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Focus and Scope

The Journal of ASEAN Studies (JAS) is an open-access international peer-reviewed bi-annual journal that enriches understanding of the past, current, and future issues relevant to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as regional organisation, community, and Southeast Asia as a region. The article shall address multidisciplinary research on theoretical and/or empirical questions. The topics addressed within the journal include a wide range of spectrum across social sciences and humanities such as but not limited to international relations, diplomacy, economy and business.

JAS expects the articles encourage debate, controversy, new understanding, solid theory, and reflection on ASEAN. The articles sent should have a sharp analysis and rigorous methodologies quantitative or qualitative as well as written in an engaging and analytical style. The JAS does publish original research articles, review article, book review, practice notes, and research notes. However, JAS does not publish journalistic or investigative style of article. The JAS would not be responsible for any implied or written statements of articles published. Each author would be responsible for their own writing.

Journal of ASEAN Studies publishes the following types of manuscripts:

- **Original research articles:** The manuscripts should be approximately 6000-8000 words. The manuscripts must contain a review of the current state of knowledge on the research question(s) of interest, then share new information or new ideas that will impact the state of theory and/or practice in the area of ASEAN Studies and/or Southeast Asian Studies.
- **Review article:** The manuscripts should be approximately 1500-3500 words. The manuscripts must contain the current state of understanding on a particular topic about ASEAN and/or Southeast Asian Studies by analysing and discussing research previously published by others
- **Book review:** The manuscripts should be approximately 1500-4000 words. The manuscripts must contain a critical evaluation of book by making argument and commentary on the particular book discussed about ASEAN and/or Southeast Asian Studies.
- **Practice notes:** These are shorter manuscripts approximately 1500-3500 words that are of specific interest to practitioners. These manuscripts must present new development for the ASEAN.
- **Research notes:** Similar to practice notes, these are shorter manuscripts approximately 1500-3500 words that have specific implications for ASEAN. The manuscripts should employ rigorous methodology either qualitative or quantitative.

Centre for Business and Diplomatic Studies

Centre for Business and Diplomatic Studies (CBDS) is established as part of the International Relations Department, Bina Nusantara (BINUS) University. Our aims are to undertake and promote research and deliberation on diplomacy, business, international relations and developmental issues particularly in Indonesia, Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific.

We also commit to build, connect and share research and others kinds of knowledge generating activities for the betterment of life of the people and earth. Our immediate constituency is International Relations Department, BINUS University and the larger constituency is the broader academic community of the BINUS University and other universities and institutions both national and international as well as policy community.

CBDS publishes scholarly journal, working papers, commentaries and provides training and consultancies services in the areas of diplomatic training, negotiations, commercial diplomacy, conflict resolutions for business, business and government relations, promoting competitive local government in attracting foreign investment, and understanding impact of regional economic integration on development specifically toward ASEAN Community 2015.

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EDITORIAL

Enhancing Global IR Knowledge Production in Southeast Asia Through Quality Publications

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Keywords: knowledge production, Global IR, Southeast Asia, publication

Introduction

Since the call for Non-Western International Relations (IR) Theory (Acharya & Buzan, 2009), there has been a growing movement within the IR discipline to engage more non-western experiences to enhance debate within IR literature. This results in the advancement of Global IR aimed to transform IR into a genuinely global discipline engaging ideas, approaches, and experiences of both Western and non-Western societies (Hurrell, 2016; Jones, 2021). This movement is not only trying to voice non-western ideas but also breaking the hegemony of euro-centrism in analyzing global issues.

However, almost a decade into the movement, such a premise to enhance the Global IR movement might still be limited. Wicaksana and Santoso (2022) show how Indonesian IR is primarily dominated by Western scholarship, especially constructivism and realism. Moreover, Indonesian IR Scholars tend to focus on empirically based and policy-oriented than conceptual ones. This resulted in the lack of Indonesian contributions towards debate in IR

literature. Not to mention that due to the neo-liberalization of education, IR courses tend to be designed to meet the demands of the job market rather than to address the debates in the discipline.

In this editorial, we would like to examine further the knowledge production in International Relations as a field of study in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia. As the only IR Journal based in Indonesia, we are interested in being part of the Global IR movement. Understanding the current state of the field in our region would allow us to focus our attention on how to energize the field in this region. To do so, a bibliometric analysis of the state of IR is conducted as a field of study.

ASEAN in IR Knowledge Production: A bibliometric analysis

Bibliometric analysis is conducted to understand the position of ASEAN in the field of IR. We utilize Scopus as our database, given its broad collections of scholarly publications. We need to reiterate, however, that this database is highly skewed toward English publications and might be biased toward English-speaking countries. However, Scopus has been used by many institutions both in the Global North and South as an instrument for evaluating research outcomes. Using keywords relevant to the study of International Relations in general, we gather around 61.687 articles from 2000 (See Table 1).

Table 1 Keywords for IR and IPE Corpus

Types	Keywords
Relevant keywords for IR Corpus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ({International Relations}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({foreign policy}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({global governance}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({international security}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({middle power}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({power transition}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({cross-border regionalism}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({international political economy}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({global political economy}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({international institution}))
Relevant keywords for IPE Corpus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ({international political economy}) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ({political economy}) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (international) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (global) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (transnational) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (globalization))

These lists can be a corpus for knowledge production in International Relations. As expected, the top four countries publishing about International Relations are all Anglo-Saxon countries such as the US, UK, Canada, and Australia, followed by the Russian Federation, Germany, and China, respectively. These Anglo-Saxon countries dominate IR studies with 31,436 or more than 50%. The US alone published around 25% of IR scholarships.

Furthermore, the top twenty most productive countries in IR knowledge production are dominated by Western countries, with more than 70% of publications published in these countries. Non-western countries such as Russia, China, India, Japan, Brazil, and Turkey account for only 14% of IR publications. This suggests that the US and Western countries dominate IR scholarship (See Table 2).

Table 2 IR Publication by Country from 2000-2022

No	Country	Number of publications
1	United States	15.689
2	United Kingdom	9.749
3	Canada	3.075
4	Australia	2.923
5	Russian Federation	2.897
6	Germany	2.887
7	China	1.694
8	Netherland	1.386
9	Italy	1.326
10	France	1.289
11	Turkey	1.248
12	India	1.038
13	Sweden	982
14	Brazil	924
15	Japan	897
16	Spain	895
17	Belgium	871
18	Switzerland	831
19	Norway	798
20	Denmark	789

Source: Scopus database

Where is the position of Southeast Asia in general and Indonesia in particular in regard to this knowledge production? All Southeast Asian countries combined have only produced 2% of IR scholarships since 2000. Singapore is ranked number 1 as a country that has made IR scholarship in ASEAN with 635 publications. Despite being the largest country in ASEAN and a supposedly important player, Indonesia has produced only 240 publications since 2000 and placed second, followed by Malaysia and Thailand in third and fourth place with 217 and 105 publications, respectively.

Arguably, Singapore has become a hub in knowledge production in IR. Singapore's two leading institutions, Nanyang Technological University and the National University of Singapore, arguably have become hub for IR knowledge production in ASEAN, publishing 426 and 352 publications, respectively, higher than all Indonesian academic institutions' productivity combined (See Table 3). Singapore is also superior in terms of the quality of the publication. Most of the publications are published in highly-ranked journals. Other than

Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia followed. There are six Indonesian institutions, six Malaysian institutions, two Philippines institutions, two Thai institutions, and one Vietnam institution in the top twenty most productive institutions in IR knowledge production (See Table 4).

Table 3 IR Publications in Southeast Asia from 2000-2022

No	Country	World Ranking	Number of Publications
1	Singapore	23	635
2	Indonesia	37	240
3	Malaysia	40	217
4	Thailand	55	105
5	Philippines	56	103
6	Vietnam	58	90
7	Cambodia	108	9
8	Brunei	112	7
9	Laos	128	4
10	Myanmar	129	4

Source: Scopus database

Table 4 Publications by University in Southeast Asia from 2000-2022

No	Institutions	Number of Publication	Country
1	Nanyang Technological University	426	Singapore
2	National University of Singapore	352	Singapore
3	Universiti Malaya	50	Malaysia
4	De La Salle University	44	Philippines
5	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	41	Malaysia
6	Thammasat University	32	Thailand
	Singapore Management University	29	Singapore
7	Bina Nusantara University	29	Indonesia
8	Universitas Indonesia	27	Indonesia
9	University of the Philippines Diliman	26	Philippines
10	Universiti Sains Malaysia	20	Malaysia
11	Chulalongkorn University	19	Thailand
12	Universitas Airlangga	19	Indonesia
13	Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam	18	Vietnam
14	International Islamic University Malaysia	17	Malaysia
15	Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta	16	Indonesia
16	Universitas Diponegoro	14	Indonesia
17	Universitas Padjadjaran	14	Indonesia
18	Universitas Putra Malaysia	12	Malaysia
19	Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin	12	Malaysia
20	Universiti Utara Malaysia	11	Malaysia

Source: Scopus database

For Indonesia, knowledge production is highly diversified. Bina Nusantara University has become the most productive in terms of IR knowledge production with 29 publications (12%), followed by Universitas Indonesia with 27 (11%), Universitas Airlangga with 19 publications (7,8%), and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta with 16 publications (6,6%). Unlike Indonesia, Philippines IR knowledge production is primarily dominated by two universities, De La Salle University and the University of the Philippines Diliman, representing almost 70% of the total publications (See Table 5).

Table 5 Publications by Universities in Indonesia from 2000-2022

No	Institutions	Number of Publication
1	Bina Nusantara University	29
2	Universitas Indonesia	28
3	Universitas Airlangga	19
4	Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta	16
5	Universitas Diponegoro	14
6	Universitas Padjajaran	14
7	Hasanuddin University	11
8	Universitas Gajah Mada	9
9	LIPI	9
10	Centre for Strategic and International Studies	6

Source: Scopus Database

The fate of the IR subfield, Indonesian knowledge production in International Political Economy, an IR subfield is even worse. From 12.470 documents with relevant IPE keywords, Indonesian-based scholars only produced 51 publications. Only one article published by Indonesian-based scholars was published in Review of International Political Economy, the most prominent journal in the field of International Political Economy. Overall, Southeast Asian-based scholars produce only 308 journal publications or 2,25%. Singaporean-based institutions dominate knowledge production with 141 publications, or more than 45% of all publications from Southeast Asian institutions. The United States still dominates most knowledge production in the field of International Political Economy with 3.660 publications, the United Kingdom with 2.879 publications, Canada with 949 publications, Australia with 817 publications, and Germany with 621 publications. In Southeast Asia, Singapore ranked first with 141 publications followed by Indonesia in second place with 51 publication, Malaysia with 48 publications, Thailand with 35 publications, and the Philippines with 22 publications (See Table 6).

The question, then, is where Indonesian IR academic scholars publish. Building upon available data of Indonesian IR scholars in the Scopus database, we can gather around 149 Indonesian IR scholars. These 149 scholars have generated 697 publications or 4,6 publications on average per scholar. However, the prevalence of Indonesian IR scholars published in

proceedings is higher than average. For instance, there were only 792 publications in proceeding out of 61.687 publications in IR or about 1,2%. In the case of Indonesia, there are 118 publications in proceedings or almost 17% of all total publications by Indonesian scholars. Publishing in proceedings indicates a low-quality paper, given the nature of proceeding, that has weak or no peer review (See Table 7).

Table 6 IPE Publication by Country from 2000-2022

No	Country	World Ranking	Number of Publications
1	United States	1	3,660
2	United Kingdom	2	2,879
3	Canada	3	949
4	Australia	4	821
5	Germany	5	626
6	Netherland	6	367
7	Italy	7	294
8	South Africa	8	278
9	China	9	271
10	France	10	264
11	Singapore	21	141
12	Indonesia	38	51
13	Malaysia	39	48
14	Thailand	43	35
15	Philippines	50	22

Source: Scopus Database

Table 7 Top ten journal outlets by Indonesia-based IR Scholars

No	Name	Type	Focus	Number
1	IOP Conference Series Earth and Environmental Science	Proceeding/ Discontinued	Non-IR Journal	73
2	Review of International Geographical Education Online	Journal/ Discontinued	Non-IR Journal	31
3	International Journal of Innovation Creativity and Change	Journal/ Discontinued	Non-IR Journal	26
4	Central European Journal of International and Security Studies	Journal	IR Journal	21
5	Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems	Journal/ Discontinued	Non-IR Journal	17
6	International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy	Journal	Non-IR Journal	13
7	International Journal of Supply Chain Management	Journal/ Discontinued	Non-IR Journal	12
8	Revista Unisci	Journal	IR Journal	12
9	Journal Of Physics Conference Series	Proceeding	Non-IR Journal	11
10	International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research	Journal/ Discontinued	Non-IR Journal	9

Source: Scopus Database

Furthermore, Indonesian IR scholars do not publish in IR or Political Science specific journals. The top ten outlets where Indonesian IR scholars publish were primarily dominated by science and management-related journals. This indicates that Indonesian IR scholars tend to publish in predatory journals or low-rank journals even though it is not part of the scholarly field. This also shows the academic environment in Indonesia seems to prioritize quantity and fast publication where proceedings can cater for such needs. As a comparison, around 59 academics based in Singapore has generated about 977 publications or 16 publications on average per person. Singapore academics published only seven conference proceedings. Most of the academics in Singapore published in reputable IR journals focusing on the Asia Pacific (See Table 8).

Indeed the low-quality publication by Indonesian scholars by no means indicates the lower quality of Indonesian scholars. Many variables explain the seemingly low-quality publications by Indonesian scholars. Many IR academics in Indonesia or some in Southeast Asia are busy and occupied with administrative or structural activities (Rakhmani, 2021). This is considering the condition of the higher education environment in Indonesia, which focuses on bureaucratic jobs. Second, the process of neoliberalization of education keeps lecturers busy in the teaching process with a large number of classes and a lot of workloads so that lecturers do not have time to do research. This, of course, really depends on each institution's policy (Rosser, 2023). Third, given the unique position of academics in Indonesia, many lecturers enjoy the role of activists or observers. The phenomenon of academic pragmatism, where lecturers interact more often with the public, makes publication activities irrelevant to some academics.

Table 8 Top Ten Journal Outlets by Singapore-Based IR Scholars

No	Name	Number of Publication
1	Pacific Review	32
2	Contemporary Southeast Asia	14
3	Asian Survey	12
4	Intellectual Discourse	12
5	Asia Policy	11
6	Asian Security	11
7	Review of International Studies	11
8	Asian Journal of Political Science	10
9	Australian Journal of International Affairs	10
10	Asian Journal of Comparative Politics	8
11	Cambridge Review of International Affairs	8
12	European Journal of International Relations	8
13	International Affairs	8
14	Journal of Strategic Studies	8

Source: Scopus Database

Our bibliometric analysis shows that the West primarily dominates International Relations knowledge production. In the case of Southeast Asia, the hub for knowledge production is Singapore. Specifically for Indonesia, the picture is even grimmer when we look at the quality of publications by Indonesian IR scholars. Not only is there a gender gap in terms of publication by Indonesian IR scholars (Prihatini & Prajuli, 2022), but there is a quality gap in publications. It is then challenging to contribute for Indonesian IR to have a distinct view that allows them to contribute toward Global IR. There is a need for further enhancement of the Indonesian IR epistemic community.

Enhancing IR in Southeast Asia

This current JAS issue aims to address such limitations in enhancing how Indonesian scholars, in particular, and Southeast Asian scholars, in general, can contribute towards the Global IR. This edition is special because it marks the tenth anniversary of the Journal of ASEAN Studies. Seven articles in this issue, in some ways, address the concern on how Southeast Asian-based scholars can contribute to the IR debate. To do so, we examine the trajectories and trends of research that engage Southeast Asia as empirical grounds.

The first article by Andrew Rosser, titled “Beyond the Crisis: Re-energizing Southeast Asian Studies”, discusses the decline of Southeast Asia as area studies. Rosser (2022) suggests several strategies to enhance Southeast Asian studies to be more relevant to debates in the disciplines. This is important because JAS, although it claims to be an IR journal, focuses on Southeast Asia and ASEAN as its empirical issues. We publish articles that engage in the issue of transnational environmental governance in Southeast Asia (Varkkey, 2021), domestic issues of particular ASEAN member countries such as the president public speech (Tyson & Apresian, 2021), to comparative analysis of two ASEAN member states focusing on how states policing cyberspace (Talamayan, 2020). However, we expect that such area studies could contribute to the particular debate. We hope JAS could be a platform for linking area studies with debates in disciplines.

The second article written by I Gede Wahyu Wicaksana and Moch Faisal Karim, titled “Approaches to Indonesia’s Foreign Policy: Area Studies, FPA Theory, and Global IR”, examines the evolution of Indonesia’s foreign policy studies, highlighting the major theoretical and methodological trends that have shaped their current form. Wicaksana and Karim (2022) show that Indonesian scholars focusing on foreign policy analysis (FPA) has engaged in more diverse theory-driven inquiries. Many recent studies on Indonesia’s foreign policy engage in role theory (Karim, 2021) and family state (Wicaksana, 2019). This could be an important trend for Indonesia to contribute to the Global IR, specifically in the sub-field of FPA. JAS has also published a variety study on Indonesia’s foreign policy, especially on Indonesia’s international leadership (Jemadu & Lantang, 2021), Indonesia’s foreign policy toward ASEAN, and the interaction between domestic politics and Indonesia’s foreign policy toward South Pacific (Lantang & Tambunan, 2020). We hope that JAS could produce more theory-driven FPA focusing on Indonesia and comparative studies of ASEAN member states.

The third and fourth articles focus on Southeast Asia's International Political Economy (IPE) trends. Miranda Tahalele et al. (2022), in their article titled "The Trajectory and Trend of International Political Economy in Southeast Asia Authors", explores the studies of Southeast Asia's political economy that have stimulated the debate over the past years and its future trends. They show how issues on climate change and the environment, the importance of sub-regional in ASEAN integration, and digitalization and technological advancement could be a trend that emerged within the policy discussion and academic forums. Hence, we encourage Southeast Asian-based scholars to engage in these issues to contribute to conceptual development that enriches IPE in Southeast Asia.

The fourth article is by Kyunghoon Kim, titled "Key Features of Indonesia's State Capitalism Under Jokowi". In this article, Kim (2022) analyses how state capitalism has expanded rapidly since President Joko Widodo came into power in 2014. He shows, however, state capitalism's resurgence has not translated into the government decidedly turning its back on the market. This type of study is important for the growing study of IPE in Southeast Asia, given the distinct nature of state-market relations that might shed light on general debates in IPE.

The fifth and sixth articles focus on trends in contemporary media issues of Southeast Asia, especially the debate regarding democratization and the rise of authoritarianism. The article by Athiqah Nur Alami et al. (2022) examines how the digital sphere may or may not support inclusive and deliberative democracy in the region. They find that digital space has created different outcomes for democratization in Southeast Asia. Digital space can be instrumental in harassing dissent or jailing opposition members in countries like the Philippines and Vietnam. At the same time, using technology offers an opportunity that has prospects for nurturing deliberative and more inclusive democracy in Indonesia and Malaysia. In their article titled "Journalism in the Age of Digital Autocracy: A Comparative ASEAN Perspective", Aim Sinpeng and Youngjoon Koh (2022) survey how digital news organizations survive and thrive in this increasingly repressive environment where governments are seeking innovative ways to monitor, surveil, censor and persecute government critics, activists and journalists. They find that digital authoritarianism does not exert downward pressure on critical journalism.

Last but not least, our seventh article is written by Tangguh Chairil et al., titled "Road to ASEAN Political-Security Community Vision 2025: Understanding Convergence and Divergence in ASEAN Voting Behaviors in the UNGA". Chairil et al. (2022) examine ASEAN cohesion and how it aligns with the institution's community-building project by looking at the pattern of divergence and convergence in ASEAN voting behaviour across security issues discussed in the UN General Assembly. They find that ASEAN member states' voting highly converges on colonialism, the law of the sea, the Mediterranean region, military expenditures, outer space, peace, and transnational crimes.

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Beyond the Crisis: Re-energizing Southeast Asian Studies

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Abstract

This article examines the main drivers of the fiscal crisis in Asian/Southeast Asian Studies and considers ways of overcoming or at least ameliorating it. In the Australian context, several leading scholars in Asian Studies have called for various new forms of strategic state financial support to help keep the field alive, including incentives and structural support for Asian languages at both school and university levels and priority in publicly-funded research grant schemes. However, re-energizing Asian Studies in fiscal terms will undoubtedly require efforts to make the field more appealing to prospective students because of the prevalence of higher education funding models in which money follows student enrollments. This will particularly be the case with Southeast Asian Studies, given the weakness of enrollments in this sub-field. In this respect, there may be some value in seeking to create new education pathways in Asian Studies that focus on cross-national issues and problems within the region as an alternative to the traditional country-focused area studies approach.

Keywords: Southeast Asian Studies, fiscal crisis, Asian studies education

Introduction

In recent decades, the field of Asian Studies—and, in particular, the subfield of Southeast Asian Studies—has been in the midst of a widely-acknowledged crisis (Jackson, 2003; King, 2005; Goss & Wesley-Smith, 2010; Acharya, 2014; Beng-Huat et al., 2019). In part, the crisis has been intellectual, reflecting a critique of the field that has called into doubt its scholarly merits, relevance, and ethical or political underpinnings. Scholars associated with cultural studies have argued that Asian Studies are a fundamentally conservative enterprise that has reinforced the subordination of Asian countries and peoples. At the same time, globalization theorists have argued that, as a field characterized by methodological

nationalism and an emphasis on difference, Asian Studies have become largely irrelevant in a context where global processes are reshaping the world and making it more homogenous in a variety of different ways (Jackson, 2003; Jackson, 2019). Asian Studies have also been criticized for lacking 'a defined canon of theories and methods around which scholars can gather' (Beng-Huat et al., 2019) in contrast to the traditional disciplines. In short, as Beng-Huat et al. (2019) have put it, Asian Studies has been criticized for having 'a three-pronged "problem": of weak rules, hard borders, and ancestral sin.'

Nevertheless, the crisis in Asian Studies is also – and arguably primarily – a fiscal crisis. As Kelley (2020) has noted, 'the critiques of area studies, from the 1990s to the present, have made abstract charges about knowledge production against unnamed individuals, when the work of many scholars who write about Asia do not show evidence of the problems these critiques claim to identify'. Moreover, scholars of area studies have thought deeply about the accusations made in these critiques and sought to adjust their approaches accordingly. However, the field's fiscal crisis is very real and posing a severe threat to the field's survival, at least in Western countries where for a variety of historical, political, and economic reasons, the field has been institutionally centred.

With a few notable exceptions, Asian Studies programs in the West have struggled to attract funding, with the result that academic positions have not been renewed and, in some cases, programs have been closed (King, 2015; Beng-Huat et al., 2019; Kelley, 2020; Aspinall & Crouch, 2023). These fiscal difficulties have reflected a marked decline in student enrolments as students flock to programs in international relations, international business, media studies, criminology, or professional disciplines instead. This shift in student choice appears to have severely impacted Southeast Asian Studies (King, 2015; Aspinall & Crouch, 2023). In Australia, for instance, student enrollments in Northeast Asian languages (Japanese, Chinese and Korean) have grown enormously over the past twenty years on the back of increasing international student enrollments. However, enrollments in Southeast Asian languages have suffered a 'dramatic decline', leading to the closure of numerous Southeast Asian language programs (Aspinall & Crouch, 2023). This has mainly been the case with Indonesian, the most widely taught Southeast Asian language. Lesser-taught Southeast Asian languages have virtually disappeared (Aspinall & Crouch, 2023).

This article examines the main drivers of this fiscal crisis and considers ways of overcoming or at least ameliorating it. In the Australian context, several leading scholars in Asian Studies have called for various new forms of strategic state financial support to help keep the field alive, including incentives and structural support for Asian languages at both school and university levels and priority in publicly-funded research grant schemes (Hill, 2012; Hill, 2020; "Australians falling behind", 2012; Aspinall & Crouch, 2023). However, re-energizing Asian Studies in fiscal terms will undoubtedly require efforts to make the field more appealing to prospective students because of the prevalence of higher education funding models in which money follows student enrollments. This will particularly be the case with Southeast Asian Studies, given the weakness of enrollments in this sub-field.

Effecting such change will not be easy but there is possibly some value in seeking to create new education pathways in Asian Studies that focus on cross-national issues and problems within the region as an alternative to the traditional country-focused area studies approach. This is because such pathways speak better to the interests and needs of students who have an interest in Asia but currently pursue this through other programs, especially the ones labelled 'international'. In presenting this argument, the article provides frequent reference to and draw on examples from the Australian context for Asian Studies because this is the context the author knows best, but it is hoped that the comments have wider relevance.

The Drivers of the Fiscal Crisis

Scholars analysing the fiscal crisis in Asian Studies have attributed it, first and foremost, to the intellectual critique of the field by cultural studies and globalisation theorists. Beng-Huat et al. (2019), for instance, have argued that the fiscal crisis is linked to a deeper problem of academic legitimacy. Scholarship on the region, they say, has been questioned at a time when universities remain dominated by traditional disciplines and new, thematically-based, interdisciplinary fields are emerging. This combination of circumstances has triggered declining student interest, withdrawal of resources, and changes in staff disciplinary affiliation: for instance, 'scholars with social science training, including the very best, are being attracted and siphoned off to disciplinary departments and, in the process, often lose their Area Studies identity' (Beng-Huat et al. 2019).

Alternatively, scholars have attributed the fiscal crisis to shifts in opportunities for prospective students brought about by globalization and, in particular, the information technology revolution and the fact that international travel has become easier (Kelley, 2016). Reflecting on the different circumstances he faced as an area studies student in the 1980s and 1990s compared to contemporary students, Kelley (2020), for instance, has argued that:

Whereas it was the "foreignness" and various degrees of inaccessibility that initially attracted me to the Soviet Union, to Taiwan, to Vietnam, and even to Thailand and Cambodia, in the age of global digital mobility that affective entry point has largely been replaced by either the banal omnipresence of the entire globe on our cellphones or the ease with which people can travel to and work in foreign lands. These two phenomena lead to different outcomes, but both contribute to the decline of the academic study of foreign societies.

It seems likely that declining student interest in Asian Studies has been driven at least partly by changing priorities in Western business communities concerning staff recruitment. In Australia, for instance, there has been a shift in the business community's calculations about the Asia-related skills and expertise that Australian business needs to compete effectively in the region and the communities from which they can recruit these skills and expertise. In the late 1980s-early 1990s, Australian business seemed to support the idea – promoted by the Australian government through reports such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy* (Garnaut, 1989) – that the country needed

to invest more in Asian language training and the study of Asian cultures and societies to produce a workforce that could facilitate Australia's economic engagement with the region. More recently (and in the wake of high levels of Asian immigration to Australia over the following decades), it has concluded that it needs staff with knowledge of Asian markets and networks rather than Asian language and cultural skills *per se*. Moreover, it can source such staff from the Australian and Asian-Australian diasporas.

For instance, in a 2012 report, the AsiaLink Taskforce (2012), a grouping largely comprising senior business leaders in Australia, listed 'sophisticated knowledge of Asian markets/environment' and 'extensive experience operating in Asia' as the top two 'individual capabilities' 'critical to business success in and with Asia'. It listed a 'useful level of language proficiency' sixth. More recently, the Asia Taskforce (2021), a grouping of business leaders, consultants and experts, have proposed that Australian business needs to recruit more corporate board members who have Asia experience and harness their networks and market knowledge. It also needs to harness the networks and knowledge of members of the Asian-Australian and Australian diaspora communities who are connected to the region through family, social, and business linkages. In short, Australian business has concluded that it can build an Asia capable workforce without widespread training of Australians in Asian languages, cultures and societies – precisely the sort of training that Asian Studies and Asian language programs provide ("Australians falling behind", 2012).

However, the leading cause of the fiscal crisis in Asian Studies is the emergence of competing ways of learning about Asia. At the same time that Asian Studies has been in fiscal crisis, fields that employ the word 'international' in their name – e.g., International Relations, International Studies, International Development, International Business, and International Management – have proliferated and, in many cases, grown enormously. Such fields do not typically focus on Asia but often offer education on Asia in accordance with what Aspinall and Crouch (2023) have termed 'a post-area studies' approach. It entails embedding area components into programs defined on a disciplinary basis. Often, it entails a concern with how global processes or issues play out within specific areas; these areas are shaping global processes/issues, and cross-national comparative analysis of both sets of dynamics. It does not require students to undertake years of language training and in-country cultural immersion, the hallmarks of an area studies approach but may entail substantial area content of a more region-wide and issue or theory-focused nature than of a country-focused nature.

Of these various internationally-defined programs, it comes to the author's sense that International Relations or International Studies has become the principal competitor to Asian Studies for students who have an interest in Asia. A review of the Australian International Relations scene by Davies and Canfield (2020), for instance, found that 42% of international relations scholars in Australian universities have an Asia-Pacific regional focus. Aspinall and Crouch (2023) suggest that this 'likely makes international relations the most Asia (or Asia-Pacific) focused of all disciplines in Australia, outside of language and Asian Studies programs themselves'.

Enrollment numbers suggest that many students prefer this post-area studies way of learning about Asia. We need to understand better the reasons for this preference.

Anecdotally, the author has heard from the students he teaches that it reflects a combination of beliefs on the part of students: that language study is more challenging than non-language study, that it can lower grade point averages (GPAs) (while the non-language study can boost GPAs); and that language study requires a more significant commitment to in-class time, making it harder to juggle university study with other commitments (particularly work commitments). In this respect, the problem for Asian Studies is not so much that students may have become less interested in studying foreign societies, as Kelley (2022) would have it, but that for a variety of reasons, they prefer broad knowledge about these societies to the in-depth knowledge offered by area studies programs. Suppose Asian Studies are to be fiscally viable in the future. In that case, it will likely have to find ways of recruiting these students and meeting their needs while continuing to meet the needs of traditional Asian Studies students. This will be a challenge given that it is presently geared mainly, if not entirely to the needs of the latter.

The Regional Alternative

It is important to note that the crisis in Asian Studies in the West has gone hand-in-hand with 'dramatic changes in global knowledge production underway as a result of the geopolitical rise of East, South East, and South Asia' (Jackson, 2019). As Asian economies have grown, governments in many Asian countries have increased public investment in higher education, including in academic research; invited foreign universities to establish branch campuses within their borders, or otherwise sought to promote the development of national higher education systems.

One consequence has been a huge increase in humanities and social science (HUMSS) research by scholars based in the region, much of which has been on the region. Some of this output has been produced by scholars in area studies centers such as the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore, the Institute of Asian Studies at Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and the Southeast Asia Research Centre at City University of Hong Kong. However, much more has been produced by scholars working in traditional HUMSS disciplines. Moreover, focusing on Southeast Asian Studies, Jackson (2019) notes that HUMSS research from the region has often had an 'anti-hegemonic and anti-imperialist' orientation in contrast to the alleged failings of Asian Studies in the West. Grounded in the traditional disciplines, it has possibly been less prone to the problem of weak rules as well. These changes suggest that Asian Studies and Southeast Asian Studies have a bright future within the region.

Some may argue that it is entirely appropriate for Asia to become the locus of knowledge production about Asia and that a shift in this locus is, therefore, a good thing. This article agrees with this sentiment. However, there are at least three reasons why Western countries need to continue producing knowledge and research in the HUMSS about Asia, indeed playing a leading role in producing such knowledge and research. First, academic freedom is, broadly speaking, currently stronger in the West than in Asia, with the result that the former is better placed than the latter to produce independent and critical research on the region.

Second, even though many Asian governments have sought to promote the development of their higher education systems in recent years, these systems remain weak outside a few countries in the region: Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and parts of mainland China. Third, as Asia's importance in economic, geopolitical, and cultural terms continues to grow, it remains imperative for Western countries to understand the region and the implications of changes within it for themselves. In short, Asia continues to matter in various ways to the West. What, then, can be done to re-energize Asian Studies and, in particular, Southeast Asian Studies in the West?

Strategies for Re-energization

In recent years, several scholars have advanced proposals for how to 'reinvent' or 'remake' Asian Studies or Southeast Asian Studies to address the field's crisis in both its intellectual and fiscal aspects. Acharya (2014), for instance, has suggested that Southeast Asian Studies should go comparative, proposing two particular analytical approaches for this purpose. The first he calls 'regional disciplinary studies'. This entails the application of traditional disciplinary frameworks and methodologies to the study of Southeast Asia. It would accordingly see the incorporation of Southeast Asian case material into discussions and debates within traditional disciplines in a more conscious and meaningful way than in the past, making them less Euro and America-centric. The second approach, 'transnational area studies', is grounded in an area studies approach rather than the disciplines. It involves a command of languages, a detailed understanding of specific places, and interpretive forms of analysis. It is less formalistic in terms of research designs and methodologies than fields like political science, particularly its quantitative strands, yet seeks to reach beyond national boundaries to examine issues of global and regional significance. As an example of this approach, Acharya points out Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities*, a landmark work on nationalism that drew on Anderson's command of multiple Asian and European languages and understanding Southeast Asian history and politics.

In another important contribution to this discussion, Jayasuriya (2015) has proposed that Asian Studies should become more centrally concerned with solving problems, particularly problems of a cross-national, global nature. By pursuing this problem-focused approach, he says, a more genuinely global social science can emerge, shed off its Euro- and American biases.

In a third important contribution, Beng-Huat et al. (2019) suggest that area studies scholars should 'adopt four doctrinal positions':

First, to treat their regions as open – as part of the world, historically and in contemporary terms. Second, to accept that regions are in flux, such that their spatial articulations may alter quite quickly, and quite fundamentally. Third, to be open and responsive to trans-regional comparative engagements (say, Asia–Africa, or Manila–Madrid–Managua). And fourth, to be equally open to the deep inter-disciplinarity that is so needed in today's world.

Another interesting possibility centers on the concept of 'Global Asia'. The precise contours of this concept and what it implies in terms of an Asian Studies education are unclear. However, from what is seen, it entails a focus on understanding how global processes are playing out within Asian contexts and these contexts are contributing to global processes. The 'About Us' section for the East Asia Foundation's magazine, *Global Asia*, for instance, states that: 'Our aim is to give voice to the global dimension of what is happening in Asia.....[W]e aim for Asia to speak to the world, and the world to Asia. That is important at a time when this region is playing an ever greater role in world affairs' ("What is Global Asia", n.d.). Monash University has sought to translate this orientation into a teaching program by creating a major in 'Global Asia' as part of its Bachelor of Arts. This major is described as a program that 'examines the global impact of Asian countries, cultures, and economies' (Monash University, 2023). Significantly, this major has components drawn from both the humanities and the social sciences, indicating an intent to maintain the interdisciplinarity of traditional education in Asian Studies.

The article's purpose here is not to argue for or against each of these proposals. It is simply to note that: 1) much thought has already gone into how Asian Studies might be meaningfully reinvented, and 2) much of this thought has sought to move the field beyond the methodological nationalism that has characterized the field towards a more globally-focused or comparative approach. This lays the foundation for potentially fruitful further discussion about how we might create new education pathways in Asian Studies that appeal to students lost to the various 'international' programs mentioned earlier. This is because the various proposals above, or at least some of them, have the potential to be translated into the broad forms of education on the region that many students appear to prefer.

Finally, it is also important to note that there are nowadays many more options for effective intensive, in-country language training available to students than was the case when the traditional area studies approach was developed. This enhances the scope for development of new pathways through an Asian Studies education. The traditional pathway involved starting with language training and then moving on to development of specialized expertise in literature, politics, culture, history and so on. The presence of effective intensive, in-country language training opens up the possibility of an alternative pathway whereby pursuit of a broad approach to learning about Asia is converted to specialized country expertise through language training and cultural immersion at a later point in a student's academic journey than being required at the beginning. Such a trajectory, of course, relies on the availability of adequate supporting funding for in-country study from government, university, or private sources as well as conducive degree structures.

Conclusions

The fiscal crisis in Asian Studies is severe and poses a significant threat to the future viability of the field. Overcoming it will take work. If it can be overcome, the creation of new pathways through an Asian Studies education that widens the field's appeal to a broader range of students will likely be part of the mix. In this argument, this article does not suggest

that we should abandon traditional pathways and replace them with these new ones. Instead, the proposition is that these new pathways operate in parallel to traditional ones, each serving different groups of students. Nevertheless, meeting the needs of students who have a broad interest in Asia rather than a deep interest in a particular part of the region will require a significant change in curricula and pedagogical orientation within the field and hence significant adjustment in how we go about our work.

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Approaches to Indonesia's Foreign Policy: Area Studies, FPA Theory, and Global IR

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Abstract

The research traces the evolution of Indonesia's foreign policy studies, highlighting the major theoretical and methodological trends that have shaped their current form. As a starting point, the research introduces a discourse on non-Western Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), having developed beyond the dominance of the Western-rooted International Relations (IR) discipline. Indonesia's foreign policy studies evolve through two stages. The first stage occurred during the Cold War until the early 2000s. It demonstrates a scholarship development characterized by an attempt to promote a national-focused or area studies perspective, despite the influence of realism and positivism. The second stage, visible since the mid-2000s, shows the advancement of diverse theory-driven inquiries, having been moved by the younger generation of scholars more exposed to various theories and research methods in IR. Dealing with these two phases of the studies will likely build Indonesia's foreign policy studies' inclusive, critical, and unique identity. It can be realized by adopting and contextualizing approaches offered by state transformation theory, critical realism, and reflexive theorizing in IR to unpack the relatively overlooked aspects of Indonesia's foreign policy.

Keywords: area studies, Global IR, Indonesia's foreign policy, mainstream theories, multiplicity, non-Western identity

Introduction

The research examines the development of studies on Indonesia's foreign policy. The evolving discourses on the major theoretical and methodological trends influence the focus in International Relations (IR) discipline. This inquiry is relevant for two interrelated reasons. First, there is a growing interest in the Indonesian IR community to account for how IR is researched, studied, and taught at universities and research institutes in the country (Hadiwinata, 2009; Wicaksana, 2018; Wicaksana & Santoso, 2022). Nonetheless, the current scholarly works on IR in Indonesia have yet to specifically highlight the evolution of Indonesia's foreign policy studies. Hence, the research contributes to closing this knowledge gap. Second, thoroughly exploring the crucial phases of Indonesia's foreign policy studies can help researchers and scholars better understand which concepts, theories, and methods are most significant to employ for their academic purposes.

The research undertakes a comprehensive literature review between April and September 2022 to collect related sources informing three essential components of the studies: 1) the most influential pieces, 2) the major themes of discussion, and 3) what ideas make changes to the academic and practical interests. The research mainly argues that it is likely to construct an inclusive, critical, and unique identity on Indonesia's foreign policy studies. It endeavors to locate the intellectual basis to found a non-Western Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) stream from Indonesia.

The remainder of this article proceeds in five steps to explore the arguments. The first section tries to conceptualize what non-Western FPA means. The second part looks at the past trends in Indonesia's foreign policy studies from the Cold War until the early 2000s. Then, it outlines the development of a scholarship found upon an area studies perspective besides referring to FPA-dominant theoretical and methodological frameworks. The overview is followed by a discussion of Indonesia's foreign policy scholars' tendency to improve theory-driven research programs for academic and policy interests. Next, it further progresses the studies. In the fourth section, the research proposes prospective topics for the future horizon of Indonesia's foreign policy studies. The research considers the potential of advancing local-based knowledge by applying state transformation theory, critical realism, and reflexive theorizing in IR. Finally, the research emphasizes the contribution Indonesia's foreign policy studies can make to project the discourse of Global IR

What, and Why, is Non-Western FPA?

The research conceptualizes non-Western FPA within the context of the evolution of FPA as a sub-field of IR. FPA has developed since the 1950s, particularly at universities in North America and Western Europe. Seen from the origins, it is understandable that FPA was called part of Western Social Science. FPA was also labeled the core of the Cold War IR since the former reached its impressive theoretical and methodological advancements during the 1960s and 1970s. It appeared along with the surges of dominant IR theories, such as

neorealism and neoliberalism. Moreover, traditional FPA concentrated on analyzing decision-making through ideas, institutions, and practices describing the preoccupation with high political state-centric agendas, mainly military security, ideological conflicts, territorialism, and proxy wars. An excellent reference to understanding this past picture of FPA is Holsti (1996). However, following the collapse of the bipolar international system and the intensifying impacts of economic globalization, contemporary FPA was born and demonstrated the spirit to adjust to changes taking place in the real world and maintain its relevance by embracing new theories and methodologies (Alden & Aran, 2016; Hill, 2015; Hudson & Day, 2019).

Another significant development within the contemporary FPA is the emergence of foreign policy studies beyond North America and Western Europe. The new platform of FPA displays a broader geographical scope of the studies and appreciation of differences from more nationally or local-oriented perspectives on foreign policy (Brunner & Hudson, 2015). Hence, the research observes binary streams of FPA direction; the mainstream FPA keeps up the preponderance of Western-centrism on one side and the pro-local non-Western knowledge production practice on the other. The research settles the interpretation of the evolution of studies on Indonesia's foreign policy in this context of FPA narratives, shedding more light on the latter trajectory.

Yet, the research underscores the importance of the locally-framed studies and research on Indonesia's foreign policy; it does not mean to discard the relevance of the existing Western-minded FPA theories and methodologies. On the contrary, by exposing the significant contributions of the locale, it aims to foster a view of a genuinely global FPA. The research borrows the way of thinking about Global IR, as initiated and advocated by Acharya (2014a, 2014b), and enriches its debates by unpacking the intriguing case of the development of Indonesia's foreign policy studies.

Acharya and other proponents of the Global IR argue that the study of world politics has been hegemonized by theories and methodologies drawn upon Western (mainly European) social, cultural, and political experiences. This knowledge system was then claimed to be scientific with a universal truth, defying the rights of non-Western (beyond European) societies to uphold their native intellectual traditions (Eun, 2019). The universalization of Western IR must be rejected. The mainstream IR paradigms must be criticized. IR scholars and studies beyond Western Europe and North America must promote their original ideas, conduct theorization based on local knowledge and practices, and voice them in the international IR academic media. These enterprises appreciate inclusivity and plurality in contemporary IR. Over the last decade, the Global IR movement has risen everywhere, from Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and Oceania, to Latin America.

Building upon this feature of the contemporary IR, non-Western FPA is characterized as: 1) produced through research emphasizing the saliency of local factors to explain foreign policy behavior; 2) taking a critical position or criticizing the established FPA theory; 3)

practicing reflexive thinking on national and international phenomena; and 4) acknowledging pluralism and complexity of worldviews from diverse nations.

The characteristics contrast with the West-originated FPA, which upholds the universal values of the major IR perspectives, considers all actors are similar or fails to distinguish national or local uniqueness, and perpetuates the dominance of positivism as the philosophy of research. However, it should be recognized that some local scholars prefer to use mainstream theories and methodologies and otherwise. Therefore, the emphasis on non-Western or Western FPA is more on the substance and process of knowledge production than the person or institution behind it.

Promoting Indonesia's foreign policy studies as a case for non-Western FPA is essential. First, it can change the traditional understanding of the conduct of Indonesia's foreign policy, which is regarded as reflexive of foreign actors' interests. Second, an Indonesian approach to Indonesia enforces the view that the country has intrinsic importance to reach in the global and regional arenas. Third, it opens up the space for new and different outlooks on policymaking and execution in Indonesia.

The Space for an Area Studies Perspective

Influential literature on the origins and evolution of Indonesia's foreign policy has long focused on the so-called *bebas aktif* (independent and active) idea and practice as the principal knowledge about the country's diplomatic affairs and international activism. This knowledge was produced and reproduced through the teaching and research of Indonesia's foreign policy, primarily referring to an approach introduced and developed by scholars such as Leifer (1983), Weinstein (1976), and Suryadinata (1996). They provide a framework of thinking and analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy guided by the established realist dictum that domestic politics is the primary source of foreign policy. Leifer (1983) explains Indonesia's foreign policy using factors like the nature of revolutionary nationalism, the dominant elite interests, and patterns of political power struggles. Weinstein (1976) reveals a conservative worldview that drove foreign policy under Sukarno and Suharto. Later, Suryadinata (1996) adds other domestic considerations, including political culture and regime structure, to understand Indonesia's international leadership aspiration in the early 1990s. Although taking different angles and highlighting diverse dynamics, such three works have said the same: it would be better to study Indonesia's participation in international politics by advancing a national or local perspective.

In line with this area studies orientation, variants of positivism are employed to guide foreign policy research. The inquiries began with establishing a general theoretical tool from which essential concepts, including national interests, power, and diplomacy, are connected systematically. In addition to these realist foreign policy metanarratives, a set of levels of analysis is selected to help direct the empirical investigation into the most relevant factors. Finally, particular local conditions are the basis for a hypothesis or argument. Of this deductive logic, the most significant variables to examine are the characteristics and

consequences of regime change from Sukarno's leadership (1945-1965) to Suharto's New Order (1966-1998). The result is an alteration in the state's foreign policy direction, notably from Sukarno's intimacy with the Eastern Bloc to Suharto's close friendship with the West capitalist governments and international organizations. The selections of cases are reflexive of the evolving conceptual guidance. Therefore, the conclusions are unsurprisingly predictable, confirming the constructed theory's applicability to the Indonesian context.

One of the crucial elements of the long learning process from Western scientific instruments was Indonesian foreign policy scholars' ability to translate the global/systemic-level theoretical features into local-nuanced knowledge building. Although there has never been any claim from Indonesian academics of a theory of Indonesia's foreign policy, the promotion of particularities is sufficient enough to recognize the value of 'Indonesianism'. The mainstream Western-centric FPA has been widely accepted and applied within the Indonesian IR community. It is not only about realism's entrenched influence on the older generation of Indonesian IR lecturers, researchers, and practitioners trained in North American tertiary institutions. The later acceptance of constructivism also convinces everyone that Indonesia should not have a dream about indigenous theories. However, the awareness about the meaning of difference and the search for the viability of the grand theories in country-specific situations have arisen among Indonesianists. The decolonization of the Third World nations successfully elevates the status of the colonized societies and brings their intellectual wealth to the center stage of global academia. So thanks to post-colonial studies with their emancipatory voices for opening up the covert South.

Local IR scholars in Indonesia have attempted to distinguish their views on Indonesia's external affairs and actions from the dominant theories. For example, Indonesian historical realism depicts the country's nationalist elite's outlook on the phenomenon of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism instead of the anarchical international system in Hans Morgenthau's classical realism and Kenneth Waltz's neorealism. The historical realist texts were mainly written during the 1960s (Abdulgani, 1964). Indonesian historical realists noticed that the foundation of post-colonial organizations, mainly the Asian African Conference, which gave birth to the Non-Aligned Movement, had informed about Indonesia's highest profile foreign policy achievement on the Cold War stage. First, Jakarta accelerated decolonization worldwide. Second, it shaped an international order working beyond the great power bipolarity, thus allowing the Third World nations to obtain their equal international status and role vis-a-vis the developed West. This Global South project has received greater intellectual interest today because of its persistence and potential agency in post-bipolar world politics (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009).

Later, the regionalist vision adopted from the European experiences was localized in the form of normative but functional regional institutionalism of ASEAN. It was to serve Indonesian-defined objectives in Southeast Asia. Indonesia's foreign policy activity is continually understood as interlinked with ASEAN in regional geopolitics (Rüland, 2018). Anwar (1994) provides an excellent descriptive analysis of the ideologically-led power politics of regionalism in Southeast Asia and the significant contributions Indonesia and ASEAN had made together to stabilize and secure the region. Anwar has become one of the leading

references for ASEAN scholars to comprehend the inside picture of the first 30 years of the Association's development, certainly with Indonesia's leadership role turning out to be its chief institutional pillar. The discourse of ASEAN as Indonesia's foreign policy cornerstone was also vindicated by the regionalist interpretation of the intra-ASEAN interactions.

The post-Cold War international relations and domestic changes in Indonesia pave the way for the mushrooming of epistemological reformism in Indonesia's foreign policy studies. Following the rising popularity and utility of neoclassical realism, Rose (1998) first familiarizes the term, and the two-level game approach of Putnam (1988), gains traction in Indonesia's foreign policy scholarship. Working from an area studies perspective, Sukma (1999) studies how the regional and domestic environments had influenced decision-makers in Jakarta to normalize relations with China. Sukma's neoclassical realist modeling pioneered the agenda of synergizing the currents of Western FPA theories and the local explanatory variables. It matters when ones consider the foreign policy as the interface of internal and external dynamics of the state. He (2008) applies this style of analysis in his work on post-Suharto foreign policy, examining the impacts of democratization and international pressure on Indonesia's changing behavior toward sensitive security issues. Of course, in the way of thinking promoted by Sukma and other neoclassical realists, the local circumstances are given more weight in explaining policymaking, execution, and change. An essential historical realist study with a leaning toward neoclassical realist analysis is presented by Djalal (1995). He synthesizes geopolitics, diplomacy, and international law as the primary concepts to understand the central position of the UNCLOS in making Indonesia's modern archipelago. Djalal has led many who study Indonesia's maritime affairs and diplomacy to appreciate normative reasoning behind Indonesia's stance on issues like the South China Sea disputes. The descriptive study by McRae (2019) is excellent reading for this case.

Nonetheless, recently, a disagreement has arisen between Indonesian realists and regionalists, focusing on the prospects of ASEAN continuing to serve as the state's main diplomatic vehicle amid the multifaceted dynamics that have shaken the Indo-Pacific region. The realists oppose ASEAN, but the regionalist defends it. Their contending opinions indicate each other's penchant for relying on certain domestic factors in explaining the country's international priority. On one hand, the Indonesian realist version of geopolitics sends a message of faithfulness to internal structural constraints on the country's regional ambitions. Therefore, a traditionally-maintained skeptical outlook on regional institution building keeps on affecting. On the other hand, the regionalists and ASEAN apologists in Indonesia are confident in foreseeing the relevance of ASEAN, even though the great powers are returning to reorder East Asia (Natalegawa, 2018). Notwithstanding this inconclusive academic contestation, it is favorable concerning local knowledge development.

Progress through Diverse Theory-driven Inquiries

Entering the 2000s, the second phase of Indonesia's foreign policy studies has come about. The area studies perspective remains essential in research and publication on many aspects of the country's international relations. Interestingly, Indonesia's foreign policy

scholars are broadening the scope and substance of the studies' theoretical and methodological instruments. Theories and methods associated with constructivism, English School, post-colonialism, and feminism in IR are engaged, thus producing a broader spectrum of intellectual debates. However, it should be acknowledged that this positive development in Indonesia's foreign policy studies came late compared to FPA in other developing countries, such as Brazil, India, South Korea, and Turkey. One might blame the long-standing and unchallenged thinking of prominent academic figures and policy analysts who had directed IR in Indonesia to become realist-thought and positivistic. They wrote textbooks and published many pieces demonstrating the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the realist-positivist approaches. Since their works were considered compulsory reading materials for IR university students, their way of viewing the world was likely to become hegemonic (Wicaksana & Santoso, 2022). Suppose this academic landscape had allowed space for area studies on Indonesia's foreign policy, it can be considered it was a realist local foreign policy epistemology.

In addition, although non-realist theoretical and methodological tools have attained a larger ground in Indonesia's foreign policy studies, the research and publication trends are more interested in applying concepts and theories to empirical cases instead of building new ones. Of course, they are critical of the established realist arguments, but none has shown the will to replace realism as the dominant point of view. An excellent example is Laksmana's study (2011), which offers a counter-realist position explaining how Indonesia has strengthened its regional and global profile. Laksmana shows that the successful diplomacy of emerging powers varies from their material power possession. However, on the other hand, it is underpinned by a non-material source of strength, including policy initiatives, advocacy, and networks. A case in point is Indonesia's peaceful process of democratic consolidation, which has helped bolster the country's international image. Furthermore, Indonesia is actively fostering defense diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region, where contested big players are embraced through the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus. Despite its interesting narrative and rich interpretation, Laksmana's article lacks original theorization. It focuses on empirical analysis of Indonesian-specific factors instead of formulating a theory to argue against realism. A similar tendency can be easily encountered in many other works using Indonesia's foreign relations as an illustration to verify their critique of the realists.

Diversifying theory-led research on Indonesia's foreign policy is more effective in the middle-range theory application. Some streams of constructivism contribute significantly to this favorable development. Role theory is well-employed by many scholars to discover the ideational force that moves foreign policy. In the case of Indonesia, Karim (2017, 2021a, 2021b) provides an advanced conceptualization of the state's role and demonstrates the limits to its pursuance. Karim's role theory works have focused on foreign policy under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration. He aptly utilizes role conception, contestation, and legitimation theory to locate critical arenas of conflict of interest and identity between the government (elite) and the mass (public). Besides this, role theory is relevant for analyzing the limits of a foreign policy ideal and implementation. Therefore, as Karim argues, the state needs to legitimize foreign policy decisions through two mechanisms: glorifying history and

intensifying symbolic means to uphold national unity. Rüländ (2017) also refers to role theory to approach Indonesia's foreign policy.

Middle power is a popular concept adopted by Indonesia's foreign policy scholars to analyze the country's position in various regional and global issues. The basic assumption is that Indonesia stays between the powerful and weaker actors. Due to its limited economic and military capabilities, Indonesia is not strong enough to control the external environment. However, it is not merely the object of the big players' influence and interest. Indonesia is seen as an active and exemplary member of the international community that struggles through multilateral diplomacy to order its immediate regions and promote global cooperation (Thies & Sari, 2018). Proponents of the middle power concept in Indonesia's foreign policy expect that by conducting constructive diplomatic roles, Indonesia could climb the higher ladder toward international actorship (Rosyidin, 2017). This 'middlepowermanship' has risen to be one of the most exposed foreign policy features since the Yudhoyono government has deepened involvement within many world fora received worldwide appreciation. Acharya (2014c) notes Jakarta's rising global visibility as Indonesia matters as a newly democratic actor. Domestic and foreign academics' enthusiasm to learn about Indonesia's middle power importance has been presented in wide-ranging theoretical observations and methods of analysis. The middle power diplomacy of Indonesia and other regional states creates a security environment in which a rules-based order is its central infrastructure, and cooperative diplomacy is its most favored approach (Abbondanza, 2022; Emmers & Teo, 2015; Ping, 2017). However, the middle power concept is confined to the extent that domestic politics, historical legacy, and strategic culture can interrupt the state's stable external relations (Beeson, Bloomfield, & Wicaksana, 2021).

Indonesia's democratization provides an interesting arena in which foreign policy can be studied differently from Sukarno's and Suharto's regimes. Democracy shifts the traditional understanding of Indonesia's foreign policy, an affair of the elite or high-level diplomatic officials, to become more affected by nongovernmental factors. Policy-makers must accommodate new stakeholders, values, interests, and problems, resulting in unintendedly extensive debates on decision-making (Gindarsah, 2012; Wirajuda, 2014). Studies are expanded to examine the connections between democracy and identity in Indonesia's foreign policy. It is an exciting theme because of Indonesia's multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious social characteristics. In many respects, the state's domestic politics and international relations are steered by identity-related issues. Emmers (2021) acknowledges Indonesia's unalienable relationship between democracy, identity, and foreign policy. However, the country's improved quality of procedural democracy does not automatically promote liberal democratic ideals and practices. Foreign policy scholars, particularly Sukma (2011), who observe the implementation of Indonesian democracy, criticize the gap between rhetoric and reality. Indonesia only talks about democracy but does not walk to meet it. This critical voice extends to a pessimistic view of the ability and will of the Indonesian government to democratize its regional foreign policy institutions, especially ASEAN, as noted by Rüländ (2021).

How Indonesia hedges against the great power is an attractive research question. To some scholars and observers, hedging is perceived as the actualization of the independent and active principle of Indonesia's foreign policy toward the post-Cold War power contests in the Asia-Pacific region. Well-established literature on hedging strategy claims that middle-power states will continue to take a balanced relationship with the competing, more prominent actors (Jackson, 2014). It aims to achieve multiple objectives, from regime survival to war prevention. Hence, understandably, strategic hedging consists of economic, military, and political measures enabling the weaker states to maneuver flexibly amid the sharpening power polarization of the stronger ones (Kuik, 2016). Indonesianists agree with such a conception of hedging as the third-way choice. Indonesia has no sufficient material and diplomatic resources to balance against rival China and the United States. At the same time, bandwagoning toward each significant player is deemed unlikely for Indonesia's national interests. A deep analysis of why Indonesia chooses an equidistant stance toward Beijing and Washington informs three explanatory factors; elite perception, political culture, and geopolitical dynamics. They explain why Indonesia tends to play the role of an order-builder in the Indo-Pacific instead of building a formal military alliance with the great powers (Wicaksana, 2022a). Indeed, Indonesia shows that the more minor power can utilize regional institutions to support its agency.

The previous examples of middle-range theory-guided work on contemporary Indonesia's foreign policy support the agenda to substantiate local-oriented knowledge-building practices. The growth of more practically-oriented research on crucial policy areas strengthens this progress. They usually take on current issues of concern to the government and the public. Unlike purely academic inquiry, policy research does not produce sophisticated conceptual or theoretical discussions. Instead, it aims recommend feasible policy options to overcome specific problems (Elisabeth, 2016). Generally, the research discovers the five most significant issue areas resolved by policy research: 1) Since Indonesian President Joko Widodo launched his maritime doctrine in 2014, local and foreign analysts have discussed its challenges and prospects; 2) Achievements and problems of the conduct of Indonesia's economic diplomacy; 3) Issues related to bilateral relations with regional neighbors or international partners encompass various aspects of conflict and cooperation. One topic which attracts considerable public attention is the ups and downs in Jakarta-Beijing ties; 4) The realization of Indonesia's ideas within international organizations; 5) Reforming the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and boosting the performance of the state's diplomatic bureaucracy.

Capturing Multiplicity for Global FPA

Having observed the two stages of the development of Indonesia's foreign policy studies, the research further elaborates on how to move toward the future trajectories of a non-Western FPA with Indonesian characteristics. Borrowing from Loke and Owen's (2022) typologies of the mode of knowledge production practices, Indonesia's foreign policy studies can be localized and diversified so that their open, progressive, and unique identity is well-

featured. The process of knowledge localization is something crucial to heighten the academic benefits of the Indonesian IR community and FPA scholars. Knowledge diversification helps the studies reach status and earn legitimacy in the eyes of global intellectual societies. Drawing upon the existing scholarship products and the two reliable patterns of epistemic activity, the discussion offers three prospective sites to Indonesian-ize PFA: 1) state transformation theory, 2) critical realism, and 3) reflexive theorizing. The references to these theories and methods are significant in the context of the emergence of multiplicity, which depicts the nature of the current global politics. Acharya (2018) stresses multiplicity or the multiplex world, instead of multipolarity or the multipolar world, to explain the necessity to build polyversality in contemporary IR. It challenges the hegemonic status of Western cultural, political, and scientific traditions.

State Transformation Theory

Critical political economists widely use state transformation theory to analyze the dynamics of modern state governance. Jessop (2007) explains the dimensions of internal changes happening to the state spurred by domestic forces and international influences. State power, understood as the central government's ability to impose regulations on subnational groups, is affected by social and political frictions, conflicts among dominant classes, and transnational movements. Major political and economic players struggle for domination and exploitation of vital resources. Hence, politics of scale turns into the logic of conflict and cooperation among substate actors within the sovereign state. Hameiri and Jones (2015, 2016) conceptualize the phenomena of state transformation into three models; decentralization, fragmentation, and internationalization. They are utilized to explain how state transformation has disrupted the making and conduct of foreign policies in rising Third World powers (Hameiri, Jones, & Heathershaw, 2019). The findings are thought-provoking, arguing that domestic actors' divergent political and economic interests have interrupted policy formulation and implementation processes usually controlled by the executives. It happens even in undemocratic systems in countries like China and Saudi Arabia. As a result, complete centralization of power in the top bureaucratic apparatus is impossible to occur in the modern state.

Karim (2019) displays the usefulness of decentralization, fragmentation, and internationalization to reveal center-periphery relations in cross-border regionalism operating between Indonesia and neighboring ASEAN members. Such a general picture of state transformation can be reflected in the Indonesian case. According to Karim, the local governments, who have received more administrative authority to rule their regions, tend to disapprove of Jakarta's policy and enforce their rules over extractive industries. Consequently, the miniregionalism projects, encompassing Indonesia's peripheries and those of ASEAN neighbors, become hot spots of contestation between the central and peripheral administration structures. This vertically-contested politics is exacerbated by competition among the high-level officials of in-charge state agencies and ministries, generating policy inconsistency and weakening the execution.

Further looking at the impact on state power, as explained by Zakaria (1998), the low degree of the central government's policy enforcement capacity influences the choices for international actions. The more power the state possesses, the more assertive its position toward others in international and regional relations. On the other hand, the vulnerable state will not risk expanding its interests externally. Employing this political economy framework, Wicaksana (2022b) explains the reasons behind the failure of the Widodo government to pursue its populist objectives through foreign policy. Widodo's populism is effective domestically, but it is not manifested in Indonesia's pro-people diplomatic profile and activism due to the enduring pragmatic orientation of Indonesia's foreign policy conduct, the fragmented and weak central government, and conflicting interests of the dominant political and economic elites. They constrain any ideological motivation in the government's international activity.

City diplomacy is a prospective subject of study and research using the approach of state transformation theory. Besides the ongoing importance of FPA within the frame of the central government's ideas and practices, the local leaders have also demonstrated increasing attention, interests, and impacts in international affairs. Globalization creates a conducive atmosphere where cities can develop their external relationships and build their institutional power. Studies on city diplomacy are increasingly attractive to IR scholars, particularly since enormous state failures have plagued today's world order. Municipals around the globe gather and move together to reorder the traditional Westphalian system. City leaders develop many diplomatic networks to resolve transnational problems (Amiri & Sevin, 2020). How Indonesia's cities carry out their external relations, what drives them, and how they manage the potential for conflict of interest with the government in Jakarta or the higher levels of bureaucracy are essential topics that can be explored.

Moreover, the multidimensional crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that has proven to be devastating to the state government shows that city diplomacy and international politics are more connected. Local diplomatic channels and strategies can provide insights into Indonesian home-grown international relations. One question in mind is how city diplomacy can be situated within the framework of *bebas aktif* and what is at stake if city diplomacy is highly effective.

Critical Realism

Critical realism is not a theory of IR. However, it is a strand of the philosophy of science popularized by philosophers such as Rom Harre and Roy Bhaskar. Critical realists focus on ontology. They argue against classical and modern philosophies which acknowledge the existence of a single reality. For instance, Bhaskar (2010) claims that reality is stratified into three layers. The first layer is an empirical reality that one can experience physically. A second stratum is an event that is observable directly or indirectly using a particular technological and methodological instrument. Finally, the most profound reality is a visible and invisible mechanism, so the mechanism consists of the entirety of reality. It has structure and power

that generate and operate the event and empirical reality. In IR, critical realism has been associated with constructivism concerning the latter's ontological ambition and scientific practice. Some critical constructivists have even moved further to integrate critical realist thinking into their epistemological formula, aiming to sharpen its explanatory tool (Fiaz, 2014). However, other IR scholars, such as Beeson (2017), criticize constructivist theories from a critical realist perspective. Beeson notices that the underlying material structural power moves international politics and security. Thus, what is commonly perceived as international political constraints matter to state behavior. A case in point is the excellent power competition in the Asia-Pacific, which has shaped and reshaped the region's geopolitical architecture for decades.

Despite the debate on the relevance of critical realism for IR, an important lesson can be learned. Bhaskar's idea of the multilayered reality sends a message that either positivist or post-positivist research method prioritizes causal relationships is debatable. Instead, critical realists in IR argue for causation (Kurki, 2008). The discourse on causation challenges IR theories and methodologies on two fronts. First, it uncovers the lack of IR academics' awareness about the possibility of looking more profound than the commonly grasped social world. Second, the attention to the hidden structural forces and consequences has destabilized the established notion that to be scientific; one must leave the unseen. Therefore, approaching world politics through the lenses of critical realism means analyzing the multilevel presence and operation of a particular phenomenon beyond human thought (Patomäki, 2002). Critical realist FPA suits this direction. For example, Yalvaç (2012) approaches Turkish foreign policy from critical realism. He finds that the concept of strategic depth promulgated by the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been constrained by the underlying hegemonic structure that orders the region of Eurasia. Hence, the Turkish position on the world stage is unchanged. Jeong (2019) looks at middle-power countries from a critical realist point of view. Interestingly, it offers a distinct understanding of a network of like-minded governments who identify themselves differently, not following the broadly understood definition of a middle power.

Critical realism can help Indonesia's foreign policy scholars to develop alternative explanations for three questions. First, it is finding out how and why an idea or foreign policy practice is maintained? The research endeavors to rethink the continuity of the state's diplomatic pillars, such as nonalignment; why Indonesia sustains non-aligned toward the changing regional and global geopolitics is an under-research theme. Second, by applying critical realism to understand the major events in Indonesia's foreign policy evolution, it can be proven that they did not happen unconditionally. Intangible structures and power operated beyond the governmental office but led policymaking. Critical political economists claim that an oligarchic system works behind the political stage to arrange strategic policies (Robison & Hadiz, 2017). With this in mind, critical realism opens up the space for allying critical political economy and FPA theory to studying Indonesia's foreign policymaking. Third, critical realism justifies deconstructing the general agreement on Indonesia's role and position in the international system. Although many believe Indonesia is a middle power, it may mean something other than such a conception representing the truth of the country's international relations. The puzzle is what material and non-material circumstances have

limited Indonesian regional and global ambitions so that it is only positioned as a middle power. Amid the multiplicity of today's world politics, one can relate middle-power diplomacy, multilateral institutions, and transnationalism as the ground upon which the state's foreign policy is played out.

Reflexive Theorizing

The final recommendation is to confirm and contribute to the agenda of making FPA a global field of study along with the expansive and impressive attempt of Global IR. What has been produced on Indonesia's foreign policy is leading toward this project. First, the space created for area studies-oriented foreign policy research and theorization is a promising enterprise for an Indonesian-style FPA program. Second, the open-ended character of the FPA studies on Indonesia is advantageous to the non-Western knowledge production paradigm. Essentially, no one must rely on West-centrism in FPA to build competence and epistemic community. For these two reasons, as Eun (2022) rightly argues, reflexive theorizing is a crucial component of research and teaching contemporary international relations in Asia and Indonesia (emphasis added). The FPA community in Indonesia and foreign scholars interested in Indonesia's foreign policy have long comprehended the potential for an indigenous theory. Still, they have consciously avoided it (we already mentioned this propensity in the earlier section). However, in this section, it is time to change. The academic and empirical momentums are ripe enough to do more work on Global FPA from an Indonesian side.

Chinese scholars have given a worthy example of the effort to internationalize their local knowledge at the Global IR level. Although the claim for an IR theory with Chinese characteristics remains controversial in the eyes of the West-centric IR defenders, it does not mean that the locally-grounded IR is unrecognized. Acharya and Buzan (2019) stress that bottom-up theorizing will be more and more meaningful in the globalized international society, where non-Western nations are increasingly culturally, economically, and politically powerful vis-a-vis the declining West order. Reflexive methodologies and theories in the context of Global IR promise a revolutionary reconceptualization of what it means by scientific. According to positivists and post-positivists, scientific knowledge must be produced through procedures that denote the reliability of deductive and inductive logic. Whatever differences are encountered between these procedural ways of research, their purpose is similar, that is, to enforce the Western standard of knowledge building. On the contrary, reflexives commit not to bind their minds and practices to the established Western scientific norms and rules. Principally, all scientific products are historical, cultural, and even political. Every society is rightful to develop its worldview, including one on science. Therefore, the claim of truth is reflexive of the prevailing social order.

Critics of reflexive theorizing are concerned about the strengthening ethno-nationalistic interests driving the moves toward non-Western science. However, as critical theorist Cox (1983) argues on the subjectivity of modern science, nothing is quite natural about academic

activity. It is essential to advocate for legitimate plurality and inclusivity in knowledge production. Indonesia's foreign policy studies should appreciate the initiative to advance reflexive theorizing. Scholars and researchers of the studies can benefit from the wealth of Indonesian indigenous ethnic groups' cultural, social, political, and philosophical traditions to build distinct outlooks on the country's external relations. There have been a few pieces on this pro-local theme, such as Nguitragool (2012) on God-king and Wicaksana (2019) on the family state.

Nonetheless, their interpretations are still limited to one element of the majority of Javanese intellectual heritages. Reflexive theorizing can be more effective in undertaking pure field research on the perceptions, habits, beliefs, and symbols expressed in various segments of the Indonesian IR academic community. Little is known about why the long-standing realist pragmatic-oriented foreign policy ideas of *bebas aktif* are taken for granted. Why not think of a new different essence of *bebas aktif* based on the views of many social-cultural communities in Indonesia? This alternative vision is likely to generate a more original notion about Indonesia's position in the world.

Another intellectual endeavor that Indonesian scholars can conduct is systematically interpreting insights from great Indonesian thinkers regarding international order. Those insights can enrich the debate on studying foreign policy in the country. For instance, Kusno (2003) has successfully unpacked Tan Malaka's understanding of the colonial city and informs us about the discourse on people's consciousness in the colonial world. The same line of inquiry can be a pursuit to understand Tan Malaka's ideas of collectivism and how it raises the concept of Indonesia's foreign policy toward order-making in the Global South.

Conclusions

The research has surveyed and interpreted two phases of development in the studies on Indonesia's foreign policy. The first stage, shaped under the Cold War, though continued through the 1990s, informed that mainstream Western FPA theory and methodology mattered. However, scholars focusing on Indonesia's diplomacy and relations with the outside world have made essential attempts to explore more local or domestic explanatory tools to get better pictures of the decision-making and its driving force. This area studies orientation contributed to substantiating the studies as only partially mimicking the Western-rooted FPA. At this stage, an identity with Indonesian characteristics was already formed. The second stage of development appeared in the mid-2000s when the younger generation of scholars was more familiarized with various new theories and research methods in IR. Consequently, the area studies perspective that had made its way into Indonesia's foreign policy analysis was recalibrated by adopting diverse theory-driven inquiries. Indonesia's foreign policy scholarship becomes more colorful with the emergence of middle-range theorization under the headings of middle power, democracy, hedging, and policy-oriented research.

In addition, the research discovers and hopes to foster three intriguing themes in advancing Indonesia's foreign policy studies. First, the research notices the relevance of thinking about multiplicity as the nature of the current world politics and order. Therefore, it is highly likely to consider adopting the trajectories of Global IR in Indonesia's foreign policy studies. The research offers three theoretical and methodological approaches; state transformation, critical realism, and reflexive theorizing, which are relevant and significant to provide critical, new, and visionary insights into the studies. First, instead of taking Western scientific tools and procedures as the only standard of truth, Indonesia's foreign policy scholars can study from them and develop their original thinking. Second, by recognizing the importance of both Western and non-Western FPA, Indonesia's foreign policy scholars have contributed to supporting the emerging Global IR and Global FPA. In other words, the decolonization of FPA has made it a reality. Third, Indonesia's FPA is a possibility when more exploratory work on the covert aspects of the social phenomenon is undertaken, thus invigorating the identity of Indonesia's foreign policy studies.

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The Trajectory and Trend of International Political Economy in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

International political economy debates in Southeast Asia have expanded in the last decades from the perspectives of development theories in conjunction with the structure of states relations to the links between state-market-society. The article explores the studies of Southeast Asia's political economy that has stimulated the debate over the past years and its future trends. It intends to analyse the trajectory of the issues and topics identified utilizing structured research of studies in scientific databases and derive discussion on its future topics by looking at the links between state-market-society. The existing topics related to issues of the political economy of Southeast Asia are grouped into themes related to development financing from traditional and emerging donors, State-Owned Enterprises, and regional integration. In addition, it captures the topics based on the trend that are proposed and emerged within the policy discussion and academic forums. The initiated issues are climate change and environment, the importance of sub-regional in ASEAN integration, and digitalisation and technological advancement.

Keywords: ASEAN, Southeast Asia, International Political Economy, trends, and trajectory

Introduction

Over the past 55 years, the political-economic debates of Southeast Asian countries or ASEAN have stimulated discussion on its relevance to regional cooperation within the changing architecture of global cooperation. In recent years, ASEAN as a regional institution has extended its position by expanding the discourse of equal and central position to its external partners and within the relations among member states. ASEAN has faced several facets of international conditions since its establishment with the background of the cold war to the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the global war on terror, and the rise of China in the region (Elias & Rethel, 2016; Juego, 2020), as well as to the current situation of global pandemic (Mursitama, Karim, & Arnakim, 2021). Domestic politics of its member states also evolved and varied from a militaristic government with a non-democratic authoritarian regime to the post-populism government. The regional and domestic political contexts have shaped the relations established among countries, including in understanding the economic context attached to the political situations. These historical experiences cannot be separated from the discussion on the political economy evolution of Southeast Asia as a region, and within the countries, which is also intertwined with the social-political-cultural contestation that happens in the societies (Al-Fadhat, 2020).

International political economy debates in ASEAN have expanded from the perspectives of development theories in conjunction with the structure of state relations that broaden into the links between state-market-society theories (Juego, 2020). This evolution cannot be separated from the interaction between domestic actors, transnational stakeholders, regional markets, and policy elites (Elias & Rethel, 2016). The debates capture the idealization of relations, institutions, and perspectives that derives from how Southeast Asian countries constituted the states, including government's roles and interests within the political and economic goals (Al-Fadhat, 2020; Jones & Hameiri, 2020). The region's historical paths bring an understanding of how regionalism among member states and with other countries is shaped, including how it is embedded in the policy that developed within the regional institution. However, regional relations cannot only be explored from the perspectives of institutions, or government approaches solely but also from the context that shaped the cooperation and relations among countries (Jones & Hameiri, 2020). Therefore, it raises the question on how the ASEAN's integrated documents, such as the Master Plan of ASEAN 2025, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, or the Outlook on the Indo-Pacific functions in regional cooperation. Some might argue that these documents not only utilize as policy directions that derive the relationship among the Southeast Asian States but also justify the need to expand the state's economic and market capitalism goals in the regions.

The article intends to question how the studies of international political economy expanded in Southeast Asia? What are the trajectory and trends that derive the discussion especially regarding the state-market-society relations in ASEAN. The article aims to capture the trajectory of the research related to international political economy (IPE) in ASEAN specifically looking at the state-market-society relations that were established and expanded. It also intends to present the high and low of the debates related to IPE in ASEAN, including

on the potential future trends that extend the discussion on political economic notions in Southeast Asia. The discussion develops into several thematic issues that link directly and intertwined with the political economic framework in Southeast Asia. The sub-topics are related to the issues of financing for development and its development cooperation context, region integration in politics and economic, and state-owned enterprises, as well as proposing debates on the role of sub-regional government in deriving the idea of regionalism, climate and environmental challenges, and industrialization and technology. These topics are selected to explore the contestation of state-market-society that goes beyond the context of institutionalization of ASEAN. These issues are being contested from the specific narratives and context that appear within the dynamic relations that appear over the years among Southeast Asia countries as well as with other external state and non-state actors involved in the region.

Methodology

The article is developed based on the content analysis or scoping review on relevant literature related to political economy in ASEAN over the period since the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 until now, by identifying the occurring trends and narratives. The proposed methods applied in this article are through: (1) structured search of scientific databases (web of science, google scholar, and scopus), using search terms related to the topics from peer review journal articles and edited books; and (2) by conducting literature review on the selected topics. Annex 1 elaborates in detail the information gathered including data sets available that link with the research related to the political economy of Southeast Asia or ASEAN.

The structured search has gathered and analyzed around 509 articles relevant to international political economy issues in Southeast Asia and ASEAN from 1990-2022. It utilized the keywords of "Political Economy" and "ASEAN" and "Southeast Asia" in our search strategy. Further, ASEAN and Southeast Asia are being used interchangeably in this article as well. The search discovered a steep increase in knowledge production of IPE in ASEAN starting from 2002. On average, there are around twenty articles published regarding topics on the international political economy of ASEAN. It has also been found that Western and developed countries are still the most significant contributors to knowledge production for IPE in ASEAN. The United States is still the most productive country in producing knowledge related to IPE in Southeast Asia, with a total of 126 articles, followed by Australia with 111 articles, the UK with 86 articles, and Singapore in 4th with 67 articles. Indonesia, the largest country in Southeast Asia, placed only in tenth place with 30 articles published on the International Political Economy of ASEAN.

The same thing happened regarding citations, Western and developed countries still dominate citations in the ASEAN IPE issue. It shows that Western and developed countries continuously remain the centers of knowledge production, where the knowledge created significantly influences the direction of the studies of political economy in Southeast Asia.

Countries such as the United States, Australia, England, and Singapore produce works with a high number of citations than other countries. Uniquely, although Thailand is not among the top 10 countries that produce IPE works in ASEAN, they still ranked sixth in terms of the number of citations. Likewise, Sweden and France, although in terms of quantity, are not included in the 10 countries that produce IPE articles of Southeast Asia, but they are the seventh and eighth largest countries in terms of the number of citations. This once again shows that Indonesia, despite having more publications, still needs to have influential works in the global debates on the political economy of Southeast Asia.

Looking specifically at the issues being discussed in the academic databases based on the structure search on political economy of Southeast Asia, figure 1 presents the topics that appeared and reappeared from 2000 to 2020. Concerning the earlier issues in the structure search, specific topics related to economic integration, economic development, globalization, and development states emerged in the early 2000s. From around 2006 to 2016, issues related to development, governance, democracy, institutions, trade, regionalism, and development also appeared and were reinstated within the study of political economy in Southeast Asia as a region as well as within individual member countries, such as Philippine, Vietnam, and Singapore. After 2016, issues related to foreign direct investment, regional integration, ASEAN, and the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) dominated the discussion and the study of the political economy of Southeast Asia up until now. As the progress and trajectory from the early 2000s to now can be seen in the figure below, it also showcases the evolution of the issues that cannot be separated from the geopolitical and geoeconomic conditions that happened in the region within this period. Therefore, with this background, the exploration of issues of political economy of Southeast Asia is contextualized with the result of the structured search framed within the conceptual and theoretical approaches for further exploration. However, the article has limitations, which include not covering all issues related to political economy of Southeast Asia. Instead, selected topics regrouped within broader issues to consider their relevance within current debates, and research interests that expand among researchers, scholars, policymakers, and practitioners are explored.

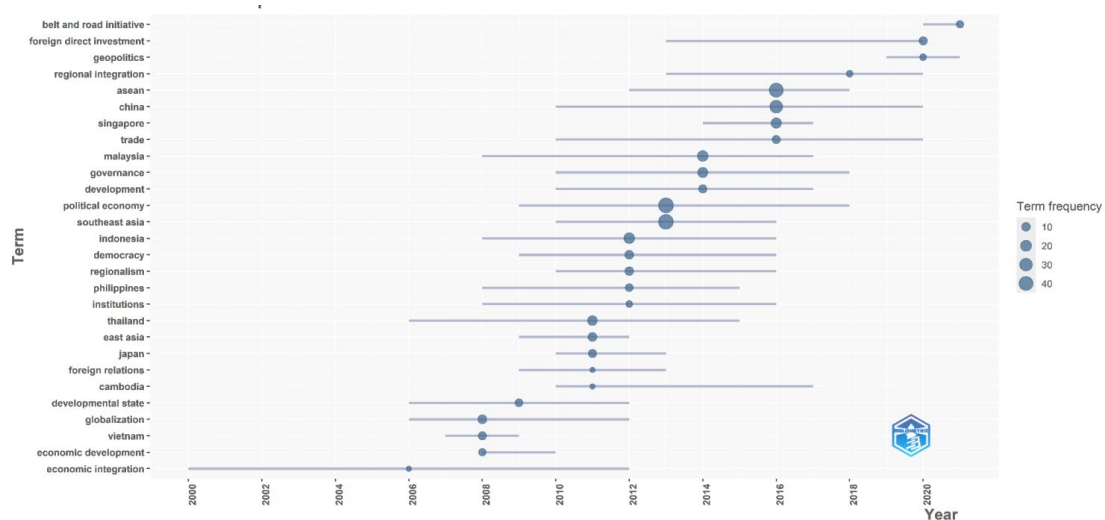


Figure 1 Trajectory of Southeast Asia's Political Economy Topics from 2000 - 2020

The Ongoing Topics of Southeast Asia's Political Economy

Looking at the topics being discussed in the context of the political economy of Southeast Asia or ASEAN, it can be seen that there are several issues that continuously and consistently appeared within the academic discussion. As identified in the structure search of scientific databases, issues such as development, regionalism, and trade continued to emerge, but differ in the numbers of publications. In the past ten years, there was a shift in the issues being discussed, especially with the rise of China's roles in the region through their expansion in political-economic cooperation in Southeast Asia. There is also a discussion regarding the regional and global dynamics in trade especially in regard to the tension between deepening regionally driven free trade through FTA or enhancing global trade through WTO (Karim, 2021). Therefore, in this part, the identification of these trajectory and current issues in the political economy of Southeast Asia is being explored within specific grouping. Further, this section identifies and explores three topics which are development financing, state-owned enterprises, as well as ASEAN integration process.

Development Cooperation and Financing: From North to South

Since the 1950s, Southeast Asian countries have been engaged with various actors internally in the region, with other Southern countries, as well as with its partners outside the regions including western or traditional donors' countries and agencies, especially concerning financing for its development program and activities. As many Southeast Asian countries are considered as low- and middle-income countries, its relations with the western donors' countries and institutions (often identified as northern or traditional aid providers) have emerged early on, even before the establishment of ASEAN. Leaders of the Southeast Asian countries were used to the support from Northern aid providers in financing their development program, compared to the cooperation with other southern provider countries (Bae, 2022). Therefore, looking at the roles of the IMF, World Bank, Asia Development Bank, European Union, and other traditional funding agencies, including Japan, Germany, and the US, it can be identified that their involvement in the development process in the region were significant (Carroll, 2020). On the other hand, ASEAN member countries have for many years also expanded their cooperation with its neighbouring countries including China and India as well as among Southeast Asian countries specially to finance their development programs, including through modalities of aid, loan, or investment program. China, for example, has engaged with many Southeast Asia countries as their development partners especially since 1991 by improving their cooperation as dialogue partners and official negotiation partners including in perceiving specific identity discourse within the established cooperation (Bi, 2021; Gloria, 2021).

The Asian Financial Crisis (AFC) in 1998-1997 revealed the fragility of the political economic conditions of many Southeast Asian countries, including its heavy crony capitalism in the political system and inadequate economic policy oversight (Carroll, 2020). In this crisis background, some countries extended their cooperation with international development organizations to help deal with the effect of the AFC through bailout programs and finance

their development program. For example, Indonesian and Thai Governments requested a bailout program from the IMF and World Bank to recover from the impact of the financial crisis with specific reform mandated. However, the Malaysian government applied different approaches to the economic recovery program and refused the IMF reforms model (Carroll, 2020). The neoliberal strategy injected by the 'Washington Consensus' that attached these Multinational Development Bank program applications in the region, has integrated the extension of market liberalization combined, which only benefited the authoritarian political regimes (Kilby, 2017; Rosser, 2020; Williamson, 1993). Further, the roles of these traditional donors in ASEAN also applied specific approaches to its program that focus on the social sectors, good governance, capacity building, and strengthening the roles of civil society (Rosser, 2020).

Learning from the crisis, ASEAN as its regional organization, has established several initiatives to build a more integrated, market-driven, and economic development region that is still being questioned on its efficiency (Elias & Rethel, 2016). As part of the commitment within ASEAN, to build and develop stronger connectivity among its member states, several development programs continued to be expanded, including ASEAN Integration (IAI) IV and Master Plan of ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025. However, the challenges remain significant despite several commitments that have been made. The development cooperation model remains segmented and symbolic rather than building more integrated cooperation. For example, the Indo-Pacific outlook stated the importance of South-South Cooperation (SSC) within the region as the model of cooperation that needed to be expanded. This initiative is firmly based on building stronger connectivity between regions, especially Asia and Africa (Prakash, 2018), but how the SSC can be effectively utilized in development cooperation within this framework remains debatable.

As SSC has been derived by the region's neo-liberal development system, the development cooperation model facilitated the similar construct of cooperation as previously shaped by traditional donors (Engel, 2019). Several programs have been developed by their aid agencies, including TICA (Thailand International Cooperation Agency) of Thailand and Singapore Minister of Foreign Affairs with a similar location of intervention, including focus on CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) countries utilizing the model of technical cooperation. Looking further at the roles of Southeast Asian countries as the provider of development support, they play significant roles as the provider countries. However, there are unconscious competing nuances among Southeast Asian countries' development cooperation agencies including among major Southeast Asian countries (such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore) working and focusing on the similar model of cooperation and targeted countries (Engel, 2019). This regional development cooperation is stimulated by geopolitical motivations including through aid giving process, as it specifically focuses on its neighboring countries for creating stability and security (Engel, 2019; Mawdsley, 2012) rather than by economic integration motives moreover within the regional cooperation framework (Bae, 2022).

Over the past decade, development cooperation with China expanded beyond the message of South-South Cooperation. It often challenged the position of traditional donors,

especially with the establishment of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). These programs have provided significant development support, especially relevant infrastructure programs to ASEAN countries (Soong, 2016; Rosser, 2020). For example, BRI has been the investment and development cooperation model through joint contribution, cooperation, and sharing process that focuses on infrastructure and capacity production (Bi, 2021). However, this has also extended the new interdependency of Southeast Asian countries to China that intertwines with the capitalism model of governments that engage from both ends. The strategy and accumulation of funds injected into the BRI programs across Southeast Asia countries have underlined China's model of an aid program that derives the region into leaning toward China's model of cooperation and weakening the US effect in the region (Einzenberger & Schaffar, 2018). Therefore, the contestation between the traditional donors and emerging donors in Southeast Asia's development cooperation signified power relations that intensify the ideological and strategic hegemony position, moving from free market to state capitalism setting of political economy in the region.

State Owned Enterprises (SOE) in ASEAN

Overall, the discussion regarding SOE (State Owned Enterprises) in ASEAN needs to be structured using a comparative analysis framework. Currently, scholars have narrowly discussed SOE in the ASEAN context using a specific case study of SOE such as, among others, in Indonesia (Choiruzzad, 2019; Kim, 2018; Kim, 2019; Kim, 2021; Kim & Sumner, 2021), Malaysia (Lee, et al., 2022; Menon & Ng, 2017; Shawtari et al., 2017; Whah, 2020; Zhang, 2021), and Singapore (Chen, 2016; Huat, 2016; Sikorski, 1989; Yeung, 1999). The discussion of SOE in ASEAN is also predominantly situated within the role of external actors, especially China's SOE, toward the investment and development concerning its political and economic rising in the region (Frost, 2004; Matthews & Motta, 2015; Zhang et al., 2018; Zhang, 2021). A comprehensive understanding on the behavior and roles of SOE in ASEAN is needed since scholars have been highlighting the dominant role of the state in the region, a quality that makes ASEAN (or East Asian countries in general) unique compared to the experience of other regions (Beeson, 2014; Ravenhill, 2010). Comparative studies are needed to enhance the understanding of the complete picture regarding the role and behavior of state in political and economic development in the region (Beeson, 2014), whether within the framework of the developmental state of Northeast Asia or clientelist type of Southeast Asian Countries (Ravenhill, 2010).

Echoing this narrative, the section attempts to highlight at least one agenda that can be discussed in a comparative manner, particularly related to the roles of SOE in ASEAN. Specifically, it concerns the issues of free trade agreement (i.e., regional trade governance) and its impact on the region. Even though hegemonic competition in the region is uncertain and complex (Beeson, 2009), this issue is becoming more relevant than ever, especially with the growing hegemonic rivalry between China and US in the regions. Not only does this "new cold war" represents the balance of power in the world today (Kaplan, 2019), but Asian regionalism, which includes multiple regional powers like China, Japan, and ASEAN, is more active than before in advancing their multilateral strategy within the regional framework

(Oba, 2019). Despite criticism of overlapping bilateral agreement due to the absence of trade governance in the region, which has been known as the “noodle bowl” syndrome (Baldwin, 2008), the advancement of multilateral institutions in Asia (including ASEAN) brings a new wave of regionalism that encourage nations to adopt an “institutional hedging” strategy (Oba, 2019) to maintain their political and economic interest in the region. It means that further development of trade agreements achieved in the region provides significant impact on many aspects of power and trade-related issues including the state-owned enterprises (Chen et al., 2018).

RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) agreement, for example, which has been implemented since early 2022, is the first East Asian mega Free Trade Agreement (FTA) (Shimizu, 2021) that covers “30% of the world’s population, contributes US\$ 25,8 trillion about 30% of global GDP, and account for US\$ 12,7 trillion, over a quarter of global trade in goods and services” (RCEP, 2022). There have been discourses among scholars on how ASEAN can keep its value of ASEAN Centrality¹ toward the mega-regional FTA like RCEP or even in the Indo-pacific context. Some scholars are pessimistic about the value of ASEAN Centrality, such as on several issues, including the issue of the global value chain in the Indo-pacific (Fujita, 2021), trade and connectivity (Mueller, 2019), leadership in moderating great-power relationships in East Asia (Jones, 2010) especially in regards to the rise of China (Jones & Jenne, 2016), as well as in the issue of security amid the competition of great powers like China and US (Kraft, 2017). Nevertheless, another research shows an optimistic view toward the role of ASEAN Centrality in the region. ASEAN is considered well in leading the RCEP negotiations process (which was finally signed in November 2020 and actively enforced this year) during the rise of protectionism and the US-China trade frictions, as well as in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic (Shimizu, 2021; Karim & Susanto, 2021).

These empirical and academic discourses signal the rising need to expand our research agenda regarding the position of SOE in ASEAN. The concept of ASEAN Centrality here should not be limited to its relationship of achieving ASEAN Connectivity 2025 or RCEP but also on how it can be utilized to understand the role of state in the framework of state capitalism. It is also necessary to stimulate the debates by exploring the impact of infrastructure-centered foreign policy, such as China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that has been spread across Eurasia, by looking at how ASEAN states ruling elites maintain their power, especially leaning closer to Beijing (Cheng-Chwee, 2018). Maintaining the value of centrality or its strategy of institutional hedge is essential not only for the ASEAN states itself but “also good for all other powers and players” (Cheng-Chwee, 2018). Therefore, the discourse can explore how SOEs are being affected and influencing the debates of political economy in the region further.

¹ ASEAN centrality can be understood as a value that views ASEAN as a node in a network, which enables ASEAN to influence regional processes while hedging its interest among powerful nations (Caballero-Anthony, 2014).

Regional Institutions: Between Politic and Market integration

The establishment of the ASEAN as a regional institution in 1967 has expanded into a unique set of mechanisms and network systems that connect its member countries with other actors and institutions across Asia-Pacific (Acharya, 1997; Jones & Hameiri, 2020). As it also evolved into a regional system of cooperation over time, ASEAN has derived cooperation and relations among its members into political and economic spheres. ASEAN members considered the ASEAN Way as the code of conduct of the cooperation, including the non-interferences and consensus decision-making process as the principles (Acharya, 1997; Yukawa, 2018). As a multilateral agency, ASEAN also shaped the model of institutionalization of cooperation engaged with the structure of relations constructed by their relations with other actors outside its members. Further, regional economic integration can be considered to have a stimulating effect to global economic cooperation and growth (Pasierbiak, 2018). However, the debates on the institution's effectiveness to stimulate and strengthen regional integration were significant over the years.

Part of the expansion of the ASEAN Way concept and its contribution to the establishment of APEC or Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation was one of the catalysts to support the idea of consensus building through its economic cooperation with its regional counterparts (Acharya, 1997). APEC was considered the consultative mechanism to build alliances and minimize the region's potential trade and economic tension strain (Acharya, 1997; Ergenç, 2020). However, the role of APEC was questioned in sustaining economic cooperation in the region, especially when the Asian Financial Crisis 1997-1998 occurred, with the aftermath that the idea to extend the effectiveness of economic cooperation in Southeast Asia was more needed. Therefore, two main initiatives were developed to improve the region's financial and economic cooperation. The first was the advancement of relevant regional policies and regulations, including accelerating financial surveillance and improving economic and market integration through Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) and the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM). The second was establishing new regional groups such as ASEAN+3 (APT) grouping with China, Japan, and South Korea and improving the existing ASEAN free trade areas (AFTA), and later ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2007 as part of the ASEAN community pillar (Ermeýdan, 2020; Jones & Hameiri, 2020; Permatasari, 2020).

In extending economic, trade, and finance cooperation in the region, the modalities and approaches utilized by ASEAN also cannot be separated from how the dynamic of cooperation, established ideas, policy direction, and its implementation linked to the transformation of state and market in the region. In 2015, the 'ASEAN Community' was launched with the expectation of managing cooperation in Southeast Asia, with the establishment of 'ASEAN 2025' as a blueprint and action plan to regulate and be adopted by member countries (Jones & Hameiri, 2020). With the Master Plan on ASEAN connectivity 2025, the intention to expand the ASEAN economic community (AEC) into comprehensive market integration among Southeast Asian countries still faces many challenges. For example, the domestic power relations of member countries on the implementation of AEC intertwined with the interests of corporations and the state, including in the way competition among

business is shaped, protectionist regulation applied to protect local enterprises, and skill workers movement regulated (Jones & Hameiri, 2020). These challenges questioned whether the model of ASEAN integration will ever be effective with the existing model of institutional and regulations that often must clash with the power of domestic governance, mechanism, and market system.

Several other initiatives are being established from these debates on the effectiveness of ASEAN as an institution that led the integration process. One of the most recent ones is the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific in 2019. This initiative emphasizes the concept previously identified by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and reiterated by the US government in identifying the future trajectory of the Asia-Pacific region by involving other neighboring countries such as India (Anwar, 2020; Choiruzzad, 2020). Indo-Pacific conveys conceptual understanding as it refers to the shifting geopolitical and geoeconomics center of Asia to the Indian and Pacific oceans that maintain international trade and transportation to support economic growth in the region (Anwar, 2020). The reappearing of the concept was also influenced by the expansion of China in the region. The need to balance the roles of China and other external actors in the region has intensified the discussion and debate on the model of integration that can be functional in the context of ASEAN, especially on ASEAN centrality (Choiruzzad, 2020). ASEAN member countries also varied in response to the establishment of this initiative. For example, Singapore questioned the initiative's scope, demanding it to be an ASEAN-led mechanism. At the same time, Indonesia took more positive notes to extend this initiative within its middle-power roles in ASEAN (Anwar, 2020).

Looking further at the dynamic of ASEAN member countries in regional cooperation through building mechanisms for ASEAN Integration, it must be addressed that the conceptual ideas, policy direction, and implementation often clash with the domestic political interest and markets. Jones (2019), for example, suggests extending ASEAN market integration through developing comprehensive value chain system that can attract more countries investing in the region. The construction of the integration model also cannot be separated by how its economic and political regulations are established, not only by the dynamic within the region and with its members' state interest, but also with the other external actors and major powers involved in the region. Therefore, the regional integration of ASEAN will continue to be relevant as part of the debate within the political economy studies of the region.

The Future Trajectory of Political Economy of Southeast Asia

Having discussed the current issues of political economy research on Southeast Asia, it is also essential to reflect the future trends in its academic debates. Other issues are often neglected in the discussion, but it has a strong relevance with the political economy perspective, especially concerning the link between the state, market, and society. These issues are also being discussed widely within the international policy forum, such as Foreign Policy Forum. Therefore, three additional topics are proposed to be the ensuing discussion of the international political economy of Southeast Asia, which are climate change and environment,

the roles of sub-national actors in ASEAN integration, and the digitalisation process and technology.

Climate Change and Environment

While at the beginning of its establishment, ASEAN focused mainly on addressing political and security issues in the region, since the late 1970s, environmental issues—particularly those that have transboundary implications—have increasingly become a common concern in ASEAN. It includes issues of protecting forests and biodiversity, air pollution, water and soil contamination, declining marine, and fishery resources, transitioning to cleaner and renewable energy, and climate change (Aggarwal & Chow, 2010; Elliott & Caballero-Anthony, 2013). Among others, two broad or major themes have gained more attention from policymakers, scientists, and practitioners: 1) air pollution from the transboundary haze, and 2) Southeast Asian efforts to mitigate climate change, particularly in the energy and Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sectors.

Transboundary air pollution due to fire and haze originating from peat and forest fires has arguably been one of the most conspicuous environmental issues in ASEAN in the last decades (Aggarwal & Chow, 2010; Mayer, 2006). It has been part of regional affairs negotiated in ASEAN because of the extent and impact of the pollution crosses into neighboring countries' airspace, especially Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. At its worst, lesser effects of the haze have also been reported in Brunei and Southern parts of Thailand and the Philippines (Mayer, 2006). The phenomena cannot be separated from the globalization of the agribusiness sector in the region, particularly in the palm oil sector (Varkkey, 2020). The increasing global and domestic demands for oil palm as “flex crops” (i.e., crops that have multiple uses) have made some countries in Southeast Asia, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, prefer palm oil as their priority crop (Cramb & McCarthy, 2016). Scientists and NGO reports associate the fire and haze phenomena with the expansion of palm oil plantations, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia (Pye, 2019, Marlier et al., 2015).

One of the questions raised by students of international politics has been why ASEAN—as a platform for regional environmental governance—has not effectively addressed the fire and haze problems. This issue has been discussed at the ASEAN level since the late 1980s, which resulted in several policies, action plans, and a legally binding agreement to mitigate the haze (e.g., the 2002 ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution), but the haze episodes have been—in varying intensities—a recurring problem annually until present times (Varkkey, 2020).

Some scholars blame the model of ASEAN cooperation—the “ASEAN way” --as the culprit of this ineffectiveness. For example, Aggarwal & Chow (2010) and Tan (2005) argue that the inability of ASEAN to address the issue can be rooted in its long-held norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, respect for sovereignty, informality, and consensual decision-making. Other scholars are not satisfied with this explanation. Varkkey (2020), for example, argues that the ineffectiveness of ASEAN haze mitigation efforts is due

to the prevalence of local and cross-border patron-client networks, particularly between the government officials and well-connected businessmen in the oil palm plantation sector in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The three most affected countries by the haze were also the major players and heavily invested in the region's palm oil sector. The combination of national interests and the existence of a patron-client culture of doing business, which was common in all three countries, resulted in regional outcomes where business elites in the sector enjoyed the privilege and protection from the government of these countries. The tendency to give in to corporate interests is a significant obstacle to more effective regional environmental governance in ASEAN (Varkkey et al., 2021).

The second most important theme is related to Southeast Asian efforts to mitigate climate change. Southeast Asia is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to climate change (ASEAN, 2021). Four Southeast Asian countries—Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand—were among the 10 most affected countries in the world in 1999 - 2018 (Eckstein et al., 2020). It is projected that climate change will continue to have a major impact on the prosperity and well-being of Southeast Asians in the future. To address the issue, ASEAN member states joined the rest of the world under the Paris Agreement and committed to reducing their GHG emissions to limit the temperature rise at 1.5oC. However, despite the high vulnerability of the region to climate change, the NDCs of ASEAN member states under the Paris Agreement is relatively modest, and considering the current policies (i.e., in its business as usual (BAU)), it is predicted that the major ASEAN members states would not be able to meet their NDC targets (Overland et al., 2021).

Particularly in the energy sector, scholars have pointed out some climate and energy paradoxes (Overland et al., 2021). While ASEAN has set a target for renewable energy sources to account for 23% by 2025 and some ASEAN member states are making progress in using renewable energy, the current national energy frameworks are still centered on fossil fuel-based energy production, particularly coal. In contrast to the trajectory in other parts of the world (e.g., Europe), coal consumption for electricity production in Southeast Asia has been growing in recent years. It is predicted that coal will overtake natural gas as the primary power source of ASEAN by 2030 (IEA, 2019). This coal's persistence in the energy sector cannot be separated from the broader political-economic processes and structure at local, national, and regional levels. In Indonesia, for example, coal-based orientation in the energy sector cannot be separated from the strong political influence and lobby of coal business elites and perception by policymakers. It is identified that coal is the country's cheapest energy source to increase electrification levels in thousands of villages that do not yet have access to electricity while at the same time helping absorb domestic coal supply after the decrease of coal demand at the international market (e.g., China) (Fünfgeld, 2019). Similarly, in the Philippines, the persistence of coal as the main source of energy generation is caused by the combination of the focus on energy security and the strong influence of 'oligarchs' in the power sector that still favor coal due to its associated profits. It is strengthened by the continuous support from associated banks and influential policymakers to support coal-based investments and the reluctance of many conglomerates to invest in renewables despite the fact that the costs of renewable technologies have been declining (Manych & Jakob, 2021).

Further, in the AFOLU sector, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have put a lot of attention to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programs as part of climate mitigation strategies in ASEAN, which aims to address the root causes of deforestation, contribute to a more broadly sustainable forest management, and enhance forest carbon stocks (ASEAN, 2021). The basic idea of REDD+ is to use market mechanisms or economic incentives to compel state, non-state, and local actors to reduce carbon emissions and conserve carbon stocks by avoiding deforestation and forest degradation (Milne et al., 2019; Gellert, 2020). Southeast Asian countries are of central interest in the implementation of REDD+ efforts as it contains one of the largest tropical forests in the world after the Amazon and Congo Basin. With the increasing recognition that forests function as carbon sinks, REDD+ has been central to global climate governance and gives countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam leverage in climate negotiations. However, studies evaluating the implementation of REDD+ in these countries have shown sobering outcomes (Milne et al., 2019; Gellert, 2020). These studies have shown that REDD+ has struggled to influence broader political and economic processes that drive deforestation at the local level. REDD+ implementations have also driven social and political tension and conflicts (Patel et al., 2013; Milne et al., 2019; Gellert, 2020). The broader political economy of resource extraction, agricultural production, and land allocation has a crucial effect and is paramount in determining REDD+ outcomes (Luttrell et al., 2014, Milne et al., 2019).

Subnational Actors and ASEAN Integration

With the growing demand to make ASEAN closer to the people, the debates to enhance the role of subnational actors in enhancing integration between ASEAN member countries have become more significant than ever. It is due to the deepening of intra-trade cooperation among ASEAN members as the achievement of ASEAN Economic Community 2025 is still at the level of 22-25% (ASEAN, 2018; Jones & Hameiri, 2020). Further, based on data from ASEAN Statistics in 2020, from 2011 to 2020, the urban population ranged from 40-44%, where the rest of the population is still in rural areas with most of the land areas dominated by agriculture (ASEAN, 2020). Apart from the higher percentage of the population in non-urban areas, the sub-national area is close to and able to apprehend the needs and aspirations of its people (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007; Duchacek, 2019; Kuswanto, Hoen, & Holzhacker, 2016; Tavares, 2016). Therefore, governments in sub-national societies are important actors that can play significant roles in ASEAN integration. The discussion, then, intends to construct debates that link the roles of cities or subnational level actors in the context of Para diplomacy and political economy in Southeast Asia. It is necessary to stimulate comprehensive policy and approaches to improve the ASEAN integration process beyond the state-level approaches. Therefore, it can be identified that three themes related to the roles and importance of subnational actors in enhancing ASEAN integration processes are being discussed.

In this globalized era, cities have become sites for the global capital grow and contestation (Tavares, 2016; Wu, 2020). Thus, the roles of sub-national governments and the institutions at the sub-national level have become an important narrative in international

cooperation. With most of the global economic output generated at the level of cities, the question raised on how the sub-national government and institutions of Southeast Asia countries can engage in the internationalization process that enables them to negotiate and position themselves at the global level (Wu, 2020). This question can be answered by engaging in political and economic approaches to transborder relations that can contribute to and challenge regionalism and integration in the region. However, it must be addressed that the issues of capacity, scope, and directive tools also need to be identified to capture local government's relevance in the regionalism process. To incorporate decentralized international cooperation in the policy process (Tavares, 2016), the power relations and structures that shaped the relations local, national, and regional governance, not to mention the non-state actors involved in the process, such as private sectors and civil society groups need to be addressed (Wu, 2020).

The concept of social capital of sub-national actors cannot be separated from the historical, political, economic, and social conditions of the region, as the concept is based on the bottom-up method as successfully implemented by the European Union in applying regional integration (Panara, 2015; Prado, 2007). It is a necessary and pressing intention to build ASEAN integration by creating social capital of sub-national actors with the resources to build an integrated ASEAN community, especially from the lowest level (Affandi & Mursitama, 2018). However, the challenges remain significant, including defining the scale and framework of work that can be identified within the sub-regional cooperation (Karim, 2019). Issues such as economic development of small medium enterprises, land degradation, and transborder conflict often emerged and evolved at the subnational level that links with network build and mechanisms attached to the issues. Therefore, Tavares (2016) identifies four phenomena that can emerge within this context, whether the network establishment derives into the ceremonial approach, theme-related relations, global, and sovereignty Para diplomacy. These phenomena constituted the local government's position, roles, and scope of activities, including extending the model of cooperation and approaches that resulted from the relations.

Concerning contribution to the debate on regionalism and regional integration, the intra-regional economic and social cooperation aspects of ASEAN, especially its relation among member countries, need to be strengthened (Balassa, 1969; EL-Agraa, 1989; Krapohl, 2017). It leads to the third issue to identify the debates, which are engagement motivations. As historically can be identified, sub-national actors have been engaged with external actors to support their policies, program, and other related activities. Several motivations to extend their cooperation are: 1) to capture the economic and political opportunities; 2) to promote the decentralization process by providing a more hands-on approach to governance and prevail isolationism; 3) to provide welfare to citizens, including diaspora; 4) to extend interests of the local leaders or stakeholders including engagement with opportunities and personal gain, and promoting local culture and geographic positions (Tavares, 2016). These motivations remain debatable but should also be captured in future discussions on the sub-regional engagement in regional integration, especially in ASEAN contexts. Furthermore, the study of sub-regional actors shall derive the idea, concept, model, and motivations that can stimulate debates on its contribution to regional integration in ASEAN.

Technology and Digitalisation

The discussion on technology and digitalization in ASEAN started off as early as the 1990s when the shift of the traditional economy from resource-based to manufacturing emerged. Over the years, Southeast Asia countries have derived their industry and technological advancement as part of their main force for ASEAN economic integration despite the obvious challenges for member countries to expand their development potential (Wai, 1995). In more recent years, these topics cannot be separated from globalization and advancement of information technology, industry 4.0, digitalization of finance, and consumption of digital technology and products (Rabe & Kostka, 2022). Indeed, Karim, Irawan, & Mursitama (2021) have shown the importance of the domestic origin of banking integration in ASEAN. However, ASEAN financial integration continues in the traditional banking integration. Furthermore, globalization of digital technology and COVID-19 also derive the development of the issues, in this case in ASEAN, as it also extends with the background of China's Digital Silk Road and policy approach of the states in shaping the industrialization and digitalization process (Banna & Alam, 2021; Bernards & Campbell-Verduyn, 2019; Rabe & Kostka, 2022). Therefore, the relations among stakeholders have stimulated future debates related to the industrialization and technology evolution in ASEAN, especially on the digital economic transformation, especially on the issues of financial technology (Fintech), and the fourth industrial revolution post-manufacturing industries.

The transformation of the digital economy in Southeast Asia has affected the conceptualization, engagement, and institutional mechanism of ASEAN's member states in deriving and managing the issues further. Looking at the growing technological changes that need to be accelerated, including fintech, cryptocurrency, artificial intelligence, and big data, the political economic approach to understand this digital evolution and its implication to the actors involved are still limited (Bernards & Campbell-Verduyn, 2019). ASEAN has developed strategic frameworks and initiatives to guide its digital integration journey, which include the ASEAN Digital Integration Framework and its Action Plan (DIFAP) and the Bandar Seri Begawan Roadmap: An ASEAN Digital Transformation Agenda to Accelerate ASEAN's Economic Recovery and Digital Economy Integration. Digital transformation is becoming a catalyst for economic development in ASEAN with the presence of e-commerce, online media, digital financial services, and online ride-hailing activities. ASEAN already has important features that will make digitalization much easier, such as having a 670 million market full of a young and tech-savvy population (MTI, 2022). Currently, ASEAN has 400 million internet users, and its regional mobile penetration is the third largest in the world, and the growth of ASEAN's internet economy is expected to be worth more than US\$300BN by 2025 (Google, Temasek, & Bain, 2020; MTI, 2022).

Looking at the scale and progress of digitalization in Southeast Asia, it remains significant to capture how the actors, technology, and policy are intertwined in the process. It can be identified that actors involved in the digital economy in Southeast Asia have also been expanded. Previously, they were dominated by states, multinational enterprises, and external actors such as China now have derived actors at the subnational level, such as small-medium

enterprises that utilize digital technology to buy and sell their products (Karim et al., 2022). Financial technology (fintech) in Southeast Asia has evolved in a way that created a specific structure of relations among actors involved that influenced how policy and implementation are applied. However, the implication and debates about technology disruption, especially those that affected the political economic activities in the region, have often been missing in the analysis. The debates need to capture how external and internal factors influence the production and financial mechanism of the technology, including how technology accumulated by the process of political economic relations between the country and the region (Bernards & Campbell-Verduyn, 2019).

Furthermore, this digital transformation also cannot be separated from how the industrial revolution 4.0 (IR4) impacted the way Southeast Asia countries take advantage of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Ambashi, 2020). The concept of fourth industrial revolution (4IR) has given birth to the idea of transformation by focusing on new technologies, which have had tremendous effects on industries and societies since its introduction in 2016 (Ambashi, 2020). However, the 4IR has also posed challenges, such as deep disruption to jobs, especially in manufacturing and services-based jobs (Enzmann & Moesli, 2022). It must be addressed that institutional setting, capacity, access or network system, and infrastructure are necessary to make the region's digitalization process work. ASEAN countries' readiness to mitigate these digital technology changes and adaptation might differ from one country to another (Ambashi, 2020). Therefore, the debates on the process, changes, and effect of the technological disruption and digitalization in Southeast Asia are necessary to understand the dualism that often appears such as bridging the policy and implementation, understanding the subnational and regional conditions, bridging the political and economic interest, and understanding the external and internal stakeholders involved (Bernards & Campbell-Verduyn, 2019).

Conclusions

The research intends to explore and analyze the progress and alternative direction of the political economy in Southeast Asia. The study of it has been constructed from various phases of historical experiences and relations that emerged and evolved from its relations between member states and with other countries outside the regions. The discussion also cannot be separated from how the regions interact between states and its government, the market and its enterprises, and the society at large, and how the established power relations shape the dynamic cooperation among countries involved in the ASEAN further. Several issues are constantly being discussed within the study of political economy based on the structure of academic research databases. The topics that appeared and reappeared from 1990 to 2020 are constructed within three issues of development financing, namely: 1) traditional donors' countries or from other Asia and Southeast Asia countries including emerging donors; 2) the roles of State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) in enhancing the state capitalism, and 3) economic integration of ASEAN. These issues have shaped the debates including how it linked with the events and situations that emerged in Southeast Asia over the time.

Looking further into the evolution of the political economy discussion, it has been identified that several related topics and issues have been less discussed in academic papers based on the structure search that has been conducted. Therefore, the article has proposed three additional issues that engage closely with the policy and context of political economy in Southeast Asia. These issues include climate change and the environment, sub-regional position in ASEAN integration, technology, and digitalization. These issues give alternative perspectives to the discussion of political economy, as they also engage and interlink with the roles of the state, market, and society. The research is expected to stimulate further discussion on the political economy of Southeast Asia. Further, more topics can be identified and provided as it is also expected that the discussion can provide significant nuances to extend the debates on the political economy beyond the usual discussion in the context of Southeast Asia as a dynamic region that is continuously evolving.

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Annex

Annex 1: Methodology and Datasets

The methodology used in the paper refers to the structured research of scientific databases on the topics or themes related to political economy in Southeast Asia or ASEAN. The dataset identified as the results of this structure of search are on the number of citation used, the universities that the writers come including the location of the universities, the number knowledge products on the topics including number of articles and book produces, words that associated with the study of political economy of Southeast Asia or ASEAN, and the fluctuation of themes over the period of specific time from 1990 to 2020, as well as the graph of topic that become the trend from 2000 to 2020 that being utilised as the trigger points of discussion for this paper.

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Key Features of Indonesia's State Capitalism Under Jokowi

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Abstract

State capitalism has been expanding rapidly since President Joko Widodo came into power in 2014. During the past decade, the absolute size of state-owned entities has grown notably, and many have acted as 'agents of development' in charge of conducting government-led projects, especially in the area of physical infrastructure. While this trend and characteristics are reminiscent of the previous surge of state capitalism under Suharto before the 1997 Asian financial crisis, there also exist significant differences. First, state capitalism is surging in an economy that has been liberalised to a significant degree compared to the past. Furthermore, state capitalism is expanding along with the government's efforts to improve the business environment for the private sector through market liberalisation. In the case of state-led infrastructure development, it is legitimised by emphasising the importance of improving connectivity in vitalising the private sector. Second, state capitalism is surging in the context of political democracy, as opposed to authoritarianism. Therefore, the mobilisation and management of state-owned entities and the side effects of those efforts are closely scrutinised by various stakeholders. The government needs to respond to their criticisms if it wishes to continue using state capitalism as an important engine for economic development.

Keywords: state capitalism, state enterprises, infrastructure, democracy, market liberalisation

Introduction

Using the case of Indonesia, this conceptual paper highlights three outstanding features of the recent resurgence of state capitalism and contributes to the 'varieties of state capitalism' literature. Firstly, the paper highlights that state capitalism has been revived to implement Indonesia's national development strategy. The 'new state capitalism' literature has been

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overwhelmingly focused on state-owned entities' international operations (Alami & Dixon, 2020a; Bremmer, 2010; Cuervo-Cazurra, 2018; Babic, Garcia-Bernardo, & Heemskerk, 2020; Kowalski & Perepechay, 2015; Kurlanzick, 2016). However, the recent expansion of state capitalism in Indonesia has primarily been driven by the government's strategy of mobilizing state-owned entities to implement domestic development projects.

Secondly, Indonesia's case demonstrates that state capitalism has been emerging in the context of market liberalization under the Jokowi government. Existing literature has highlighted the entities in which the government and private investors hold equity (Bruton et al., 2015; Musacchio & Lazzarini, 2014; OECD, 2016). These partially state-owned entities have been created by the government's sales of a proportion of equity in wholly state-owned entities, the government's acquisition of shares in privately owned entities, or the government's establishment of joint ventures along with private investors. While partial state ownership in state entities has also been found in Indonesia, other characteristics demonstrate the integration of state-owned entities and the market economy. Many developing countries have liberalized their economies over recent decades, and state-owned entities have selectively embraced market institutions in their operations. This paper discusses the characteristics of state-owned entities, where they have been adapted to and entangled with market forces, as is the case in Indonesia.

Finally, state capitalism is expanding in a democratic setting in Indonesia. State capitalism's resurgence has often been understood as centralized, with authoritarian states using state-owned entities to achieve government goals (Carney, 2015; Carney, 2018). However, in democratic countries, many more stakeholders are involved in expanding and mobilizing state-owned entities. In this sense, state capitalism is restrained as numerous actors and organizations play the check-and-balance role (Kim 2021).

This conceptual paper is organized in several sections that: 1) provide a brief history of Indonesia's state capitalism during the period prior to the recent resurgence; and 2) highlight how Indonesia's recent state capitalism (a) fits into Indonesia's development strategy, (b) is integrated with the forces of market economy, and (c) is discussed in democratic Indonesia with an emphasis on its side effects, respectively.

A Short History of Indonesian State Capitalism

This section analyses the evolution state-owned sector's endurance and adaptation over a long period and highlights how state-owned entities have played a central role in the economy, particularly prior to market opening, which accelerated from the late 1990s in Indonesia.

Indonesia's state-owned sector was established following the country's independence. Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution, which states that 'Branches of production that are important to the state, and that affect the public's necessities of life, are to be controlled by the state', gave the basis upon which the government legitimized its economic role (Butt &

Lindsey, 2008). However, the decade after independence saw the sector expand slowly as the cash-strapped government gradually began to nationalize and establish new state enterprises (Pangestu & Habir, 1989). The call for the government to play a central role in economic development intensified during the 1950s after attempts to invigorate the indigenous private sector had failed to produce notable outcomes (“Socialism and Private Business”, 1965; Thee, 2012). However, the vitalization of state capitalism was not possible without sufficient capital.

The state-owned sector expanded in a transformative way during the following decades using two mechanisms. Firstly, the deterioration of diplomatic relations with Western countries led the Indonesian government, with its strong anti-colonial stance and socialist aspirations to take over foreign companies. The Sukarno government expropriated over 700 Dutch companies in the late 1950s following conflict over the sovereignty of Western New Guinea. This government also seized a number of British and American companies during the mid-1960s, when there was conflict with Malaysia’s Western allies over the formation of the Malaysian Federation. As a result, the government became a major corporate owner across diverse economic sectors, such as estate crop plantations, trading, and banking (Lindblad, 2008). Secondly, the Suharto government recycled commodities revenue during the 1970s oil boom to strengthen the state-owned sector to implement import substitution industrialisation. The expansion of the state-owned sector and various protectionist measures were catalysed by a strong nationalistic mood, which was often displayed in aggressive demonstrations against ethnic Chinese capitalists. During the period, state oil company Pertamina provided financial resources to develop infrastructure and industrial sectors, including steel, chemicals, utilities, and engineering (Robison, 1986).

Between mass nationalization and the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the state-owned sector played an essential role in the economic and political scene, and there has not been a serious attempt to dismantle it (Gonzalo, Pina, & Torres, 2003; Hill, 2000). State enterprises were key tools in the statist economic regime, emphasizing self-sufficiency and industrialization (McKendrick, 1992; Robison, 1986). Even during periods of economic difficulties, in which Indonesia leaned towards liberalization, such as in the second half of the 1960s and the decade following the mid-1980s, there continued to be protectionist elements in the economic policy regime, providing a conducive environment for the survival of the state-owned sector (Fane, 1999).

During the late-1990s, Indonesia faced the most significant economic crisis in its modern history. A three-decade-old authoritarian regime collapsed with the economy, and liberalization accelerated under the auspices of IMF. Regulations in diverse policy areas, including trade, investment, and business operations, were unwound significantly over the following decade (Marks & Rahardja, 2012; Pangestu, Rahardja, & Ing, 2015). While complete sales of state enterprises were rare due to nationalistic political challenges, the state-owned sector became the target of the liberalization program and experienced partial privatization, marketization, and corporate governance reform (Republic of Indonesia, 2015; OECD, 2010). Partial privatization of state enterprises was often conducted by partially listing their shares in the domestic stock market. As these state enterprises came under the monitoring of the financial market and were pressured to satisfy financial investors and regulators, their

governance underwent significant reform (Kim, 2019). Profit generation, as opposed to development contribution, became the primary goal of many state enterprises, the performance of which was mainly measured in terms of tax and dividend payments to the government (Rakhman, 2018; Wicaksono, 2008). Although the speed of reform in the state-owned sector varied over time and across entities, there was a significant restructuring of state enterprises' governance and operation in tandem with general economic liberalization during the 2000s.

In sum, Indonesia's state-owned sector proliferated during the 1960s–1970s, when state-owned entities were considered by the government agents that could be mobilized to implement economic projects in numerous sectors, often deemed strategic. This period was followed by the phase of market opening during the 1990s–2000s when the sector paid stronger attention to profitability. Though the implementation of ambitious privatization failed because of political disagreement, many state-owned entities' priorities shifted away from national development contributions. By the mid-2010s, the Indonesian government continued to hold an extensive portfolio of state-owned entities, many of which were regarded as agents of raising state budget revenue.

State Capitalism's New Development Missions

Indonesia's privatization during liberalization occurred gradually due to financial and political challenges, mainly involving the partial sales of state enterprises. As a result, the Joko Widodo (popularly known as Jokowi) government could use numerous state enterprises of significant sizes as tools in its development strategy. As of 2019, there were 113 state enterprises under the Ministry of State Enterprises and four state enterprises under the Ministry of Finance, of which the government had majority ownership (Republik Indonesia, 2020b). State enterprises operate in quasi-monopoly utilities and infrastructure sectors. Many state enterprises are leaders in a range of liberalized sectors, including banking, construction, and mining. There are state-owned manufacturing firms in commercial sectors, such as cement and steel production, and strategic sectors, such as defense industries. State enterprises under the Ministry of Finance have provided targeted financing for infrastructure, renewable energy, and mortgages. Under the Jokowi administration, many state enterprises have seen their priority shift from profit generation to development contribution and grown significantly with government support. State enterprises' combined assets increased 12,4% on an annual average from 4,580 trillion rupiahs in 2014 to 9,242 trillion rupiahs in 2020 (Figure 1). State enterprises' assets as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) also increased rapidly from 43% in 2014 to 60% in 2020 (Republik Indonesia, 2015; Republik Indonesia, 2021).

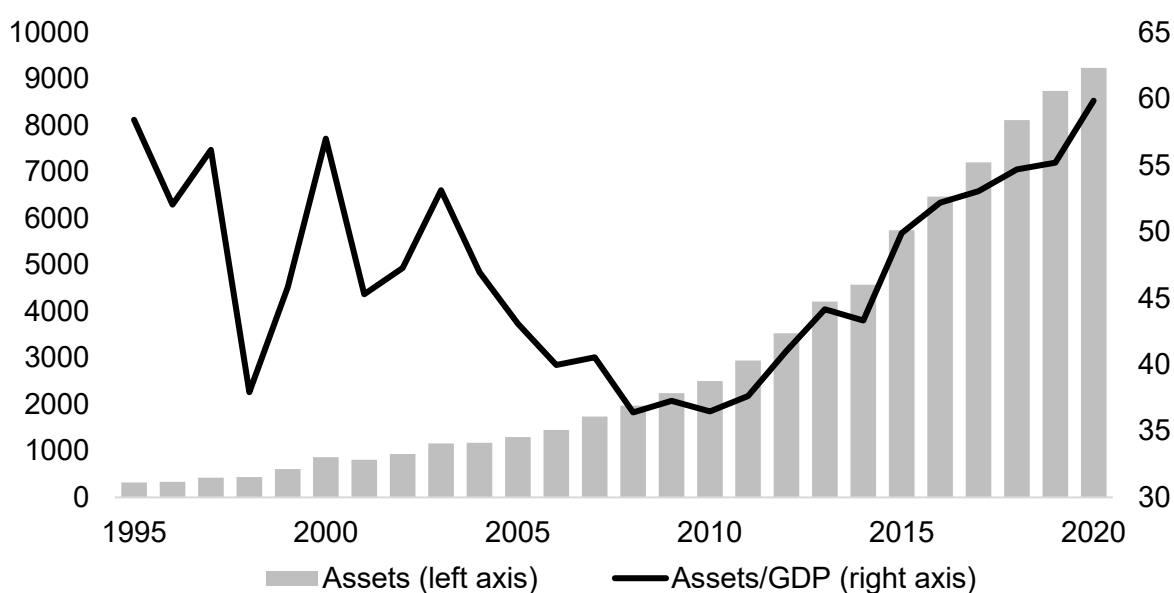


Figure 1 Indonesian state enterprises' assets

Source: Ministry of Finance (various issues)

Stretching the scope of the state-owned sector, government-owned funds with developmental missions have also grown under Jokowi. The most notable cases were the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) and the State Asset Management Agency (LMAN). LPDP, the assets of which increased from 18 trillion rupiahs in 2014 to 54 trillion rupiahs in 2019, acts as a sovereign wealth fund and has begun to diversify financial investment into, for example, state enterprises' bonds (LPDP 2015, 2020; Republik Indonesia, 2020a). LMAN, initially created to manage the state's underutilized assets, was transformed into a land bank that would provide direct or bridging funding for land acquisition in infrastructure projects. As of November 2020, this institution had provided funding for 83 National Strategic Projects, amounting to 62 trillion rupiahs, with a large share flowing into state enterprises (Habibah, 2020). Furthermore, state-owned development financiers with the core mission of accelerating infrastructure development have expanded notably. The assets of Sarana Multi Infrastruktur (SMI) increased from 9 trillion rupiahs in 2014 to 76 trillion rupiahs in 2019 (SMI, 2019; SMI, 2020). In 2019, SMI's financing was concentrated in infrastructure segments promoted by the Jokowi government, such as toll roads (51% of the total), electricity (20%), and other transportation (16%). SMI also holds a 30% stake in Indonesia Infrastructure Finance, a long-term financier co-owned by International Finance Corporation, Asian Development Bank, Deutsche Investitions-und Entwicklungsgesellschaft, and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation. The government also established a sovereign wealth fund called the Indonesia Investment Authority in 2021. To stimulate national development, the fund received an initial capital of 15 trillion rupiahs, followed by a five-fold expansion of money to 75 trillion rupiahs.

This expansion of state capitalism was motivated by Indonesia's development challenges when Jokowi came into office in 2014. The Indonesian economy's growth trajectory has been stable for over a decade, even during the global financial crisis. However, with economic growth rates of approximately 5%, Indonesia was considered to lack dynamism compared to other emerging economies (Resosudarmo & Abdurrohman, 2018). This medium-paced growth, combined with worsening inequality, did not provide adequate opportunities for many people. In this context, the natural resource sector's uncertain future after the commodities boom and feeble manufacturing competitiveness became a significant policy issue. There was concern surrounding the possibility of premature deindustrialization and the collapse of the domestic mining sector, which would have had negative consequences for the job market (Asian Development Bank, 2019; Garnaut, 2015). Many electorates and businesses considered weak infrastructure as Indonesia's main challenge. During the decade until Jokowi's inauguration, the government had limited fiscal space to increase capital investment due to increased energy subsidies, and private infrastructure investment stayed small ("Meeting Asia's infrastructure", 2017; McCawley, 2015).

The Jokowi government argued that the previous administrations' passive approaches, particularly in infrastructure, were inadequate in solving development challenges. After limited success with a strategy focusing on regulatory reform during the previous decade, expecting private investment to pour into and lead development projects appeared unrealistic (Davidson, 2015). The government also faced the 2003 fiscal rule, constraining investment capacity by limiting annual fiscal deficits to 3% of the GDP (Blöndal, Hawkesworth, & Choi, 2009). Therefore, the administration devised a plan to expand investment beyond its fiscal space by using state enterprises that could leverage significantly with government guarantees. Strong support for economic nationalism in the political arena has also offered a favorable environment for stimulating state capitalism (Wicaksana, 2019). Under pressure to achieve visible outcomes before the 2019 re-election, the Jokowi government used state enterprises to drive development projects.

The Jokowi government assisted state enterprises in stimulating their development contribution. One major policy was the expansion of the state capital injection, partly facilitated by a decline in international energy prices, which, in turn, allowed energy subsidies to shrink. Capital injections into state enterprises increased more than five-fold from 25 trillion rupiahs in 2010–2014 to 146 trillion rupiahs in 2015–2019. LPDP and LMAN, the state development financiers, also received capital injections of 36 trillion rupiahs and 93 trillion rupiahs, respectively, in 2015–2019 (Republik Indonesia, 2020a). Moreover, the government encouraged state banks and specialized state-owned financiers to fund state enterprises. Other support measures for state enterprises included tax incentives for asset revaluation and decreasing dividend ratios.

Jokowi's developmental state capitalism focused on infrastructure expansion. The administration's support was focused on state enterprises in the infrastructure-related sectors, which received 80% of the total capital injection in 2015–2019 and benefited from a significant increase in public infrastructure investment and state financial institutions' funding. There continued to be regulatory and technical challenges, but there was a path-breaking change in

the speed of project implementation, particularly in the transportation sector (KPPIP, 2020). For example, due to active construction by state enterprises such as Waskita Karya and Hutama Karya, the length of toll roads built under Jokowi exceeded the length built during the four decades before he came into office (Soemarno, 2019). The rail system within and between urban centers began to expand, often led by state-owned Kereta Api Indonesia (Shatkin, 2019).

The government also strengthened state control over natural commodities assets. The foreign divestment requirement in the 2014 Mining Law was implemented with the state mining enterprise Inalum acting as the primary acquirer. Inalum became a significant shareholder of leading foreign miners in Indonesia, such as Freeport Indonesia and Vale Indonesia. Before the acquisitions, the government designated Inalum as a sectoral holding company and transferred state-owned shares in other mining companies to Inalum. This reorganization expanded Inalum's balance sheet, enabling easier access to funding (Inalum, 2020). In the energy sector, state oil company Pertamina took over operatorship of some of Indonesia's most significant oil and gas blocks, including Mahakam and Rokan, from foreign companies. Pertamina has also been made a sectoral holding company to strengthen its financing capacity (Pertamina, 2020).

Within the two significant pillars of infrastructure development and resource nationalization, there has been a cross-cutting goal of industrialization. The acceleration of infrastructure development aimed to provide a more efficiently connected and resourced environment for manufacturing firms. The government also used the infrastructure boom to foster state manufacturing firms. Semen Indonesia, a state-owned cement producer, profited from the increase in demand and made a large leap by acquiring the third largest player (Semen Indonesia 2020). State enterprises producing transportation equipment, such as trains, benefited from the boom (Republik Indonesia, 2020b). In the commodities sector, state enterprises were assigned to developing downstream businesses and adding value to natural resources. Pertamina, responsible for 90% of Indonesia's existing refining capacity in 2019, has been orienting investment to achieve the goal of doubling crude processing capacity to 2 million barrels per day by 2025 (Pertamina, 2020). State mining companies have been expanding investment to build their processing and refining capacity and taking advantage of their large nickel reserves to participate in the electric vehicle battery industry (Inalum, 2020).

State Capitalism's Adaptation to Market Forces

Indonesia has seen a rapid expansion in state capitalism since the mid-2010s, as many state-owned entities have been mobilized to implement numerous development projects. The Jokowi government aimed to use state-owned entities as enablers after past governments had faced limitations of relying on market forces for pushing forward development projects. Jokowi's strategy was successful, and he went on to win the presidential election in 2019, giving him five more years to carry out his ambitious development projects, especially in the

infrastructure sector. Somewhat surprisingly, though, this period also witnessed the active support and integration of market forces in managing the economy and even the state-owned sector (Figure 2).

Firstly, the Jokowi administration has repeatedly underscored the importance of enhancing the environment for private businesses and entrepreneurs and spent significant bureaucratic energy into moving up its position in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) index. As a result of a number of reform policies, Indonesia’s ranking increased from approximately 120th during the previous administration to 73rd in 2020. The drivers behind this shift were infrastructure development and ‘economic policy packages’ aimed at stimulating investment. These packages’ main goals were to harmonize regulations and simplify bureaucratic processes, including plans to deregulate 255 rules (Investor Relations Unit 2020a). Furthermore, there were measures to open the economy to foreign investors (PwC Indonesia, 2018). The second Jokowi administration has maintained the goal of achieving 40th on the EoDB ranking and pushed forward a ‘job creation’ omnibus law (“Presiden Jokowi minta kemudahan”, 2020). Among the omnibus law’s diverse goals, the focus has been on enhancing the investment and business environment, with related articles accounting for approximately half of the entire bill (Investor Relations Unit, 2020b). Interestingly, state-led infrastructure development is also often presented as essential to enhancing the business environment.

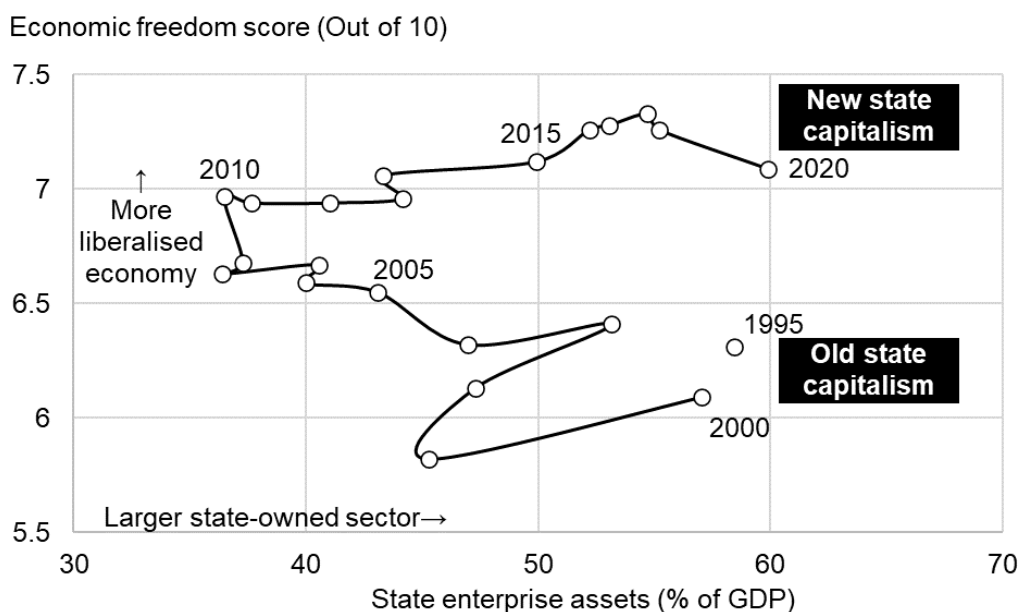


Figure 2 Indonesian state enterprises’ assets and economic freedom index

Source: Fraser Institute (various issues); Ministry of Finance, Indonesia (various issues)

Secondly, the Indonesian government has legitimized its mobilization of state-owned entities by arguing for the limited fiscal space to conduct numerous development projects directly. The resurgence of state capitalism under Jokowi follows a period of significant financial market uncertainty, during which Indonesia was identified as one of the 'fragile five' countries with weak fiscal and current account positions in 2013 as the United States central bank signalled the slowdown of monetary expansion and international capital left 'emerging' countries (Basri, 2017). Furthermore, in Indonesia, government spending is constrained by the fiscal rule, which caps the annual fiscal deficit at 3% of GDP, and breaking this rule can have serious political consequences. This policy means that increasing government investment beyond readjusting the budget structure is difficult in the short term. Discretionary government spending is further constrained because certain shares of the budget are legally required to be spent on health and education (Blöndal et al., 2009). Under these circumstances, the Jokowi government's decision to leverage state enterprises to raise funding and link them to state-owned financiers allowed a significant public investment spree without destabilizing the fiscal situation (Investor Relations Unit, 2020b). The state-owned sector's capital expenditure more than doubled from 221 trillion rupiahs in 2015 to 448 trillion rupiahs in 2018.

Thirdly, Indonesia's government has sought to strengthen the relationship between state-owned entities and private companies, particularly in strategic sectors. For example, the nationalization of Freeport Indonesia has often been viewed as a state enterprise 'taking over' a private firm. However, it may also be interpreted as a public-private mechanism for sharing risks. After the Indonesian government invested 3.85 billion dollars in acquiring Freeport Indonesia's shares, the company is 51% state-owned and 49% private-owned and is pursuing a plan to strengthen downstream businesses, which involves significant patience ("Completion of PT Freeport", 2019). The second Jokowi administration has also attempted to benefit from emerging industries by creating a partnership between state enterprises and private firms. Indonesia Battery Corporation, an alliance between state enterprises, has been negotiating with global electric vehicle battery industry firms to establish an integrated value chain in Indonesia (Harsono, 2020). Finarya, a state-owned alliance offering electronic money services (LinkAja), has received 100 million dollars from a Singaporean multinational ride-hailing company Grab, seeking opportunities in the growing financial technology sector (Eloksari, 2020). A state enterprise subsidiary, Telkomsel, has invested 450 million dollars in the Indonesian private company Gojek to benefit from the expanding ride-hailing market (Singh, 2021). Finally, Indonesia's sovereign wealth fund, Indonesian Investment Authority, aims to attract investment worth 225 trillion rupiahs from some of the largest international institutional investors to stimulate development projects (Akhlas, 2020).

Finally, the Indonesian government has been sourcing key bureaucrats to run state-owned entities from the private sector. Jokowi has chosen candidates with strong business backgrounds to lead the Ministry of State Enterprises and promote state-centered development projects. The Minister chosen during the first administration was Rini Soemarno, who had worked in the business sector for over two decades. Soemarno's most notable experience was her time at Astra International, a leading conglomerate in Indonesia, between 1989 and 2000, where she was appointed Finance Director and subsequently

President Director. Soemarno played a role in the company's initial public offering in 1990 and survival during the Asian financial crisis. The Minister of State Enterprises during the second administration was Erick Thohir, who is even more strongly rooted in the business world than his predecessor. Thohir's father is one of the 'co-founders' of Astra International, and his brother is the founder and principal shareholder of the leading mining company Adaro Energy. Moreover, Thohir himself is a renowned businessperson who owns the media company Mahaka Media. The Indonesian government perhaps regarded personnel with private sector experience as most appropriate for achieving the dual goal of profit-making and development contribution. While development contribution has gained greater importance, profit-making has not been overlooked by ministers from private sector backgrounds.

State Capitalism Meets Democracy

Sustaining state capitalism under democracy is not simple. There have been many recent cases, such as those in Brazil and Malaysia, where the mobilization of state-owned entities has been interrupted, facing economic, political, and societal issues. The remaining section of this paper discusses the questions raised regarding reviving state capitalism under Jokowi by various stakeholders in a democracy and how the government has attempted to justify and legitimize the resurgence of state capitalism (Figure 3).

Firstly, questions have been raised about the rapidly increasing debt levels of the state-owned sector. In particular, state enterprises in the utilities and construction sector have seen their debt expand significantly when conducting large-scale infrastructure projects (Salna & Dahrul, 2020). Over this period, state-owned financial companies have participated in funding these state enterprises and experienced an increase in debts. The government agrees that state enterprises' financial health requires close monitoring but argues that the current situation is neither unreasonable nor threatening. If looking at state enterprises as a whole, this issue is not a significant risk, at least in the short term.

The expansion of public debt is inevitable in financing development projects, the benefits of which are reaped in the long term. Because government spending is limited by the fiscal rule that caps annual fiscal deficits at 3% of the GDP, the government has mobilized state enterprises to implement debt-financed development projects. Compared to other developing countries, Indonesia's fiscal situation is relatively strong, which can cushion the effects if state enterprises struggle with short-term liquidity and refinancing risks. On an individual basis, many of the largest state enterprises continue to have a stable financial profile, and investor confidence is holding up. There are, of course, many state enterprises with poor performance, though most of these are small and unlikely to cause systematic risks. In response to criticism of the expanding debt, the Ministry of Finance has continued monitoring and sharing the risk profile based on the macro stress test model (Republik Indonesia, 2020a).

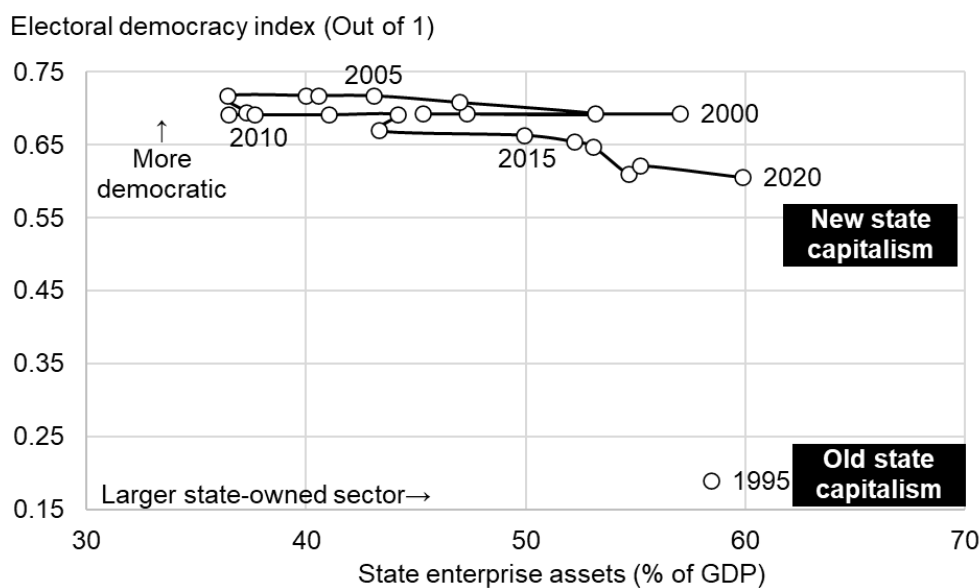


Figure 3 Indonesian state enterprises' assets and electoral democracy index
 Source: Ministry of Finance, Indonesia (various issues); V-Dem Institute (various issues)

Criticisms have been made on the methods used to reorganize state enterprises (Kim, 2018). Since the mid-2010s, the primary reorganization has involved creating sectoral holding companies. Over the past five years, holding companies have been designated and established in the mining, energy, pharmaceutical, and insurance sectors. The government plans to create further holding companies across other sectors, such as tourism and infrastructure. The government has also created sub-level holding companies by combining state enterprises' subsidiaries in the same sector. Sub-level holding companies in the Islamic banking and hospital sectors have been established. The government argues that holding company structures are the most effective method of creating synergy as stronger firms can help weaker firms in the rationalization process and find sources for expanding investment by leveraging enlarged assets. Simultaneously, the government has halted privatization altogether. The government's sole focus on creating holding companies has been criticized. Experts have argued that holding companies may have beneficial effects in some sectors but not in all, meaning each sector needs a tailored reorganization method that considers several aspects. Furthermore, the critiques have highlighted that the negative consequences may outweigh the positive effects as weaker firms could pull down healthier firms in the same holding company. Some experts have also pointed out that while looking neater in terms of the corporate arrangement, holding companies may hinder corporate governance as subsidiaries can hide under a new umbrella structure.

The government has begun to respond to this criticism. The Ministry of State Enterprises has abandoned the long-term goal of creating a super-holding company, which has been deemed unrealistic and its effects uncertain (Rahman, 2019b). The ministry is also taking measures to enhance the internal structure of holding companies. For example, energy holding company Pertamina has started to organize its numerous subsidiaries by creating

sub-sectoral holding companies (Pertamina, 2021). Furthermore, the ministry has been considering revising government regulation 41 of 2003 to gain greater capacity and autonomy in implementing diverse reorganization methods, including liquidation, mergers, and spin-offs (Rahman, 2019a).

There have also been concerns about how deep and far state enterprises will go. Over the past five years, there has been a notable expansion of state enterprises' market share across several economic sectors. The state bank's share in Indonesia's total loans increased from 34% in 2014 to 42% in 2020. The market share of Semen Indonesia in the cement industry increased from 39% in 2018 to 53% in 2019 after acquiring Holcim Indonesia, the third-largest producer in the country (Semen Indonesia, 2020). Another increase in market share through mergers and acquisitions is that of Inalum. Inalum's market share in the mining sector expanded following its acquisition of a stake in Freeport Indonesia and Vale Indonesia (Inalum, 2020). It is also clear that state enterprises' market share has increased significantly in the construction sector, with their order books expanding at a breakneck speed. State enterprises are expanding market shares in their traditional areas and actively entering new emerging sectors. For instance, mining companies Inalum and Antam, energy company Pertamina, and electricity company PLN have created Indonesia Battery Corporation to enter the growing electric vehicle battery industry (Tani, 2021b). A number of state enterprises have co-invested in Finarya to create the financial technology platform LinkAja, which provides electronic money services (Silviana, 2022). Private firms have complained about state enterprises' growing market shares, highlighting that this expansion would harm the investment environment (Prabowo, 2019).

In return, the government argues that market share expansion is a feature only of select business areas it deems as strategic, such as finance, mining, and infrastructure-related sectors. The government's involvement plays a role in fixing market failures and protecting strategic assets in these sectors. Simultaneously, the government highlights that a growing market share partly reflects state enterprises' competitiveness. It also argues that state enterprises are devising plans to enter new industries to be in an advantageous bargaining position before powerful foreign companies enter the country to tap into the extensive resources and market. For instance, the Indonesian Battery Corporation is currently negotiating with Chinese and Korean companies seeking to establish electric vehicle-related manufacturing bases in Indonesia (Ministry of Investment 2021). Furthermore, Finarya recently invited Singapore's Grab to become a shareholder (Tani, 2021a). In contrast, the government's direct entry into new sectors in which major domestic players already exist has been infrequent. For example, while there has been speculation that the government may enter the ride-hailing services and compete against Indonesia's Gojek, the government stated that it was only a rumor.

Another issue raised in democratic Indonesia is the linkage between corruption and state capitalism. Corruption cases are numerous and range from petty misconduct to deeply rooted fraud. For example, there have been accusations of PLN's officials receiving graft in relation to Riau coal-fired power plant and Petral's previous boss receiving bribes related to oil imports (Asmarini 2015; Siddiq, 2018). The corruption case that has perhaps gained the

most attention has been that of Garuda Airline's boss smuggling a Harley-Davidson motorbike and Brompton bicycles from France using the company's Airbus A330 ("Direksi Garuda penyelundup", 2019). There have also been significant corruption cases, so they shook the companies foundation. There has been the mismanagement of funds at Asabri and Jiwasraya, which have caused losses of 22,8 trillion rupiahs and 16,8 trillion rupiahs, respectively (Prasetyo, 2021). Allegedly, there has been large-scale financial market manipulation and money laundering at these state-owned financial companies. The government has acknowledged this corruption problem but has suggested that immoral individuals have caused it. Furthermore, it has been suggested that a long list of unveiled corruption cases is evidence of Indonesia's strong monitoring institutions.

There have also been concerns about nepotism in the state-owned sector. During the first and second terms, many commissioner positions have been given to the president's supporters. Critiques have highlighted that some of the individuals that occupy these posts do not have relevant experience or capabilities. At the same time, the Ministry of State Enterprises continuously receives "recommendations" for state enterprises' high-ranking positions from various lawmakers and bureaucrats who want their slice of the pie. Proponents have argued that the inclusion of the president's supporters reflects diversity on boards and that supporters are essential agents able to translate the government's goals into state enterprises' actions (Sudrajat, 2017; Hamdani, 2020; Purnomo, 2020).

Another concern is the business background of the Minister of State Enterprises, Erick Thohir. The government and supporters have highlighted that Thohir's connection to the business world is essential as state enterprises seek to adopt more effective management systems and strengthen cooperation with private businesses. The government and supporters have also argued that Thohir's weak political affiliation is a strength. The view on political connection is questionable; the business-politics boundary is fluid in Indonesia, and many people from the business world are directly and indirectly embedded in the political world. Thohir may not be loyal to certain political parties, though he became a politician, in a broad sense, when he led the President's re-election campaign team in 2019. There is also concern about Thohir's connection to Indonesia's business groups. He is considered one of the prominent figures in Indonesia's business world. His acquaintances, including his brother, are some of the wealthiest capitalists in Indonesia, owning large conglomerates. Several civil organizations have highlighted how the capital city relocation project and the recently-adopted omnibus law could benefit the country's largest companies connected to politicians (Johansyah, 2020; Fraksi Rakyat Indonesia, 2020).

Conclusions

Indonesia has experienced a rapid expansion of state capitalism since the mid-2010s, as the Jokowi government's development strategy has heavily relied on state-owned entities, particularly in the infrastructure and mining sectors. However, state capitalism's resurgence has not translated into the government decidedly turning its back on the market. The

government has legitimized the expansion of state capitalism by arguing that it is necessary to enhance the business environment, particularly in infrastructure, and maintain a stable fiscal environment. The government has also sought to embrace market mechanisms by encouraging collaboration between state-owned entities and private businesses and using management talent from the private sector.

The concerns raised by numerous stakeholders during the resurgence of state capitalism have reflected the obstacles that the government has faced in mobilizing state-owned entities in a democratic context. Stakeholders have questioned financial stability, reorganization method, business scope, corruption, and nepotism. There have been productive discussions on economic issues surrounding state capitalism. Balancing fiscal stability and development project implementation, devising a suitable reorganization method, and determining state enterprises' appropriate business scope would require continuing the discussion between the government and stakeholders. However, the government's justifications for and responses to concerns surrounding corruption and potential nepotism have, so far, been limited. As seen in countries such as Brazil and Malaysia, the public's dissatisfaction with, or even anger towards, these issues and the political backlash that follows may seriously disrupt the course of developmental state capitalism.

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Kyunghoon Kim is an Associate Research Fellow at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) where he analyses the political economy and industrial policies of Asia's developing countries. He holds a PhD in Development Studies – Political Economy from King's College London and his thesis focused on the role of state-owned entities in economic development. Prior to his PhD, he received a master's degree from LSE and worked at the Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI) covering the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) for six years. His recent publications include journal articles in *Structural Change & Economic Dynamics*, *Competition & Change*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, and *the Pacific Review*.

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Democratization in the Digital Era: Experience from Southeast Asia

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Abstract

Southeast Asia is home to about 8.5% of the world's total population and 10% of its internet users, yet it is also home to 12.7% of the world's social media users. The exponential growth in internet and social media utilization poses both opportunities and challenges towards democratization. The research aims to examine how the digital sphere may or may not support inclusive and deliberative democracy in the region. Using elaboration on case studies from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, the current study is reflecting on shared challenges and opportunities in preserving democracy amidst the rapid development of cyberspace as a mode of political communication. The findings suggest that digital space has been instrumental in harassing dissent or jailing opposition members in countries like the Philippines and Vietnam. On the other hand, the use of technology provides an opportunity to foster a more deliberative and inclusive democracy in Indonesia and Malaysia. The article contributes to the wider conversation on democracy and the digital sphere in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries.

Keywords: democratization, digital era, cyberspace, Southeast Asia

Introduction

In the last ten years, internet penetration has increased at an unprecedented rate. At the end of 2011, over 2 billion people worldwide were using the internet, accounting for roughly 30% of the global population (Kemp, 2021). After ten years, the global user figure has risen to nearly 4 billion, with more than 6 in 10 people worldwide using the internet by the end of 2021. Similarly, the Southeast Asia region has seen exponential internet penetration growth and massive social media usage. Southeast Asia has about 8.5% of the world's total population and 10% of its internet users, but it also has 12.7% of the world's social media users (Kemp, 2021).

The scale of social media use in Southeast Asia is impressive, both in terms of the number of users and the average amount of time spent. Filipinos, for example, spend more time online than people in any other country on the planet (Kemp, 2021). Indonesia, the region's largest country, saw a fivefold increase in internet users in 2021 when compared to 2011. Indonesians now use the internet for an average of 9 hours per day, which is significantly more than the global average of just under 7 hours per day.

With such widespread participation in social media platforms, political communication on the internet has emerged as a burgeoning field, receiving significant attention from academics. Prihatini's (2020) observations on the utilization of social media by female lawmakers conclude that cyberspace is not always a safe option for their campaign strategy since opponents may apply money politics and snatch constituents' support. Hence, social media plays an insignificant role in their vote-consolidating processes. Talamayan (2020) suggests that the internet has been instrumental in silencing dissent or harassing or jailing opposition members in countries like Thailand and the Philippines. The practice of censorship and control in contemporary cyberspace has been widely used in Southeast Asia (Sinpeng, 2021), resulting in a significant threat to the quality of democracy (Sinpeng, 2020; Sinpeng & Koh, 2022).

This paper aims to investigate the relationship between democratization and the digital sphere. It aims to unpack both traditional and contemporary challenges faced by democracies in the region, particularly during the digital era, by drawing on the experience of Southeast Asian countries. It also seeks to identify cross-national opportunities and how the digital sphere can support inclusive and deliberative democracy. The article focuses on the shared challenges and opportunities for preserving democracy amid the rapid development of cyberspace as a mode of political communication.

Democratization and the Digital Sphere

Rapid advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) have aided states in acquiring digital capacity. It does not spare democracies the desire to use digital surveillance under the guise of maintaining security and social order, even though it is frequently perceived as a tool used by authoritarian regimes to maintain their reign of power

and quell nuisances. The threat of terrorism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks has prompted the passage of new legislation ensuring democratic state surveillance of its citizens (Bigo, 2017). States must therefore protect their citizens from threats, such as tracking the movement and funding of terrorists. Surveillance, on the other hand, can be indiscriminate in targeting groups and individuals who are critical of states, such as the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) monitoring of Amnesty International and Médecins du Monde (Dencik, Hintz, & Carey, 2018). Similarly, Poland's new Surveillance Law gives security forces the authority to spy on people who aren't even suspects (Rojszczak, 2021).

Furthermore, states can collaborate with private actors in this surveillance enterprise. It should be noted that technology companies collect and own a massive amount of user data (Zuboff, 2015). For example, the United States' PRISM Program grants the government access to the databases of technology companies such as Apple, Facebook, and Google (Berghel, 2013). In comparison, Indonesia's contentious Ministerial Regulation 5 (MR5) requires all technology companies, both domestic and multinational, "to register with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and agree to provide access to their systems and data as specified in the regulation" (Lakhdhir, 2021). States can also ask Google to remove objectionable content from its platforms, such as YouTube and Instagram. Excessive use of digital surveillance does not bode well for democracy.

Constant monitoring can prevent the public from voicing their opinions and criticisms for fear of reprimanding (Penney, 2016; Stoycheff et al., 2019). Not only is online behavior affected by surveillance, but it also extends to the offline domain too, where individuals choose to play safe by being compliant, conformist, and submissive (Marder et al., 2016). This 'chilling effect' suppressed freedom of expression as one of the fundamental human rights protected by international law (Bernal, 2016). The International Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) rules in Article 19(2) that:

"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice," (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1966).

Furthermore, Article 21 and Article 22 ensure the right of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association. Yet, these are equally undermined by state surveillance by intimidating opportunities for collective action (Stoycheff, Burgess, & Martucci, 2020). As activists utilize digital platforms to organize events and distribute messages, they have become easily targeted by states (Owen, 2017). The systematic repression of the Black Lives Matter movement exemplifies what Canella (2018) designates as "racialized surveillance" in the United States.

Goold (2010) once asked in his article, "How much surveillance is too much?" to which he answered, "We know that there is too much surveillance when citizens begin to fear the surveillance activities of the state, and no longer feel free to exercise their lawful rights for fear of unwanted scrutiny and possible censure," (Goold, 2010). Here, the key is citizens' experience, not merely state justification. The ICCPR underlines special circumstances where

such a right can be suspended – when it is misused for war propaganda and hate speech (national, racial, or religious) among others. Consequently, this rule implies that states can act on those issues, say, through censorship and content moderation. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) provides three indicators to determine justifiable surveillance: (1) it is conducted in accordance with the law, (2) it has legitimate aim, and (3) it is executed with necessity and proportionality (Watt, 2017).

Concerns remain, nevertheless, regarding the implementation of such criteria. The Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet) reported that in Indonesia digital attacks, such as hacking and doxing, have become increasingly political targeting government critics, including journalists and scholars (SAFEnet, 2022). The following section elaborates the regional experience in preserving democracy in the digital era. In some instances, the patterns in Southeast Asia resonate the global trends (Freedom House, 2021).

The Countries' Perspectives

The following section offers a regional perspective on how democracy is surviving during the digital era. Using unique experience from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam, the country's case studies provide challenges and opportunities ranging from election transparency to state censorship.

Indonesia

This section aims to examine under what conditions the use of technology affected democratization in Indonesia. It argues that despite digitalization might destabilize democracy it facilitates Indonesia's democratic consolidation. The use of information technology such as social media provides more spaces for citizen's political participation. However, it poses risks in proliferating disinformation and hate speech that heighten social polarization among society. For example, President Joko Widodo referred to social media's paradoxical tendency toward destructive innovation, where the ease of access to information contrasts with Indonesian users' tendency to eschew facts and broadcast their biased views without proper evidence or academic research (Tyson & Apresian, 2021). President Widodo further argues that people use social media to attack, reproach, accuse, and vilify one another, which is not a true reflection of Indonesian culture or tradition.

Internet connectivity and technology have grown dramatically in Southeast Asia. Since then, technology has had an impact on its social, political, and cultural circumstances. As a result, the Internet has become ingrained in the political culture of the region. Furthermore, Southeast Asia is a notable region where individuals use online social networking sites at a significantly higher rate than the global average (Abbott, 2015). With more than 80% of Internet users in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines having an active Facebook profile, Facebook maintains its global dominance in cyberspace (Masna, 2011).

Social media networking and technological advancement are also visible in political life. Digitalization has influenced Indonesia's political activities in some ways. Power has shifted away from states because of digital technologies and the pervasiveness of corporate algorithms. Massive technological corporations are amassing enormous market and political power, as well as transforming into powerful information conduits. Several news outlets, for example, are run by Indonesian politicians. As a result of the combination of corporate media ownership and politics, Indonesia's digital democracy has faced challenges.

The term "digital literacy" refers to a community's ability to generate and critically evaluate knowledge as well as their ability to use digital information and technology in a variety of formats. In addition, digitalization has revealed a high level of digital illiteracy in Indonesian societies. Risks associated with technological advancement must be acknowledged in previous general and regional elections, such as the Jakarta governor race. Disinformation, hate discourse, and hate speech are examples of things that could destabilize our democracies.

As a result, the use of technology has increased social and political polarization, as well as identity politics among societies. Primordialism and identity politics were also visible during general elections, particularly the 2019 election of the President and Vice President. According to a Puskapol poll conducted at the University of Indonesia, the use of political buzzers in society has become one of the catalysts for increasing social polarization and identity politics (Puskapol, 2019). Other polls predict that ethnic, religious, racial, and intergroup (SARA) themes will be used more frequently in Indonesia's general elections in 2024, including regional and parliamentary elections as well as presidential elections.

A comparative study on regulating fake news in Southeast Asian region (Smith et al., 2021) finds that Indonesia has enacted the Law on Electronic Information and Transactions as amended in 2016 and Government Regulation on Trading Through Electronic Systems. In summary, the relevant offences under article 27 of the Act are to knowingly and without authority distribute and/or transmit and/or cause to be accessible electronic content which offends against propriety (article 27(1)), and/or affronts [sic] or defames (art. 27(3)), and/or extorts and/or threatens' (art. 27(4)). However, since there is no clarification as to what constitutes an offence against propriety or what constitutes the offence of affronting, it is left open to the courts to decide.

Despite its various implications on Indonesian political practices, the article argues that digitalization should be seen as an opportunity that has prospects for democratization in Indonesia. The rapid advancement of information and technologies, and the proliferation of online channels of social interaction could facilitate democratic consolidation. The consolidation of democracy is a discernible stage in the shift from authoritarian authority to civil government. Thus, to a democratic system, it is essential to the construction and enthronement of a stable, institutional, and long-lasting democracy (Oni, 2014). Moreover, a democratic regime should be consolidated when it is "likely to endure" (O'Donnell, 1996) and when we may expect it "to last well into the future" (Valenzuela, 1992).

These definitions highlight that democratic consolidation occurs when democratic standards are so ingrained in society and supported by political elites that there is no threat

of the regime reverting to illiberalism or autocracy. Digitalization and democratic consolidation have close links in several conditions. First, technology promotes equality and public inclusion, which is required for democratic consolidation. Digital activism will facilitate the formulation and implementation of public policies that reflect interests and development priorities by creating more venues for political participation that put citizens at the center. While fostering an open sphere, online activism provides numerous chances to aid democratization and cultivate an informed and engaged pro-democratic populace.

Secondly, digital democracy could improve accountability and transparency in democratic governance. Both transparency and accountability are the principles of good governance that indicate democratic consolidation. Therefore, the use of technology can promote government transparency, decentralization, public service delivery, and contact with citizens. They boost citizens' ability to monitor government behavior and voice their requirements to their legislators.

Finally, the utilization of technology in political activities will enhance effectiveness by providing effective services of democracy. Digital technology improves productivity in many areas, including elections. For instance, online databases greatly simplify developing and maintaining accurate and up-to-date electoral rolls. Therefore, it is critical to consider how the government might make it easier for citizens to exercise their political rights through digitalization in the digital age.

To sum up, the broader use of technology among societies to express their political rights may contribute to avoiding the breakdown of democracy and helping the completion and deepening of democracy in Indonesia.

Malaysia

This section aims to analyze how digitalization accelerates the process of democratization of new and young people into Malaysian politics. It argues that digitalization emerges as an accelerator of democratic inclusion of these young people who previously were not in the circle. Digitalization has opened more expansive access to political participation and leadership among the youth and emerged as the catalyst for democratization. A youth NGO, Undi18, and the only youth-centric political party in the country—the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA), are the reflective case studies.

Persatuan Pengundi Muda, known as Undi18, has made history in Malaysia when they successfully pushed for a constitutional amendment on the voting age in the country from 21 to 18 years old and automatic voter registration. The group was led by two young Malaysians, Qyira Yusri and Tharma Pillai. They were student leaders and members of the Malaysian Students Global Alliance (MSGA), established in 2016. The young MP Syed Saddiq from MUDA embraced this call and extended it to be tabled in the parliament. This amendment brings an addition of 6,23 million new voters, of which 1,4 million are aged between 18 to 20 years old. This group is known as the Undi18 voters (Azhar, 2022). This group will vote for the first time in Malaysia's upcoming 15th General Election (GE15) on the 19th of November 2022 (Election Commission of Malaysia, 2022).

The world's first Digital Parliament was another initiative organized by Undi18 with other youth organizations which intensified the democratization effort in the country, held in July 2020, powered by the Microsoft Team. This group convened a two-day session via live stream emulating the real parliament discussing and passing 'laws' and 'policies' related to the economy and education affecting youth. A diverse background, including women, minorities, disabled youth, and localities, makes up the 222 youth representatives who voluntarily represent their constituencies. An overwhelming 6,300 applications were received from the youth nationwide to be representatives in the digital parliament. The selected representatives have brought up various issues relating to the economy, specifically about the digital economy and the need to raise digital literacy. Strategies to enhance accessibility to Malaysians from the low-income group, young people living with disabilities, young migrants, stateless children, and other vulnerable communities were also deliberated. The session was viewed by more than 200,000 viewers (Gnaneswaran, 2020). This initiative provides a space and opportunity for the youth to be part of active nation-building and produce substantive democratization.

Democracy literacy is another effort by Undi18. They are active in preparing the youth, particularly the first-time voters, to experience and be exposed to democracy as well as making them politically informed citizens. They have produced many open access online media to educate voters on democracy, elections, voter registration, casting postal votes, and discourses on issues and policies in the country as well as capacity building (Undi18, 2022).

The Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA) is the one and only political party for youth, found by the former Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq in September 2020, who fought for Undi18's bill in the parliament. Through its Black Paper (Kertas Hitam), its philosophy should be "the True North" for MUDA members which carries six core values related to Physical, Human, Added, Financial, Social, and Institutional. They reminded the members that their participation, no matter through what means, can be a catalyst towards implementing organic change beyond the construction of race, religion, and demographics (Biro Dasar Muda, 2022).

MUDA is active in engaging with the youth. In its effort to engage the youth in politics, they have launched "literasiswa" (abbreviation for literasi politik mahasiswa or student political literacy). The initiative literalizes the young voters especially the first-time ones. The project educates the youth with political education concerning topics such as methods to check polling places, choose a candidate, vote, and register the postal vote. Nearing the 15th General Election, they promptly replaced the political education segment in the website with GE15 related pages where people can join or support the political force with just a click away to www.muda.my.

Undi18 and MUDA show how digital has significantly contributed to the democratization process by mainstreaming youth into the political process and system. Digitalization has accelerated youth political participation and leadership in politics. Data by Merdeka Center revealed that the internet is the primary source of information regarding the country's political and current affairs, sampled among 1,216 youth aged between 15 to 25 years old (Merdeka Center, 2022). It indicates that in the case of Malaysia, digitalization plays

an important role in expanding the parameter of democracy and enriching its democratization process. With the digital sphere filled with accessible information, polls, news, and interactive platforms maneuvered by the youth, democratization has taken to the next new level. Digitalization has made democracy substantive to young voters and enabled them to participate in and experience democratization. However, there is a concern for youth not within the accessibility of this digitalization sphere - because of the low internet quality and the high internet connection cost (Curtis et al., 2022). A holistic, inclusive, and sustainable action should be put in place to ensure no one is left behind in this digital democratization.

Philippines

In the Philippines, the challenges it faces during the digital era are a function of its brand of democracy. Philippine-style democracy features some of the expected components of a democratic state, namely, the regular conduct of elections¹. Beyond that, there are cracks in this iteration of democracy. Political dynasties dominate from the national down to the lowest levels of governance (Tadem & Tadem, 2016). Further, there is a tendency to “give up” the supposed democratic nature of government in favor of autocratic leaders after elections. The popularity of presidents after their election to office became a license for their administration to impose centralizing policies which concentrated power to the center. Thus, while politicians tend to appear consultative, democratic, and open, their policies and positions on issues are not necessarily so. Such tendencies reached their peak under the administration of Rodrigo Duterte, who was clearly populist in every aspect of his governance.

What exacerbated this style of democracy is the Filipinos’ high consumption of social media content. With the closure of the country’s largest television network ABS-CBN under Duterte, many Filipinos turned to social media to source their news. This is complemented by the proliferation of bloggers and vloggers, who presented themselves as alternatives to traditional media. Furthermore, telecommunication companies came up with promotions giving their subscribers free or “unlimited” Facebook and TikTok access. This made social media a new battleground for politicians, electoral campaigns, and strategists.

The digital era created the blurring of lines between facts and fiction. While this phenomenon is not exclusive to the Philippines, one can argue that the results of the last two elections in the country are a product of widespread misinformation and the proliferation of fabricated stories. On many occasions, rabid supporters of candidates discard historical facts in favor of “opinions” based on what they read on Facebook or watched on TikTok and YouTube. At a certain point, an anti-intellectualist discourse has risen in the Philippine social media sphere. Since one of the 2022 presidential candidates was Ferdinand Marcos Jr, whose father Marcos Sr served as president and used Martial Law to extend his power, many of his supporters attempted to revise history to favor the Marcoses and antagonize democracy fighters, including the late president Corazon Aquino, and his husband assassinated senator

¹There could be additional provisos on what counts as democratic elections, such as free, fair, open, and honest. In appreciating Philippine electoral democracy, a minimalist definition was adopted which is the mere presence of periodic elections.

Benigno Aquino Jr. Without exaggeration, historians were called liars while bloggers and vloggers were hailed as exposers of alternative truth. The discourse turned questions of facts into matters of “opinions.”

A critical component of the phenomenon is understanding social media literacy. In the Philippines, while social media is widely used, there exists a problem of appreciating social media content, taking whatever is posted or seen as truth or facts. The issue of discernment cannot be more emphasized: Which is true? Which is not? Partly to blame is the substandard public education system. History classes at the basic education level barely cover the period of dictatorship. If at all, what is highlighted in the history textbooks is the construction projects under Marcos Sr’s rule for almost two decades. These books barely mention the atrocities of the dictatorship, including human rights violations and corruption of the Marcos family and his cronies. It makes the consuming public vulnerable to lies, deception and whitewashing in social media.

Unfortunately, the discussion on social media literacy also took a classist turn. As some started labeling opposing camps with names, it also heightened the class distinctions between supporters of one candidate against the other. For example, labels such as “bobotante” (stupid voter) were used to derogate Duterte and Marcos Jr supporters. On the other hand, the supporters of Leni Robredo claimed to be moralists, creating a sense of distance between the middle class and the masses. Such is indicative of the political polarization that brewed during the early years of the Duterte presidency and spilled over the Marcos Jr administration.

Since 2016, Philippine politics, arguably, has been widely polarized, with the help of troll armies, and supporters living within their respective echo chambers and filter bubbles. On the one hand, supporters of Duterte were named “DDS” or Duterte Die-hard Supporters. This is a play on the supposed meaning of DDS which is “Duterte Death Squad,” which Duterte was rumored to tap to eliminate lawbreakers and political enemies when he was still mayor of Davao City. On the other hand, the political opposition was labeled “Dilawan” (yellowish) in reference to supporters of former president Benigno Aquino III’s Liberal Party. These labels with derogatory intents were widely used in the social media as hashtags on Facebook and Twitter. In the 2022 presidential elections, new names were used to identify competing camps. Robredo’s supporters who wore pink during the campaign were called Pinklawan (a combination of pink and dilawan), while Marcos Jr supporters were labeled “pula”, the color of his campaign².

Nevertheless, if this is politics and democracy in the digital era, then it leaves behind an even larger community out of the picture. The reality is that the Philippines, despite the advancement in information and communication technology infrastructure, is not fully digital. The periphery remains disconnected to the online world where the debates and arguments occur. Indeed, the political discourse is not simply shaped in the social media or digital realm. Aside from social media literacy, this is perhaps one of the greatest challenges the country must face in the digital era – that there remains a segment of the population who

²As maybe noticed, political campaigns in the Philippines center on the individual candidates and not necessarily on their political parties. Thus, there is reference to their colors and personality.

are still not included in the digital world. Perhaps another question would be, at least in the case of the Philippines, should political discourse now be done in online mode?

Vietnam

Vietnamese authorities have never ceased to fret over “toxic content” (nội dung xấu độc) on the internet; and indeed, the definition of “toxic content” has shifted over the years (Luong, 2017b). In the 1990s, “toxic content” was associated with pornography – so much so that in December 1996, to vouch for the arrival of the internet in Vietnam a year later, its advocates reportedly had to prove to Vietnam’s top leaders that pornographic websites could be blocked effectively (Duc, 2012). They succeeded, and the internet was officially launched in Vietnam a year later (Hoang An, & Nam, 2017), but on the condition that the World Wide Web was placed under state scrutiny and censorship. The stated need to censor pornographic content, however, masked a more significant concern of the powers that be: that the internet would unleash the floodgates of anti-government propaganda and facilitate a freer flow of information, which would end up posing major threats to the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party (Hiep, 2019).

A fixation on anti-state content has shaped how Vietnamese authorities have deployed various censorship strategies to achieve the dual goal of creating a superficial openness while maintaining their grip on online discourse.

The crackdown on what was perceived as anti-state content started all the way back in the early 2000s when the authorities started formulating several broadly worded and vague regulations on internet controls. During the 2001-2007 period, Vietnamese authorities publicly pointed their fingers at pornography and other sexually explicit content as a legitimate rationale for reining on the internet.

However, according to an in-depth report (<https://opennet.net/studies/vietnam>) by the OpenNet Initiative (2021), despite their public platitudes about curbing it, Vietnamese authorities virtually did not block any pornographic content between 2005 to 2006. The censors focused instead on what they perceived to be politically and religiously sensitive sites hosting anti-state content: corruption, ethnic unrest, and political opposition.

In fact, an analysis of all of Vietnam’s laws and regulations on internet controls during the 2001-2005 period shows that legal terms that fell under the category of “fine tradition and custom”, including pornography-related ones, were eclipsed by those under the “national security” category (Figure 1).

Perhaps the most prominent exhibit of the Vietnamese control model with Chinese characteristics is the 2018 Cybersecurity Law. This law appears to be dominantly dictated by the “Seven Bottom Lines”; a list of online behavior guidelines Beijing coined in 2013 to govern internet usage. The Vietnamese state’s formulation spells out seven barriers that social media posts must not transgress: 1) the rules and laws of the country, 2) the socialist system, 3) the country’s national interests, 4) the legitimate interests of the citizens, 5) public order, 6) morality, and 7) authentic information.

Those broad and vague dictums serve a dual purpose: 1) to enable the authorities to bend the implementation of the law to their will, and 2) to perpetuate self-censorship among internet users. However, it would be overly simplistic to frame the crackdown on high-profile and influential bloggers and activists as a sign of Vietnam tolerating little public criticism even in the online sphere. Vietnamese authorities have handled public political criticism, both online and in real life, with a calibrated mixture of toleration, responsiveness, and repression. In fact, responsiveness and legitimacy are even more crucial to the resilience of an authoritarian regime like Vietnam.

Responsiveness means the authorities have also looked to social media as a valuable yardstick to gauge public grievances and, wherever appropriate, take remedial actions to mollify the masses. Such public grievances have centered on environmental concerns and the government’s mishandling of bread-and-butter issues. They could be vented against a local move to build a cable car into what is billed as Vietnam’s cave kingdom (Luong, 2017a), a plan to fell nearly 7,000 trees in the capital of Hanoi (Peel, 2015), or a calamitous fish kill along the country’s central coastline (Pham & Nguyen, 2016).

The authorities have tried to appear as responsive to public sentiment online as they could, but not without some caveats: Collective action or social unrest, their *bête noire*, could arise from the fact that criticism of the government’s policies in a particular area quickly spreads to another, perpetuating a spiraling cycle of public disenchantment. Vietnam’s online movements – most of them initiated, coalesced, and sustained by youths during the 2014-2016 period – have revolved around that dynamic, which remains relevant today.

More than two decades since the internet’s arrival in Vietnam, anti-state content has been exhausted as a pretext for the authorities to rationalize reining in the online sphere (Figure 2). At the same time, Vietnam’s lack of political and technological wherewithal and limited home-grown social media platforms have throttled its efforts to match China in creating a “national internet” meant for the enforced blocking of Western social media platforms. Having tried for nearly a decade to exert greater control over information online, the Vietnamese authorities now recognize that they cannot act like China and ban foreign tech giants altogether. But on the other hand, the Vietnamese government has co-opted and utilized Big Tech on various fronts to the point that it would be all but possible to shut down the major social platform – chiefly Meta’s Facebook and Google’s YouTube – as they have threatened (Pearson, 2020).

Ironically, Facebook and YouTube have also become increasingly enmeshed in Vietnam’s online censorship mechanism (Cloud & Bengali, 2020). Case in point: From Facebook’s very top level – Mark Zuckerberg – the social media giant has also been upfront

On one hand, the internet creates a deepening polarization, strengthening the state's domination over individuals' political aspirations, and multiplying vile harassment. The government in Vietnam, for example, has been applying ultimate control over circulated messages on social media platforms by pushing the big-tech companies to subscribe to the government's desire. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, cyber trolls have been effectively exaggerating polarization among citizens as the digital era created the blurring of lines between facts and fiction. While this phenomenon is not exclusive to the Philippines, one can argue that the results of the last two elections in the country are a product of widespread misinformation and the proliferation of fabricated stories.

On the other hand, Malaysia has witnessed how young people could maximize their digital activism and create a wave of substantial political changes. Youngsters in Malaysia demanded for a lower minimum age (from 21 to 18 years old) to vote which will result in additional 6 million young voters participating in the upcoming elections. The case of Malaysia indicates that digitalization plays an important role in expanding the parameter of democracy and enriching its democratization process. From Indonesia, we learnt that digitalization has exposed digital illiteracy among its societies. Fueled with narratives produced by buzzers and cyber armies, identity politics and socio-political polarization have been unavoidable.

Further research is needed to unpack strategies to overcome state cyber censorship and to preserve freedom of speech amidst democratic stagnation in the Southeast Asian region. A likely research avenue from here is to investigate whether digital activism needs to investigate the success of other causes in other countries. Future research may look deeper into how states are copying each other in terms of suppressing dissent opinions and the critical junctures, and actors, involved during the process.

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Journalism in the Age of Digital Autocracy: A Comparative ASEAN Perspective

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Abstract

Cyber authoritarianism is on the rise globally. Governments around the world are seeking innovative ways to monitor, surveil, censor and persecute government critics, activists and journalists. Southeast Asia is an especially hostile environment for journalism online: its governments have regularly investigated, arrested and convicted ordinary citizens for their online activities. The region also remains one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the world. This raises the question of if and how news organisations survive and thrive in this increasingly repressive environment. The study draws on original survey and interview datasets of 52 digital news organisations in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand conducted as part of the 2021 Inflection Point International project on digital media entrepreneurship in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa. We argue that digital news organisations in Southeast Asia continue to report and investigate politically and socially sensitive issues despite the high risks for state repression. They are motivated by their belief in providing public good and supporting civic engagement. The findings in this study provide concrete empirical evidence that digital authoritarianism does not exert downward pressure on critical journalism.

Keywords: digital news organisation, cyber repression, journalism, authoritarianism, sustainability, press freedom, ASEAN

Introduction

When Maria Ressa, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and CEO of Rappler, was convicted of a cyber libel charge concerning an article about alleged corruption by government officials, few in the Philippines were surprised. Rappler, an independent online news organization, has been subject to state repression, intimidation, and harassment of its journalists since former president Rodrigo Duterte came to power in 2016. The declining press freedom and growing cyber authoritarianism in the Philippines is not unique in the region. Member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have witnessed an overall decline in internet freedom and growing online censorship for the past decade (Shahbaz, Funk, & Vesteinsson, 2022). Journalists in Myanmar and Thailand have been detained and imprisoned for pursuing politically sensitive topics perceived as a threat to their regimes. The Philippines remains one of the deadliest places on earth for journalists for the fifth year in a row (“2021 World Press Freedom”, 2022). Across Southeast Asia, internet crackdowns and arrests were made based on journalistic activities deemed by those in power to harm national security and promote disharmony among the public.

Parallel to this trend of growing online censorship and repression is an explosion of digital media organizations. As internet and social media connectivity rise past 50% penetration rates across ASEAN, news consumption via mobile phones through social media apps and digital news platforms has sharply risen. In the last survey conducted in the Philippines relating to the consumption of news related to the 2022 national election, consuming news online via phone apps became the second most popular method of news consumption after television (“Truth Watch runs intercept”, 2022). Similarly, recent estimates have shown that the vast majority of Southeast Asians – more than 70% – consume news via social media (Statista, 2022). It is not surprising considering Southeast Asia is one of the world’s most social media active populations. Young people in ASEAN reportedly spend an average of 10 hours a day online, 3 hours longer than the global average (Kemp, 2021). There are reasons to be hopeful for digital media news organizations to thrive. ASEAN’s population spends much time online and prefers to consume news via social media or news apps. On the other hand, the region has experienced growing cyber repression, internet censorship, and crackdowns on journalists – all of which raise the costs for digital news organizations to operate.

The research is one of the first in ASEAN to investigate the business sustainability and political viability of digital news organizations in the region. We only consider ‘digital native’ news organizations, which are news establishments that have been online from their inception. Its core questions concern the extent to which digital news organizations survive and thrive in an increasingly repressive online environment. How do digital media organizations respond to growing cyber repression in ASEAN? Since the advent of digital media technologies that encourage information flow, online news companies have vastly expanded. Social media, regardless of the coverage at a global or national level, hold public attention to politically sensitive news. As many countries witnessed the political ripple effect of cyberspace, strict regulations governing breaking news and freedom of expression the

government implement are very much subjective to debate (Sinpeng, 2020; Hill & Sen, 2002). Member States of ASEAN, in which some influential media conglomerates and start-ups are taking baby steps in the direction of a digitized society, particularly have many rules and regulations for press coverage. In existing literature analyzing media coverage worldwide, it is evident that freedom of expression is influential in news operations and journalism in the digital age. A sharp rise in Internet users also attaches great importance to online freedom of expression. Previous studies help us make sense of a digitized map showing freedom of expression, press, and Internet use (Abbott, 2011; OECD, 2019). However, less attention has been paid to examining the cyber repression and the coverage of politically sensitive news.

Given the growing cyber repression and censorship on journalism, we expect the reporting of politically sensitive news to decline and a greater focus on soft news. The question that needs to be addressed is how digital news organizations cope with cyber-authoritarianism. In this context, this article tests the hypothesis that in authoritarian regimes that exercise both physical and digital forms of repression, digital news companies are less likely to pursue politically sensitive topics because of threats of punishment from the state. The research also anticipates that digital news organizations that are financially struggling would refrain from reporting on issues that could elicit government repression. To test these hypotheses, we examine how digital news organizations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand decide which content to pursue and the financial and political consequences of those decisions. Implications based on the analysis of the study will provide original empirical contributions to the understanding of journalism in ASEAN and, specifically, the extent to which digital news organizations sustain themselves in increasingly challenging economic and political environments.

The research consists of four sections. By examining existing literature on the internet freedom, censorship, and journalism in the countries mentioned, the research looks at digital authoritarianism in member states of ASEAN. The next section will discuss data, methodology, and its findings. Lastly, the research elaborates the implications of the findings and its contribution to the study of journalism and internet politics.

Digital Authoritarianism in ASEAN

There is growing digital authoritarianism worldwide. Some countries or regions, like Southeast Asia, have experienced a marked decline in online freedom. Existing research has shown that a hostile political environment makes it financially and politically challenging for media organizations to operate. It is particularly the case for digital news organizations because restrictions on online press freedom are worst affected by cyber-authoritarianism. Under an authoritarian regime that imposes strict censorship of digital media, political issues, including anti-government slogans or widespread criticism of the present government's handling of national concerns, have hardly received comprehensive coverage in the press. The censorship laws and regulations turn the clock back forty years. Across Southeast Asian countries (Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia), key censorship issues are

'Internet user arrested or imprisoned', 'pro-government commentators', and 'website blocked' (Table 1).

Digital authoritarianism in Southeast Asia, defined as 'pro-government regulations governing digital media coverages', must be set in hostile politics (Masduki, 2022). Since the 2014 military coup, a growing concern has been about how the expansion of censorship could hinder the freedom of expression and press in Thailand. The interim government had employed "the Computer Crime Act and the long-standing *lèse majesté* under 112 of the Thai Criminal Code" to order a crackdown on opposition to the military regime online (Anansaringkarn & Neo, 2021). 'Charge against individuals after the 2014 coup', quoted in Anansaringkarn & Neo's study (2021), shows that the censorship operates in favor of the military regime¹.

Cyber repression still exists in the contemporary Philippines² and at present it is a threat against rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution. Since the enactment of 'Republic Act No. (RA) 10175' and 'the Cybercrime Prevention Act' under the former President Benigno Aquino III provoked an angry response from media freedom advocates (Robie & Abcede, 2015), hostile political environment has raised some doubts about the freedom of expression in the Internet. Because of the high levels of cyber repression (Feidstein, 2021), the former President Rodrigo Duterte's government raised some doubts about their ability to guarantee the freedom of speech online. Although war on crime during his six-year tenure as the President had been visible and dramatic at the first sight, digital repression had been central to growing concerns, ranging from censorships to government intervention in cyberspace³.

Malaysians rarely represents their concerns to the authorities⁴ although cyber repression is evident in the state. Since the mid-1990s, Malaysians have had access to the Internet. In explanations for social media in Malaysia, the governmental decree, known as 'the Sedition Act and Internal Security Act', imposed strict censorship of print media rather than digital coverages (Weiss, 2012). Nonetheless, it should be noted that the government was expecting to gain control of the Internet by using general media and liberal laws (Azizuddin, 2009, cited in Weiss, 2012). In the case of news site 'Malayiakini, there is convincing evidence of a link between digital authoritarianism and the threats to opposition opinions⁵. In this sense, censorships are in place for controlling the press.

It is doubtful whether the freedom of the Internet in Indonesia is possible. On the surface, basic human rights, including freedom of expression have been guaranteed by the existing constitution (Lubis, 2017). As Yilmaz et al. (2022) note, however, "Internet bill mandates online service providers to remove or block content on their platforms when requested by the government".

Data and Methodology

The research is based on data from 'the Inflection Point International' that conducted interviews with the leaders of 52 media organizations in Southeast Asian countries, including

15 in Thailand, 15 in Indonesia, 14 in the Philippines, and 8 in Malaysia⁶. The Inflection Point International follows the selection criteria ‘SembraMedia uses’ to select media organisations for each country. Their partner funders consisting of Luminate, CIMA, and Splice Media (a regional ally) double-checked initial media lists for Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Based on the same interview questionnaire including more than 500 questions, researchers conducted a video or telephone interview with media leaders. They used not only ‘Python’ to process data electronically but also Google Spreadsheets to conduct calculations and general comparisons.

Table 1 Key Censorship Issues

Key internet controls	Thailand				The Philippines				Indonesia				Malaysia			
	‘19	‘20	‘21	‘22	‘19	‘20	‘21	‘22	‘19	‘20	‘21	‘22	‘19	‘20	‘21	‘22
Social media platform blocked									○		○	○				
Website blocked	○	○	○	○					○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Internet shutdown					○	○			○	○	○	○				
Pro-government commentators	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	○	○	○
New censorship law	○	○				○	○				○				○	
New surveillance law	○						○				○					
Internet user arrested or imprisoned	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Internet user physically assaulted	○	○	○	○			○	○	○		○					
Technical attacks					○	○	○	○		○	○	○				
Status	N/F	N/F	N/F	N/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F	P/F

*Source: Internet control during Freedom on the Net’s coverage period of June 2018 to May 2019, June 2019 to May 2020, June 2020 to May 2021, and June 2021 to May 2022 (Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2021/key-internet-controls>).

*Note: “to track the different ways in which governments seek to dominate the digital sphere, Freedom House monitors their application of nine key internet controls. The resulting data reveals trends in the expansion and diversification of these constraints on internet freedom”.

○ : Key censorship issue regardless of survey periods.

This article uses interactive graphics to discover the digital media landscape provided by the Inflection Point International’. The key questions that the research concentrates on are: 1) What topic do digital new organizations cover; 2) What revenue sources support high-impact journalism?

The research examines the percentage of responses to the two questions to clarify sensitive issues in each country and digital media’s revenue sources. As the proportion of topics including online news seem to be affected by ‘Business maturity tiers’, the research

looks at whether the financial footing is influential in the coverages. This will help make sense of a variation in the response to digital authoritarianism. The research also uses ‘hot-button issues’⁷ from the perspective of Southeast Asians, voters’ concerns at the national level, and ‘business models’⁸ to examine politically sensitive news topics.

Employing a comparative approach to sensitive issues included in digital news in Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, the research looks into similarities and differences responding to cyber repressions, and analyses digital authoritarianism’s any real influence over online news organization.

News Operations under Cyber-Authoritarianism

The previous points about digital authoritarianism allows us to raise many questions, which are important to understand how digital media companies respond to hostile political environment. By analysing the Inflection Point International’s database, this section presents and discusses types of topics included in online news. To make sense out of Southeast Asian experiences with media coverages, the section examines digital news organizations in Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Thailand

Although news topics have long been diverse, there is a tendency among digital news organizations to cover sensitive issues. Surveying 15 digital media companies, ‘human right’ and ‘politics’ are considered core dimensions of online news. Considering these organizations’ annual revenues, the key issues they address have quite different emphases (Table 2). Tier 1 has no difference in topics reported in the digital media. Their editors have offered to lend weight to all issues, including human right’, ‘politics’, ‘gender’, ‘health’, ‘environment’, ‘culture and entertainment’ ‘education’, ‘LBGTQ+’, ‘law’, ‘business and economics’, ‘police or crime’, ‘media’, ‘technology’, and ‘science’. In Tier 4, similarly, digital new organizations captured the attention of matters of great import such as ‘human rights’, ‘politics’, ‘gender’, ‘health’, culture and entertainment’, ‘education’, ‘LBGTQ+’, and ‘media’. In Tier 3, on the contrary, much attention has been paid to ‘human rights’, ‘politics’, and ‘environment’. In Tier 2, digital news organizations stress the importance of ‘environment’.


Two different features are empirically observable. Firstly, digital authoritarianism hardly affects coverages of politically sensitive topics included in hot-button issues. Regardless of profit or non-profit organizations (Appendix 3), these topics are uppermost in editors’ minds. Secondly, the middle-income groups, including Tier 2 and 3, are passive observers of politically sensitive events. In Tier 1 and 4, hot-button issues consisting ‘human rights’, ‘politics’, ‘gender’, ‘health’, and ‘environment’ are the most significant importance to editors. In Tier 3, ‘human right’, ‘politics’, and ‘environment’ are politically sensitive issues. In Tier 2, there is insufficient attention to hot-button issues. All in all, many regulations and

rules caused by cyber authoritarianism rarely restrict media news organisations’ capacity to cover hot button issues.

Table 2 Topic Analysis - Thailand

Types of Revenue \ Issues	All tiers	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	No Revenue
Human rights						
Politics						
Gender/Women’s Issues						
Health						
Environment						
Culture & Entertainment						
Education						
LGBTQ+						
Law						
Business & Economics						
Police/Crime						
Media						
Technology						
Science						
Sports						
Others						

*Source: The Inflection Point International (2021).

 : The most sensitive issue.

The Philippines

Despite news topics that provoke a storm of demonstration against the government, digital news organizations pay much attention to some issues such as ‘human rights’, ‘politics’, ‘business and economics’, and ‘media’. In interviews with leaders of 14 digital media organizations, it should be noted that ‘politics’ is the most sensitive news topic. Focusing on companies’ annual revenues, there are limited resources that explain very much a subject for debate (See Table 3). In Tier 1, digital news organizations decide to focus on ‘politics’, and ‘business and economics’ while, in Tier 2, putting more effort into covering ‘human rights’ and ‘media’. Considering Tier 3 and 4, it is hard to imagine that the freedom of the national

press is fully functional in Filipino democracy. Digital media companies may reevaluate coverages of sensitive issues.

Related to a topic analysis, two different features are empirically observable. Firstly, in a political situation where an authoritarian regime replaced a democratic government, digital media hardly report on politically sensitive events mentioned in hot-button issues. In Tier 1, in effect, editors' all interests are centered on 'politics' among five different types of topics. In Tier 2, 'human rights' included in the media coverage is a message sent to Filipinos concerning an authoritarian regime. Secondly, digital authoritarianism directly influences online news operations. Regardless of profit or non-profit organizations (Appendix 3), digital media played a passive role in the coverage of politically sensitive issues.

Table 3 Topic Analysis - Philippines

Types of Revenue \ Issues	All tiers	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	No Revenue
Human rights						
Politics						
Gender/Women's Issues						
Health						
Environment						
Culture & Entertainment						
Education						
LBGTQ+						
Law						
Business & Economics						
Police/Crime						
Media						
Technology						
Science						
Sports						
Others						

*Source: The Inflection Point International (2021).

: The most sensitive issue.

Indonesia

Digital news organizations are characterized by a politicization of practical problems. Even though there is not a shred of evidence that sensitive issues are reported in high-income digital media (Tier 4 in Table 4), cyberspace offers a window of opportunity for turning attention to the most sensitive events. By conducting interviews with leaders of 15 media organizations, the growing interest in 'women's issues' is evident in the most sensitive issue. Considering these companies' annual revenues, there are significant differences in results of

a topic analysis (Table 4). In Tier 1, great emphasis is placed on ‘human rights’, ‘gender or women’s issues’, and ‘LBGTQ+’. In Tier 2, news editors place a high value on the coverage of problems such as ‘politics’, gender or women’s issues’, ‘health’, ‘environment’, ‘culture and entertainment’, and ‘education’. In Tier 3, they add ‘human rights’, ‘law’, ‘business and economics’, ‘media’, ‘science’ to the most sensitive issues.

Two different features are empirically observable. Firstly, regardless of a digital authoritarianism, non-profit organizations are active in reporting on sensitive events. It implies that important changes in media environment would affect digital news operations running for profit. Secondly, nonetheless, as hot-button issues, politically sensitive problems, are reported in digital press, media news are less likely to arise from regulations and rules in a given political situation.

Table 4 Topic Analysis - Indonesia

Types of Revenue \ Issues	All tiers	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	No Revenue
Human rights		■		■		■
Politics			■	■		■
Gender/Women’s Issues	■	■				■
Health			■	■		
Environment			■	■		■
Culture & Entertainment			■	■		
Education			■	■		■
LBGTQ+		■				■
Law				■		■
Business & Economics				■		
Police/Crime						■
Media				■		■
Technology						
Science				■		
Sports						
Others				■		

*Source: The Inflection Point International (2021).

■ : The most sensitive issue.

Malaysia

Digital media organizations in Malaysia have progressively introduced the most sensitive issues although high-income groups play a major role in cyberspace (Tier 3 and Tier 4 in Table 5). In interviews with leaders of 8 digital news companies, ‘environment’ draw much attention from interviewees. Considering these organizations’ annual revenues, the important point in news reports is that, regardless of profit or non-profit companies, they

make an effort to publicize environmental issues. The whole analysis of news operations in digital media is clearly influenced by a given political situation. Without a doubt, cyberspace is now controlled by an authoritarian regime. In Tier 1 and Tier 2, there is nothing in new reports on hot-button issues. In Tier 3 and Tier 4, on the contrary, news editors keep up the coverage of sensitive issues such as ‘human rights’, ‘politics’, ‘gender or women’s issues’, and ‘environment’. As they get to discuss problems that are crucial for Malaysians, these news organizations play a key role in democratic deliberation in times of a digital authoritarianism.

Table 5 Topic Analysis - Malaysia

Types of Revenue \ Issues	All tiers	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	No Revenue
Human rights						
Politics						
Gender/Women’s Issues						
Health						
Environment						
Culture & Entertainment						
Education						
LBGTQ+						
Law						
Business & Economics						
Police/Crime						
Media						
Technology						
Science						
Sports						
Others						

*Source: The Inflection Point International (2021).

 : The most sensitive issue.

Discussion and Conclusions

Findings and analysis have shown that digital news organizations in ASEAN are committed to pursuing politically sensitive topics despite hostile media and economic and political environments. All news organizations interviewed experienced at least one form of government repression – the most common of which was government monitoring and surveillance. Many organizations received many cyber attacks on their websites, particularly following the publication of politically sensitive news. At times the editors were asked not to pursue investigative journalism on topics such as government corruption; otherwise, they would face some form of consequences. These types of government intimidation, both direct and indirect, raised the cost of pursuing critical journalism.

Given the highly competitive and profit-driven market of digital businesses, there were ample reasons for these organizations to stay away from reporting on critical and controversial issues. Analysis and findings drawn from the Inflection Point 2021 study demonstrate the opposite: digital news organizations understand the high cost of covering politically sensitive issues but continue to do. Their primary motivations for such decisions are ideological: they see themselves as changemakers in society and essential vehicles for civic engagement. As such, they reduce the overall 'cost' of publishing politically sensitive issues by increasing their revenue in other areas of business, such as content creation, which allows them to absorb the costs and risks posed by critical journalism.

Journalists in these digital news organizations also pushed the boundaries of censorship. Although editors and journalists alike reported having understood where the "line" was in terms of what was appropriate for reporting, they also took advantage of the vagueness of censorship. Given that much of the press censorship in these countries has often blurry lines, some presses have sought to be bold with borderline politically controversial content. If there was no state response to their borderline reporting, they interpreted this as permission to push further for coverage of more politically sensitive topics.

Another important way politically sensitive issues gain coverage without raising political risks for news organizations is to focus on a non-controversial topic in politically sensitive areas of a country. Echo's series on love in the deep south of Thailand is a case in point. The deep south, which has been a site of insurgencies for decades, is a highly politically sensitive area of the country. However, by discussing the topic of love among young people in the area, Echo could highlight the deep south's population without raising the alarm with the Thai authorities, especially the military. What the consumers have learned is not just about the lives of ordinary people in the deep south (which most Thais do not understand); Echo was able to show that there is a commonality among groups of the population that have conflicted with one another for a long time.

The implications of research analysis are threefold. First, the research provides concrete empirical analysis that rising digital authoritarianism does not necessarily exert downward pressure on critical and investigative journalism among digital news organizations in ASEAN. Despite increasing crackdowns on the press and continued persecution of journalists on politically motivated charges, coverage of politically sensitive news has not declined. The finding contributes empirically and theoretically to research that examines the relationship between journalism and democracy by demonstrating how rising digital authoritarianism does not equate to declining critical journalism.

Second, the findings suggest that digital news organizations see their coverage of sensitive topics as a type of public service; they provide critical and investigative journalism to serve the public interests. They view their journalism as part of a broader movement that drives civic engagement and push towards progressive social and political change. This insight provides the rationale for continued coverage of politically sensitive issues in otherwise repressive regimes; the value of journalism is beyond material base.

Third, to absorb the potential loss of revenue and/or increased cost of investigative journalism, many digital media organizations rely on revenue generating models that draw on incomes from non-governmental sources, such as philanthropic grants, consulting, content creation for third parties and merchandise sales. These strategies have served to shield these organizations from the potential negative consequences of pursuing sensitive news coverage.

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Appendix

[Appendix 1] Revenue Sources in Southeast Asian countries (Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia)

Primary revenue source	All tiers	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Grants from private foundations or philanthropy	<u>37%</u>	<u>75%</u>	<u>38%</u>	<u>33%</u>	
National advertising sold by staff	14%		25%		<u>43%</u>
Creation of content of non-media clients	14%		25%	17%	14%
Sponsored content or native advertising	9%			33%	
Local advertising sold by your staff	6%				14%
Other consulting services for clients	6%				
Gants from foreign government	3%		13%		
Grant from any government organizations	3%			17%	
Donations from individuals	3%				
Product sales	3%				
Other consulting services for clients		25%			14%
Subscriptions to news site					14%

*Source: Inflection Point International (2021).

[Appendix 2] Revenue Sources in Southeast Asia (Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia)

Most popular revenue sources	All tiers	Tiers 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Grants from private foundations or philanthropy	<u>40%</u>	<u>75%</u>	<u>38%</u>	33%	14%
Sponsored content or native advertising	26%	25%	25%	<u>50%</u>	<u>29%</u>
Donations from individuals	23%	25%	25%	17%	
Google AdSense	20%	25%	13%	17%	14%
Creation of content for non-media clients	14%	25%	25%		
Local advertising sold by your staff	11%				14%
Training programs for non-journalist clients	11%			17%	
Grants from Google	9%	25%			
Grants from foreign government	9%		38%		
Product sales	9%	25%			14%
Affiliate ads		25%			14%

Grants from a corporation other than Google		25%			
Membership program		25%			
Creation of unique content for other media			13%		
Every sponsorship sales			13%		
Grants from Facebook			13%		
Grants from any government organization...			13%		
National advertising sold by staff				17%	
Training programs for journalists				17%	
Design or technology services for clients					<u>29%</u>
Programmatic advertising networks					14%
Syndication of your content to other media					14%

*Source: Inflection Point International (2021).

[Appendix 3] Profit and Non-Profit Digital News Organisations

Type of organizations	Thailand	The Philippines	Indonesia	Malaysia
For profit	<u>513</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>261</u>	<u>125</u>
Hybrid (for profit and non-profit combination)			106	26
Non-profit/NGO	52	24	12	11
Have not formalized the organization		58	12	4

Notes

- ¹ Based on ‘Charges against individuals after 2014 coup’, politically sensitive issues and censorships were categorized according to causes of accusation (<https://freedom.ilaw.or.th/en/content/charges-against-individuals-after-2014-coup>).
- ² “According to Article 19, an analysis of the state of the media in the Philippines in 2005 indicated that unlike many other countries, there was no cluster of laws in the Philippines that could be described as ‘media laws’” (CMFR, 2006, cited in Robie & Abcede 2015).
- ³ For example, “Duterte and close aides in the executive branch undertake three primary activities: directing information operations, coordinating financing for such activities, and overseeing legal enforcement and persecution. Panelo and his team in the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) oversee messaging and coordinate with outside influencers and editorialists, such as RJ Nieto, Sass Sassot, and Rigoberto Tiglao from the Manila Times....Often Panelo will set a top-line message that influencers and pro-government media will amplify” (Feldstein 2021).
- ⁴ “Relatively little Malaysian internet usages is politically-oriented; entertainment is a bitter pull. Most Malaysian blogs are not political in focus. The most comprehensive survey of Malaysian bloggers to date, with over 1,500 blog readers (over half of them bloggers themselves) as respondents, found that the majority prefer personal journals to sociopolitical blogs; most of those inclined toward more political content were male and older, compared with the largely younger (and generally well-educated, middle- or upper-class) respondents. An even lower proportion of bloggers themselves prefer political blogs, and only 6 percent have such blogs. Instead, the overwhelming majority use their blogs to recount their “personal experiences,” generally in English” (Tan and Zawawi 2008, cited in Weiss 2012).
- ⁵ “Among the most notorious such instances, policies raided prominent news site Malayiakini in 2003, in connection with its publication of a letter deemed seditious; its computers and servers were confiscated, temporarily shutting down of the site” (Brewer 2003, cited in Weiss 2012).
- ⁶ Media organizations include Prachatai.com, The Isaan Record, The Momentum, The Matter, Thai publica, Green news, Echo, The Pattaya news, Thai (enquirer), the people, Thisrupt, Isranews agency, The Standard (stand up for the people), The 101.world, Coconuts in Thailand; Puma Podcast, Vera Files (truth is our business), Bulat Lat, Digicast (negros), Dnx (Digital News Exchange), Davaotoday.com, Panay today, Press.one, ND (northern dispatch), Nowyouknow, Reportingasean (voices and views from within), Manila today, Aghimutad, The Post in the Philippines; Mojok, The conversation, Konde.co, Magd lene, Lipu naratif, Catch me up!, Watch DOC, Betahita, Zona utara, Independen.id, Terakota.id, Serat.id, Balebengong, Kediripedia.com, Idn Times in Indonesia; and Malaysiakini (news and views that matter), New Naratif, Between the lines, Cilsos.my (current issues tambah pedas), Trp, Macaranga, Codebule (health is a human right), Bicara Minggu Ini (by Norman Goh) in Malaysia (<https://data2021.sembramedia.org/about-the-study/>).
- ⁷ “The top five coverage area cited across all regions were: human rights, politics, gender/women’s issues, health, and environment” (SembraMedia, 2021).
- ⁸ “Four distinct tiers of business maturity were based on total revenue, number of page views, team size, and how many years they had been publishing (SembraMedia, 2021). Tier 1: organizations were more than five years old and seemed to have stagnated, unable to grow revenue above \$20,000 per year. Tier 2: team size nearly doubled to a median of 14 with more than three times the traffic, and nearly five times the revenue. With revenues of between \$ 20,000 and \$99,999, most of these media leaders were better able to cover expenses, but they still struggled to show any kind of profit. Tier 3 features media with multiple revenue streams, where larger teams and audiences enable higher advertising rates and audience support, and revenue range from \$100,000 to \$499,999. Media in tier 4 reach millions of people each month, bringing in more than \$500,000 per year (with some generating well over a million dollars annually)” (SembraMedia, 2021).

Road to ASEAN Political Security Community Vision 2025: Understanding Convergence and Divergence in ASEAN Voting Behaviors in the UNGA

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Abstract

While the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint 2025 envisages a centrality of regional architecture in responding to security challenges in the region, divided positions among the member states – mostly visible in the South China Sea dispute – have deepened the pessimism on the fate of APSC. Notwithstanding the persisting intra-ASEAN disunity, the organization has been projecting the goal of ASEAN centrality in the global political arena. The goal highlights ASEAN's emerging role as the 'hub' of regional cooperation in Asia-Pacific hence cohesion is highly expected. The research aims to examine ASEAN cohesion and its alignment with the institution's community-building project. The research primarily looks at the pattern of divergence and convergence in ASEAN voting behavior across security issues discussed in the UN General Assembly. It also underscores the underlying factors behind the emerging patterns. Using Agreement Index (AI), the research finds that ASEAN member states' voting highly converges on colonialism, the law of the sea, the Mediterranean region, military expenditures, outer space, peace, and transnational crimes. Alternatively, voting diverges on resolutions related to arms transfer, counterterrorism, and armed conflict. Contributing factors to this pattern include member states' preferences, the identity, value, norms, and cognitive prior of the regional organization, as well as alliance and major powers' preferences.

Keywords: ASEAN Political Security Community, APSC Vision 2025, convergence, divergence, UN General Assembly, voting behavior

Introduction

Following the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community in 2015, the organization has been pursuing the regional integration agenda under the framework of ASEAN Community Vision 2025 (ASEAN, 2015a, 2015b). The vision aims to elevate cooperation among the member states across three integration pillars, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The blueprints of AEC, APSC, and ASCC 2025 respectively highlight some key premises, including ASEAN's "common position on economic fora" (ASEAN, 2015c), "responsible and constructive role globally based on an ASEAN common platform on the international issue" (ASEAN, 2015d), and "proactive contribution to the global community" (ASEAN, 2015e). Furthermore, it stresses the importance of strengthening institutional capacity to promote greater ASEAN actorness abroad. While these visions are normatively achievable, the pursuit can be seen as an uphill battle, particularly that of the APSC pillar.

Arguably, the diminishing intra-ASEAN cohesion is the underlying factor behind the significant setback in the ASEAN community-building project (Fardhiyanti & Wee, 2022) and the achievement of the ASEAN centrality goal (Acharya, 2017; Indraswari, 2022). ASEAN member states' positions are often divided when dealing with various regional security challenges. For instance, ASEAN fails to produce a collective stance in the South China Sea dispute since member states continue demonstrating diverging positions. Incompatibility among member states can be observed in other issues, such as China's expanding influence in the region (Gloria, 2021), the Sino-US rivalry, the military coup in Myanmar, and the establishment of AUKUS in 2021.

The intra-ASEAN disunity arguably has undermined the organization's role in dealing with the emerging regional security challenges. Furthermore, it has lowered ASEAN's reputation within the international community and decentered ASEAN in the regional security architecture (Dunst, 2021; Beeson, 2022). Some observers have underlined contributing factors leading to the increased pessimism about ASEAN cohesion and the prospect of APSC. Beeson (2016), O'Neill (2018), and Chirathivat and Langhammer (2020) agree that ASEAN was particularly divided in dealing with the rise of China. Beeson (2016) further argues, "an effective, coherent, consistent, and collective response to the challenge of China is likely to prove beyond ASEAN abilities". This is due to China's divide and rule practices (DRP) through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project (Chirathivat & Langhammer, 2020) and economic policies in general, particularly toward the authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia (O'Neill, 2018). The domestic politics of individual members and the institutional set-up of ASEAN also added to factors facilitating the divergence in member states' stances on regional political and security issues (O'Neill, 2018). Acharya (2017) further argues that the diminishing intra-ASEAN cohesion has posed a serious challenge to ASEAN's inherent ambition to be the center of diplomacy and regional processes in the Asia Pacific region.

Inherently, the research endeavors to solve whether the lack of intra-ASEAN cohesion is reflected in a larger international forum in which ASEAN is expected to function as a unified regional bloc. The research argues that disagreement on key regional security challenges to a varying degree is a rational outcome as they might directly and adversely affect member states' national and regional interests. As stated in its blueprint, the APSC adopts a comprehensive security approach which takes into consideration both traditional and non-traditional, emerging, and existing key security challenges vital to national and regional interests. It includes not only military threats to national sovereignty and regional stability but also transnational crimes and trans-boundary challenges, namely people smuggling, drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal arms transfer, IUU fishing, piracy, robbery against ships, cybercrimes, and natural disasters. However, issues discussed in the extra-regional forums go beyond these regional issues. Thus, the APSC cohesion should be holistically examined by including emerging security issues at the global level.

Against this backdrop, the research aims to examine APSC cohesion by looking at its voting behavior on security issues in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The UNGA is the largest international forum with universal membership discussing international security issues. It is, thus, expected that examining ASEAN voting behavior in this institution could provide a more comprehensive picture of the cohesion of ASEAN as a political security community as envisaged in the APSC 2025. The two research questions examined are: 1) to what extent do ASEAN positions converge and diverge on security issues in the UNGA?; 2) what explains the pattern of convergence and divergence of ASEAN positions on security issues in the UNGA? The research provides not only a deeper insight into the pattern of convergence and divergence of the member states' position but also the contributing factors shaping such a pattern. In doing so, the research will firstly provide the conceptual framework of cohesion and the theoretical framework on factors influencing actors' cohesion. Next step is outlining the research method followed by findings and discussion on the pattern and factors shaping the cohesion of ASEAN in the UNGA.

Concept and Theory: Voting Cohesion of a Regional Organization

The existing literature has discussed the cohesion of ASEAN when dealing with regional security issues such as the Indochina Crisis (Weatherbee, 1985), Myanmar (Haacke, 2008), the South China Sea (Thayer, 2012; O'Neill, 2018; Thu, 2019), China-US rivalry (Graham, 2013; Chirathivat & Langhammer, 2020) and the COVID-19 pandemic in the region (Rüland, 2021). Nevertheless, an analysis of ASEAN cohesion in its participation in the larger international forum is strictly limited. Nguitragool and Rüland (2015) suggest that ASEAN as an actor at the international fora has claimed itself as "a pioneering endeavor" and "one that will still be preliminary, tentative and incomplete in many respects" (Nguitragool & Rüland, 2015). They focus on providing a theoretical foundation to explore the cohesion of ASEAN through their roles in various stages of negotiation and not through their voting behaviors, which is done using the case study of the WTO and ILO, thereby leaving gaps in the cohesion of ASEAN in the UNGA. Ferdinand (2013) and Jang and Chen (2019) fill this gap by examining selected

international issues in the UNGA between 1970-2011 and 1991-2018, respectively. However, a focus on international security issues is still missing as the main concern of this research. The research builds on these works and other literature on states' voting behaviors in the UN (Hurwitz, 1974; Foot, 1979; Rasch, 2008; Hosli et al., 2010; Jin & Hosli, 2013; Ferdinand, 2014; Burmester & Jankowski, 2014; Meyers, 1966) to examine the cohesion of ASEAN as a political security community.

The concept of cohesion is often used interchangeably with coherence in discussions of international or regional organizations. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, as a term, cohesion means as "a condition in which people or things are closely united". Meanwhile, coherence refers to a condition with two requirements, namely the absence of contradiction and the existence of positive synergies between components (Hillion, 2008; Hoffmeister, 2008, cited in Portela & Raube, 2009). From the definition, it seems that both terms have different emphasis. Cohesion is more political and often used together with the word political, hence political cohesion (Gebhard, 2017), such as the cohesion policy of the EU and ASEAN in narrowing development gap among members. Coherence is more institutional and is, in fact, often associated with the word policy, hence policy coherence, such as the well-known Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) by the OECD to ensure synergies among policies on development.

The definition also suggests that coherence is of higher quality than cohesion as it requires positive synergies rather than a nominally united position. Therefore, coherence is more apparent in the discussion of foreign policies of regional organizations, particularly the EU (Algieri, 1999; Rasch, 2008; Carbone, 2009; Nilsson et al., 2012; Mayer, 2013; Pertiwi, 2019). Meanwhile, cohesion is more apparent in the discussion of voting behaviors of both EU (Luif, 2003; Kissack, 2009) and ASEAN (Nguitragool & Rüländ, 2015; Jang & Chen, 2019). The inquiries are on the extent to which members of these organizations have a common position (even though more consistently used for examining ASEAN voting behaviors). Rasch (2008) uses voting coherence, but it is to discuss to what extent members of the EU vote in line with the position of the EU. Based on this consideration, this paper will use cohesion in discussing to what extent ASEAN positions converge and diverge on security issues in the UNGA.

The cohesion of an international or regional organization is essential for its actorness in international relations. Nguitragool and Rüländ (2015) argue that a highly cohesive regional organization is necessary to increase its capacity to be an effective actor who can influence an international forum's agenda, norms, and institutional design. A cohesive organization also tends to have a more favorable bargaining position as a negotiator to achieve its interests. Even for intergovernmental organizations, cohesion is beneficial for member states from the perspective of the political scale in the way that collective action tends to have more weight in international negotiation and lower the costs of policy implementation (Ginsberg, 1989; Ginsberg, 1999). Externalization theory also acknowledges the positive impacts of cohesion for regional integration in the way that cohesion requires greater coordination among members (Haas & Rowe 1973, cited in Nguitragool & Rüländ, 2015). All these considerations are present in the APSC vision 2025, where ASEAN seek greater cohesion to increase its actorness and presence at the international level.

Achieving greater cohesion, however, is not easy particularly for intergovernmental organizations. Member states take full control of the bargaining process in these organization, hence individual state's preference matters. This is in line with the findings of many literatures on states and regional organizations' voting behaviors in the UN which also suggests preference as the main driver of actors' cohesion (Voeten, 2013; Bailey, Strezhnev, & Voeten, 2015; Bailey & Voeten, 2018). According to liberal intergovernmentalism theory, these organizations are cohesive which even could speak with one voice or set common position when the preference of individual member states converge, when they need commitments from others, or when they believe that joint policy is more beneficial (Moravcsik, 1993; Moravcsik, 1995). Likewise, member states are divided or lack of cohesion when their preferences diverge, and the benefit of cooperation is low. Preference, and thus voting, tends to converge on issues in the minimum interests of member states as the cost of cooperation is low. However, preference tends to diverge on issues in the higher interests of member states as it is more indivisible, and the risk of cooperation is higher.

Using the case of the EU, Ginsberg (1999) adds that international or external stimuli and regional contexts, such as the organization's identity, norms, and interests, are other factors shaping the foreign policy of a regional organization. Pertiwi (2019) argues that the key external stimuli shaping the cohesion of a regional organization are the other actors' preferences, particularly that of more powerful actors, who, in pursuing their preferences, intentionally shape or unintentionally have impacts on the cohesion of the regional organization. Powerful actors tend to support the cohesion of a regional organization when they see that a more cohesive organization is beneficial for them. Meanwhile, they tend to adopt divide and rule strategy when they are threatened by the collective position of the regional organization, when they only need to deal with certain countries and not the entire group, or when they are frustrated in dealing with the complexity of the regional organization. Other literature on state's voting behaviors focuses on alliance as another key external stimuli. As far as regional context, Nguitragool and Rüländ (2015) add that cognitive prior, defined as "an existing set of ideas, belief systems, and norms which determine and condition' current world views and behaviors of ... regional organizations" is the key regional factor shaping the cohesion of an organization. It is related to Ginsberg (1999), who included the identity, norms, and values of the regional organizations as key factors shaping the foreign policy of a regional organization. It follows that aspects of organizational identity, norms, and values facilitate cohesion or vice versa. Factors shaping the pattern of convergence and divergence of a regional organization are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Factors influencing the pattern of voting cohesion of a regional organization

National context	State's preference
Regional context	Identity, value, norms, and cognitive prior of the organization
International context	Alliance and preference of the more powerful actors

Research Method: Agreement Index of Voting Cohesion

The research uses mixed methods to examine the extent of and factors influencing ASEAN cohesion on security issues in the UNGA. First, the research uses a quantitative method to examine the extent of ASEAN voting cohesion using the agreement index (AI). AI is chosen since it is considered the most suitable index to measure the extent of cohesion of political groups in the UN. It is helpful for large numbers of countries and resolutions. In doing so, this paper initially collects the voting data of ASEAN member states at the UN General Assembly on security issues from the UN Digital Library website (United Nations, n.d.). The research filters the data to include only resolutions adopted in the UN General Assembly, through a vote, from 2011-2020. There were 847 resolutions adopted through a vote at the UN General Assembly in 2011-2020, with an average of 84,7 resolutions per year (Figure 1). The site records the vote by each member state on each resolution listed in textual forms, such as 'Y' for yes, 'N' for no, 'A' for abstention, and 'blank' for absence or non-voting.

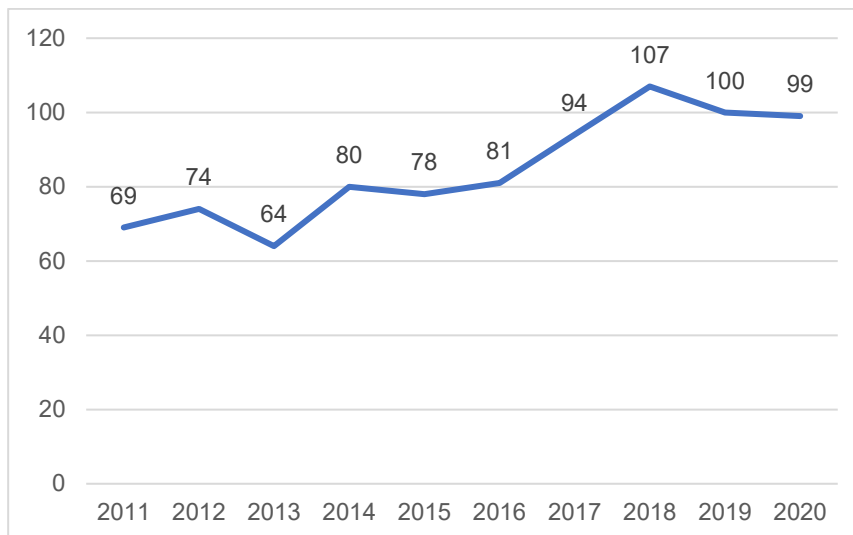


Figure 1 Number of Resolutions at the UN General Assembly, 2011-2020

The research codes whether resolutions are categorized as security issues such as armed conflicts, colonialism, nuclear issues, disarmament, human rights, and/or others for non-security issue areas (Table 2). Our definition of security issues refers to issues that are explicitly included in the APSC blueprint. A resolution can fit into multiple categories, namely: 1) resolutions on the Arms Trade Treaty are coded both 'arms transfers' and 'disarmament'; 2) resolutions on nuclear disarmament are coded both 'disarmament' and 'nuclear'; and 3) resolutions on disarmament agreements in outer space are coded both 'disarmament' and 'outer space' (Arms Trade Treaty, 2020). Figure 2 shows the number of resolutions in each category. Human rights, Middle East, nuclear issues, disarmament, and colonialism are the top five most discussed in the UN General Assembly with higher number of resolutions.

Table 2 Resolution Issue Categories

Issue Areas		
Armed conflicts	Human rights	Outer space
Arms transfers	Law of the Sea	Peace
Colonialism	Mediterranean region	Refugees
Counterterrorism	Middle East	Transnational crimes
Cybersecurity	Military expenditures	Other
Disarmament	Nuclear	

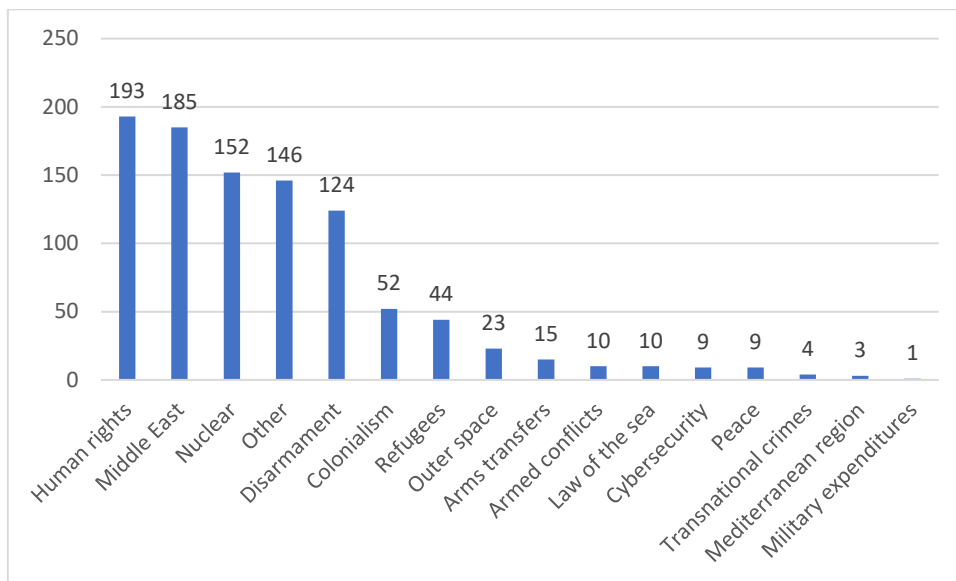


Figure 2 Resolutions Based on Issues at the UN General Assembly, 2011-2020

Finally, this research uses agreement index (AI) by Hix, Noury, and Roland (2005) to measure the extent of ASEAN voting cohesion:

$$AI = \frac{\max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\} - \frac{1}{2} [(Y_i + N_i + A_i) - \max\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\}]}{(Y_i + N_i + A_i)}$$

where Y_i denotes the number of 'yes' votes expressed by group i on a given vote, N_i the number of 'no' votes, and A_i the number of abstentions.

To examine factors influencing the pattern of convergence and divergence in ASEAN positions, this paper uses qualitative method by applying variables in the theoretical framework explained earlier.

Findings and Discussions

Statistical Overview of ASEAN Voting Cohesion

There are at least three observations that can be made on the ASEAN voting cohesion on security issues in the UNGA. First, ASEAN overall demonstrated active presence in the UN General Assembly even though their positions do not always converge. Table 2 demonstrates the high number of voting by the ASEAN member states compared to their non-voting number. It means that the 2025 Vision to increase the Community presence at the international level has been well implemented. However, Table 3 demonstrates that there are varying numbers of 'yes', 'no', and 'abstain' votes. Thailand is the one that voted 'yes' on most resolutions (789), followed by Malaysia (780) and Singapore (778). Meanwhile, Myanmar voted 'no' the most (36), followed by Vietnam (28) and Cambodia (26). Myanmar is also the one that abstained the most (74), followed by Indonesia (71) and Singapore (62). Myanmar also had been absent the most (110), with a big gap with the next most absent states, Cambodia (39) and Laos (23).

Table 3 ASEAN Member States' Votes at the UN General Assembly, 2011-2020

All Resolutions	Yes (Y)	No (N)	Abstentions (A)	Non-Voting
Thailand	789	0	56	1
Malaysia	780	8	52	6
Singapore	778	6	62	0
Brunei	770	20	52	4
Philippines	770	16	53	7
Indonesia	762	13	71	0
Cambodia	761	26	20	39
Laos	742	20	61	23
Vietnam	742	28	55	21
Myanmar	626	36	74	110

Second, the average of ASEAN voting cohesion on security issues in the UNGA has interestingly decreased since the establishment of the Community in 2015. Figure 3 shows that the agreement index of ASEAN member states had been trending upward in 2011-2015, but then decreased in 2016-2020. The research argues that there are two explanations on this trend. First, as can be seen in Figure 2, the number of resolutions in the UN General Assembly has relatively increased and almost doubled in 2018. This increases chances of incoherence among member states. Second, many issues discussed in 2018 were related to issues that have been divisive among ASEAN member states, such as human rights, Middle East, and disarmament. Given the unavoidably rising complexity of international security following from

globalization, this finding should be an early warning for ASEAN to strengthen its cohesion in response to emerging issues.

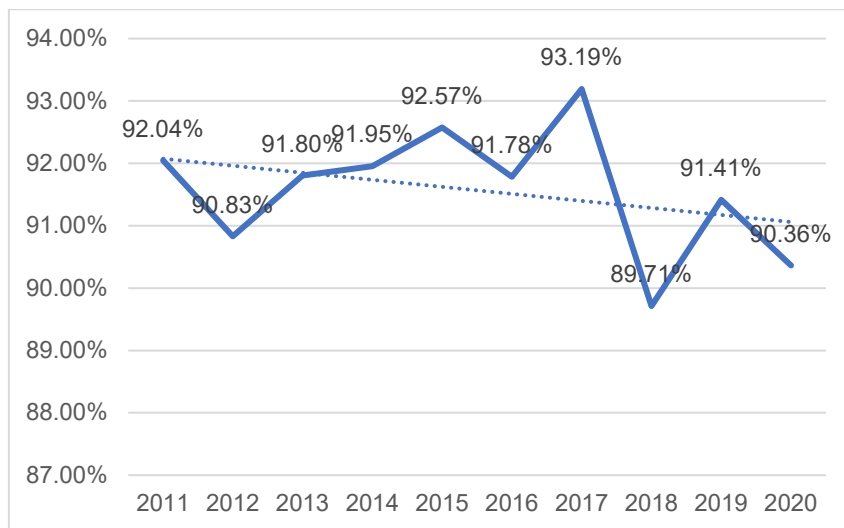


Figure 3 Yearly Average of Agreement Index of ASEAN Member States' Votes at the UN General Assembly, 2011-2020

Third, despite of the decreasing trend on the ASEAN voting cohesion overtime, ASEAN maintained a relatively high level of coherence with yearly average of 91,50% (Figure 3). One way to understand this trend is that the APSC has divided positions over various issues. However, in many instances, member states demonstrate their differing preference not by voting 'no', but by abstaining or simply being absent.

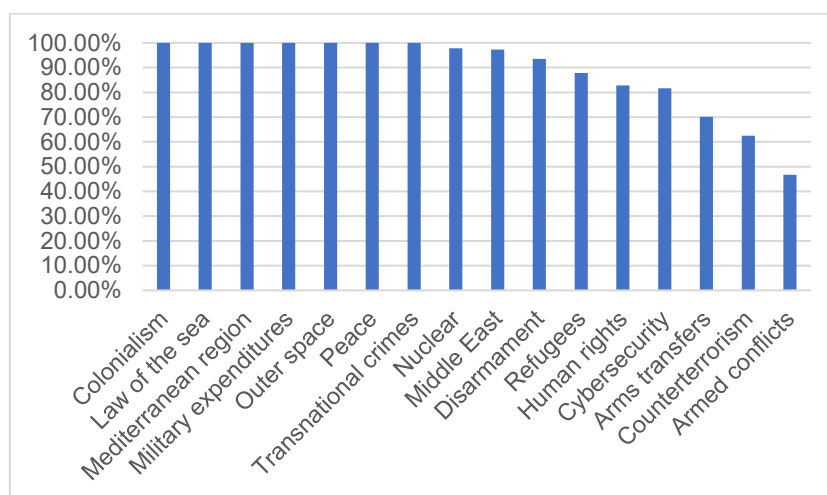


Figure 4 Average of Agreement Index of ASEAN Member States' Votes at the UN General Assembly, 2011-2020, by Categories

The Pattern of Convergence

Figure 4 also shows the pattern of convergence in ASEAN voting behavior on security issues in the UNGA. ASEAN voting cohesion is highest (100%) on issues fallen under colonialism, law of the sea, Mediterranean region, military expenditures, outer space, peace, and transnational crimes. The category of colonialism consists of resolutions on dissemination of information on decolonization, fourth international decade for the eradication of colonialism, implementation of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, questions of Guam, the rights of Palestinian people, and use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights. The Law of the Sea consisting of annual resolutions aims to reaffirm the importance of and the implementation of the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Mediterranean region includes resolutions on strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. Military expenditure includes a resolution on objective information on military matters. Outer space included resolutions on prevention of an arms race in outer space, no first placement of weapons in outer space, further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency and confidence building measures, and reducing space threats through norms, rules, and principles of responsible behaviors. Peace includes resolutions on the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, Academy for human encounters and dialogues, and promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogues. Lastly, transnational crimes include resolutions on preventing and combating illicit brokering activities.

ASEAN voting cohesion remains relatively high (80-99%) on nuclear, Middle East, disarmament, refugees, human rights, and cybersecurity. Nuclear consists of 99 resolutions, where ASEAN is only divided into 17 resolutions. The lowest agreement index of 55% comes from the discussion about joint courses of action toward a world without nuclear weapons. Most ASEAN member states voted for the resolution except Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar, who abstained from the voting. Myanmar has been consistently abstaining since 2011. Middle East consists of 137 resolutions related to the Middle East, where ASEAN is only divided into five resolutions dedicated to Palestinian issues. Similarly, lower agreement indexes are largely due to the abstention and absences of some member states. Disarmament consists of 122 resolutions, where ASEAN member states are divided into 26 resolutions. These resolutions with lower agreement indexes included resolutions on Anti-Personnel Mines, Chemical Weapons, Cluster Munitions, and Ballistic Missile Proliferation. Refugees consist of 13 resolutions where ASEAN's position converges on the global refugees' situation but significantly diverged (25-66,6%) on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar have continuously voted against the resolutions while the other ASEAN member states mostly abstained.

Human rights deserve separate discussion as it has often been the source of criticism to ASEAN, yet ASEAN cohesion on this issue in the UNGA is relatively high (82,77%). Human rights consist of 193 resolutions. Even though ASEAN is only divided into only 68 resolutions, the agreement index is significantly lower. These include issues on capital punishment (10-

40%), human rights (25%) and democratic reform in Myanmar, human rights crisis in Syria (25%), discrimination against religious minority and the implementation of Sharia Law in Iran (25%-55%), human rights situation in North Korea, human rights in Crimea and Ukraine, and human rights in Palestine (25-70%). On cybersecurity, ASEAN voting cohesion reach 81,67% but only 55% in three resolutions due to abstain position of some member states. Some divided issues are on responsible state behavior in cyberspace, countering the use of information, and communications technologies for criminal purpose.

The Pattern of Divergence

Figure 4 shows that ASEAN demonstrate divergence in voting on security issues in the UNGA in arms transfer, counterterrorism, and armed conflict. On the issue of arms transfer, the relatively low agreement index among ASEAN member states (50%-66,67%) resulted from continuous abstention by Indonesia, Laos, and Myanmar. Counterterrorism is one resolution to address the alleged assassination attempt against the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the United States. ASEAN voting cohesion is moderate (62,5%) due to divided position among member states on the resolution which calls out Iran for the attempted execution of the plot to assassinate the Ambassador. In this case, Malaysia and the Philippines voted for the resolution, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam abstained, while Cambodia and Laos were absent. Armed conflict is the category of issue where the average ASEAN voting cohesion is the lowest (46,76%). Within this category, Syrian civil war and conflict in Crimea had the lowest agreement index, which is 25% and 25-40% respectively. On the escalation of violence in Syria (Resolution 71/130 2016), five states including Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand voted for the resolution. Meanwhile, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and the Philippines chose to stay abstained. On the Resolution 74/17 2019 on Crimea, ASEAN was divided with five abstentions (four 'no', and one 'yes'). Similarly, the agreement index for Resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine is inherently low (33,3%). Four states including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam abstained to the resolution. Meanwhile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines voted for the resolution. Laos was absent in this roll call vote.

Factors Explaining the Pattern of Convergence and Divergence in ASEAN Voting Behavior

The National Context: Individual State's Preference

Liberal intergovernmentalism argues that the cohesion of a regional organization is shaped mainly by the dynamics of individual member states pursuing their own preferences. These organizations are cohesive and even could speak with one voice or set common position when the preference of individual member states converge, when they need commitments

from others, or when they believe that joint policy is more beneficial (Moravcsik, 1993; Moravcsik, 1995).

Based on the pattern of convergence in ASEAN position, ASEAN is also cohesive on issues that are beneficial for member states such as transparency on military expenditure, peaceful use of the outer space, Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, fighting transnational crimes, decolonialization and reaffirming commitment to the UNCLOS. ASEAN consists of relatively small and middle states, but is in a strategic geographical position in the global politics. Hence, maintaining regional security and autonomy has been central for the ASEAN amid continuous presence and intervention by major powers in the region. In this context, transparency of military expenditure, peaceful use of the outer space and the Indian Ocean, and commitment to the UNCLOS are important for all ASEAN member states. The last mentioned is particularly relevant given the unresolved maritime disputes in the region where major powers tend to use their might instead of international law to exert their claim or influence in the region. Transnational crimes are also common issues among member states who are still struggling to fight illicit drugs, human trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, terrorism, and sea pirates (ASEAN, 2015).

ASEAN also demonstrates a relatively high cohesion on issues with minimum costs which are not directly intervening into their own national preferences. Resolutions on the security of Mediterranean region has no direct impact to individual member states or the APSC as a group, thereby member states have more freedom to decide on their vote in these resolutions. Understandably, voting for the resolutions is preferable as it demonstrates good citizenship in the international arena. In addition, ASEAN shares similar security issues with the Mediterranean region, thereby voting for the resolution also symbolizes their position against similar security threats.

Preference also plays a key role in shaping the cohesion of ASEAN. ASEAN has a relatively high level of coherence on security issues in the UN General Assembly. In fact, lower levels of coherence in some issue areas are contributed by abstain or absence of the ASEAN member states. However, there are indeed notable divergence among ASEAN member states, and they are shaped by different preferences. First, ASEAN member states are divided on issues that have different direct impact to their national preference. ASEAN is divided on capital punishment because of their diverging national preference on the use of death penalty at home. Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, and Thailand allow death penalty, meanwhile Cambodia and the Philippines has abolished it (ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020). On democratization, national reconciliation, and discrimination against minority in Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and the Philippines voted against the resolution given the shared problems at home. Meanwhile Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, and Malaysia voted for the resolutions on Rohingya given the strong public opinion supporting the Rohingya in these Muslim majority countries. On cybersecurity, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar voted against the responsible state behavior in the cyberspace given the government stronghold on the cyberspace. This contrasts with more opened countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

ASEAN also diverges on issues that have different indirect impact to their national interests. These are usually resolutions on specific countries or regions where they have some aspects of similarities at home. On refugees, for examples, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam voted against the resolutions on the status of displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and Tskhinvali Region. These resolutions include the right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees and their descendants and the unacceptability of forced demographic changes. As countries that have contributed to significant numbers of refugees abroad, it is not surprising that the three countries voted against the resolution. Meanwhile, other ASEAN member states who have been struggling with the coming of refugees voted for the resolutions. On human rights in other countries, such as Iran, Syria, Ukraine and North Korea, ASEAN member states were divided based on their domestic condition related to human rights, democracy, and public opinion from Muslim majority (in the case of human rights in Middle Eastern countries).

Regional Context: Identity, Value, Norms, and Cognitive Prior of the Regional Organization

The pattern of convergence also shows that ASEAN is cohesive on issues that have been well agreed at the ASEAN level, which resonates the importance of identity, value, norms, and cognitive prior of the regional organization in shaping member states' voting behaviors. In this case, ASEAN upholds the norms of 'Asian values', which appreciate authority, hierarchy, and power as well as prioritize economic, social, and cultural issues over civil and political and security issues. ASEAN's cognitive prior can be seen in the so-called 'ASEAN Way', which posits the organization's cooperation norms, including non-interference, informality, consensus, nonbinding decisions, pragmatism, flexibility, close interpersonal relationships, and lean institutionalization. These norms and cognitive prior were informed by political realism: the belief that power shapes international relations, and that states are placed in an imagined hierarchical order defined by attributes of power (Rüland, 2017; Rosyidin & Pattipeilohy, 2020; Agastia, 2021).

The norms of Asian values and the ASEAN Way influence the organization's voting cohesion. The more central an issue in the ASEAN, the more likely ASEAN member states act cohesively on this issue. As the theoretical framework argues, preferences of individual member states will interact with policies/norms/principles taken at the institutional level. Member states will strongly support a resolution where their preferences and the APSC policies/norms/principles converge. They will moderate their disagreement when their preferences and the APSC policies diverge. They will act incoherently when they have different preferences and have no common regional policies on this matter.

In this context, all issues in which ASEAN member states' vote converges have common regional policies bases. Decolonization, for example, is central in the ASEAN six fundamental principles as written in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) (ASEAN, 1976). They include "mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and

national identity of all nations; the right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; [and] non-interference in the internal affairs of one another” (TAC article 2) (ASEAN, 1976). The Law of the Sea is no less important as maritime cooperation is among prioritized areas of cooperation in the APSC Blueprint 2025. In addition, ASEAN also has ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) as an institution which helps to strengthen regional maritime cooperation. Both repeatedly refers to ASEAN adherence to the UNCLOS.

Regarding peace and the outer space, ASEAN has declared itself as Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971 and continues to emphasize peaceful relations in the regions including in the APSC Blueprint 2025. While not all ASEAN member states are members to United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (COPUOS), ASEAN has expressed its full support to the Committee and has dedicated a series of workshop under the ARF and has established ASEAN Research and Training Center for Space Technology and Application (ARTSA) to promote peaceful use of the outer space (UNOOSA, n.d.). Lastly, transnational crimes and security threats in the Mediterranean region are all central in the APSC Blueprint 2025 which adopts comprehensive security and promote cooperation to combat transnational crime. The APSC is also equipped with the ASEAN Ministerial Meetings on Transnational Crimes to promote cooperation on shared challenges among ASEAN member states.

Similarly, ASEAN tends to diverge on issues that have no bases or no common regional policy at the ASEAN levels such as capital punishment, refugees, and arms transfer. Common regional framework is not a cause by itself, but it is an intervening variable that increases the chance for incoherence among member states. The principle of non-interference central in ASEAN cooperation also contributes to the incoherence of the APSC. In general, ASEAN member states are incredibly careful in deciding their voting in the UN General Assembly particularly on issues specific to other countries, such as the Crimean conflict, Syria, Iran, North Korea, and Palestine. At first, it might be argued that this should help them to act coherently, but with the already diverging preferences among member states, the APSC is still divided usually between ‘no’ vote and abstain.

International Context: Alliance and Major Powers’ Preferences

The incoherence of ASEAN member states’ voting behaviors at the UN General Assembly on security issues may be influenced by each member states’ alignments with external great powers. This seems evident in resolutions in which ASEAN member states do not have common regional policies bases, and in which great power rivalry between the United States, Russia, and China is apparent. Among the examples are the resolutions on human rights in Syria, Iran, and North Korea, as well as resolutions regarding the conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia.

In the case of human rights in Syria, Russia and other countries are supporting the Syrian government in the Syrian civil war, while the United States and its allies are supporting

the Syrian opposition. Out of ten resolutions on human rights in Syria, the average agreement index of ASEAN member states' voting is 51,75%. There are more abstentions (58) than 'yes' votes (25) on this issue, 14 absence/non-voting, and three 'no' votes. Only Thailand always voted 'yes' on this issue, while Laos and Singapore always abstained, and Myanmar and Vietnam never voted 'yes'. Brunei voted 'yes' once and abstained nine times. Cambodia was absent eight times, while Myanmar was absent five times.

In the case of human rights in Iran, the United States and other countries have criticized Iran's alleged human rights abuses, while Russia and others have backed Iran. Out of ten resolutions on human rights in Iran, the average agreement index is 36,17%. There are more abstentions (52) than 'no' votes (42) on this issue, six absence/non-voting, while there is no 'yes' vote from ASEAN member states. Brunei and Vietnam voted 'no' in all ten resolutions, while Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand abstained all the time. Myanmar was absent six times.

Meanwhile, the case of human rights in North Korea, the United States and other countries have criticized North Korea's alleged human rights abuses, while China and others have supported North Korea, even dismissing a UN report on human rights in North Korea in 2014. Out of three resolutions on human rights in North Korea, the average agreement index is 30%. There are more abstentions (16) than 'no' (eight) or 'yes' (six) votes. Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore abstained in all three resolutions, while the Philippines and Thailand voted 'yes' in all three, and Myanmar and Vietnam voted 'no' in all three.

In the cases of conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia, Russia is one of the belligerents in both. Regarding the conflict in Ukraine, there are nine resolutions, including five on human rights in Crimea and Sevastopol, three on the militarization of the region, and one on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Out of the ten resolutions, the average agreement index is 49,26%. As with the previous issues, there are more abstentions (58) than 'no' votes (23), 'yes' votes (eight), or absence/non-voting (one). Brunei and Vietnam abstained in all ten resolutions, while Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand abstained eight times. Cambodia voted 'no' eight times.

The pattern is considered similar if seen closer on each issue. Out of five resolutions on human rights in Ukraine, the average agreement index is 61%, while the average agreement index of the three resolutions on the militarization of the region is 35%, and the agreement index of the one resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine is 33,33%. In the first two issues, there are more abstentions than the 'yes' or 'no' votes. However, only in the resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine there are more 'yes' (five) votes than abstentions (four) or 'no' (none) votes.

Meanwhile, regarding the conflict in Georgia, there are ten resolutions on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from the location of the conflict, out of which the average agreement index is 46,50%. There are more abstentions (59) than 'no' votes (31), absence/non-voting (eight), or 'yes' votes (two) votes. Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand abstained in all ten resolutions, while Laos and Vietnam voted 'no' in all ten. Cambodia was absent eight times.

In many of these cases, the 'yes' and 'no' votes indicate support or opposition, while the abstentions or absence of ASEAN member states seem to indicate the member state avoiding the opposite position of external great powers with which the member state has alliance or strategic partnership. Among ASEAN member states, the Philippines and Thailand are the closest ally of the United States, having treaty commitments with the superpower, although Manila-Washington relations have been unstable during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte, who favors closer relations with China and Russia. Another close partner of the United States in the region is Singapore, which had turned down an offer to be a major non-NATO ally but maintains close military relations with Washington. While far from being a historical ally of the United States, Vietnam's relations with Washington have been improving in the context of its disputes with China in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, the closest partners of China and Russia in the region includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Duterte-era Philippines. Other member states, like Indonesia and Malaysia, have been taking somewhat neutral positions between the external great powers.

Thailand's alignment with the United States explains its support for the resolutions on human rights in Syria and North Korea and its lack of 'no' votes on other resolutions that Washington supports in the above cases. Singapore's mostly abstain positions on the above resolutions, and its lack of 'no' votes, shows that while it does not support most of the resolutions, it avoids taking a position opposite of the United States. The Philippines' votes on these resolutions seem to have shifted along with regime change, with 'yes' votes and abstentions before the Duterte presidency, while 'no' votes only cast during the Duterte era. Meanwhile, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar mostly voted 'no' or abstained on the above resolutions, suggesting their lack of backing for the United States-supported resolutions and their inclination towards China and Russia.

Conclusions

The research has discussed the extent to which ASEAN member states converge and diverge in their voting on security issues in the UNGA. The research has shown that ASEAN member states have generally high level of cohesion in their voting behavior. However, despite the expectation that the establishment of the Community in 2015 will improve the cohesion of ASEAN member states, in reality it does not have a significant effect on cohesion, and it has been decreasing ever since. The findings should be an early warning for the ASEAN member states to strengthen its cohesion going forward. However, this will be an extraordinary task, considering the emerging security issues regarding the conflict in Myanmar, which seems to keep ASEAN divided, between states and competing imperatives.

The research has identified the security issues in which ASEAN member states converge and diverge. ASEAN member states converge on issues that have common regional policies bases. The member states do not have significant difference in preferences among each other. Meanwhile, ASEAN member states diverge on issues without those criteria, and in which great power rivalry is apparent. This means that if division between ASEAN member states

thickens, the organization's incoherence will only grow larger, fueled by chance and uncertainty in the organization's particular nature.

The findings complement the previous research by Jang and Chen (2019) as the only literature on the voting behaviors of ASEAN member states, thus generating crucial new knowledge for studies on ASEAN and Southeast Asian regionalism. Further research is suggested to expand the scholarship on this topic by applying different theoretical perspectives, aside from liberal intergovernmentalism to explore other factors that may explain the coherence of ASEAN member states. Another way to expand the literature on this topic is by using other methods of measurement for the coherence of vote behaviors to see whether the results will be consistent with this research.

Further research may also focus on different time frames to find out changes in the voting behaviors of ASEAN member states over shorter or longer periods of time. The research suggests an additional comparative analysis of ASEAN and other regional organizations, such as the European Union or the African Union, to discover whether the level of coherence among ASEAN member states conforms to a normal standard, or whether it is too high or low from the expected level from a regional organization.

Finally, the research also highlights the finding that the number of resolutions in the UN General Assembly has relatively increased and almost doubled in 2018, which increases chances of incoherence among member states. Therefore, this paper acknowledges that in addition to the variables mentioned in the theory, the increasing number of incoherent voting behavior among ASEAN member countries can be influenced by the number of issues that are getting bigger than in previous years so that the possibility of divergence also increases.

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