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ASEAN 'LIVING TOGETHER IN HARMONY' WITH RUSSIA — USA — CHINA: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE APSC, ASCC AND SDGS

Abstract. The promises of a "New Asia" collide at the juncture of most if not all kinds of cultural, religious, political, economic discourses, towards the South-East [Pacini, Siow Yue 1997]. ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is primed to be key to inter-regional decision-making. With the recent signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the regional bloc has taken bolder steps towards building its economic powerhouse vis-à-vis the superpowers [Petri, Plumer 2020]. Furthermore, the promise of integration between China's One Belt, One Road initiative and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union do have future implications on the regional bloc. Needless to say, while the COVID-19 pandemic has closed majority of the borders, disrupted tourism and halted trade activities, this side of the world has brought and will still bring the modern triangle: Russia, USA, and China, to the diplomatic tables.

Constantly shaped by geo-politics, the 10 member states, with baskets of socio-economic resources and political capitals, for centuries have been exposed to colonial and trade powers, including former American and European colonizers, and trading partners in nearby East and South Asia. Such experiences have shaped their constructions of diplomatic practice, within and outside the region, in so far as in its first ten years of existence, ASEAN especially the APSC (ASEAN Political Security Community) was preoccupied with internal integration and caution was placed on external relationships [Villanueva, Manalo 2017].

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Today, the culture of diplomacy in ASEAN is still as volatile as its waters, amidst ethno-linguistic diversities and split-struggles for self-determination, among other juxtapositions. The regional bloc has 10 dialogue partners with whom it regularly co-hosts high-level exchanges, namely: Australia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russian Federation and the United States of America. It maintains that these dialogue partners are on an equal footing with member states, where joint decisions and actions are made for programmes of mutual benefit, and with cost-sharing approaches [Pushpanatham, 2003].

In terms of soft power, people-to-people exchange has been one of the bedrocks of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), which commits to: *"lift the quality of life of its peoples through cooperative activities that are people-oriented, people-centered, environmentally friendly, and geared towards the promotion of sustainable development."* According to the ASEAN Blueprint 2025, the Qualities of the ASCC are: 1) People engagement, 2) Inclusive, 3) Sustainable, 4) Resilient and 5) Dynamic. This includes but not limited to forging business communities closer, as well as think tanks and non-governmental organizations.

Taking it a notch higher, in the foreseeable future, the pandemic has moved most if not all transactions online, limiting in-person contact and transforming shared socio-cultural experiences. Vaccine and health care and other universal development and humanitarian goals have been at the forefront of all international relations. What is next for hard and soft diplomacy for, with and by region, is yet another expedition for all interested aboard.

Key words: ASEAN, Russia, China, USA, diplomacy, consensus, peace, security.

Introduction

To speak of ASEAN diplomacy, one needs to understand the principle of consensus – timeless for its historicity and geopolitics yet calls for responsiveness towards shifts in an ever-changing globalized world. In the same manner, the so-called ASEAN Way is defined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as: 'mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations.' This has traditionally translated to the following principles: right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs between members, the settling of disputes by peaceful means, and the principle of nonconfrontation and cooperation [Villanueva, Manalo 2017].

One of the founding fathers, former Prime Minister of Thailand, Thanat Khoman, once said of consensus: *"Confidence building to prevent conflict breaking-out within the region and preventing the major powers outside the region from intervening in any regional conflict* [Shoji 2008]. The choice of Bangkok as founding place on 8 August 1967 was a sign of respect for his active role in the formation of ASEAN. Former President Suharto of Indonesia, another key regional figure, echoes the sentiment at the very first ASEAN parliamentary meeting in 1975 in Jakarta: *'Without trying to cast the blame on foreign powers, who for many centuries had completely dominated the fate of our peoples, we cannot, however, just ignore that (sic) fact that the past long period of colonisation had induced the emergence of differences of what actually represent their national interests, in both the political and economic fields* [Shoji 2008]*."*

To understand the ASEAN Way, the answers lie in a historical progression of how diplomacy has worked, and not worked, within the bounds and outside the region. Pre-colonial Southeast Asia was widely for its kingdoms, principalities, sultanates – not uncommonly described in literature as a world divided between rulers and peasants [Villanueva, Manalo 2017]. Culturally and anthropologically, the spirit of solidarity, or 'living together in harmony,' is even expressed in the Bangkok Declaration, as reflected by traditional values in the region just like in the Malay and Filipino village life (kampung, or barangay, respectively). Where there are mufakat (consensus) and musyawarah (consultation), the issues were deferred if compromise was not attained [Collins 2014]. Alicia Magos wrote that such relational sustained equilibrium within the community (2016).

While colonial influence was 'highly varied' across the communities of peoples, it inarguably brought about a significant deed: the establishment of international boundaries (Milton Osborne). Such epistemic changes accompanied the organisation of the bloc, which is still driven by

internal integration and places caution on external influences. Simultaneously, in the backdrop of the Cold War, ASEAN's founding fathers have demonstrated determination in preventing the region from being a political arena of superpowers. As a matter of fact, the Bandung Conference of 1955 sought to create a neutral space in the assurance of the superpowers [Stubbs 2008].

The open-ended discourse between the ASEAN way, within emerging demands of its political security pillar, is a diplomatic task at hand. Is the consensus principle pushing regional identity to evolve or reifying post-colonial national identities? At which levels of regional governance are mechanisms of political accountability in place, that can translate into measurable indicators of political progress? As precisely put by the work ASEAN Consensus: The Intangible Heritage of Southeast Asian Diplomacy: "*If modern diplomacy was adapted to the requirements of European international society, consensus was invented to adapt modern diplomacy irreversibly to the requirements of a new ASEAN order* [Villanueva, Manalo, 2017]."

How ASEAN Diplomacy Works and Doesn't Work

The region itself is founded against a backdrop of intra-regional conflicts, with anti-communist sentiments breeding in the relatively young nation states. There existed disputes over Sabah between Philippines and Malaysia, Indonesia's "Konfrontasi" toward Malaysia, among several others [Jain, 2007]. To establish a framework for political-security cooperation, the first Bali Concord took place in 1975, to be followed by the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). ASEAN also became heavily involved in the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia [Jain, 2007].

In the current context, apart from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, conflict is still no stranger to the region. Southeast Asia remains to be home to the most persecuted stateless people in the world, the Rohingya refugees, as per the UNHCR, and the longest struggle for self-determination in Asia, in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao [Alim 1995]. These 2 intra-regional issues that concern 2 or more member states relied on the involvement of a combination of diplomatic actors, but rarely any concerted regional effort towards sustainable peace. Nevertheless, the regional bloc has seen more receptivity towards the targeted lens of countering violent extremism, with the presence of the regional terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah, among others. For instance, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia signed the Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures [Pushpanathan 2003], and in 2012, the Malaysian-led Global Movement of Moderates was adopted by the 20th ASEAN Summit.

In terms of geo-politics, the involvement of outside powers is a whole other diplomatic ballgame. For instance, at the 45th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), Cambodia's refusal to accommodate references to incidents in the South China Sea, resulted to the AMM's first failure to issue a joint statement. At the 49th annual meeting, there was yet another failure to mention a landmark ruling by an international arbitral tribunal with regards to the Philippines versus China case in the South China Sea. In 2002, the "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea" was signed to reflect ASEAN Centrality as the underlying principle for promoting regional cooperation, with ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the East Asia Summit for dialogue [Baviera, Maramis 2017].

Bilateralism and Multilateralism in ASEAN +

ASEAN has yet to scale and enforce, where appropriate, cooperation with thematic and sub-regional mechanisms to complement relevant regional initiatives [Baviera, Maramis 2017]. Interestingly, demonstrations of the so-called ASEAN-X format govern some economic issues by enabling two or more member states to move ahead in liberation, provided that the other members will follow [Baviera, Maramis 2017]. In matters of peace and security, such has been applied on an ad-hoc basis to the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism before its full ratification by all members. In 2013, there was the Preah Vihear dispute, when shuttle diplomacy was conducted by then Indonesian Foreign Minister, Marty Natalegawa, to deescalate the conflict between the

Cambodian and Thai borders. As a matter of fact, Article 8 (8) of the 1995 Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, 4, mentions: *"Except as provided for in this Treaty, decisions of the Commission shall be taken by consensus or, failing consensus, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. "*

The arena of multilateralism has also seen ASEAN developed increasingly stronger formats with its official dialogue partners: Australia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russian Federation and USA. While it maintains that these partners are on an equal footing with member states, relevant formats include : ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) defined at the 27th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in 1994 as: *"a consultative Asia-Pacific Forum for promoting open dialogue on political and security cooperation in the region,"* as well as the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) convened in 2010 in order to be: *"a platform for ASEAN and its eight Dialogue Partners Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States (collectively referred to as "Plus Countries"), to strengthen security and defense cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region."*

The Future of Public Diplomacy in ASEAN and the Triangle

As for ASEAN vis-à-vis the Triangle of Russia-USA-China, similar rules may or not apply. The pandemic has challenged stakeholders to compete digitally, whereas public diplomacy has risen to the forefront [Kamali-Chirani 2021]. Although "public diplomacy" is not explicitly stated in working documents, the ASEAN Charter (Article 1, 13) assumes "*all sectors of society to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building*," which is further clarified in all Master Plans on ASEAN Connectivity. It is then worth looking at synergy with the ASEAN Political Security Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, as can be seen in the performance of the ASEAN-Institute of Peace and Reconciliation through its capacity building and research mandates, inter-cultural dialogues, among others.

While the "Uncle Ben's dollar diplomacy" declined during the Trump administration, and the decommissioning of military bases in the Philippines, many development-related formats continue to pervade inter-regional and international discourse [Kamali-Chirani, 2021]. In the recent decade, US Embassies exhibit support civic action through network-based movements, such as the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), which has organically grown widely as: "a public diplomacy program designed to advance regional strategic goals, break down barriers that separate the next generation of leaders in Southeast Asia, and link those emerging leaders to the United States." Social media is another effective tool of the West for cultural diplomacy in the rest of Asia [Graham 2007].

Neighboring China benefits from a deeper historical relationship that traces as early as the Han and Qin dynasties. Confucian values are said to be embedded in regional discourse, where the Chinese concept of diplomacy "harmony but without uniformity" resonates the ASEAN way [Kamali-Chirani 2021]. Notwithstanding, multiethnic Chinese peoples in Southeast Asia account for more than 80% of overseas Chinese worldwide, whose family businesses have become emblems not only of the Chinese language, food, and holidays, but also the localization of Chinese towns that afforded public goods of economies of scale [Berger, 2015]. Another layer to this business-oriented relationship is the rise of technical support in social entrepreneurship and start-ups, as captured in the last ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium: Enhancing the Roles of Youth in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In between these intimate relationships, the ASEAN principle of non-interference has sat fairly well with Russia. While the Russian Federation became a full-pledged ASEAN dialogue partner in 1996, it paid more attention to bilateral ties, and a rather symbolic presence in regional affairs [Lavrov 2010]. Historically, in the Mekong sub-region, Russia was instrumental in setting-up national film industries, radio and television, and written languages for indigenous communities, where Russian language centers remain operational up to this day [Mazyrin 2010]. Granted the many medical, technological, and agricultural institutes set-up, a large segment of present-day elite

studied in the U.S.S.R. and Russia [Mazyrin 2010]. Further it is worth considering the relations with Indonesia as the only ASEAN co-member of the G20 Summit, and Singapore being host to the first Russia-ASEAN consultations which continue to support the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre. Since 2012, progress has been observed since the "turn east" policy, and in 2015, for the first time, Russia was host to senior regional leaders at the ASEAN-Russia Summit in Sochi, then soon after, in 2016, the Permanent Mission of Russia to ASEAN was established [Krasnyak 2019].

For a relatively young region, one important sector is youth (15-35 years old, as defined by the ASEAN Youth Development Index) that has been coined "the future of ASEAN's external relations." Compared to its American and Chinese counterparts, Russia–ASEAN public agenda is uniquely evolving at its own pace. For one, it benefits from the lack of historical suspicions targeted at Russia brought about by the West after the Cold War, especially among the new generation. At the same time, identity discourse of Russia in between Europe and Asia warrants a discussion on how they perceive their Asian in a society that is said to still predominantly identify with European culture. What an ASEAN-Russian relationship looks like without China as a tag team, or what it will look like in between the trade wars, is an exploration in and of itself.

Conclusion

ASEAN living together in harmony rests in a historical understanding of the dynamics between hard and soft power in the region.

In matters of the triangle, while American public diplomacy revolves around economic growth, transnational threats, maritime cooperation, youth empowerment and gender equality, China pivots to cooperation on development, finance, and trade, and more recently SDG agenda as well. Compared to American and Chinese counterparts, Russia–ASEAN agenda is uniquely evolving at its own pace, a rather symbolic presence.

Such trends exist within the changing arena of multilateralism, as in the case of the United Nations which has been spearheading two major diplomatic efforts: the sustainable development agenda for the world, and climate change negotiations [Jimenez 2019]. Founded to repair the ruins of World War II, the UN turns towards a nexus discussion on sustainable development, whereas the Triangle sits as permanent members of the UN Security Council, alongside the United Kingdom and France.

For ASEAN, this involved the granting of observer status at the UN General Assembly and the signing of ASEAN-UN Memorandum of Agreement in 2017, which not only increased spaces in international relations but resulted to several policy and programme shifting that interplayed between the APSC to the ASCC, and even the AEC. These include concepts such as positive peace with targets related to governance, sustainable urbanization as linked with climate action, and so forth, under the Sustainable Development Agenda, otherwise known as "Global Goals," a process which began in 2012 after Rio+20 [Jimenez, 2019]. During the pandemic precisely, vaccine and health diplomacy have been at the forefront, the third of the Global Goals.

Today, ASEAN is in a seemingly awkward position: the desire to play a leadership role in the regions of the world, as well as the competing demands of its dialogue partners, which are often driven by inescapable geopolitics in the region, and diplomatic shifts in the world. Despite its apparent inward-looking political philosophy, and growing regional economic strength, ASEAN remains entangled within the larger world order. Regional institutions continue to expand, while ASEAN proposes new approaches, and negotiates the propositions of partners, as a region of nation states, with collective and individual diplomatic relations towards external actors.

For the most part, the pandemic has led to a break-down of institutional barriers, and even some traditional boundaries in peace and security, it is worth asking how harmonious ASEAN remains among itself and others, amidst the evolving character of this public diplomacy-in-the-making.

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А. А. Марьина*

СООБЩЕСТВО БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ В ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ АЗИИ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКОГО ОСМЫСЛЕНИЯ

Аннотация. В статье сообщество безопасности АСЕАН рассматривается с точки зрения различных теорий международных отношений. Выделяются неореалистские, неолиберальные и конструктивистские компоненты, которые позволяют рассматривать интеграционное объединение в Юго-Восточной Азии через соответствующие парадигмы международных отношений. Автор в своем исследовании обращается к работам К. Дойча, А. Ачарьи, Э. Адлера, М. Барнетта, Б. Бузана и О. Уэвера и приходит к выводу, что наиболее оптимально для анализа процессов, протекающих в Юго-Восточной Азии, является теория региональных комплексов безопасности, которая гармонично совмещает в себе как реалистский, так и конструктивистский компоненты, а также, в отличие от европоцентричных теорий, допускает наличие региональной специфики. Помимо этого, делается комплексный обзор критики АСЕАН как сообщества безопасности, нацеленный на выявление актуальный проблем интеграции и перспектив дальнейшего развития сообщества.

Ключевые слова: АСЕАН, АТР, сообщество безопасности, региональный комплекс безопасности, Южно-Китайское море.

Введение

Существует определенный разрыв между теоретическим осмыслением проблем безопасности и поиском их потенциального решения и реальностью. Очевидно, что ни одна теория не может быть реализована в чистом виде на практике, при этом большинство теорий ориентируются на европейские международно-правовые реалии и не являются релевантными для других регионов. Тем временем опыт регионального взаимодействия в сфере безопасности АСЕАН может использоваться другими интеграциями развивающихся стран. Затрагиваемая тема является актуальной для Российской Федерации как в плане использования опыта АСЕАН и переноса его на ЕАЭС и СНГ, так и в плане вовлечения России или отдельных восточных областей непосредственно в сообщество безопасности АСЕАН.

Проблема безопасности в регионе Юго-Восточной Азии

С начала XXI века все больший вес в мировой политике приобретает Азиатско-Тихоокеанский регион, где пересекаются интересы как ведущих мировых, так и региональных держав. При этом в регионе сконцентрировано большое количество развивающихся стран, которые с целью взаимопомощи и формирования единой стратегии развития в 1967 г. создали АСЕАН, определив центральной задачей ассоциации построение сообщества в сфере политики и безопасности. Являясь наиболее успешным примером интеграции развивающихся стран, АСЕАН часто рассматривается через призмы различных теорий безопасности с целью обоснования их жизнеспособности, а разнообразие действующих в регионе акторов международных отношений и преследуемых ими целей

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