

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY FOR **ESSZONE**



Editors

Diana Peters
Jennifer Chan Kim Lian
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Martin A. Sebastian



UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

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Foreword

Sabah is a unique state among all the states in Malaysia. Firstly, the Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak form the Federation of Malaysia in accordance with Malaysia Agreement 1963. This gives Sabah a unique system of governance in comparison with other states in the Peninsular. Secondly, Sabah is situated astride the South China Sea and the Sulu Sea, two important waterways in the region. Thirdly, the East Coast of Sabah, lies in a tri-border region encompassing the Philippines and Indonesia. This region of Sabah is diverse with land and undersea flora and fauna as well as the range of coastal, island and seafaring communities. The South China Sea is an important source of hydrocarbon and marine living resource whilst the Sulu Sulawesi Sea provides a rich tri-border culture, a booming trade and a community rich with culture and language.

The proximity of the borders have provided for the movement of the tri-border community and essential goods from the East of Sabah to Mindanao in Southern Philippines and Sulawesi in Indonesia for centuries. The thriving tri-border community has been a unique feature in the Sulu Sulawesi region. These communities enjoy the land-sea nexus and the short passages across borders to make a living and be part of the booming coastal economy.

However, the porosity of the borders has also been a boon for transnational maritime crime syndicates. Impoverished communities in the region not only become targets for these crimes but also security operations by the Government as their mobility become restricted. The Eastern Sabah Safety and Security Zone (ESSZONE) and the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) were established after a failed attempt by armed insurgents who infiltrated into Sabah to conduct terror activities in 2013. Since then, security has been heightened, implicating the movement of essential goods, tri-border trade, the economy of the coastal, island and seafaring communities.

I welcome the KESBAN at Sea project for the ESSZONE as an essential hearts and mind campaign to amalgamate soft and hard security in addressing the plight of the coastal, island and sea faring communities. I would like to see a thriving region which can be a springboard to the Pacific in time to come. I believe, with the gradual progress in Mindanao and the burgeoning economy in Sulawesi, East Sabah will once again be the El Dorado of the East.

I would like the ESSZONE Committee to work closely with MIMA and UMS on the KESBAN at Sea project recommendations. There is a need to codify unity of effort in managing scarce resources and avoid duplication of effort to achieve the reality of making the ESSZONE a prosperous and glorious region.

Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Mohd Shafie bin Haji Apdal

Chief Minister of Sabah

Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

April 2019

Preface

The notion of a more holistic approach to security off the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZONE) was first discussed at the Sulu Sulawesi Sea Conference held in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in 2015. Since then, UMS and the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA) with the support of the National Security Council's Sabah Office have worked closely to come up with a better understanding on the best approaches to protecting Malaysia's maritime borders. It is imperative that a holistic view of citizen's livelihood and economic consideration need to be addressed as a major contributor to the internal safety and security of the state.

This book is an attempt to contextualise the issues occurring in this part of the region which is not only solely constrained by security in the traditional sense, but also to ensure the livelihoods of citizens are being protected. The four pillars for a holistic approach identified in this book are based on the inputs by stakeholders in four workshops organised in throughout 2016, under the same theme. It is realised that the challenges to the security of Eastern Sabah has many faces – piracy, illicit trafficking, and kidnappings – and these challenges are evolving. As such, an all-encompassing solution is needed.

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