

Thinking ASEAN

From Southeast Asia On Southeast Asia

+
INFOGRAPHIC
Batik

*Strengthening the
Role of Youth in
Preventing Atrocity
Crimes in ASEAN*

*Rupiah
Depreciation:
Currency Survival
or Back to 1998?*

*Sub-Regional Counter-
Terrorism Mechanisms Take
Lead in Southeast Asia's Fight
Against the Islamic State*



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A note from the editor

Dear readers:

Welcome to the September 2018 issue of the monthly Thinking ASEAN!

The latest round of the ongoing trade war between the world's two largest economies, the United States and China, continue to haunt the region, dragging down ASEAN member states with them. Whilst economists may argue over the short term pros and cons of imposing tariffs and even the potential gains that ASEAN may seize from this opportunity, one thing is clear: in the long term there are no winners. We are thus hopeful by Indonesia's President Joko Widodo's word at the recent World Economic Forum on ASEAN in Ha Noi, Vietnam that he and his 'fellow Avengers stand ready' to prevent any trade war from turning into an 'Infinity War.'

Speaking of war, our first article is by Mr Olli Suorsa, a PhD candidate at the Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong. His article on 'Sub-Regional Counter-Terrorism Mechanisms Take Lead in Southeast Asia's Fight Against the Islamic State' looks at recent developments including moves towards sub-regional land patrols, raising many important questions and obvious criticism arising from their practicalities and realism, and at the same time noting the significant opportunities and possibilities that may spring up from the initiative.

Our second article is by Ms. Fina Astriana, researcher at ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center. Her article explores 'Rupiah Depreciation: Currency Survival or Back to 1998?' As Indonesia enters the presidential election period, the country's economic performance is under the spotlight and the article looks at the factors and consequences of the Rupiah's recent depreciation which has hit lows not seen since the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998 that brought down the long term rule of Soeharto's New Order regime.

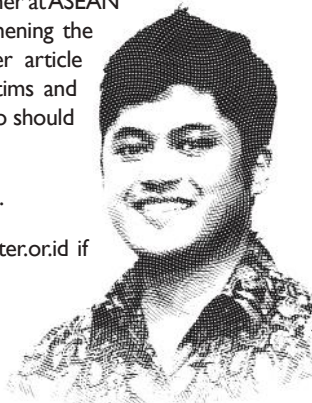
Our third article is by Ms. Vierna Tasya Wensatama, also a researcher at ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center who writes on 'Strengthening the Role of Youth in Preventing Atrocity Crimes in ASEAN.' Her article looks at the important role of young people not only as victims and perpetrators of atrocity crimes, but also as agents of change who should be involved in ASEAN's effort against such crimes.

As usual, we present an infographic that this month covers Batik.

Don't hesitate to drop me a line at thinkingasean@habibiecenter.or.id if you have comments, input, or prospective submissions.

Happy reading!

Best regards from Jakarta



From Southeast Asia On Southeast Asia

Thinking ASEAN is a monthly publication that aims to provide insightful, cogent and engaging perspectives on issues central to contemporary Southeast Asia and the ASEAN member states. It is a product of The Habibie Center, with the generous support of the Republic of Korea's Mission to ASEAN.

The content of *Thinking ASEAN* does not reflect the official opinion of The Habibie Center or institutions related to the publication. The Habibie Center was founded by Indonesian President Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie in 1999 as an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization to promote the democratization and modernization of the country.

Responsibility for the information and views expressed in *Thinking ASEAN* lies entirely with the author(s). For comments, suggestions and prospective contributions, the Managing Editor of *Thinking ASEAN* can be reached at thinkingasean@habibiecenter.or.id.

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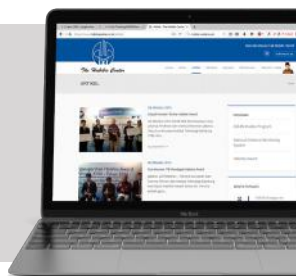
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The Habibie Center

The Habibie Center was founded by Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie and family in 1999 as an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation. The vision of The Habibie Center is to create a structurally democratic society founded on the morality and integrity of cultural and religious values.

The missions of The Habibie Center are first, to establish a structurally and culturally democratic society that recognizes, respects, and promotes human rights by undertaking study and advocacy of issues related to democratization and human rights, and second, to increase the effectiveness of the management of human resources and the spread of technology.

Sub-Regional Counter-Terrorism Mechanisms Take Lead in Southeast Asia's Fight Against the Islamic State



Army patrols

Source: pxhere.com/CC0 Public Domain



Mr. Olli Suorsa,
*PhD candidate at the Department of Asian and International
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South East Asia is a region heavily burdened by historical and contemporary security challenges associated with armed insurgency, militancy and terrorism. The threat of terrorism—ethno-nationalist, religious or ideological by nature—has largely remained localized to the region’s less-governed border regions like the three southern provinces of Thailand or Mindanao in the southern Philippines.

With the incursion of al-Qaeda to the region during the 1990s and, more recently, that of the Islamic State (IS), the new realities of the terrorist threat to the region has since at least 2014 been underlined. The so-called 3rd generation terrorism is characterized by its increasingly transnational and trans-boundary nature, with growing regional and international linkages and scope of operations, finance, and recruiting. Responding to the threat has therefore become more challenging than before.

As the terrorist fighters respect no nation-states’ legal borders nor that of the region’s primary interstate organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the relative ‘open borders’ policy within the Association’s borders eases the movement of individuals.

The region’s response to the new height of the terrorist threat has been five-fold:

1. States have taken national, comprehensive measures—‘soft’ or preventive and rehabilitative and ‘hard’ or legal counter-measures—to curb terrorism from gaining a stronger foot-hold;
2. Accepting international standards on counter-terrorism;
3. Regional pledges and agreements to enhance cooperation in legal, law-enforcement and military domains to combat the spread of terrorism in Southeast Asia;
4. Improving bilateral defence and security cooperation, including exchange of information and intelligence between and among

members of the grouping and with extra-regional partners like the United States and Australia; and

5. The growth in number and scope of Southeast Asia’s sub-regional initiatives against terrorism.

At the regional level, the ASEAN response to terrorism has typically involved joint statements, declarations and pledges of improved cooperation, plans of action, and low-key capacity building with little concrete action. Tellingly, in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA and the 2002 Bali bombings, ASEAN was the last region to forge a legally binding legal framework to combat terrorism, the *ASEAN Counter Terrorism Treaty (AC-CT)* in 2007, which only came into force in 2011. Malaysia was the last member state to sign the treaty in 2013.

Common challenges limiting the development of ASEAN’s organizational responses to terrorism have been hampered by a multitude of issues ranging from the inefficiencies of the bureaucratic model of ASEAN decision-making—the ‘ASEAN Way’—to major differences in the member states’ strategies and elite threat perceptions in relation to terrorism as well as concerns over sovereignty and interference in domestic affairs. Despite the threat’s increasingly regional and international nature, terrorism is often considered as a local and, thus, internal matter.

Importantly, the threat of terrorism and, therefore, the responses to it have not been even and largely focused on the region’s ‘least-governed’ territories, such as the porous borders between the member states or, perhaps most famously, the tri-border area between the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the countries most affected by the Islamic militancy and terrorism have taken the most active measures to curb the threat. Similarly, those states have most actively promoted regional cooperation and sub-regional collaboration to curb and disrupt the movement and activities of suspected terrorist individuals and groups.

In May 2017, the Maute Group, pledging allegiance to the ISIS and its leader Abu Bakr al-Zarqawi, laid siege on the city of Marawi in Mindanao, southern Philippines, taking the Philippine security forces by surprise. This eye-opening incident—characterizing the seriousness of the threat posed by the Islamic State to the region—galvanized the region’s leaders’ resolve, naming terrorism as the most salient threat the region faces today.

The locus of the Sulu Sea patrols, formally known as the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA), started in June 2017, was quickly refocused to counter-terrorism, trying to disrupt and prevent terrorists from using the Sulu Archipelago as a logistical conduit, or ‘back door’, to smuggle fighters or arms between Sabah and Kalimantan in Borneo and Mindanao in the Philippines. The three countries modeled their effort in the relatively successful example of Southeast Asia’s sub-regionalism, the Malacca Strait Patrols that began in 2004.

Similar to the Malacca Strait anti-piracy initiative, the Sulu Sea patrols started as coordinated maritime patrols between the participating states. The TCA was quickly expanded to include intermittent aerial patrols to enhance the responders’ maritime domain awareness and detection of militant or terrorist movements along the porous borders. It is argued that the initiative has been successful in deterring further terrorist activity in the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas as there has been no recorded incidents since the establishment of the mechanism in June 2017.

As another example of the growing sub-regionalism in Southeast Asia, the initiative by the Minister of Defense of Indonesia, Ryamizard Ryacudu, the ‘Our Eyes’ intelligence sharing initiative (OEI), modelled after the American-led ‘Five Eyes’ mechanism, allowed participants to exchange (initially) strategic information and provide early-detection of terrorist movements within the association’s borders. The intelligence ‘pact’ was soft-launched in January 2018 by six early participants: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore,

The so-called 3rd generation terrorism is characterized by its increasingly transnational and trans-boundary nature, with growing regional and international linkages and scope of operations, finance, and recruiting. Responding to the threat has therefore become more challenging than before.

Philippines, Thailand, and Brunei with the rest of the ten members of the grouping as signatory partners. Moreover, to further enhance the initiative's early-detection capability, extra-regional partners the United States, Australia, Japan, and New-Zealand were accepted as the initial external partners. The capable external partners enhance the regional members' intelligence capacity significantly, providing information particularly of Southeast Asian fighters in Iraq and Syria that have joined the ISIS' fight in the Middle East, with survivors, gradually, returning to the region and posing a legitimate threat.

The significance of the OEI is in it filling a critical gap in the regional counter-terrorism cooperation and in greatly improving the effectiveness, quality and speed of the intelligence exchange. Initially, the collaboration will be on strategic intelligence, before moving on to operational and tactical intelligence. Similarly, the initiative will grow to involve information and intelligence from multi-agency sources.

As a further evidence of the growing trust and confidence—despite the usual negative rhetoric about the prospects of any serious cooperation it seems that the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia may well

prove the skeptics wrong. The on-going momentum in the trilateral collaboration is set to expand further to army-to-army patrols, thus involving all three services in the Sulu Sea mechanism—a first for the region.

The land patrols will substantially enhance the three countries counter-terrorism fight. In the next two months the three Ministers of Defence will agree on a draft Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that will clarify, especially, the legal mandate of the foreign forces in another country's territory. The trilateral army cooperation will then commence with a trilateral exercise to drill the agreed upon standard operating procedures (or SOP), communication and interoperability between the three countries' armies before an inaugural deployment to Mindanao, Philippines, takes place at a future date (not yet settled as of writing).

The land patrols raises some important questions and opportunities for the grouping. Will the army-to-army joint patrols be more than just optics? Are the patrols going to take place on a frequent basis? Are the army-led patrols going to run into domestic political infighting or inter-agency rivalry due to the differing state strategies to handle the threat of

terrorism—whether military or law-enforcement led responses? This is a particularly critical question as the Philippines' counter-terrorism strategy calls for military to respond to the threat, whereas Indonesia and Malaysia have favored police as the leading agency. Moreover, in case of another major terrorist attack—another 'Marawi'—in one of the three countries' soil—whether in Mindanao, Sulawesi or Sabah—in what circumstances will the help of the other two armies be invoked?

Traditionally, Southeast Asian countries, except Philippines, have preferred to address the local militant and terrorist threats nationally without outright involvement of other powers. The collaboration will be invoked on an affected state's invitation.

Beyond many important questions and obvious criticism arising from the practicalities and realism behind any future army-to-army patrols in any of the three countries' territory, significant opportunities and possibilities can also be seen spring up from the initiative. These can include, for instance, synergies brought about between operational and command structures of the army-to-army patrols and the future peacekeeping task force

planned under ASEAN. Whether ASEAN will have its own peacekeeping unit in the future, akin to the ASEAN Militaries' Ready Group on HA/DR (Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief) remains to be seen, but such developments help lower the barriers in making progress toward the eventual formation of one.

Only over time will the answers to the above questions become clear. However, based on the author's communication with the Ministry of Defence of Indonesia, there is a strong political will in the three capitals to advance the army-to-army patrols. There is a clear interest in obtaining ownership over the threat within the region, avoiding outside big power interference. It seems if the regional pressure to provide assistance to Manila in lifting the IS-affiliated forces

from Marawi and the Philippines' current administration's disdain of American special forces' presence in the restive South have contributed to the mechanism moving forward. To this end, like Ryamizard Ryacudu posited in the 2018 edition of the Putrajaya Forum in Kuala Lumpur, in April, the region's sub-regional initiatives on counter-terror-ism signal that Southeast Asia and ASEAN are increasingly capable of handling the threat within the region, while welcoming capacity building assistance from big powers like the United States and Australia.

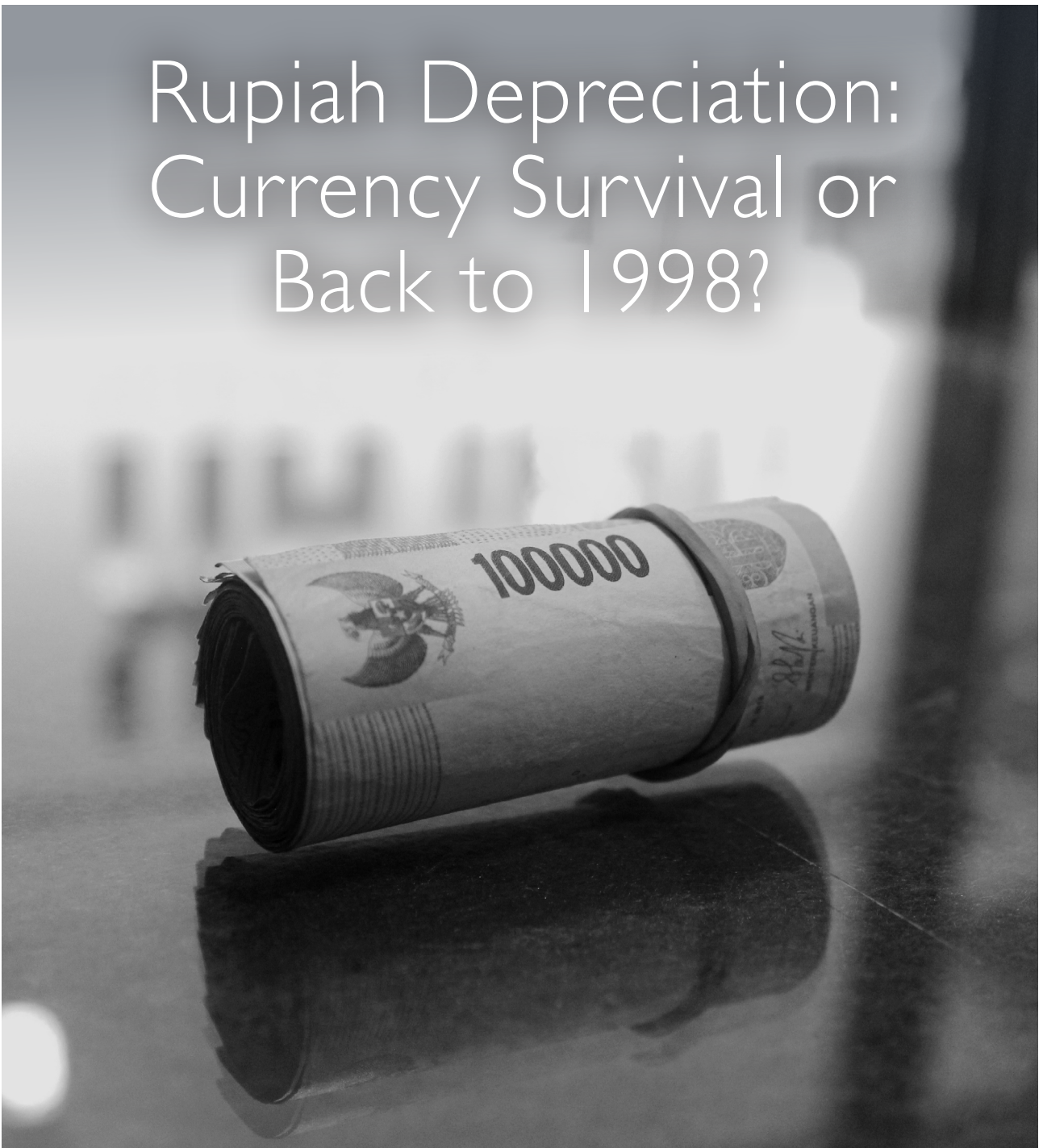
Counter-terrorism has become another showcase of ASEAN security cooperation advancing at rapid pace, even if it is still largely reactive. While the ASEAN legal framework and agreements on countering terrorism have moved forward

at a snail's pace, the practical, on-the-ground, cooperation has taken place at sub-regional levels. The evolution of the Sulu Sea patrols from anti-piracy and kidnapping for ransom criminal activities to counter-terrorism and from sea patrols to, first, air and, then, land patrols, is a case in point. Moreover, the six-country mechanism—'Our Eyes'—intelligence sharing initiative adds important 'enabler' to the region's fight against terrorism. With these mechanisms built inclusive—open for future participants and observers to expand the mechanisms to ASEAN-wide arrangements—the sub-regional initiatives, with the directly affected states taking the lead, forge the practical regional efforts ahead in combating terrorism in Southeast Asia.



Military soldier army
Source: flickr.com

Rupiah Depreciation: Currency Survival or Back to 1998?



Rupiah roll

Source: pxhere/CC0 Public Domain



Fina Astriana,
Researcher at ASEAN Studies Program

For the past several months, the Indonesian rupiah has been continuously depreciating against the US dollar. In the beginning of 2018, the rupiah was being traded at between Rp 13,300 to Rp 13,400 per US dollar. Since then, the rupiah, along with several other emerging market currencies have been under pressure. On Wednesday, 5 September 2018, the rupiah was at its lowest level since the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998, when it hit Rp 14,938 per US dollar. In some major

banks in Indonesia, the rupiah depreciated to more than Rp 15,000 per US dollar on that day. For example Bank Mandiri sold USD 1 at Rp 15,003, BCA at Rp 15,150, and CIMB Niaga at Rp 15,050.

Comparison 1998 and 2018

Due to the continuous depreciation, many are beginning to worry whether the country will face a similar economic crisis like the one in 1998 or not. As the biggest Southeast Asian economy,

economic instability in Indonesia might reverberate through the region. This article will examine the factors that cause this depreciation, as well as Indonesia's capacity to withstand this challenge and even ways that it might benefit from it.

However, many analysts argue that the current macroeconomic situation is relatively better compared to the condition in 1998. Table 1 below shows some of the economic indicators comparison.

Table 1. Economic indicators in 1998 and 2018

| Rupiah 1998 | Rupiah 2018 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rp 3,030 per US dollar in Sept 1997 - Rp 10,725 per US dollar in Sept 1998 (depreciated 254 percent) | Rp 13,345 per US dollar in September 2017 - Rp 14,815 per dollar in September 2018 (depreciated 11 percent) If the rupiah depreciated like the one in 1998, it should reach Rp 47,241 per US dollar in September 2018 |
| Foreign reserve in 1998 USD 23.61 billion | Foreign reserve in 2018 USD 118.3 billion |
| Indonesia's sovereign credit rating in 1998 Junk | Indonesia's sovereign credit rating in 2018 Investment grade |
| Net capital inflow in 2nd quarter of 1998 - USD 2.470 billion | Net capital inflow in 2nd quarter of 2018 USD 4.015 billion |
| Economic growth in 2nd quarter of 1998 (yoy) - 13.34 percent | Economic growth in 2nd quarter of 2018 (yoy) 5.27 percent |
| Inflation in August 1998 78.2 percent (yoy) | Inflation in August 2018 3.2 percent (yoy) |
| Poverty rate in 1998 24.2 percent or 49.5 million people | Poverty rate in 2018 9.82 percent or 25.9 million people |

Source: BI, BPS, CEIC

As of August 2018, Indonesia's foreign reserve had fallen to USD 117.9 billion, decreased by USD 400 million from USD 118.3 billion in July 2018 due to Bank Indonesia's intervention in the foreign exchange market and to repay public foreign debt. The current foreign reserve was equivalent to 6.8 months of import or 6.6 months of import and servicing of the government's external debt.² This figure alone shows that Indonesia's economic fundamental is stronger than it was during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998.

It is also supported by the statement of one of the biggest international ratings agency, Fitch Ratings. In a written statement, Fitch Ratings claimed that, "The government's debt repayment budget is slow with good prospects of economic growth amid the external challenge of global uncertainties".³ Therefore, Fitch Ratings still maintain Indonesia's debt rating of BBB with a stable outlook. Not only Fitch Ratings, other international rating agencies, such as Moody's and S&P, also gave good credit ratings for

Indonesia. The recent rupiah depreciation has not affected the ratings yet, hence foreign investors should not be too worried. The positive investment grade from top international rating agencies proves that they maintain confidence in Indonesia's economy despite the rupiah's depreciation.

Table 2. Indonesia's credit ratings in 2018

| International Rating Agency | Credit ratings | Outlook |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Fitch | BBB | Stable |
| Moody's | Baa2 | Stable |
| S&P | BBB- | Stable |

Source: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (2018)

While most of the economic indicators show relatively strong economic fundamentals, some indicators are weakening and the government needs to pay attention to it. Indonesia's current account deficit has become higher in recent months. In the second quarter

of 2018, the government of Indonesia experienced a deficit of USD 8 billion or 3 percent of the GDP, higher than the previous quarter which was USD 5.7 billion. It is also higher than the same quarter last year which was only USD 4.7 billion (or 1.96 percent of GDP).⁴

The debt to GDP ratio⁵ is also increasing to 34.4 percent in 2018, higher than the one in 2008, but still below the cap which is 60 percent. Meanwhile the debt service ratio⁶ in 2018 reached up to 56.3 percent, increasing significantly from 17.2 percent in 2008.

Table 3. Indonesia's debt indicators

| Economic indicators | 1998 | 2008 | 2018 |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Debt service ratio (DSR) | 52 percent | 17.2 percent | 56.3 percent |
| Debt to GDP ratio | 116.8 percent | 33.2 percent | 34.3 percent |

Source: Katadata (2018)

Despite those indicators, people should not be too worried that Indonesia will fall into another economic crisis like the one in 1998. The Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs Luhut Panjaitan mentioned that, "There is no need to worry that a crisis such as 1998 will re-occur today. Conditions are very different from 1998".⁷ It is also not accurate if people assume that Indonesia will face an economic crisis like in Argentina and Turkey because Indonesia's economy is performing better than both countries.

Factors causing the rupiah's depreciation

The depreciation of the rupiah is affected

by internal and external factors. From the internal side, the purchase of the rupiah by importers and corporations to pay import products and debts, respectively, caused the rupiah to decline.⁸ Bank Indonesia has already warned corporations not to pile up US dollars as it will have a negative impact on the rupiah.

Aside from the internal factor, external factors have arguably contributed more to the rupiah's depreciation. It is mostly driven by the interest rate hikes in the US.⁹ As of early September 2018, the US Federal Reserve (or the Fed) has raised the US interest rates twice, in March and June. The interest rate hike is based on the fact that the US now has

stronger inflation and better economic growth this year.¹⁰ The Fed is expected to announce the third Fed Fund Rate hike to 2.25 percent in the next FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) which takes place on September 25-26, 2018.¹¹ It is believed that the Fed will likely raise the Fed Fund Rate again in December 2018 and has indicated there may be as much as three rate hikes next year.

The monetary tightening from the Fed encourages foreign investors to move their assets to the US from developing countries, such as Indonesia. Portfolio investors are searching for higher yield in the developed countries hence they sell-off their assets in emerging markets.

As of August 2018, Indonesia's foreign reserve had fallen to USD 117.9 billion, decreased by USD 400 million from USD 118.3 billion in July 2018 due to Bank Indonesia's intervention in the foreign exchange market and to repay public foreign debt.

In the case of Indonesia, these portfolio investors are selling their rupiah for the US dollar or selling Indonesia's sovereign bonds to buy assets that produce higher yields. As a result, the rupiah's value continues to fall every time the Fed raises the interest rate. The selling-off of emerging market's assets was also triggered by the currency crisis in Turkey and Argentina. Due to both countries' conditions, foreign investors are afraid of the risk of contagion to other developing countries hence they prefer to buy safer assets from the developed countries such as the US.

What are the consequences from the rupiah's depreciation?

One of the direct negative consequences from the rupiah's depreciation is the higher price of imported goods. Laptops, smartphones, luxury cars, and other imported goods will become more expensive for Indonesians.

In addition, based on a theory, when a country's currency is depreciated, it should help boost the country's export since the products become cheaper. However, the theory does not really apply in Indonesia since the content of Indonesia's export products are dominated by imported raw

materials hence the positive impact of the depreciation is nullified. Producers whose products contain high imported raw materials will be burdened with the rising costs. Hence, they will have to either increase the price of the products they sell and will likely face slowing demand or keep the price of their products but their profit margin will be decreased.

One industry that will likely be affected is the food and beverages industry. Adhi Lukman, General Chairman of the Indonesian Food and Beverage Association (GAPMMI) mentioned that an eight percent decline in the rupiah will increase a company's cost of goods sold by three percent.¹²

From the government side, if the rupiah continues to weaken, the government's ability to repay its debt will diminish. Around 40 percent of the government's debt is denominated in foreign currency.¹³ Hence, the weaker the rupiah, the bigger the interest that the government should pay. However, the government is still confident that they can manage its debt. In the proposed 2019 state budget, the government prepared a scenario where the rupiah depreciates by 35 percent to Rp 18,000 per US dollar. The Finance Ministry's Budgetary Director-General,

Askolani, assured that the government debt would still be controllable if the rupiah weakens to Rp 18,000 per US dollar.¹⁴

On the other side, currency depreciation will also create a good opportunity. Since the rupiah is relatively cheaper than other foreign currencies, foreign travelers who travel to Indonesia will be able to buy more goods and services. This is the reason the government tries to attract foreign travelers to come to Indonesia. An official with the Tourism Ministry claimed that they want to have a blessing in disguise from the rupiah's depreciation by increasing promotional activities to boost tourist arrivals. By promoting the tourism sector, it is expected that it will help boost Indonesia's economic growth amid the unstable global economy.¹⁵

Government's efforts to stabilize the rupiah

As of now, the government of Indonesia has implemented a number of policies in order to strengthen the rupiah. From the monetary side, Bank Indonesia has raised the interest rate five times in 2018 to 5.5 percent so that it can attract foreign investors. However, this policy also creates some consequences. When the interest

rate is higher, it means the borrowing cost will also increase. Higher borrowing cost will discourage people and companies to borrow money from the banks for their businesses.

Bank Indonesia has also intensified its intervention in the foreign exchange market and has bought sovereign bonds from the secondary market. Between August 30 to September 4, Bank Indonesia had spent Rp 11.9 trillion in the foreign exchange market in order to stabilize the rupiah. In addition, on August 31, Bank Indonesia bought sovereign bonds worth Rp 3 trillion (USD 202 million) from foreign investors.

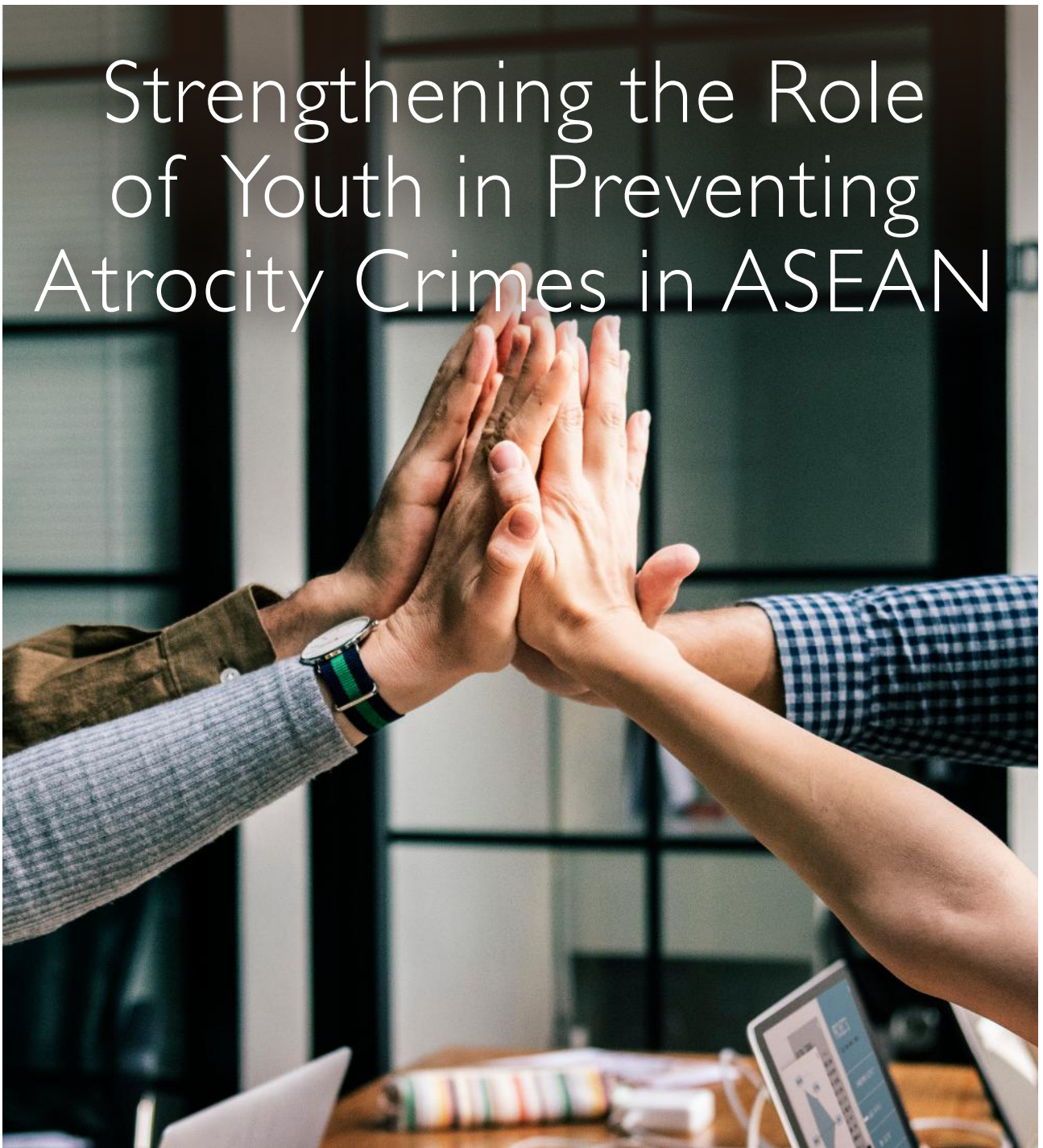
From the fiscal side, the government will increase taxes on 1,147 imported goods, ranging from 7.5 percent to 10 percent. The government will also ban the purchase of luxury cars. The policy aims to reduce the current account deficit which hit 3 percent of GDP in the second quarter of 2018. In addition, the government is also implementing the B20 (biodiesel 20) policy, which makes mandatory the use of 20 percent biodiesel blend in order to reduce the oil import. The policy is expected to save the government's money by up to USD 2.2 billion for the next 4 months.

While the government has implemented good policies, it should still remain cautious, especially since the external pressures remain high until next year. The rupiah will not likely strengthen to below Rp 14,000 in the near future, however, we can still expect that Indonesia's economy is still strong enough and is not going to fall into another economic crisis.

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Strengthening the Role of Youth in Preventing Atrocity Crimes in ASEAN



2009 Elections, Indonesia
Source: commons.wikimedia.org



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During the 2005 United Nations World Summit, it was agreed upon by the heads of state and government that it is the responsibility of every state to protect its population from four atrocity crimes - genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing - and moreover they committed themselves to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine to take action to prevent atrocity crimes when they know or should know that populations are at grave risk.¹ However, states in the Southeast Asian region are still currently struggling with atrocity crimes and their risk factors. The Asia-Pacific Outlook provided by the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect categorises states into five levels of risk in its Regional Atrocity Risk Assessment. While three ASEAN member states are categorised as “very low” and four are “low”, Indonesia is categorised as a state with “moderate” risk, and Myanmar along with the Philippines are warned with “very high” risk of atrocity crimes.²

In preventing atrocity crimes, it is essential to include groups of youth, as well as women, religious minorities, and other marginalised peoples. Such stakeholders are often excluded from prevention efforts, but they are deemed to be among the most sensitive to escalating social tensions and have access to information beyond the reach of key actors, while also being the first groups targeted in the perpetration of atrocities.³ Statistics show the Asia-Pacific region is home to the largest group of youth at 717 million,⁵ or 60% of the world’s young people between 15 to 24 of age, where 213 million of them reside in ASEAN countries - the largest ever number of ASEAN youth to present.⁶

A simple question of who the youth is, in the context of atrocity crime, may now come to mind. According to Ozerdem, youth as a “category” has long been perceived as ‘a historically constructed social category, a relational concept, and as a group of actors that is far from homogenous’, with numerous factors that make youth highly diverse in many senses.⁷ It is inevitable that youth is often perceived – or even actively narrated – as either helpless victims or potential perpetrators of atrocity crimes. In 2017, an estimate of 408 million young people aged 15-29 resided in settings affected by armed conflict or organised violence.⁸ The present-day perception of youth tends to be on the negative side, as the prevalent lack of education and opportunity, fragmented social identity in the respective society, as well as exposure to social injustice has stereotyped the majority of youth in many countries as vulnerable to extremism.⁹ Furthermore, long-standing social conflicts are inherited from generation to generation, some being deeply rooted within communities that they become part of the local culture and history, such as what we see happening to the Rohingyas in Myanmar. Forced to ‘conserve’ such part of history, youths then have limited opportunity to live peacefully and are exposed to possibilities of having to deal with conflict residues that would later become risk factors of atrocity crimes. When exposed to imbalanced information and biased prejudice, young people may also be prone to unwanted persuasion. As victims of conflicts and/or their residual impacts, young people are then more prone to be deprived of their basic rights to education, employment, or even life, making them vulnerable in such sense.

However, young people’s potential should not be downplayed to a level where they are

merely passive or even negative actors of the society. While young people may account for the majority of those engaged in extremist violence, in reality only a minute proportion of the whole youth population are involved in violence, attributing to the stigmatisation of youth as a ‘criminal’ group. From the strong demographics youth boasts, there is actually an even bigger potential that the youth holds for peace and positive change. The youth are indeed often among the most vulnerable victims of mass atrocities, but they should also be leveraged into stakeholders and agents of atrocity prevention. Considering that the future of the world will lay in their hands, it should be ensured that young people are exposed less to risk factors of atrocity crimes and more to opportunities of peacebuilding and social change with active participation. As said by the then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his 2012 report on Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict, “a successful peacebuilding process must be transformative and create space for a wider set of actors - including, but not limited to, representatives of women, young people, victims and marginalized communities; community and religious leaders; civil society actors; and refugees and -internally displaced persons - to participate in public decision-making on all aspects of post-conflict governance and recovery.”¹⁰

International efforts

At the international stage, the United Nations has been highly aware of and active in advocating youth as peacebuilders through continually making efforts in increasing youth participation in peace processes. In 2012, the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development established the Inter-Agency

In preventing atrocity crimes, it is essential to include groups of youth, as well as women, religious minorities, and other marginalised peoples.

Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, co-chaired by Peacebuilding Support office, the UN Network of Youth Peacebuilders, and Search for Common Ground. The document of Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding was then published by the Working Group in 2014 to inform 'participative, inclusive and inter-generational peacebuilding strategies' in the necessary communities, endorsing principles such as promoting young people's participation as an essential condition for successful peacebuilding, valuing and building upon young people's diversity and experiences, as well as involving young people in all stages of peacebuilding and post-conflict programming.¹¹ As a move symbolising the organisation's interest and seriousness in strengthening the presence of young people in the international stage, in 2013 the UN Secretary-General appointed the first ever UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth serving as an advocate for youth issues.

The efforts did not stop right there. The first Global Forum on Youth, Peace, and Security was held in August 2015, bringing together 500 government officials, policy experts, youth-led organisations, and young peacebuilders from over 100 countries aimed at helping shape a new international agenda on youth, peace, and security. From the event, the Amman Youth Declaration was adopted: it presented the "common vision and roadmap towards a strengthened policy framework to support [young people] in transforming conflict, preventing and countering violence and building sustainable peace",¹² focusing on four key areas: youth building peace, preventing violence extremism, gender equality, and socio-economic empowerment. The Amman Youth Declaration then became a trigger for many to start increasing the involvement of youth as peacebuilders, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) further recognised the crucial role of young people as peacebuilders when it unanimously adopted Resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace, and security.¹³ The legally binding Resolution marks the start of youth participation in the international peace and security agenda, as it recognised the important positive contribution of youth to peace processes, and provided a framework for states and

relevant stakeholders to support their efforts.

Aside from calling for youth involvement in decision-making peace processes, the UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015) also orders "to carry out a progress study on the youth's positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional, and international levels".¹⁴ Following the mandate, the Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security was then established. Support also came in the form of funds: the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund launched its Youth Promotion Initiative as part of recognising the role of young people as central to the relevance and effectiveness of peacebuilding processes. The Initiative offers youth organizations the much-needed financial support to implement peacebuilding projects, operating in 15 countries to advance the UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015).

Regional efforts: what can ASEAN do?

ASEAN can definitely learn from what stakeholders at the international level has been doing on increasing the role of youth in peacebuilding, particularly atrocity crimes prevention. The appropriate approach to counter the existing negative narratives of the youth is to amplify their voices and make sure that such voices are actually listened to. In implementing the UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015) to strengthen youth participation in preventing atrocity crimes within the region, there are a number of measures that ASEAN can take; but first, ASEAN needs to recognise and firmly address that there are indeed atrocity crimes taking place within the region, and as part of implementing the Responsibility to Protect, ASEAN member states must be present and active in addressing risk factors of atrocity crimes.

ASEAN can push for the establishment of regional and national frameworks as well as organisations recognising youth as agents of peace. Following the 10th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth on 20 July 2017, the ASEAN Ministers of Youth launched the first ASEAN Youth Development Index (YDI) Report, providing the basis for informed decision-making

and planning new interventions for the youth.¹⁵ At the 31st ASEAN Summit in the Philippines, ASEAN member states have declared their commitment to adopt and promote the ASEAN YDI for use in their respective countries. In this regard, ASEAN can also coordinate with its member states in establishing an effective collective effort. As much more active as ASEAN should be involved in atrocity crimes prevention using its diplomatic mechanisms, collective regional efforts are also essential in ensuring the commitment of and between states to prevent atrocity crimes, as well as supporting each other in the process. States should commit to start and sustain atrocity crimes prevention programs in their respective territories.

However, ASEAN should not only make decisions for the youth - but it should be done with the youth actively involved at the process. Ensuring the participation of underrepresented groups, including youth, has proven effective in helping prevent and respond to atrocity crimes, as what is reported to have happened in Africa.¹⁶ In relation to paragraphs 1 to 3 of the UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015) regarding expected increasing youth participation, ASEAN should commit to include youth in relevant decision-making processes of atrocity crimes prevention. ASEAN can also support and empower youth organisations in forms of funding, formal recognition, and further involvement in the region's peacebuilding efforts. Funding youth organisations, particularly the local ones focusing on a targeted scope, is essential to ensure that peacebuilding efforts by youth can be sustainable and impactful for the long run.

While young people should be encouraged to champion peace and help prevent atrocities in their respective neighbourhoods, states should not forget to address the risk factor of youth as seeds of violence perpetrators. Numerous factors, such as patriarchal and patronage cultures as well as significant ethnic and religious divides, can limit the visibility of other groups as well as their awareness of and access to peacebuilding processes, affecting the young people's level of participation in them. The older generations may have been the initiators or perpetrators

of past atrocity crimes at the expense of younger generations' present and future lives. It is important for states to understand the psychological drivers and past experiences of violence as risk factors that make young people receptive to radical messages,¹⁷ and further actively include youth in preventing atrocity crimes in areas where conflicts have run for generations. Empowering the youth to become peace-builders and make efforts to identify risk factors is essential to resolve their historic marginalisation and negative stigmatisation, as well as breaking the chain of long-standing conflicts that can potentially lead to atrocity crimes.

Youth needs to be seen as not only leaders of the future, but also leaders of the present. We cannot look away from the fact that times have changed: the current era is indeed strongly driven by young forces in all aspects. There are issues and demographics that in the past may seem hard to reach through conservative methods, but are now more approachable through grass-root movements that the youth drives. ASEAN can look into opportunities of supporting alternative and independent methods of atrocity crimes prevention at the grass-root level. One of the alternative methods available to increase the role of youth in conflict or post-conflict areas is storytelling, which effectiveness has been studied in a small youth peacebuilding program in Nigeria¹⁸ and also recently practiced through a youth storytelling training program in five cities of Indonesia.¹⁹ A storytelling circle has the ability to provide a safe space for youths to share their stories of experience, therefore preventing such feelings from being untold and building up which would potentially expose them to persuasion of perpetrating crimes. By listening to personal stories of locals, young people learn more about the situation in their own neighbourhoods and address what the actual problems are, in order for them to plan a detailed action of peacebuilding and preventing atrocity crimes through a bottom-up approach.

In conclusion, ASEAN as a regional organisation should not retract itself from delving into the matter deeply in order to find a sustainable solution - in fact, ASEAN should take advantage of the available opportunities to engage with its member states and

encourage them to make maximum efforts in preventing atrocity crimes from happening and wreaking havoc in the region, which would put even more lives of human beings in danger. We all need to bear in mind that changing for the better shall not be feared, and when youths are able to become the agents of such change, they shall be given the chance to do so.

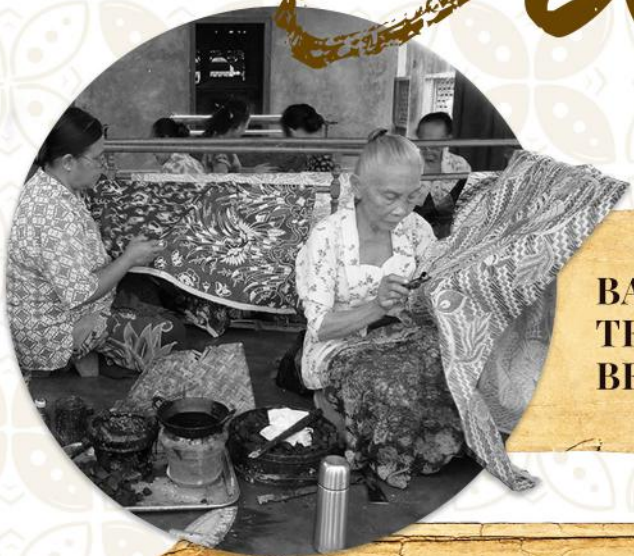
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Batik



**BATIK IS A WAX DYEING
TECHNIQUE THAT IS BELIEVED TO
BE ORIGINATED FROM INDONESIA.**

**BATIK IS ALSO FOUND IN OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIA
COUNTRIES, SUCH AS MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, AND
AMONG THE HMONG ETHNIC GROUPS.**

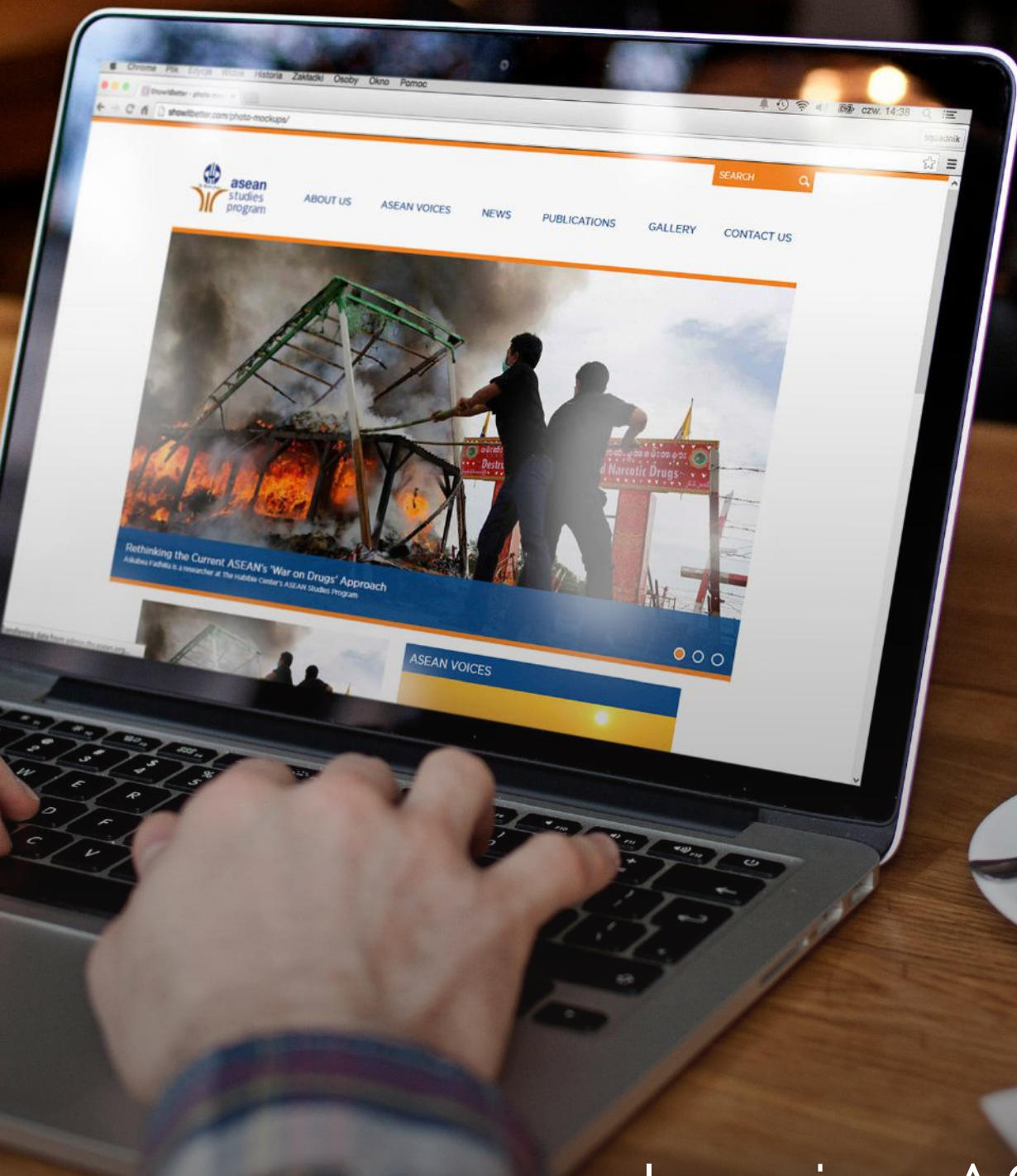
**INDONESIAN BATIK WAS
RECOGNIZED BY
UNESCO AS INTANGIBLE
CULTURAL HERITAGE
OF HUMANITY IN 2009.**



**BATIK PATTERNS EMBODY SPECIFIC MEANINGS
THAT ARE USED FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS, FROM
RELIGIOUS RITUALS, WEDDINGS, TO FUNERALS.**

**BATIK IS NOT ONLY THE FAVOURITE
OF INDONESIAN AND SOUTHEAST
ASIANS, BUT ALSO OTHERS LIKE
THE LATE NELSON MANDELA!**





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Why Facebook is losing the war on hate speech in Myanmar



<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-facebook-hate/>

Reuters found more than 1,000 examples of posts, comments and pornographic images attacking the Rohingya and other Muslims on Facebook. A secretive operation set up by the social media giant to combat the hate speech is failing to end the problem...

...here is a sampling of posts from Myanmar that were viewable this month on Facebook:

One user posted a restaurant advertisement featuring Rohingya-style food. "We must fight them the way Hitler did the Jews, damn kalars!" the person wrote, using a pejorative for the Rohingya. That post went up in December 2013

Why it matters:

Facebook, and social media in general, is in hot water. Digital platforms that are designed to share news and stories among friends, families and peers are apparently also used to share disinformation, intolerance, and even call to violence. The impact of such activities is not always clear, but the risk is real as hateful narratives that threatened social cohesion are spread, including in Southeast Asia—where identity tensions are major issues in many countries in the region.

In the case of Myanmar, at least until 2015, it only dedicates minimal resources to tackle the spread of hate speeches spreading through their platform in Myanmar. According to the article, by that

year, there are only two Burmese speaking employees that are tasked to monitor the issue, while the spread of harmful messages were already widespread.

The article notes that Facebook executives have also acknowledged their late response. Mia Garlick, Facebook's current director of Asia Pacific policy states that. "[Facebook] were too slow to respond to the concerns raised by civil society, academics and other groups in Myanmar. We don't want Facebook to be used to spread hatred and incite violence. This is true around the world, but it is especially true in Myanmar where our services can be used to amplify hate or exacerbate harm against the Rohingya."

In 2018, a coalition of human rights groups in Myanmar wrote an open letter to Mark Zuckerberg, noting that, "The risk of Facebook content sparking open violence is arguably nowhere higher right now than in Myanmar" At the same time, they also mentioned that Facebook is facing significant challenge over, "over-reliance on third parties, a lack of a proper mechanism for emergency escalation, a reticence to engage

local stakeholders around systemic solutions and a lack of transparency."

The case in Myanmar is an example of how social media platforms are steps behind the spread of disinformation and hate speech. The article does not propose a solution to fix this issue. It only describes the limited ways that social media platforms are attempting to handle it. Facebook, on that matter, is indeed aware that they are playing the role of messenger for hate messages, and are trying and seemingly failing to address it. Perhaps, their global operations mean that they can be slow to response on issues halfway across the world from their headquarter.

Countries all over the world are still trying to find the right formula in governing the internet. If government attempts to regulate interactions over the internet, they often risk swerving too close to curbing free speeches. On the other hand, it seemse quite clear that it is not feasible to leave the matter of governance to the hands of digital companies.

Many companies have tried. None has succeeded.



ASEAN ROUND-UP

Wirya Adiwena is Head of International Relation of The Habibie Center



Faster Response to Relief Operations



<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/faster-response-to-relief-operations>



An annual meeting of Asean's air force chiefs this year resulted in an improvement to standard operating procedures, enabling the air forces to respond faster to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (HADR) in the region.

The 15th Asean Air Chiefs Conference in Singapore enhanced the Asean Air Forces Standard Operating Procedure, through having a uniformed prefix in aircraft call signs for regional HADR operations.

This leads to faster diplomatic clearance processes when working together.

Why it matters:

Humanitarian relief is one sector where ASEAN cooperation shines. This article highlights two important points in this regard, firstly, that substantial cooperation among Member States in important issue is possible, and secondly, sometimes, the driving force is not only civilian diplomats but also military officials.

One primary example of ASEAN cooperation in the humanitarian sector is the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Center, an organisation that was established in 2011 with the mandate to facilitate cooperation and coordination of disaster management among ASEAN Member States. Under the center, cooperation among different agencies managed to be facilitated quite effectively.

One important feature of this cooperation is the disaster related data sharing activities under AHA Center that help regional efforts in data management and dissemination that improves the effectiveness of regional efforts to manage the impacts that disaster would have for Member States—especially noting that the regions are often hard hit by disasters

such as tsunami, earthquakes, and typhoons.

The sharing of data is often sensitive issues in ASEAN. This region still has to improve confidence among Member States to the point that they can share national datasets. But, AHA Center has proven that under the right management and frames—non-political and humanitarian focused—such a thing is possible.

One way to do this is through confidence building measures. And quite central to this effort is military officials. They are the backbone of their nations security and are often quite sensitive in activities that would mean sharing national informations. However, their involvement in promoting regional humanitarian efforts, as well as sub-regional efforts to share information on some other issues such as on counter-terrorism, shows that military officials are also influential in fostering confidence in the region.

In a region where military has had a lot of experience in staying in power, it is not surprising that they have a lot of chance to develop cordial relations among each others.



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The ASEAN Studies Program was established on February 24, 2010, to become a center of excellence on ASEAN related issues, which can assist in the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. The Habibie Center through its ASEAN Studies Program, alongside other institutions working towards the same goal, hopes to contribute to the realization of a more people-oriented ASEAN that puts a high value on democracy and human rights.

The objective of the ASEAN Studies Program is not merely only to conduct research and discussion within academic and government circles, but also to strengthen public awareness by forming a strong network of civil society in the region that will be able to help spread the ASEAN message. With the establishment of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center aims to play its part within our capabilities to the ASEAN regional development.

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