

Research on Maritime Security Cooperation Between China-ASEAN Countries under the Background of the “Maritime Community with a Shared Future” Initiative

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Abstract: Since China put forward the "Maritime community with a shared future" initiative, it gradually strengthens national strategic planning and layout in the field of maritime security. The large area of maritime contiguity shared by China and the ASEAN countries calls for the close partnership in each other's maritime security cooperation. This thesis mainly aims to study how maritime security cooperation between China and ASEAN countries can be carried out under the "Maritime community with a shared future" initiative, what obstacles exist, and how to optimize cooperation plans in the future. On the basis of existing case studies of maritime security cooperation between China and ASEAN countries, the research firstly summarized the trends of maritime security cooperation between the two sides, and then confirmed that the establishment of "Maritime community with a shared future" initiative has led maritime security cooperation between China and ASEAN into a new age, especially in the in-depth cooperation in the field of traditional maritime security and the expansion of cooperation in the field of non-traditional maritime security. The results are of great practical significance: they are conducive to deepening the maritime security interaction between China and ASEAN countries, as well as stabilizing the security environment in Southeast Asian seas.

Keywords: maritime security cooperation, China-ASEAN, “Maritime community with a shared future”

1. Introduction

Security has always been a core national interest, and the mobility and connectivity of the maritime has further complicated security issues, so countries need to negotiate and cooperate on maritime security to reduce uncertainty. The long-standing competition between China and ASEAN countries over maritime security has become a hidden danger to the stability of bilateral relations. “Maritime community with a shared future” initiative was put forward by Chinese leaders in April 2019 to point out the direction of China's future diplomatic development. The proposal demonstrated China's will to further deepen the scope of its activities in the maritime domain, with an export-oriented strategy as the core concept in dealing with sea-related issues.

2. “Maritime community with a shared future” and Maritime Security

2.1. The connotation of the concept of “Maritime community with a shared future”

The concept of a “Maritime community with a shared future” is an enrichment and development of the concept of “A human community with a shared future”. It is one of the major contributions made by China in the field of global ocean governance, which provides feasible solutions for all mankind in marine cooperation and exchange and resource co-governance. “Maritime community with a shared future” is a further innovation and expansion of the strategy of building maritime power.

Different from the traditional concept of maritime power, the concept of maritime power embodied in China's "Maritime community with a shared future" initiative emphasizes the pursuit of national comprehensive maritime rights and interests through cooperation. It weakens maritime competition and conflict between countries.

In the context of "Maritime community with a shared future" , the understanding of ocean power can be extended to the following aspects: First, go beyond confrontational cognition and advocate maintaining maritime peace; Second, resist power politics and safeguard maritime security; Third, break down marine barriers and promote marine prosperity; Fourth, adhere to the bottom line of development and protect the marine environment; Fifth, overcome mutual hostility and revitalize maritime culture together.

2.2. Maritime Security in the Context of “Maritime community with a shared future”

"Maritime community with a shared future" is to promote maritime security cooperation among countries and realize ultimate maritime security. China believes that maritime rights and interests include basic national security, legitimate rights and interests in sovereign maritime areas, security of maritime lanes, safeguarding and expanding overseas rights, and the right to peaceful use of the high seas and areas. This maritime rights and interests include both the defense of one's own maritime security and the maintenance of international maritime peace.[1]The aim of building a "Maritime community with a shared future" is to protect the maritime rights and interests of more countries.

China and ASEAN countries share common concerns and interests in the field of maritime security. At the level of territorial sovereignty, the delimitation of the South China Sea, island disputes, and the demarcation of exclusive economic zones have long plagued China-ASEAN relations, resulting in frequent diplomatic crises; At the level of maritime economy, China and ASEAN countries have established solid economic and industrial ties relying on the "Maritime Silk Road". The volume of bilateral trade and the degree of market openness have been continuously improved, which lead them movie towards the "Blue Economy Partnership". In addition, under the multinational "Indo-Pacific Strategy", the seas around ASEAN have become the focal point of geopolitical competition among major powers, seriously undermining the autonomy and maritime security of ASEAN countries.[2] Based on factors such as territorial disputes, economic interests and external pressures in this maritime area, it is particularly important to establish a cooperative relationship of mutual trust between China and ASEAN.

3. The Historical Basis of China-ASEAN Maritime Security Cooperation

The first stage was from 1991 to 2001. At this stage, the two sides conducted preliminary explorations on maritime security cooperation, laying the foundation for the next stage of cooperation. Due to the historical particularity of the South China Sea issue and borders, China and some ASEAN countries were in a state of tension, and it was not until 1991 that China and ASEAN countries launched dialogue relations, and the relations between the two sides were eased.

The second phase ran from 2002 to 2011. This stage is a special period for the institutionalization of security cooperation between the two sides, and maritime cooperation has developed steadily. In 2002, China and ASEAN countries signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. In 2003, China and ASEAN established a "strategic partnership", incorporating maritime cooperation into the ten major areas of bilateral relations development.

The third stage runs from 2012 to 2017. At this stage, China-ASEAN maritime cooperation has entered a new stage of upgrading, renewal and development. In 2012, China initiated the establishment of the China-ASEAN Maritime Partnership and issued the Framework Plan for International Cooperation in and Around the South China Sea. In 2013, China put forward the strategic concept of building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road with Southeast Asia as the hub. In 2015, China officially launched the "China-ASEAN Year of Maritime Cooperation". In October 2017, China and ASEAN countries held the first large-scale maritime search and rescue exercise, which is an important example of deepening practical maritime cooperation between China and ASEAN and improving the regional maritime search and rescue cooperation mechanism.

The fourth stage is from 2018 to the present. During this period, China-ASEAN maritime security cooperation made major breakthroughs, such as deepening cooperation in maritime defense and important non-traditional security areas. [3]

4. New Trends in Maritime Security Cooperation between China and ASEAN Countries under the “Maritime community with a shared future” initiative

4.1. Deepening cooperation in the field of Marine traditional security

China and ASEAN have cooperated in regional cooperation mechanisms such as the "10+3", the East Asia Summit and APEC, and promoted the issuance of cooperation documents such as the “Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation”, resolving conflicts and conflicts of regional interests to the greatest extent and maintaining regional harmony and stability. It can be seen that the cooperation between China and ASEAN can bring a strong impetus to regional development and produce the effect of increasing the effectiveness of governance. To some extent, cooperation between China and ASEAN will determine the future direction of the regional landscape.[4]

As a sensitive area and "short board" of maritime cooperation between the two sides, China-ASEAN maritime security and defense cooperation has also made breakthroughs in recent years. [5] In October 2017, China and ASEAN agreed to conduct joint exercises, and held joint maritime exercises in Singapore in August and October 2018 in the northern waters of the South China Sea. In April 2019, the two sides held the "Maritime Joint Exercise 2019" in Qingdao. The multilateral joint maritime exercise between China and ASEAN countries is of landmark significance in promoting China-ASEAN maritime security cooperation and the all-round improvement of bilateral relations.

At the Fourth China-ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus in October 2017, China and the 10 ASEAN countries agreed to conduct joint exercises, and held tabletop exercises and joint maritime exercises in Singapore and the northern waters of the South China Sea in October 2018. Eight ships, five observers and more than 1,200 officers and men from China and the 10 ASEAN countries conducted a seven-day joint exercise on the Rules for Unexpected Encounters at Sea reached in 2014. This is the first multilateral maritime joint exercise between China and ASEAN countries, and it is a milestone in the all-round improvement of China-ASEAN bilateral relations.

On October 22, 2018, China and the 10 ASEAN countries began to hold a seven-day "Maritime Joint Exercise-2018" in the airspace of Zhanjiang, Guangdong and the East China Sea. This is the first joint military exercise between ASEAN and a single country. The China-ASEAN "Maritime Joint Exercise-2018" exercise is divided into two stages: tabletop exercise and actual military exercise. The

tabletop exercise was held at Changi Naval Base in Singapore on 2 and 3 August, and the actual exercise consisted of three parts: port and shore activities, maritime exercises and exercise summaries. The smooth holding of the China-ASEAN maritime exercise was due to two reasons: First, the current situation in the South China Sea has generally stabilized and improved, ASEAN countries have become more active in cooperation with China, especially Vietnam, the Philippines and other claimant countries have adjusted their policies in the South China Sea and returned to the track of dialogue, consultation and cooperation with China, which has created a good atmosphere for the exercise to be carried out. [6] Second, with the development and changes of the situation in the South China Sea, China and ASEAN countries have actively explored promoting confidence-building measures in the South China Sea in recent years to manage differences, avoid miscalculations and prevent crises.

4.2. Broadening cooperation in the field of Marine non-traditional security

4.2.1. Cooperation in maritime disaster prevention and mitigation and maritime search and rescue

In 2012, China held a seminar on maritime disaster prevention and mitigation in the South China Sea. At the 22nd ASEAN Summit in April 2013, ASEAN decided to continue to strengthen security cooperation and held joint military exercises on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief with China, the United States and other countries in June 2013 to continuously enhance ASEAN's own ability to cope with disasters and crises. On July 27, 2016, representatives from China, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and other ASEAN countries gathered in Guangzhou to conduct in-depth communication and discussion on matters related to the joint maritime search and rescue sand table exercise, as well as jointly responding to major maritime emergencies in the South China Sea and strengthening national maritime search and rescue cooperation. As an active participant and promoter of the ARF, China has successfully undertaken 24 cooperation projects over the past 19 years, and the "ARF Guiding Principles for Disaster Relief Cooperation" submitted has become the first systematic document regulating disaster relief cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, playing an important and constructive role in promoting regional security cooperation.

It is valuable for China and ASEAN to carry out maritime non-traditional security cooperation in earthquake relief for such force majeure disasters, which will be necessary for the prevention and recovery of maritime disasters.[7] These activities have enabled countries in the region to continuously exchange disaster reduction experience, further improve disaster management capabilities, coordination and communication levels, and tacit understanding of mutual cooperation, and the non-traditional maritime security cooperation mechanism between the two sides has gradually taken shape. On the contrary, China is adopting a peaceful approach to continuously improve the overall level of disaster relief cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, which also shows that China has the confidence, ability and certainty to work with ASEAN to maintain non-traditional maritime security cooperation in the region.

4.2.2. Maritime counter-terrorism cooperation

The oceans dominate Southeast Asia, providing ASEAN countries with a vital source of economy and a source of many dangers. Among these unexpected dangers are terrorist attacks at sea. In response to non-traditional maritime security threats, including terrorism, China and ASEAN have adopted international cooperation and made good progress, and maritime terrorism has been curbed to a certain extent.

On May 15, 2015, the 13th ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Conference on Counter-Terrorism and Combating Transnational Crime hosted by China was held in Nanning, Guangxi, which mainly

focused on transnational and cross-regional terrorism, violent activities and cross-border drug crime activities. Further improve the mechanism and use a variety of means to combat transnational crime. In recent years, China's Ministry of Public Security has continuously strengthened law enforcement and security cooperation with ASEAN member countries, and has jointly carried out joint operations against transnational crimes and overseas fugitive pursuits, effectively curbing prominent crimes such as drug crimes and terrorism in the region.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, including China, has established formal ties with ASEAN; the organization signed the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism long before the events of 11 September, which is predictable in combating terrorism. For example, APEC in November 2015, the 23rd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting Declaration was held in the Philippines, and the meeting adopted the Leaders' Declaration, which mentioned the conditions for eradicating the existence of terrorism and extremism and stressed the need for the international community to unite and cooperate to combat terrorism. This is urgent and necessary.

There is also counterterrorism cooperation between China and ASEAN member states, such as the cooperation between China and Indonesia in January 2015, which included counterterrorism intelligence exchange and joint operations. China, Indonesia and India also conduct regular counterterrorism military exercises, and diplomatic relations between them are growing. Indonesia is the center of terrorism in Southeast Asia, and terrorist incidents occur frequently, so the country attaches great importance to its maritime security cooperation and actively participates in the construction of international maritime counter-terrorism cooperation mechanisms.

4.2.3. Maritime environmental cooperation

In November 2016, China issued the Framework Plan for International Cooperation in and Around the South China Sea (2016-2020), which focuses on promoting the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative and establishes an implementation plan for cooperation in seven areas, including ocean and climate change, marine environmental protection, marine ecosystems and biodiversity, marine disaster prevention and mitigation, regional oceanographic research, marine policy and management and marine resource development and utilization, and blue economy development cooperation, to further promote maritime connectivity among partners. Under the China-ASEAN framework, many cooperation mechanisms have been established one after another, which has expanded the degree and scope of cooperation between the two sides in the low-sensitivity maritime field.

After years of efforts, cooperation between China and ASEAN countries on regional marine environmental issues has achieved remarkable results: First, through a large number of cooperation forums, the continuous operation of multilateral and bilateral mechanisms has been maintained, and exchanges and dialogues on environmental and sustainable development in the South China Sea have been promoted. Second, through the intergovernmental meeting between China and ASEAN, bilateral cooperation documents covering the substantive content of the maritime field have been formed, and substantive marine scientific research cooperation institutions or platforms have been established. Third, the signing of a document on the willingness to carry out multi-faceted cooperation has laid a foundation for all parties to carry out cooperation on marine environmental protection in the South China Sea, and also laid the foundation for China-ASEAN to jointly build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. However, as pointed out in the China-ASEAN Environmental Protection Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015: "At this stage, the lack of effective cooperation mechanism support has gradually limited the in-depth development of environmental cooperation between the two sides." In the existing situation where it is difficult to make substantial progress in the protection and governance of marine environment in the South China Sea, environmental cooperation between China and ASEAN is not only necessary to improve in broadening the field

and enriching the content, and it is more necessary to break through the "bottleneck" and make joint efforts to improve the existing process and build a long-term mechanism.

5. Barrier factors for China-ASEAN Maritime Security Cooperation

First, some ASEAN countries still have a deep sense of vigilance and vigilance against China's policy propositions in the South China Sea, and the "theory of China's maritime expansion" and "China's threat theory in the South China Sea" still have certain markets in countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. Mistrust of China has become one of the main factors hindering the deepening of interaction and cooperation between China and ASEAN countries in the maritime field.[8]

Second, the "trust deficit" problem. Judging from the current development trend, China-ASEAN maritime security cooperation in the 21st century will be mainly oriented in the arrangement of high-level, multilateral, bilateral and binding characteristics. The bilateral relationship touches on maritime political elements, including sensitive issues such as territorial disputes and the involvement of major powers outside the region, which make China-ASEAN maritime cooperation face political and even military challenges. For example, the Philippines has decided to bring in U.S. and Japanese military forces to deal with "maritime security threats" from China. The United States and its allies and partners regard Southeast Asia as an important venue for geopolitical power and continue to interfere with exchanges and cooperation between China and ASEAN countries on sea- and security-related issues. The South China Sea issue is the main lever for the United States and other countries outside the region to interfere with China-ASEAN cooperation in the maritime field. The diplomatic and military involvement of countries outside the region has become another negative factor in enhancing maritime cooperation between China and ASEAN countries.

Third, the competitive exploitation of marine resources restricts the development of marine industry economic cooperation between China and ASEAN countries and the construction of regional marine governance systems. Traditional fishing and offshore oil and gas development are important industrial supports for the economic development of ASEAN countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. In order to compete for fisheries and oil and gas resources in the South China Sea, neighboring countries have adopted a policy of independent management, plundering development and exclusive marine development.[9] The unilateral development of marine resources by some ASEAN countries has become an important obstacle to regional resource conservation and overall transformation and upgrading of the marine industry chain. Cooperation Hierarchy" question.

6. Conclusion

China-ASEAN maritime security cooperation has entered the new stage of upgrading and innovation. Three trends have appeared in the development of China-ASEAN maritime cooperation: level rising from secondary to strategic, fields expanding from disperse to concentrated, approaches advancing in both multilateral and bilateral arenas. Despite remarkable achievements in maritime cooperation in the recent two decades, China and ASEAN still need to pay special attention to difficulties and challenges, such as confidence deficit, limited cooperation level, and one-way action where one side is active and the other passive. Promoting maritime cooperation is also the common requirement of China and ASEAN to enhance mutual trust and resolve differences. Both sides should try to make maritime cooperation a new pillar for their strategic partnership in the spirit of win-win cooperation.

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