

Connecting Soft Power, Message Framing, and Political Actors' Involvement in Online Media: The Case of ASEAN

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How to Cite: Intenilia, A. A. M., & Holzacker, R. L. (2023). Connecting soft power, message framing, and political actors' involvement in online media: The case of ASEAN. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(2), 267–288. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i2.7693>

Abstract

The research aims to examine media message framing in the selected Southeast Asia countries (Indonesia and the Philippines) surrounding events focusing on ASEAN's 50th anniversary in 2017. The research explores the relations between media framing and ASEAN's soft power, taking an interdisciplinary research approach combining political communication studies and international relations. The concept of soft power is divided into (a) strategic narrative and message framing and (b) state and non-state actors' involvement in the communication process. The research uses qualitative content analysis and utilizes Atlas.ti software to conduct the coding process of online news items as the primary data. The main findings are as follows. First, ASEAN is portrayed with a rather positive tone on economic and socio-cultural issues. Second, ASEAN is portrayed on balance in a negative tone on political-security issues. Third, ASEAN state actors deliver more positive statements about ASEAN. Fourth, ASEAN non-state actors depict more negative statements about ASEAN. This research argues that positive news about economic and socio-cultural issues will likely enhance ASEAN's soft power. On the other hand, communication with a negative tone about political-security issues may hinder the development of the institution's soft power. ASEAN's soft power is influenced by the communication of both state and non-state actors.

Keywords: ASEAN, Atlas.ti, message framing, political actors, political communication, soft power

Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has evolved and developed over the past 56 years. From its founding in 1967 as an inter-governmental regional institution framed between the two superpower blocs during the Cold War, today, it is an institution that also wishes to assert and communicate its place among Southeast Asian citizens and on the international stage. Much uncertainty exists about the public's perception of the ASEAN Community, particularly in regard to how ASEAN may attract public engagement across the region through the promotion and spread of culture, values, and ideas. As an emerging regional institution, ASEAN has emphasized a "people-centered" and "people-oriented" approach in its ASEAN Vision 2025. However, According to Hui and Junio (2015), the "ASEAN Community" is considered "elite-driven" with a "state-centric" approach, which is not consistent with its "people-centered" goal. Moreover, the existing research about whether or not ASEAN is portrayed as a "people-oriented" organization through message framing in media is still limited. Hence, the research aims to provide analytical explanations of how the media frame the narrative about ASEAN's issues by analyzing the content of online news media and statements delivered by state and non-state actors.

The research attempts to fill the scientific gap by providing an interdisciplinary study combining aspects of the international relations theory of soft power with the political communication concept of message framing in the media. The research uses qualitative content analysis as the methodology of the case studies. Furthermore, the research attempts to scrutinize how the media frame messages about ASEAN, specifically on its 50th anniversary in 2017, with comparative case studies in Indonesia and the Philippines. The research argues that on the ASEAN's anniversary, the public received more information through online news media rather than directly from official press releases or attending official events to hear the speeches presented by state actors. Thus, it is very crucial to analyze the image of ASEAN, depicted through the message framing, interpreted and recreated by the media.

For the case study of media framing, the research compares Indonesia and the Philippines, two democratic countries in Southeast Asia with a wide range of available media sources to the public. The timeline of the case studies is limited to the key event of ASEAN's 50th anniversary celebration in August 2017. The research argues that ASEAN's 50th anniversary is one of the most crucial moments in the institution's history, which generates increased media and public attention. During the 50th anniversary, the ASEAN Secretariat, located in Jakarta, collaborated with the government of Indonesia to connect with the public, such as conducting the ASEAN's 50 parade, involving thousands of people. Considering that in 2023, Indonesia's Chairmanship in ASEAN has received media attention, it is intriguing to reflect on the previous "big event" organized for ASEAN in Indonesia in 2017.

Three reasons justify why Indonesia and the Philippines are chosen as the case studies. First, both Indonesia and the Philippines have been among the founding members of ASEAN since its establishment on 8 August 1967. Second, Indonesia and the Philippines are similarly situated countries: both are middle-income and democratic. It means that people can participate in political activities, and the press has the freedom to publish news. Third, both

Indonesia and the Philippines have an important role in the moment of the ASEAN's 50th Anniversary. In 2017, the Philippines was the Chair of ASEAN. As for Indonesia, the country hosts the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta and held the ASEAN Parade by inviting the public to join. Hence, comparing Indonesia and the Philippines in the research is justifiable.

Literature Review/Analytical Framework

The research argues that the ASEAN's image in the media can affect this organization's soft power. The theoretical concept of soft power is highly influenced by Joseph Nye (Nye, 2004). In his work, he writes that soft power can be achieved by promoting positive images and shaping public opinion, which later will be translated into public support. Soft power is a co-optive power: "The ability to shape what others want can rest on the attractiveness of one's culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices" (Nye, 2004). Soft power is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies". Based on Nye's argument that "information is a form of power", the research argues that information presented by media is part of ASEAN's soft power to portray its positive image by using its culture and value without coercive force, which may result in obtaining public support.

The research argues that it is important for ASEAN to attract the citizens of its member states to support the ASEAN Vision, particularly for the regional integration process. This argument is supported by Chitty (2017). Delivering attractive messages through public diplomacy can attract the public abroad and at home. It is also highlighted that "where public diplomacy develops trust, liking, and alliances for a country, soft power is generated" (Chitty, 2017). Moreover, in this context, it is not limited only to a country but also to ASEAN as a regional organization. Hence, by attracting people at home, ASEAN will have acquiescence and later will create a positive public opinion, which will strengthen the establishment of the ASEAN Community. Furthermore, previous research mentions how strategic communication can be used to develop a specific "theme" and a particular "event" (Nye, 2004, 2008). Thus, the research will use a specific case study of ASEAN's 50th anniversary as the "event" to examine the strategic communication of ASEAN in terms of spreading information and building a positive image of this organization.

Other than Nye (2004), scholars have attempted to provide further elaboration on the concept of soft power, such as Rothman (2011), Gallarotti (2011), and Roselle et al. (2014). The work of Rothman (2011) is about the revision of the concept of soft power. His work emphasizes the necessity to explore the practical means and mechanisms of soft power. Commenting on the importance of soft power, it is noted that the new conceptualization of soft power uses media and institutions as the means to influence others (Rothman, 2011). He proposes to create a conceptualization of soft power, which ranges from the hardest to the softest form. He clerks four categories within the continuum of power types. Hard power consists of two categories: command and military resources and economic forms of power.

On the other hand, soft power focuses on agenda-setting, institutional control, and framing and rhetoric.

According to Rothman (2011), to utilize agenda-setting power, an institution has to master the knowledge of the agenda system and other resources, such as information and rhetorical resources. Framing and rhetoric can be used to generate influence from one actor to another in the form of communication. He also mentions that "moral framing can affect the behavior of a second actor because the frame can affect the context within which actors look at specific issues". He argues that the addition of "emotional elements" in a particular issue can affect the available choices for a state to pursue. He argues that there are two mechanisms for the influence of soft power, namely "norm diffusion" and "discourse dominance". Norm diffusion stresses the importance of "what is normal or right", rather than through rational calculation. The second mechanism is "discourse dominance". The domination of discourse and rhetoric can generate influence over the position of other actors. It can be done by actors to alter the way the public sees a certain issue through the discourse portrayed in the media. In this context, the role of actors is very prominent.

The work of Rothman in framing and rhetoric is related to the study by Roselle et al. (2014) on strategic narrative. In order to conduct the empirical study, the research uses the projection method of strategic narratives. The projection of the strategic narrative means that the study analyses "the flow of narratives" in media. They mention three methods to analyze strategic narratives: formation, projection, and reception. They also mention that actors have a significant influence in shaping the narratives. The research by Roselle et al. (2014) provides a theoretical framework to conduct empirical research to assess the narratives within ASEAN, which involves the issues and the actors. Based on the theoretical framework of soft power mentioned, the research will take two major points that will be explained further in the following section, namely strategic narrative and actors' involvement.

Narratives are linked to the message. Several existing studies analyze the importance of the message in the context of politics and communication. According to Graber and Smith (2005), political communication encompasses the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that potentially have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics. Based on Golan et al. (2019), states possess the capability to create and disseminate influential messages in the context of verbal and symbolic communication through strategic narratives. Their work also mentions the theory of framing, which allows state actors to transfer "purposively designed messages" in a desirable context.

Next, according to De Vreese et al. (2011), framing can be used to understand the content of news media. Furthermore, they mention that issue framing can influence public opinion through direct and indirect routes. The direct route means that media framing can alter the "belief importance", the way people perceive the importance of some aspects of a particular issue. On the other hand, the indirect route points out the "belief content", which gives people new consideration instead of only altering the existing beliefs. It is argued that "the negative and positive information is asymmetric and that negative information has a stronger impact on citizens' attitudes than positive information". In addition, they cite additional research,

which emphasizes the same pattern: negative information is "more salient", "more memorable", "more persuasive", and "has a stronger effect" than positive information.

In addition, research by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) mentions that framing analysis is crucial in examining the relations between public policy and public perceptions of particular issues. Framing analysis also highlights "what people talk and think" and "how they talk and think" (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, as quoted in Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). It also states that the issue frame can change public opinion regarding an international or regional organization, which has been seen such as on EU-related issues (Saris, 1997, as quoted in Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Moreover, two approaches are provided to conducting content analysis research to examine news framing, namely inductive and deductive approaches (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The inductive approach consists of an open view of all possible frames and does not strictly define the preconceptions of the frames. It contrasts with a deductive approach, where certain frames are defined to be analyzed. An example by Dauda and Hasan (2018) uses news framing in Malaysian online newspapers. Their work findings highlight the news framing into themes and attributes of salience and manifestation of frames.

Other than message framing, the research also aims to analyze the involvement of actors. It is emphasized that providing information to the public or public diplomacy is not limited only to state actors but also to associations of states, sub-states, and non-state actors (Lee & Ayhan, 2015). According to Lee and Ayhan (2015), non-state actors can provide a fresh alternative when the issue of a "mistrusted government" arises. They can be more neutral and more expert since their credibility comes from their expertise. The non-state actors can help the state by providing a public good in the form of collaboration. Non-state actors can also be a "supplement" to regard the outcomes of public diplomacy as public goods. After explaining the theoretical framework of soft power, message framing, and actors' involvement, the following section will analyze strategic narratives and message framing with the two case studies in Southeast Asia.

Research Methodology

The research uses online media coverage to conduct comparative case studies of Indonesia and the Philippines. The data in this comparative study are taken from 1st to 31st August 2017 to see how media published the news items related to ASEAN in August 2017 as part of the "waves of reports". The research also uses several criteria to include the news item as data, namely: (i) containing keywords "ASEAN" in the title and/or in the content; (ii) being published and/or edited on 1 August 2017 until 31 August 2017; (iii) news items from the Philippines are published in English; (iv) news items from Indonesia are published in Bahasa Indonesia and/or in English; (v) the news types are journalistic news, column, opinion, and analysis. The total data are 130 news items in the online media.

The research codes the quotations in each news item (in the form of a statement or content of the news item itself) to conduct the coding process. The total quotations are 657

quotations. The case selection of the anniversary is based on the notion that it is one of the most important “key events” of ASEAN as a regional organization. The research by Kepplinger and Habermeier (1995) presents the assumption of how key events may trigger “waves of reports”.

The research applies a deductive approach by predefining the frames prior to conducting the coding and the analysis to have a clear idea to examine which frames and categories are related to answering the research questions. The type of frame used is issue-specific frames. This type of frame allows us to be more specific in analyzing relevant details regarding an examined event or issue. The research attempts to create its frames and categorizations with regard to answering the research questions. The codes presented are directed to seek the message framing in the media about ASEAN’s regional integration on its 50th anniversary. Hence, the research uses three pillars of the ASEAN Community, namely political security, economy, and socio-cultural, to have a comprehensive analysis of ASEAN’s integration. It also focuses on analyzing the state and non-state actors involved. Therefore, the research divides the actors into internal and external actors, both state and non-state actors, to examine the broader range of statements to analyze the involvement of various actors.

The research has determined keywords as criteria to include one statement or content in a positive or negative tone. A positive tone is portrayed by showing optimism and support towards ASEAN. This tone also consists of the trust in ASEAN’s future as a regional organization that has many opportunities and possibilities, including but not limited to "significant; strengthen the position; resiliency; peace, regional stability, prosperity; bright and prosperous future; economic growth; historic milestone; unity; sustainable development; progressive; and collaborative". On the contrary, a negative tone contains pessimism, criticism, and statements that undermine and underestimate ASEAN or see that conflict is still ongoing, and ASEAN has made no effort to reach cooperation or peace. The research also categorizes the tone that questions ASEAN’s capability as negative tone as it shows the type of hesitation towards this organization, including but not limited to "step back; loss of hope; suffer from conflicts; failures; disappointment; loss of species; exclusive and elitist organization; insecurity; worsening; threat; attack; inability; shame; not doing enough; pessimism; unsolved disputes; doubting; passive; suffer; weakness; social and economic gap; intolerance; difficulty to reach consensus; detached and indifferent; giving up access; and unable to recover". Therefore, the research divides the frames into different coding categories, as shown in Table 1. These categories are all divided into the software of Atlas.ti.

After determining the description of all codes, the next part is to start the coding process. The authors open all 130 documents one by one and link the quotation in the news items (statement or content of the news item itself) with a certain code. The authors have the summary of all data of the news items, divided into news items of the Philippines and Indonesia. The authors read all the news documents and make quotations. All quotations are linked to certain codes. It can be seen from the process that one quotation can contain more than one code. It is caused by the statements, or the content of the news item can reflect more than one topic at once.

After linking quotations with codes, the next step is to analyze the result with the function “analyze” and “co-occurrence table”. The next step is a process to create a code co-occurrence table. This process aims to make a connection among the codes. For instance, the authors want to see all quotations that link to code “business group” and “non-state actors: experts/analyst” with “positive tone” and “negative tone”. The authors then select the option “co-occurrence table” to see all the quotations that link to these four codes. Hence, the result will show all quotations that consist of business groups and experts/analysts and the relations to positive tone and negative tone. With all quotations easily grouped and linked in Atlas.ti, the authors use the result to conduct analysis and draw conclusions.

Table 1 Code Group of the Media Content Analysis

Number	Code Group	Number of Codes	Codes
1	ASEAN Actors	8	ASEAN Actors: 1. ASEAN Secretary General 2. ASEAN Heads of State 3. ASEAN Ministerial Level ASEAN Non-State Actors: 1. Business Group 2. Experts/Analyst 3. NGO/Activist 4. Religious Group 5. Youth/Public Figure
2	Tone	2	1. Negative Tone 2. Positive Tone
3	Messages (Issue-Specific Frame)	3	1. Political-Security Issue 2. Economic Issue 3. Socio-Cultural Issue

Analysis

Message Framing in Media

Based on the coding process of all quotations on Atlas.ti software, the research finds the following comparison on the positive and negative tone of political security, economy, and socio-cultural issues. As presented in Figure 1, the research finds that a negative tone in the political-security issue is more prevalent than a positive tone. It is primarily due to the issue of the South China Sea dispute mentioned by the media in the Philippines. In contrast to the political-security issue, the economy and socio-cultural issues with more positive tone are more prevalent compared to negative tones in the media. The following section will provide an in-depth qualitative analysis of the issue of each category.

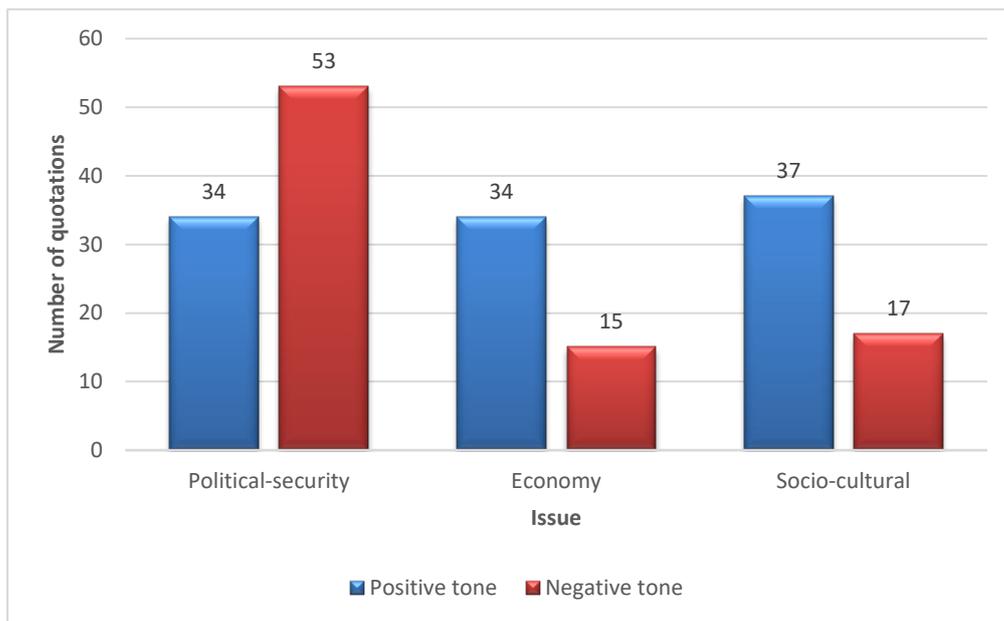


Figure 1 Tone of Message Framing based on Issue (Political Security, Economy, and Socio-Culture) in Media

Political-Security Issue

The research also finds three major frames with positive impressions about ASEAN in political-security issues. Firstly, the media frames the achievement of ASEAN in maintaining regional peace and stability. Secondly, the media stresses implementing ASEAN Way principles in dealing with conflict. Thirdly, there is a contribution of Indonesia in addressing ASEAN's political security challenges. The news items frame that this region's survival from instability and conflicts that have happened during its establishment is unforeseen. Southeast Asia is previously depicted as a "poor and deeply troubled" region. Many experts have said that this organization will become extinct due to its diversities and conflicts. However, its ability to endure the Vietnam War and cooperate with communist countries is surprising. It is stated that ASEAN has become the second most successful regional organization in the world (Mahbubani, 2017). The news articles also cover the ability of ASEAN to support Myanmar's transition process. ASEAN supports Myanmar in the process of democracy, reconciliation, and development with the principle of non-intervention (Tempo.co, 2017).

The research finds three prominent negative issues framed by media in August 2017, namely the disunity among ASEAN member states, the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar (Prawira, 2017; Antony, 2017), and domestic issues regarding religious and ethnic intolerance (Pos-Kupang.com, 2017; Kompas.com, 2017a; VOA Indonesia, 2017; Philstar.com, 2017). The news article mentions how ASEAN and China face a "hard negotiation" about the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea dispute, despite the fact that the leaders have agreed to discuss the issue (VOA Indonesia, 2017). The Rohingya issue in Myanmar is stressed by the

news articles from Indonesia. One particular example highlights the demand that urges activists all over the world to stop the genocide activities in Myanmar (Antony, 2017).

Economic Issue

The research also finds one major frame of positive impression on economic issues: the success of the ASEAN Economic Community. This major frame is divided into two related sub-topics, namely economic growth (Nugroho, 2017; Diah, 2017b) and ASEAN's connectivity (Kompas.com, 2017b; Gamboa, 2017; Philippines News Agency, 2017). There is a limited number of news items that associate negative impressions with economic issues. The major frame in this context relies on the negative consequences of economic development. The negative impression of the ASEAN's economy issue is mostly addressed by civil society networks, who criticized ASEAN's inclusion. They express their complaint in ASEAN pro-trade liberalization; the hampered growth of the fishing industry; and the issue of food insecurity in the region. In addition, environmental groups highlight the environmental damages that happen due to the expansion of the market and economic activities (Interaksyon, 2017). To recapitulate, the negative issues on the economic sector framed in August 2017 are not significant compared to the positive impression of the success of the ASEAN Economic Community.

Socio-Cultural Issue

Two positive frames emerge in this part, namely the leadership of Indonesia in ASEAN and the ASEAN's spirit of togetherness portrayed in the celebration of ASEAN's 50th anniversary. The first positive frame in socio-cultural issues is generated mostly from Indonesian news articles. The news items frame a positive image of the leadership of Indonesia in ASEAN. Indonesia is depicted as the key player with a crucial role in ASEAN. One example is the news item presenting Indonesia as the initiator of human rights protection, establishment of the security community in Southeast Asia, and cultural performance since the beginning of ASEAN's existence (Tribunnews.com, 2017). The second topic on the positive tone of the socio-cultural issue is regarding the celebration of ASEAN 50th anniversary, such as the ceremonial, parade, and youth engagement (Philippines News Agency, 2017). Regarding the ASEAN's 50th anniversary parade, it aims to promote that "ASEAN is owned by the people and for the people" (Wardah, 2017). In this context, the research finds that Indonesia dominates the public discourse of the ASEAN's 50th anniversary celebration by having a parade with more than 3.000 civil society participants that attract media attention.

Similar to the negative frame of the economic issue, there is only a limited number of negative news items related to socio-cultural issues. Those negative frames involve the threat of losing native habitats and species in ASEAN countries (Gamboa, 2017), the inadequate actions of ASEAN to improve people's lives, a view of ASEAN as an "exclusive and elitist" organization, and that the ASEAN Community is missing a crucial pillar, which is an

environmental pillar (Interaksyon, 2017). This section concludes that the negative frame portrayed by media is less prevalent than the positive frame on the socio-cultural issue.

State and Non-State Actors' Involvement in Media

This part uses an argument by Lee and Ayhan (2015) about the involvement of non-state actors. It has to be noted that, in this context, the positive and negative tones are not only *delivered by* the actor but also *about* the actor. This part discusses how state, non-state, and external actors use the tone to express their messages or opinions about ASEAN.

ASEAN State Actors

ASEAN state actors in this section consist of three categories: ASEAN Secretary-General, Heads of State, and Ministers. The tone of messages conveyed by the actors is divided into two categories: positive and negative. As presented in Figure 2, the ASEAN Secretary-General is the category with the fewest statements. Although there is no negative tone associated with the ASEAN Secretary-General, the research argues that the existence of the ASEAN Secretary-General in media coverage is relatively insignificant compared to the Heads of State and Ministers. The finding shows that the highest coverage is the statement from and about the ministerial level. The research argues that it is caused by the crucial roles of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi, and the Philippines, Alan Cayetano, in delivering their statements to the media on the occasion of the anniversary.

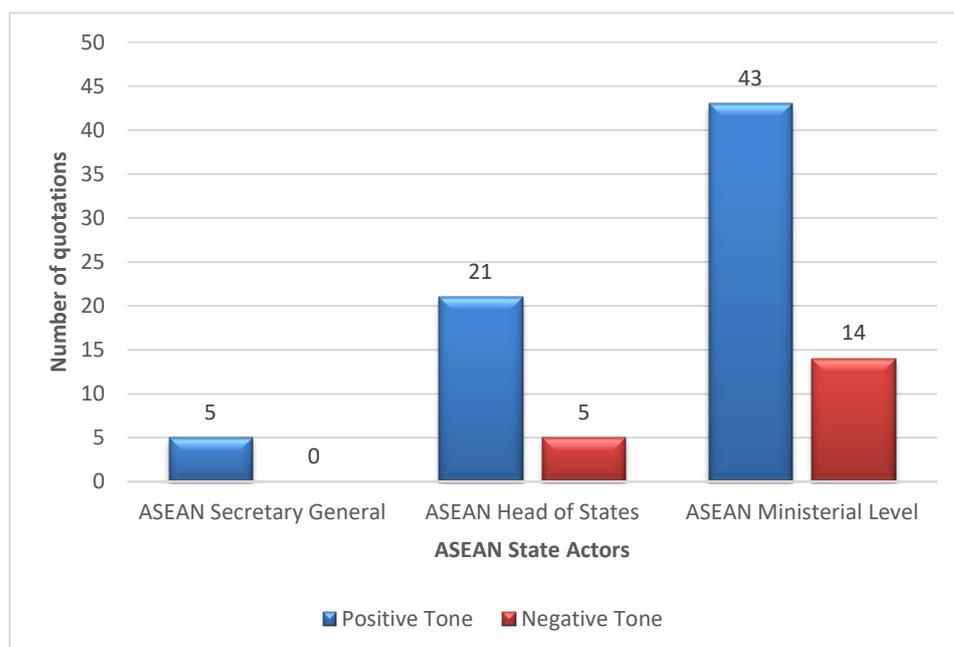


Figure 2 Tone of Statements from and about ASEAN State Actors in Media

Positive Tone

A positive tone is crucial because it helps to generate positive images. According to Gallarotti (2011), a positive image will create respect and admiration. Moreover, these admirations will then generate an endearment and emulation of policies. This section will analyze the positive tone from ASEAN state actors and how this impacts ASEAN's positive image to attract the support of the citizens among the member states. This section will be divided into the ASEAN Heads of State, Ministers, and Secretary-General.

The news articles in the Philippines emphasize three positive acts by President Duterte that are crucial to building ASEAN's positive image. First, he has announced a formal alliance with various business chambers on the 50th anniversary (Bellosillo, 2017). Secondly, Duterte has pursued a legal way to mark the importance of ASEAN. He has signed Proclamation No. 282 on 31 July to disseminate information about the important role of ASEAN. Third, it is an act of directing relevant agencies and departments to support the ASEAN Vision (De Jesus, 2017). Moreover, other than the topic of the ASEAN's anniversary, Duterte has mentioned the ASEAN's partnership with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) (Corrales, 2017). It illustrates the willingness of Duterte to maintain ASEAN's cooperation with an external party. The research argues that according to the media, Duterte has attempted to conduct public diplomacy by spreading the significance of ASEAN's roles to his people, government, business groups, and external actors.

Having explained the positive image of ASEAN built by Duterte, the research now turns to the statements by President Joko Widodo. There are three points stressed by Joko Widodo that affect the positive image of ASEAN: ASEAN's comparison with other regional organizations, its contribution to regional stability, and the benefit of ASEAN for the people. Regarding the comparison with other regional organizations, Joko Widodo reflects that the Brexit phenomenon between the United Kingdom and the EU should be a lesson for ASEAN. Furthermore, he has emphasized that ASEAN is special because it has the "spirit of brotherhood" and always "holds hands" with one another (Hasan, 2017). Furthermore, ASEAN always prioritizes dialogue and negotiation over power. He mentions his optimism that ASEAN will become the fourth biggest market in the world by 2030 (Supriatin, 2017; Ihsanuddin, 2017).

In the context of regional stability, Joko Widodo expresses his optimism that ASEAN has managed to create regional stability in Southeast Asia despite the existing conflicts that happen in other regions. Furthermore, Joko Widodo indicates the role of ASEAN in Indonesia. He has proclaimed that "ASEAN is strong, and along with ASEAN, Indonesia is going forward" (Setiawan, 2017a). The last point of his statement highlights that ASEAN has to maintain its relevance to society. He has argued that ASEAN leaders should work hard so that society can feel the benefit of ASEAN's existence. In addition to the statements by Joko Widodo, the news items from Indonesia also highlight the cooperation between Indonesia and Vietnam based on the statements by the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong (Jordan, 2017; Setiawan, 2017b; Sindonews.com, 2017a).

At the ministerial level, there are two differences between the news items in the Philippines and Indonesia. The news stories in the Philippines mostly cover statements and events related to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Alan Cayetano. On the other hand, the news items from Indonesia present not only Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi, but also several other ministers, such as the Minister of Tourism Arief Yahya, the Minister of Communications and Informatics Rudiantara, the Minister of Health Nila Moeloek (Chaerunnisa & Nodia, 2017), and Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of Indonesia Susi Pudjiastuti (Setiawan, 2017b). The ministers from Indonesia also often emphasize that Indonesia is the “key player” and the “centre” of ASEAN (Diah, 2017a). Furthermore, Cayetano has not emphasized the Philippines’ leadership in ASEAN. Rather, he expresses his appreciation to Indonesia for actively contributing to support ASEAN’s development. There are two similarities among the statements of the ministers from both countries: their interest in cooperation among the member states and with external parties and their optimism about ASEAN’s integration. Retno Marsudi highlights the cooperation with Russia, whereas Alan Cayetano asserts the partnership with China.

Marsudi and Cayetano both show that cooperation with external parties is crucial in ASEAN. They both also convey their appreciation of ASEAN’s accomplishment and optimism toward the further integration of ASEAN. Their statements about ASEAN’s achievements can be divided into three topics: maintaining regional stability, implementing ASEAN’s principles, and building regional community. Marsudi emphasized that ASEAN has successfully maintained the stability in Southeast Asia, both from security aspect and economic development (Diah, 2017b). Cayetano also confirms this statement by addressing that ASEAN has successfully proven its promise to maintain peace, stability, and economic development for ASEAN people. He states that the peaceful settlement of regional disputes and regional cooperation are the most unique and admirable characteristics of this organization (ABS-CBN News, 2017). The statements by Cayetano and Marsudi show that they attempt to tackle the criticism and pessimism of ASEAN through facts and optimism that ASEAN has been able to maintain regional stability in Southeast Asia.

In the context of the implementation of ASEAN’s principles, Cayetano has said that they have a new initiative. It is due to the proposal made by Indonesia to have an informal meeting prior to the actual formal meeting to agree on several issues. Cayetano has expressed his appreciation for the initiative and leadership of Indonesia in ASEAN. Indonesia first proposed this informal meeting in Lao PDR in 2016. Cayetano has also praised the constructive dialogue, consultation, and confidence-building possessed by ASEAN that have made this organization one of the key venues for the settlement of political and security issues (ABS-CBN News, 2017). From these statements, Cayetano shows his belief in implementing ASEAN Way principles, particularly the consultation and negotiation, as an accomplishment of ASEAN, led by Indonesia.

Furthermore, regarding building the ASEAN Community, Cayetano delivers positive and confident messages about ASEAN. He has stated that ASEAN manages to solve the problems of the divisions, fears, and hostilities. He has emphasized the need to think more of “we” than “I”, and “we are a community, more than a community, not just a nation but a

region" (De Jesus, 2017). ASEAN has grown as a dynamic and resilient community, admired, and respected by other regional organizations (Cabato & De Guzman, 2017). Both ministers support the dissemination of ASEAN's positive image by depicting their optimism.

Negative Tone

The research finds that Duterte and Joko Widodo are portrayed very differently in the media. Duterte is described as defending China more than prioritizing ASEAN's unity. On the other hand, Joko Widodo is seen to be making an effort to support the ASEAN's position against China. The news article written by Nery (2017) states that Duterte is portrayed as taking the ASEAN's partner aback by choosing to take a "soft landing" approach towards China. On the contrary, Joko Widodo is depicted as making a good action to support ASEAN by renaming Indonesia's northern sea as "Laut Natuna Utara" or the Northern Natunan Sea and by blowing over 60 foreign fishing vessels that have been seized by the Indonesian government. Therefore, in this context, the news items that consist of a negative tone only report Duterte's approach to China.

Other than the Heads of State, the research also assesses the statement from the ministers. The news items that consist of statements from the ministerial level mostly cover the statements of Cayetano and Marsudi. However, data show that the negative tone is only related to Cayetano with the issue related to China. One news story mentions how Cayetano "blasts" local online news media for highlighting that ASEAN makes a weak statement about the issue of the South China Sea. Cayetano asserts that such framing of the news media is "old and biased". He shows his objection to the news items about the question of the weak statement made by ASEAN to face China (Morillo, 2017). On many other occasions, Cayetano confidently shows positive messages concerning ASEAN. However, during several comments, he also admits that he sees ASEAN in a pessimistic way. For instance, during his speech at the closing ceremony of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting 2017, Cayetano told the audience that he "lost hope" once he saw different national interests over sensitive issues that had yet to be solved by ASEAN (De Jesus, 2017).

The research argues that the ASEAN Heads of State and Ministers mentioned in this section actively contribute by expressing their appreciation of ASEAN's accomplishments. On the other hand, there are still several negative statements related to ASEAN. Nevertheless, this section finds that the involvement of ASEAN state actors generates more positive news articles than the opposite. It can contribute to spreading optimism and a positive image of ASEAN. A positive image is expected to transform into positive public opinion and public support to strengthen ASEAN's soft power. However, the negative image or statements from and about ASEAN state actors should not be undermined. Although the number of negative statements is less than the positive ones, ASEAN has always to monitor its image projection in the media.

ASEAN Non-State Actors

ASEAN non-state actors in this section are divided into various groups, namely business groups, experts/analysts, NGOs/activists, religious groups, and youth/public figures. The research finds a difference between statements associated with state actors and non-state actors. For ASEAN state actors, most of the tone is positive, whereas it varies for ASEAN non-state actors. Figure 3 illustrates that for youth/public figures and business groups, a positive tone is more than a negative tone. On the contrary, experts/analysts, NGOs/activists, and religious groups present more negative tones compared to positive ones. Business groups and youths support the anniversary event as part of public diplomacy actors to spread the values and benefits of ASEAN. On the other hand, analysts, NGOs, and religious groups use the anniversary moment to criticize ASEAN's actions and progress in various issues. The upcoming section will provide further analysis of each category.

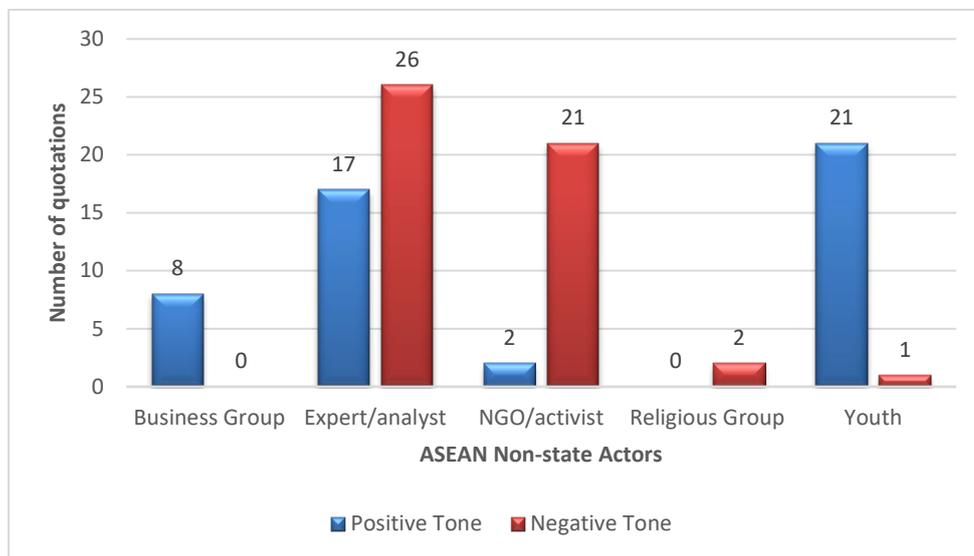


Figure 3 Tone of Statements from and about ASEAN Non-State Actors in Media

Positive Tone

The research notes that the positive tone from non-state actors comes from business groups, experts, and youths. One news article mentions that the CEO of AirAsia Group, Tony Fernandes, has contributed to the anniversary by providing affordable tickets to attract more tourists to visit various destinations in ASEAN countries. He stresses that ASEAN has inspired all of its population to unite together for 50 years (Merdeka.com, 2017). The positive tone about ASEAN from experts and analysts emphasizes the achievement of ASEAN. According to Mahbubani (2017), this region offers an "unexpected glimmer of hope". He is very optimistic and hopeful about the development of the region caused by the advancement of ASEAN as a regional organization. He also highlights the ASEAN's cultures of *musyawarah*

and *mufakat* (consultation and consensus) as the core of its “impressive resilience” (Mahbubani, 2017).

An analysis by Gamboa (2017) presents ASEAN as the second most successful regional grouping after the EU. In addition, Indonesia has selected 50 youths from all over the country to become ASEAN Youth Ambassadors. This program aims to raise awareness among youths towards the ASEAN Community and be the agents in disseminating information about ASEAN (Matondang, 2017). The positive statements also come from public figures of Indonesia. They mention the benefits of being a citizen of ASEAN member states, such as traveling freely within the member states without a visa and having more opportunities as well as broader networks (Sindonews.com, 2017b; Garmina, 2017; Wardah, 2017).

Negative Tone

Three categories of non-state actors address negative statements about ASEAN in various issues. These are experts/analysts, religious groups, and NGOs/activists. The research also finds that negative statements from non-state actors are dominated by the weaknesses and failures of ASEAN in various topics, dominated by political-security issues. These issues are similar to the news frame that has been explained in the negative frame of political-security issues, namely the disunity among the ASEAN member states, the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar, and ethnic intolerance issues. While the message framing focuses on the topic of the message, this section will focus on exploring who the actors are.

There is one particular statement from Dr. Jay Batongbacal, Head of the Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, University of the Philippines, who gives a negative tone about the Philippines. He has mentioned that China is expanding its presence more and more in the South China Sea. He has questioned whether it is necessary to compromise the national interest in this issue to secure loans and weapons from China (Bondoc, 2017). Furthermore, a negative tone also comes from a religious group in Indonesia called "Muhammadiyah". This religious group has emphasized their demand for ASEAN to stop the genocide activity in Rohingya. They have argued that due to the high number of victims, ASEAN should not uphold the principle of non-intervention and change it with the obligation to take responsibility for protecting Rohingya. They have urged ASEAN to consider “freezing” the membership status of Myanmar in ASEAN (Antony, 2017).

The Regional Director of Asia Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Michael Vatikiotis, has mentioned that the conflicts related to intolerance and hate triggered by ethnicity and religion are the current challenges faced by ASEAN. He has provided the example of Muslim supremacy towards Indian and Chinese people in Malaysia and the Muslim versus Buddhist tension in Myanmar. These conditions will potentially affect the stability of the region (Pos-Kupang.com, 2017). He has also highlighted the big economic gap in ASEAN member states as one of the causes of conflicts, and it only benefits a few people (Pos-Kupang.com, 2017). ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People’s Forum (ACSC/APF 2017) has also urged ASEAN leaders to take into consideration the aspirations and recommendations given by ASEAN people (Interaksyon, 2017). ACSC/APF 2017 has held a protest in the Philippines

with over 1.000 members. They have attempted to raise their voice, saying that within its 50-year existence, ASEAN has grown as an “exclusionary and elitist” organization (Interaksyon, 2017).

A statement is written questioning how far ASEAN can put aside the principle of "consensus and deliberation" by considering the dynamic of politics and the economic condition of the region (Wisnu, 2017). It questions the implementation of consensus as a decision-making mechanism in ASEAN. She also mentions an approach called “ASEAN (N)-X” that has been implemented by ASEAN in several mechanisms for the economic sector to be used more. Moreover, this argument is supported by Romulo et al. (2017). According to Romulo et al. (2017), ASEAN has to explore more the “ASEAN minus X” mechanism in several sectors as an alternative to the principle of consensus and consultation decision-making process. ASEAN has to consider the “ASEAN minus X” principle below the ASEAN Summit while maintaining the consensus decision-making for the high-level issue. Based on those statements, the research concludes that the non-state actors tend to question the policies and actions of ASEAN. Their questions lead them to “urge and demand” ASEAN to make better action and policy improvements.

Conclusion

The empirical research demonstrates that political-security issues have more association with a negative tone than a positive tone. There are three issues framing in this topic: the issue of disunity among the member states in the South China Sea dispute, Rohingya conflict, and ethnic intolerance problems. On the other hand, economic and socio-cultural issues have a more positive impression on media. The dominant frame of the economic issue is the achievement of ASEAN in terms of economic growth and development. The socio-cultural issue is related to the ASEAN’s parade and celebration of ASEAN’s 50th anniversary with various cultural performances pioneered by Indonesia.

The research shows that ASEAN state actors portray more positive statements and attempt to build a positive image of ASEAN through the media. The role of the ASEAN Heads of State and Ministers is crucial, particularly the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and the Philippines. On the other hand, ASEAN non-state actors express various impressions. ASEAN youth and the business group focus on discussing ASEAN’s benefits. In contrast, analysts/experts, NGOs/activists, and religious groups depict ASEAN with more negative statements. They question and urge ASEAN to do more realistic and concrete actions. Furthermore, five external states are mentioned in their relations with ASEAN, namely China, North Korea, Russia, the US, and Australia.

The research argues that the news exposure will affect public opinion and influence ASEAN’s soft power. The exposure of positive news from online media can generate a new positive view on the economic and socio-cultural issues that previously do not exist or are still lacking in public. Thus, ASEAN’s soft power regarding economic and socio-cultural issues can be enhanced. On the contrary, the discourse on the political-security issue is dominated

by a negative tone. It shows that the values of respecting sovereignty, non-intervention, consensus, and consultation as ASEAN's principles are problematized in the media. The norm diffusion in ASEAN is challenged by the criticism and hesitation presented by the non-state actors. The non-state actors consist of analysts/experts, NGOs/activists, and religious groups, dominating the discourse by showing their questions and urging ASEAN to have better actions and policies. The message framing by these non-state actors may hinder the soft power of ASEAN because they mostly project hesitation, pessimism, and criticism of ASEAN. These framings later can generate negative images of ASEAN in public, which may diminish ASEAN's soft power to attract public support. From the perspective of the general public as the receiver of the messages, they may construct a more negative image of ASEAN if they receive more negative news from the media.

The exposure of more negative news on political-security issues can alter the public opinion of ASEAN, from trusting this organization to skepticism or distrust. When most non-state actors question the ASEAN's policies in political-security issues, the legitimacy of ASEAN policies is questioned. If ASEAN does not balance the news in countering the hesitation by non-state actors, the image of "consultation and dialogue" as the dispute settlement mechanism will not be perceived positively by the public. Therefore, with a more negative impression, the soft power of ASEAN in the context of the political-security issues is hindered. ASEAN's image has already been constructed in a more positive tone in terms of economic and socio-cultural issues. Having a negative image of the political-security issues may jeopardize ASEAN's overall soft power because those three issues are interconnected to one another, as the pillars of the ASEAN Community.

The research by no means advises ASEAN to change its principles in dealing with political-security disputes. Rather, the research suggests that ASEAN has to conduct more public diplomacy through its direct and indirect communication by emphasizing the strength of the ASEAN's political-security mechanism and cooperation. Hence, ASEAN can counter the criticism and balance the narrative and discourse depicted in media. ASEAN has to pay more attention to its image projected in the media, particularly political-security issues. At the same time, it maintains a positive impression of the economic and socio-cultural issues. Improving public diplomacy will not contradict ASEAN's principles. Instead, public diplomacy creates a better understanding of the public about this regional organization, which is expected to be more "people-centered" and "people-oriented".

The research acknowledges its limitation in connecting the concept of soft power, message framing, and actors' involvement in online media. The focus of the research is limited only to examining the message framing projected by online media in Indonesia and the Philippines in 2017. Moreover, this research does not include a public opinion from the ground, such as how ASEAN people respond to the messages projected by online media, since the interview with ASEAN citizens is not part of this research methodology. Incorporating ASEAN citizens' opinions in future research can elaborate the analysis presented in this research. Comparing the current ASEAN 56th anniversary and Indonesia's Chairmanship in ASEAN in 2023 with the result of this research can provide a more comprehensive analysis regarding this matter.

Acknowledgment

This article is part of master's thesis at the University of Groningen in June 2019 entitled "ASEAN Public Diplomacy: Exploring the Concept of Soft Power in Analyzing Message Framing and Political Actors' Involvement" under the supervision of Professor Dr. Ronald L. Holzhaacker. The author would like to extend her appreciation to StuNed scholarship for funding her master's degree (Master of Arts in International Relations).

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