

ISSN 2580 6378  
E-ISSN 2580 7048



JURNAL  
**ASIA  
PACIFIC  
STUDIES**

Journal of International Relations Study Program  
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences  
Universitas Kristen Indonesia

Volume 8 | Number 1 | January - June 2024

## **AMPLIFYING INDONESIA'S DEFENCE DIPLOMACY IN ASEAN: EXPLORING THE ASEAN SOLIDARITY EXERCISE NATUNA 2023**

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### ***Abstract***

*Being the regional actor in the heart of the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN has had its share of multilateral initiatives that encompass its members' interests and the region's development. However, ASEAN has little initiative in the form of a joint military training for its member states. That was until Indonesia's chairmanship in ASEAN, a joint military exercise was held in September 2023 which was named ASEX-01 N. This new development is interesting given its enactment occurred in the midst of a competition between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific. Against that backdrop, the paper seeks to point out how said initiative may serve as a means to accentuate Indonesia's role in Indonesia whilst providing benefits to reap by the rest of ASEAN member states. To that end, the paper employs a qualitative research method involving the use of secondary data. Moreover, the paper also utilizes the concept of defence diplomacy to better understand the ASEAN initiative at hand. The paper begins with a brief overview of Southeast Asia's regional landscape that is witnessing a competition for influence between the US and China. The article then lays out the recent ASEAN initiative it's concerned with that is the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023. Upon learning of what the initiative entails, the paper would proceed with the defence diplomacy analysis of said initiative. Here, it can be understood how the initiative entails some matters that can benefit Indonesia's international reputation as well as ASEAN member states' capacity building.*

*Keywords: ASEAN, ASEX-01 N, Defence diplomacy, Indonesia, Southeast Asia*

### **Abstrak**

Sebagai aktor regional di jantung Indo-Pasifik, ASEAN telah membentuk berbagai inisiatif multilateral untuk mendukung kepentingan negara-negara anggotanya serta perkembangan kawasan. Namun, ASEAN tidak memiliki banyak inisiatif berupa latihan militer bersama bagi negara-negara anggotanya. Akan tetapi, pada September 2023, di bawah kepemimpinan Indonesia dalam ASEAN, sebuah latihan militer bersama akhirnya diadakan dengan nama ASEX-01 N. Perkembangan terbaru ini menarik untuk dilihat mengingat kompetisi antara Amerika Serikat dan Tiongkok yang tengah mengisi kawasan Indo-Pasifik. Artikel ini kemudian bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana inisiatif tersebut bisa menjadi kesempatan untuk memperkuat peran Indonesia serta di saat bersamaan memberikan manfaat bagi negara-negara anggota ASEAN. Untuk itu, artikel ini memanfaatkan metode riset kualitatif dengan data sekunder. Tidak hanya itu, konsep seperti diplomasi pertahanan juga turut digunakan untuk memahami inisiatif yang dibahas. Artikel ini pertama memaparkan lanskap regional Asia Tenggara yang tengah menjadi panggung kompetisi Amerika Serikat dan Tiongkok. Selanjutnya, artikel memberikan deskripsi lebih lanjut terkait inisiatif ASEX-01 N. Usai memahami apa inisiatif itu bawaikan, artikel ini kemudian memberikan analisis diplomasi pertahanan. Melalui analisis itu, dapat diketahui bagaimana inisiatif tersebut bisa memperkuat reputasi internasional Indonesia serta mendukung pengembangan kapasitas pertahanan negara-negara anggota ASEAN.

**Keywords:** ASEAN, ASEX-01 N, Asia Tenggara, Diplomasi pertahanan, Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

Being the center of the Indo-Pacific, Southeast Asia has become a region that attracts many states across the world, including global powers like the US and China. The two giants have their share of initiatives that fill the region's development. However, the competition between the two global powers isn't the only defining feature of the region. Another important actor to take into account in Southeast Asia is the very regional bloc that consists of almost all the states there, that being the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Over the years, ASEAN has grown and acclimated to the region's dynamics. Despite being rather disparate to other regional entities like that of the European Union, like the absence of punishment for laggards in ASEAN, ASEAN's persistence over the years have proven its relevance to the region's growth. Proving that there is no one fit all formula for regionalism. Moreover, its attractiveness eventually led many other states in the region, if not all, to apply for ASEAN membership. The scan be maid attractiveness can be attributed to ASEAN's vast forums, like the ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Economic Community, and initiatives that allow member states to work together on a positive sum enterprise as well as overcoming regional problems that is otherwise difficult to do unilaterally. An example can be seen in 2022 where ASEAN has opened up the first door for a new member state, that is Timor Leste. Timor Leste has consistently applied for ASEAN membership all the way since 2011, the said perseverance that has lasted for more than a decade can be taken as a token of ASEAN's appeal. The attention it has garnered from the states of Southeast Asia is also amplified with that of its outside counterpart. Other regional powers, in the context of the Indo-Pacific, along with global powers like China and the US have taken into account the prowess of ASEAN. The aforementioned notion can be seen in the active participation or support of those states in many ASEAN initiatives and how they would involve ASEAN in many of their overtures as well. The interplay of attention, either within or outside the region, and ASEAN's growing capacity make it a regional actor not to be trifled with.

When discussing ASEAN, one state in particular is prominent in that regional bloc. That particular state is Indonesia. Indonesia was one of the founding members of ASEAN back in 1967. Apart from that status, Indonesia has also made its presence and influence in the regional bloc known through its vast involvement in many ASEAN affairs. In doing so, it also strengthens its ties with other member states and ASEAN's growth as a regional actor in the region through partaking in ASEAN overtures in novel areas. Against that position, it is not surprising that Indonesia is regarded as the *de facto* leader of ASEAN despite the annual change of ASEAN chairmanship. In 2023, Indonesia gets its turn to be the chairman of ASEAN for the year. One of the fruits of Indonesia chairmanship is the enactment of an ASEAN military exercise for its member states. Known as the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023, the defence initiative was proposed by Indonesia and executed back in September 2023 (Budiman, 2023). Given the present state of the regional landscape, the emergence of such an initiative attracts much attention both from within and outside of ASEAN.

In the past, a handful of studies have been done over the topic of Indonesia and ASEAN defence diplomacy, albeit each with different objects to observe. First, there is a research done by Frega Wenas Inkiriwang (2021) that is entitled "Multilateral Naval Exercise

Komodo: Enhancing Indonesia's Multilateral Defence Diplomacy?". The research focused on the Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo, one of Indonesia's defence diplomacy initiatives that is multilateral in nature. The research finds how the said initiative is in line with the 4 motives of defence diplomacy as it allows Indonesia to foster and strengthen ties with many states, among which are China and the US. The next one is titled "Co-chairing Asia-Pacific defence diplomacy: the case ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus" by Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit and Nantasit Klaisringoen (2019). Instead of focussing on a military exercise like the former, this one has its eyes on the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meetings Plus (ADMM-Plus) as the defence diplomacy initiative to dissect. Upon a closer look, the paper focuses on the dynamics of Thailand and Russia as the co-chairs over the military medicine collaboration. The key finding of the said research is how resource management, as opposed to the amount of resource a state has, is more important as apparent in the outcome of the ADMM-Plus military medicine collaboration. Over the aforementioned elaboration, the article seeks to enrich the academic landscape of Southeast Asia's defence diplomacy dynamics, specifically one involving ASEAN and Indonesia.

Given the nascent nature of the topic along with the lack of preceding works on the topic, the article seeks to dive deeper into that particular ASEAN exercise along with Indonesia's standing. Against that backdrop, the paper bears three contents to discuss later down the road. The primary focus would be on why Indonesia needs to rejuvenate its defence diplomacy effort in ASEAN following the recently done ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023. In providing a better understanding of said matter, a look into the regional dynamics of the concerned region of Southeast Asia along with the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023 is also provided.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Defence Diplomacy**

Defence diplomacy can be understood as the use of the military in a non-violent manner. Such a use sets it apart from the use of the military in wars alike. Defence diplomacy can take the form of joint military training, port visit, personnel exchanges, the enactment of defence forums, etc (Muniruzzaman, 2020). Similar to other forms of diplomacy, defence diplomacy can be utilized to strengthen ties between states in the defence sector. In some ways, defence diplomacy can also be a venue for public diplomacy as states obtain the opportunity to promote their identity to a greater audience. For example, in the Super Garuda Shield exercise involving the US, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, and other states, the participants from other countries were introduced to Batik and its creation process (Madrim, 2023). Apart from that, defence diplomacy can also be a tool to address threats and its perception between countries, especially in the anarchic international system (Gusfi et. al., 2023).

The conduct of defence diplomacy rely on some instruments, for example appointing and maintaining defence attache abroad, the development of international agreements in the field of military cooperation, training and education of soldiers and civilian employees of the ministry of defence, etc (Drab, 2018). Given the vast scope and instrument that defence diplomacy entails, there is no fixed model that states can refer to. This allows states to come up with their own modes of defence diplomacy which are shaped behind said initiative.

There are four motives behind the enactment of defence diplomacy, which are strategic engagement, capacity-building, confidence-building measures, and international reputation (Cotter, 2013). Strategic engagement is the motive in which defence diplomacy is done as

a strategic engagement tool to interact with other states, either in a bilateral or multilateral fashion. The capacity-building motive refers to the use of defence diplomacy as a means to improve the involved states' military capacity as they can identify and improve their shortcomings. In regard to confidence-building measures, it points out how defence diplomacy may serve as a way to enhance trust and eliminate mistrust between the involved states. Given the changing landscape states can find themselves in, the pattern of amity and enmity may change over time. However, with the use of defence diplomacy, states can attempt to eliminate fear or perception of threats from other states. Lastly, the international reputation motive is one where states use defence diplomacy as a means to improve their international reputation or image. The enactment of a defence diplomacy initiative could boost a state's image either in showcasing the competence of its military or even the identity of the state itself.

### **3. Research Method**

In carrying out the result, the paper employs the qualitative research method. The method can be understood as a research method that is done through qualitative examinations and interpretations of the data in possession. In providing the ground for the analysis, the writer makes use of both primary and secondary data, notably past studies, and relevant media coverage. Furthermore, the analysis would take on the regional level given the regional nature of the chosen exercise while also taking into account matters on the national level. Relevant concepts are also put to use, notably defence diplomacy, to dissect the dynamics of the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023 and Indonesia's position. The paper would have three discussion points that would make up the discussion contents. It begins with an overview of the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023 that recently took place and continues with a regional overview of Southeast Asia's dynamics. Both aforementioned points would then culminate to the last point concerned as to why in regard to defence diplomacy in ASEAN, Indonesia needs to step on the accelerator. The results will then be laid out in the forthcoming part of the paper, that is the conclusion.

### **4. Discussion**

#### **4.1 Here be dragons: Competition for influence in Southeast Asia**

The end of the Cold War, along with the eve of globalization, has brought about vast changes to the world we live in. Given the strong interconnectedness that imbues the international system, it is important therefore to go over the regional landscape with a fine toothed comb. Against the strong backdrop of interconnectedness, what occurs in the region has garnered the interest and attention of other states, even as far as halfway across the globe. An example can be made by looking at the US-China competition in the international system. The competition between the two has made them involved in numerous interactions across the globe. Southeast Asia has also become a stage for the two powerhouses' competition (Khoo, 2022). Both of them seeks to establish a foothold or sphere of influence for themselves in the region and they also have attempted to establish or strengthen ties with the states there. Oftentimes, one of their initiatives would attract opposition from the other. For the case of Southeast Asia, China has criticized US's moves in the region by deeming

them irresponsible or narrow-minded. An example is present in China's critics towards the trilateral security partnership between the US, UK, and Australia (BBC News, 2021). The same is also done by the US as it often criticizes China's stride in the region. A notable example is present in how the US criticized China's power projection and claim in the South China Sea (Setiowati et. al., 2022). Given the overarching competition between the two, said competition in the region has far reaching effect and presence across numerous fields.

The sea has also become one of the stages to the competition between the two powerhouses. For China, there is no need to look far to note its interest in the maritime domain as the South China Sea dispute resembles a good example. As for the US, its opposition to the claim of China in the waterways as well as its freedom of navigation policy can be seen as the counterpart of China's. Taken together, the conflicting interests and initiatives between the US and China would then play a huge role in defining the development of the dispute along the region. The interplay of conflicting moves can be seen in how China's claim over the South China Sea would accentuate its presence and foothold in the heart of the Indo-Pacific (Zhang, 2017). Such a thing does not only attract reservation from states in the region but also the US which views China as a rival in the international system. The claim that China made is also against the freedom of navigation policy of the US which seeks to maintain the freedom and lawful passage as well as the use of the sea (Bahri, 2020). China's unilateral claim has also given rise to numerous conflicts on the sea involving its coast guard vessels and other vessels, notably fishermen and coast guards, from states in the region. With that policy in mind, it can be understood how the claim that China made can be viewed as a threat to the aforementioned policy which encompasses the interest of the US (U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, 2023).

Putting aside the perks of their respective initiative, the growing presence of the two powers in the region brings to light a rather pessimistic wind for ASEAN. What is meant by that is how ASEAN's growth and centrality in the region, either that of Southeast Asia or the Indo-Pacific, may be overshadowed by the aforementioned two giants. Such a case can be made with the strong influence and relations both China and the US have developed with many ASEAN member states (Beeson, 2022). For the former, we can look into the strong ties between China and Cambodia as well as Laos. The strong influence and ties China has developed with the two could bother ASEAN's overall performance. For example, given the strong ties Cambodia has with China, it has not been supportive with ASEAN's effort to overcome the dispute. In the 2016 ASEAN foreign ministers meeting, Cambodia blocked any mentions of the dispute which prevented any deliberation by other member states (Mogato et. al., 2016).

As for the latter, the US has accentuated its presence in the agenda of both Vietnam and the Philippines. The US has rejuvenated its defence ties with Vietnam in the last decade. The US has done two Vietnam port visits involving the USS Carl Vinson and the USS Theodore Roosevelt in the last 6 years alone (US Indo-Pacific Command, 2020). Moreover, the US has provided Vietnam with countless funds it could use for its capacity building. For example, from 2017 to 2023, Vietnam has received an amount of \$104 million under the Foreign Military Financing program which was also enhanced by another \$81.5 million in 2018 to support the Indo-Pacific strategy (US Department of State, 2023). The same ties are also growing with the Philippines as seen in its recent decision to allow the US to access

some of its military bases (Al Jazeera, 2023). While the two do not show any stern opposition against ASEAN, their overall presence and activities in the region nonetheless steal the spotlight away from ASEAN at times.

Hence, with the anarchic nature of the international system, not to mention the gap between ASEAN and either the US or China, there is no telling what tomorrow could bring for ASEAN and the heart of the Indo-Pacific. While it is true that ASEAN remains a key actor in the region's development, one can not deny the enormous influence and power the two powerhouses have which dwarf those of ASEAN. However, amidst such a turbulent sea, the states that make up the regional bloc do not remain silent. Under the leadership of its chairman, ASEAN has strived to maintain its relevance through spearheading numerous breakthroughs, either in the forms of policies, outlooks, or a more practical move in the form of a military exercise that entails all ASEAN member states.

#### **4.2 The case of the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023**

The ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023 is another fruit of Indonesia's ASEAN chairmanship in 2023. The exercise involved the armies, airforce, and navies, as opposed to only one of them. The component it entailed makes it different from other similar initiatives, like the AMNEX (ASEAN Multinational Naval Exercise). As it was proposed by Indonesia back in June 2023, it did not receive unanimous support from the rest of ASEAN member states. Following the announcement, some ASEAN member states, one of them being Cambodia, did not give any response (Koh, 2023). Some raised their concerns as a result of the initially chosen area of exercise that was close to the disputed area in the North Natuna seas. Eventually, Indonesia settled on moving it away from the disputed area to the seas near Batam and South Natuna (Dianti, 2023). In the end, the exercise would continue on its trajectory as it would eventually be held in September 2023. Not only that, the exercise would witness the involvement of all 10 ASEAN member states including Timor Leste, albeit in different degrees of involvement. To that regard, some states went as far as sending out their ships while others remained as observers (Mayberry, 2023).

Despite being an example of another training initiative involving respective participants' military, the exercise did not include any combat exercise. However, despite the absence of such exercise, the initiative did not lose its luster as it still includes other relevant activities as well, from maritime security, disaster response, to rescue operations. The involvement of the aforementioned topics were made more viable as a result of the change of the exercise's location. The exercise was done back in September 2023 and lasted for 5 days in waters around Natuna, Indonesia.

The exercise, notably its focus towards the maritime domain, can be seen as Indonesia's effort to highlight the importance of said domain. Before the exercise, Indonesia has held a similar forum that is focused on maritime security, albeit it focused on the role of the coast guards. Not stopping there, ASEAN cooperation over the maritime domain is also further pushed with the release of a strategic document known as the ASEAN Maritime Outlook (Indonesia MOFA, 2023). The exercise that was held back in September 2023 is therefore also in line with the outlook as it resembles the regional bloc's members cooperation in the maritime domain, notably maritime security and humanitarian assistance on the sea. The

focus towards the region's maritime domain can be understood as a result of its importance to the region's development as well as the turbulent state it is in now (Parameswaran, 2023). For the latter, an example can be made out of the South China Sea dispute that has remained unsettled for decades. The present state is exacerbated with how much attention the dispute has garnered over the years, so much so that it has now also caught the interest of outsiders, notably the US. The present state of deadlock over the dispute as reflected in the code of conduct's lack of progress has driven some member states frustrated. Therefore, the exercise plays an important role in highlighting ASEAN's centrality both to its member states and outsiders.

#### **4.3 Amplifying Indonesia's defence diplomacy effort towards ASEAN**

The ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natune serves as a defence diplomacy initiative for Indonesia. On the surface, it can be perceived how the initiative may serve as a platform for confidence-building measures and capacity-building measures for the member states. The former can be seen in how the initiative could strengthen the ties between member states whereas the latter is present in the opportunities for development that member states can partake in. However, the initiative also serves as an opportunity for Indonesia to accentuate its presence in ASEAN. Defence diplomacy-wise, There are many things Indonesia can reap from undertaking efforts to engage in said activity in ASEAN.

One of the components of the defence diplomacy effort in ASEAN that Indonesia may benefit from is also present in relations to its international reputation, especially in the Southeast Asia landscape. Given Indonesia's role in suggesting and bringing the initiative to fruition, Indonesia's identity as one of the key players within ASEAN is further supported. Moreover, as part of Indonesia's interest towards ASEAN, the initiative also gives rise to ASEAN's development and relevance amidst the dynamic region. This particular aspect of defence diplomacy for Indonesia is also in line with the idea of ASEAN centrality, both in inward and outward manners. The former refers to how through spearheading the effort for the exercise's enactment, Indonesia is supporting ASEAN's internal centrality. For the case of the exercise, Indonesia's role in bringing it into fruition allows ASEAN to take the center stage of its member states' attention.

Despite the exercise being attended with varying degrees of involvement by the ASEAN member states, it has shown that ASEAN is ready to cater and stride further into the defence sector. That is further proved with the involvement of Cambodia and Laos which in the past have shown to lean more onto China upon the discussions of maritime issues like the South China Sea dispute. Such a participation demonstrates the growing luster of ASEAN amidst the region's turbulent dynamics. The long overdue exercise as many regard it to be also shows how Indonesia's chairmanship in ASEAN allows more room for the regional bloc to grow and encompass more fields, fields that can be beneficial for its fellow ASEAN member states.

In this part, the exercise also shows the motive of capacity-building as apparent in the maritime security topics. The topic selection allows member states to learn and improve their capacity in facing threats presented by natural disasters and crimes perpetrated by non-state actors on the sea (Costa, 2023). Therefore, through the enactment of the exercise,



ASEAN member states are given the opportunity for capacity-building in numerous fields, albeit not including any combat practice for the time being. Whereas for the latter, the nature of Indonesia's initiatives as made apparent in the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023 shows some noteworthy points of its competence, especially to the two global powers. To bring it into perspective, the exercise itself can be utilized to understand how the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna 2023 is quite the spectacle for the two global powers.

First, it is important to take into account the issues ASEAN is entangled with either of the two global powers. In this case, overarching competition for influence between the US and China along with the South China Sea dispute can be regarded as such. Through the exercise, Indonesia chose to have the Natuna vicinity as the place in which said exercise would be run. Such a choice can be interpreted as a signal of how Indonesia wishes for ASEAN to go forward, breaking the stagnant, with the ongoing regional dynamics either between the two giants or the one in the South China Sea. The connection to the latter can be seen in how initially the exercise was planned to be held in the North Natuna Sea, an area in which Indonesia is somewhat at odds with China's territorial claim. In the end, said plan did not come to be as Indonesia took into account concerns from other member states of how such a thing may attract unnecessary tension from China. Therefore, in a way, the exercise can be taken as a token of ASEAN's interest to unite themselves to resume progress on the South China Sea dispute involving China's one sided claim.

However, such a signal is not one to be perceived as a green light for the US and its allies to see ASEAN, and its member states, as one of their own. The idea of ASEAN aligning itself with them may as well be a noxious move towards the interest of ASEAN member states given the strong ties ASEAN still share with China amidst the tension on that waterway. It is important therefore to note that while ASEAN is at odds with China in the South China Sea, it is not by any means the same condition the US finds itself against China. Hence, the measures Indonesia have brought up to other ASEAN member states as apparent in the exercise around Natuna does not have any confrontative means that may be perceived as so by China. The move can then be seen as how ASEAN wishes to avoid tension and seek a solution that would not be destructive for both sides through dialogue channels or other measures alike, something that is also in line with Indonesia's interest despite not being a claimant state in the dispute. In doing so, ASEAN's identity as a separate actor in the region is accentuated where it seeks to not lean onto neither of the two giants. While it is true that ASEAN does not see eye to eye on some pressing matters with either of the two, such a disagreement is not sufficient to force ASEAN, along with Indonesia, to change its course to sail between the two giants.

Hence, the exercise serves as an example of Indonesia's capacity to imbue said initiative with the values that ASEAN holds of not taking any side amidst the competition for influence between the US and China. Aside from that, Indonesia's leadership is also present in how it seeks to bring about progress in the dispute that would not harm the interest of other member states, along with the region, through unnecessary approaches that may fan the flames. Such a conduct of leadership, given Indonesia's reputation as ASEAN's de facto leader, would boost the aforementioned international reputation as a prominent regional power either in the scope of ASEAN or the overarching Indo-Pacific instead of a mere regional power who straddles the fence. Furthermore, ASEAN's centrality would also be

supported by bringing to the surface the idea for the two global powers that ASEAN is not only a formidable actor in the region, but also one that is not pliable to be forced to take sides.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The enactment of the ASEAN Solidarity Exercise Natuna in September 2023 serves as an important development in the region's defence sector. Apart from showcasing the members of the regional bloc's commitment, it can also be viewed as another example of Indonesia's leadership as seen in its role as ASEAN's chairman and initiator of the initiative. Through the conduct of the exercise as a means of defence diplomacy, Indonesia got the chance to develop its international reputation in the regional bloc. The reputation as a leader can be seen in its key role to bring the exercise to fruition as well as in navigating its members and exercise amidst the US-China competition they are witnessing. The latter is present in how Indonesia adjusted the exercise's execution to not attract negative attention from China near the disputed waterways so as to maintain ASEAN's non-alignment stance amidst the competition. Additionally, the exercise also provides ASEAN member states with capacity-building measures against contemporary threats to maritime security as well as confidence-building measures as it provides member states the chance to practice and strengthen their ties in the defence sector. Therefore, despite its limitation in not covering combat exercises, the exercise nonetheless bears some fruits that are beneficial to Indonesia and ASEAN as a whole.

As earlier mentioned, the strong interconnectedness of the system makes it not surprising for any regional event to bring about implications beyond its region. Therefore, further research can be done to assess how ASEAN initiatives in the defence sector, notably involving the maritime domain, are interpreted by both global and other regional powers alike in the region. Especially because said interpretation can have its share of influence on the region's dynamics, not to mention the growing interest of other powers to the region. Another area that can further be explored is regarding the potential for strategic engagement that initiative can have. While the initiative caters to ASEAN member states in its initial run in 2023, the growing presence of the US and China makes it an important matter for ASEAN to address. As the motive suggests, it can be explored how the initiative can be developed in the future as a strategic engagement platform for ASEAN, as a whole, and the two powerhouses.

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