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Southeast Asian States' Approaches to Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution

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Abstract. This paper conducts a comparative analysis of three cases — Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam — to examine the distinctive features of Southeast Asian states' involvement in peacekeeping. These cases provide representative insights into the motivations and experiences of regional states that joined UN peacekeeping operations at different historical junctures: Indonesia in the 1950s, Thailand in the 1990s, and Vietnam in the 2000s. By identifying the common and unique aspects of this engagement, the authors argue that Southeast Asian nations' approaches to peacekeeping are deeply rooted in the values that underpin their foreign and domestic policies. Appealing to these values, Southeast Asian states contribute conceptual innovations to existing peacekeeping models, which are predominantly based on Western perspectives. By generalizing the peacekeeping experiences of Southeast Asian states, this paper fills a gap between broader publications that focus on Asian peacekeeping practices and single-country studies. The research underscores that Southeast Asian states, following a challenging period of decolonization and nation-building in the framework imposed by the Westphalian international relations system, have been trying to infuse their own approaches into the Westernized realm of international interaction. Since the 1950s, several regional states have participated in UN peacekeeping operations. The involvement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in resolving the Cambodian conflict in the late 1980s and the Thailand — Cambodia settlement in 2008—2011 has stimulated the development of regional peacekeeping practices. By contributing to peacekeeping operations, Southeast Asian states aspire to enhance their regional and even global influence. In certain instances, their engagement in peacekeeping has ideological, cultural or religious motivations, or stems from specific foreign and domestic policy considerations.

Key words: peacekeeping, ASEAN, UN, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand

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Юго-Восточная Азия: подходы к миротворчеству и разрешению конфликтов

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Аннотация. На основе сравнительного анализа трех кейсов — Индонезии, Таиланда и Вьетнама — анализируется специфика миротворчества, характерная для стран Юго-Восточной Азии (ЮВА). Выбор кейсов обусловлен тем, что данные государства полномасштабно подключались к миротворческой деятельности ООН в разные периоды: Индонезия — в 1950-х гг., Таиланд — в 1990-х гг., Вьетнам — в 2000-х гг. Подобная выборка представляется репрезентативной с точки зрения анализа побудительных мотивов и практики миротворчества стран региона с учетом специфики их опыта миротворческой деятельности. Подобный подход позволяет выделить как общее, так и особенное в миротворчестве стран Юго-Восточной Азии. Авторы доказывают, что подходы стран ЮВА к миротворчеству определяются ценностным базисом внешней и внутренней политики этих государств, что дает возможность генерировать концептуальные инновации, дополняющие сложившиеся ранее преимущественно на базе опыта стран Запада модели миротворчества. Благодаря миротворческой деятельности страны ЮВА решают ряд практических задач. Обобщая миротворческий опыт стран ЮВА, исследование восполняет аналитический пробел между работами, посвященными практикам миротворчества азиатских стран, и публикациями о национальном опыте миротворчества. Показано, что после сложного процесса обретения независимости и построения собственной государственности в рамках, заданных Вестфальской системой международных отношений, страны ЮВА стремились привнести свои самобытные подходы в вестернизированную практику международного взаимодействия. С 1950-х гг. некоторые страны региона стали активными участниками миротворческих операций под эгидой ООН. Развитию миротворческих практик способствовала вовлеченность АСЕАН в разрешение камбоджийской проблемы конца 1980-х гг. и таиландско-камбоджийское урегулирование 2008—2011 гг. Участвуя в миротворчестве, страны ЮВА стремятся к наращиванию своей субъектности не только на региональном, но и на глобальном уровне. В отдельных случаях интерес к миротворческим миссиям может определяться идеологической, культурной или религиозной мотивацией и другими причинами, проистекающими из многоаспектных направлений внешней и внутренней политики стран региона.

Ключевые слова: миротворчество, АСЕАН, ООН, Индонезия, Вьетнам, Таиланд

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Introduction

The researchers often ignore the peacekeeping activities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states. Yet many of them are now actively involved in United Nations peacekeeping missions. As of February 2023, seven ASEAN member states — Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, and the Philippines — made a significant contribution

to the UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO).¹ Among the 101 states that have sent peacekeepers to UNPKO during this period, these countries ranked 8th (2704 peacekeepers), 25th (863), 26th (850), 45th (307), 48th (269), 78th (30) and 81st (28 peacekeepers), respectively. In 2022—2023, Indonesia,

¹ Troop and Police Contributors // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam overtook permanent members of the UN Security Council such as the US and Russia in terms of the quantitative parameters of the UNPKO participation.² Since the early 21st century, the aforementioned Southeast Asian countries have been expanding their involvement in peacekeeping missions.³ Given this, the authors pose the following research question: Why have states that do not belong to the group of leading world powers intensified their peacekeeping activities in recent decades?

A number of studies focus on the peacekeeping experience of the Asia-Pacific countries (Guo Yanjun & Puja, 2022; Howe & Kondoch, 2017; Jenne, 2023). M. Cabellero-Anthony and A. Acharya analyze the impact of the UN peacekeeping operations on regional security in Asia (Cabellero-Anthony & Acharya, 2005). Some publications explore the functional areas of regional cooperation related to UN peacekeeping operations, regional and national approaches to conflict resolution, developing ASEAN — UN partnership in the sphere of peacekeeping, and ASEAN approaches to peace (Jones, 2020; Jones & Mulloy, 2021; Koldunova, 2019; Mahbubani & Sng, 2017). More recently, researchers have started focusing on ASEAN's attempts to resolve the conflict in Myanmar that started in 2021. In doing so, they assess the Association's existing and new mechanisms, particularly the role of the ASEAN Special Envoy on Myanmar (Rogozhina, 2021).

However, the participation of Southeast Asian countries in the UNPKO remains largely

² Troop and Police Contributors // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

³ See: Monthly Summary of Contributions (Police, UN Military Experts on Mission and Troops) as of 28 February 2013 // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/feb13_1.pdf (accessed: 08.03.2023); Monthly Summary of Contributions (Military Observers, Civilian Police and Troops) as of February 2003 // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/february2003_1.pdf (accessed: 08.03.2023).

unexplored in the academic literature. D. Capie's and L. Hutabarat's publications focus on some aspects of Indonesia's approaches to peacekeeping (Capie, 2016; Hutabarat, 2014; 2017). Vietnamese researchers Phan Xuan Dung and Nguyen Cao Viet Hung (Phan & Nguyen, 2022), the Australian researcher C. Thayer (2014), the already mentioned D. Capie (2014) and N. Chapman (2017) examine Vietnam's peacekeeping activities. D. Pivovarov (2006) studies the interactions between Vietnam and the UN. Ch. Chinwanno (2004), K. Kraisoraphong and B. Howe (Kraisoraphong & Howe, 2014) review Thailand's peacekeeping activities. However, the above-mentioned researchers neither focus on the non-Western specifics of peacekeeping, nor identify the common features of the ASEAN member states' peacekeeping activities. This paper aims to bridge this analytical gap.

The paper examines three cases — Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. These countries joined the UN peacekeeping activities at different stages: Indonesia in the 1950s, Thailand in the 1990s and Vietnam in the 2000s. The goal is to present specifics of Southeast Asian state's peacekeeping practices that emerge from different historic and international contexts, which justify the choice of the mentioned cases.

Methodologically, every case study involved characterizing the main stages of the country's involvement in peacekeeping, analyzing the structural changes in the government agencies that followed greater involvement in peacekeeping, providing a quantitative assessment of the peacekeeping troops, examining the value-based component of peacekeeping introduced by each country, and assessing the state's self-representation of peacekeeping activities at the national and regional levels. The authors also identified the national interests that countries pursued in peacekeeping. For these purposes, the authors used official documents, interviews, and statements made by political leaders, diplomats,

and heads of the peacekeeping contingents concerning the peacekeeping. The national and UN statistics served as sources of quantitative data about national missions and troops. The analysis of the ASEAN member states' motives for expanding their peacekeeping activities and the specifics emerging from their practical involvement in peacekeeping allowed the authors to draw a generalized conclusion on the specifics of ASEAN's participation in peacekeeping.

Indonesian Approaches to Peacekeeping

Among all Southeast Asian nations, Indonesia became a pioneer in joining the UN peacekeeping operations. The country's approaches to peacekeeping have varied depending on the transformation of its foreign and domestic policies or their ideological foundations (Murwanto et al., 2020, pp. 343—344). At the same time, a number of conceptual provisions of Indonesian foreign policy, such as focusing on equality and harmony, have continued to influence Indonesia's peacekeeping activities regardless of the political regime.

Since President Sukarno's tenure (1945—1967), Indonesia has sought to form the image of a peacemaker and mediator in resolving international conflicts. The sources of this aspiration emanate from the five principles of Indonesian statehood (*Pancasila*) and the traditional Javanese philosophy, which call for solving problems through diplomacy, restraint, and harmonious relations (known as *Halus* in Indonesian), avoiding brute force and pressure (*Kasar*).

In the context of peacekeeping, among the five principles of Indonesian statehood, the principle of maintaining “the unity of Indonesia” deserves special attention. It presupposes the inviolability of Indonesian borders and territorial integrity, and also reflects Indonesia's commitment to sovereignty and support for the UN Charter as a mechanism for ensuring the equality of all sovereign nations (Capie, 2016, pp. 6—7). Moreover, Paragraph

IV of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia also enshrines Indonesia's obligation to participate in the establishment of a world order based on independence, perpetual peace, and social justice.⁴

In Sukarno's worldview, the Global South countries, including Indonesia, had successfully defended their sovereignty in a difficult struggle against colonialism. Thus, he considered peacekeeping and the UN as global instruments to counter neocolonialism. Anticolonial motives justified Indonesia's decision to send an Indonesian contingent to join the UN Emergency Forces (UNEF) in the Suez Canal as part of the operation to separate the conflicting Egypt and Israel.

Accordingly, Sukarno perceived the Arab-Israeli confrontation not as an ethno-religious conflict but as a continuation of the neocolonial policy towards the Arab countries, with Israel as the instrument of this policy (Kuklin, 2023, pp. 41—43). These ideas determined another guiding principle, according to which Indonesia's participation in peacekeeping contingents required highest possible UN legitimization of a particular mission. At the same time, Indonesia aspired to prevent the UN from being used by global powers to interfere in the affairs of small or middle powers (Capie, 2016, pp. 3—4).

During President Suharto's rule (1968—1998), more attention was paid to economic pragmatism. The search for investment from developed Western countries entailed the transformations in the old anticolonial rhetoric. Indonesia started to act from the position of a strong regional power, capable of proving itself at the global level as an intermediary and contributing its ideas to improve UN peacekeeping practices. For example, after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Indonesian political and military leader R. Abin headed the second UNEF contingent to disengage the conflicting

⁴ UU Dasar Republik Indonesia 1945 tahun [The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia] // MKRI. URL: <https://www.mkri.id/public/content/infoumum/regulation/pdf/UUD45%20ASLI.pdf> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

Egypt and Israel, first as the Deputy Commander and from 1976 to 1979 as the Commander (Bar-Yaacov, 1980, pp. 213—214).

During the Suharto presidency, Indonesian peacekeeping activities acquired a visible regional dimension. In the 1980s and 1990s, while attempting to solve the Cambodian problem, Indonesia strove to strengthen the ASEAN role as an organization ready to develop regional solutions to regional problems. From 1979 to 1989, Indonesia mobilized international community's support for the Cambodian settlement and ensured that ASEAN's position became part of the final declaration of the UN International Conference on Kampuchea in 1981 (Cook, 2017, pp. 37—39). After the establishment of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1992, Indonesia deployed more than 2,000 troops, police officers, and military observers.

In 1998, the Asian financial crisis and the fall of the Suharto regime led Indonesia into a period of fundamental transformations, including the democratization and demilitarization of Indonesian politics. The transition period was marked by controversy with the UN over East Timor. The military elites, who still retained significant political influence, opposed President B.J. Habibie's decision to hold a referendum there and withdraw Indonesian troops who had been in Timor since 1975. However, in need of international financial assistance, Indonesia had to make concessions. Armed forces and law enforcement reform significantly limited the direct participation of the Indonesian contingent in peacekeeping operations (Alagappa, 2001, pp. 517—518).

In 2004, S.B. Yudhoyono became president as a result of Indonesia's first-ever direct presidential election. He ensured that the Garuda Contingent, the peacekeeping contingent of the Indonesian armed forces, restored its positions in international peacekeeping operations. As a professional military man, S.B. Yudhoyono considered Indonesian participation in UN missions a

priority. From 1995 to 1996, he himself led the Indonesian peacekeeping force in Bosnia and gained first-hand experience of participating in such operations.

Indonesia's peacekeeping activities at the beginning of this century reflected the new realities of the country's political development. Adhering to the principles of democracy, S.B. Yudhoyono realized the necessity to rely primarily on Indonesia's moral authority. Indonesian diplomacy could no longer afford resorting to the power strategies associated with the Suharto style, as they could entail reputational losses for Indonesia in the eyes of the international community. From S.B. Yudhoyono's viewpoint, Indonesia's active participation in resolving regional conflicts, contribution to UN peacekeeping operations, and positioning Indonesia as a leader of the Islamic world should have contributed to overcoming the stereotypes of the past.

During the administration of S.B. Yudhoyono, the most significant contribution of Indonesia to peacekeeping was the establishment of the Peace Maintenance Mission Coordinating Team (TKMPP) in 2011. The team included the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (as Director), the Minister of Foreign Affairs (as Chairman), Minister of Defense, Minister of Law and Human Rights, Minister of Finance, Minister of National Development Planning, Cabinet Secretary, Commander of the Indonesian National Armed Forces, Chief of Indonesian National Police, and Head of the State Intelligence Agency. The task of the Coordinating Team was to develop policies and agree on the necessary steps to effect Indonesia's participation in international peacekeeping missions based on national interests.⁵

⁵ Peacekeeping Contributor Profile: Indonesia // Providing for Peacekeeping. 2016. URL: <https://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/2016/02/05/peacekeeping-contributor-profile-indonesia/> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

As part of this group's activities, S.B. Yudhoyono opened the Indonesian Peace and Security Center (IPSC) in Sentul, Bogor, in 2011. The center was established to train the Garuda Contingent and representatives of other countries' peacekeeping contingents. Under S.B. Yudhoyono, PT Pindad, an Indonesian state-owned enterprise specializing in military and commercial products, also provided support for the Indonesian contingent. The use of domestically produced small arms, helicopters, boats, armored vehicles, and light armored vehicles has become another hallmark of Indonesian peacekeepers (Hutabarat, 2014, pp. 195—196).

During Yudhoyono's presidency, Indonesia successfully organized a peacekeeping mission under ASEAN auspices. In 2011, as the ASEAN Chair, Indonesia mediated the Cambodia — Thailand border dispute over the Preah Vihear Temple. Following a series of armed clashes between the two ASEAN countries, the then Foreign Minister of Indonesia M. Natalegawa convened an emergency session of ASEAN in Jakarta, where Cambodia and Thailand agreed to allow Indonesian observers (40 military and civilian specialists) to monitor the disputed border area (Jenne, 2014, pp. 168—170).

Under the two terms of President J. Widodo, Indonesia has continued to promote its global peacekeeping brand. In 2015, the Indonesian government published a new policy guide for Indonesia's participation in UNPKOs. The guide, titled the "Roadmap Vision 4,000 Peacekeepers for 2015—2019," was put into effect by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation No. 05/2015. According to the regulation, Indonesia must strictly adhere to the basic principles of UNPKOs, including the consent of all parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in cases of self-defense.⁶

⁶ Peraturan Menteri Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia Nomor 5 Tahun 2015 [Minister of Foreign Affairs. Regulation No. 05/2015] // Regulasip — Indonesia Regulation Database. 2015. URL: <https://www.regulasip.id/book/4110/read> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

Despite the fact that by 2020 Indonesia was only able to send 2,674 people to UNPKOs (almost half of the roadmap's defined goal), it still ranked 8th among the top 10 countries contributing troops to UNPKOs (Murwanto et al., 2020, pp. 349—350).

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from 2019 to 2020, Indonesia not only focused on its traditional priority areas such as the Rohingya problem in Myanmar and the Palestine issue but also sought to contribute to the conceptualization of new peacekeeping areas, such as increasing the role of women in peacekeeping. Under the Indonesian presidency, the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2538 (2020) on female personnel in UN peacekeeping missions by consensus on August 28, 2020.⁷ Currently, 158 Indonesian female peacekeepers serve in 7 UN missions in Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Darfur, Mali, and Western Sahara.⁸

It is worth noting that Indonesia is also active outside the framework of the UN peacekeeping missions. A recent example of this is President J. Widodo's mediation efforts to resolve the conflict in Ukraine, undertaken in June-July 2022, on the eve of the G20 summit in Bali.⁹

⁷ Security Council resolution 2538 (2020) [on women in peacekeeping operations] // United Nations Digital Library. August 28, 2020. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3879191?ln=ru> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

⁸ Women, Peace and Security in Indonesia // United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). 2023. URL: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-peace-and-security-in-indonesia#view> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

⁹ Kuklin N. S. Diplomacy of Harmony and Good Offices: President Joko Widodo's Global Scale Efforts // Russian International Affairs Council. July 4, 2022. (In Russian). URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/diplomatiya-garmonii-i-dobrykh-uslug-globalnye-shagi-prezidenta-dzhoko-vidodo/> (accessed: 08.05.2023).

International Peacekeeping: Thailand's Experience

In December 1946, Thailand became the 55th member of the UN.¹⁰ Thailand's accession to the UN was motivated by the need to overcome the legacy of the Second World War, during which Thailand was an ally of militarist Japan, and to ensure the support of all five permanent members of the UNSC. In 1950, Thailand was one of the first countries to send nearly 12,000 soldiers to the Korean Peninsula as part of the UN Command.¹¹ Yet, Thailand's most extensive and ideologically neutral participation in peacekeeping started in the late 20th century.

Thailand has been systematically engaged in UN peacekeeping since 1991 when the government sent 7 Thai officers to the demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait, and soon after expanded the number of officers to 50 in the UN Mission in Iraq (UN Guard Contingent in Iraq, UNGCI). Thai officers were also subsequently sent to Cambodia, Sierra Leone, East Timor, and Sudan. However, the largest Thai contingents were based in the UN mission in East Timor.¹²

There were several reasons for Thailand's increasing participation in peacekeeping after the end of the Cold War. For the first time, international peacekeeping officially became one of Thailand's foreign policy priorities in its UN activities. In the 1990s, ASEAN member

states started to develop principles of interaction between their armed forces. As A. Acharya noted, in the 1980s this cooperation was aimed at exchanging experience in combating insurgency movements, primarily communists, while in the 1990s, the focus shifted to countering external challenges and threats (Acharya, 1992, p. 15).

As of 2023, Thailand ranked 45th among countries contributing to UN peacekeeping activities.¹³ Thai peacekeepers participated in 3 UN missions: South Sudan (273 soldiers, 5 officers, 2 experts, and 13 police personnel), the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) (6 experts), and Somalia.¹⁴

The expansion of Thai peacekeeping led to the establishment of the Peace Operations Center (POC) within the Royal Thai Armed Forces.¹⁵ Three units operating under the Center include the engineer company, a mobile hospital and the division responsible for well drilling. The Center can request personnel from 3 branches of the Royal Thai Armed Forces depending on the specifics of the UN mission. The Center is also responsible for representing the armed forces in the government during Thailand's decision-making process on joining peacekeeping operations, providing training for Thailand's peacekeeping forces according to the UN standards and managing deployment process of Thai peacekeeping troops.

Thailand has its own philosophy of peacekeeping. At the official level, Thailand perceives its participation in peacekeeping as a contribution to achieving the UN sustainable development goals. Thus, peacekeeping is

¹⁰ Resolution 13 (1946) / [adopted by the Security Council at its 83rd meeting], of 12 December 1946 // United Nations Digital Library. December 12, 1946. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/111972?ln=ru> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹¹ Thailand and the UN, 75 years and counting // Royal Thai Embassy, Cairo, Egypt. December 16, 2020. URL: <https://cairo.thaiembassy.org/en/content/thailand-and-the-un-75-years-and-counting?page=5d81bfb315e39c24dc0034f2&menu=5d81bfb415e39c24dc003565> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹² Thailand deploys peacekeeping forces. A Question & Answer with Royal Thai Armed forces Rear Adm. Nuttapon Ketsumboon // Indo-Pacific Defense Forum. April 22, 2019. URL: <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2019/04/thailand-deploys-peacekeeping-forces/> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹³ Troop and Police Contributors // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹⁴ Thailand // United Nations Peacekeeping. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/thailand> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹⁵ Thailand deploys peacekeeping forces. A Question & Answer with Royal Thai Armed forces Rear Adm. Nuttapon Ketsumboon // Indo-Pacific Defense Forum. April 22, 2019. URL: <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2019/04/thailand-deploys-peacekeeping-forces/> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

primarily understood as an action that ensures development. In conflict zones, Thailand seeks to apply the concept of “sufficiency economy” proposed by the late King Rama IX of Thailand in 1997.¹⁶ Unlike other concepts of economic growth, it advocates for following the “middle” path in economic activity and lifestyle, rejecting extreme forms of consumption, establishing ethically correct interpersonal relations, and caring for nature. Although economists both in Thailand and abroad question the practical implementation of the concept, its connection with peacekeeping allows Thailand to emphasize its unique approach to peacekeeping.

Thailand interprets the tasks of its peacekeepers broadly, using the principle of “more than a mission mandate.”¹⁷ It implies that in addition to stabilizing the situation in the conflict zone, Thailand’s peacekeepers fulfill a range of tasks such as establishing friendly relations and partnerships with local communities, supporting infrastructure and economic projects, and transferring Thailand’s developmental experience that suits the local conditions. It is also obligatory for Thailand’s peacekeepers to consider local cultural and religious specifics. As the Director of the Center for Peacekeeping Operations, Rear Admiral N. Ketsumboon emphasized in his 2019 interview that over Thailand’s participation in UNPKO the UN authorities have not registered a single case of Thai peacekeepers unacceptable behavior in the host countries.¹⁸

¹⁶ Statement by His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.) Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand. General Debate, 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. New York, 29 September 2015 // Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations. September 29, 2015. URL: <https://humanrights.mfa.go.th/upload/pdf/GA70-EN.pdf> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹⁷ The Exhibition “Thailand’s Contributions to UN Peacekeeping and Peace-Related Operations” // Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand. March 1, 2016. URL: <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/5d5bfc015e39c306001b701?cate=5d5bcb4e15e39c3060006834> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹⁸ Thailand deploys peacekeeping forces. A Question & Answer with Royal Thai Armed forces Rear Adm. Nuttapon Ketsumboon // Indo-Pacific Defense Forum.

As part of the UN mission in South Sudan, Thai peacekeepers focus on carrying out engineering work and restoring communications between different parts of the country when their disruption hinders the delivery of humanitarian aid. Another area of the Thailand contingent’s activity is providing training to local communities in agriculture. In general, Thailand’s traditional culture of goodwill contributes to establishing effective communication between the Thai military and local communities.¹⁹

The philosophy of Thai peacekeeping also implies an emphasis on gender equality. By the early part of this decade, the 3 Thailand’s peacekeeping contingents included 14 women. According to a concept paper submitted to the UN, Thailand advocates for women participation in all stages of the peace process as they can effectively address community issues affecting women and children.²⁰

The research literature provides several explanations for Thailand’s increased peacekeeping activities. Its expansion has allowed Thailand to shape a positive image of the country and demonstrate significant achievements in foreign policy, particularly during periods of political turbulence at home (such as the military coups in 2006 and 2014). The intensification of peacekeeping activities has also allowed Thailand to strengthen its position in the UN. In 1998, Thailand joined the UN Standby Arrangement System, which created a register of member state resources for peacekeeping operations (Kraisoraphong & Howe, 2014).

April 22, 2019. URL: <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2019/04/thailand-deploys-peacekeeping-forces/> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

¹⁹ With engineers and roadway repair crews, Thai blue helmets help keep South Sudan moving // UN News. August 18, 2021. URL: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098052> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

²⁰ Thailand’s views on full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding // United Nations. URL: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/thailand-rev.pdf> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

Vietnam and International Peacekeeping

Unlike Indonesia and Thailand, Vietnam joined the UNPKO much later — in 2014, Vietnam sent its first two officers to South Sudan.²¹ However, despite the relatively short period, participation in peacekeeping operations became one of Vietnam's foreign policy and defense priorities aimed at shaping the image of a responsible member of the international society.

Initially, Hanoi was cautious about the UNPKO. From 1975 to 1993, Vietnam refrained from making its annual UN contribution on peacekeeping,²² and in 1993 declined the UN General Secretary's B. Boutros-Ghali proposal to join peacekeeping forces (Capie, 2014, p. 116).

This position was based on Vietnam's historic memory of foreign invasions. Vietnam regarded national sovereignty and territorial integrity as immutable values, and its political elite and society regarded the presence of foreign troops on another state's territory as a violation of national sovereignty and disrespect for the principle of non-interference in another state's internal affairs. Former Deputy Foreign Minister and Head of the Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee's Commission for External Relations, Le Hoai Trung, stated that Vietnam viewed UNPKOs as an instrument of influence by the US and Western countries, contrary to the UN Charter and international law.²³

²¹ Vietnam joins UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan // Voice of Vietnam. June 12, 2014. URL: <https://english.vov.vn/en/politics/vietnam-joins-un-peacekeeping-mission-in-south-sudan-277616.vov> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

²² Thayer C. ASEAN and UN Peacekeeping // The Diplomat. April 25, 2014. URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2014/04/asean-and-un-peacekeeping/> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

²³ Lê H.T. Ngoại giao và hoạt động gìn giữ hòa bình Liên hợp quốc // Cục Gìn giữ hòa bình Việt Nam [Lê H.T. Diplomacy and UN Peacekeeping Operations // Vietnam Department of Peacekeeping Operations]. March 25, 2021. (In Vietnamese). URL: <http://www.vnpkc.gov.vn/tin-tuc/nguyen-cuu-trao-doi/ngoi-giao-va-hoat-dong-gin-giu-hoa-binh-lien-hop-quoc> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Vietnam faced internal challenges and focused mainly on recovering its national economy and implementing reforms known as *Doi Moi*. During that time, the country lacked sufficient human and financial resources, experience, and an appropriate legislative framework to fully engage in peacekeeping missions (Phan & Nguyen, 2022, p. 3).

Since the early 2000s, however, Vietnam's approach to peacekeeping missions has changed. Economic growth, Vietnam's preparations for serving as a non-permanent member of the UNSC from 2008 to 2009, and its upcoming chairmanship in ASEAN in 2010 have all contributed to a shift in Vietnam's attitude towards international peacekeeping. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supervised the creation of special groups of representatives from leading ministries to explore the possibilities for Vietnam to join UN peacekeeping activities (Phan & Nguyen, 2022, p. 4). The 2009 Vietnam National Defense White Paper declared that "Vietnam greatly appreciated the role of the UN and regarded the peacekeeping operations (PKO) as an important function of the UN."²⁴

In 2013, the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam ratified the master plan "Vietnam People's Army's participation in the UNPKO in 2014—2020 and in the following years."²⁵ In the same year, the National Assembly revised Paragraph 64 of the Constitution, thus, allowing sending Vietnamese military forces abroad.²⁶ In 2014, the

²⁴ Vietnam National Defence // Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of National Defence. Hanoi : Ministry of National Defence, 2009. P. 27. URL: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/155222/Vietnam2009.pdf> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

²⁵ Nguyen C.V. New development of Vietnam's participation in the UN peacekeeping operations // National Defence Journal. April 11, 2018. URL: <http://tapchiquptd.vn/en/theory-and-practice/new-development-of-vietnams-participation-in-the-un-peacekeeping-operations/11518.html> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

²⁶ Thayer C. ASEAN and UN Peacekeeping // The Diplomat. April 25, 2014. URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2014/04/asean-and-un-peacekeeping/> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

Vietnamese Peacekeeping Center became operational and was later transformed into Vietnam Department of Peacekeeping Operations (VDPO),²⁷ which coordinates all activities related to Vietnam's participation in the UNPKO.

By 2023, 526 Vietnamese military personnel and public security officers had participated in UN peacekeeping missions in South Sudan and the Central African Republic.²⁸ These included more than 70 military officers (observers and liaison officers), nearly 250 military doctors, and 200 sappers.²⁹ Vietnam operates four Level-2 field hospitals in South Sudan. Vietnam also demonstrates good performance in terms of women participation in peacekeeping missions, with their current share being 16%, which exceeds the UN recommended minimum of 15%.³⁰ However, Vietnam limits its participation in peacekeeping to logistics, advisory, and humanitarian tasks, avoiding any combat operations (Phan & Nguyen, 2022, p. 7). An agreement between Vietnam and the UN allows Vietnamese military personnel to reject involvement in peacekeeping operations that

may have a negative impact on Vietnam's bilateral relations with other countries.³¹

Vietnam's peacekeeping activities extend beyond the UN framework and also have a regional dimension. In 2021—2023, Vietnam and Japan became co-chairs in the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting with Dialogue Partners (ADMM+) Expert Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations (EWG on PKO). In 2022, Vietnam hosted the meeting of the Association of Asia-Pacific Peace Operation Training Centers (AAPTC) for the first time. Additionally, Vietnam chaired the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centers Network (APCN) in the same year. Vietnam proposed displaying the ASEAN flag along with the national flag of ASEAN member states participating in peacekeeping operations.³²

Vietnamese peacekeepers strictly adhere to three basic principles of UN peacekeeping: consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate. These guidelines align in many respects with Vietnam's "Four No's" defense policy, which rejects the use of force and joining any military alliances.³³ The latest Vietnam Defense White Paper in 2019 reaffirmed Vietnam's commitment "to make substantive contributions and broaden its participation in UN peacekeeping operations."³⁴

²⁷ Nguyen C. V. New development of Vietnam's participation in the UN peacekeeping operations // National Defence Journal. April 11, 2018. URL: <http://tapchiquptd.vn/en/theory-and-practice/new-development-of-vietnams-participation-in-the-un-peacekeeping-operations/11518.html> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

²⁸ Seven Vietnamese officers to take on U.N. peacekeeping mission // Ministry of National Defence. February 8, 2023. URL: <http://mod.gov.vn/en/detail/sa-en-news/sa-en-news-qpan/seven-vietnamese-officers-to-take-on-un-peacekeeping-mission> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

²⁹ Kiều G. Việt Nam và những dấu ấn trong hoạt động gìn giữ hòa bình // Báo điện tử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam [Kiều G. Vietnam and key stages in peacekeeping // Communist Party of Vietnam online newspaper]. January 20, 2023. (In Vietnamese). URL: <https://dangcongsan.vn/quoc-phong-an-ninh/viet-nam-va-nhung-dau-an-trong-hoat-dong-gin-giu-hoa-binh-630191.html> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

³⁰ Women and peacekeeping in ASEAN countries // UNDP Vietnam. December 31, 2020. URL: <https://www.undp.org/vietnam/publications/women-and-peacekeeping-asean-countries> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

³¹ Hoàng T. Việt Nam xem xét cử đội trực thăng tham gia gìn giữ hòa bình [Hoàng T. Vietnam considers deploying helicopters to participate in the UN peacekeeping operations] // VnExpress. January 12, 2021. (In Vietnamese). URL: <https://vnexpress.net/viet-nam-xem-xet-cu-doi-truc-thang-tham-gia-gin-giu-hoa-binh-4219516.html> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

³² Vietnam to host ASEAN peacekeeping meeting in September // VietnamPlus. May 17, 2022. URL: <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-to-host-asean-peacekeeping-meeting-in-september/228729.vnp> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

³³ 2019 Vietnam National Defence (2019 Vietnam National Defence White Paper). Hanoi : National Political Publishing House, 2019. P. 23. URL: <http://mod.gov.vn/wcm/connect/08963129-c9cf-4c86-9b5c-81a9e2b14455/2019VietnamNationalDefence.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-08963129-c9cf-4c86-9b5c-81a9e2b14455-mXO.UaH> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

³⁴ Ibid. P. 27.

Vietnam's increasing peacekeeping activities are also driven by the need to strengthen the country's defense capabilities. Vietnam expects peacekeeping to contribute to the modernization of the People's Army.³⁵ Another significant factor is the growing role of the Ministry of Defense in foreign affairs. Vietnam has signed memorandums of understanding on peacekeeping with 9 countries: Australia, India, China, New Zealand, Russia, the USA, France, South Korea, and Japan. Additionally, Vietnam has signed memorandums with the UN and EU.³⁶

Vietnam's decision to join the UNPKO also indicates its intention to position itself as a reliable and responsible member of the international community, a dynamic economy, a politically stable country with a modern and well-equipped army. Participation in UN peacekeeping operations enhances the international status of Vietnam's army, which serves not only as a guarantor of political stability, but also contributes to Vietnam's international integration.

Conclusion

The analysis presented suggests that despite the existing national peacekeeping specifics, the ASEAN countries analyzed in this paper share a number of similarities in their approaches to peacekeeping. It is these similarities that

currently form the regional model of peacekeeping activities.

In their peacekeeping practices, ASEAN states that once suffered from colonialism attach particular importance to issues of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the non-use of peacekeeping as a means of influencing small and middle powers by great ones. This position is most clearly manifested in Indonesian approaches to peacekeeping, but also finds reflection in the values shared by Vietnam and Thailand. The historical memory of the Indochinese wars determined Vietnam's initially cautious approach to peacekeeping, which until the 1990s was considered an instrument to interfere in the internal affairs of other states.

All the countries under review strive to expand and supplement conventional peacekeeping practices, largely formed by the leading Western countries, with new conceptual and practical tools originating from their own political and economic development. In some cases, the experience of regional conflict resolution in Southeast Asia becomes a valuable source of innovative developments in peacekeeping. Relying on the UN peacekeeping and its mediator stance in a number of conflicts, Indonesia is seeking to consolidate its role as a regional leader and even as an aspiring global power. The implementation of these tasks should be facilitated, among other things, by the activities of the Indonesian Peace and Security Center, a training hub for peacekeepers not only from Indonesia but also from other countries. Thailand is also trying to propose its own approach to post-conflict economic recovery based on the "sufficiency economy" concept, which opposes the hyper-consumption model of Western development. Although the practical implementation of this concept causes controversy among economists, it nevertheless allows Thailand to occupy its own niche in peacekeeping by focusing on Thai peacekeepers' contribution to the infrastructural and agricultural reconstruction of countries that have experienced conflict. Vietnam, in turn,

³⁵ Quỳnh V. Đề màu cờ Việt Nam phủ rộng hơn trên bản đồ gìn giữ hòa bình thế giới // Cục Gìn giữ hòa bình Việt Nam [Quỳnh V. Vietnam seeks to expand its participation in UN peacekeeping missions // Vietnam Department of Peacekeeping Operations]. May 28, 2021. (In Vietnamese). URL: <http://www.vnpkc.gov.vn/tin-tuc/nguyen-cuu-trao-doi/de-mau-co-viet-nam-phu-rong-hon-tren-ban-do-gin-ghu-hoa-binh-the-gioi> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

³⁶ Kiều G. Lực lượng gìn giữ hòa bình: Góp phần nâng cao vị thế của Việt Nam trên trường quốc tế // Báo điện tử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam [Peacekeeping forces to enhance Vietnam's role in the international arena // Communist Party of Vietnam online newspaper]. February 12, 2021. (In Vietnamese). URL: <https://dangcongsan.vn/chao-xuan-tan-suu-2021/dat-nuoc-va-xuan/luc-luong-gin-ghu-hoa-binh-gop-phan-nang-cao-vi-the-cua-viet-nam-tren-truong-quoc-te-574148.html> (accessed: 08.03.2023).

participating in peacekeeping operations, seeks to emphasize its humanitarian role, the sense of belonging to ASEAN, and openness to international cooperation on a constructive basis.

Peacekeeping helps Southeast Asian countries solve a number of foreign and domestic policy problems. It serves as a universal way to improve their status in the UN structure, to form the image of responsible and

indispensable international actors (even in cases of very limited participation in peacekeeping missions), to strengthen the capabilities of their armies, and to develop defense diplomacy. The latter plays a special role for Southeast Asia as a whole, since it allows enriching ASEAN-centered regional multilateral interaction (e.g., ADMM, ADMM+) with the experience gained by the Southeast Asian states through peacekeeping activities of global scale.

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