

## Building Security through Cooperation: European and Southeast Asian Ways Compared

**S**ession Two of the Germany - Malaysia Forum was chaired by **Mr Michael Däumer**, Policy Analyst (Global Issues), European External Action Service. The two presenters were **Colonel (R) Rainer Meyer zum Felde**, Vice-President of the Federal College of Security Studies (BAKS), and **Dato' Dr Muthiah Alagappa**, Tun Hussein Onn Chair in International Studies, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia. ISIS Analyst **Billy Tea** reports.

**Mr Michael Däumer** described regional cooperation as encompassing the three C's: Cooperation, Communications, and Coordination. The creation of the European Union and Asean reflects the values and principles of each, and their respective historical experiences. The fundamentals of the two organizations vary in norms and missions because of the variance in their traditions and beliefs, which in turn influence their internal structures and the ways in which they work.

**Colonel Rainer** presented the German and European perspectives on regional cooperation. To compare notes on multilateral, comprehensive and cooperative approaches to security, he made reference to over 2000 years of European history. He observed that historically, European countries' responses to conflict contained certain characteristics/values. These are still present and are reflected in the European Union, he said.

These are:

- System based on the rule of law, democracy, social and free market economy, and respect for international law;
- Commitment to the vision of the European Union in a transatlantic framework;
- Preference for conflict prevention and crisis management by means of soft power; and
- Fair acceptance of smaller neighbours' interests.



From left: Muthiah Alagappa, Michael Däumer and Rainer Meyer zum Felde

The rise of the European Union has a direct correlation with the rise of Germany, and vice versa. In the mid 1990s, Germany was busy with re-unification, while trying to maintain a stable Europe by including Central and Eastern states in Nato, and by deepening EU bonds through the Eurozone. During the Cold War, Germany was a key player in trying to end the conflict by promoting confidence-building measures, arms control and cooperation within Nato. The changing nature of the world after the fall of the Soviet Union also meant a transformation of conflict. Modern wars are no longer two-dimensional or between two opposite parties; they now include non-state actors. The international community has shown great difficulty in adapting to these new characteristics.

However, Germany, through the European Union and Nato, has adapted and is continuously transforming to respond adequately to modern conflict. It currently contributes 50 per cent of the Nato/Europe Collective Defence force,

and is the host nation for Allied Corps in the Forward Defence Posture.

The post-Cold War world is no longer bipolar. It has many poles, with the rise of countries like Japan, China, India, and Brazil. These countries have established their economic and political influence in the world and their positions on issues matter in the world order. But the rise of some countries has also been accompanied by the fall of others.

There are two 'arcs of instability,' comprising states with weak infrastructures and bad governance. These two arcs overlap over the Middle Eastern/Central Asian region, home to religious fanaticism, nuclear proliferation, and regional power competition. Meanwhile, the area has great strategic importance because it holds large amounts of natural resources and is one most of the most utilized trade routes connecting the West, the Middle East, and Asia. The area therefore has been a destabilizing factor, having seen decades of conflict which the West has been unable to efficiently manage or resolve. Moreover, modern conflicts now have global repercussions and necessitate an all-inclusive response, encompassing diplomatic, economic and social aspects.

Germany is adapting to these new security threats by promoting a 'whole-of-government approach,' as demonstrated in its latest MoD Guidelines for Defence. The new principles emphasize conflict prevention and containment rather than waiting for a conflict to arise and then responding to it. However, the reality is that Germany, like the international community, has limited financial and military means to respond to conflicts and therefore, will have to choose carefully which conflict it will be able to respond. And it will in future analyze each conflict on a case-by-case basis, weighing its national interest against its responsibility internationally, and assess what the consequences of non-action would be. Indeed, intervention these days requires lengthy



*Mahani Zainal Abidin posing a question*

economic, political, military, and civilian engagement and cannot be taken lightly.

Today, the distinction between external and internal security has become less and less relevant. New threats are not contained within the borders of a country. To counter these new security risks, Germany is applying a national, comprehensive and coordinated security policy that includes political, diplomatic, economic, development, police, humanitarian, social and military measures. It will promote this comprehensive method to international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and Nato.

The United States decided to shift its focus to the Pacific Region in light of the multi-polar world, and to protect its national interests as well as to continue to promote peace and stability. However, Colonel Rainer said, Europe has not done enough to help manage problems in the African and Asian regions – these problems include war, famine, competition for resources, and long-term conflicts such as the issue between Israel and Palestine. He believes that it is time for Europe to do its share as a global player.

He posits that Europe has to build its own capabilities so as to respond to security issues, at least within its periphery. The EU has to be able to address multifaceted risks, which demands the harmonization of all infrastructures and institutions. These include: the coordination of a

politico-military culture, the European integrated defence posture, the pooling and sharing of expenses, the combining of both soft and hard instruments in a pragmatic way (EU, Nato, UN), and if necessary, to have expeditionary forces and capabilities to support the decisions made.

Meanwhile, Germany is responding to the new threats through a comprehensive approach, through coordinating national and international capabilities to respond to complex civil-military crises, as well as addressing collective defence scenarios. It is only through education and training at the national, regional, and international levels that such harmonization across the politico-civilian-military sphere can occur. Germany will therefore work with the UN, EU, and Nato in order to make such goals realizable.

While the world has changed greatly since the end of the Cold War, the institutions and the infrastructures to deal with conflict have not. Germany understands that the globalized nature of societies ties together both national and international security issues but it also realizes that it is necessary for all participants to do their share and work together to manage and resolve these issues.

**Dato' Dr Muthiah Alagappa** said that the fundamental difference between the EU and Asean in building regional cooperation lies in their methods and goals. The EU uses integration to establish a more centralized organization, while Asean utilizes cooperation and wants to protect its members' national sovereignty.

Europe responded to the threat of the Soviet Union by creating the European Union and promoted integration as a mean of avoiding conflict. Since then, the European Union has grown to establish a common currency and market. More importantly, it has ratified an EU constitution in order to legitimize the common positions of its members on regional and international issues. In terms of security, Europe

relies on national military forces, the collective self-defence mechanism, and an alliance arrangement with the US and NATO as a security shield. Through all these the European Union has managed to build a security community.

The core of European security is founded on integration. However, Muthiah raised a question: is the absence of war in Europe due to integration and community-building or did the threat of war provide the impetus for community-building? Indeed, the situation in Europe was relatively stable post World War II, with both France and Germany being defeated powers and NATO as a peace guarantor in the region. This in turn might have facilitated the European process of integration, therefore leading to community-building. Meanwhile, for the original Asean 5, integration was not the goal. Their interest was in the formation of a regional organization that would increase their diplomatic weight, while developing a regime that would support national and government security in member states, and protect them from interference in each other's domestic affairs.

During its formation, Asean was primarily focused on coordination, collaboration, and cooperation rather than community-building. Indeed, its objectives were much less ambitious than those of the EU and little of these were meant to respond to both internal and external threats. It was only in the last decades that the process of integration took place in Asean. However, it is not in the process of becoming a 'community.' Indeed, Asean does not intend to establish a supranational institution with the necessary financial resources and decision-making authority.

Asean uses a multi-layered approach to managing and responding to conflict. This includes regional cooperation, and bilateral and multilateral alliance. Asean's attempt to manage conflict has been constrained by its core value of non-intervention. While it has not had great success in responding to conflict, it has helped to

lower apprehension between members and facilitated dialogue amongst them. However, a question comes to mind: has Asean contributed to the lack of armed conflict in the region? Indeed, the organization only took form after the end of Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia and it was enlarged after the Cambodian war. Moreover, much of Asean's contribution to security is by association; therefore did peace and prosperity come from Asean or is it because of Asean that peace and prosperity were achieved?

Regional cooperation in Europe is fundamentally different from that in Asia. The EU wants to create more supranational institutions in order to strengthen its capabilities to respond to conflict, while Asean wants to preserve national sovereignty with an emphasis on building strong communities at national levels, and then expanding to the regional level. Muthiah concluded that the idea of building security in Asia should not be taken at face-value and perhaps Asia should create its own method.

### Conclusion

The world has changed greatly since the days of black and white television and phone landlines.

Today, the internet is everywhere and people are constantly connected to the web. Events that occur in Germany will be known in Malaysia within seconds through new social media outlets. The world knows no borders and neither do conflicts. The European Union and Asean have had to learn to adapt to this new world, and to learn from the experiences of others to avoid repeating mistakes. It is in this spirit that the first *Germany - Malaysia Security Forum* took place.

This forum was timely as it brought about a better understanding of the histories of the two nations which have shaped the values present in the formation of regional organizations. To respond appropriately to modern security issues in today's globalized world, it is essential to learn from each other's experiences as well as to explore new ways of cooperation. Only through strong international collaboration can these issues be managed and solved. This forum allows for relationships to be created and it lays the path for future partnerships between Germany/the European Union/NATO and Malaysia/Asean.



*The participants posing for a group photo*

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