



THE HABIBIE CENTER

**Talking ASEAN on ASEAN as an Actor International Forums
17 March 2015**

**ASEAN as an Actor in International Forums – Reality, Potential and
Constraints
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ASEAN as an Actor in International Forums – Reality, Potential and Constraints

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**Presentation, Habibie Center, Jakarta,
Indonesia, 17 March 2015**



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1. Introduction

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2. The Puzzle and Analytical Framework

The Puzzle



- **How does ASEAN operate in global forums?**
- **How cohesive is ASEAN in global forums?**
- **Which factors shape ASEAN's behavior in global forums?**

Basic Theoretical Assumptions



- With progressive integration, regional organizations tend to become more cohesive vis-à-vis third states
- Regional organizations have a tendency to extend their intra-regional cooperative behavior to their interactions with third states

Crucial: Material institutional factors such as

- Functional specificity
- Homogeneity
- Autonomous central authority

Our Argument (I)



- We agree that the institutional architecture matters for the behavior of regional organizations vis-à-vis third states
- **But:** We argue that the institutional architecture is strongly influenced by cognitive factors; cognitive factors thus have also a major impact on the interaction of a regional organization with third states

Our Argument (II)



Cognitive factors result in constraints for ASEAN in global forums

- Shape repository of cooperation norms (ASEAN Way) and the
- Institutional set-up

Constraints exacerbated by

- Conflicting norms since Bali Concord II
- Power asymmetries in global institutions

Typology of Actor Cohesion



| <i>Type of Cohesion</i> | <i>Bloc</i> | <i>Quasi-Bloc</i> | <i>Caucus</i> | <i>Bowling Alone</i> |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| <i>Properties</i> | | | | |
| World view | Positive | Mainly positive | Mainly negative | Negative |
| Regional Identity | Very high | High | Low | None |
| Trust | Very high | High | Low | None |
| Defection from collective action | Never | Rarely | Frequently | Always |
| Power-sensitivity | Low | Low | High | High |



3. ASEAN's “Cognitive Prior” and Negotiating Capacities

Actorness



Influenced through ideational factors, but also by material factors;

- Domestic negotiation capacities
- Regional negotiation capacities

Southeast Asian Political Elites' View Towards the External World



Historically grown ideational context in which ASEAN operates

- Hindu-Brahmanic and Sinic power-sensitive state craft
- Reproduced through wars, colonial conquest, Great Power interventions, a highly asymmetric global distribution of power, history of disputes in the region

Result: Normative and institutional structure which limits the depth of cooperation and impedes the development of collective negotiation capacities

National Negotiation Capacities



- New York and Geneva missions
- Government support of negotiators
- Epistemic communities and knowledge management
 - Think tanks and universities
 - Media
 - NGOs
 - Business and private sector associations

Regional Negotiation Capacities



- ASEAN Secretariat, catalyst functions in knowledge management, budget, staffing
- ASEAN New York and ASEAN Geneva Committee
- Preparatory meetings prior to international negotiations (Contact Group G20)
- ASEAN University Network
- ASEAN-ISIS
- Regional business groups, regional NGO networks



4. Stages of Negotiation

Three Stages of Negotiation



1. Identifying problems, defining issues and agenda-setting
2. Setting principles, norms, rules and procedures of negotiation and international cooperation
3. Concluding the negotiations: voting and compliance

Identifying Problems, Defining Issues and Agenda-Setting



- ASEAN's role as an initiator, innovator and agenda-setter in international negotiations is largely confined to minor or special issues (low politics);
- In key issues of the global order such as UN reform, trade liberalization and climate change it has rather been a reactive force

ASEAN as a Norm Entrepreneur



- Stands for rather conservative Westphalian sovereignty norms
- Rarely a radical challenger of the existing international institutional architecture
- Abstained from pursuing obstructive and intransigent negotiation practices; good global citizen;

Voting and Decision-Making in Global Forums



- Comparatively high degree of ASEAN unity at least in the UN General Assembly
- **But:** Quasi-bloc behavior primarily in votes on rather insignificant issues.

ASEAN Voting Behavior in the United Nations General Assembly, 2002/2003-2011/2012



| UNGA | ASEAN Joint Voting | ASEAN Split Voting |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 57 th UNGA 2002/2003 | 50 (70.4%) | 21 (29.6%) |
| 58 th UNGA 2003/2004 | 55 (72.4%) | 21 (27.6%) |
| 59 th UNGA 2004/2005 | 48 (67.6%) | 23 (32.4%) |
| 60 th UNGA 2005/2006 | 52 (69.3%) | 23 (30.7%) |
| 61 st UNGA 2006/2007 | 60 (68.9%) | 27 (31.1%) |
| 62 nd UNGA 2007/2008 | 59 (76.6%) | 18 (23.4%) |
| 63 rd UNGA 2008/2009 | 52 (71.2%) | 21 (28.8%) |
| 64 th UNGA 2009/2010 | 36 (52.4%) | 33 (47.6%) |
| 65 th UNGA 2010/2011 | 53 (79.3%) | 14 (20.7%) |
| 66 th UNGA 2011/2012 | 36 (55.4%) | 29 (44.6%) |
| Total | 501 (68.53%) | 230 (31.5%) |

ASEAN Split Voting in UNGA, Defections by Member Country



| <i>Member Country</i> | <i>Number of Defections, 57th-66th UNGA</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| Brunei | 19 |
| Malaysia | 28 |
| Indonesia | 31 |
| Philippines | 43 |
| Singapore | 43 |
| Thailand | 51 |
| Cambodia | 66 |
| Viet Nam | 72 |
| Myanmar | 77 |
| Laos | 78 |

Compliance



- ASEAN's compliance record is rather mixed
- Higher in the international trade regime than in human rights and environmental issues



5. ASEAN as an actor in global forums: negotiation strategies

Negotiation Strategies



1. Competing for executive and leadership positions
2. Framing
3. Coalition building
4. Forum shopping
5. Image projection and creation of „soft power“

Negotiation Strategy and Type of Cohesion



| <i>Negotiation Strategies</i> | <i>Type of Cohesion</i> |
|--|-------------------------|
| Competing for executive and leadership positions | Caucus |
| Framing | Quasi-Bloc |
| Coalition building | Caucus |
| Forum shopping | Caucus |
| Image projection and creation of „soft power“ | Quasi-Bloc |

Two Case Studies



Selection criteria

- Material, distributive issue (WTO)
 - From quasi-bloc to caucus
- Ideational, normative issue (ILO)
 - From caucus to quasi-bloc



6. Conclusions and Future Options

Tentative Conclusions (I)



- 1) There is no automatic link between progress in regional integration and increasing cohesion of regional organizations in global forums.
- 2) Regional organizations extend their mode of intra-regional cooperation to global forums.
- 3) The case of ASEAN suggests that the extension of cooperative behavior to global forums is not primarily a question of the institutional architecture.

Ideational factors thus are an important missing link in the explanation of ASEAN's behavior in global forums.

Tentative Conclusions (II)



- 4) ASEAN foreign policy elites share a basically sceptical world view. Paradoxically this does not lead to a pooling of resources to overcome weakness through regional cooperation. They cooperate if it suits their national interests, but pursuing national interests may also amount to bowling alone or to build coalitions with non-ASEAN members. Pragmatism trumps the imperative of regional cohesion.

Tentative Conclusions (III)



- 5) Where insecurity and vulnerability are less pervasive, the likelihood to act more cohesively increases (quasi-bloc behavior)
- 6) Where the reputation and respectability of the entire region is at stake, even normative disagreements can be overcome and the likelihood of regional cohesion increases (quasi-bloc behavior).

Strengthening ASEAN as an International Negotiator



- Upgrading the process of knowledge generation
- Better coordination of multi-level governance
- Reforming the ASEAN Secretariat



**Thank you very much for your
kind attention!**