



## Non-Traditional Security Threats and Multilateral Response in East Asia

Ali Jibran<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract:

Since the end of the Cold War, East Asia has been hit severely by non-traditional security threats that are transnational in scope and non-military in nature. Non-traditional security threats can be considered as cross-border resource depletion, environmental degradation, terrorism, natural disasters, food shortages, infectious diseases, drug trafficking, human smuggling and other transnational crimes. The main objective of this study is to explore multi-lateral framework in East Asia to deal with non-traditional security threats in three areas: infectious diseases, natural disasters and transnational crime and terrorism. Transnational nature of these challenges in era of globalization and regionalism, requires multilateral response. The main finding of this study is that East Asia has become one of the highly integrated region in the world and to deal with the aforementioned three non-traditional security threats, a variety of multi-lateral frameworks exists in East Asia: Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN+3 (APT), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The English School of international relations will be applied as theoretical framework in this study. This study will be divided in five sections. The first section deals with the theoretical foundation; the second with regionalism in East Asia; the third section discusses the problem of infectious diseases; the fourth section deals with natural disasters and the fifth with emergence of transnational crimes and terrorism in East Asia.

**Keywords:** East Asia, security threats, infectious diseases, natural disasters, terrorism

### INTRODUCTION

Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, opined once that to reason against globalization would be tantamount to argue against the law of gravity. He meant that evolution of trade, networks and technology connecting people across the world has become unstoppable and, therefore, unquestionable. (Douglas, 2016). However, the world is witnessing now some side effects of this increased connectivity. This study is intended to discuss one major side effect of globalization - non-traditional security threats in East Asia - and multilateral security framework to cope non-traditional security challenges. This study makes the central point that rapid pace of regionalism or regional integration resulted in creation of various institutions of different purposes in East Asia which are designed to deal with non-traditional security threats. The theoretical framework used in this study is English School of International Relations. The English School suggests that society of states functions primarily on three factors: institutions, common interests and common rules. But, as this research is focused towards

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<sup>1</sup> PhD Scholar, Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: ali.jibran33@gmail.com

investigating multilateral response in East Asia towards managing non-traditional security threats, therefore, only the role of institutions have been taken in this study in controlling non-traditional security challenges. Thus, regionalism means role played by multilateral security institutions as coping mechanism against the non-traditional security threats.

The first section gives a short introduction of English School of international relations. The second section deals with the emergence of regionalism in East Asia. It has been discussed why regionalism could not evolve during the Cold War, but developed in a very fine shape in post-Cold War era. The second section suggests that the Cold War era was marked by the ideological tensions between Maoist China and other states of region which prefer capitalism over socialism. However, in the aftermath of Cold War, ideological appeal of Maoism was replaced by economic pragmatism in China. Therefore, the major barriers in the way of emergence of regionalism were removed. This section focuses on the emergence of different regional institutions in East Asia.

The third section discusses infectious diseases in East Asia and the regional solution to the challenges posed by these diseases. Because of rapid intern-connection in East Asia, infectious diseases can go unchecked across the borders. Regional response to these infectious diseases is highly difficult because of globalization. Multilateral response towards infectious diseases was very poor at the start of the 21st century. However, certain institutions have been developed after the outbreak of SARS in 2004 in East Asia. Though level of regional institutions in East Asia is not completely satisfactory; but, regional intuitions and other initiatives like training programs of the professionals are improving with time.

The fourth section deals with natural disasters and the coping mechanism to deal with these in East Asia. This section suggests that East Asia is one of the most vulnerable areas of the world to natural disasters. The developed countries have good expertise and resources to deal with it; while the poor states found it very hard to manage the results of natural disasters. Regional mechanism against natural disasters has been improving in East Asia through different programs like training, awareness and financial aid.

The fifth section discusses cross border crime and terrorism that is also the result of increased inter-connection in East Asia. It is very difficult to control the cross border crimes because when the countries of region are reaping huge benefits of developed infrastructures like road and highways; the criminals are also using these infrastructures and modern technologies to carry on their projects. However, certain institutional mechanisms can be found in East Asia to deal with these transnational crimes.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

The two most famous international relations theories in post-World War 2 were realism and liberalism. Realism suggests that global politics is incessant tussle among the states which function on the basis of self-interest; therefore, conflict is the most prominent and unavoidable feature of international affairs (Buzan, 2014). On the other hand, liberalism suggests that international relations cannot be considered as 'war of all against all' and peace can prevail at global level through international organizations. The English School can be considered as the 'via-media' between realism and liberalism (Buzan, 2014).

The English School claims that states develop an 'anarchical society' or 'international society' without surrendering before some higher power. Such a society enables the states to develop an international system in which there is 'high level of order' and 'low level of conflict' (Linklater, 2005). This concept of 'international society' came to light as a result of numerous meetings of British Committee held in 1959. The Committee's idea of 'international society' was sociological, historical, philosophical and legal way of thinking; therefore, the English School appeared much different to the mechanistic thinking of IR that was prevalent in the United States and Europe after the World War 2 (Buzan, 2014). The notable figures in the English School are Herbert Butterfield, Hedley Bull, Adam Watson and Martin Wight, Robert Jackson, Tim Dunne, Nicholas Wheeler and Barry Buzan (Wang & Buzan, 2014). Due to the efforts of these scholars, English School became a full-fledged 'third debate' in international relations. The first debate was the tussle between the realists and the liberals about the nature of global politics; while the behaviorialists and the traditionalists opposed each other in the second debate (Wang & Buzan, 2014).

The fundamental claim of English School is that states develop societies (Karmazin, 2014) just like humans who develop societies to live (Wang & Buzan, 2014). The role of institutions is central in the theory of English School because the English School suggests that institutions work as a tool through which international society limits the freedom of society to pursue their self-centric goals. Barry Buzan opines that English School gives a lot of importance to institutions because of three reasons: at first, institutions are part and parcel of 'international society', secondly, institutions have the explanatory power of describing 'order' in international societies, whole thirdly these are institutions that differentiate English School from other IR approaches (Buzan, 2004).

#### **EMERGENCE OF REGIONALISM IN EAST ASIA**

East Asia was not a well-integrated region because of the ideological tensions during Cold War. The main tussle in East Asia was Maoist China and the other states of the region which prefer market economy. China was charged by the East Asian states of intervening in the internal matters of other states to create Socialist revolutions in those countries. On the other hand, China was also suspicious of close contacts of some of East Asian states with the United States. Establishment of Association of South Asian Nations in 1967 was considered by China as an anti-Maoist or anti-Chinese entity (Jacques, 2012). Though Chinese strategy was transformed to a great extent by Deng Xiaoping; however, due to the ideological barriers, genuine community building measures could not be taken in East Asia till the end of the Cold War.

Genuine efforts towards regionalism in East Asia were witnessed in the post-Cold War era when the ideological rivalries among the countries were replaced by pragmatism. China demonstrated that it wanted to become a part of East Asian community. The countries of East Asia, which always saw China with suspicion also changed their views about China. Martin Jacques suggests that China's embrace of multilateralism was due to four factors. At first, China was confident that its economy had started improving because of Deng Xiaoping's Open Door policy. Secondly, towards the turn of century, China had decided to join World Trade Organization, therefore Chinese concern in regionalism was natural. Thirdly, China became aware of the fact that by joining multilateral frameworks, China would not play second fiddle to Japan. The last reason was that the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-8 had proved that era of isolationism had come to a halt and now the East Asian economy had become highly integrated (Jacques, 2012). China's Rise has become a fact in

international economy which refers to unparalleled Chinese economic growth since Open Door Policy of Deng Xiaoping in late 1970s (Xiaoming, 2006). China's Rise revolves around making China the ideal place for foreign investment and setting Chinese economy as export oriented economy. This makes it pertinent that China should have close economic relations with the states of East Asia. Therefore, economic pragmatism enforced China to concentrate on the region that had been historically neglected by China (Jacques, 2012). China's trade with Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Indonesia increased to unprecedented level in post-Cold War era (Brookings, 2005).

Economic integration in East Asia is central to the idea of regionalism in East Asia or East Asian Community. Inter East Asia increased to 50 percent towards the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Xiaoming, 2006). To end dependence on World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), East Asian political elite tried to create a network of swap agreements to protect themselves from global financial crisis (Henning, 2002). Some analysts suggested that through swap initiatives like Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI), East Asian countries are striving to develop an Asia Monetary Fund that may prove a substantial alternative of IMF (Bergsten, 2007).

The noteworthy progress in the development of East Asian Community has been in establishment of variety of regional institutions. This diversification of institutional mechanism in East Asia is due to complex historical, religious and cultural heritage, political systems and security relations (Yunling, 2012 ). These are important institutions in East Asia like ASEAN, ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and South Korea), ASEAN+6( China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and India), Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the Greater Mekong Sub-region and research-based Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional forum (ARF), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) (Yunling, 2012 ).

Towards the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the idea of "East Asian Community" was generally accepted by the states of East Asia. The leaders from ASEAN, Japan, China and South Korea met in Kuala Lumpur to launch ASEAN+3 in 1997. The leaders of ASEAN+3 agreed to introduce East Asian Vision Group (EAVG) to advance the cause of East Asian regionalism. EAVG presented its report in 2001 about realizing the East Asian Community. The concept of "East Asian Community" was officially announced at the Sixth ASEAN+3 Summit. Two Kuala Lumpur Declarations were adopted in 2005 at first East Asian Summit (EAS) and eighth ASEAN+3 Summit. These declarations confirmed "East Asian Community" building as the long-term goal of cooperation in East Asia" and ASEAN plus Three would continue for development of East Asian Community. Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama opined that the member states of ASEAN+3 should work together to strengthen East Asian Community and got the positive response from China and South Korea (China Institute of International Studies, 2014).

### **TRANSNATIONAL THREATS AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE IN EAST ASIA**

Non-traditional security threats can be considered as cross border terrorism, transnational crime, natural disasters, climate change and infectious diseases etc. The transnational nature of these non-traditional security challenges suggests that no country alone can manage these challenges. Therefore, isolationism is not the solution to non-traditional security threats. The ideal solution to the problems posed by non-security challenges is regional institutionalism. In

this section, three non-security threats and multilateral response to those threats in East Asia has been discussed.

### **Infectious Diseases**

East Asia has suffered from a variety of infectious diseases with pandemic potential which proved a heavy burden on healthcare system and economies of the region. Acute respiratory syndrome badly influenced the tourism of East Asia (Caballero-Anthony, 2007). Influenza AH5N1 proved highly detrimental for poultry industry. East Asia is a region of social, technological, biological and ecological interconnection; because of which microbes can adjust easily in new ecological places. The processes like urbanization, population growth, movements, changes in agriculture, food production, land use and sanitation make the coping mechanism against infectious diseases very difficult (Coker, Hunter, W, Marco, & Hanvoravongchai, 2011). The outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) proved highly pernicious for economies of East Asia. A number of countries of East Asia like Hong Kong, China, Taipei China, Viet Nam and Singapore were hotspots of SARS (Fan, 2003).

The outbreak of SARS in East Asia highlighted the lack of regional preparedness to deal with infectious diseases because some countries, like Hong Kong and Singapore, were able to manage these diseases in quick time; while other countries, like China and Vietnam found it very difficult to cope with these infectious diseases. This issue was highlighted at World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2006 in Davos, Switzerland. The report suggested that East Asia had been a breeding ground for infectious diseases; therefore, a regional approach to cope with such challenges was pertinent (Caballero-Anthony, 2007).

In fact, outbreak of SARS proved a harbinger of some regional initiatives to avoid or reduce the impact of such infectious diseases in future. These regional initiatives were the ASEAN Expert Group on Communicable Diseases, the ASEAN Highly Pathogenic Infectious Diseases Program and the Regional Framework for Control and Eradication of HPAI. These measures were intended to seek joint regional solution to infectious diseases. Furthermore, East Asia also looked for foreign aid to enable the region to cope with the challenges posed by the diseases. For example, the United States offered US \$392 million to US \$1.9 billion for global avian flu fund at Beijing Conference in 2006. However, coping mechanism against infectious diseases in East Asia has certain limitations. At first, East Asia has economies of different size and different levels of development. In the presence of poor health facilities in many parts of East Asia, a regional response to the menace of infectious diseases is not an easy task. More comprehensive mechanism is needed to improve the overall response against infectious diseases. The governments of poor countries of the region should endeavor to improve health infrastructure, moreover, monitoring system should be upgraded and regional institutions should be developed which can respond to the infectious diseases in emergency (Caballero-Anthony, 2005).

### **Natural Disasters**

World Bank suggests that disasters can occur in any country; however, the countries with weak economies are exposed to the destruction wreak by natural disasters. Asia covers 30 percent of land worldwide; however, 40 percent of natural calamities globally occurred in Asia. A huge



chunk of GDP is lost due to these natural disasters. For example, 2.7 percent of GDP annually is lost because of disasters; while the poor countries of East Asia which function primarily on tourism, had to face 10-15 percent decline in GDP. Since the last decade, East Asia has been hit by earth quakes, tsunamis, droughts and food shortages (West, 2014).

Most of the countries of East Asia are vulnerable to high risk of natural calamities. The region has witnessed tropical cyclones, floods, forest fires and sporadic tsunami. Some states of East Asia\_ especially Philippines and Indonesia are located in 'Pacific ring of fire', a volatile area known for eruptions of volcanos and major earth quakes. When tsunami hit Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia; other ASEAN countries were hesitant to support these countries because of state centric apprehensions (Caballero-Anthony, 2007). United Nations' World Conference on Disaster Reduction culminated in mechanism of disaster relief operation through Hyogo Framework of Action. This framework instigated East Asian countries to start their own regional framework to deal with natural disasters. Similarly, in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, that targeted Myanmar and perished around 130,000 people, ASEAN decided to develop an Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT). This team was envisaged to assess the nature of disaster and recommend the suitable actions like provision of food, water and sanitation, logistics and other relief actions. The main objective of ASEAN-ERAT is to reduce delays and confusion in operations. Currently, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) manages ASEAN-ERAT with strategic vision of " One ASEAN, One Response" (Wey, 2016).

East Asian countries have been successful in devising a strategy in which most of the states offer military and civilian assets, supply and logistic support that can be rapidly mobilized in case of emergency. The standard operating measures have been introduced by ASEAN that guarantee smooth execution and coordination of operations in crisis by a variety of ASEAN bodies. Furthermore, ASEAN has decided to run disaster simulation exercises on annual bases to test the preparedness of government and non-government agencies (Jacques, 2012). Infact close cooperation of countries of East Asia to cope with natural disasters has served a strong confidence building initiative. Working side by side in platforms of combating natural disasters can be considered as one of the few areas where each country is sincerely trying to help other countries regardless of geopolitical interests (Wey, 2016).

ASEAN members suggested that they need additional funds to manage such natural disasters in future. International community and donor agencies like Asian Bank and World Bank were also requested to financially and technically help the governments of the region against natural calamities. Special attention has been paid to develop institutional mechanisms to deal with these challenges. ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX-05) had been developed in 2005 and came into practice in 2009. Trainings of the persons affiliated with emergency units has been conducted on regional level (Caballero-Anthony, 2007).

### **Transnational Crime and Terrorism**

Transnational crimes in East Asia can be considered as money laundering, trafficking of drugs, arms smuggling, piracy, cybercrimes and others. These transnational crimes undermine security of states as well as individuals. Therefore, dealing with these transnational crimes requires

transnational response (Caballero-Anthony, 2007). However, regional cooperation in this area is limited because of state centric concerns of the regional states. East Asia is the region that is rapidly integrating economically; however, massive human migration and transfer of technology has posed serious security threats to the governments of the region. In fact, most of developing nations lack the resources to address these transnational threats. On the other hand, international and regional organizations have limited mandates to react stringently against transnational security challenges (Douglas, 2016).

Illegal trade in East Asia has been recorded as US \$100 billion according to estimates of UN, which is more than GDPs of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. This estimate was announced after the decision of ASEAN to move towards a single market similar to the EU which allows free flow of labor, technology and the people. However, the decision of economic integration has resulted in increase of cross border crime and drugs. It has been noted that 30-40 percent of products that are produced of wood are illegal because these are prepared with the smuggled wood (Caballero-Anthony, 2007). Myanmar has been adversely hit by drug smuggling as it is the second largest producer of heroin while Afghanistan being the first largest producer of heroin. Illegal shipping is another area in East Asia because of which US \$5.3 trillion of global trade is transited through waters of Southeast Asia. A reason of increase in illegal trade is that East Asia is very unique as it is home to world's poor economies like Myanmar and Laos; while, at the same time, some of the richest economies of the world, like Singapore, can also be found in East Asia. Because of increased level of economic integration, the countries of the region are building a number of highways and other infrastructure to facilitate the cross border trade. When this increased level of economic integration is enabling the countries to control the geographic barriers; at the same time, it is providing ample opportunities to the smugglers, drug dealers and other cross border criminals to carry on their nefarious projects (Post, 2016).

However, regional efforts have been made to manage problem of cross border crime and terrorism in East Asia. Some of the regional measures to control cross border crime are ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) and ASEAN Chiefs of National Police (ASEANAPOL). These bodies share information, enhance legal cooperation and conduct training of police and other law related staff. ASEAN members have been very careful about controlling menace of terrorism. In 2001, ASEAN members were agreed to develop several measures to fight terrorism including enhanced coordination among the law enforcement agencies of different countries. The member states of East Asia to receive help from the US under the auspices of ASEAN-US Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism in 2002. It was decided that member states of ASEAN would take intelligence and technical help from the US to cope with the rising tide of terrorism in East Asia (Caballero-Anthony, 2007).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigates two inter-related phenomena in East Asia: regionalism and multilateral response to non security threats in East Asia. In the aftermath of Cold War, regionalism gradually emerged in East Asia ; and now East Asia is considered as one of the best integrated region in the world. After the end of ideological tensions of the Cold War , the whole world and especially East Asia was engulfed by new and non-conventional security threats. The transnational nature of these

threats require multilateral response. The emergence of these challenges also suggested that era of isolationism has ended while inter\_connection or regionalism is the only way to survive. Three non-traditional security threats and multilateral response to these threats in East Asia discussed in this study are: infectious diseases , natural disasters and cross border crimes and terrorism. It has been argued that different institutions have been developed in East Asia to deal non traditional security threats. Though these institutions are still in evolving phase but the countries of East Asia have decided managing non-traditional security threats through the mechanism of regional institutionalism.

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