

Facing Grey Area Phenomena – Transformation through Transnational Crime and Violence in Southeast Asia

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Summary

Transnational crime and violence are not new to Southeast Asia. The sovereign sensitivities are still strong in this region, which detained effective measures against these threats to the stability and wealth of nation states. Although ASEAN would be an excellent platform and basis for cooperation and security strategies, most Southeast Asian states practice their own security policy. But there are signs for a transformation heading towards a cooperative direction.

The following article substantiates this transformation by drawing on the concept of Grey Area Phenomena (GAP) and the efforts against these phenomena by Southeast Asian states on the ASEAN arena. In doing so, the high pressure on interior and exterior sovereignty caused by GAP gives no political and financial alternative to a transformation. The acceptance for a decrease of sovereign sensitivities is growing and makes way for a regional security strategy with mutual cross-border cooperation.

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1 Sovereign sensitivities and current pressures on Southeast Asian nation states

Down to the present day sovereign sensitivities are extremely high among Southeast Asian states. Most Southeast Asian countries experienced colonialism by European powers and gained their international legal sovereignty rather lately.¹ This important gain and object of self-confidence, understandably, is preserved and maintained with all possible remedies. Particularly with regard to security matters, any interference of neighbouring and alien states is rejected fiercely by Southeast Asian states. That notably becomes apparent concerning members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Although a multitude of objectives – such as the acceleration of economic growth, social progress, and cultural development – were

¹ Myanmar gained independence in 1948, Indonesia in 1949, Cambodia in 1954, Laos in 1954, Vietnam in 1954, Malaysia in 1957, Singapore in 1965, Brunei Darussalam in 1984 and East Timor in 2002. Among the Southeast Asian states, Thailand is the only sovereign state without a history of colonial occupancy.