

5-31-2023

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Siallagan, Andri (2023) "THE FAILURE OF ASEAN COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION IN PREVENTING THE ARRIVAL OF FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS IN THE MARAWI CONFLICT," *Journal of Terrorism Studies*: Vol. 5: No. 1, Article 2.

DOI: 10.7454/jts.v5i1.1057

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/jts/vol5/iss1/2>

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JOURNAL OF
Terrorism Studies

**The Failure of Asean Counter-Terrorism Cooperation in Preventing the
Arrival of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in The Marawi Conflict**

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Abstract

This article examined the elements that contributed to ASEAN counter-terrorism cooperation's failure to prevent the presence of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) in the Marawi conflict in 2017. The massive ISIS propaganda resulted in an increase in FTF mobilization from several countries to unite the Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups in taking control of Marawi City. This study used a qualitative method and deductive analysis technique by compiling relevant literature on ASEAN's cooperation in counter-terrorism, the FTF problem, and the Marawi conflict. This article would discuss the dynamics of ASEAN cooperation in combating terrorism and the unpreparedness in anticipating the involvement of FTFs in the Marawi conflict. This paper argued that ASEAN counter-terrorism cooperation within the framework of the Convention on Combating Terrorism (ACCT) was ineffective in addressing the presence of FTFs since it did not convert to the practical level and appears to be simply ceremonial. This weakness should encourage ASEAN member nations to reorganize the focus of counter-terrorism cooperation and implement appropriate measures, such as intelligence sharing, border surveillance, prevention of terror financing, and counter-propaganda of terrorists on social media.

Keywords: ASEAN, Counter-Terrorism, Marawi Conflict, FTFs

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis faktor penyebab kegagalan kerja sama kontra-terorisme ASEAN dalam mencegah kedatangan Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) dalam konflik Marawi pada tahun 2017. Masifnya propaganda ISIS mendorong peningkatan mobilisasi FTF dari berbagai negara untuk bergabung dengan kelompok Abu Sayyaf dan Maute dalam menguasai Kota Marawi. Kajian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan teknik analisis deduktif dengan mengumpulkan literatur yang berkaitan tentang kerja sama kontra-terorisme ASEAN, masalah FTF dan konflik Marawi. Artikel ini akan mendiskusikan dinamika kerja sama ASEAN dalam memerangi terorisme dan ketidaksiapan dalam mengantisipasi keterlibatan FTF dalam konflik Marawi. Tulisan ini berargumen bahwa kerja sama kontra-terorisme ASEAN dalam kerangka Konvensi Tentang Pemberantasan Terorisme (ACCT) tidak efektif mengatasi keberadaan FTF karena tidak diterjemahkan pada tataran praktis dan terkesan hanya bersifat seremonial. Kelemahan tersebut perlu mendorong negara anggota ASEAN untuk mengatur ulang fokus kerja sama kontra-terorisme dan menerapkan implementasi yang tepat, seperti pertukaran intelijen, pengawasan perbatasan, pencegahan pendanaan teror maupun kontra-propaganda teroris di media sosial.

Kata Kunci: ASEAN, Kontra-Terrorisme, Konflik Marawi, FTF

INTRODUCTION

From the Realism perspective, the state is seen as the main actor that plays a dominant role in influencing the international system. The state becomes the center of the organization of political power that is the basis of international relations (Dugis, 2016). Along with globalization, the state is no longer the only main actor influencing international security. The role of non-state actors such as multinational companies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations, to individuals began to show significance (Institute of International Studies, 2020). This development can be seen from the increasingly intensive activities of non-state actors across the legal boundaries of state sovereignty. Meanwhile, from the standpoints of Pluralism and Constructivism, security issues become more developed and varied when non-state actors in international relations are examined. Elke Krahnmann (2005) defines non-state players in the realm of security as private actors and intergovernmental organizations that play an essential role in global security. Therefore, states are encouraged to recognize that the system established to ensure national sovereignty will not be effective in dealing with transnational crime, terrorism, or global pandemics.

Meanwhile, Hofmann and Schneckener (2011) explained that non-state armed actors as groups that commit violence to achieve their goals, are not integrated into official state institutions, and have autonomy in political decisions, military operations, resources, and infrastructure. In the Pluralism and Constructivism approach, security threats come not only from states, but also from the

behavior of actors active in international relations, such as intergovernmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, transnational organized crime, international terrorist networks, and individuals with policymaking roles in the international community (Zaini, 2020). Meanwhile, non-state actors known as foreign terrorist combatants or Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) have been discussed in several studies that examine conflict and regional security dynamics related to terrorist attacks. Between 1980 and 1992, up to 20,000 foreign fighters arrived in Afghanistan and became fighters when confronted by the Afghan military (Yunanto, 2017). However, the flow of foreign combatants to Syria since 2011 is believed to be the largest in the last six years, with 25,000-30,000 people from 100 countries (Yunanto, 2017).

The attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York on September 11, 2001, led to the understanding that terrorism has an ideological character that correlates with religion and is transnational in nature. The attack developed into a global issue after the President of the United States (US), George W. Bush, announced "Either you are with us or against us" to win international support in the battle against terrorism (Wuryandari, 2014). In another address, George Bush referred to the war on terrorism as the "first Crusade of the twenty-first century" (Mardenis, 2011). The UN Security Council then approved Resolution 1373 in 2001, urging all member states to work together to combat terrorists, terrorist organizations, and terrorist supporters. The duties outlined in the resolution are incorporated in the 1999 UN Convention to Combat Terrorist Financing

(Rosand, 2003). Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2178 in 2014, mandating all member states to engage in criminalization, international cooperation, and information exchange in combating extremism in the context of preventing terrorism committed by FTFs (Wibisono, 2020). Resolution No. 2178 serves as the foundation for all UN member states to prohibit and oppose the global existence of FTFs.

On June 29, 2013, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi declared the formation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which now controls territory stretching from Aleppo, Syria to Diyala, Iraq (Glenn & Nada, 2019). In response to the mounting threat posed by ISIS, the United States launched the campaign Inherent Resolve, a multinational military campaign that resulted in over 8,000 bombings in Iraq and Syria (Glenn & Nada, 2019). ISIS has established and maintained a network of overseas affiliates outside of the Middle East.

During 2015-2016, ISIS affiliates in Egypt bombed a Russian airliner killing 224 people, a series of coordinated attacks by ISIS affiliates left 130 people dead and more than 300 injured in Paris, France, and a shooting spree by ISIS sympathizers killed 49 people in Orlando, Florida (Glenn & Nada, 2019). The London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) reported that 41,490 FTFs from 80 countries joined ISIS (Cook & Vale, 2018). As a result, some countries in Europe refuse to repatriate their citizens who become FTFs by revoking citizenship but still accept several children back with various considerations (Saraswati, 2020). During 2015-2016, ISIS affiliates in Egypt bombed a Russian airliner, killing 224

people; in Paris, France, a series of coordinated attacks by ISIS affiliates killed 130 people and injured over 300; and in Orlando, Florida, a shooting spree by ISIS sympathizers killed 49 people (Glenn & Nada, 2019). According to the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) in London, 41,490 FTFs from 80 countries have joined ISIS (Cook & Vale, 2018). As a result, some European countries refuse to repatriate their people who become FTFs by renouncing their citizenship, yet take several children back for various reasons (Saraswati, 2020).

The ASEAN Ministerial Forum on Transnational Criminals (AMMTC) is an ASEAN ministerial-level forum that focuses on transnational criminal issues (ASEAN, ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism, 2012). The AMMTC, which has been conducted yearly since 2017, is the top policy-making body in the ASEAN forum for dealing with transnational crime (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015). ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD), ASEAN Chiefs of National Police (ASEANAPOL), ASEAN Directors-General of Customs, and ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration and Heads of Consular Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCIM) (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). At its 11th meeting on September 20, 2017, AMMTC established a plan of action to prevent and combat transnational crime in eight priority areas: (1) counter-terrorism, (2) illicit drug trafficking, (3) human trafficking, (4) money laundering, (5) arms smuggling, (6) sea piracy, (7) international economic crime, and (8) cybercrime. Until 2021, the AMMTC produced two conventions, seven

declarations, six action plans, and three guidelines that ASEAN countries can use to address transnational crime issues (ASEAN, 2022).

On January 13, 2007, in Cebu, Philippines, the AMMTC agreed on the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (ACCT) agreement in response to a string of terror acts in the ASEAN region (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). Within the ACCT framework, ASEAN member states agreed to the principle of neutrality in defining terrorism as a common enemy, as well as counter-terrorism efforts while upholding human rights, international law, and UN resolutions, and without labeling specific communities as terrorist groups (Yani, Heryadi, & Sudirman, 2012). In the ACCT, ASEAN member states agreed on several points, including information and intelligence sharing to prevent terror attacks, improving border surveillance to prevent terrorist movement, increasing institutional capacity and technical cooperation, promoting public awareness in countering terrorism, developing regional databases, strengthening capabilities to deal with the threat of biological and cyber attacks, and encouraging a transparent court system for planners, financiers and perpetrators of terrorist acts (ASEAN, ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism, 2012). To accelerate the implementation of ACCT, ASEAN conducted two working groups to discuss the ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism on November 17, 2009, in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and September 20, 2017, in Manila, Philippines (Sudirman & Sari, 2017).

ACCT is a type of cooperation commitment that is formalized as the

foundation, norms, and procedures of ASEAN countries in terms of fighting terrorism, making the ACCT convention an international regime (Namora, 2016). According to Sudirman and Sari (2017), the ACCT is a regional security regime because all ASEAN member nations agreed on the neutrality of the definition of terrorism, the protection of human rights in counter-terrorism activities, and the avoidance of identifying specific communities as terrorist groups. Meanwhile, according to Marguerite Borelli (2017), ACCT is the dominant regime in regional counter-terrorism policymaking. According to the foregoing views, the ACCT can be viewed as an international regime because ASEAN member states are required to observe all of its rules.

The phenomenon of FTFs is not a new one in Southeast Asia. According to the ICSR research, about 1,063 people from ASEAN countries became ISIS FTFs in Syria and Iraq (Cook & Vale, 2018). Meanwhile, the maneuvers of the Abu Sayyaf (ASG) and Maute groups to pledge allegiance to ISIS and take control of Marawi City led the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to launch a large-scale operation to liberate the city and arrest ISIS Mindanao leader Isnilon Hapilon (Franco, Detecting Future 'Marawis': Synthesizing Alternatives Indicators for Assessing the Potential for New Manifestations of Violent Extremism in Mindanao, 2020). The Marawi crisis provided a new opportunity for FTFs to join the ASG and Maute factions in Mindanao. During the Marawi war, several FTFs from other nations chose to join the ASG and Maute factions, and the Philippine military killed and identified 32 FTFs (ASEAN Economist, 2018). Meanwhile, on June 4,

2017, Indonesian Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu estimated that around 1,200 ISIS sympathizers, including 40 Indonesians, had joined the conflict with local Philippine terrorists (Ng, 2017).

Terror attacks involving FTFs continued to occur after the crisis in Marawi City. On August 24, 2020, in Jolo, Sulu Province, there were suicide bomb attacks using motorcycles outside Paradise Food Plaza supermarket and outside of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral Church in Barangay Walled City, leaving 15 people dead, including security forces and civilians, and 75 others injured (Gallardo, Umel, Maitem, & Navales, 2020). The Philippine police alleged that the attack was carried out by 2 women, one of whom is suspected to be an Indonesian citizen, who came from one of the ASG militant factions led by Mundi Sawadjaan (Gallardo, Umel, Maitem, & Navales, 2020). Previously on January 27, 2019, a terror attack involving FTFs inside Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral Church left 27 people dead and 77 others injured (Pareno & Unson, 2019).

Several academics from Indonesia and abroad have also discussed studies on counter-terrorism cooperation and the dynamics of terrorism in the ASEAN region. Discussions on ASEAN counter-terrorist cooperation and terrorism challenges in the Philippines in prior research used security cooperation, terrorism, and securitization techniques. Due to differing legal systems, studies that apply the security cooperation approach highlight the issue of terrorism, asking ASEAN to strengthen cooperation through consensus (Chow, 2005). According to Marguerite Borelli (2017), ASEAN's armaments and counter-terrorism measures

have failed to meet the threat of terrorism. Studies that use a terrorist approach highlight the asymmetrical conflict that occurred in the southern Philippines by small groups utilizing suicide bombing attacks (Temby, 2019). Another study discussed the rapid development of local terrorist groups in the Philippines so ASEAN needs to provide more assistance (Mark, 1995). Studies with the concept of securitization explained that ASEAN chose a counter-terror policy that uses a national security approach rather than individual security (Gerstl, 2010). The question to be answered in this paper is why ASEAN counter-terrorism cooperation was not effective in stemming the arrival of FTFs in the Marawi conflict. To answer this question, this paper would describe the implementation of ASEAN counter-terrorism cooperation agreed upon in the ACCT agreement such as information and intelligence sharing, border surveillance to prevent terrorist movement, prevention of terrorist financing, and ISIS propaganda in the Marawi conflict.

METHODS

The study used a qualitative method, which aimed to understand phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numerical empirical data (Bryman, 2012). With a qualitative approach, it is expected that this study can provide understanding and rationalization related to a phenomenon that occurs within the scope of international relations. The qualitative method with deductive analysis techniques facilitated the formation of abstractions based on the data collected and the interconnection between ASEAN counter-terrorism cooperation and the FTF arrival problem faced by the

Philippines. The source of this study used secondary data derived from data collected from books, journals, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The follow-up of the ACCT agreement is marked by the implementation of regular meetings of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and Senior Official Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) which become the main mechanism for discussing, planning, and determining strategies, as well as counter-terrorism action plans prepared for the AMMTC meeting (Namora, 2016). Some important outcomes of the SOMTC meeting include strengthening member countries' national laws related to terrorism, enhancing law enforcement capabilities through joint training utilizing facilities such as The Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Malaysia and Jakarta Center For Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) in Indonesia, as well as sharing information on rehabilitation and counter-radicalization for arrested terrorists (Namora, 2016). The ACCT does not have an implementation deadline and does not provide an oversight mechanism that ensures compliance by ASEAN countries (Borelli, 2017). As a result, the adoption of the provisions in the ACCT to the national laws of member states is tailored to the national interests of ASEAN member states.

The untimely process of ratification and adoption into national laws of ASEAN member states is one of the obstacles to the implementation of the ACCT so it cannot anticipate the transformation and trend of acts of terrorism (Borelli, 2017). Ratification of

the ACCT by all ASEAN countries was only implemented in 2013 and additional clauses related to regional extradition instruments were agreed in 2016 (Borelli, 2017). Meanwhile, the Philippines ratified the ACCT on March 24, 2010, followed by signing a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia on maritime security, participating in a workshop organized by the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and conducting counter-terrorism capacity building training for Philippine law enforcement agencies (Namora, 2016). However, the ACCT's lengthy implementation process and gaps along ASEAN countries' borders were used by FTFs to enter the Philippines and join local terrorists such as the ASG (Ho & Yee, 2017).

Compartmentalized Barriers to Intelligence Exchange

The Marawi conflict, which lasted from May to October 2017, was the first time that local ISIS-affiliated militants acquired control of a territory by importing operational techniques and media strategies from IS operations in Syria and Iraq (Postings, 2018). Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was unprepared for urban warfare against the ASG and Maute groups, relying on airstrikes and heavy artillery to cause significant damage to Marawi City (Fonbuena, Marawi Battle Zone: Urban Warfare Challenges PH Military, 2017a). More than 1,200 people were killed in the battle, which ended on October 23, 2017, including approximately 900 ASG and Maute militants. Meanwhile, the AFP reported 32 FTFs killed in Marawi, including two children (Yusa, Philippines: 100 Foreign

Fighters Joined ISIS in Mindanao Since Marawi Battle, 2018a).

The involvement of FTFs in the Marawi war demonstrated that intelligence information cooperation between ASEAN member states and institutions have not been successful. Ryamizard Ryacudu, Indonesia's Defense Minister, stated that 40 Indonesians have joined the ASG and Maute organizations in the Marawi battle (Ng, 2017). Meanwhile, a September 2019 report by the National Counterterrorism Agency's (BNPT) FTF Task Force revealed that approximately 58 Indonesians had joined ISIS, which controls Marawi City in the Philippines (Rahmanto, May 2020). Due to excessive compartmentalization, the discrepancy in the number of FTFs directly involved in the Marawi war demonstrated that each state agency in Indonesia has a different working pattern and does not share information.

The AFP claimed to have killed 32 FTFs on separate fighting fronts during the Marawi liberation operation but only provided photographs and identities of 16 FTFs slain (Yusa, Philippines: 100 Foreign Fighters Joined ISIS in Mindanao Since the Marawi fighting, 2018a). According to the

AFP, there has been a considerable increase in the number of terror incidents in the Philippines involving FTFs. However, Philippine security officials refused to reveal the nationality of the deceased FTFs. Meanwhile, the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) claimed to be awaiting information from Philippine authorities regarding the dead Malaysian FTFs, including Mahmud Ahmad, who was accused of assisting the ASG in the Marawi City attack (Bernama, 2017a). PDRM is willing to send a forensic team to help the Philippine authorities identify Mahmud Ahmad's body (Bernama, 2017b). The Malaysian authorities' response contradicted their previous claim that they did not have a list of Malaysian FTFs killed in the Marawi conflict (Yusa, Philippines: 100 Foreign Fighters Joined ISIS in Mindanao Since the Marawi Battle, 2018a). In contrast, the Philippine Ministry of Defense stated that it is working with the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to identify the bodies of Isnilon Hapilon and Omarkhayam Maute who were killed in a firefight with commandos and claimed not to have found the body of Mahmud Ahmad (Morales, 2017).

Figure 1. Operation Marawi City Liberation



Source: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Juli 2019

The disparity in information concerning the number of FTFs involved in the Marawi conflict and FTFs killed during the combat generated concerns about the number of FTFs currently operating in the southern Philippines. Major General Fernando Trinidad, AFP Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, estimated on January 18, 2018, that approximately 48 FTFs remain and are actively involved in training potential terrorists in Mindanao (Yusa, 2018b).

The number of FTFs released was far less than the data from the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence, and Terrorism Research (PIPVTR), which estimated that around 100 FTFs have remained in Mindanao since the liberation of Marawi (Petersen & Fonbuena, 2018). The majority of these FTFs came from Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Morocco, Spain, France, Tunisia, Iraq, Somalia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China (Yusa, 2018a). The lack of transparency of Philippine authorities

was alleged to secure intelligence sources or avoid international misunderstandings that risked making them look ineffective.

Lack of Border Supervision and Smuggling

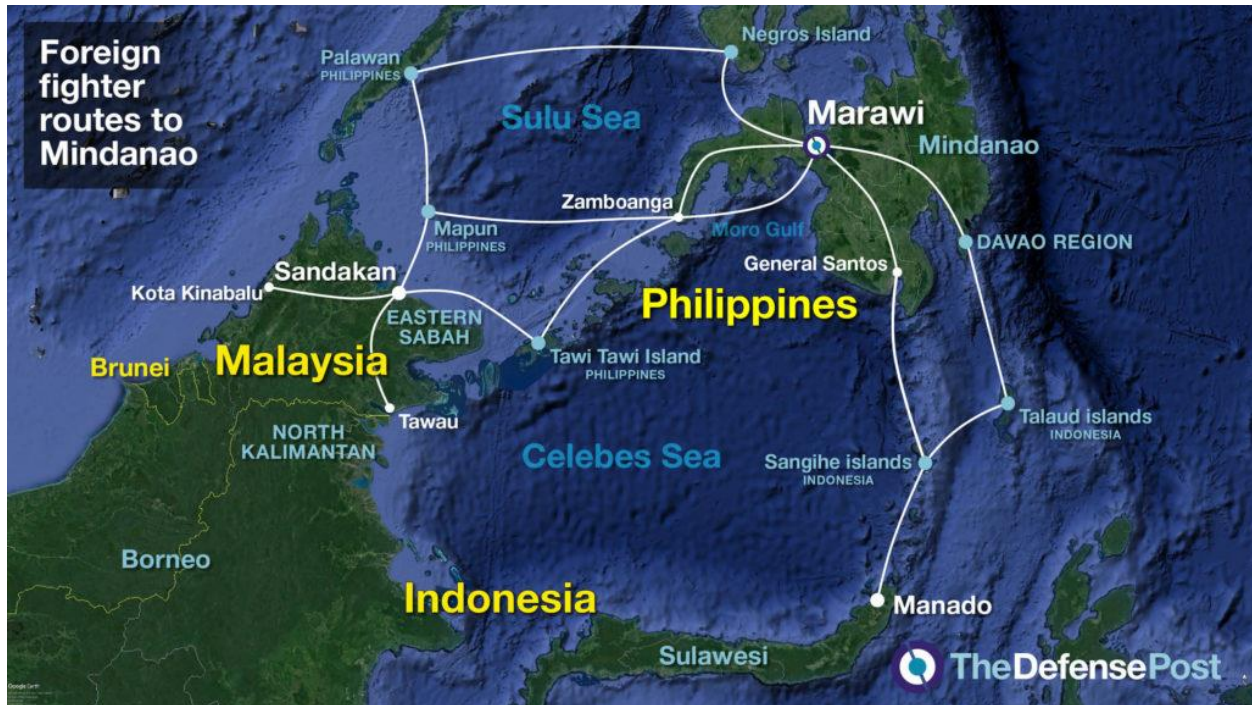
The increase in kidnappings and robberies conducted by the ASG group in the vicinity of Sulu waterways has prompted ASEAN member countries, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, to strengthen border patrol cooperation. However, patrol cooperation between the three countries was informal and lacked a clear structure. Representatives of Indonesian, Malaysian, and Philippine authorities agreed on a Trilateral Maritime Patrol (TMP) near Tarakan, North Kalimantan, in June 2017, to ensure that ISIS terrorists do not use the Sulu Sea to disturb the security of the three nations (Setiawan, 2017). The three countries also increased their collaboration and launched trilateral air

patrols at Malaysia's Subang Air Base. Trilateral patrols were somewhat effective in preventing IS-supporting FTFs from immediately mobilizing, but ineffectual in preventing kidnappings by ASG and other organizations in the Sulu Sea (Maitem & Navales, 2020). The situation arose as a result of the three nations' authorities focusing on counter-terrorism measures, which coincided with a pause in kidnapping cases that lasted from March 2017 to September 2018 (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2019).

Gaps in the borders of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines became one of the elements that made tracking the transit of ISIS sympathizers and supporters to Marawi difficult. More than ten terrorist sympathizers

were arrested and deported by Philippine security authorities at Manila and Clark International Airports (Yusa, 2018a). In 2018, Philippine security forces apprehended a Spaniard carrying explosives and an Egyptian transporting US\$19,000 in cash to Basilan (Beech & Gutierrez, 2019). The tight monitoring of formal channels through airports means that FTFs and IS sympathizers often use land and sea routes across the borders of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. PIPVTR leader Rommel Banlaoi identified Sandakan and Tawau in Malaysia, and Sangihe Islands and Talaud Islands in Indonesia as popular routes used by FTFs from both countries to Marawi City, Philippines (Yusa, 2018d).

Figure 2. FTF Movement Toward Marawi City



Source: The Defence Post, November 2018

Malaysia's geographical position and visa-free program are among the factors that allow terrorist organizations to use Malaysian territory as a transit and logistics hub (US

Department of State, 2019). This condition also permitted foreigners to easily enter and exit Malaysia without being flagged as a security danger. The choice of land and sea

routes was due to the rampant smuggling activities supported by residents at the Malaysian border. In the Sabah region, Malaysian officials apprehended a Filipino for attempting to smuggle two Bangladeshis and one Malaysian to Mindanao on Mahmud Ahmad's orders (Latiff, 2017). Malaysian officials arrested 5 Filipinos and 2 Malaysians in a separate operation in the same region for enabling the transit of Malaysians and Indonesians heading for Mindanao (Fonbuena, 2017b). Thousands of child militants, on the other hand, are said to have crossed the border in Sabah and joined terrorist groups in the southern Philippines (Yusa, 2018c).

Failure to Track and Prevent Terror Finance

The success of the ASG and Maute groups in taking control of Marawi City was inseparable from financial support from IS sympathizers. ISIS's Central Command in Surah channeled tens of thousands of US dollars to the Maute group in January 2017 (Emont & Villamor, 2017). Meanwhile, Malaysian FTF Mahmud Ahmad reportedly sent around US\$600,000 through Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD) member Achmad Supriyanto to several terrorists in the Philippines via Western Union (Gutierrez N., 2017). Mahmud Ahmad always gave instructions to Supriyanto through the Telegram application to raise and transfer money from Syria before the terrorist attack on Marawi City. Mahmud Ahmad was also said to be the main link between ISIS in Syria and ISIS groups in the Philippines, including in recruiting FTFs who joined the Marawi conflict (Francisco, 2017).

During the Marawi City liberation operation, Philippine security forces recovered US\$1.5 million in cash and bank checks from a terrorist-controlled residence (Gutierrez N., 2017). The money was believed to have been raised by sympathizers and family members of terrorists living in the Philippines. Meanwhile, the Philippine military reported finding US\$1.5 million from ISIS in Syria to fund the Marawi City attack (Counter Extremism Project, 2020). The discussion over the ASG and Maute groups' funding sources and remittances revealed that the Philippines, as an ASEAN member, was unable to detect and prevent terrorism financing in the context of the Marawi fight.

The Philippines is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Asia Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering, both of which are regional intergovernmental organizations dedicated to combating money laundering and terrorism financing. The Philippines' failure to identify and prevent terror financing during the Marawi crisis, on the other hand, highlighted concerns about domestic policy implementation. The Paris-based FATF found that the Philippines does not comply with FATF-mandated monitoring systems and processes, but is still working with the APG to resolve the issue (Counter Extremism Project, 2020). Even as recently as June 25, 2021, the FATF placed the Philippines on a list of countries that should be subject to increased surveillance due to shortcomings in anti-money laundering and terrorism funding prevention activities and strategies (Sun, 2021). The Philippines was identified by FATF as having vulnerabilities in preventing

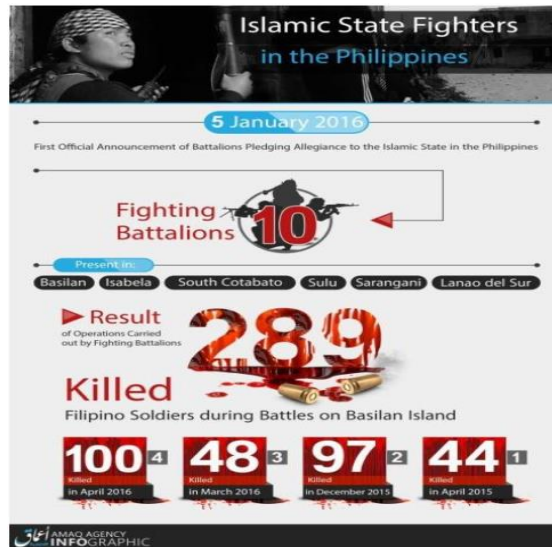
money laundering and terrorism financing in the country.

Extremism Propaganda and Recruitment through Online Media

The ASG group under the leadership of Isnilon Hapilon pledged allegiance to ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and posted their video on the Youtube channel on April 20, 2015. Not long after, in December 2015, ISIS released a video showing the acceptance of allegiance by the Hapilon-led ASG (Habulan A. B., 2016). The ASG group under Hapilon's command was also assisted by several FTFs to launch an armed attack in April 2016, which became the first ISIS

attack in Philippine territory (Diola, 2016). ISIS's news agency, Amaq released an infographic claiming to have 10 combat battalions in 5 different locations and claimed to have killed 289 Filipino soldiers in the Basilan region since April 2015 (Diola, 2016). Meanwhile, in June 2016, ISIS released a propaganda video entitled "The Solid Structure" asking sympathizers and members to fight alongside the ASG in the Philippines if they cannot go to Syria (Geronimo, 2016). The call was also heard by ISIS's sympathizers outside Southeast Asia (Habulan, 2018), although the Philippine military refused to recognize the video as IS propaganda (Geronimo, 2016).

Figure 3. ISIS Claims Successful Attack in the Philippines



Source : Perspectives on Terrorism, Agustus 2017

ISIS actively maintains two Filipino-language Telegram channels, "IS Philippines Supporters" and "IS Ranao", which channel content around Hapilon group activities and marksmanship training (Franco, 2017). The ASG also shared a video of the beheading of Canadian hostage Robert Hall after his ransom demand was rejected by the Philippine and Canadian governments (Diola, 2016). During the Marawi conflict,

through their Telegram group, Indonesian fighters complained about the lack of fighters traveling and joining the ASG in the Philippines (Moir, 2017). ISIS also spread calls to its supporters on social media to prepare for a 'second phase of attacks' in other cities in the Southern Philippines, claiming the attack in Marawi City was only 'the beginning' as many children and new militias would be trained (Singh, 2017).

The attitudes and strategies of ASEAN member state to extremist propaganda on social media and ISIS recruitment for the Marawi crisis have been diverse. The Philippine government, through the Marawi Joint Task Force (JTF), aggressively collaborated with the Civil-Military Operations Coordinating Center to distribute pamphlets, banners, and radio broadcasts to mold public opinion and counter militant propaganda narratives. Along with the systematic removal of ISIS content from the internet, Philippine authorities used strategic counter-narratives to flood the information environment, including emotional combat footage, documentation of civilian rescue operations, and stories of citizen solidarity (Knight & Theodorakis, 2019).

The Marawi conflict and the proliferation of ISIS propaganda on Telegram also prompted Indonesia to take anticipatory measures. Indonesia, through the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemenkominfo), blocked Telegram because it found 55 channels used by terrorists (Putra, 2017). The blocking was the right decision because the ISIS group turned to the encrypted messaging service Telegram as its official media after being blocked from Twitter in September 2015 (Smith, 2017). The Indonesian government's move also received a positive response from CEO Pavel Durov who promised to remove all terrorism and radicalism content on Telegram (Fadhilah, 2017). However, the Indonesian government's move to block Telegram was quite late compared to other ASEAN member states. Singapore blocked an online newspaper, Al Fatihin because it

was allegedly affiliated with the media run by ISIS supporter Furat Media (Chua, 2016).

The 11th AMMTC meeting in Manila on September 20, 2017, produced a joint declaration titled "Manila Declaration to Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism," one of which agreed on a commitment to address the threat of radical propaganda and extremism through social media (ASEAN, 2017a). The AMMTC proclamation might be viewed as a follow-up to the August 7, 2017, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting, which explored methods to combat the spread of extremist ideology via the internet and social media (ASEAN, 2017b). However, efforts to block websites, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and Telegraph channels indicated to be used by ISIS were futile as they will open new sites to spread extremist views. Weak monitoring of social media in Southeast Asia has also increased the number of ISIS supporters in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (Moir, 2017). On the other hand, the ASEAN member states' meeting to discuss the spread of radicalism online seems to be only ceremonial and does not establish a standardized handling mechanism.

CONCLUSION

The series of terrorist acts that occurred in the ASEAN region encouraged member states to discuss cooperation mechanisms to overcome the threat of further terror attacks. AMMTC as a forum for ASEAN countries to discuss the issue of transnational crime then agreed on the ACCT on January 13, 2007 in Cebu, Philippines. The ACCT as a commitment to cooperation in combating terrorism was considered in line with the UN Charter and Resolutions, as well as relevant

international law. Ratification of the ACCT was only fully implemented in 2013 with additional clauses related to regional extradition instruments. Nevertheless, the ACCT was a significant achievement in counter-terrorism cooperation in Southeast Asia.

The ASG and Maute attacks on Marawi City established a new front demonstrating IS's growing influence in Southeast Asia. ISIS's support for the assaults by the two local Philippine terrorist groups was not limited to rhetoric but also included financial assistance and the propagation of social media propaganda in a technique similar to that utilized in Syria and Iraq. The propaganda has drawn ISIS sympathizers and supporters from Southeast Asia and beyond to join the ASG in the southern Philippines. Several FTFs from various countries then attempted to travel to Marawi City to join the ASG and Maute groups that controlled the city. FTFs have played a big part in the Marawi crisis and continue to arrive in the southern Philippines, despite local authorities increasing law enforcement in the area. However, no information on the official number was available because each ASEAN member country has different data on the number.

The FTF-backed ASG and Maute terrorist attacks on Marawi City showed the unpreparedness of the Philippines and the ASEAN community in combating terrorism. The Philippine security authorities were forced to fight an urban war in the middle of a densely populated area in Marawi. As a result, the Philippines tended to take pragmatic unilateral actions in line with national interests and seemed to ignore the

cooperation mechanism in line with the provisions of the ACCT. This condition can be seen from the hesitation of the Philippine authorities to share intelligence information about the situation of the Marawi conflict and the presence of FTFs from other ASEAN countries. During the Marawi conflict period, the Philippines only established practical cooperation bilaterally or trilaterally with Malaysia and Indonesia. This was based on the understanding that the Marawi crisis only affected the security stability of the three countries, especially the Philippines. On the other hand, the principle of non-intervention in the "ASEAN Way" became an obstacle for the ASEAN community to help the Philippines overcome terrorism and the presence of FTFs in its territory.

The presence and activity of FTFs during and after the Marawi conflict have heightened awareness of the absence of surveillance and the numerous breaches in the border that terrorists use to enter the southern Philippines. Meanwhile, the ISIS Center in Syria continues to provide financial assistance via several FTFs in the southern Philippines. Because of the engagement of local people, it has become more difficult for security officials to discover the presence of FTFs and the flow of terrorism financing. Furthermore, the Philippines appears to prioritize its national security interests and appears to oppose the direct involvement of ASEAN member states in the Marawi conflict.

The end of the Marawi conflict did not stop the terror threat involving FTFs in the southern Philippines. ISIS and its local affiliates in the Philippines continue to spread propaganda and call for extremism utilizing

various social media platforms. On the other hand, efforts to eradicate online extremism propaganda were only sporadic and uncoordinated within the framework of ASEAN counter-terror cooperation. As a result, the influx of FTFs is still ongoing in the southern Philippines and indicates that there are still many ISIS sympathizers in the Southeast Asian region. This condition triggered concerns about the potential terror threat that imitated the attack in Marawi with different groups and greater strength.

This research concluded that ASEAN counter-terrorism cooperation, particularly within the ACCT framework, was ineffective and failed to prevent the arrival of FTFs in the terror attack in Marawi. The failure was because ASEAN member states have not translated ACCT at a more practical level and the cooperation is only incidental. Meanwhile, efforts to find problem-solving to overcome the weaknesses of counter-terrorism cooperation have not been made because ASEAN tends to prioritize the issue of terrorism less. As a result, ASEAN member states did not have the same political will and efforts in dealing with terrorism issues in the region. Therefore, ASEAN needed to refocus on the counter-terrorism cooperation format and effective mechanisms to respond to the dynamics of terrorism threats in the region.

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