



**The Problem of State-Led Regionalism in ASEAN's Transformation
toward the ASEAN Community in 2015**

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe the limitations of the state-led regionalism approach in Southeast Asia in preparing for the development of the ASEAN Community. The greatest need in terms of the formation of the ASEAN Community is to address how this transformation will find a balance between external dynamics on the one hand and accommodation to internal demand from Southeast Asia's society on the other hand.

The policy of non-interference in other states' domestic politics, which is one of the basic principles in ASEAN, has to be revised. ASEAN must have clear qualifications and categorizations about the ASEAN Community's construction as a pillar of integration. Currently, there are clashes of perception on essential issues such as human rights and democracy, as a result of the state's dominant role in the Southeast Asian regionalism project. The limitations of the state-centric approach also leave the problem of representation. This means that the state perspective will be more determined by political and technocratic calculations. What is needed is an effort to transform state-led regionalism into community-led regionalism in order to realize a more representative ASEAN Community.

Keywords : *State-led regionalism, ASEAN community, community-led regionalism*

Introduction

ASEAN member countries seem to have had the same perceptions on the formation of an ASEAN Community that will take effect in 2015. At the ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 1997, the determination to shape society in Southeast Asia had already been designed by the leaders within ASEAN region. This ASEAN Summit offered a strategic momentum for ASEAN to transform into an association with a broader spectrum of cooperation (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009).

Patrimonialism Within Regionalism

Since it was formed in 1967, ASEAN has become a regional cooperation initiative that has demonstrated its dynamic persistence in the context of an international politics which is increasingly fast-changing. This powerful regional group upholds models of conflict resolution that make the typical qualities of Asian harmony, cooperation and non-intervention the essential principle of any conflict resolution. Asian patrimonialism became the style of leadership in almost all the countries in the region, projected onto a variety of decision-making processes.

The positive side of patrimonialism contributes to non-conflictual mechanisms for the resolution of issues. Collective efforts to maintain harmony follow the typical settlement of realist logic, in which interest is placed in the primary position. On the other hand, patrimonialist settlement patterns also contain weaknesses, especially when many new issues in the Southeast Asian region have appeared as a direct result of globalization. At the same time, the process of democratization has been spreading out into several countries in the region. Starting from the process of democratization that hit the Philippines in the mid 80's, the democratic process in a number of Southeast Asian countries continued to spread out to Indonesia in the 90s, and then was dramatically transmitted to Myanmar and has also raised imitation movements that are quite important in the dynamics of domestic politics in Malaysia lately. Even in countries that are newcomers in ASEAN, such as Cambodia, the civil society movement is undergoing a transformation in line with the country's transition into a democratic state (*Banez-Ockelford, 2011*). All these phenomena signal the emergence of the diffusion of democracy (*Uhlen, 1993*) and the snow-ball effect of democracy (*Huntington, 1991*) in Southeast Asia.



Nearly a half-century after its creation, ASEAN has become what one writer has called "one of the most enduring inter-Governmental Organizations outside Europe" (Beeson, 2007: 216). Outside the EU, regional cooperation is seen as having the ability to adapt to external dynamics on one side, and to accommodate itself to changes that are taking place at the internal level on the other side. The durability of ASEAN as a regional cooperation initiative creates a dynamic region both economically and politically.

Viewed at the macro-level, ASEAN as an interstate cooperative organization is a phase that can be divided into two important periods. Both periods showed intermediate patterns, before subsequently the idea for community integration appeared at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore (1997). The summit appears to be an important culmination – after the regionalism-making process phase in the first two decades (1960-1980's) up to the phase of state developmental regionalism in the two decades (1980s to 2000s).

The first phase refers to the creation and intervention of Western countries that required a buffer zone in the East-West ideological conflict at that time. ASEAN was envisioned as a success story of Western modernization through the contagion effect and the demonstration effect. The first effect concerns the efforts of the West (especially the U.S.) in the transmission of developmentalism in Southeast Asia in very technocratic and efficient ways. The second effect concerns regional efforts to accelerate modernization. For those two big programs, it is clear that the power and preferences of Western countries like the United States will not be absent. Southeast Asia is a role model for the spread of Western modernization (*Simpson, 2008*). Both these efforts seem to have been successfully run, either by ASEAN countries or by the influence or intervention of Western countries.

The second phase points to the direct result of the emergence of the state as an actor in the consolidation of development in a number of Asian countries. Here, Southeast Asia is

described as a group of geese that follow the main goose of Asia, ie. Japan. Some political scientists have said that ASEAN regionalism is developmental-state regionalism, which is determined by states as the main actors. The developmental-state model makes state development policy the determinant and executor at the same time. In terms of issues, this model gives more attention to the economic aspects (*Beeson, 2007*).

The hegemonic power in the first phase, the United States, which provided political instruction for the formation and road map of ASEAN in the early days, slowly started to face a lot of evaluation, not least because of the emergence of middle-powers in international politics and economics. As the hegemonic power in the second phase, the goose, i.e Japan, also moderated its economic role related to the emergence of new economic powers of Asia such as South Korea, India, China and Taiwan. The durability of ASEAN countries in facing the economic crisis in 1997 appears to have become the crucial point for ASEAN to be more free in creating a design and architecture of cooperation, changing from one that is very loose to a form of cooperation that is more systematic and structural. This is what created a principle that was upheld by the ASEAN countries since three decades, namely the "ASEAN Way".

At The Crossroads of the ASEAN Way

The emergence of the state as an actor determining ASEAN cooperation could not be separated from the historical and cultural construction of this region as one of the important enclaves of Asian values. From this come the kind of patterns of conflict resolution and integration models that are known as the "ASEAN Way". According to Acharya (2001), the ASEAN Way is defined as: "... a process of regional interactions and cooperation based on discreteness, informality, consensus building and non-confrontational bargaining styles". The choice of the "ASEAN Way" seems to be based on the desire to accelerate the development



of regional economic growth. On the other hand, this choice is certainly not free from fundamental problems that afflict almost all the people of Southeast Asia, especially in terms of political rights, participation and also their position in the construction, which is often marginal.

The ASEAN Community seems to be very different from the European Community. It is likely, in the EU, that there is a desire to become a resistance block to the speed and influence of the United States. On the road to the ASEAN Community, as it often appears in a number of Summit outcome documents, persistence seems to become the big target – namely, how the transformation of ASEAN as a peripheral capitalism buffer can be maintained. With the current perspective, the ASEAN Community is actually fairly ambitious, because it wanted to accommodate a variety of changes in the external economic-political pendulum. Perhaps there is only one thing that has experienced exclusion from this route: namely, the attempt to accommodate a variety of demands, changes, and perceptual constructions of the ASEAN community at grass-roots level.

In terms of dealing with traditional issues such as security and economic and regional cooperation, ASEAN has demonstrated its capacity. There has been almost no significant turmoil in the region such as would indicate openly conflictual relations among members. However, the dynamics of ASEAN do not only take place in the context of state to state relations. Currently there is an "explosion" of non-traditional issues, or we might call the time-bomb of economic, social and culture right (ECOSOC). The emergence of economic, social, and cultural rights is expected to begin to supplement traditional issues in Southeast Asia. This is an obvious consequence of the Southeast Asian regional dynamics that appear in the globalization arena. Meanwhile it is also a direct result of Southeast Asia's position as an important zone for the expansion of multi national companies. Economic, social and cultural



rights will arise to accompany formal ASEAN efforts to establish the ASEAN Community by 2015. The presence of non-traditional issues is also not free from the patterns of cooperation that have been built up by Southeast Asian civil society alongside the different strengths of global civil society. At the state level, the power of ASEAN's partners is only showing the dominance of Japan and the United States as. At the level of civil society, patterns of cooperation and collaboration have emerged with European countries. The strength of civil society activists has already designed initiatives linking the various transnational elements and issues. Issues such as migrant workers, climate change, forestation, human trafficking and women's rights, ECOSOC rights and minorities issues including terrorism, are new issues that are very relevant to the design of the ASEAN community.

Various climate change projects in a number of ASEAN countries are now showing a fairly close relationship with European countries such as Finland and Norway. New security issues such as terrorism bring many countries close to Australia. With such a landscape, there is no longer a dominant external power in ASEAN. This is also the story of an appropriate and strategic momentum to expand the scope, dimensions and projections of ASEAN's upcoming integration in 2015.

The establishment of an ASEAN Community is about how this transformation balances the response to external dynamics on one side and the demands of internal accommodation of Southeast Asian societies on the other side. The principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries that had been held by ASEAN as a kind of regional etiquette is now receiving criticism in many circles. Meanwhile, there is a perceptual collision over a large number of issues such as upholding human rights and democracy.



Likewise, ASEAN has to deal with potential issues (incoming issues) such as smog disaster. The case was an issue of great attention in 1997-1999, which was again repeated at the end of May 2013. Tensions have flared among Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Indonesia is considered as the ringleader of the disaster. At that time there were no ASEAN efforts to resolve this. Besides not having a clear instrument, ASEAN countries believe that the most disadvantaged neighbors like Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei tend to respond the protests through very polite diplomatic style. Some aid and assistance is also offered by Malaysia and Singapore.

The limitations of state-centric approaches lead to representation problems. In new issues such as the environment, the state perspective will be determined more by political and technocratic calculations. However, in the handling of problems such as smog, the problem is much more complex. Local aspects such as the world view of the forest community, and the economic and social problems faced in rural communities, are far from the imagination of the state. The legitimacy of the state to represent environmental issues also often becomes problematic. Cross-border human communities in the forest directly adjacent to neighboring countries, for example in the Borneo forest, have a habitus that has been established. The forest has become a medium of identification beyond the administrative boundaries of a state.

Various environmental management efforts in the ASEAN region reflect the realist approach in which the dominance of state actors is still very strong. In order to solve the problem of smoke pollution, ASEAN countries have made several attempts. In 2002, ASEAN agreed on a joint commitment to the so-called ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. In this agreement each country that ratifies makes a commitment to participate in solving the problem of smoke pollution in the region most affected by the forest fires in Indonesia.



Meanwhile, an effort leading to a way of negotiating sovereignty takes place discreetly at the level of civil society. A breakthrough took place when three countries in the region, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam, designed a joint project called "Heart of Borneo (HoB)". Basically, this project is an effort by the three countries to look at the most problematic environmental issue, which is the forest. Besides wishing to develop the conservation of the vast forests of Borneo, HoB is designed as an effort by the three countries to divide up their commitment to maintaining the sustainability of the Kalimantan forests as the lungs of the world. On February 12, 2007, the project was launched by HoB (WWF Indonesia, April 2010). HoB is an attempt to persuade and construct, designed World Wild Fund (WWF) Indonesia. It was then used as a model of forest rescue in a number of areas in the world (WWF Indonesia, 2011). This case is very interesting, as we see the emergence of civil society initiatives in Southeast Asia in managing new issues.

On the issue of human rights, ASEAN civil society networks actively proposed the ASEAN Human Rights Body. The agency is trying to adopt a similar institution to what was established in Europe. However, the proposal still ran aground because of perceptual differences and visions of human rights enforcement among ASEAN countries themselves (Human Rights Working Group, 2011). These two issues - the environment and human rights, give an overview of the aspects of state sovereignty which are actually still in effect and of the aspects that are starting to experience change. Perhaps because the issue of human rights is still directly related to the power of a number of countries in the region, countries use "respect for the sovereignty" to avoid conflict. Meanwhile, for environmental issues, the idea does not seem strong enough to use. Even in environmental issues, mainstreaming is actually carried out by the civil society, and the state follows all of the design, scope and actions of civil society.

It seems that there are some efforts to negotiate sovereignty in several issues that arise in contemporary relations among nations. In a declaration signed by ten leaders of ASEAN in Cha-am Hua Him, Thailand, in 2009, ASEAN agreed on a road map. The roadmap gave clear directions on the architecture of the region towards the establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015. This is consistent with the idea of the formation of a regime. As stated by Pempel (in Jakasurya, 2001), a regime is very important to build new arrangements beyond the state borders. A regime must have three basic components: a socio-economic alliance, the presence of political-economic institutions and a public policy strategy.

Meanwhile, Kaniskha Jayasurya (2001) tries to see the presence of the state as a key actor in the integration of ASEAN in the context of the emergence of the developmental state model as a production pattern of development of capitalism in Asia. Patterns of development in the region could not be separated from the interests of the main patron countries in this region, such as the United States and Japan. Jayasurya says the Japanese industry leadership phase has spawned the phenomenon of "embedded Mercantilism" in which a state actor is inherent in the whole construction of regional economic achievement. As a result, regional initiatives are always oriented to the logic of development, and also at the same time qualify the actors that should be involved in the regional dynamics.

The Problem of Representation

The presence of non-state actors in Southeast Asia is increasingly impossible to ignore. Various elements of civil society have grown even in countries that are considered less democratic, such as Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. They build advocacy in their respective countries with regard to new problems such as the effects of development, establishing regional networks and building a number of initiatives in addressing new issues (Terrence and Elies, 2011).

Limitations of state-centric approach cause representation problems. In new issues such as the environment, the state perspective will be determined more by political and technocratic calculations. In the handling of problems such as smog, the problem is much more complex. Local aspects such as the world view of the forest community, and the economic and social problems faced in rural communities, are far from the imagination of the state. The legitimacy of the state to represent environmental issues also often become problematic. Cross-border human communities in the forest directly adjacent to neighboring countries, as in the Borneo forest, have a habitus that has been established. The forest has become a medium of identification beyond the administrative boundaries of a state.

Andrew Linklater (1998) tried to offer a political community approach when looking at a shift or transformation of international politics post-Cold War. The phenomenon of integration and conflict in some regions, according to Linklater, can no longer be approached from a realist viewpoint that makes the state a key actor. By using Habermas's critical perspective, Linklater tries to see the other actors who experience ostracism or exclusion on a paradigmatic basis. According to Linklater (1998: 16): "... unlike neo-realism, critical approaches take the prospects for ethical foreign policy and the possibility of new forms of political community seriously".

Conclusion

The ideals for the formation of the ASEAN Community 2015 appear to be an elitist project. It is time for ASEAN to better accommodate new voices that are articulated by the new political generation in Southeast Asia. Development issues in the future will bring an explosion of the social participation of civil society groups in Southeast Asia. It seems the patterns of patrimonialism in conflict resolution and state domination in the design of the new ASEAN regionalism must begin to be replaced by a more representative approach. Southeast



Asia is an area of growing civil society groups, as a result of human migration in Southeast Asia which is increasingly fast, easy and open. The ASEAN Community is not merely a new arena for the circulation of capital from international capitalism, but also a new social space for the people of Southeast Asia themselves. ****

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