

Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
Indonesia
Korea
Lao PDR
Malaysia
Myanmar
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand
Vietnam

Partnering for Tomorrow

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on ASEAN-Korea Partnership

The ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership: Where Is Security Cooperation Heading?

Steven C.M. Wong
Deputy Chief Executive
Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

ASEAN-ROK cooperation

“Security cooperation conspicuously missing ... in the field of security cooperation, ASEAN and Korea have not made meaningful progress” – Lee Jaehyon

This chapter argues there have been (dramatic) developments since then – interests merging, limitations receding and mutual trust and confidence paying off

“Political road has been paved and widened and the scope of defence-related activities with it...the next quarter of a century should markedly contrast from the previous one”

ASEAN-ROK cooperation

What should be expected from Declaration of ASEAN Community and ASEAN Political–Security Blueprint 2025? What implications for ASEAN–ROK?

ASEAN – a constructivist enterprise built on a bedrock of enduring – but not immutable – member states’ interests

In the absence of supranational authority, ASEAN relies on states’ perceptions of their interests and expectations of stakeholders for change

This now includes active defence cooperation.

Political Cooperation

Korean Peninsula – litmus test for ASEAN–ROK strategic partnership

ASEAN has not been reticent on issue; ASEAN Regional Forum has been a primary forum for dialogue on Korean Peninsula since 1994; ARF has been used by ROK and DPRK for four sideline and two informal meetings

ARF and ASEAN ministers and ASEAN leaders have issued statements almost annually

- Sinking of Cheonan in 2010
- Meeting between ROK and DPRK in 2011 on side–line of 18th ARF in Bali, Indonesia (4 sideline meetings, 2 informal meetings)

Political Cooperation

ASEAN foreign ministers' statement in 2016 particularly pointed –the nuclear test, rocket and ballistic missile tests were “in violation of the UNSC resolutions”

30th ASEAN Summit Chairman's Statement – attributed escalation of tensions that can affect peace and stability in the region to the DPRK

ASEAN member states have diplomatic relations with DPRK. Should not be made to adopt a strategic tilt, whether at behest of US or DPRK, so that it can continue to play a political–diplomatic role

(Paper discusses escalation of tensions as the possible consequence of actions by stakeholders)

Security Cooperation

APSC Blueprint 2025

- Strengthen relations with dialogue partners
- Improve mechanisms of the TAC
- Explore cooperation activities in ARF, APT and EAS (refer chapter)

APSC Blueprint does not cover the full spectrum of activities going forward

ASEAN–ROK

- Joint Declaration on ASEAN–ROK Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2010)
- Joint Statement of the Commemorative Summit, Busan, South Korea (2014)
Objectives include cooperation in traditional and non–traditional security challenges
- Plan of Action (2011–2015), (2016–2020)
Maritime security included as an area for cooperation

ADMM and ADMM+8

Highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism (2006 & 2010)

Objectives include conducting dialogue and cooperation to build mutual trust, confidence and capacity building

Seven areas of hands-on practical training and exercises:

1. Maritime security (Singapore and ROK EWG co-chair for 2017–2020 cycle)
2. Counter terrorism
3. Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
4. Peacekeeping operations
5. Military medicine
6. Humanitarian mine action
7. Cybersecurity

ADMM Plus Dialogue Partner Informal Meetings

Currently held with China, US and Japan. (Note: ADMM–China Defence Ministers Informal Meeting particularly active.)

Concerns:

- Potential overlap with the ADMM+8 agenda
- Strain on ASEAN member states resources

Guidelines for ADMM Plus Dialogue Partner Informal Meetings:

- Only held on years the ADMM+8 does not convene
- Even then only a maximum of two meetings a year alongside the ADMM and ADMM Retreats
- Requests decided by consensus, based on merits and urgency
- Not require the establishment of preparatory working groups or follow-on activities

Moving forward

ASEAN–ROK investments in building mutual trust and confidence paying off

Unclear as to the interest of parties for a ADMM–ROK Defence Minister’s Informal Meeting (AKDMIM) in future given immediacy of threats in the Korean Peninsula

It is suggested that at a strategic opportunity, such a bilateral may be beneficial for the region. ADMM not perceived as a threat. Non–participants could be invited as observers. Demonstrate peaceful aspects of military cooperation.

“The ASEAN–Korea Strategic Partnership today has more hard security possibilities and discretion that were not available when they started off in 1989. This, among other things, can decidedly only be considered a good thing.”

Thank you