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SECURITY COMMUNITY, ASEAN AND ITS MEMBER STATES: MUTUALLY REINFORCING OR A RELATIONSHIP OF CONVENIENCE?

ASEAN, despite its significant achievements and status as the most important international organization in the Southeast Asian region has constantly been met with criticisms, particularly in the role it played towards maintaining security in the region. This article seeks to examine the relationship between ASEAN (as an international organization) and member states; in terms of how they utilize the organization for collective security. It looks first at the evolving concept of security followed by an examination of the theoretical security framework in the context of "states" versus "institution". The article then looks at the ASEAN Way as a method utilized by its member states in managing their affairs as well as the relationship between ASEAN as an organization and its individual member states in the context of security community building. The article finds that despite its limitation as a regional organization, ASEAN and its member states exists under the condition of mutual interdependence when it comes to forging regional security.

Keywords: *ASEAN, Security Community, International Organization, Mutual Interdependence, Regional Security*

Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 out of the security concerns of its five original member states; Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. This was a time when Southeast Asia was polarized during the Cold War period by the efforts of communist states in Indochina to export their revolution into the region.[1] Incidentally, the formation of ASEAN was not without any difficulties or failures. The effort towards regional cooperation began in 1961 with the formation of the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) in July 1961 by the Federation of Malaya,[2] the Philippines, and Thailand. Unfortunately, ASA lasted for only two years before it was dissolved due to the tensions between the Federation of Malaya and the Philippines over the territorial dispute of

Sabah. Their quest for regionalization continued with the establishment of MAPHILINDO, by Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia in 1963 but was short lived after only a month of its formation due to the eruption of border clashes or *Konfrontasi*[3] between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Since then, the decades have witnessed ASEAN managing its internal tensions with some success. The role it played during Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978 leading towards the resolution of the conflict has revealed ASEAN's ability, for the first time, to act as a diplomatic community speaking with a single voice in the international arena.[4] As time passed, against all odds and expectations, ASEAN has survived for more than 50 years since its establishment and celebrated its golden anniversary in 2017. However, ASEAN has been criticized with regards to its supposed weaknesses and deficiencies as a security community. Perhaps one of the harshest criticisms is that ASEAN is nothing more than "*an ineffectual talk shop masquerading as a potent regional organization*".[5]

Why has ASEAN, despite its significant achievements and status as the most important international organization in the region, constantly been met with criticisms, particularly in the role it played towards maintaining security in the region? This article, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between ASEAN (as an international organization) and its ten individual member states;[6] in terms of how they utilize the organization. Has there been active collective utilization, or has ASEAN only mattered to its member states at times of their own convenience pertaining to their individual security concerns as suggested by critics resulting in ASEAN's inability to act swiftly in times of conflicts?

Following this introduction, this article is structured into five sections. The first section will dwell briefly on the evolving concept of security followed by the second section examining the theoretical security framework in the context of "states" versus "institution". The third section examines the ASEAN Way as a method utilized by its member states in managing their affairs. The fourth section scrutinizes the relationship between ASEAN as an organization and its individual member states; under the theme of this article (i.e. States and International Organization), in the context of security community building. Considering the given limitation of an article, this research will focus on ASEAN as a whole when providing its examples, rather than to conduct a comprehensive comparative study of each and every ASEAN member state in this regard. Finally, the last section will analyse and sums up its findings.

The Evolving Concept of Security

It has been said that security is seen as an "essentially contested concept". Walter Bryce Gallie pointed out that an essentially contested concept is where there is "no one clearly definable general use of any of them which can be set

up as the correct or standard use".[7] The Oxford dictionary defines security as "the state of being free from danger or threat". Yet, when we discuss the concept of security in the study of international relations and international politics, the difficulty lies in determining exactly what kind of danger and threat, from who and for whom? Traditionally the study of security since the end of World War II and throughout the Cold War period has been concerned with national and state security. Emerging from what was the most devastating period of destruction in human history, it is natural that the understanding and search for security placed emphasis on avoiding war and policies are directed towards that end.[8] More importantly, the rivalry between the United States and its allies against the Soviet Union and its allies during the Cold War presented a continued threat of war and violence.

The end of the Cold War however has brought about a change in how security is perceived. Barry Buzan pointed out that the decline in the fear of war and the rise of other agendas such as economic or environmental concern have widened the construction of what is considered a threat.[9] Particularly, he points out that the state is no longer as important in the new security agenda when compared to the more traditional understanding of security. Therefore, in understanding the concept of security, rather than pinpointing the exact type of threats it is possible to work with a definition framework such as that stated by Paul Williams, which is the 'alleviation of threats to cherished values'.[10] Similarly, in his article 'The Concept of Security' however, David Baldwin argues that the problem with security lies not so much in the vagueness of its conception rather with the complication in empirical observation which brings about the question of "security for whom" and security for which values?".[11]

In asking these questions, the newer understanding of security has evolved to question the continued emphasis of security based on military threat and state survival. In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Human Development Report linked security with development, popularizing the concept of human security, arguing against the narrow definition of security and shifting the focus from nation states to people.[12] More importantly, the UNDP points out that human security is universal, interdependent, is easier to ensure through prevention, and is people-centred. Although the concept of human security has been criticized as too "expansive and vague",[13] it continues to shape much of the security agenda today. The UN resolution 66/290 reaffirms the importance of human security shifting security response from not only military protection but to the protection and empowerment of the people.[14]

This article agrees with Baldwin's assessment that despite the vagueness of the security concept – the basic premise is to be free from danger or threats. The empirical value of who is free from danger and threats, and what type of dangers and threats can and will continue to evolve. On that note, the early manifestation of ASEAN and its role as a regional organization aligns

with the concept of security that has been pursued since the end of World War II which places states as the point of reference and seeks for the possibility of non-violent change in international relations. This concerns security for individual countries in the region and the changing manner of how countries in Southeast Asia navigate the relations amongst themselves through the establishment of ASEAN as an international institution was the basis of enhanced security in the region. Following that, the perception of security in ASEAN also began to change and reflect other concerns in line with the geopolitical change towards non-traditional security concerns.

Security in the Context of States Versus Institution

Based on the understanding of security discussed in the previous section, this section looks at the different stakeholders and their contribution towards attaining or establishing security. In the effort to find security, we need to assess the context of "states" versus "institution", where the issue of what actually contributes to non-violent change in a global or regional order has been widely debated between neo-realists and neo-liberals.[15] In the nutshell, neo-realists are sceptical of the prospects that institutions contribute towards peaceful change in the world order and is adamant that change occurs as a consequence of, often violent, shifts in either the "balance" or "distribution" of power within the anarchic international system.

Neo-liberals on the other hand, argue that the changing political structure of the world with the increase in liberal democratic states mean that these violent shifts are unlikely to occur as democracies do not go to war with each other.[16] More importantly, they view that change can occur peacefully through the working of international institutions. The establishment of international institutions facilitate cooperation by providing information, reducing transaction costs and helping to settle distributional conflicts. However, while the neo-liberals disagree with the neo-realists' argument that institutions matter only on the margins of international relations; neo-liberal institutionalism is still on the same page with the neo-realism premise that institutions are conditioned by the distribution of power.[17] Both schools of thoughts are tied to the concept of the distribution of power as they take state interests under that concept as a given. As interest remain wedded to the process of inter-state interactions taking place in such a given institutionalized setting, such interactions do not profoundly transform the condition of anarchy.

On the other hand, the introduction of constructivism in the field of security studies has expanded the horizon of the debate, changing the discourse of security as understood by neo-realism and neo-liberalism. Constructivism became the main theoretical framework for the study of security communities. A security community is posited upon not only the lack of conflict between members of the community but rather the ability and effort by the

community's member to resolve conflict in a non-violent or peaceful manner.[18] Constructivism's growing influence in shaping the new discourse on security communities can be found in its three core arguments.

First, constructivism postulates that a habit of war avoidance within an international community of states is a social construction. This construction is generated and reinforced through interaction, socialization, norm setting and identity building. Second, the transformative impacts of norms not only regulate state behaviour but can also redefine state interests and constitute state identities. Notably, this also includes the development of collective identities. The third is the influence of subjective factors such as ideas, culture and identities that contributes towards the building of the cultural norms and the emergence of the "we feeling" on state interests.[19]

In short, constructivism argues that despite the anarchic nature of the international system emphasizing on state sovereignty, any emerging security dilemma does not usually lead to a breakdown in basic cooperation among states. States would generally refrain from taking maximum short-term advantage of each other but instead work with each other for long term mutual gain. This behaviour has proven that states would rather adhere to international norms, institutions and laws, rather than be constrained under the distribution of power in order to maintain peace among themselves. Multilateral norms and institutions have helped stabilize the international environment, where such norms and institutions appear to be playing a significant role in the management of a broad array of regional and global changes in the world system today.[20]

According to constructivists' argument, states govern their interactions by following the rules states develop together through interaction and negotiation. As the rules become more firmly established, institutions grow up around them and states cultivate the habit of working through those institutions. Therefore, based on the institutions-as-rules approach[21], institutions can shape the "*the rules of the game in a society*", including both formal rules such as constitutions and laws enforced by the state, and informal constraints such as "*codes of conduct, norms of behaviour, and conventions*". Both these formal rules and informal constraints are generally enforced by the members of the relevant institutions. Within the rules, states realize great gains and avoid the costly outcome associated with a breakdown of cooperation.

The ASEAN Way and Regional Security Order

Arguably, it is rather unique that the effort to form a security community in the region came from the small states grouping of ASEAN members rather than from the major powers in the region; namely China and Japan, or even the extra-regional superpower, the United States. This goes against the established norm of the Cold War period especially in consideration that the United States was the focal centre of security cooperation in East Asia.[22] The Asia-Pacific

theatre of the Cold War was a major concern for the United States[23] when considering that the United States was involved in two wars in the region, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Security regimes in East Asia were therefore based on the hub and spokes system with the United States establishing bilateral security alliances with its allies such as Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.

The establishment of ASEAN in 1967 was momentous as it signified the desire of five small Southeast Asian countries to 'bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation' as stated by the ASEAN Declaration signed by Foreign Ministers of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand in Bangkok. More importantly, it was a pivot away from the conflict in the status quo that the countries of Southeast Asia were facing. The formation of ASEAN through what was termed a 'sports-shirt' diplomacy was the foundation of the ASEAN style of accommodative deliberation focusing on consultation and consensus.[24]

The region has continued to enjoy relative stability and peace in the post-Cold War era as a result of ASEAN's strategies in influencing and persuading the major powers of the world's policy decision, to some extent, through the ASEAN-led multilateral institutions. ASEAN continues to balance the aggressive growth of China's power in the region by facilitating the continued United States security commitment in the region[25] is one of the strategies. ASEAN's ability in engaging the United States and China under the platform of its multilateral institutions by capitalizing on both powers' desire to play a vital role in the region has demonstrated the success of ASEAN in regulating exchanges, developing norms, and creating a regional identity towards maintaining the security stability of the region.

In the context of the relationship between ASEAN as an organization and its member states' varying interests, the latter's desire to unite and form the former begun from their desire to collectively address their inherited weak socio-political cohesion, the legitimacy problems of a number of their post-colonial governments, inter-state territorial disputes, intra-regional ideological polarization as well as the vulnerability of their affairs being intervened by the external powers. ASEAN's role in moderating intra-regional conflicts has significantly reduced the likelihood of war in the region[26] by virtue of its own model of regional cooperation, managed through the ASEAN Way,[27] which emphasized informality and organizational minimalism. All the member states benefited from ASEAN in this regard and managed the organization for their collective benefit.

Nevertheless ASEAN and its model of regional cooperation have received many criticisms of its alleged failure in developing concrete institutional mechanisms and procedures for conflict resolution particularly since the late 1990s. Intra-ASEAN differences over longstanding norms such as non-interference, as evident in the wake of the expansion its membership

to include the CLMV[28] countries, have further aggravated the perceptions of ASEAN's weaknesses. It has not worked in conformity with the mainstream views that institution should work by constraining states preferences through the provision of sanction mechanisms to prevent cheating. In the case of ASEAN, it has prioritized less in developing such sanction mechanisms[29] but rather manage its affairs by focusing, in a more positive manner; on developing norms of collective action. This difference in approach as compared to the mainstream's heavy dependence on structures and their functions is the main reason for the criticisms toward the ASEAN way of managing its inter-state affairs.

The approach of the 'ASEAN Way' through "constructive engagement"[30] has proven to be highly fitting to the institution that consists of small states geared to inducing cooperative behaviour from its members through socialization, rather than constraining uncooperative behaviour through sanctions. This is logical, particularly in the context of the Southeast Asian region, due to the multitude of its volatile and explosive ethnic, racial, and religious differences. This is, what has been argued by some scholars as to the cultural peculiarities of the ASEAN member countries.[31] For ASEAN members, engagement is always better than isolation or conflict. The three concepts that underline the ASEAN way: discussion (*mesyuarat)*, consensus *(muafakat)* and cooperation *(gotong-royong)* which sets the groundwork that allows ASEAN members to interact as equals. The effort to make decisions through discussion and consensus means that ASEAN member countries do not worry about being forced into agreeing to a policy through a majority vote. It also allows ASEAN member countries to act on regional decisions based on their individual capability and capacity.

It also encourages engagement beyond only the head of states. Under ASEAN regional cooperation has extended beyond the top leaders and head of member states. Rather, ASEAN also prizes its active Track 2 Diplomacy. Track 2 Diplomacy conducted through 'non-official' diplomatic channels were able to contribute to "confidence building and conflict resolution" between the member states of ASEAN. Huiyun Feng also pointed out a unique aspect of ASEAN's track 2 diplomacy is the close working relations that track 1 and track 2 institutions share in ASEAN's effort. For example, the cooperation between the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Council on Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP).[32]

However, this does not mean that ASEAN is abandoning the importance of developing more concrete institutional mechanisms and legal based procedures for the management of its conflict resolution, but rather it is moving in that direction at a pace that is deemed acceptable by most of its member states. This is reflected in the signing of the ASEAN Charter in 2007 which was put into force as the legal and institutional framework of ASEAN, formalizing what had for the previous 40 years been a loosely organized

cooperation effort between the member states. More importantly, ASEAN's own effort at shaping the political security architecture in the region has brought about the recognition of 'ASEAN centrality' in the Asia Pacific region.

ASEAN: The Relationship Between the Institution and Its Members States Towards Building a Security Community

ASEAN desire in moving towards a more cohesive Southeast Asia "*capable of addressing itself to the outside world… in terms of its own aspirations rather in terms of major power rivalry and contention*"[33] has long been reflected in its 1967's Bangkok Declaration. Under this spirit, at the beginning of its humble step, pragmatic issues such as regional security took on more importance than the issues of human rights and the creation and consolidation of democracy. The indirect political liberalization and democratization became secondary within the ASEAN's notion of constructive engagement. ASEAN focus is more towards substances that "unite" rather than focusing on issues that "divide". The grand vision of a new regional order would be based on peaceful cooperation and genuine interdependence within ASEAN member states.

The end of the Cold War and the expansion of ASEAN membership also meant that security concerns that had initially motivated the formation of ASEAN had also changed. ASEAN's policy of neutrality and non-interference also meant that ASEAN member countries were no longer seen as a threat to one another. However shifting interest of larger powers outside of the region posed continued uncertainties for ASEAN. It is therefore clear to ASEAN members that security for the region was "with their neighbours as opposed to against their neighbours".[34] This further motivated member countries to utilize ASEAN as their platform in order to ensure the continued security and stability of the region ASEAN's external relations as well.

The most notable example of ASEAN member states' early success in steering ASEAN as an international organization toward a security community building is the establishment and the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 24 February 1976. India and China were the first countries outside ASEAN to sign the treaty in 2003, followed by Russia in 2004, the United States in 2009 as well as the EU in 2012. The TAC was also endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly stating it as a crucial provision for the pacific settlement of regional disputes as well as to achieve peace, amity and friendship among the peoples of Southeast Asia in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Within ASEAN, the 24 non-members[35] accession to the TAC is seen as a symbol of commitment to engagement in Southeast Asia, and ASEAN member states' emphasis on multilateral processes.

The acceptability of the TAC by many countries in the region and beyond has paved the way for ASEAN to establish its most successful

institution that manages the region's security affairs, namely the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994. The ARF became the first truly multilateral security forum covering the wider Asia Pacific region. It is the only regional security framework in the world today in which all the major players of the international system (including the United States, Russia, Japan, China and the European Union) are represented.[36] Through the ARF, ASEAN has created a relatively new norm of inclusiveness under the concept of "security with others rather than against them", using the ARF as a platform of dialogue for, not only among the like-minded states; but with principal regional actors that have conflicting perspectives on regional security issues as well.

The deepening security framework in which ASEAN operates places ASEAN as the interconnecting organization within the larger network in the region. Although ASEAN itself might not lead the discussion in all the platforms it serves as the common entry point for its member countries in regional institution building such as through the ARF as mentioned above, and the East Asian Summit. As Caballero-Anthony puts it, ASEAN's 'betweenness' allows ASEAN to gain influence by being a bridge or the broker to other members in various regional networks.[37] ASEAN as a collection of small and militarily weak nations emphasizes engagement rather than confrontation and this, in the long term, would promote transparency, confidence-building and other forms of security cooperation in the region

Since the establishment of ASEAN, its member states have never turned back but instead has further heightened their collaboration towards a security community building. The adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2007 that has conferred the legal element into the organization entitled it to act on its own in international affairs. The setting up of ASEAN Political-Security Community Blue Print in 2009 has paved the way for ASEAN in accelerating its goal towards the building of a security community in the region through the commencement of the ASEAN Community that unite ASEAN under its three pillars namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

Under the ASPC, ASEAN has also continued to shape the mechanisms that contribute to its achievement as a security community. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and have established a more focused agenda for ASEAN's security framework. This includes amongst others, maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster management, peacekeeping operations, and military medicine.[38] Furthermore, under the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), ASEAN also expanded its multilateral security dialogue and cooperation to eight other members (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea and America).[39] Combined military exercise has also been carried out under the ADMM-Plus.

More importantly, ASEAN's role in terms of security cooperation has begun to evolve alongside the evolution of how security is understood. As discussed in the earlier section of the article, the understanding of security has begun to explore security not only for the state but also for the people, and the threat to security was no longer understood only as the threat of war. ASEAN member nations have continued to deepen and improve on its ability to cooperate in order to address these new security concerns. These include transnational crime, piracy, disaster response, terrorism and environmental concerns. The language of how ASEAN perceives security has become more in line with the 'people-centred' perspective of today's understanding of human security.

According to Howe and Park, the shift ASEAN has undergone in setting up the ASEAN Community reflected an increasing acceptance and compatibility between the 'ASEAN Way' and human security.[40] Although the nation-state remains the central actor in ASEAN, the increasing shift to include other stakeholders including the private sector and non-governmental organizations is consistent with expanding its security focus. The 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration On A People-Oriented, People-Centred ASEAN reaffirmed these values. Under the AEC and ASCC, ASEAN has also made efforts to narrow the development gap between the original ASEAN members and the CLMV countries.

For example, Cambodia and Vietnam have made massive strides in catching up to the income level of Indonesia and the Philippines.[41] Overall improvement in living standards is vital towards the improvement of human security for the lesser developed member countries of ASEAN. This includes an overall improvement in life expectancy and a decrease in infant mortality rate. The CLMV countries have also seen a rapid improvement in access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation. According to the ASEAN Secretariat, access to safe drinking water in the CLMV countries have improved on par with the ASEAN-6. Meanwhile, access to improved sanitation has actually bypassed that of the ASEAN-6.[42]

Despite all of these achievements, it would be naïve to deny that ASEAN is not without its own problem. Criticism that ASEAN is only relevant to its member countries when it is convenient for them stems from the perceived inability for ASEAN to take decisive actions. ASEAN's own value of neutrality and non-intervention meant that often times member governments have been free to carry out repressive actions on its people counter to what ASEAN propagates. Issues such as the continued oppression of the minorities in Rakhine by the Myanmar government have divided ASEAN members on their expected response. The report prepared by ASEAN's Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) on expected repatriation of refugees have also been criticized as unrealistic and ignoring the atrocities suffered by the Rohingya and other Rakhine minorities at the hands of the

Myanmar military.[43]

However, it would be dismissive to say that ASEAN's inability to solve problems is a signifier that ASEAN is not relevant as a security community for its members. Criticism towards ASEAN has not been backed by action from any other quarters, neither has the international community made any better efforts than what ASEAN is doing. It is important however for ASEAN member countries and other stakeholders such as civil society organizations to continue pressuring ASEAN to improve its engagement. Although ASEAN's approach to building a security community is not defined by a need to act and decisively address problems there is still necessary improvements needed.

ASEAN needs to improve the process that allows a mutual solution to problems and preventing conflicts from happening. This effort is significant in the nature that it prioritizes inclusion and was able to shape an optional security mechanism where the smaller ASEAN states did not have to choose in siding with any specific power but engage all of the big powers (the United States and China included) in a manner that is acceptable by the ASEAN member states. This is important as it gave weight to the participation of the small Southeast Asian countries in the effort to create global norms. The need to depend on ASEAN for this makes the relationship between ASEAN as an institution and its member states a mutually reinforcing one.

ASEAN Political-Security Community

Since its inception, ASEAN's objectives and focus had evolved parallel with the development in the international arena. From combating the communist insurgency, it further widened into economic cooperation after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. It progressively strengthened its role in international relations through the development of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). More recently, four years ago, this regional organization had gone beyond its initial objective by adopting the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) in 2015 therefore solidifying security as one of its major agendas. Despite the establishment of the ASPC, ASEAN's approach to security is notably different from traditional security organizations as they remain a non-military organization.

Although ASEAN members have various bilateral military cooperations amongst themselves, ASEAN itself has not incorporate a military element to its organization. However, this is not something that would be completely unthinkable either as ASEAN had also managed military conflict in the past. There was an instance where ASEAN has discussed about using force against Vietnam during the Cambodian Conflict in order to protect Thailand's sovereignty. Vietnam's army had moved into Thailand's border in their pursuit of the resistance Cambodian's Khmer Rouge guerillas, According to Acharya (2001):

"...it was evident, as Lee Kuan Yew asserted, that the Vietnamese action had prompted ASEAN policy-making circles to rethink their position on military cooperation. President Marcos appeared to be more receptive to the idea of intra-ASEAN military cooperation, which he thought was necessary as a measure 'to stem the tide of insurgency'. Adam Malik, who had opposed a military role for ASEAN while in office, now proposed that ASEAN should hold a military exercise of 10,000 troops on the Thai-Cambodian border to demonstrate its unity to Vietnam."

Despite that, the APSC today remains focused on promoting peaceful resolutions and is steadfast in renouncing any act of aggression. It is people-centric and emphasises on comprehensive security concerns and approaches. Critics had challenged the effectiveness of ASEAN in materializing the APSC as a community based on comprehensive security. Many observers believe that ASEAN had failed in pursuing this aspiration of a 'comprehensive' security community as it is continuously challenged by seemingly 'never ending' traditional and non-traditions security issues within the region. The issues of human rights abuses such as the Rohingya in Myanmar, the violence in the Southern provinces of Thailand., over 50 years of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebellion in southern Philippines as well as issues of underdevelopment and poverty in most of ASEAN's states make it harder for observers to have faith in the APSC.

These scenarios are inevitable due to the differences in regimes, ideologies, national interests and types of leadership among the nation states in the association. This unique trait of the ASEAN states has been, on the one hand, one of its strength in terms of diversity and dialogue. On the other hand it remains one of the biggest challenge for ASEAN to move forward. The differences in approaches mean that ASEAN countries are rarely able to agree on a unified approach in dealing with security threats in the region. In the case of the South China Sea for example, Vietnam and the Phillipines remain the most belligerent against China while other ASEAN countries such as Malaysia and Brunei have been silent on China's encroachment in the region. Despite that, ASEAN and all its member states continue to engage diplomatically with China, preferring instead to focus on the Code of Conduct as the means to negotiate with China.

In other instances, ASEAN has also shown remarkable flexibility and unanimity in dealing with global socio-political concern. In June 2019, ASEAN released the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific. Its acceptance of the 'Indo-Pacific' term reflects ASEAN's continued effort to play a central role in the affairs of the region. Although this seemingly aligns it with the United State's vision of regional order, ASEAN has been clear that its acceptance of the term 'Indo-Pacific' does not mean an exclusion of the existing infrastructure

such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asian Summit – both which includes China. In such, this reflects on Kuik's (2016) argument on hedging as ASEAN is playing to both the superpowers for it's own regional security and interest, neither explicitly aligning nor balancing between the powers.

Conclusion

It can thus be concluded that the relationship between ASEAN as an organization and its individual member states exists under the condition of mutual interdependence between one another. The perception of its critics that ASEAN member states are using the organization as and when it is needed at their convenience is completely unfounded. The critics should bear in mind that ASEAN regionalism is the product of small states' cooperation. The perceived lack of its capacity in managing certain conditions is more due to the limitations of a grouping managed by small states and its effort to balance larger, external geopolitical pressure. Having said that, the extent of ASEAN ability to manage the region's security affairs by advocating a non-violent change in the region under such limitation is, by far, the evidence of ASEAN's success.

It also supports the mutually-reinforcing relationship between the organization and its member states as the 'ASEAN Way' which was shaped by its member states has begun to evolve into a more comprehensive rules-based approach. The critics of ASEAN may wish to see ASEAN roles as a security community in the region as a continuous learning process for the organization under the dynamics of the changing regional geopolitical environment. Most importantly, ASEAN depth and scope of integration within the organization as well as with the international community has gradually evolved and would continue to evolve towards this end.

Endnotes

1. The threat of communism towards the region is reflected in the "Domino Theory" prominent from the 1950s to the 1980s that assumed if one country in the region came under the influence of communism; the surrounding states would follow in a domino effect.
2. The territories on Peninsular Malaysia were first unified as the Malayan Union in 1946. Resistant against the Malayan Union has led towards the birth of the Federation of Malaya in 1948, whereby it achieved its independence from the British on 31 August 1957. Malaya united with North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore on 16 September 1963 to become Malaysia. Singapore was expelled from Malaysia and becoming an independent state in 1965.
3. A violent conflict from 1963–66 that stemmed from Indonesia's

opposition to the creation of Malaysia.

4.   Benny, Ravichandran, *Cabaran Pembinaan Komuniti Asean: Analisis Persepsi Awam Di Tiga Negara ASEAN*. Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies, Vol. 42, No.2. 2015, pp. 76-102.

5.   Eaton, Sarah & Stubbs, Richard, *"Is ASEAN Powerful? Neorealist versus Constructivist Approaches to Power in Southeast Asia."* Pacific Review Vol.19, No.2.2006, pp. 137–138.

6.   Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

7.   Gallie, Walter Bryce, "Essentially contested concepts" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian society*. Vol. 56. Aristotelian Society, Wiley, 1955.

8.   Walt, Stephen M, *The renaissance of security studies*. International Sudies Quarterly, Vol 35, no. 2. 1991, P. 212.

9.   Buzan, Barry, *Rethinking security after the Cold War*. Cooperation and Conflict, Vol 32, no. 1, 1977, p. 9.

10.   Williams, Paul D, *Security Studies: An introduction*. Routledge, London. 2008, P.1.

11.   Baldwin, David A, *The concept of security*. Review of International Studies, Vol 23, no. 1. 1997, Pp 5-26.

12.   The UNDP points out two aspects of human security which are 1) "safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression" and 2) "protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities." [UNDP. 1994. *Human Development Report 1994*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 23].

13.   Paris, Roland, *Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air*. International Security, Vol. 26. No. 2.2001, Pp.87-102.

14.   The UN Resolution 66/290 states that: *"human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people"*. The resolution also further states seven aspects which encompasses *"a common understanding on the notion of human security"* [United Nations. 2012. *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 2012*, A/RES/66/290].

15.   Detail arguments of the debate between the neo-realists and neo-liberal institutionalists on whether institutions have an independent effect on state behaviour could be found in [Mearsheimer, John. J. Winter 1994-95. *The False Promise of International Institutions*. International Security, Vol. 19, No. 3] and [Keohane, Robert O. & Martin, Lisa L. Summer 1995. *The Promise of Institutionalist Theory*. International Security, Vol. 20, No. 1].

16. The 'democratic peace theory' as argued by Michael Doyle (1983) posits that liberal democracies do not fight wars against one another; drawing from Immanuel Kant's argument of perpetual peace. He explains this in a more recent article where he points out the three interconnecting pillars contributing to peace between nations are *"Republican representation, an ideological commitment to fundamental human rights, and transnational interdependence."*

17. As evidence in Keohane & Martin's (1995) "*... as soon as a state's position within the anarchical state system becomes a threat to the survival of others, a countervailing initiative, based on one or more actors, is created to restrain the rising state and ensure the preservation of the states system in maintaining or restoring a situation of approximate equilibrium, as states need to counterbalance any potential hegemon to ensure their survival and to prevent their being dictated to.*"

18. Pouliot, Vincent. 2006. *The alive and well transatlantic security community: A theoretical reply to Michael Cox*. European Journal of International Relations, Vol 12, no. 1, p.120.

19. Constructivists' concept of security community was pioneered by Karl Wolfgang Deutsch in 1957 where he examined how increased communications and transactions among societies can redefine their perceptions and relationships and lead to the establishment of security communities in which the use of force becomes illegitimate as a means of problem solving.

20. Ruggie, John G. Summer, *Multilaterism: The Anatomy of an Institution*. International Organisation. Vol.46, No.3. 1992, p.561

21. North, Douglass C, *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press. 1990, p.3 & 36.

22. For further information, see article by Kuo Kuo Wen &Yeh Hsiang Yi entitled "The U.S. – Japan Alliance and Asia-Pacific Security: Implications for Japan-Taiwan Relations", at *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies*, Vol. 42, No.1, July 2015. pp 62-64. Also refer article by Masahiro Matsumura entitled "China's Demographic Onus and its Implications for the Japan-U.S. Alliance: The Increasing Need For Deterring China's Aggression Against The Senkaku Islands" at *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Disember 2014. pp 6-10.

23. Abdul Muein Abadi. Between ASEAN demos and ASEAN kratos: The genesis of ASEAN public spheres. *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, December. 2015. pp. 1-22.

24. Ramos, Fidel Valdez. 2017. "From 'Sports-Shirt' Diplomacy to a

Model Rules-Based Organisation." In ASEAN @ 50 Volume1: The ASEAN Journey: Reflections of ASEAN Leaders and Officials, edited by Surin Pitsuwan, Hidetoshi Nishimura, Ponciano Intal, Jr., Kavi Chongkittavorn, and Larry Maramis, Jakarta, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA). Pp. 35-46.

25. See Yuen Foong Khong, "Coping with Strategic Uncertainty: The Role of Institutions and Soft Balancing in Southeast Asia's Post–Cold War Strategy" in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson, eds., 2004. *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency*. Stanford University Press, pp. 172–208.

26. Wars in Southeast Asia since 1967 include Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia between 1978 and 1989, and a border war between Thailand and Laos in 1986. In addition, there was a near-war situation between Vietnam and Thailand during the period of 1978–1989. However, the fact that Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos & Myanmar became ASEAN members in 1995, 1999 and 1997 respectively, and the original ASEAN members, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines had not fought a war against each other since they founded ASEAN in 1967, it thus valid to argue that the countries in Southeast Asia have not fought a war among themselves as ASEAN members.

27. The 'ASEAN Way' is widely defined as a working process or style that is informal and personal. Policymakers constantly utilize compromise, consensus, and consultation in the informal decision-making process. It prioritizes a consensus-based and less conflictual way of addressing problems. This "quiet diplomacy" allows ASEAN leaders to communicate without bringing the discussions into the public view. Members avoid embarrassment that may lead to further conflict. [Source: Masilamani, Logan. & Jimmy, Peterson. 2014. *"The "ASEAN Way": The Structural Underpinnings of Constructive Engagement."* Foreign Policy Journal Vol.1, No.21.]

28. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar & Vietnam.

29. This tendency was supported by Acharya (2014) that the norm of developing collective action through sanction mechanisms is not applicable to regional groupings in the developing world as compared to that of the mainstream European model. [Source: Acharya, Amitav. 2014. *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. Routledge].

30. The idea of constructive engagement originated from the policy adopted by the United States under Reagan administration towards the apartheid regime of South Africa in 1980s by vetoing the United Nations economic sanctions and replaced it with the United States'

effort by means of incentives to encourage the regime to gradually move away from apartheid.

31. It has been argued by Anthony Milner (2017) that the Western perspectives of international relations such as those revolving around the post-Westphalian model of 'power, 'sovereignty' and 'state' cannot be taken for granted. Milner argued for the need to assess international relations through the specific cultural and historical lens of the region. [Source: Milner, Anthony. 2017. *Culture and the international relations of Asia*. The Pacific Review, Vol 30, no. 6, pp. 857-869].

32. Feng, Huiyun. 2018. *Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific: Lessons for the Epistemic Community*. Asia Policy, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 60-66.

33. Acharya, Amitav. 2014. *Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*. Routledge.

34. Collins, Alan. 2000. *The Security Dilemmas of Southeast Asia*. Singapore, London & new York: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies / MacMillan Press Ltd / St Martin's Press. P. 128.

35. The 24 non-ASEAN countries that has signed the TAC are: Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, East Timor, Egypt, EU, France, India, Japan, Mongolia, Morocco, New Zealand, North Korea, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey and the United States.

36. To date, there are 17 countries participating in the ARF, namely Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, East Timor, the United States, and Sri Lanka.

37. Caballero-Anthony, Mely. 2014. Understanding ASEAN's centrality: bases and prospects in an evolving regional architecture. *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp.563-584.

38. Ba, Alice D. 2017. ASEAN and the Changing Regional Order: The ARF, ADMM, and ADMM-Plus. In *ASEAN@50 Building ASEAN Community: Political–Security and Socio-cultural Reflections*, edited by Aileen Baviera and Larry Maramis, Jakarta, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA). Pp. 146-157.

39. Tan, See Seng. 2017. *A Tale of Two Institutions: The ARF, ADMM-Plus and Security Regionalism in the Asia Pacific*. Contemporary Southeast Asia, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 259–264.

40. Howe, Brendan, and Min Joung Park. 2017. *The Evolution of the "ASEAN Way": Embracing Human Security Perspectives*. Asia-Pacific Social Science Review, Vol. 16, no. 3. Pp. 1-15.

41.   Furuoka, Fumitaka. 2019 *Do CLMV countries catch up with the older ASEAN members in terms of income level?*, Applied Economics Letters, vol. 26, no. 8, pp. 690-697.

42.   According to the ASEAN Secretariat, "CLMV access to safe drinking water has progressively improved from 68.1% in 1999 to 90.6% in 2016, comparable with the rate in ASEAN-6" and "CLMV access to improved sanitation has progressively improved from 50.2% in 1999 to 76.5% in 2016". ASEAN-6 countries had a 71.9% access to improved sanitation in 2016. [Source: ASEAN Secretariat. 2017. *1967-2017: ASEAN Social Progress*, Jakarta, The ASEAN Secretariat].

43.   The Straits Times. 2019. *Outcry as Asean report predicts 'smooth' return of Rohingya to Myanmar*. Published on June 8, accessed on June 10, 2019. (https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/outcry-as-an-asean-report-predicts-smooth-return-of-rohingya-to-myanmar).

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