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ASEAN SOCIAL COHESION DEVELOPMENT: TOWARD STRENGTHENING REGIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes the principle of social cohesion for ASEAN countries. In the context of social cohesion model, ASEAN members should strive to preserve their strong relations in spite of their diverse backgrounds. Only by understanding and accepting individual differences can ASEAN move forward with the pursuit of its development agenda without being seen as one with only the soft power by its peers. As such, this paper argues that social cohesion has the potential to be made as the foundation for ASEAN development and expansion in the future. Looking at the uncertainties of global economy and politics, ASEAN should be well-equipped and well-prepared to embrace the world's many unpredictability of sort. With ASEAN continuing to go strong and steadfast with its neutrality principle, ASEAN is more than able to further consolidate its unity as a whole, which is paramount to secure the regional security. The member countries' heterogeneous and varied backgrounds notwithstanding, not only a strong and cogent ASEAN will be more understanding of each other, it will only help buttress and bolster the sovereignty of its member countries. As such, this qualitative paper deliberates on and provides the framework of the social cohesion for a strong ASEAN country so important to face the challenges of global politics.

Keywords:

ASEAN, Pluralism, Political Stability, Regional Integration, Regional Security, Social Cohesion.

Introduction

Today, social cohesion has become the basis for the development of regional cooperation. Referring to the development model in European and Western countries, regional cooperation

is seen to have been strengthened by social integration in the context of development. This is due to the global impact that threatens their regional development and cooperation. The challenges of globalization and global political and economic uncertainty are emerging as a factor in ASEAN's overall security. Therefore, ASEAN social cohesion has been discussed in the past few years. Perspectives on Global Development 2012 - Social Cohesion in a Shifting World, an informative publication from the OECD Development Centre, brings together recent research and provides practical policy ideas to create more cohesive societies in this new global setting. The OECD Development Centre has collaborated with national authorities to organize several expert seminars to increase policy discussion initiatives on social cohesion at the regional level. The King Prajadhipok Institute, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand collaborated to organize a meeting of this kind on July 21, 2011, in Bangkok. The study focus on ASEAN regionalism and utilized social cohesion element as strengthening it bond as an alternatives for prevent international conflicts. Within the challenges of ASEAN moving toward social cohesion development it is important to understand the foundation of ASEAN establishment in regional cooperation on political security for long lasting diplomatic relationship.

ASEAN Development

Five founding fathers of ASEAN as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Philippines in 1967 aim for fostering political security, social progress, economic growth, cultural advancement. This international organization later on joined by Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, Cambodia in 1999, and Brunei in 1984. With a total size of 1.7 million square miles (4.5 million square kilometers), the ASEAN region is home to more than 600 million people. ASEAN took the role of the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), which was established in 1961 by the Federation of Malaya (now a part of Malaysia), Thailand, and the Philippines. Under the banner of cooperative peace and shared prosperity, ASEAN's chief projects centre on economic cooperation, the promotion of trade among ASEAN countries and between ASEAN members and the rest of the world, and programs for joint research and technical cooperation among member governments.

As of the 15th of December 2008, when the ASEAN Charter went into effect, ASEAN will be governed by a new set of laws and have a number of new organizations to help with community building. All 10 ASEAN Member States have ratified the ASEAN Charter in full (or adopted it in Member States without Parliament or when such ratification could be done through a Cabinet decision). Thailand was the last to do so, on November 15, 2008; Singapore had deposited its instrument of ratification with the ASEAN Secretary-General on January 7, 2008. The ten ASEAN Member States have effectively turned the ASEAN Charter into a binding contract. Additionally, in accordance with Article 102, it will be registered with the United Nations Secretariat (Asean, 2020). Therefore, with the ASEAN Charter, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is a regional organization that brings together disparate neighbors to address economic and security issues, and this indirectly led to achieved sustainable ASEAN Social Cohesion towards strengthening social security.

Problem Statement

Regional cooperation within ASEAN has played a significant role in achieving international security in the Southeast Asian region. Several factors contribute to the fact that regional cooperation within ASEAN has had a positive impact on international security. It is significantly requiring a collective security especially post World War II. ASEAN's commitment to collective security and the principle of non-interference in each other's internal

affairs has helped maintain stability and to prevent conflicts within the region. By promoting dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes, ASEAN member states have contributed to peace and security in the region (Narine, 1998). Besides that, ASEAN has implemented confidence-building measures to promote trust and transparency among its member states. These actions include the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which provides a platform for dialogue on security issues and the promotion of preventive diplomacy (Permal & Basiron, 2010). ASEAN regional cooperation towards international security is one of the most crucial part in international relation. With the current development of war and tense create unpleasant circumstances for most of the international community especially ASEAN that obviously effect it major trading and economic affairs. Started with the Arab Spring, United States of America-China trade war, Ukraine-Russia war and Palestine-Israel conflict surely give lot of pressure toward ASEAN Political security and economy. The development of the conflict became threat and contribute to soft power inclination of political interference. The ongoing tension between pro western alliances and socialist parties only jeopardize peace and properties in this region.

Literature Review

Conflict resolution among the huge challenges to sustain regional corporation. ASEAN has been involved in mediating and facilitating conflict resolution efforts in the region (Leifer, 1999). For example, the organization played a role in facilitating the Cambodia peace process in the 1990s and supported efforts to resolve conflicts in the southern Philippines and Myanmar. Together with preventing escalation: Through mechanisms such as the Southeast Asia Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). ASEAN has encouraged countries to commit to peaceful coexistence and the peaceful settlement of disputes. This has helped prevent conflicts from escalating into larger regional crises (Yuan & Lee, 2023).

For disaster management and humanitarian assistance, ASEAN cooperation in disaster management and humanitarian assistance has contributed to the region's resilience and security. Studies show that joint efforts to respond to natural disasters and support affected countries strengthen regional ties. (Caballero-Anthony, et al 2023). Counter Terrorism: ASEAN has taken initiatives to counter terrorism and extremism through information sharing, capacity building and joint exercises. These efforts have contributed to regional security by addressing transnational threats. (Darmayadi et al., 2023). Within the diplomacy approach ASEAN also manages to resolve many maritime issues. ASEAN member states have cooperated on maritime security issues, including dealing with territorial disputes, piracy and illegal fishing. Mechanisms such as the South China Sea Code of Conduct aim to maintain stability and prevent conflict in the region (Sudirman et al., 2023). The effort mostly relates to norms and rules of conduct. ASEAN has helped shape these principles in the region and promoted compliance with international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. This contributes to a stable environment where conflicts are less likely to occur (Wicaksana, & Karim, 2023).

Diplomatic Channels of ASEAN provides member states with communication and negotiation, which can help prevent misunderstandings and miscommunications that could lead to conflicts. (Chheang, 2023). Inculcating and promoting regional identity became foremost priority in the sense of common regional identity and community. This may contribute to a mindset of cooperation and conflict avoidance among member states. (Thompson & Sunchindah, 2023).

Therefore Economic Interdependence and integration within ASEAN has been the peak of regional security factors. Through initiatives such as the ASEAN Economic Community has created interdependence among member states. Economic stability and growth can contribute

to political stability and a reduced likelihood of conflict. (Abadi & Al-Fadhat, 2023). Also the establishment of soft Power Diplomacy has been discussed became tool for peace keeping. ASEAN's diplomatic efforts focus on soft power, dialogue and consensus building. This approach may be more conducive to conflict prevention and resolution (Al-Ayubi & Rijal, 2023).

While ASEAN regional cooperation has contributed significantly to international security in Southeast Asia, challenges and opportunities continue to evolve. Hence the study focused on the dynamical political circumstances. The organization must adapt to changing geopolitical dynamics and social cohesion in address emerging security threats to ensure lasting stability in the region (Caballero-Anthony et al., 2023). At the very beginning ASEAN manage to aggregate the level of conflict and certain dispute over diplomatic approaches. Based on trust and social cohesiveness, ASEAN proved it successful and highly effective.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative methods by using content analysis. Ideas and debates are refined and supported by secondary data. Analytical materials in assisting the study are obtained from books, articles, news materials, official documents, statistics and all official sources. Each of the content analyses is categorized according to the theme of the debate in the study. In addition to detailing the theme to the objectives of the study, open coding is used effectively in understanding each issues and research findings. Open coding assisted in categorize and defined distinct concept or theme (William & Moser, 2019)

Findings

During a time of rapid expansion, economic and social changes create new pressures and challenges for governments to manage. increased income disparities, structural change, and the need to meet residents' increased expectations for a high standard of living and access to opportunities are some of the problems. Disadvantaged populations have been cut off from the advantages of growth as a result of rising inequality within nations and in certain significant major economies. The increase in the share of top earnings is a major contributor to these rising within-country disparities. Recent events, such as labor disputes in China, political protests in Thailand, trade unionists' street demonstrations in India, and the Arab Spring upheaval, imply that the development trajectory of nations with continuous growth, significant reductions in poverty, and an overall improvement in the world (OECD, 2011).

Up until 2015 within 27th ASEAN Summit there also more discussion and concern over social cohesion The ASEAN Sociocultural Community as for preparation for The ASCC Blueprint 2025. Under the area of Social Welfare and Development there are a lot of diverse issues on poverty, illiteracy, least development among ASEAN countries. Human capital development, social protection, pandemic response, humanitarian aid, green jobs, and circular economy are just a few of the cross-sectoral challenges that are involved. Two platforms—the ASCC Council, supported by the Senior Officials Meeting on the ASCC (SOCA), and the Coordinating Conference on the ASCC (SOC-COM)—have been created to manage the pillar's coherence as well as cross-sectoral concerns. The ASCC Council makes sure that the ASEAN Summit's pertinent decisions regarding the ASCC pillar are carried out. Additionally, it oversees the execution of the ASCC Blueprint and works to improve the coherence and consistency of ASCC policies. The first of the ASCC Council's two annual meetings took place on August 24, 2009. However, most of ASEAN Social Cohesion merely focuses on community development within the range of social equity rather than political security. So the

study show that ASEAN should really looking at the main issues before the political uncertainty jeopardizes the achievement and prosperity establish by previous leaders of ASEAN.

ASEAN political security started as main idea for regional integration especially after the cold war period. The incremental process of Neo-federalism marks the most significant corporation. By far all those challenges with the diversity of population instability for domestic politics, some country proceeds with the con-socialism democracy. The idea of power sharing representative seems to be working (Lijphart, 1969) and became infamous political structure for most countries around the world. However, the diversity of population composition mostly works within ethnic lines. The pluralism by Furnivall (1939) clearly defined such challenge in nation building. Political instability once again became hostile since the ethnocentric and hegemony culture mix with political identity in any diverse society (Jazimin et al., 2020). Looking through social cohesion aim as it requires fully participation from all countries in ASEAN. One of the solutions that may create some sort of balance and sustainable regional corporation. Social cohesion stands out within three components as mention below,

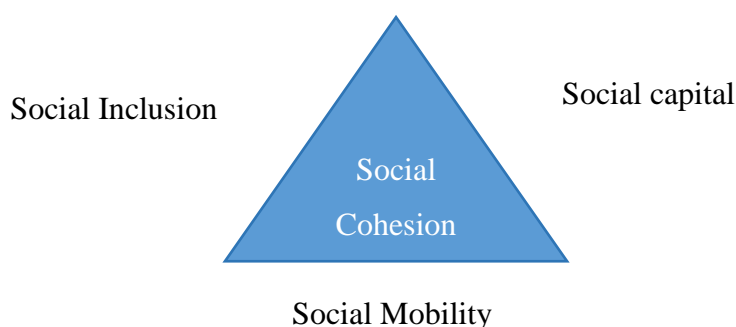


Figure 1: Three Components of Social Cohesion.

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2011

Social cohesion in ASEAN closes the gap between its members. Fundamental principles such as social inclusion should be adopted to celebrate the differences of each member state. This can make a positive difference to ASEAN. The priority in social capital that focuses on community relations and values in each member state is very significant to ASEAN. Through social capital, which is well guarded, it can solve many humanitarian problems so that it can leave the walls of prejudice among ASEAN countries while facilitating the process of cooperation in security politics and socioeconomic. social mobility also emphasizes the development of better citizens with improved living standards and good educational opportunities. Educational exchanges and cooperation can shape ASEAN to go even further. With a reduction in the rate of poverty as well as a stronger economic class that is able to make each member country better and equal economic gap. Furthermore it significantly reduces prejudices and avoid social class conflict within community at any level ((Jazimin & Sity, 2018).

Conclusion

ASEAN was born to bring regional peace as its main objective. Regional security is of paramount importance to ensure the continuity of socioeconomic development cooperation and the well-being of ASEAN citizens. With a strong spirit of social cohesion, ASEAN will be able

to survive and continue to be strong in elevating its status as a strong political and economic bloc and make a big impact on the world. Social cohesion that should exist in ASEAN is seen as a defense mechanism that is more powerful than weapons. Even though ASEAN continues to be tested by soft power and international political pressure, it cannot be relied upon by foreign powers to remain a neutral political-economic region. So, it is very important to defend the principle of non-interference by placing diplomacy and peace as the main principles in any policy and issue.

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