

STRENGTHENING ASEAN CENTRALITY IN THE REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN THE FACE OF MAJOR POWER COMPETITION



efficacy of these institutions and, concomitantly, to foster the practical security co-operation which some of them are tasked with.

Why does this matter to New Zealand?

In New Zealand's *Defence White Paper 2016* it was recognised that "tensions in the region [i.e. Asia] ... are now greater than they were five years ago, [and] are a cause for concern." Increases in defence expenditure; changes in military posture; and a "shifting distribution of power" have led to Asia being "the focus of a complex interplay of global interests."



help ASEAN implement the Declaration of the EAS on Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations, for example, as well as extend the range of practical military cooperation which occurs under the auspices of the ARF and ADMM-Plus as well with the ASEAN members themselves. This is certainly something the ASEAN members would welcome. The Blueprint for the ASEAN Political Security Community 2025 notes the desire to “promote co-operation on regional defence and security matters between ASEAN and Dialogue Partners” along with that of strengthening “substantial and strategic cooperation” and “identifying ASEAN interests and priorities with respective Dialogue Partners”.⁵ In New Zealand's case, this could see the furthering of the ongoing cooperation in the areas of maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, to which could be added landmine clearance, peacekeeping operations and countering Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Conclusion

New Zealand is only one of ASEAN's 10 dialogue partners (the others being Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States) and, as that list shows, it is very much a small state by comparison. Its ability to help maintain and strengthen ASEAN centrality in the face of major power competition can thus only be limited. As Robert Ayson

