ASEAN('S) WAY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: ACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE ROLE

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Abstract

ASEAN is widely praised for its establishing regional cooperation among countries of Southeast Asia and attracting countries from rest of the world too because of its core objective of bringing peace and stability in the region. Promotion of regional trade and investment followed by unprecedented economic growth is the major credit of ASEAN which is widely appreciated. Nevertheless, despite 50 years of its age, it hasn't been fully successful in managing internal conflicts among its member states and conflicts with external states. Its ineffectiveness to manage conflicts have raised concerns over the relevance of ASEAN in 21st century where Asian continent is said to be playground for major powers because of shifting of epicenter of International Politics from America and Europe to Asia. ASEAN's role is limited by its charter of Non-interference into the internal affairs of its member states. This article looks into the basic weaknesses in ASEAN as an organization thus providing recommendation to overcome its shortcomings and improve its performance. The article concludes that ASEAN, because of increasing demands of amendments in conflict management techniques due to changes in the nature of conflict, needs to transform from its modest goals and principles to deal with conflict to new trends of conflict management, perhaps from soft mediation to hard mediation in near future.

Keywords: ASEAN Way, conflict management, non-interference, third-party mediation

Introduction

In international politics, the concept of regionalism has been gaining grounds. The regional organizations have been playing their role of security and defense actively and effectively under the capacities of defense alliances, as agencies that facilitate economic development and technological progress. The organizations have also played significant role in reducing the regional conflicts. The increase of inter- and intra-state conflicts and the limitations of United Nations in dealing with internal matters[1] have enhanced the role of regional organizations in peacemaking and most importantly in peacekeeping. ASEAN – The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was formed in 1967 by Indonesia,

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[1] Rajshree Jetly, "Conflict Management Strategies in ASEAN: Perspectives for SAARC," *The Pacific Review,* 16, no.1 (2003): 54.

Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Other Southeast Asian countries including Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam joined the association later on. The Secretariat of ASEAN is located in Indonesia at its capital city of Jakarta. The highest body for decision-making is ASEAN Summit which meets annually. Also, annually held are the meetings called Ministerial Meetings which comprise of foreign ministers of the member states.

The Bangkok Declaration signed in 1967, which was founding declaration of ASEAN, called for promotion of regional peace and stability because most of the states in the region have gained independence from colonial rule and were in the phase of rebuilding themselves economically and politically[2] The ASEAN's effectiveness in terms of regional security and peace started in 1976 when its first Summit was held where the non-intervention in domestic affairs, avoidance of use of force and discouraging boundary disputes were decided amongst the member states. Since, the events of Philippines renouncing of his country's claims on Sabah in 1977 Summit of ASEAN and the success in the diplomatic realm where ASEAN members diplomatically pressurized Hanoi to back off of its 1978 invasion of Cambodia, made ASEAN recognized on international forum the most successful organization in the Third World.[3] The purpose of the present study is therefore to ascertain the effectiveness of conflict management techniques used by ASEAN to ensure the peace and security in Southeast Asia.

The rest of this papers has been organized in the following way: section one introduces the issue; section two provides the readers with the statement of the problem; section three gives significance of the study; section four reviews the relevant literature; section five defines the methodology that has been employed; section six discusses the problem statement in the light of literature reviewed and results obtained by means of data collection; section seven concludes the paper.

Statement of the Problem

The Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN) is the leading regional organization of the South East Asian Countries. It was established in 1967 with the aim of improvement in economic development, social progress and cultural development, promotion of peace and stability through abiding by the rule of law, besides other objectives of collaboration and cooperation among member states. For being one of its core objectives and focusing on bringing upon peace in Southeast Asia, ASEAN is widely praised for its establishing regional cooperation among the countries and attracting countries from rest of the world too. Promotion of regional trade and investment followed by unprecedented economic growth is the major credit of ASEAN which is widely appreciated. However, despite 50 years of its age, it has bitterly failed to manage not only internal conflicts of its member states but also conflicts of its members with external states. Its ineffectiveness to manage conflicts have raised concerns over the relevance of ASEAN in 21st century where Asian continent is said to be playground for

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[2] *Ibid*., 55.
[3] Kripa Sridharan, "Regional Organizations and Conflict Management: Comparing ASEAN and SAARC," *Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2* (2008): 5.

the major powers as the epicenter of International Politics is shifting from America and Europe to Asia. ASEAN is bitterly criticized for its inability to solve bilateral dispute between Cambodia and Thailand, between Laos and Cambodia and between Myanmar and Thailand. In Myanmar, the violation of human rights has also invited criticism of scholars against effectiveness of ASEAN. Moreover, South China Sea dispute between China and some of the member states of ASEAN is yet another major issue spoiling the image of ASEAN and questioning its relevance as the sole body of the South East Asian states to manage their conflicts. Amer[4], nevertheless, believes that the Association's failure to manage inter-state disputes of the region can be attributed to the parties involved and not to the Association as such. As for the bilateral conflicts of ASEAN members are concerned ASEAN's role is limited by its charter of Non-interference into the internal affairs of its member states. Issue of Human Rights violation in Myanmar is always defended by Myanmar as its internal matter. For the management of external conflicts i.e. South China Sea problem between China, Vietnam, Philippines and Malaysia, ASEAN has signed Code of Conduct with China, but it is yet to bear fruitful results as issue remains unresolved and both parties continue to challenge their claims.

Significance of Study

The 21st century is projected as the Asian century where Asian continent is said to be the epicenter of international politics. Emerging China, prospering India, buoying Japan and vibrant economic performance of ASEAN are some major factors inspiring major powers to participate in the affairs of the Asian continent. Thus, studying the role of ASEAN in conflict management is significant in many ways. Firstly, this study will help to look into the basic weaknesses in the ASEAN as an organization thus providing guidelines to overcome its shortcomings and improve its performance. Secondly, this study will provide a feedback to the policy makers to formulate their policies with regards to establishing their ties with ASEAN. Thirdly, the study will help the research scholars to find some different perspectives for their research studies, projects etc. Lastly, this study will add to the existing knowledge about the ASEAN and dynamics of regional politics of South East Asia.

Literature Review

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s role as conflict manager can be analyzed by means of understanding the mechanism the Association adopts in managing conflicts. The organizations sometimes establish their own ways or mechanisms to resolve the issues the member states face. Same is the case with ASEAN. Majumdar states that through Bangkok Declaration, the Association 'outlined a new venture of regionalism and symbolized the beginning of a process of accommodation among its member and the ASEAN conflict management process'.[5]

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[4] Ramses Amer, "The Conflict Management Framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)," in *Conflict Management and Dispute Settlement in East Asia*, ed. Ramses Amer, and Keyuan Zou, (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2016): 54.
[5] Munmum Majumdar, "The ASEAN Way of Conflict Management in South China Sea," *Strategic Analysis,* 39, no. 1 (2015): 73.

Jetly defines the conflict management as the "way in which a society attempts to deal with its inter-party conflicts and is inclusive of a wide range of techniques that can be classified under three broad heads: conflict avoidance, conflict prevention and conflict resolution".[6] Sridharan[7] has given somewhat similar elements of conflict management that are effective for regional organizations to be successful in their efforts to bring peace and security to the region. These elements include prevention, containment and termination.

This article utilizes the mix of elements of the conflict management as given by various scholars, this section defines the following elements – conflict prevention in detail, and conflict containment and termination precisely and analyses them from the perspective of ASEAN's conflict management, in the next section. Besides these three elements, conflict resolution is focused as well to understand wide range of approaches that ASEAN adopt to play a role of conflict management amongst the member states.

The conflict prevention has been defined by Jacob and Jackson in two different ways, narrowly and widely. As both have different policy implication; the nations my implement that is most relevant to the situation of their society. Bercovitch and Jackson define conflict prevention; in narrow terms 'the conflict prevention is seen as a range of actions undertaken to prevent a potential conflict becoming violent before the deployment of forces or forceful intervention by an international or regional organization Thus, in narrow terms of definition of conflict prevention the states attempt to recognize the employment of diplomatic strategies. In wider terms, definition of conflict prevention not only includes diplomatic efforts to prevent a conflict but 'measures to remove the conditions that lead to the outbreak of conflict in the first instance'.[8]

Carnegie Commission on the prevention of Deadly Conflict, published in 1999 identified conflict prevention as action and policy which can;

- prevent the emergence of violent conflict and identify non-violent means of resolving the tensions;
- Stop ongoing conflicts from spreading; and
- Deter the re-emergence of violence[9]

The Commission divides the approaches to conflict prevention in following categories; Operational prevention which defines a mechanism which address immediate crisis by means of mediation between parties by means of sending high-level diplomatic missions. The second category of approaches to prevent conflict is structural prevention. This category addresses root causes such as poverty, unequal distribution of state resources and political repression. The former category addresses conflict on short-term or immediate basis, whereas the latter category addresses conflict on longer-term which is

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[6] Jetly, Conflict Management Strategies in ASEAN, 55.
[7] Sridharan, "Regional Organizations and Conflict Management, 3.
[8] Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jacob, *Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-First Century: Principles, Methods and Approaches.* (The University of Michigan Press), 90.
[9] Sanam Naraghi Anderline, Judy AL-Bushra and Sarah Maguire, "Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action," *International Alert, Women Waging Peace*, (2004): 1.

why it is regarded as more comprehensive approach[10] Conflict prevention is carried out in order to avoid the occurrence of violence and its recurrence which can escalate it further.

Alagappa refers conflict containment to the technique in which the states 'restraint in the use of force with the aim to deny victory to the aggressor and to prevent the spread of conflict which could enmesh other actors and result in escalation of violence'.[11] The conflict termination, on the other hand, explains that a condition must exist that can end military operations. Conflict termination has gained a significant focus in recent years. The conflict termination involves two main features; settlement and resolution. In settlement, the violent hostilities are brought to an end. On the other hand, conflict resolution is mostly aimed at elimination of the very sources of conflict and transformation of the attitudes and behavior of the parties involved.[12]

The notion of conflict resolution is the process that helps contending parties identify and settle disputes with some degree of finality and the term resolution also suggests that a conflict can be resolved or dealt with and conflict is said to be resolved when a noticeable outcome has been reached, conflict behavior has been terminated from the contending parties and there has been a satisfactory distribution of resources agreed upon and carried out by the parties. The idea of conflict resolution, thus, suggests that to achieve more values and benefits and lessen the costs associated with conflict, the adversaries deal with the conflict instead of extending it. It is, thus removing the problems that have caused the conflict. Various outcomes that contending parties achieve due to conflict resolution can be avoidance or withdrawal, conquest, domination, or imposition, and a compromise agreement.[13]

The concept of conflict resolution suggests that a conflict can be resolved or dealt with and conflict is said to be resolved when a noticeable outcome has been reached, conflict behavior has been terminated from the contending parties and there has been a satisfactory distribution of resources agreed upon and carried out by the parties. Okungu, Mullins, Lechtenberger and Murdock[14] describe conflict resolution as the process which is carried out by means of communication between two or more groups that are in dispute through the help of a mediator. The purpose of engaging mediator in conflict resolution technique of conflict management is that the understanding may develop between the contrasting sides to refrain from blaming one another. The parties, should, instead focus on finding a common ground to agree to the solution of the problem.

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[10] *Ibid.*, 2.
[11] Muthaih Alagappa, "Regionalism and Conflict Management: A Framework for Analysis", *Review of International Studies,* 21, no. 4 (1995): 369.
[12] Christopher R. Mitchell, *The Structure of International Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989): 275-277.
[13] Bercovitch and Jacob, *Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-First Century,* 90.
[14] Phoebe, A. Okungu, Frank E Mullins, DeAnn Lechtenberger and Janice Murdock, "Twenty Characteristics of an Effective Conflict Management Response Team," *Journal of Human Services: Training, Research and Practice* 2, no. 1 (2017), http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jhstrp/vol2/iss1/5

Research Methodology

This is pure qualitative research based on secondary sources of information. Descriptive method will be used to analyze the data collected through secondary sources. Books, periodicals, newspapers and online sources of data will be used to gather the data. Content analysis method would be used to examine the collected data.

Discussion
Challenges / Factors for Ineffectiveness

Political stability, security, rule of law, business friendly environment, respect for human rights, uniform and fair trade and economic policies are essential prerequisites for a successful organization. On the contrary, ASEAN is faced with diversity problem. Its member countries have diverse cultures, different political systems etc. ASEAN region is home to diverse Political, economic and cultural systems. There are fragile democracies in the Philippines and Indonesia. Some others are ruled by authoritarian governments. There is an absolute monarchy in Brunei, military dictatorship in Thailand and single-party communist rule in Laos and Vietnam.

Unlike EU, ASEAN has grouped together various states having different cultural, political and economic systems. After Donald Trump's announcement to back step from South East Asia, the balance of power will be disturbed. In absence of USA, ASEAN member countries will definitely be caught in tension as China may become sole regional power. Will ASEAN be able to address the traditional and non-traditional security concerns of its members is the real test of its effectiveness. ASEAN's reputation for tackling human rights issues is another major challenge that has plagued the organization for decades.

ASEAN and the Regional Issues

In order to analyze the ASEAN's adoption of conflict management techniques, one needs to understand the ongoing and already managed intra- and inter-state conflicts within the region.

In Southeast Asia, there are various kinds of conflicts and issues most of which are legacies of colonial period. The conflicts that the region of Southeast Asia faces include intra-state conflict, inter-state conflicts and intra-regional conflicts.

Intra-state Conflicts in Southeast Asia

Intra-states conflict in Southeast Asia is divided into two kinds, state-formation conflicts and revolutionary conflicts. Askandar, Bercowtch and Oishi[15] explain that state-formation conflict involves identity conflicts for example secessionist movements where a particular identity groups seeks for their own territory. These state-based conflicts attempt to create their state based on their communal identities. The identities that are

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[15] Kamarulzaman Askandar, Jacob Bercowtch, and Mikio Oishi, "The ASEAN Way of Conflict Management: Old Patterns and New Trends," *Asian Journal of Political Science 10, no.2 (2002):* 26.

foundation of the separatist interests are language, religion, culture, and the political and economic interests are expected out of secessionism. The case of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) against the Philippine government is the best example of state-formation conflicts in Southeast Asia, where the former party has been comparatively more successful, as the later was convinced to come for negotiation so that concession can be granted to the Moro people. Besides the Moro nationality in Philippines, numerous ethnic, religious and linguistic groups have been fighting for their rights in Indonesia. Acehnese, West Papuan and Timorese are only but a few groups that have raised their voice against the injustices done to them by the Central Indonesian Government. All of the above-mentioned issues remained unresolved but only East Timor issue has been resolved in 2002. Suppression and national integration programs were the means by which Indonesian government tried to suppress the socio-political, secessionist and independent demands by Timorese. Revolutionary conflicts, in contrast, are the conflicts which occur when rebellion groups aim to topple the present government and bring in a government that follows their ideology. The ideology-based groups create the situation of discontent and violence in order to achieve their goal of imposing their ideology-based system of government. The revolutionary conflict in Malaysia between 1948 and the early 1990s those conflicts which mainly involved Communist ideology; the conflicts in the Philippines since 1969 and in Thailand from 1976 to 1983[16] are some of the revolutionary conflicts which had occurred in Southeast Asia. However, most of the revolutionary conflicts have been unsuccessful in this region.

Inter-state Conflicts in Southeast Asia

Most of the inter-state conflicts are territories-based disputes as in the colonial period the borders were drawn artificially. The linguistic, ethnic and religious differences were not taken into consideration by the colonial masters during the devising of borders between the regional states. The *Konfrontasi* (meaning confrontation) was a dispute between Malaysia and Indonesia between 1963 and 1966. *Konfrontasi* was coercive diplomacy whereby Indonesia challenged the legitimacy of newly independent Malaysia (Acharya, 2014). Several disputes took place between Indonesia and Malaysia where other members of the newly formed ASEAN were also involved. It can be said that formation of ASEAN was the progression of the process that led to reconciliation between both countries. The *Konfrontasi* has been a prime example of use of power in this inter-state dispute. However, this coercive diplomatic stance by Indonesia has underscored the importance of regionalism at first, which subsequently changed with the fundamental political change in Indonesia. The decision to renounce *Konfrontasi* eventually served as the model for possibility of a regional order by resolving the matter through non-use of force and utilization of peaceful means of conflict resolutions.[17]

Another inter-state dispute which has involved several countries of Southeast Asia has been the Spratly Island dispute, which has been going on since late 1950s. The states involved are China, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Vietnam and which claim

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[16] *Ibid*., 26-27.
[17] Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014): 5.

ownership over the Spratly Islands located in South China Sea. The Spratly Islands consists of hundreds of islands that are mostly uninhabited and the dozens of rocky outcrops, atolls, sandbanks and reefs. The possibility of containing of natural resources has attracted such claims by the surrounding countries. ASEAN has not yet been able to bring solution to the issue, however, 'the ASEAN, as the regional key stakeholder, has made efforts to defuse tensions among the claimants and seek a long-term agreement in negotiation with China for peace, stability, security and development in the region'.[18]

Tensions between Myanmar and Thailand in late 1990s

The movement of refugees from Myanmar to Thailand, due to ethnic conflict in Myanmar, has caused sour relationship between Thailand and Myanmar. Thailand blames that the influx of refugees also brings with it the influx of narcotics that is threatening the Thai society. Due to the lack of formal demarcation between Myanmar and Thailand border (only 58 kilometers out of 2400 kilometers are formally demarcated), the guerrilla warfare, drug production and cross-border trafficking has been taking place between the two states' ethnic groups residing adjacent to border areas[19] Besides, there has been regular cross-firing and attempts of incursions into Thai territory, because of skirmishes between the central authorities and the Karen and Shan minorities in Myanmar. The military actions along Thailand and Myanmar borders that involve troops from Myanmar and groups allied to central government and the opposition group that has resided in border areas and camps in Thailand. Since 1999, the high officials have met to discuss measures to settle the disputes and to avoid clashes in the disputed areas. The efforts have been carried out to by two sides to agree to prevent the escalation of border conflicts.[20] Chantavanich and Kamonpetch[21] report that about 109,992 individuals from more than 20,000 households belonging to mix of ethnic and religious background who have been living in temporary shelters in Thailand. The governments of Myanmar and Thailand are making efforts for safe return of the refugees from Thai refugee campuses to Myanmar.

Indonesia and Malaysia's dispute over Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan

Both Indonesia and Malaysia claim their sovereignty over Pulau Sipadan and Pulau Ligitan. Indonesia asserts that its claim of control over the islands is based on conventional title named the 1891 Convention signed between Great Britain and the Netherlands. Whereas, the bases of Malaysian claims over the islands of Ligitan and Sipadan follows the series of alleged transfer of the title originally held by the former sovereign, the Sultan of Sulu. Malaysia believes that the title having been passed in turn

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[18] Hong Cuong Nguyen, *The South China Sea Dispute: ASEAN's Role in Addressing Disputes with China. (Fort Leavenworth, USA, 2013): iv.*

[19] IISS Strategic Comments, "Thailand-Myanmar Tensions," *Strategic Comments 6, no.2 (2000):* 1-2.

[20] Ramses Amer, "Expanding ASEAN's Conflict Management Framework for Analysis," *Asia Journal of Political Science* 6, no. 2 (1998): 47.

[21] Supang Chantavanich and Aungkana Kamonpetch, "Introduction: Background of Protracted Conflict and Displacement in Myanmar, in *Refugee and Return: Displacement Along the Thai-Myanmar Border,* ed. Supang Chantavanich and Aungkana Kamonpetch (Cham: Springer, 2017): 1-8.

to Spain first. It was then handed over to the United States followed by handing over of the State of North Borneo to the United Kingdom, and finally to Malaysia.[22]

Dispute of Sabah Island between Malaysia and the Philippines

North Borneo dispute, as the dispute over Sabah Island usually referred to, is a disquieting issue between Malaysia and the Philippines' bilateral relations, states Soomro. The dispute of Sabah Island developed into contentious diplomatic issue because of claim of Philippines over the Island of Sabah. The issue is still unsettled because of unclear agreement signed in 1878 between the Sultanate of Sulu and the British North Borneo Company. Simon recommends that Malaysia and the Philippines should, in order to stop the conflict from turning into a violent armed conflict, adopt multilateralism. The author is of view that ASEAN Security Community can play a very active role is resolving the issue by adopting visionary security policies.[23]

Cambodia and Thailand temple issue

Preah Vihear Temple issue between Cambodia and Thailand in 2008 and 2009 is another issue that had led to political tensions between the two Southeast Asian countries. The issue is related to the areas in the vicinity of the Preah Vihear Temple, over which Thai and Cambodian troops had clashes along the border resulting in casualties.[24]

Intra-regional Conflicts in Southeast Asia
The South China Sea (SCS) Dispute

The South China Sea dispute is considered a threat to East Asian stability because of claims over the South China Sea by the People's Republic of China, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.[25] Keyuan Zou states that region around South China Sea according to the United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea (the LOS Convention) is;

> …a semi-enclosed sea, which is defined under Article 122 as a gulf, basin, or sea surrounded by two or more States and connected to another sea or the ocean by a narrow outlet or consisting entirely or primarily of the territorial sea and exclusive economic zones of two or more coastal States.[26]

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[22] Hasjim Djalal, "Dispute Between Indonesia and Malaysia on the Sovereignty Over Sipadan and Ligitan Islands," *Jurnal Opinio Juris* 12, (2013): 20.
[23] Naureen Nazar Soomro. "Malaysia-Philippines Bilateral Relations: The Issue of Sabah Island." *Asia Pacific: Research Journal of Far East & Southeast Asia* 31, (2013): 16.
[24] Ramses Amer, The Conflict Management Framework, 53.
[25] Kwei-Bo Huang, "The Transformation of ASEAN as a Third-Party Mediator in Intra-Regional Disputes of Southeast Asia," in *Conflict Management, Security and Intervention in East Asia: Third-Party Mediation in Regional Conflict,* ed. Jacob Bercovitch, KB Huang and CC Teng (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008): 147-164.
[26] Keyuan, *China-ASEAN Relations and International Law* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2009): 173.

Effectiveness of ASEAN WAY of Conflict Management: Its Efforts and Effects

The ASEAN has adopted several conflict management techniques. ASEAN member states have achieved and adopted the diplomatic rules that have developed the sense of common interests and values in them. ASEAN has become a "cooperative security regime, where disputes are managed within the parameters of consensus-based norms and procedures."[27] The ASEAN Way is one of the series of established guidelines and norms that are adopted by the member states. The main principles, that make the ASEAN Way a document for members to refer to in case of inter- and intra-state conflict, include the principles of non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the non-use of force. These principles are usually the part of regional security arrangements carried out anywhere in the world, but the characteristics that make ASEAN Way an effective mechanism is its conflict management by putting emphasis on dialogue and the practice to agree to disagree for conflict settlement.[28]

Despite differences in cultural, political and economic systems of ASEAN member states, the Asian culture, political and economic context has brought ASEAN states together in 1967 which were considered to be impetus for the Association's establishment. The Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) and Maphilindo[29] paved the way for ASEAN formation. The key architect of ASA, Thai Foreign Minister, Thamat Khoman stated that the foundation of ASA and any future formation in Southeast Asia would have Asian culture and tradition in common. Maphilindo, although not successful itself, its key principles however, proved later to be salient features of "ASEAN Way". Goh further explains that member states of Maphilindo;

> undertook not to use collective defense to serve the interests of any among the big powers and pledged commitment to the principles of consultation, or *musyawarah,* as the basis for settling differences among members. This would later form ASEAN's central approach to regional interaction and cooperation.[30]

Non-interference in internal matters of member states, as the basic principle of Association has had helped ASEAN in terms of conflict management, claim Askander, Bercowtch and Oishi[31] Goh, on the other hand, blames that there has been observed intervention by regional organizations in the internal or bilateral issues. One such example is ASEAN's intervention in the conflict of Cambodia with Vietnam, by although indirect means of involving the larger international community. Nevertheless, ASEAN has applied its non-confrontational styles to the situation where perhaps the direct approach has worked faster and better than the diplomatic approach. No-use of force no doubt has benefitted ASEAN to some extent in achieving his goal of conflict management through diplomacy, pressure, communication and trade-offs.

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[27] Sridharan, *Regional Organizations and Conflict Management,* 4.

[28] Majumdar, The ASEAN Way of Conflict Management in South China Sea, 73.

[29] Maphilido or the Greater Malayan Confederation was formed by three states namely, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, was a non-political confederation of the Malay race in 1963.

[30] Gillian Goh, "The 'ASEAN Way': Non-Intervention and ASEAN's Role in Conflict Management," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2003): 114.

[31] Askandar, Bercowtch, and Oishi, The ASEAN Way of Conflict Management, 24.

Post-cold war era has been bigger challenge for ASEAN then pre-cold war era, which has compelled it at some instances to back off from its traditional patterns of conflict management. Conflict in Myanmar (Then Burma) over democratization, ongoing since August 1988, political crisis in Malaysia ongoing since 1998 and after the sacking the government and arresting the former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, and the crisis of East Timor since 1998 to March 2002, which started as the result of independence referendum, which have been internationalized through human rights network. These issues pose a serious challenge to ASEAN way of conflict management.[32]

Conclusion

The result of all these changes and challenges to the ASEAN Way of conflict management, have acted as source of transformation of ASEAN to the third-party mediator in intra-state and even in intra-regional disputes occurring in the region. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) yet needs to play an active role of third-party mediator. More and more regional organizations are cooperating with United Nations (UN); one, for legitimizing their actions, second, to gain valuable information and know-how of recent conflict management techniques.[33] Hence, the ASEAN, because of increasing demands of amendments in conflict management techniques due to changes in the nature of conflict, needs to transform from its modest goals and principles to deal with conflict to new trends of conflict management, perhaps from soft mediation to hard mediation in near future.

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[32] *Ibid.*, 34.
[33] Huang, The Transformation of ASEAN as a Third-Party Mediator, 153.

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