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Solidarity for Myanmar: #MilkTeaAlliance Indonesia's Transnational Activism in Pressuring the Government of Indonesia and ASEAN

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Solidarity for Myanmar: #MilkTeaAlliance Indonesia's Transnational Activism in Pressuring the Government of Indonesia and ASEAN

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ABSTRAK

Kudeta militer di Myanmar pada 1 Februari 2021 yang dilakukan oleh Tatmadaw terhadap petinggi-petinggi pemerintahan yang baru terpilih—di mana Partai National League for Democracy (NLD) menjadi mayoritas—mengundang reaksi keras dari masyarakat sipil, salah satunya ialah jejaring masyarakat sipil Milk Tea Alliance (MTA). Tulisan ini membahas mengenai solidaritas jejaring MTA Indonesia dalam menekan Pemerintah Indonesia dan ASEAN, khususnya pada Konferensi Tingkat Tinggi (KTT) Khusus ASEAN. Tulisan ini didasarkan pada metode kualitatif dengan menggunakan kajian literatur terhadap studi kasus, khususnya terhadap aktivisme Milk Tea Alliance di Indonesia. Berdasarkan pada kerangka konseptual 'Pola bumerang' mengenai jejaring advokasi transnasional, tulisan ini berargumentasi bahwa aktivisme Milk Tea Alliance merepresentasikan model yang berharga dalam kerjasama masyarakat sipil Selatan-Selatan melalui keberagaman kanal, bentuk aktor, dan isu. Sehingga, jejaring ini berperan penting dalam mendekolonisasi relasi tidak setara negara Utara-Selatan dalam konsep awal Keck & Sikkink. Lebih jauh, tulisan ini juga memaparkan peran norma di level regional dalam memengaruhi 'pola bumerang' yang membuat lebih sulit bagi solidaritas ini untuk menekan ASEAN dan Pemerintah Indonesia sebagai pemimpin de-facto ASEAN untuk bertindak tegas terhadap Tatmadaw.

Kata Kunci:

Aktivisme transnasional, Milk Tea Alliance, Kudeta Myanmar, Demokrasi

ABSTRACT

The military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, carried out by the Tatmadaw against top officials from the newly elected-government—in which National League for Democracy (NLD) Party made the majority—brought strong backlashes from civil society, one of which was the Milk Tea Alliance. This paper discusses the activism of Milk Tea Alliance Indonesia in pressuring the Indonesian government and ASEAN, especially during the ASEAN Special Summit. This paper is based on qualitative method using literature review on the case study of Milk Tea Alliance activism in Indonesia. By referring to the 'Boomerang pattern' framework on transnational advocacy network, this paper argues that the Milk Tea Alliance represents a valuable model in South-South civil society cooperation due to the multiplicity of channels, actor form, and issues. Therefore, it plays an essential role in decolonizing the unequal North-South relations in the initial concept of Keck & Sikkink. Furthermore, this article also exposes the role of regional norms in influencing the 'boomerang pattern,' making it difficult for the solidarity to push ASEAN & Indonesian government as the de-facto leader of ASEAN to act stricter on Tatmadaw.

Keywords:

Transnational activism, Milk Tea Alliance, Myanmar Coup, Democracy

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of contemporary civil society network tends to be ignored in the study of international relations. Despite the recognition of non-state actors in international relations, the discussion of the power and the role of these entities, especially towards state actors, is often reduced to a state-centric logic emphasizing the lack of power of these actors. In this context, this paper is discussing the role of Milk Tea Alliance in putting pressure on state actors and regional organization. On February 1, 2021, a military coup was carried out by the Tatmadaw, the Myanmar military, against the State Counselor, Aung San Suu Kyi, President Win Myint, and several leaders from the newly elected government, in which the National League for Democracy (NLD) party was the majority. The coup, which took place a day before Myanmar's Parliament inaugurated the winners of the 2020 election, was declared as a consequence of the military junta's rejection of the November 2020 election results. The Union Solidarity and Development (USDP) party, backed by the military junta, lost and planned re-election. As a result, the military held power over the country and declared a state of emergency for the following year. This coup is said to have dismantled the democratic transition process in Myanmar, which has been going on since 2011.

This military coup met an intense backlash from hundreds of thousands of Myanmar people who took to the streets in the next few days (Strangjo, 2021). The military and armed groups, including Myanmar's police, have responded to the protests using violence against protesters. As a result, from February to July 2021, more than 800 civilians were killed, including children, and thousands more were arrested both on the streets and at home (Head, 2021). The United Nations has labeled this action a "vicious crackdown" as well as a "gross human rights violation and a possible crime against humanity" (Hein, 2021; Teza, 2021).

The international community has been putting pressure on ASEAN as a regional organization and, in particular, Indonesia as the *de-facto* leader of ASEAN. Indonesia is regarded as the natural leader of ASEAN due to its size and historical assumption; nevertheless, its leadership in ASEAN is often questioned (Emmers, 2014). Efforts to resolve the Myanmar conflict are seen as a test of ASEAN's capacity as an institution and Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN. Responding to this challenge, ASEAN held a Special Summit to discuss the issue of Myanmar by inviting the leader of the Myanmar coup, General Min Aung Hlaing, the military commander, in April 2021. This summit met with protests from civil society networks in Indonesia, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) repeatedly clarified that this summit did not at all legitimize the military junta (CNN Indonesia, 2021a).

This paper examines the boomerang pattern formation of the Milk Tea Alliance's solidarity in Myanmar's case by focusing on the case of Milk Tea Alliance Indonesia as an object of assessment. Milk Tea Alliance is a loose but massive coalition of online pro-democracy movements mainly consist of netizens coming from Hong Kong as a form of dissent against the Chinese government and internet trolls. The sentiment was shared by netizens from Taiwan and later India. Milk Tea Alliance began to evolve from an anti-Beijing "meme" to a "leaderless" protest movement pushing for change across Southeast Asia, specifically in Thailand and Myanmar. The name "Milk Tea" is rooted in the tradition of mixing tea with milk shared by Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Myanmar, and India but not shared by China (The Economist, 2021). Its coalition later expanded to other Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines, despite not all these countries having a tradition of drinking tea with milk.

Milk Tea Alliance Indonesia is a pro-democracy civil society network that is in solidarity with the people of Myanmar in order to put pressure not only on the military junta but also on ASEAN and Indonesia as *de facto* leader of ASEAN. Examples are demonstrations in front of the ASEAN Secretariat building, the Myanmar embassy, the Gowes for Democracy movement, and digital activism such as naming and shaming through social media. This paper aims to answer the question of how transnational solidarity is formed in the case of the Milk Tea Alliance with networks in Southeast Asia to pressure ASEAN and the Indonesian government to act decisively against the Myanmar military junta?"

This paper argues that the Milk Tea Alliance transnational solidarity in Indonesia was formed through a massive 'boomerang effect' mechanism between South-South pro-democracy civil society organizations, precisely in the ASEAN context. MTA has been described as an alternative to ASEAN as it has become a central force in shaping the youth's knowledge between pro-democracy protesters and their opponents (Chia & Singer, 2021). The objective of this research is to inquire how transnational solidarity is built to influence ASEAN and the Indonesian government and the practical challenges faced by ASEAN to create impactful resolutions.

Originally coming from Hong Kong, the Milk Tea Alliance is often identified with the "Anti-China" adage, for example, in the research of Temby (2021) or Schaffar & Praphakorn (2021), but this idea, in fact, does not represent the characteristic of Milk Tea Alliance coalition in Southeast Asia. Joshua Wong emphasized that this movement is not only about opposition to one country (only) but action against authoritarianism everywhere (Barron, 2020). This activism represents a marginal voice and pan-Asian solidarity in domestic and foreign politics

whose awareness was built due to the Covid-19 factor (Dedman & Lai, 2021). The movement is now spread in more than eight countries, transcending continents, and the hashtag #MilkTeaAlliance has been used by tens of thousands of online activists (Ting-Hsuan, 2021).

In transnational relations, the term 'boomerang pattern' is known from Keck & Sikkink (1998) when local actors externalize issues and form transnational coalitions with outside actors to suppress domestic actors. This can be the other way around in the context of global advocacy when domestic actors are embraced to strengthen the legitimacy of transnational actors (Pallas, 2017, p.9). In transnational activism literature, there is a theoretical research gap where the conceptualization of the 'boomerang pattern' generally emphasizes North-South relations, where solidarity in Southern countries characterized by democratic struggles is networked with civil society and actors in North countries with established democracies.

Keck & Sikkink's assumptions are too simplistic to be applied in the ASEAN context; hence there are theoretical and practical gaps. The process of transnational activism takes place in a South-South context and through various channels, namely ASEAN as a regional organization, ASEAN member states, and Indonesia as *the de facto* leader of ASEAN, thus not as simplistic as Keck & Sikkink claim to be. The dichotomy of international and domestic processes in the study of transnational activism also ignores the regional context where in this case, activism also seeks to encourage the reform of ASEAN institutions.

There has not been numerous academic research that had systematically discussed this issue, especially the Milk Tea Alliance, as a civil society network in Southeast Asia that has different characteristics from the first emerged similar movements. In the other words, there is a gap of literature in this particular study. However, several researchers have attempted to address this gap. Waites (2019) discussed the decolonization of the boomerang pattern through the adoption of the socio-cultural context in the advocacy. In comparison, Gombursen & Hellema (2018) discussed transnational activism as being locally relevant and globally impactful. This group of scholars focuses on the nature of "global advocacy" contested with socio-cultural norms. While recognizing this feature, this research aims to capture the complexity of the boomerang pattern of transnational solidarity through not only the issues from the lens of socio-cultural context but also the multiplicity of channels, actor form, and the complexity of the issues.

Therefore, this paper fills the gap in assessing the Milk Tea Alliance as the state of transnational solidarity movement, in the context of ASEAN and its member states in such a way recognizing the "ASEAN way" as the regional norm. In addition, the research also aims to capture the trend of civil society networks in ASEAN through a case study of the Milk Tea

Alliance, especially in Indonesia, considering that this movement in Southeast Asia has a different trajectory from its initial emergence in Hong Kong.

To those aims, this paper will first discuss the theoretical framework and the methodology it uses. The discussion section will be divided into three: (1) the origin of the Milk Tea Alliance network in the Myanmar coup issues as well as the emergence of MTA Indonesia solidarity in the issue, (2) MTA as a distinct model of South-South transnational network by connecting it to the 'boomerang pattern' concept (3) assessing how regional norms play an essential role in shaping the effectiveness of the transnational movement in pressuring the Indonesian government and ASEAN.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Transnational Advocacy Network (Keck & Sikkink, 1998)

The definition of transnational action was first raised by Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane (1971, p. 331), who still emphasized the state as the leading political actor in transnational action until Risse-Kappen (1995) first recognized the emergence of networks of non-state actors and launched the term "transnational relations." (p.5). Efforts to more comprehensively understand transnational activism are made possible by Keck & Sikkink which recognizes more actors ranging from non-governmental organizations, social movements, and many more. These transnational actors not only influence policy outcomes but also transform and participate (process) in policy debates (Barnett and Duvall, 2005). This concept emphasizes the role of transnational advocacy networks in influencing state behavior, not just the other way around (p.52). However, this paper utilizes the term 'transnational solidarity' because it reflects the spirit of social movements and activism more as the term implies shared goals, grief, mutual support among people (*community*), transcending status and normative restriction (Turner, 1995).

In understanding transnational advocacy networks, this paper intends to use a socio-constructivist approach. Instead of interpreting transnational network resources as material resources, such as finance and human resources, this paper seeks to interpret resources from the intangible aspect, namely information, knowledge, and norms. In understanding the function and role of transnational networks from a constructivist lens, Keck & Sikkink (1998) emphasize four functions; information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics (p.95). Information politics is the ability to use and transfer necessary information to a place where the information has more influence, while symbolic politics is the ability to build network with distant audiences, and leverage politics is the ability to defend

groups that have little influence, lastly, accountability politics is the ability to suppress actors who have influence. This concept would be employed to understand how and what is the role of Milk Tea Alliance solidarity in pressuring the third party to act on the military junta.

Boomerang Effect (Rodriguez-Garavito, 2015)

Soetjipto and Yuliestiana (2020) categorize theories on transnational activism into four categories based on the main theorizations, namely norm diffusion, boomerang pattern, political opportunity structure, and accountability and effectiveness (p.45). This paper will focus on the second group of theories considering that the Milk Tea Alliance was formed from domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) networking with alliances from foreign countries. The government of the foreign country then puts pressure on the state. This process is named as the 'boomerang effect. This advocacy mechanism is generally carried out on issues of human rights and democracy where at the domestic level, there is suppression on that issues so that it requires assistance from other countries that are more established in human rights and democracy conditions-typically are the northern countries. This is due to the perceived image that a robust pro-democracy and pro-human rights organizations coalition can only grow from Global North countries. Thus, 'boomerang effect' model is perceived to be effective between a "more democratic" state helping civil society organizations from a "less democratic" state. This is often followed by assumption that the former is always a Global North country while the latter is always a Global South country.

The author believes that this assumption maintains an unequal North-South relationship because of the tendency to view that pressuring actors which is a more democratic state is always assumed as Global North and countries being pressured are always Global South. This sustains patronizing and unequal relationship by not recognizing Global South as a potential legitimate actor. Despite being perceived as less democratic compared to Global North countries, advocacy is also possible between South-South countries, especially among civil society organizations and countries in the Global South. In the development of the theory of transnationalism, Rodriguez-Garavito (2015) advances three boomerang models, namely the 'internal boomerang,' global virtual network, and 'multiple boomerang.' Internal boomerang is a collaboration between two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the local/national level. The global virtual network is marked by information and communication technologies in which e-activists use online advocacy platforms to mobilize the power of decentralized crowds to target a specific actor. In comparison, multiple boomerang is when political pressure comes from different geographic locations and is mobilized towards multiple targets.

Rodriguez-Garavito (2015), through the 'multiple boomerang' model emphasizes targets and channels that can vary in addition to the other two models, namely 'internal boomerang' and global virtual networks. This model can fill the gap between theory and practice where activism is carried out against regional actors and in the regional realm, with the emergence of regional organizations such as the European Union and ASEAN. Regional and national entities must be distinguished because sometimes advocacy can be directed simultaneously at one or both. Taking regional actors into account can enable us to understand how these organizational actors – based on regional norms, information, and collective capacities – can put pressure on member states. This concept reinvigorates the agency and capacity of Global South countries in South-South advocacy by recognizing the multiplicities of channels, actor forms, and the complexities of the issues by taking into account domestic and regional socio-cultural contexts. Thus, it rejects such simplistic view of boomerang pattern which reduced the complexity of transnational advocacy in the Global South and reproduce unequal relations.

Norm Localization (Acharya, 2004)

Socio-constructivism allows us to see movement and exchange between states beyond tangible materials, such as idea, norms, information, and knowledge. When we discuss norms diffusion and promotion in the context of ASEAN and Global South countries, it is important to recognize that these entities do have cognitive priors and institutional buildups, thus we cannot say that norms are taken as how it is. Therefore, in order to understand how norms are adopted, we need to recognize the role of intersubjectivity done by countries in responding to norm promotion.

Amitav Acharya (2004) argued that local agents reconstruct norms to make them fit with the local agent's cognitive priors and identities. This concept transcends the view that favors "good" global norms over "bad" local beliefs by recognizing the existence of normative structure at the local level. Thus, norms from the global level are localized by a local agent. In the case of 'boomerang pattern' is the third actor. This theorization is employed to answer why norms are not directly accepted nor rejected but are adapted, especially in the case of ASEAN, whereas regional norms play an essential role in reshaping global norms. In conclusion, Acharya navigates how transnational norms could have an impact on institutional change in ASEAN, however, it depends on norm-takers' congruence building and localization of the said norm as a key to the process. In this paper, this concept is used to understand why there has been a slow adoption of norms by ASEAN by arguing that intersubjectivity have to be built

between norm promoters and norm takers considering the difference in existing knowledge and norms.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach through socio-constructivism that is closer to positivism by focusing on the norm-based socio-constructivism approach. This is reflected in the case study method in which the Milk Tea Alliance movement in Southeast Asia are used to represent a sample of transnational activism that occurs at the regional level. This case study will be used to test the state of the art of transnationalism theorization. In addition to case studies, this research is also based on a literature review of the concepts and mechanisms for forming the Indonesian Milk Tea Alliance activism to answer research questions. The data to be used is secondary textual data which is interpreted qualitatively and taken from various secondary sources, namely journals, books, media, and other types of documents. In addition, this research also measures how regional norms come into play in the 'boomerang pattern' of the Milk Tea Alliance solidarity in the case of Myanmar.

DISCUSSION

The Origin of The Establishment of Milk Tea Alliance Network in the Myanmar Coup Issue

Myanmar's incorporation into this movement marked by the inclusion of the Myanmar flag side by side with Taiwan, Thailand, Hong Kong, and India (Duangdee, 2021) in the Milk Tea Alliance poster designed by Bangkok artist Sina Wittayawiroj which shows an image of milk tea as a symbol of resistance. Myanmar celebrities, such as Paing Takhon and Hnin Thway Yu, posted three-finger selfies on Instagram and the hashtags #SaveMyanmar, #StandWithMyanmar, and #WhatsHappeninginMyanmar became popular in Myanmar and Thailand (Duangdee, 2021). In contrast to its early emergence, this movement does not have a strong anti-China orientation. Resistance in Thailand and Myanmar is associated with the military's role in democracy instead of the impact of a foreign actor on the country's democratic condition.

MTA Myanmar has the spirit of externalizing information about oppression and human rights violations amidst censorship and information restrictions by the Myanmar police and military. The movement was first incorporated as a part of the formerly formed MTA coalition in Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and India. The formation of MTA Myanmar and the Myanmar coup influence the inception of the same movement in Malaysia, the Philippines, and

Indonesia with the spirit of supporting Myanmar's civil society protest against the military junta. In Indonesia, this alliance is a combination of various pro-democracy activists and also a coalition with civil society organizations such as the Young Revolutionary Front (Front Muda Revolusioner), the People's Faction (Fraksi Rakyat), the Civil Society Alliance for a Great Indonesia (Almisbat), the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), and others. These organizations share the same spirit as Milk Tea Alliance: Pro-democracy and some of them are youth-led movements.

Previously, members of the Milk Tea Alliance network were local activists who had been involved in the 'Reformasi Dikorupsi', Vote of No-Confidence (Mosi Tidak Percaya), and Omnibus Law demonstrations (Muhammad, 2021). This explains why domestic issues such as Papua are often included in MTA Indonesia advocacy. The Milk Tea Alliance Indonesia was formed as an effort to establish transnational solidarity with Myanmar activists since the military coup in the country. Its presence is more of a 'broker' for the people of Myanmar against ASEAN and the Indonesian government as well as to mobilize information about human rights violations and violence that occurred in Myanmar in the hope that these actors will take action against the military junta.

Milk Tea Alliance activism outside Myanmar is mainly carried out through online methods, for example, a meeting on February 28, 2021, as an act of solidarity with Myanmar through banging pots and pans protest, solidarity messages, and taking photos with three-finger salutations via Zoom. The Milk Tea Alliance also makes a lot of use of online media to consolidate and organize actions. Manik Marganamahendra from the Milk Tea Alliance Indonesia explained that when building MTA Indonesia, weekly communications and meetings were held with activists in Myanmar and networks in Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Korea, the Philippines, and the Myanmar diaspora to share information and the situation of fellow activists and what actions of solidarity or diplomacy can be done (Muhammad, 2021). This reflects the idea of transnational solidarity as the activists have mutual goals and shared grievance transcending national borders.

The transnational movement is reflected by the exchange of information and knowledge outside of countries' borders. MTA Indonesia is actively campaigning for information about violence perpetrated by the military junta through memes, posts, photos, and popularized through various hashtags, for example, #StandWithMyanmar #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar #MilkTeaAlliance Indonesia. One of the digital activisms carried out is by naming and shaming the military junta through the movement's Official Statement on March 12, 2021. One method of framing this movement is using the term "junta terrorist." The mention of "terrorists" in the

document encourages the perception of collective responsibility to show solidarity with the Myanmar people and not to play in a "terrorist" scenario. The term terrorist describes how the military is not a legitimate actor in the government but creates terror for the people and is a common enemy.

the activities of the Milk Tea Alliance are not only existing in digital realm but spread to physical protests. Thus, mobilization is not limited to intangible resources but also tangible resources such as human resources. On March 13, 2021, the Milk Tea Alliance held a non-violent solidarity action in front of the ASEAN secretariat building in Jakarta. This action condemned Myanmar's military junta and asked ASEAN member countries to take a firm stand, stand with the Myanmar people, and encourage efforts to restore power to the people. This action is carried out in conjunction with prayer, candlelight, and hitting the pot. Previously, the MTA Indonesia coalition, the Urban Poor People Network (JRMK), held a similar action in front of the Myanmar Embassy on February 5, 2021 (CNN Indonesia, 2021b; 2021c). The shift in target or opposition to this movement indicates that activists are starting to recognize ASEAN's role in resolving the Myanmar conflict.

This solidarity action succeeded in pressuring ASEAN to act through the holding of the ASEAN Summit to discuss the Myanmar coup. However, the ASEAN Summit invited Military Commander General Min Aung Hlaing. Initially, there were demonstrations from Myanmar activists to the Indonesian Embassy over concerns about the legitimacy of the military junta during the ASEAN meeting (Irrawaddy, 2021). Next, MTA Indonesia, together with other non-governmental organizations, on April 20, 2021, held a similar protest against the military junta's presence as Myanmar's representative.

Activists from Myanmar on Twitter have responded positively by thanking activists from Milk Tea Indonesia for protesting on the Twitter account of Milk Tea Alliance Indonesia (2021). This affirms the movement's shared grievance and mutual goals, transcending borders. Besides mobilizing human resources to protest physically, transnational solidarity in the case of Milk Tea Alliance is reflected more by intangible resources such as the transfer of information, knowledge, and norms outside of Myanmar to its Southeast Asian activist network. These intangible resources are capitalized to build emotions and grievance, shaping the movement's goals, thus solidifying the transnational advocacy network.

The Boomerang Model of Milk Tea Alliance as South-South Transnational Network

The military coup that took place in the midst of the pandemic worsened the socio-economic situation in an already very vulnerable Myanmar. Unlike previous movements, health workers,

teachers, factory workers, and even civil servants are involved in the protests (LIPI, 2021). This involvement suggests something more critical than their employment status, even amid a pandemic. As in many other places, the trend of securitization of movement restrictions is also taking place in Myanmar, intending to limit the movement of activists, reflecting the trend of global democratic deconsolidation. The military junta cut off access to electricity, Facebook, censored websites, and even suppressed journalists. Pinckney & Rivers (2020) describes the restrictions on activities during Covid-19 have led to many activisms being driven online (p.1). Although activists in Myanmar face a digital dictatorship, the internet can enable the mobilization of resources, particularly information, beyond national boundaries (Sasipornkarn, 2021).

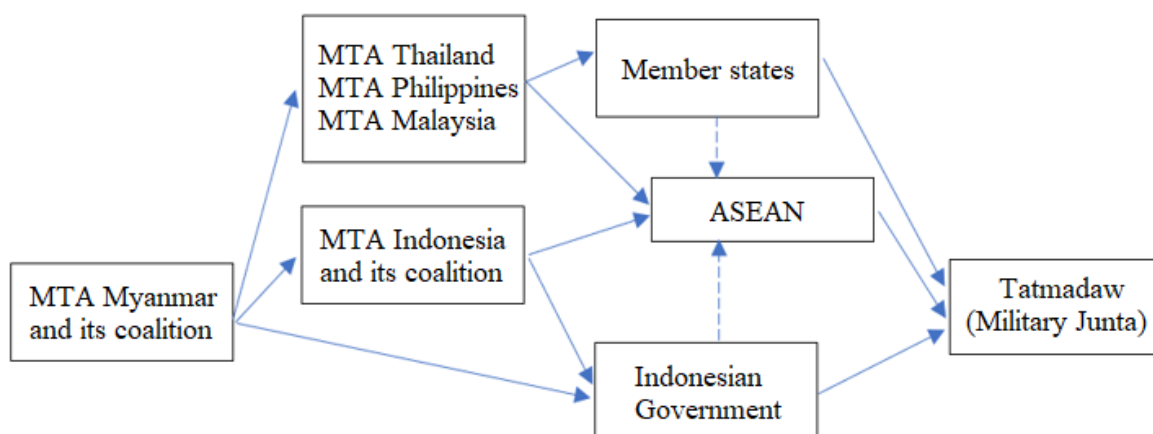
This awareness has been awakened because democratic norms are slowly being institutionalized and are getting stronger because of MTA solidarity. When society is faced with censorship and information restrictions, and it is no longer possible to expect from legitimate authority, this is when MTA Myanmar has to transfer information outside and to make coalition abroad not just to sustain the movement but also to put pressure on external actors to pressurize the military junta eventually. The presence of this movement outside the territory of Myanmar is what makes it louder because the government would not be so able to control access to information outside its territory. Thus, this movement is amplified in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Previously, Keck & Sikkink envisaged this process taking place in a country with human rights issues and poor democracy against groups in a country that has established human rights and democracy conditions – assumed to be a Northern country – to push back against this oppressive government. In reality, there was a coalition between MTA Myanmar and Indonesia and subsequent demonstrations by various MTA networks in Southeast Asia to put pressure on ASEAN.

In this case, the MTA hopes that there will be a 'boomerang effect' from efforts to make the movement outside of Myanmar's authority as a transnational one, to be precise, to Indonesia as the *de facto* leader of ASEAN together with ASEAN as a regional institution. Indonesia has long been said to be the 'natural born leader' or 'first among equals' (*Primus inter pares*) within the ASEAN. Roberts and Widyaningsih (2015) argues that Indonesia has the power as a manager and mediator of crises and conflicts as well as the potential role for ideational leadership. This is why the position of Indonesia is crucial in ASEAN as it traditionally hold the role as a manager or mediator of crises and Indonesia could influence ASEAN's ideational structure, especially in acting against Tatmadaw.

While it is easy to put Indonesia into the theorization, it is challenging to put ASEAN into the dichotomy of Keck & Sikkink's theorization regarding 'domestic – international' and 'progressive – repressive.' In contrast to the European Union, ASEAN is referred by Ginsburg (2005) as a kind of regionalism that strengthens the sovereignty of its member states and places the principle of non-intervention and territorial sovereignty as *ex-ante* of democracy and human rights (Ramcharan, 2000, p.63; Ginsburg, 2005, p.420)—both are identical to the West and often become pretexts of intervention. This makes ASEAN, on the one hand, a manifestation of the sovereignty of member countries. On the other hand, it is a different regional entity that has limited dispute resolution capacity with the primary mechanism, namely dialogue. Thus, ASEAN is not a single monolithic entity and cannot be easily categorized into Keck & Sikkink's third-state conceptualization.

' The MTA coalition in Southeast Asia utilizes the 'multiple boomerang' model with elements of a global virtual network because of its open participation through massive technological access during a pandemic. These multiple boomerangs recognize the diversity of issues from each channel or NGO and targets from different geographic areas. Therefore, MTA is no longer interpreted as an anti-China movement, for example, in the research of Schaffar & Praphakorn (2021) and Temby (2020), such as in India and East Asia. This movement targets ASEAN's capacity to uphold democratic values and Indonesian leadership with various other issues at the domestic level, such as the fight against violence in Papua in Indonesia, protests against Duterte in the Philippines, and protests against the monarchy in Thailand.

Figure 1. Transnational Network of Milk Tea Alliance



Source: Formulated by Author

The various MTA channels, as shown in Figure 1, on the one hand, create pressure from various geographical locations, such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and the Philippines as well as various channels through a coalition with local civil society organizations in each member states. This network model represents the 'multiple boomerang' model as the movement that is also directed towards multiple actors: ASEAN member states, the Indonesian government as *the de-facto* leader of ASEAN, and the ASEAN itself as an organization to act firmly towards the military junta in Myanmar. This brokering and coalition model through 'multiple boomerang' aims to target the Indonesian government and ASEAN at the regional and international levels. Thus, in the actor form, ASEAN differs significantly because of its regionalism model, allowing member states to act independently and sometimes differently from the organization.

Compared to the traditional boomerang pattern, the ASEAN does not represent the single monolithic entity as Keck and Sikkink previously imagined. ASEAN differs from other targets, specifically North states because of its sovereign-reinforcing regionalism. As shown in figure 1, on one side, arguably, it has the power to influence member states through declarations, non-binding resolutions, programs, and membership. ASEAN, formed by its member states, has collective capacities to act and put pressure on the military junta. This is reflected by the Five-Point Consensus and ASEAN summits, despite significant impact is yet to be seen. On the other side, member states can influence the decision of ASEAN. Thus, the role of member states is essential in putting pressure on ASEAN. As a consequence, the MTA coalition is formed in each member states instead of forming direct pressure on ASEAN.

This has both positive and negative implications. On one side of the coin, this multiple boomerangs with the 'global virtual network' characteristic create multiple channels with multiple resources pressurizing different actors which is each member state and ASEAN itself. Thus, diverse and inclusive channels are its most powerful characteristic. Milk Tea Alliance solidarity expanded from Myanmar and Thailand to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and now to a loose network in Singapore (Sciortino, 2021). This network of activists may expand and become a broker in pressuring national governments to pressure ASEAN. Then, the ASEAN is expected to act upon the Myanmar coup.

The second favorable implication is that South-South solidarity's role differs from the one-way and patronizing way of lecturing democracy from perceived North third-state to South state. A relatively equal relation characterizes ASEAN and inter-member state's relations compared to patronizing and unequal relations in North-South relations in Keck and Sikkink's conceptualization. Hence, the pressure MTA put is not only on these states to lecture Myanmar

on democracy but also on respective domestic democratic issues. MTA also pressures each member state to care about their domestic issues; thus, this model avoids romanticizing a state's relative democratic or human rights condition compared to the other, in this case, Indonesia vis-à-vis Myanmar. This new conceptualization advances the Global South state as an agent of democracy, despite questions regarding their capacity and legitimacy to push forward democratic and human rights norms. 'South' countries could put pressure on relatively undemocratic countries by calling out undemocratic practices. However, they could be called out by other actors due to their democratic issues. This made them not just actors receiving pressure to democratize but also 'imperfect' actors to push countries to democratize.

Nevertheless, on the other side of the coin, this pressure is said to be weaker, looser, and more dispersed, instead of one enormous pressure to one third-actor. Previous research has also emphasized weak ties, weak influence, and the marginal role of technology networks or social media. In fact, the various boomerang chains in the MTA case were built through cross-border digital mobilization (Tufekci, 2014; Schradie, 2018). Moreover, Fuchs (2014) emphasizes that social media can be a transnational public space that penetrates information barriers, but of course, with various limitations, namely movement deradicalization, slacktivism, and information monopoly. Thus, the 'Global Virtual Network' model characteristic also exposes MTA to these weaknesses.

The issue in Milk Tea Alliance also has been contextualized and became more complex from mere solidarity with Myanmar to also incorporating domestic democracy issues, ranging from Papua issues in Indonesia, protests against Duterte in the Philippines, and monarchy issues in Thailand. The domestic issue is not exclusively discussed by one coalition at the domestic level but rather is exchanged at the regional level. Thus, the movement represents resentment against illiberal government in ASEAN. However, it adds more issues than mere solidarity to Myanmar activists, making it have so many agendas to handle. This can overshadow the main goal of demonstrating solidarity in the case of Myanmar.

Assessing The Role of Milk Tea Alliance as The Transnational Movement in Pressuring the Indonesian Government and ASEAN

In assessing the roles of transnational network advocacy, Keck & Sikkink describes four functions of transnational networks. MTA Indonesia is considered to have an information politics function where information can be utilized, transferred through communication and coordination (symbolic politics), as well as the leverage to defend vulnerable groups, namely the people of Myanmar (leverage politics) through its massive coalition in Indonesia and their

activism towards government and ASEAN. However, for accountability politics indicators, MTA Indonesia is considered not yet capable of influencing policy outcomes from influential actors. Nevertheless, the role of transnational networks, as emphasized by Barnett & Duvall (2005) is not only policy outcomes but also transformation and participation in policy debates (p.52).

The MTA network succeeded in pressuring the Indonesian government to state its position in not legitimizing the military junta and rejecting statements about the idea of re-election (France24, 2021). Through protests and solidarity, MTA Indonesia succeeded in encouraging the urgency of the Myanmar issue, which led to the ASEAN Summit and the Five-Point Consensus convening. Unfortunately, the consensus is not specific in discussing "cessation of violence," specifically violence against who and who perpetrates it (Kharisma, 2021). This is the main difference between ASEAN's action and the Milk Tea Alliance's demand.

However, there was a behavior alteration in October 2021, Myanmar's junta chief was excluded from the ASEAN summit in October 2021 and was replaced by a non-political representative at a summit of Southeast Asian nations (DW, 2021). While it is hard if not impossible, to prove the causal effect that the behavioral shift from ASEAN's symbolic recognition of the military junta is exactly what the Myanmar activists and Milk Tea Alliance solidarity have been protesting and pushing for (Chia & Singer, 2021). ASEAN leaders, including Indonesia, also seem to be frustrated by the lack of meaningful progress of the Five-Point Consensus (Voi.id, 2022). These concerns are shared as well by Milk Tea Alliance's coalition. With behavior alteration of ASEAN and its member states towards Tatmadaw, it can be concluded the Milk Tea Alliance has considerable influence at least among its supporters towards ASEAN and the Indonesian government.

The boomerang mechanism is highly dependent on the role of third-party actors as well as state actors themselves in responding to information, especially in the ASEAN context. Unfortunately, ASEAN and its member countries, especially the Indonesian government, have a very weak role in suppressing the Tatmadaw – even according to some experts, it is called legitimizing the Tatmadaw – so that the highest pressure from the MTA is directed at ASEAN and the Indonesian government. Instead of questioning the capacity of the Global South entities, this paper explains this by contrasting norms existing at the global, regional, and national levels, which affects the effectiveness of the transfer of norms beyond boundaries.

The author sees this as a different approach taken by ASEAN and its member states. Acharya (2004) emphasized that norms are not directly adopted but localized by interlocutors,

which are the ASEAN national governments and ASEAN policymakers themselves. Global democratic norms brought by Milk Tea Alliance are being localized into ASEAN's regional norms which champion democracy through non-intervention and dialogue. This explains why the two entities have different and contrasting approaches. While MTA pushes for a stricter approach such as exclusion, sanction, and condemnation – which is shared by global actors, specifically the European Union and United States (Jacinto, 2021) – ASEAN champions informal and lengthy consultations (Katsumata, 2003). Besides norms as cognitive priors, ASEAN's institution was made to build trust among regimes and not to solve conflict thus push for intervention is localized to fit into not only norms but also the institution itself (Thompson & Chong, 2020).

Furthermore, ASEAN adheres to the principle of non-interference and quiet diplomacy which are often contrasted with the Western model of intervention (Ramcharan, 2000). The different approach also affected member states' approaches, especially in the case of Indonesia. In this context, ASEAN and Indonesia serve as interlocutors localizing global democratic norms to fit into the regional and national level. ASEAN's careful approach is due to the experience of colonialism and foreign intervention in the name of democracy. Therefore, as post-colonial states, they prioritize regime stability and nation-building. This does not mean they did not do anything substantial, but they try to relay the 'boomerang' to Tatmadaw, albeit in a totally different way than MTA expected.

The contrasting and different approach can be visible as Milk Tea Alliance Indonesia explicitly questions the outcome of the ASEAN Way which encourages dialogue against those who monopolize violence such as the military junta. Safina, a representative from MTA Indonesia, emphasized that ASEAN focuses a lot on processes, such as dialogue or forming envoys, but with a blurry end goal (Gatra.com, 2021). This view was also confirmed by the MTA civil society network in Myanmar, which criticized the Five-Point Consensus, calling ASEAN as "incompetent" and that the consensus was "weak," "none of the points were implemented," and worse, it was seen as weakening the voice of Myanmar civilians (MilkTeaAlliance, 2021). MTA Indonesia itself in its official statement document indicates that the approach taken by ASEAN and the Indonesian government, in particular, has not been firm and does not provide a clear signal to the military junta.

In its official statement, MTA Indonesia is not only targeting the ASEAN, but also the Indonesian government. So far, Indonesia has held ASEAN high level meetings and summits, also urged for the implementation of the five-point consensus, including pushing Myanmar to approve the appointment of the ASEAN envoy (Allard & Da Costa, 2021). However,

Laksmana emphasizes that in the document, Indonesia mostly inserts the lowest denominator terms, for example, emphasizing "ASEAN centrality," "cooperation," without being accompanied by measurements through strategic efforts. Looking from an effectivity lens, the actions of Indonesian government are said to be lacking a clear impact or outcome as MTA expected, namely the form of sanctions against military institutions as well as regional or international mechanisms to pressure the military junta.

MTA Indonesia and Myanmar framed ASEAN and Indonesian government's ambivalent dialogue approach towards Tatmadaw as legitimizing and playing in the scenario of the violent dictator, instead of supporting the civil society in Myanmar. Tobing (2018) emphasizes that the ASEAN Way – ASEAN's euphemism for regional cooperation that emphasizes sovereignty and non-interference – prevents ASEAN's capacity to reconcile and resolve humanitarian conflicts (p.155). ASEAN is too focused on conflict resolution processes, such as dialogue, appointment of envoys, and must recognize the importance of showing the results (outcomes) of these processes, or their legitimacy will continue to be questioned.

Despite criticism of ASEAN & Indonesia as a third actor, MTA has successfully crystallized pressure to the two actors to act on Myanmar's issues. Should there be any issues, ASEAN and Indonesia's embrace of its non-interference, dialogue, and quiet diplomacy are hindrances toward strict actions against Tatmadaw. The boomerang from global democratic norms brought by MTA did reach Tatmadaw. Nonetheless, it is "weakened" by the interlocutors. Although it did not succeed in encouraging ASEAN and the Indonesian government to condemn and take firm action against the military junta, MTA has caused behavior alteration in the two entities. ASEAN now does not invite military junta and Indonesia grows upset about the slow implementation of the Five-Points Consensus. This slow adoption by ASEAN as a regional organization shows that norms are not directly accepted by ASEAN but rather localized by interlocutors or member states to fit into cognitive priors and institutions. In conclusion, MTA has influenced ASEAN and Indonesian government's behavior towards Tatmadaw despite not in the way it expected due to preexisting regional norms.

CONCLUSION

Milk Tea Alliance (MTA) plays an important role in making transnational solidarity among civil society in several Southeast Asian countries, ranging from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia against Tatmadaw in the issue of Myanmar's coup. In Indonesia, MTA specifically targets the Indonesian and ASEAN governments to act decisively in resolving the Myanmar conflict

through *'boomerang effects.'* Due to Tatmadaw's suppression of domestic activism, MTA builds coalition in Indonesia to put pressure on Indonesia as *primus inter pares* and ASEAN in order to generate stronger pressure towards Tatmadaw.

MTA solidarity in Myanmar's issues reflects 'Multiple boomerang' with 'Global Virtual Network' characteristic marked with multiple channels and inclusive participation. However, ASEAN differs from the 'North' state in Keck and Sikkink's model as it is not a single monolithic entity, but is rather shaped by its member states as *'sovereign-reinforcing'* regionalism. Due to its unique regional characteristics, multiplicities of channels, and issues, MTA is an interesting case in the study of 'boomerang pattern.' Moreover, South-South civil society interaction in the case of ASEAN to Myanmar does not reflect the North-South patronizing logic, but rather a more equal standing as it puts forwards 'South countries in the position of shaping and receiving norms. This might raise a question about infectivity, but this model decolonizes the former North-South unequal relations in Keck and Sikkink's model.

Through the *'boomerang effect'* among South-South civil society organizations, the Milk Tea Alliance has been able to put pressure on the Indonesian government and ASEAN. However, norms are localized by interlocutors to fit into cognitive priors and institution, thus the global democratic norms brought by MTA is shaped by the ASEAN way. This caused majority of the efforts to be trust-building, dialogue, and consultations which are shaped by ASEAN and Indonesia's embrace of ASEAN way. Although it did not successfully encourage ASEAN and the Indonesian government to condemn and take firm action against the military junta, MTA has caused behavior alteration in the two actors, despite not in the way it expected.

Therefore, this paper concludes that there is a significant difference in the South-South solidarity reflected in the case of the Milk Tea Alliance in Southeast Asia, whereas regional norms come into play to shape the actor form, multiplicities of channels, issues, and approach they take in the effort to solve Myanmar's issues. Therefore, this paper opens up to future research regarding not only the different models of the initial simplistic boomerang pattern, but also its challenges and ineffectiveness. This paper also recommends academic discussion about the Milk Tea Alliance as a new democratic force in ASEAN and how it can be made more effective considering ASEAN's institutional buildup and norms.

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