

# Problems Faced by ASEAN in Dealing with Transnational Drug Smuggling in Southeast Asia Region

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## Article Info

Volume 83

Page Number: 4779 - 4788

Publication Issue:

July - August 2020

## Article History

Article Received: 06 June 2020

Revised: 29 June 2020

Accepted: 14 July 2020

Publication: 25 July 2020

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to explain the problems issued by ASEAN in the discussion of transnational smuggling of narcotics in the Southeast Asian region. In this study using primary data and secondary data. The Southeast Asia region has a vast territory of 4.4 million KM and the United Nations explained that ASEAN increased growth from 563.7 million in 2006 and in 2015 reached 631 million people. This study produces conclusions about the problems issued by ASEAN in its research on transnational drug smuggling in the Southeast Asia region based on negotiation factors at the regional level related to the differences of each ASEAN member country related to narcotics, climate change. ASEAN countries, the weak value of ASEAN norms and norms, do not have countries that control the participation of ASEAN countries as well as the low sense of ownership of Southeast Asian people towards ASEAN. The object of this research is the ASEAN international organization related to drug smuggling. Analysis of the factors that influence the ASEAN security system in transnational protection policies using two models, namely the international level negotiation model and one at the national level in the form of ratification of ASEAN international relations related to drug smuggling.

**Keywords:** ASEAN, drugs, negotiation regimes, ratification of the ASEAN agreement

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This fact is also reflected from the conflict of interest among Southeast Asian countries themselves such as the confrontation that often occurs between Indonesia and Malaysia, territorial conflict between Malaysia and The Philippines related to Sabah region, and the separation of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation (M. Sabir, 1992).

Francis Fukuyama believes in one side that the end of cold war has brought the peace to the nations as conflicts related to ideology war have stopped (The End of History and The Last Man, 1992). However, even though the conflicts and military tension subsided, yet issues related to non-traditional security arise, especially the ones related to human security including threat and transnational crimes.

Ever since the 2000, transnational crime has started to become well-organized and it has spread to not only conflict-vulnerable nations such as middle east and Latin American countries, but also to nations that maintain favourable relationship such as European and Asian countries, especially in the Southeast Asian countries which are well known to share favorable and effective cooperation (The New Transnationalism Activism, 2005).

Since 1968 up to the present time, ASEAN has succeeded in developing and maintaining the peace and stability in the region, and raising the trust among the members. ASEAN has also made significant contribution to the security and stability of broader region in Asian Pacific through ASEAN Regional Forum since 1994. ASEAN has agreed to form ASEAN Community which is an intra-ASEAN cooperation in the Declaration of ASEAN Political Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Socio Culture Community (M. Sabir, 1992).

In 1970, ASEAN countries started to experience problems related to national and international security issues, especially the ones related to the nuclear proliferation-free program in an agreement of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). However, the dynamicity in diplomatic relationship among the nations started to bump into problems related to human security issues in 1990 (Hutahayan, 2019). The effects can be in the form of anesthesia, painkiller, euphoria, hallucination and imagination. Drugs are commonly used in medical treatment such as in surgery, to relieve pain, and so on (Alifia, U, 2008. Page 8).

Drug smuggling as transnational crime rapidly develops and threatens the national security of a country. Good coordination system among drug mafia allows them to distribute the drugs across countries (John Broome, 2000). ASEAN Narcotics Center stated that the narcotic plants are planted in areas known as Golden Crescent which includes Iran, Afghanistan and in “Golden Peacock” areas including Latin America as well as “Golden Triangle” area in the borderline of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar (2015, Page 3).

The Golden Triangle area in Southeast Asia becomes the places for some people to plant opium which is the main ingredient of heroine and cocaine. The business in this area generates up to US\$ 160 billion dollar profit per year (Zarina Othman, 2004). The development of poppy farm in the golden triangle area has been the primary source of income for the society around the area in Myanmar as the majority of the society work as poppy farmer (UNODC, 2014. Page 12).

As a regional organization, ASEAN has made some attempts to deal with the threats of drug smuggling. IN 1972, ASEAN held a meeting for ministers to discuss the modes of drug smuggling in ASEAN area namely ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matter (ASOD) (Fernandes and Solimun, 2017). Drug problem is undeniably a serious issue that threatens the health, security and welfare of the society in Southeast Asia. ASEAN held the 30<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Kuala Lumpur, resulting in a agreement to enhance the attempts to fight against transnational crime including terrorism, human trafficking, drug abuse, weapon trade, and piracy.

Issues on transnational crime including drug smuggling in Southeast Asia were also discussed in ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) to support 2015 ASEAN Drug-Free program. ASOD is the official forum for ASEAN members to solve problems related to drug trade. ASOD was officially established in 1984 in Jakarta as the follow up program of the regular meeting ASEAN Experts Group on the Prevention and Control of Drug Abuse held since 1972 under the authority of the Committee on Social Development (COSD) and Narcotic Desk in the headquarter of ASEAN (ASEAN Narcotics Center, 2015).

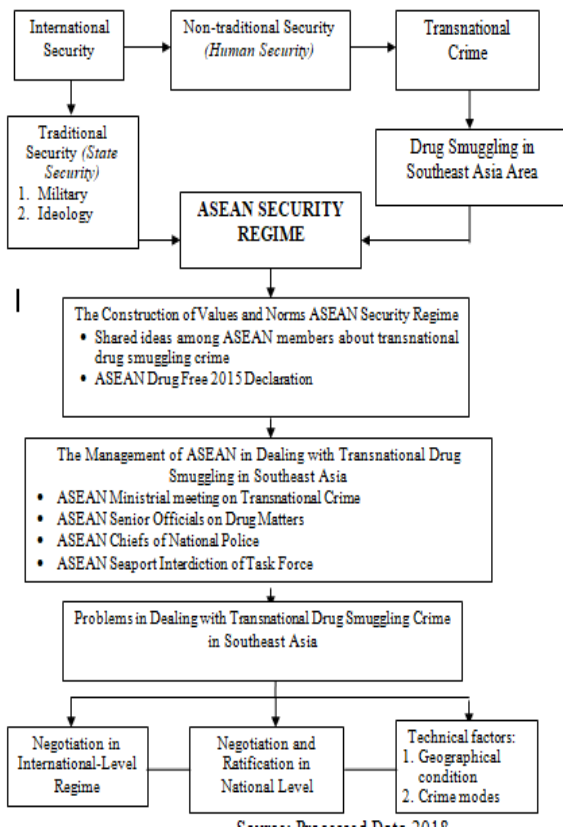
Different views on the security related to drug smuggling in Southeast Asia countries also triggers inadequacy of the coordination and attempts made by the organization to fight against drug abuse in the area. Several factors are known to relate with drug trafficking in borderline areas between Southeast Asian countries such as the fact that state officials are less professional in working and the inability to catch up with the sophisticated way in performing transnational crime among doers. Those weaknesses become the

obstacles that prevents ASEAN from being able to anticipate drug trafficking in ASEAN area (Bambang Cipto, 2007).

The modes of drug smuggling to ASEAN countries are presented before ASEAN Drug Free Declaration in 2015 until the end of the declaration, in which it was shown that the number of drug smuggling in Southeast Asian countries kept arising. The ineffective implementation of the ASEAN declaration program as explained previously has intrigued the researcher to analyze the Problems Experienced by ASEAN in Dealing with Drug Smuggling Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia.

## 2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The framework of this research on the problems faced by ASEAN in dealing with transnational drug smuggling crime in Southeast Asia is presented as follows.



Source: Processed Data 2018

**Figure 2.3 Research Framework**

Regarding those problems, the hypothesis of this research was formulated as “the factors that caused ineffective ASEAN security regime in dealing with transnational drug smuggling include the non-optimal internalization of values and norms of ASEAN Drug Free Declaration among member countries which can be analyzed based on regional negotiation among Southeast Asian countries as well as national negotiation within ratification process in the member countries”.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach and case study method that investigated certain event, subject or documentation of certain event in details (Moleong, Lexi J. 2000). The object of this research is ASEAN international organization in dealing with transnational drug smuggling crime. Primary data and secondary data were analyzed in this research to explain the phenomena. Primary data were the data obtained from interviews done to informants from ASEAN headquarter in Jakarta, ASEAN-NARCO, *Badan Narkotika Nasional Direktorat Reserse dan Narkoba*. Meanwhile, secondary data included annual reports of the *Direktorat Reserse Narkoba* on drug trafficking cases, report of *Setnas ASEAN*, report of ASEAN NARCO and journals related to transnational crime activities and other relevant sources.

After that, the data were inductively analyzed by drawing a conclusion of the obtained data from the general view to the specific ones. In the other words, conclusions were drawn by involving all of research elements that could not be analyzed related to regional organizational dynamicity which was employed by international regime in anticipating drug trafficking. In this research, data analysis and observation were done simultaneously, in which data were directly analyzed right after they were obtained. The obtained data were descriptively analyzed.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The socialization of ASEAN role can be carried out by dominant actors in the community who are able to get the members used to the

appropriateness and the expected behavior among the members. This process constructs the identify of the community through regional security community.

The products of the organization include the strengthening of the collaboration among national and regional organizations, the government and international actors in order to effectively collect valid information related to the changes in the trade mode, vulnerability and identification of opportunities that contribute to the mutual trust in fighting against well-organized drug crime (Ralf Emmers, 2003. Page 12).

Based on the Drug-Free 2015 scheme, ASEAN area is projected to be free from drug production and distribution. In a meeting held in Bangkok 2000 on the realization of the Declaration of ASEAN Drug-Free program, the deadline was shortened to 2015.

Policies to support the acceleration and implementation of the mutual agreement on drug matters have been implemented by member countries by focusing on the implementation of law supremacy in every nation. Even though preventive, preemptive and repressive actions have been taken to deal with drug smugglings, they could not yet completely solve the problems. The data released by ASEAN Narco Centre shows that since 2015 to 2017, the distribution and smuggling of drug increased in terms of types and crime modes.

Factors that influence the effectiveness of regional organizations in dealing with drug trafficking are explained as follows.

#### **4.1 Negotiation Process in ASEAN Security Regime Level**

The negotiation in ASEAN security regime level will be more effective if conflict management is dominated by the principle of openness from all of the member countries. Regarding to the negotiation related to transnational drug smuggling crime in Southeast Asia, ASEAN security regime has administered

several methods in carrying out the mutual agreement in international level even though the implementation still faced obstacles especially during the lobbying process. The existence of ASEAN security regime will be able to solve various problems related to mutual security including drug smuggling crime. There are some factors that hinder the effectiveness of the negotiation process in regional ASEAN level including:

##### **4.1.1 Different Perception among ASEAN Countries on the Threat of Drug Smuggling in Southeast Asia Region.**

This means that human security of a community also becomes threatened due to less optimal protection efforts provided by the country. Therefore, maintaining the security for the ASEAN community in dealing with drug smuggling requires good coordination and cooperation from member countries. In fact, Thomas L. Friedman explained that technology encourages globalization which involves global integration, even further according to him the world seems to be a global village that unites humanity in one space of dimensions and time even though they are physically apart (Thomas L. Friedman. 1999. p. 16).

Countries involved are groups of third world countries (developing countries), ranging from some countries in South Asia and Central Africa, as well as countries in South Asia, including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, even European countries.

Heroin (Putaw) is often packaged and hidden in congratulatory cards, bath soap packs, powder milk boxes, trash cans, the back of the refrigerator as found in in several drug crime cases in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia. Meanwhile, ecstasy pills are often hidden in candy wrappers, beverage wrappers, bread cans, matches, helmets as happened in several cases in

Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, and Malaysia.

*And one of the most common types of narcotics in the Southeast Asia region is methamphetamine and putau which are stored in boxes containing piles of fish to avoid the detection of sniffer dogs and stored in clothes or slippers / shoes that have been modified to avoid being detected by detection devices at pioneer class airports as happened in several disclosures in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines and Malaysia.*

*([https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/ASEAN\\_2015](https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/ASEAN_2015)).*

Drug smuggling does not only threaten state security, but it also appears as a threat to human security. Hence, a comprehensive anticipation from all parties is necessary, including the ones from the government, the public and the private sector. In dealing with drug smuggling in the Southeast Asia region, each ASEAN country has agreed to fight against this crime, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

This increase in the number of opium farms is obviously influenced by various factors. One of the most influential factors towards this significant increase is the law enforcement in the business field and the high rate of drug abuse, resulting in the rapid development of opium farms. After Myanmar, Laos and Thailand are also known to have opium farms (Kramer, T. 2015. p. 44).

Opium fields that grow in the borderline of these three countries are known as the golden triangle, a term that refers to the opium farms located in the three border regions of those countries. The harvested opium plants are sent to Taiwan and China to be extracted and marketed to various countries in the Southeast Asian region

and even the world. Seen from the socio-cultural point of view, the traditional societies in Southeast Asian countries have been using the plant as painkillers, cigarette, and cooking seasoning. However, abuses in the use of the plants have made the plant illegal to be planted according to the Southeast Asian regional community agreements.

Myanmar, Laos and Thailand regard the farm beneficial for the economic development of the community, as the community have been planting these poppy plants since ancient times. They regard massive prohibition policy will lead to conflicts within the community which will result in a higher rate of. Whereas for other member countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, which are the market for narcotics products, regard the business as a major threat for their society. Those countries then started to establish internal supervision and transnational cooperation to break the chain of drug smuggling crime in their countries.

Indonesia and the Philippines are among the countries with the highest consumption of narcotics. Therefore, the governments of those countries are very aggressive in fighting against drug smuggling crime by enforcing harsh legal sanctions up to the death penalty for the drug cartel mafia. This difference in perceptions of the threat of narcotics in the Southeast Asian region causes ASEAN organization being unable to implement optimal efforts in resolving various problems related to drug smuggling in the Southeast Asia region.

Therefore, single agreed perception can be obtained only if ASEAN member countries are willing to communicate this matter in a joint integrity pact even though in the 1970s, ASEAN has begun to discuss this transnational drug smuggling crime in formal forum or dialogues process with other major countries. Forums were held to support the formulation of the political and security agenda in the ASEAN blueprint based on 50 years of ASEAN experience.

This different perception on policy priority scale in carrying out ratification, implementation and law enforcement was analyzed from the constructivism point of view, resulting in an insight that the structures which unite the humanity are rather determined by the shared ideas instead of material resources. In fact, ASEAN countries agree to declare drug trafficking a common threat, yet each country has its own priority scale in dealing with this crime. For instance, Indonesia and the Philippines apply death penalty for drug mafia while some other ASEAN countries still apply conventional law of imprisonment in dealing with the crime. This difference in the law supremacy has resulted varied ways in resolving the problem of transnational drug smuggling. In addition, every action made by a country will be taken based on their perception of the interactions with other ASEAN member countries. The cooperation or conflict in dealing with transnational drug smuggling crime are also influenced by the country's shared understanding of the interaction of international political maps.

Seen from constructivism perspective, the state policies in the Southeast Asia in dealing with transnational drug trafficking have certain influences on the state, especially in analyzing the behavior of other countries or other international political actors. Meanwhile, seen from the implementation of the handling of drugs in the Southeast Asia region, the different perceptions among ASEAN member countries are formed based on collective meanings understood by each ASEAN head of state. Every ASEAN country does have the desire to stop drug smuggling despite the existence of various inhibiting factors, especially the ones related to the production of drugs in Laos, Myanmar and Thailand and the high market demand upon the products in the Southeast Asia region, especially Malaysia and Indonesia .

Therefore, within the context of drug matters in Southeast Asia region, different perceptions arise from each ASEAN country regarding the threat of narcotics. For Indonesia and the Philippines, drug smuggling is highly dangerous and it is considered a massive threat as Indonesia and the Philippines are the destination countries of drug trafficking. The Chairperson of the Indonesian Representative Team at the ASEAN Narcho Center stated that:

*Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore are often become the transit countries and according to Myanmar, Laos and Thailand, drug is indeed a real threat but keep in mind that mostly, narcotics products are distributed in three countries' border areas (Results interview with ASEAN Narcho Center on May 12, 2018).*

Based on the explanation above, different perceptions of ASEAN member countries against the threat of narcotics will affect their responses and policies, especially the ones that relate to law and regulation on drug smuggling crimes in the Southeast Asia region.

#### **4.1.2 The Differentiation of Interest Priority and ASEAN Leaders' Agenda**

Since the establishment of ASEAN in 1968, ASEAN member countries have always been committed to apply the values and principles of ASEAN membership. In one hand, this appears as a good condition which strengthens the existence of ASEAN organizations. However, the understanding of the shared values, such as respect for national sovereignty, non-intervention and peaceful conflict resolution, these values cannot automatically integrate the communities with distinctive characteristics the way the communities of regional institutions integrate.

The cooperation among ASEAN member countries has been able to engage member countries to comply with international norms in

the field of security, for example on conflict prevention and resolution and non-proliferation of mass destructive weapons, fostering cooperation in law enforcement between member countries and links communication with powerful countries with intersecting interests in the Southeast Asia region. Overall, big countries play a role in shaping the identity of ASEAN member countries.

Different priority scale of the interests among ASEAN countries ever since the establishment of ASEAN ranges from the field of economy, cultural sociology, up to the ASEAN political and security community. It can be inferred that agreement has been taken, yet the implementation is not yet optimal, especially related to ASEAN political and security community issues.

The enhancement of security sector among ASEAN countries has not been well institutionalized. This can be seen from the way of problem solving in ASEAN, especially related to transnational crime in the Southeast Asia. Political leaders in ASEAN countries are still focusing on various challenges in the country of each member country rarely discussed regional issues.

Looking back at the history, the golden age of ASEAN in the 1980s to the 1990s occurred because ASEAN had strong political leaders who held strong control such as Lee Kuan Yew, Mahathir Muhammad and Suharto. Those leaders had strong political control, time and political resources to discuss regional cooperation, as quoted by Henri Kissinger, saying that foreign policy will be well established as domestic politics gets more stable.

Unfortunately, in the present time, ASEAN leaders are rather busy with their respective domestic problems such as President Jokowi, Prime Minister Najib and President Rodrigo Duterte who do not prioritize regional issues discussions including the issue of ASEAN community security which is no longer considered

as internal state issue. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Long stated that:

*“Domestic agendas must be well-managed, but if it becomes very time consuming and you do not have time to take care of ASEAN cooperation or you cannot make ASEAN cooperation matters as important, for example in terms of investment guarantees, trade, economic cooperation or problems human resources and human security, ASEAN will become a place that has no role”* (Mahbubany Kishore and Jeffery. 2017. p. 277).”

The above discussion indicates the importance of ASEAN cooperation that can be more effective if ASEAN leaders finish their domestic problems and have good political electability. In fact, Indonesia as one of the founding countries of ASEAN, still faces internal problems (economic inflation, political dynamics and Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism) and Malaysia which also faces chaotic internal politics that result in ASEAN inability to convey its national interests due to the distracted focus of ASEAN member countries on their own national domestic internal problems.

In addition, the issue of institutionalization of ASEAN institutions keeps growing but with a relatively weak condition, resulting non-optimal function. This is reflected in the ASEAN-EU collaboration in the program for regional integration support (APRIS) that there was criticism of ASEAN from EU leaders namely "ASEAN personnel and resources are inadequate, its mandate is weak, the organization has no executive power and staffs travel too often (Laura Allison. 2015. p. 108).

National interests are important elements in the achievement of a nation's goals and they are the transformation of the founding fathers' ideals. Especially related to security sector, countries involved in a consensus will find it difficult to achieve common goals. This is certainly different from bilateral cooperation, international or

tripartite organizations where countries that embark on cooperation have one agenda, related to the clash of national interests among ASEAN countries as a factor inhibiting the handling of regional drug trafficking, it was also shown on the agenda of the Summit in which drug trafficking was not specifically discussed (Keith R. Krause, 2012. p. 66).

Therefore, the less optimal function of ASEAN becomes the limit of the organizational function. The ASEAN Political and Security Community must determine what security functions must be enhanced in order to be recognized as a community both internally and externally. Problems with other institutions must be avoided and recognized by the legitimacy of other institutions, such as the United Nations.

Conflict that require peace intervention are not considered as ASEAN's "competency areas", although efforts have been made, for example by the establishment of the ASEAN Peacekeeping Center. In fact, ASEAN delegates the issue of peacekeeping to other institutions. Moreover, the software (integrated doctrine) and hardware (integrated forces) for peacekeeping needs are not yet adequate. As the consequence, the agenda for peacekeeping can be an agenda that breaks down or fragmented for ASEAN. Hence, a good mechanism should be built to strengthen the mutual trust in ASEAN member countries.

One way that can be done is to strengthen the concept of Confidence Building Measures. The term Confidence Building Measures was first introduced in the 1950s when the United States and the Soviet Union submitted a proposal in front of the UN on the use of space and supervision of the placement of troops in Europe. The attempt failed, but it had a great influence on the academic and political movements. Along with the findings of the two superpowers, in the end, a similar idea reappeared and was officially adopted in Helsinki 1975 (CSCE) as a politically binding agreement.

Therefore, Confidence Building Measures are every effort to avoid tensions and the possibility of inter-state conflict carried out formally and informally through unilateral, bilateral and multilateral relationship. The process includes both military and non-military aspects that can be carried out in three forms. First, declaratory measures, such as statements not to make the first attack in any form and / or agreement not to use certain types of weapons if certain armed conflicts if the conflict cannot be avoided. History shows that these agreements have been effective in resolving prolonged conflicts and for constructing common principles to be recognized and adhered in a region or sub-region. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia is one of ASEAN declaratory agreements.

The second model is transparency measures, both in the form of information exchange, communication enhancement, military activities notification and permission to conduct observation and inspection in activities related to joint security. The next is constraint measures, such as risk reduction regimes, prohibition on the existence of certain weapons in an area (exclusion / separation zone) or generally it is a restriction on the number / type of personnel, equipment and operational activities. Agreements or statements about nuclear-free areas, such as ZOPFAN, can be categorized in that effort.

Based on the elaboration of the concept, considering that ASEAN still faces quite difficult problems, especially the issue of geopolitics in the region and the busyness of ASEAN leaders in resolving domestic problems, the second version of the Eminent Person Group is considered necessary. This allows them to have enough and intense time to improve the understanding of political will among ASEAN countries such as former President SBY in Indonesia, PM Goh Cok Tong from Singapore, PM Anand Panyarchun from Thailand and President Ramos from the



Philippines. These leaders knew each other well and they were not too much focusing on only domestic affairs of their own country, allowing them to also focus on ASEAN issues.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The policy carried out by ASEAN is not optimal because it only focuses on the anticipation efforts carried out partially and domestically by each country related to the most stringent and strongest country in carrying out operations against postponement of narcotics smuggling. Southeast Asia region. The non-institutionalization of values and norms for spending related to narcotics that is demanded by the handler is still focused on which country is most concerned about the negativity of narcotics abuse. Ineffective efforts made by ASEAN occurred because leaders tend to focus on partial and domestic nature of each country.

Many have lent by countries in efforts to eradicate drugs, especially in negotiations at the regional level in Southeast Asia and negotiations at the domestic level in the form of implementation and rule of law of each ASEAN member country. The gap between idealism and the challenges in the dispute by the ASEAN security regime is a theoretical finding, namely the "Paradox of International Organizations". Implementation of cooperation to save transnational drug smuggling is still against the contradiction or support between ideality and the reality of international organizations. Ideally, all ASEAN member countries agree on common values and norms in the ASEAN security regime. However, they show a big difference in the perception of the dangers of drugs. They also have different national interests complicated. Required, not all plans are implemented properly and optimally.

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