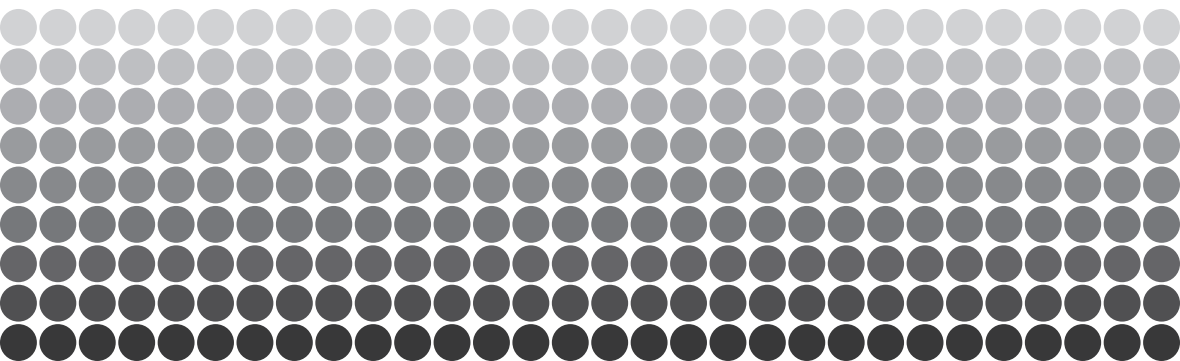**sipri**

SIPRI YEARBOOK 2013
Armaments, Disarmament and International Security

The fragile peace in East and South East Asia

STEIN TØNNESSON, ERIK MELANDER, ELIN BJARNEGÅRD, ISAK SVENSSON
AND SUSANNE SCHAFTENAAR

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**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
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OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.sipriyearbook.org

II. The fragile peace in East and South East Asia

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In the 1980s East and South East Asia went from being the world's bloodiest battleground to one of its most peaceful regions, and this era of relative peace has continued (see figure 1.1 and table 1.1).[1] In 2010, state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence killed only an estimated 674 people, the lowest number recorded by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) in any year for this group of countries.

More than 30 years of relative peace have contributed to making East and South East Asia the world's main economic growth region. Yet the peace seems by no means secure. While states have avoided direct conflict with each other and have stopped supporting insurgent movements on each other's territory, decades-old suspicions linger and economic integration has not been followed up with political integration. Increasing tensions since 2008 have been underpinned by rapid military build-ups in several countries, notably in East Asia.[2] Meanwhile a number of intrastate armed conflicts remain active in South East Asia, and some of these have escalated in recent years.

This section presents the statistical evidence for the East and South East Asian peace and its historical development. It goes on to examine the ongoing intrastate conflicts in Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand, and then looks at the recent upsurge in interstate tensions in East Asia, and the possible risks to peace.

The East and South East Asian peace

In the first three decades after World War II, East and South East Asia was the site of the world's deadliest wars: the Chinese Civil War in 1946–50, the 1946–54 First Indochina War, the 1950–53 Korean War, and the 1959–75 Viet Nam War. Eighty per cent of battle deaths worldwide in the period

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[1] East Asia here includes China, Japan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea), the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Mongolia and Taiwan. South East Asia here includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. The East Asian Peace programme at Uppsala University covers all of the listed countries as 'East Asia'.

[2] See chapter 3, section I, chapter 5, section I, and chapter 9, section IV, in this volume.
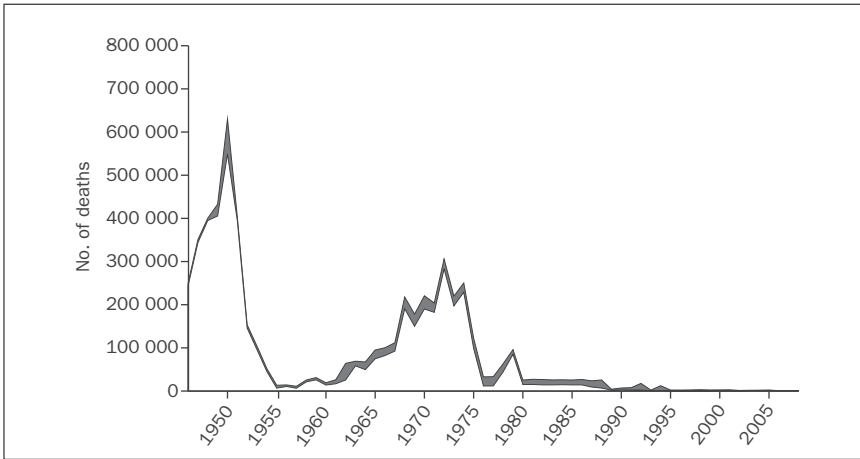
Figure 1.1. Battle-related deaths in armed conflicts in East and South East Asia, 1946–2008

Note: The figure is based on data from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), using the UCDP definition of battle-related deaths. Because of methodological differences, PRIO estimates may be higher than UCDP estimates for the same conflicts. For those conflicts where PRIO provides a best estimate, that estimate is used; for other conflicts, the PRIO high and low estimates are used. The shading indicates the difference between the high and low estimates.

Source: Lacina, B. and Gleditsch, N. P., 'Monitoring trends in global combat: a new dataset of battle deaths', *European Journal of Population*, vol. 21, nos 2–3 (2005).

1946–79 were in East and South East Asia.[3] In the same period there were a number of massacres, genocides and man-made catastrophes: the 1958–60 Great Leap Forward and 1966–76 Cultural Revolution in China, the anti-communist massacres in Indonesia in 1965–66, the 1975–79 Cambodian genocide, and the massacres that followed the 1975 Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

In the 1980s, as battle deaths increased in other regions, they dropped off sharply in East and South East Asia, and the region's share of global battle deaths fell below 8 per cent. Since 1990 there has been an overall reduction in global battle deaths but East and South East Asia has remained ahead of the trend: its share in the world total has fallen to 3.5 per cent (approximately 27 000 of the 760 000 battle deaths worldwide in 1990–2011, according to UCDP best estimates).[4]

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[3] Tønnesson, S., 'War and peace between nations since 1945', ed. N. Owen, *The Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asia History* (Routledge: London: forthcoming 2013), pp. 96–97.

[4] Data from the UCDP battle-related deaths data set, <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/>. On the global reduction see Pinker, S., *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (Penguin: London, 2011); Goldstein; J. S., *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (Penguin: London, 2011); and Gleditsch, N. P. et al., 'The decline of war', *International Studies Review*, vol. 15, no. 3 (forthcoming 2013).

Table 1.1. Number of conflicts and one-sided violence actors in East and South
East Asia, 1980–2011

Year	State-based	Non-state[a]	One-sided[a]	Total fatalities	Year	State-based	Non-state	One-sided	Total fatalities
1980	11	..	..	15 000–25 000	1996	5	1	2	1 275
1981	13	..	..	15 000–26 000	1997	7	1	2	2 145
1982	9	..	..	14 000–27 000	1998	5	2	3	760
1983	9	..	..	14 000–26 000	1999	4	2	1	1 919
1984	10	..	..	15 000–26 000	2000	5	2	4	2 960
1985	8	..	..	14 000–26 000	2001	5	1	2	1 681
1986	10	..	..	14 000–27 000	2002	5	–	7	1 444
1987	11	..	..	9 000–24 000	2003	5	–	4	2 133
1988	10	..	..	7 000–26 000	2004	4	–	4	1 695
1989	7	–	2	5 860	2005	7	1	2	1 479
1990	9	1	1	2 636	2006	5	1	3	1 338
1991	7	1	3	3 589	2007	5	1	2	1 245
1992	8	–	4	2 469	2008	5	–	2	892
1993	4	1	1	890	2009	6	1	2	1 036
1994	6	–	1	2 038	2010	5	–	2	674
1995	5	1	3	2 357	2011	7	1	2[b]	1 504

Note: Figures for 1980–88 have been compiled from best estimates when PRIO provides such
estimates, otherwise from both low and high estimates (rounded to the nearest 1000).

[a] Non-state conflicts and one-sided violence are recorded only from 1989.

[b] This figure excludes the alleged killing of 72 Hmong civilians by government forces in Viet
Nam, due to insufficient corroborating evidence. This incident is included in table 1.7 in sec-
tion III.

Sources: For 1980–88, Lacina, B. and Gleditsch, N. P., 'Monitoring trends in global combat: a
new dataset of battle deaths', *European Journal of Population*, vol. 21, nos 2–3 (2005). For
1989–2011, UCDP 'battle-related deaths' data set, version 5-2012, <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/>;
Eck, K. and Hultman, L., 'Violence against civilians in war', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 44,
no. 2 (2007), pp. 233–46; and Sundberg, R., Eck, K. and Kreutz, J., 'Introducing the UCDP non-
state conflict dataset', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2012), pp. 351–62.

Although several states have persisted in using capital punishment and
violent means of repression, the available statistics do not indicate that the
decline in armed conflict has been offset by an increase in other kinds of
organized violence.[5] East and South East Asia has simply become more
peaceful (see figure 1.2).

Developments in Indochina (Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam) account for
much of the decline in battle deaths. For most of 1945–89, Indochina was
the region's main battleground. The war that broke out between France
and Viet Nam in 1946 became part of the cold war in 1950, with China help-
ing Viet Nam win the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, after which Viet Nam
was temporarily divided into North and South Viet Nam. China, later

[5] Kivimäki, T., 'East Asian relative peace: does it exist? What is it?', *Pacific Review*, vol. 23, no. 4
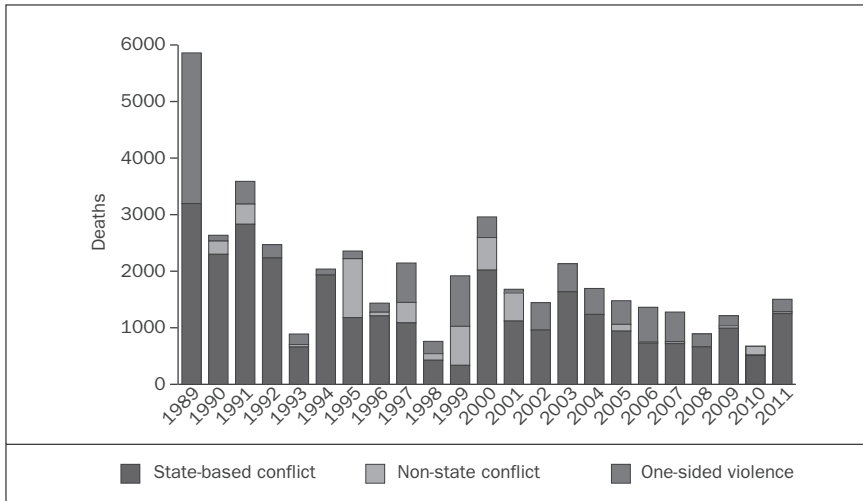(Aug. 2010), pp. 503–26.

Figure 1.2. Fatalities in state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence in East and South East Asia, 1989–2011

Numbers of deaths are UCDP best estimates except for 2011, where 72 Hmong civilians allegedly killed by Vietnamese Government forces are excluded due to insufficient corroborating evidence.

Sources: As for table 1.1.

joined by the Soviet Union, assisted North Viet Nam, the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Viet Nam, and similar movements in Cambodia and Laos in their wars against the local United States-backed regimes in 1965–75. By 1976, Communist regimes had been established in all three countries of Indochina, bringing a precipitous drop in battle-related deaths—despite a short but very bloody war between China and the Soviet-backed Viet Nam in 1979. This war followed Viet Nam's invasion of Cambodia to remove the pro-Chinese and genocidal Khmer Rouge and install a pro-Viet Nam regime. In the late 1970s the strategic focus of the cold war rivalry shifted to Europe and the Middle East.

Battle-related deaths in East and South East Asia fell sharply again in 1989. A low-key insurgency against the Viet Nam-supported government in Cambodia, sustained by a broad alliance of China, the USA and the non-Communist South East Asian states—organized since 1967 in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—ended when Viet Nam withdrew.[6] Also in 1989 a long communist insurgency ended in Myanmar and the military government agreed ceasefires with several armed ethnic groups.

[6] For a brief description and list of members of ASEAN see annex B, section II, in this volume.

The 1990s and 2000s saw a decrease not just in communist rebellion but also in ethnic conflict. The main reasons for this decline were a strengthening of government capacities to control their populations, new infrastructure that made it harder to maintain guerrilla bases in the jungle, a reduction in available aid from abroad, and also a shift in the tactics of rebel movements from armed resistance to 'people power'. Although non-violent rebellions have at times been violently suppressed, they have also had notable successes, such as the ousting in 1986 of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Thailand's return to democracy in 1992 and the fall of Suharto's 33-year-old New Order regime in Indonesia in 1998.

How can the trend towards regional peace be explained? One factor is the Sino-US rapprochement in the 1970s, which made them de facto allies against the Soviet Union. Another is the fact that regional leaders gave priority to market-driven economic growth and saw political stability as a prerequisite for realizing their economic goals. Most countries of the region have at some point shifted from ideological aims backed by military power to policies geared towards economic growth. The most important initiator of such change was Deng Xiaoping, China's de facto leader from 1978 to 1997. His pragmatism contributed significantly to regional stability and economic integration.

Yet there is little to indicate that East and South East Asia is becoming a 'security community'.[7] As described below, several armed conflicts remain active in the region, and in 2011 their number went up from five to eight.[8] There are also many unresolved militarized disputes.

Active armed conflicts

Despite significant interstate tensions, the UCDP did not register any interstate conflict in East and South East Asia between 1989 and 2010. The long-standing conflict between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) erupted into violence in 2010. In March the sinking of the South Korean warship *Cheonan*, which South Korea officially blamed on a North Korean torpedo caused 46 deaths.[9] Another 4 South Koreans and possibly some North Koreans were killed in November when North Korea fired against the

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[7] Deutsch, K. W., *Political Community at the International Level* (Doubleday: New York, 1954); Deutsch, K. W. et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Greenwood: New York, 1957); and Acharya, A., *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (Routledge: London, 2001).

[8] Some figures given in this section differ from those given in section III due to methodological differences.

[9] South Korean Ministry of National Defense, Joint Civilian–Military Investigation Group, 'Investigation result on the sinking of ROKS "Cheonan"', 20 May 2010, <http://www.mnd.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engbdread.jsp?typeID=16&boardid=88&seqno=871>. See also Farrell, A., 'Behind the mystery of the Cheonan', *Metro Éireann*, 15 Aug. 2012.

nearby South Korean-held Yeonpyeong island.[10] However, because the cause of the *Cheonan* sinking has not been firmly established, it is not counted by UCDP as a conflict. In 2011 the only interstate conflict since 1989 was registered when fighting between Cambodia and Thailand in a disputed area near the Preah Vihear temple, which had been going on since 2009, killed 28 people.[11]

However, several intrastate conflicts have remained active in South East Asia (see table 1.2). While most have their origin in the process of decolonization, some countries have been more affected than others. There is a tendency for the more conflict-ridden countries to have a military that either evades control by the government or dominates it.[12] Laos and Viet Nam, like China, have armies tightly controlled by a Communist party. The Communist regimes established in those two countries in 1975–76 have gradually overcome resistance from ethnic minority groups so that in recent years there has been no armed struggle, only demonstrations and riots.[13] Malaysia and Singapore have been able to prevent internal armed conflict since the 1960s as both states have well-organized security forces under civilian control.[14] The countries where the military has been an independent political force are Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand. It can be no coincidence that these are the countries where internal conflicts have been most persistent.

A notable characteristic of East and South East Asia's post-World War II history has been the scarcity of successful peace agreements. Significantly, the Korean armistice of 1953 has not been replaced by a peace agreement, leaving the two sides technically at war. The Geneva agreements on Indochina in 1954 and Laos in 1962 failed, as did the 1973 Paris agreement on Viet Nam. Most armed conflicts in the region have ended in the military defeat of one side, in a ceasefire, or have simply petered out. While this may mean that fighting has stopped, the underlying incompatibilities are often not addressed, leaving the potential for conflict to re-emerge. This fact does not, perhaps, bode well for the ongoing peace processes in Myanmar and the Philippines.

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[10] 'China calls for emergency talks amid Korea crisis', BBC News, 28 Nov. 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11856454>.

[11] See the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/database/>.

[12] Mietzner, M. (ed.), *The Political Resurgence of the Military in Southeast Asia: Conflict and Leadership* (Routledge: London, 2011).

[13] For 2001 and 2004 see Hayton, W., *Vietnam: Rising Dragon* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 2010), pp. 215–16. In May 2011 there were unconfirmed reports that up to 72 ethnic Hmong Christians had been killed in Điện Biên province. 'Vietnam: investigate crackdown on Hmong unrest', Human Rights Watch, 17 May 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/05/17/vietnam-investigate-crackdown-hmong-unrest>.

[14] Slater, D., *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010).

Table 1.2. State-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence actors in East and South East Asia, number and fatalities, 1989–2011

Location	State-based		Non-state		One-sided violence		Total fatalities
	No.	Fatalities	No.	Fatalities	No.	Fatalities	
Intrastate conflicts							
Philippines	2	13 362	5	173	4	686	14 221
Myanmar	9	8 621	4	2 007	2	1 922	12 550
Cambodia	1	4 333	–	–	1	667	5 000
Indonesia and Timor-Leste[a]	2	2 461	3	2 053	4	2 230	6 744
Thailand	1	1 284	–	–	2	1 789	3 073
Laos	1	75	–	–	1	73	148
Interstate conflicts							
Cambodia–Thailand, 2011	1	28	–	–	–	–	28
Other							
China	–	–	–	–	1	2 651	2 651
Total fatalities		**30 164**		**4 233**		**10 018**	**44 415**

Note: UCDP best estimates are used for battle-related deaths and one-sided violence fatalities.

[a] The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UDCP) treats Timor-Leste as having been part of Indonesia until 2002. Since then the number of fatalities in Timor-Leste has not reached the UCDP threshold of 25 deaths in one year.

Sources: As for table 1.1.

The only successful peace agreements in the region have been the 1991 Paris Agreement on Cambodia and the 2005 agreement between the Indonesian Government and the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, Free Aceh Movement).[15] The Aceh agreement was part of a general shift to peace in Indonesia. After the election of former general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to the Indonesian presidency in 2004 the violent upsurge after the fall of Suharto in 1998 ended, except in West Papua. Indonesia has since been at the forefront of developing policies within ASEAN to address threats to peace both between and within states.

Since 1989 the Philippines has suffered more battle deaths in armed conflict than any other country of the region. Fatalities have been registered almost continuously in all three UCDP categories: state-based conflict, non-state conflict and one-sided violence. The government is engaged in two parallel conflicts. One is with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which fights for a general land reform, making the Philippines the only country in the region with an active communist insurgency. The other is with the Moro independence movement in Mindanao, where the strongest organization is currently the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

[15] For details of these agreements see the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia (note 11).

The smaller Abu Sayyaf Group has also engaged in armed fighting, kidnappings and terrorist acts but has become less active.

The fighting between the MILF and the government escalated in 2011 but stopped when a peace plan was agreed in October 2012, with Malaysian mediation. This seemed a breakthrough, as the parties agreed to an overall formula for resolving the conflict.[16] Uncertainty remains, however, about its implementation and the possibility that the rival Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which made its political settlement with the government in 1996, could undermine the process. The Philippine Government and the CPP are also engaged in long-running negotiations facilitated by Norway.[17]

Since 1989 Myanmar has had the second highest number of battle deaths of any state in the region. Its many protracted internal armed conflicts began immediately after it gained independence in 1948. The wave of ceasefire agreements between the government and armed groups after 1989 reduced the amount of fighting but did not lead to political settlements.[18]

Myanmar's transition to a constitutional government in 2011 brought mixed results. Many new ceasefires were agreed, including the first ever between the government and the Karen National Union (KNU).[19] However, a 1994 ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and its Army (KIA) broke down, leading to renewed fighting in June 2011, after which a series of attempts to agree a new ceasefire failed.[20]

In Rakhine State the new national constitution adopted in 2008 and elections in 2010 exacerbated conflict between the Buddhist Rakhine majority and the Muslim Rohingya minority, which many Rakhine see as immigrants from Bengal. This led to outbursts of communal violence in June and October 2012, and the internal displacement of tens of thousands of people.[21] The government has announced its intention to carry through a peace process and involve all armed groups in a national political dialogue before planned elections in 2015.[22]

Organized violence has also killed thousands of people in Thailand. In 2001 a new generation of Malay Muslim insurgents began a series of violent

[16] 'Philippines and Muslim rebels agree peace deal', BBC News, 7 Oct. 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19860907>.

[17] International Crisis Group (ICG), *The Communist Insurgency in the Philippines: Tactics and Talks*, Asia Report no. 202 (ICG: Bangkok, 14 Feb. 2011). The CPP pulled out of talks in Nov. 2011 but agreed to a 26-day ceasefire from 20 Dec. 2012. Pagaduan-Araullo, C., 'The "special track" falters', Business World Online, 4 Apr. 2013, <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Opinion&id=68185>.

[18] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Myanmar: A New Peace Initiative*, Asia Report no. 214 (ICG: Jakarta, 30 Nov. 2011), p. 3.

[19] South, A., *Prospects for Peace in Myanmar: Opportunities and Threats*, PRIO Paper (Peace Research Institute Oslo: Oslo, Dec. 2012).

[20] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Myanmar: Storm Clouds on the Horizon*, Asia Report no. 238 (ICG: Jakarta, 12 Nov. 2012).

[21] International Crisis Group (note 18), pp. 1–2.

[22] International Crisis Group (note 18), p. 20.

attacks in the Patani region of southern Thailand, which was part of a former sultanate annexed by Thailand (then Siam) in 1902. Malay Muslim insurgents fought against the Thai Government from the 1950s to the 1970s, but never with the intensity displayed since 2001. Strict security measures undertaken after the first attacks in 2001 provoked a spiral of violence from 2004. Loosely organized insurgent groups carried out a great number of killings and bombings. Under a state of emergency declared in 2005, the Royal Thai Army set up local militias and maintained a heavy presence.[23] Fighting continued throughout 2012.

While the Patani conflict escalated, a polarized political struggle also developed in the Thai capital, Bangkok, between the 'yellowshirt' movement seeking to oust the elected Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, and the 'redshirt' pro-Thaksin movement. The yellowshirts identify with the traditional elite and are backed by much of Bangkok's middle class, while the redshirt movement has its main support base in Thailand's highly populated north and north-east and among immigrants from those regions to the capital. Both before and after Thaksin was ousted in a 2006 military coup there were violent incidents in Bangkok. More than 90 people were killed in 2010.[24] Demonstrations have continued, but with little violence, under the government of Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, who was elected in 2011. Thai society remains polarized at a time when a possible conflict over the royal succession looms.

The yellowshirt movement also whipped up nationalist sentiment against Cambodia over a disputed area near the Preah Vihear temple. Weak governments were unable to handle the dispute diplomatically. Troops were deployed on both sides, and there were violent artillery exchanges in 2009, 2010 and 2011.[25]

Thus, although Thailand is a middle-income country with long-standing experience of democracy (albeit frequently interrupted by military coups), it has had three kinds of conflict in recent years: intrastate over territory; intrastate over government; and interstate over territory. The power struggles in the capital have impaired the state's capacity to prevent conflict with minority groups as well as foreign countries.

[23] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Thailand: The Evolving Conflict in the South*, Asia Report no. 241 (ICG: Bangkok, 11 Dec. 2012), pp. 1–2; and Melvin, N. J., *Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 20 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Sep. 2007).

[24] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Bridging Thailand's Deep Divide*, Asia Report no. 192 (ICG: Bangkok, 5 July 2010), pp. i–ii, 1–3.

[25] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Waging Peace: ASEAN and the Thai–Cambodian Border Conflict*, Asia Report no. 215 (ICG: Bangkok, 6 Dec. 2011).

Rising tensions

Since 2008 interstate tensions have increased on the Korean peninsula and in China's relations with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, the USA and Viet Nam. This has been due to a range of factors, including resource-related rivalries, arms procurements, contested historical memories, and the perceived rise of China and decline of the USA. The capacity of the USA to maintain its presence in regional geopolitics through alliances, naval bases and the permanent deployment of troops in Japan and South Korea has been questioned. In 2008, when the USA was hit by a financial crisis, China assumed a more assertive attitude towards its neighbours. This led to incidents and a strategic backlash, with several states asking the USA to reaffirm its commitment to regional security. US President Barack Obama responded by rebalancing the focus of US military planning, foreign policy and economic policy in what was termed a 'pivot' to Asia.[26]

The rising tensions have accentuated risks to the regional peace. While the internal armed conflicts in South East Asia are unlikely to escalate and threaten regional stability, the Korean situation and China's maritime disputes carry greater risk since the USA might become directly involved. The more cooperation there is between China and the USA, and the more the two sides appreciate their economic interdependence, the less likely they are to let serious risks arise. Yet there can be no certainty that the two governments are able to control events. The USA is bound by treaty to defend Japan, South Korea and the Philippines if they come under attack, and China may find it difficult to back out of a crisis if nationalist movements mobilize. Taiwan and Viet Nam are not US allies but Viet Nam has moved closer to the USA in recent years, and the USA continues to sell weapons to Taiwan.

Although Taiwan's unresolved status caused much tension in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, it has not done so recently. This is largely due to improved relations across the Taiwan Strait since Ma Ying-jeou was elected Taiwanese president in 2008.

In 2012 the Korean situation was particularly worrisome, however. The Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear programme had stalled in 2007, and in 2009 North Korea restarted its nuclear programme.[27] It carried out its first nuclear test explosion in 2006, and a second in 2009. In late 2011 the young Kim Jong Un took over as leader following the death of his

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[26] Manyin, M. E. et al., *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's 'Rebalancing' Toward Asia*, Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress 7-5700 (US Congress, CRS: Washington, DC, 28 Mar. 2012).

[27] The 6-Party Talks began in Aug. 2003 as a Chinese diplomatic initiative aimed at resolving the controversy over how to address North Korea's suspected nuclear weapon programme. In addition to China and North Korea, the other parties are Japan, South Korea, Russia and the USA. See also chapter 7, section II, in this volume.

father, Kim Jong Il. He reconfirmed his father's *songun* (military first) policy and prioritized moving ahead with the nuclear programme. North Korea successfully test-fired a rocket in December 2012 and carried out a third nuclear weapon test in February 2013.[28] The USA urged China to use its leverage to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapon and missile programmes.[29] As North Korea's main trading partner and source of food and oil, China was believed to have influence in Pyongyang. Kim Jong Un, however, was recalcitrant. Since China's economic support to North Korea is motivated by fear of a regime collapse that could cause a flow of refugees into China and lead to Korean reunification on South Korea's terms, it seemed reluctant to exercise its enormous leverage.

China's maritime disputes carry less risk than the Korean situation. Maritime incidents sometimes serve as lightning rods for interstate tensions. Yet there is a real risk of escalation if the USA should decide to intervene on behalf of an ally or to defend the principle of the freedom of navigation. The USA is bound under the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security to help Japan protect its sovereignty and keeps a controversial base at Okinawa. China and Japan have built close economic relations but have never gained mutual trust. Their suspicions are fuelled not just by territorial disputes but by resentment linked to Japan's colonization of Korea and Taiwan and the 1931 and 1937 invasions of China, and of Japan's failure to distance itself convincingly from its history of war crimes.

After a period of relative calm at sea following the adoption of a Sino-ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in 2002, there was an upsurge of maritime incidents in the East China Sea and South China Sea from 2008.[30] These incidents were fuelled by fishing interests, prospects of finding oil under disputed parts of the continental shelf, certain ambiguities in the Law of the Sea, and the mere fact that few maritime boundaries have yet been agreed on.[31] Legal experts disagree over how much impact small islands can have on the delimitation of maritime zones. Their status as either 'low-tide elevations', with no maritime zone of their own, 'rocks', with a right to only 12-nautical mile (22-kilometre) territorial waters, or 'islands' that can sustain human habitation or an economic life of their own,

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[28] See chapter 6, section IX, and chapter 7, section II, in this volume.

[29] Nakamura, D. and Harlan, C., 'Obama urges China to add to global pressure on North Korea over rocket launch', *Washington Post*, 26 Mar. 2012; and Quinn, A. and Blanchard, B., 'Clinton urges China to help on Iran, North Korea', Reuters 3 May 2012.

[30] Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, signed 4 Nov. 2002, <http://www.asean.org/asean/external-relations/china/item/declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea>. See also Wezeman, S. T., 'The maritime dimension of arms transfers to South East Asia, 2007–11', *SIPRI Yearbook 2012*; and chapter 9, section IV, in this volume.

[31] See International Crisis Group (ICG), *Stirring Up the South China Sea,* Asia Report no. 223 (ICG: Brussels, 23 Apr. 2012); and Raine, S. and Le Mière, C., *Regional Disorder: The South China Sea Disputes* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2013).

with a right to a continental shelf and 200-nautical mile (370-km) exclusive economic zone (EEZ), remains contested in international law.[32]

Patriotic feelings have contributed to transforming these disputes over small islands into major issues. China, Taiwan and Japan claim the Japanese-controlled Senkaku/Diaoyu islets east of Taiwan in the East China Sea. In the South China Sea, China, Taiwan and the Philippines claim Scarborough Shoal, west of Luzon. China, Taiwan and Viet Nam claim the Chinese-held Paracel Islands. The Spratly archipelago is claimed in full by China, Taiwan and Viet Nam and in part by Malaysia and the Philippines. Brunei Darussalam also has a maritime zone claim in the area. While the South East Asian claimants agree that the Spratlys can have only 12-nautical mile territorial waters, China argues that they are entitled to a 200-nautical mile EEZ.[33]

All the states involved (except Taiwan, because of its unrecognized status) have signed and ratified the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and are thus bound by it.[34] There is an increasing awareness that any boundary agreement has to be based on the Law of the Sea, but posturing is likely to continue for as long as states try to maximize their zone claims.

The most dangerous incidents in 2010–12 were related to the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, where Japan arrested a Chinese fishing boat captain in September 2010, leading to several weeks of vigorous Chinese protests and nationalist mobilization before he was released. A new crisis arose in 2012 when the Japanese Government bought the Senkakus from a private owner, provoking not just protests from China (which could not recognize any such transaction as it claims sovereignty over the islands) but also the dispatch of Chinese naval ships and military aircraft.[35] There was also a standoff between Chinese and Philippine vessels in April–May 2012 at Scarborough Shoal, ending in a Philippine withdrawal. China then sealed off the entrance to the lagoon with a rope and has kept a more or less permanent presence.[36]

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[32] International Court of Justice (ICJ), 'Maritime delimitation in the Black Sea' (*Romania vs Ukraine*), Judgment of 3 Feb. 2009, *ICJ Reports*, 2009, p. 110, para. 149; and International Court of Justice, 'Territorial and maritime dispute' (*Nicaragua v. Colombia*), Judgment of 19 Nov. 2012, *ICJ Reports*, 2012, p. 90, para. 238.

[33] Chinese Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Note verbale to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, CML/8/2011, 14 Apr. 2011, <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/vnm37_09/chn_2011_re_phl_e.pdf>.

[34] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), opened for signature 10 Dec. 1982, entered into force 16 Nov. 1994, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 1833 (1994).

[35] Manyin, M. E., 'Senkaku (Diaoyu/Diaoyutai) Islands dispute: U.S. treaty obligations', Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress R42761 (US Congress, CRS: Washington, DC, 22 Jan. 2013).

[36] Perlez, J., 'In Beijing, Clinton will push for talks over disputed islands', *New York Times*, 3 Sep. 2012.

As of 2012, it was impossible to gauge how seriously the rising tensions were threatening regional peace. New leaders took power in several countries. The Chinese Communist Party elected Xi Jinping as its new leader in October 2012, shortly before Barack Obama was elected to a second term as US president. In late December 2012 Shinzō Abe took over as Japanese prime minister. Also in December, South Korea elected a new, conservative president, Park Geun-hye, who had spoken out in her campaign in favour of rapprochement and confidence building between the two Koreas.

It is not yet clear what factors have done most to underpin the relative regional peace since 1980—power balance, economic interdependence, economic growth priorities, or new values and discourses. Nevertheless, there sadly seem to be few grounds for considering the peace secure.

Conclusions

While there was a precipitous decline in organized violence in East and South East Asia in the period 1980–2010, the militarized disputes in the Taiwan Strait, the Korean peninsula, the East China Sea and the South China Sea have not been resolved. Furthermore, economic growth has allowed many states to acquire new weapon systems.[37] China and North Korea are nuclear powers, while Japan and South Korea operate under a US nuclear umbrella. China, Japan and South Korea have built efficient modern navies. The US Navy has boosted its presence in the region and conducted many joint exercises with its allies. Although there is not yet a regional arms race, the growth in military capabilities contributes, together with continuing intrastate armed conflicts in several countries, to the fragility of the East and South East Asian peace. The growing number of submarines is considered particularly destabilizing.[38]

The region may still have a chance to deepen the peace it has enjoyed for well over 30 years, but this will require improvement of several bilateral and multilateral relationships, notably between the two Korea states; China and Japan; China and ASEAN; and China and the USA. Unfortunately, there are presently no signs that the national leaders are ready to enter into regional security cooperation beyond the purely consultative frameworks of ASEAN+3 (ASEAN plus China, Japan and South Korea), the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the East Asia Summit, which since 2011 has included Russia and the USA.[39]

[37] See chapter 5, section I, in this volume.
[38] Till, G., *Asia's Naval Expansion: An Arms Race in the Making?*, Adelphi Papers nos 432–33 (Routledge: London, 2012), pp. 45, 89, 98, 124–26.
[39] For more on confidence-building mechanisms in Asia see chapter 9, section IV, in this volume.