

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS, IMPLICATION AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT ASEAN IDENTITY

Last year in 2017, ASEAN celebrate the 50th years of its anniversary. After half a decade maintain its influence and develop the association up until today. Despite many criticisms regarding the way they conduct its regionalism, ASEAN stays with their way to maintain political security and economic cooperation among its member state with a hope for a better and prosperous ASEAN. Moreover, it is true that the beginning of its integration focused on traditional political security and economic perspective. When it comes to talking about will ASEAN shift towards the non-traditional community that focuses on social development, many scholars argue that such an initiative is not listed as the main factor of its establishment. Ahmad Rizky Umar (2017), in his article titled “ASEAN After 50: Why Political and Economic Integration is Not Sufficient” noted that even after 50 years of its establishment, still ASEAN neglect the focus on social integration. Moreover, thus, because of this, currently many challenges in terms social happened, and yet ASEAN as the regional forum could not mitigate it.

A. From Social Issues to Challenges in the Establishment of ASEAN Identity

The failure of social integration in ASEAN is not only a small problem that neglected after 50 years of stagnation in the social development of ASEAN community. Take an example for Rohingya Crisis that involve the migrant movement from Rohingya to many places in ASEAN. The conflict that occurred because of the lack of social integration between minority, lack on sense of belonging and brotherhood. From the article by Jera Lego (2017), even the crisis of Rohingya was not discussed in the 30th ASEAN Summit’s official agenda. Not to argue that the ASEAN Way was the factor why ASEAN still respect what they called as a domestic

issue, but the domain of the issue of Rohingya itself is spreading to a regional domain which people from Rohingya start to escape the horrible situation on their country. Apparently, there is no path for ASEAN on addressing the issue as it may be seen as the act of intervention. However, if there is a better understanding on “upholding people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN,” there will be a certain degree of understanding where the intervention is allowed in order to safeguard the community at risks.

South Thailand insurgency is, generally speaking, the same with Rohingya conflict. It occurred due to differences of identity in the society where the Muslim separatist group in Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Songkhla are demanding their Independence. In the recent explanation by Maximilian Morch (2018), the conflict started in 2004 up until today. The root of conflict that involves the annexation of Malaysian Sultanate of Patani with the Anglo-Siamese treaty in 1909. Due to force assimilation, the conflict began to emerge in 2004 and still occurred until today. Despite both of sample cases are problems between Muslim community and other groups, what the writer tried to highlight is the absence of collective identity that sees through differences of belief, ethnic group, and social status. Thus, we could conclude from both examples mentioned, that social problem driven by the failure of ASEAN to integrate its community do exist. Even though the tension on the field keeps decreasing, but the conflict may indicate that severe social problem is a reality inside of ASEAN. Moreover, yet, ASEAN did put huge concern on the development of a shared identity that may avoid the social conflicts.

There are still many challenges that make the establishment of ASEAN Identity is not as smooth as we might think. Social issues that are happening in ASEAN is just a small reminder of the pursuing a regional organization only based on political security and economic driven initiative with a cost of social disintegration. However, to establish the ASEAN

Identity itself, there are several others essential challenges that demand ASEAN react faster as those challenges are already becoming a problem for the development of ASEAN.

One of that challenge is the influence of an external factor that comes from outside of ASEAN. For example, the influence of China regarding expanded membership that fosters the growth of influence across the region. Amitav (2017) also noted that the relations between the two contesting power of China and The U.S. as a problem that disintegration of ASEAN's internal unity. For instance like The Principle of ASEAN Centrality in the Asia/Indo-Pacific that supported by the United States regarding regional architecture is entirely against China intention of their engagement with Southeast Asia. Thus, this could lead to the separation between that country who have quite strong relations with China mainly countries in the northern part of Southeast Asia especially Cambodia.

Thus, to cope with the US-China rivalry in the region, ASEAN need more strong commitment regarding identity building. The notion of remain neutral to increase more regional cooperation should become the basis for ASEAN in coping with external influence that tried to break the unity of ASEAN. This condition is quite a challenge in the reality of ASEAN since it is a limitation to control over the range of bilateral relations of its member. For instance, in the conflict of South China Sea, the primary cause of the stagnation is China bilateral maneuver towards countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar that geographically closer to their border. With this opportunity, China starts to over more bilateral assistance that drives several countries away from the framework of ASEAN multilateralism in solving the problem of the South China Sea. Despite the success of ASEAN in establishing a declaration of conduct that manages the conduct of belligerence in the South China Sea, but with such initiative from China could become the factor why ASEAN could not end the dispute.

Amitav (2017) in his work also mention several other Challenges and limitations of ASEAN Identity beside the domestic instability such as conflicts and religious extremism as well as the external influence; he noted that problem like disjuncture between official ASEAN and the people of ASEAN should be resolved to manage the establishment of ASEAN Identity. *“The notion of a ‘socio-cultural community’ does not simply mean recognizing extant social and cultural similarities amongst societies and states. It requires a conscious desire and effort to engage in interactions in a variety of areas, such as arts, education, tourism, etc. that promote mutual understanding amongst societies and create a ‘we feeling’. However, who are ‘we’? True socio-cultural communities need to be bottom-up, rather than top-down.”* (Amitav, 2017).

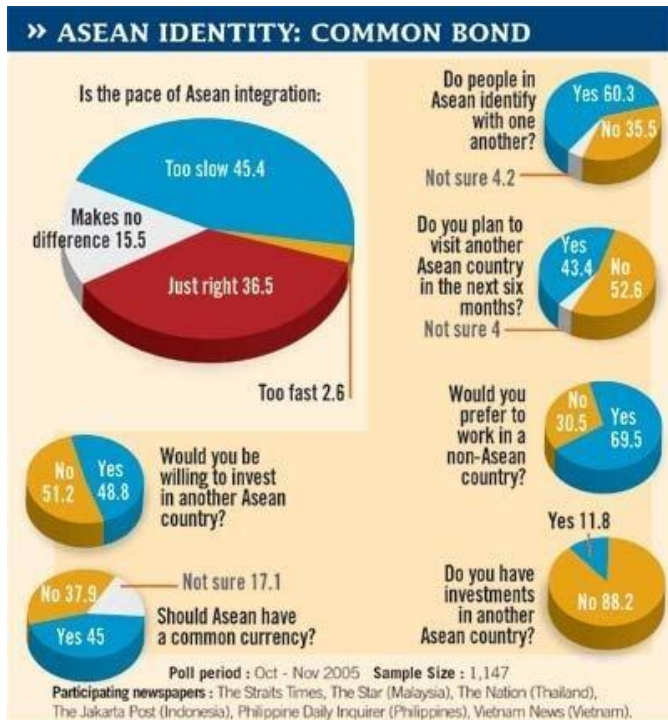
Last but not least, in order to establish the firm ASEAN Identity, Intra-ASEAN disputes such as the border dispute and sentiments towards each other should be avoided in order to create a sense of Belonging in ASEAN. Despite numbers of challenges and limitation, from this researcher point of view, these challenges could give a significant reason why ASEAN Identity is needed. We could conclude that those challenges exist due to the absence of ASEAN Identity itself, thus fostering the establishment of the collective identity is necessary to bridge social and political problem inside ASEAN.

B. The relevance of The Establishment of ASEAN Identity

As the development of the identity is still on the progress, and yet people are still waiting for the realization of more integrated ASEAN Community, many scholars have already conducted research to prove the relevance of ASEAN Identity to be established. In this thesis, This researcher would like to refer to two surveys in regards to Common Bond inside

ASEAN and Attitudes and Awareness towards ASEAN: Findings of a Ten-Nation Survey.

B.1. ASEAN Identity: Common Bond – Survey by Jakarta Post



The survey that is conducted by newspaper from six

Figure 4.1: ASEAN Identity Common Bond

Source : (Acharya & Layug, 2012)

ASEAN countries namely The Jakarta Post (Indonesia), Straits Times (Singapore), Star (Malaysia), Nation (Thailand), Philippine Daily Inquirer and Vietnam news find out the percentage of people in ASEAN identify with one another is

60% which means from 10 person, 6 people could identify with one another as ASEAN. This survey leads to the conclusion where common share identity across the region does exist thus ASEAN should start to focus on the program to boost its growth even though in the survey showed trends of Southeast Asian distrust towards the regional association. The significant findings to answer why the distrust occurred is the percentage of ASEAN integration that 45.5% people believe to be too slow.

B.2. Attitudes and Awareness toward ASEAN: Findings of a Ten-Nation Survey.

In September to November 2007, Eric C. Thompson from National University of Singapore and Dr. Chulanee Tianthai from (Chulalongkorn University) research more than 2000 students in the crucial university of ASEAN countries. The research tends to measure attitudes towards ASEAN as a whole as well as knowledge about the region and association. The question focuses on several questions such as: Do youth today consider themselves to be citizens of ASEAN?; Are the region's youth enthusiastic or skeptical about ASEAN?; How well do the region's youth know ASEAN and its members?; What are their concerns for the Association and the region?.

The findings found out that in the average 75% of general understanding about ASEAN such as the knowledge about the region obtained by the student understanding of ASEAN. The most student could identify the map, the flag, the history and the member state of ASEAN. Furthermore, 90% of student were interested to know more about ASEAN. Moreover, the survey found out that Economic Cooperation, Tourism, and Development Assistance are the top three aspirations for the regional integration.

With this positive result, the implementation of ASEAN Identity is not irrelevant due to the rise in expectation

of more integrated ASEAN. Adult and Young generation across Southeast Asia start to feel that they share the same identity as the ASEAN Community even though the diversity of culture and nation among them.

From the two surveys above, we could conclude that the measures taken by ASEAN to develop the young generation cluster such as the children and the youth are quite successful to become the embryo of the future of ASEAN community. It still at the beginning of the development, however from the survey, the establishment of ASEAN Identity is still relevant.

C. Implications of ASEAN Identity

There are several implications after the establishment of ASEAN Identity that could be obtained. With ASEAN Identity as the bridge of culture in Southeast Asia, people would better know themselves as one community with a regional identity. Thus, the tolerance towards other culture will increase inside the region. With such attitude, ASEAN, resolving conflicts such as the Pattani conflict, South Philippine insurgency as well as Rohingya refugee crisis is not entirely as frustrating as today.

Amitav Acharya (2012) noted that socialization of the Identity led by ASEAN could make a significant benefit on power relation by providing a place major power to discuss matters peacefully. We all know that one of the achievements for ASEAN is to be a successful partner for the East Asian countries with the platform of ASEAN + 3. East Asia is known for a high tension region since some conflict and dispute are happening in that region. For instance like the Korean peninsula that up until now still not unite even though the discussion on unification is increasing during 2018, but other parts of East Asia remains to be conflictual. Taiwan problem towards one-China policy, China and Japan relations as well as Korean and

Japan relation that is full of sentiments create the region to become more segregated. With ASEAN +3, East Asia's significant power could discuss matters and establish cooperation in a multilateral forum. Thus the implementation of regional identity to safeguard the peace development inside the region is necessary.

However, if we take a look on the principle of people-oriented and people-centered, the actual benefits should be obtained by the community. As ASEAN becomes unite in a regional identity, we could predict that more and more people in ASEAN will interact with each other. In the business sector, with a more fluid and open market, the flow of production and market across ASEAN could give a better impact for not only manufacture but also small and medium enterprises. This condition will also have an impact on the ASEAN entrepreneur initiative that the program focuses on fostering youth of ASEAN to start a business startup. Besides the economic benefits received from the more fluid society in ASEAN, the Social sector will also be the most significant sector that will receive the improvement. With the increasing cross-border interaction and implementation of ASEAN Identity, in a daily basis the benefit that could be received by ASEAN community, for example, there will be many airports that start to make an exclusive line in immigration check for ASEAN citizen. This could genuinely give a significant impact on the pride of being ASEAN in a small example yet quite a significance. Moreover, of course, it is not only the immigration checking that becoming more natural but it may become much broader implications such as the easy administration for ASEAN citizen to conduct an international marriage, migration, job application within the region.

Thus, with all the possibilities that might come with better character and identity building in ASEAN, we could conclude that the overall idea of ASEAN Identity is still relevance yet with the increasing significance to implement it.