal greatly with terror attacks that may affect the China border and the region as a whole. The ASEAN trade group is a large entity with a lot of member countries. In case of an attack in China or the greater region, the group could come together and combine efforts to deal with the problem. The main goal for the formation of ASEAN was to make a podium for Asian integration and co-operation that work with Asian nations to bring unity, development, and sustainability among the member countries as well as solve disputes and other problems that may arise in the region (Hänggi 2014). The ASEAN group is quickly becoming one of the world's most influential and successful entities and is proving to be a great powerhouse that is not limited only to economic and infrastructure transformation in Asia. Good relationships within such the organization would positively impact countries in the region in the fight against terror.

China has proposed various regional organizations such as the Silk Road Initiative. China is spending a lot of money on this project that involves developing the infrastructure of the countries along the old Silk Road (Wei 2016). This initiative aims to improve the relationship of China and other foreign nations greatly. The objective of these many organizations is inevitable to bring together nations in the region in times of difficulty such as when facing the threat of terrorism. It has become unanimously clear that terrorism cannot be dealt with by a single state rather. It is an initiative that involves the cooperation of many countries. With the

Silk Road Initiative, China strengthens ties to promote relationships with other countries with the aim of bringing more stable cooperation on the war against terrorism.

China has been very instrumental in the proposing of the Shanghai Cooperation organization which is a security, economic and political organization. The organization cooperates with its member countries to deal with security concerns, mostly terrorism, and conflict. It works together in the training of militaries and in the sharing of any intelligence about militia groups that might have the violent capability within the region. It also engages in fighting the terrorist groups that may target its member countries (Sandler, 12). These initiatives have improved the counter-terror speed response within China and other regional countries.

There were also indications that ISIS was beginning to pose a threat to China in 2016. An ISIS song published in Mandarin called for Chinese Muslims to take up arms against China because of its alleged religious suppression. The Chinese government reported that some Chinese citizens have joined ISIS and other terrorist organizations in the Middle East, and are concerned these foreign terrorist fighters could return to China with increased skills. As a result, China has attempted to prevent some of its citizens from traveling to Syria, Iraq, and Central Asia.

Cooperation between China and the United States on issues of counterterrorism has remained limited. The United States hosted in 2016 the third bilateral Counterterrorism Dialogue with China and the second expert-level exchange on Countering Improvised Explosive Devices. United States officials claim that Chinese law enforcement agencies remain apprehensive about conducting joint investigations or sharing specific threat details with U.S. law enforcement partners. In this regard, the U.S. has repeatedly claimed to have issues with what they allege as a lack of transparency that has complicated efforts to verify details of terrorism and other violent acts inside China (UNHCR2016). In this regard, it is clear there is much more room for improvement on all sides in regards to cooperation on global terror efforts.

In relation to legislation, border security and law enforcement counterterrorism measures enacted in 2015 that intensified enforcement, surveillance, and security throughout the country continue till today. These measures increased inspections at all main transportation hubs, including bus and train stations, railways, airports, and ports. The measures also include an enhanced and expanded video and data surveillance network. Chinese law enforcement and security forces in Xinjiang have occasionally conducted raids and unannounced house searches, body searches and mobile phone searches in public venues according to international and Chinese state media sources.

In addition to these counterterrorism measures, the National People's Congress passed the country's first counterterrorism law on December 28, 2015, to "provide legal support for counterterrorism activities, as well as collaboration with the international community." The law, which took effect on January 1, 2016, broadened China's definition of terrorism beyond internationally accepted definitions and intensified the scope of its counterterrorism measures (UNHCR2016). The law further made provisions to establish a counterterrorism intelligence

center to better coordinate terrorism response and information sharing across government agencies.

In December, the XUAR People's Congress adopted amendments to its border management regulations, tightening rules for individuals crossing to and from neighboring countries and granting local authorities the power to close border crossings to address "defense management, counterterrorism, and stability maintenance needs."

In regards to the countering the financing of terrorism, China has been a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing. The Chinese government has strengthened preventive measures to counter terrorist financing, such as making suspicious transaction reports more comprehensive. Based on current law enforcement investigations, the United States had previously expressed concerns about China adequately controlling terrorist financing. Chinese law enforcement has moved toward increasing their ability to freeze funds and investigate suspicious banking transactions in regards to countering violent extremism in China. China does not have an official strategy or program explicitly designed to counter violent extremism. China has stated, however, that policies that promote economic growth and increased official presence in rural communities would help address the drivers of terrorism in the XUAR. The government implemented a number of other programs aimed at "stability maintenance," many of which promote cultural assimilation in the XUAR and place restrictions on the practice of Islam (UNHCR2016).

China remains engaged in counterterrorism efforts in Central Asia, conducting bilateral and multilateral joint exercises with regional neighbors and through frameworks, such as the Shanghai Cooperative Organization, comprising China, Kazakhstan, The Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In July, the militaries of China and Russia held joint counterterrorism exercises in Moscow, according to Chinese official media. Recently, China and Tajikistan held four days of counterterrorism exercises involving a mobile company of Chinese soldiers in Tajikistan. In September, China announced plans to assist in strengthening the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border to bolster counterterrorism efforts. Following this exercise, China held the inaugural meeting of the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism in Counterterrorism with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan (UNHCR2016).

Malaysia

Other significant regional players such as Malaysia who have also suffered from terrorist attacks in recent years have supported the efforts of international and regional organizations involved in countering terrorism, to include the United Nations, the GCTF, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the East Asia Summit. In recent years, Malaysia hosted an International Conference on De-radicalization and Countering Violent Extremism for ASEAN member states and strategic partners. The Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism hosted a number of multilateral events during the year, including ones on preventing the flow

of foreign terrorist fighters, countering ISIS narratives, and the radicalization of undergraduate students.

On April 7, 2015, The Prevention of Terrorism Act was passed through Malaysia's high court. This act has proven to be controversial due to the fact that this law enabled the Malaysian authorities to detain terror suspects without trial for a period of two years. POTA also does not allow any judicial reviews of detentions. Instead, detentions will be reviewed by a special Prevention of Terrorism Board. The POTA bill has been criticized by opposition elements as a reincarnation of the former International Security Act, which was revoked in 2012. The passage of POTA coincided with the arrest of seventeen suspected militants who were involved in an alleged terror plot in the capital Kuala Lumpur.

Australia

In 2016 and at present, Australia continues to strengthen counterterrorism laws; investigate and disrupt suspected terrorists; and maintain high levels of cooperation with the United States and international partners, including through the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Australia plays a major role in the coalition as a leading contributor of military support, humanitarian assistance, and efforts to disrupt foreign terrorist fighters. Australia contributed more than 300 personnel, including a Special Operations Task Group, to provide training and advising capacities in Iraq; and provided strike operation capability in Syria and Iraq by contributing F/A-18 Hornet fighters, a tanker aircraft, and an airborne control aircraft. In July, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced that Australia would expand training to paramilitary police agencies, including Iraqi federal and local police and border guard forces. Additionally, Australia works with a number of partners in Southeast Asia to build capacities and strengthen the response to the foreign terrorist fighters and ISIS threats in the region (UNHCR2016).

Michael Keenan, the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counterterrorism, noted in November that the preeminent terrorist threat in Australia is from individuals or small groups who use simple attack methodologies. These lone offender threats were not exclusive to violent Islamist extremism; a violent right-wing extremist was also charged with terrorism-related offenses in Melbourne.

In regards to Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The Australian government continues to apply its comprehensive counterterrorism legislation against domestic threats and passed additional legislation to strengthen national security protections. In December, the Australian Parliament passed the Criminal Code Amendment (High-Risk Terrorist Offenders) Bill 2016, which allows for the ongoing detention of high-risk terrorist offenders, approaching the end of their custodial sentences, but who pose an unacceptable risk of committing a serious terrorism offense if released. Another amendment this year to the Commonwealth Criminal Code empowered the Australian military to target a broader range of ISIS operatives, consistent with international law (UNHCR 2016).

In recent time Australia has launched the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC), which combined Australian law enforcement and criminal information agencies to provide a broader picture of imminent threats and help identify links between organized crime and national security investigations, including foreign fighters, terrorists, extremists, and their supporters. The Australian Counterterrorism center was restructured in 2016 to better coordinate Australia's counterterrorism efforts and to countering the financing of terrorism: Australia continued its regional and global leadership in counterterrorist finance. As a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and a co-chair of the FATF's Risks, Trends, and Methods Group, Australia recently obtained observer status in the Middle East and North Africa's Financial Action Task Force, a FATF-style regional body. Australia is a founding member and co-chair of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), a FATF-style regional body, and a co-chair of the APG Mutual Evaluation Working Group. Australia's financial intelligence unit, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC), is a founding member of the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, and assisted Southeast Asian countries in developing a regional profile of financial characteristics of foreign terrorist fighters. Australia also serves as the chair of Egmont's Information Exchange Working Group and is a core member and major contributor to Egmont's multilateral ISIS project (UNHCR2016). That Commonwealth agencies work together on operations, policy challenges, and capability development.

In recent and past years Australia has strongly supported efforts in counterterrorism on a multilateral, regional organizational level. Australia has proven itself to be viable, regionally and globally as a member of the United Nations, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, the Pacific Island Forum, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Recently Australia has been privileged also to volunteer to chair the Counter-Terrorism Working Group of APEC. As a member of the GCTF, Australia co-chairs with Indonesia the Detention and Reintegration Working Group, which focuses on capacity building for corrective services officials and prisons officers; strengthening the security of detention facilities; detention and correction programs for terrorist detainees; and developing pre-release and post-release/aftercare programs.

Philippines

The southern Philippines has for an extended period of time been seen as breeding ground in regards to extremist activity. Extremist organizations such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf Group operate in the eastern most island of Mindanao as well as in the Sulu archipelago. In these areas due to various problems such as a weak rule of law as well as it's rugged terrain, poverty and the fact that a Muslim minority groups in the area have generally felt a sense of marginalization the Philippine government has found great difficulty in its fight against extremist groups and the perpetuation of terror acts in the region.

In recent years, the Philippine government has made significant progress in combatting terrorism, due in part to counterterrorism aid provided by major regional players such as China and the United States. In 2007, Philippine officials killed 127 alleged members of Abu

Sayyaf and arrested an additional thirty-eight. The same year, Philippine courts sentenced fourteen members of Abu Sayyaf to life imprisonment for their role in the May 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping of twenty people. The Philippine government also passed the Human Security Act (HAS) in 2007, which allows for the wire tapping of members of judicially designated terrorist organizations. The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs has also issued digitized, machine-readable passports as part of its counterterrorism initiative.

The passage of 2007 HAS promoted concern among human rights groups about the status of human rights in the Philippines. Human Rights Watch warned that the law went overboard and engaged in spurious prosecutions. The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedom also opposed the legislation, arguing it "undermines the rule of law" and "could have a negative impact on human rights in the country." The Philippines government insists that the HAS preserves civil liberties, though activists have cataloged rights violations that have allegedly occurred under HAS (Bhattacharji 2018).

Introspect Marwari Siege

On May 23rd, 2017, In the southern Philippines ISI overtook the city of Marawi were they laid siege in a five-month long conflict. This conflict is a prime example of how terrorism has now taken on a global face. Terrorists have connected themselves through global networks which as of yet fly under the radar of many state security apparatuses. With many of these militants receiving training, funding and weaponry in and from lands half a world away, conflicts such as this one have proven to have the ability to cripple a whole nation. Further more the globalization of terror sees militants from various countries world wide aligning themselves with local fighters in regions that have little or no connection to their country of origin. This particular conflict was fought between the Philippine government security forces and militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Lavant including the Maute and Abu Sayyaf Salafi jihadist groups. The battle also became the longest urban battle in the history of the Philippines. In the year prior to the Battle of Marawi in 2016 the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to Iraq or Syria from the region declined consistent with global trends. As a result, regional concerns shifted to foreign terrorist fighters potentially returning to southeast Asia and using their operational training, skills, connections, and experience gained in Iraq or Syria to launch domestic attacks. According to the Philippine government, the clashes began during an offensive in Marawi to capture Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the ISIL affiliated Abu Sayyaf group. After receiving reports that Hapilon was in the city, possibly to meet with militants of the Maute group, an operation by Philippine government forces was launched. These militants were alleged to be an armed group that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and were believed to be responsible for the 2016 Davao City bombing.

The attack in Marawi City has proven to be a stark reminder of the threat of globalised terrorism to the world at large but to the Asian region in particular. It was observed during this conflict that a multitude of the terrorists were foreigners who had been in the country for a longtime, offering support to the Maute group in Marawi. Their objectives included the raising of the flag at the Lanao del Sur Provincial Capital and the declaring of a "*Wilayat*" or

provincial ISIL territory in Lanao del Sur. The deadly result of the Battle of Marawi showed to many the dangers of globalised extremism. Over 87 civilians were killed along with 165 government forces. On the other hand, 975 militants were killed with about only 11 being captured. Those affected by injuries were in their thousands. Furthermore, destruction of property and the local economy had made the situation evermore direr with estimations of damages in the tens of millions of dollars.

Prospects of Terror Free Asia

Proposed solutions in regard to the terror threat in Asia are numerous, yet the objective of all regional states should firstly be in accordance with international resolutions against terrorism and states that harbor terrorism. The uniformity of policy in the region should be a major objective. This uniformity will allow nations of the region to share vital information in regards to border security, economic security, arms, drugs and contraband trade, etc.... as well as the pooling of regional resources towards the handling of a unique and clear objective. With nations agreeing to give a portion of their mandate to an autonomous regional organization made up by a quota system that takes into account all regional nations and their capacity, terrorism within the region can be defeated. This regional organization should be allowed to work within the confines of international, regional and domestic law unimpeded. For such an organization to function all nations within the region must agree on basic initiatives that will allow for the integration of certain laws referring to areas of economic security, border security, immigration, arms trade, drug enforcement and a whole host of other issues. At present there is no full spectrum regional organization dedicated to combating terrorism and other major security issues. Such an organization has not been able take shape due to the lack of cohesion and willingness of regional players to move towards uniformity as well as the giving up of certain security responsibilities that have traditionally remained in the domain of individual states to a regional mandated task force. Presently the politics of nationalism and that of the individual state and its regional aspirations supersedes the issue of regional security and this is why terrorism continues to be a major unresolved regional issue.

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