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## ASEAN MODERN LEADERSHIP STYLES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Ruly Gumilar<sup>1\*</sup>, Pujo Widodo<sup>2</sup>, and Mas Ayu Elita Hafizah<sup>3</sup>

Department of Weaponry Technology, Faculty of Defense Technology, Republic of Indonesia Defense University

Email: [rulygumilar@gmail.com](mailto:rulygumilar@gmail.com)<sup>1\*</sup>, [pujowidodo78@gmail.com](mailto:pujowidodo78@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [masayu.elita@gmail.com](mailto:masayu.elita@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

Countries that are members of ASEAN have a vision to create regional stability both politically, economically as well as defense and security. The strategic location of ASEAN countries, world geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics, shifts in the world power map, and conflicts of interest. This condition has the potential to make ASEAN the axis of the world, but ASEAN countries are not geographically integrated so that the geopolitical position of each member country is different and different economic levels have an impact on the implementation of an agreement. The purpose of this study is to determine the ideal strategic leadership model for ASEAN. This study uses a qualitative method through critical analysis originating from phenomena and policies that occur in ASEAN with Vietnam as the leader. The future of ASEAN is not only influenced by the leadership style of the ASEAN Chair but also by the leadership style of ASEAN member countries. ASEAN's leadership style in recent years does not seem to have had a significant impact. Based on the consideration of the different conditions of ASEAN members, the Modern Leadership Style: Adaptive and Visionary, can be applied by the ASEAN Chair, so that ASEAN's functions and roles are more optimal.

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**Corresponden author: Ruly Gumilar**

Email: [rulygumilar@gmail.com](mailto:rulygumilar@gmail.com)

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### Introduction

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is a forum for Southeast Asian countries to fight for common interests both politically, economically, and culturally. Based on these interests, ASEAN forms three pillars, namely political pillars to create a region that is peaceful, safe, and free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, economic pillars to build trade cooperation, investment, employment, poverty eradication, and reduce development gaps in the region, and cultural pillars oriented to the development of

democracy, human rights, and drug eradication, ASEAN was built and established to ensure regional stability both politically, economically and defense and security.

The strategic location of ASEAN countries, the geopolitics and geoeconomic dynamics of the world, the shifting map of world powers, and conflicts of interest that have been increasingly heated in the South China Sea are both opportunities and great challenges for ASEAN. Although from the beginning the formation of ASEAN was not intended to be an integrative regional organization like the European Union. ASEAN is more of a loose, association of ten countries in the region ([Erika & Mangku, 2014](#)). Not that ASEAN cannot grow up and become a new axis of power in the international world. The problem is those ASEAN countries are not naturally geographically integrated, so the geopolitical position of each member state is different. Differences in economic levels between countries cause differences in the ability to implement an agreement between countries. Another obstacle is the lack of ASEAN leadership. For the past 10 years, no ASEAN leader has dared to take leadership initiatives in ASEAN ([Widiyanta, 2016](#))

Therefore, strategic leadership in ASEAN with a dynamic and visionary modern leadership style is needed to be able to maintain stability in the ASEAN regional region, while bringing ASEAN members into a new axis of world power.

### **Leadership and Adaptive Leadership**

Leadership is associated with dealing with change, charting a course by creating a future vision, and then unifying, communicating, and inspiring people inside the business to achieve objectives. This is under what Philgo and Suraini said ([Philgo & Suriani, 2015](#)) that leadership is the talent or intellect that motivates a group of people (two or more) to work together to achieve a common goal. If a person lacks the innate talent, expertise, or references from previous activities in the field of leadership, directing others to attain defined goals is difficult ([Fauzi, 2016](#)).

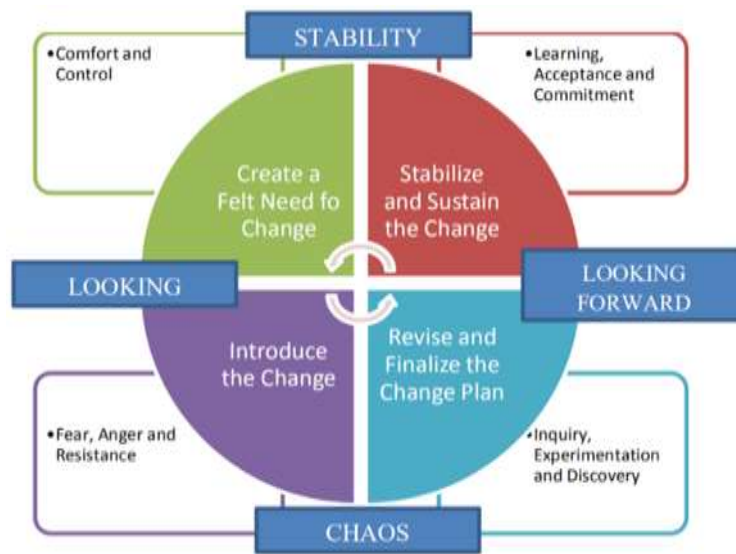
According to Septiani, influence is a leadership role that aims to direct others' behavior and attitudes in the framework of the organization while neglecting the intended goals or actual beneficiaries ([Septiani, 2017](#)). Furthermore, the expected leadership abilities by Kamrani ([Kamrani, 2017](#)) to have three skills, namely: (1) Technical skills, is the knowledge and skills of a person in the process of administrative policy and/or engineering; (2) Human skills, the ability to work effectively with people and foster teamwork; (3) Conceptual skills, the ability to think concerning models, frameworks, broad relationships and long-term plans (visionary). Wijaya ([Wijaya & Rifa'i, 2016](#)) explained that A leader must have technical expertise, product knowledge, problem-solving abilities, professional skills, innovation, initiative, and the ability to effectively use technology, information, and communication. Gupta noted that in the government sector, leadership must at least have: 1) the ability to lead as a leader as well as an official leader; (2) the ability to authorize; (3) a high concern for members; and (4) the ability to create an atmosphere of job satisfaction. This means that the leader must be acceptable to all members of the organization as a leader and must be fatherly as an official leader ([Muhtar, 2019](#)).

Rainer Turangan explains that if associated with future challenges, At the very least, a good leader must be adaptable to future uncertainties, have the ability to collaborate across national and cultural boundaries, and be able to build innovative workplaces. Of course, the

future must be identified, and an organization, including a state, must face the problems and dynamics that come with it. Leaders that are both visionary and adaptable are required to meet future problems ([Abduloh](#), 2015).

Adaptive refers to the ability to intelligently adjust to change. Adaptive leadership is defined as leadership that is capable of quickly adapting to new situations and changes. Change always results in new perspectives, and new perspectives will have an impact on current events. If the leader does not prepare his personality to respond to the new perspective, he will have trouble changing it ([Purnomo & Sanjaya](#), 2020).

Depending on the characteristics of the organization, several of the leadership concepts mentioned above can be employed to operate it. Changes in the obscurity of future events are undoubtedly related to adaptive and imaginative leadership activities ([Alma'arif](#), 2015).



**Figure 1.**  
**Adaptive leadership model (Dava Dimensi Indonesia, DDI)**

Previous studies have not focused on finding the appropriate leadership model for ASEAN. Based on the above background, this paper will discuss the current leadership style of ASEAN leaders and then analyze its suitability with the ideal leadership style model for ASEAN to maintain stability in the ASEAN region, as well as bring ASEAN members to become the new world power axis.

### **Metode Penelitian**

This study uses qualitative methods through critical analysis sourced from phenomena and policy that occurred in ASEAN along with Vietnam as the leader. Based on Lamont, qualitative methods make it easier to know a better understanding in composing the words of the phenomena around them and require focus in observing the understandings and processes that occur ([Lamont](#), 2015).

This research is supported by secondary data, data obtained by utilizing the results of other party's research, relevant information, and literature related to an existing model of leadership and ASEAN for later qualitative analysis by synthesizing existing problems.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF PROBLEMS**

Before discussing further the leadership style of ASEAN leaders, it will first be discussed about the challenges that will face ASEAN in the future, so that a more visionary and bold modern leadership style is needed.

### **1. ASEAN Challenge**

At the 9th ASEAN Summit in 2003, ASEAN member states agreed to set out a common vision for more integrative cooperation as stated in the document The ASEAN Vision 2020, mentioning

“..... The ASEAN Leaders agreed on a shared vision of ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward facing, living in peace, stability, and prosperity, tied together in cooperation in dynamic development, and a community of caring societies, which was approved on the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN..” (ASEAN, 2010:60) ([Alzaharani et al., 2017](#))

Then at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore, on November 20, 2007, ten member states established the ASEAN Charter. At the 2008 summit in Thailand, all ASEAN countries ratified it. Changes from the Declaration to the Charter have a very important meaning. The declaration is a statement of the will of a loose nature, while the Charter is a "Rules-based and peoples-oriented Organization" that legally has more binding power, especially after ratification means it has entered the stage of positive law implementation (entry to force) and has binding force. The interesting thing about this change is that politically there is a more complete will of cooperation towards the integrity of the ASEAN Community, as affirmed in (ASEAN Charter, Article 1, paragraph 13)"to promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building". Blueprint of unity is carried out with closer cooperation through three pillars, namely economic, political, and socio-cultural pillars towards the establishment of integration of Southeast Asian communities (ASEAN Charter Article 1 paragraph 2). By tying the economic, sociocultural, and political sectors of security together, the year 2020 is designated as an achievement of ASEAN integrity. Along with other regional partnerships, optimism for this achievement is growing, but there has been no concrete evidence of this vision being realized till now ([Saeri, 2017](#))

### **2. Analysis of Vietnam's Leadership Style in ASEAN in 2020**

Under the ASEAN Charter, The ASEAN Chair is rotated every year in alphabetical sequence of ASEAN member states' English names. Vietnam is the ASEAN Chairman in 2020, replacing Thailand who previously served as ASEAN Chairman in 2019 ([RI., 2020](#)). This shows that the source of leadership in ASEAN organizations is Empowerment through Delegation of Authority.

"Cohesive and Responsive" is the theme of ASEAN 2020, which is supported by five priorities for 2020 that have been identified to accomplish ASEAN's long-term goals. Such priorities are: (i) to actively contribute to the regional environment of peace, security

and stability; (ii) to bring prosperity through regional integration and connectivity, enhancing ASEAN's adaptability to the 4th Industrial Revolution to seize opportunities; (iii) to raise awareness of the ASEAN Community and Identity; (iv) strengthen partnerships for peace and sustainable development, and promote the role and contribution of ASEAN in the international community; and (v) increase the operational capacity and efficiency of ASEAN ([Indonesia](#), 2020)

Vietnam has shown its achievements in the field of economic development with the highest growth rate and an increasing amount of foreign investment. Solidarity and support for its 1967 solidarity are needed to move ASEAN, which has been established since 1967, to a further level to create prosperity, stability, and peace in the region. The strength of Vietnam in ASEAN in 2020 is defined by a complex international scenario and a number of negative aspects. The world economy, for example, is weakening, global trade is declining, there is more competition and trade conflicts among key economic powers, gold prices are rising, crude oil prices are fluctuating rapidly, and international market dangers are rising. Furthermore, the situation on the Korean Peninsula is extremely tense, and the situation in the South China Sea is quite worrisome.

Economic growth in the last two years above 7 percent, Vietnam invites all ASEAN members to make the association of nations in Southeast Asia a common foreign policy platform. In a fact, some ASEAN member states tend to be pragmatic, focusing on domestic affairs, rather than emphasizing ASEAN's role as a regional organization. Vietnam wants to emphasize and strengthen ASEAN's position as a central entity and a central role in relations with major powers.

In the economic field, ASEAN member countries including Vietnam are growing stronger and need to be integrated to compete with China and India by increasing attractiveness for foreign investors. A cohesive SEAN is an inevitability to maintain regional stability. In the past, the Southeast Asian region has been the object of battles and struggles for influence between forces. ASEAN unity should not be shaken or even torn apart by major powers trying to influence its member countries.

Each member is not strong enough to stand alone on the face of planet Earth. The members of this bloc will be much stronger and their voices united before the great powers if they unite. As a result, ASEAN is becoming more trustworthy in addressing all concerns in Southeast Asia, and ASEAN's economic growth will not be hampered by regional instability. Today ASEAN must certainly have a common voice with the forces, to unite. The same voice in dealing with internal issues to ensure regional stability. It is expected that there will be no more voices that make this organization divided due to the influence of external factors. Of course, all ASEAN members want their region to be stable to continue economic growth ([Bangun](#), 2021)

### **3. Adaptive Leadership Style for ASEAN**

Being a government leader in a country whether national, regional, or local is not easy. Leadership in ASEAN must face challenge after challenge. In the face of adversity, adaptive and imaginative leadership can be achieved by:

- a. Create a Felt Need for Change

A leader who anticipates change (adaptive leadership) must be able to instill a sense of urgency for change. This indicates that the leader has a responsibility to inculcate in the organization's members a sense of transformation. Leaders who want to instill a conscious feeling of change in their followers must be able to identify what needs to change (what needs to change), why an organization must change (why it must change), and what will happen if the organization does not respond to the change (the consequences for the organization of not responding to the challenge) and Leaders should attract their members' attention by offering them reasons to leave a comfortable condition (catch their attention-give people a reason to leave their comfort zone). Some of the aforementioned questions can be implemented by adaptable leaders. (Al Ma'arif, 2016).

**b. Introduce the Change**

It is the visionary leader's role to introduce change to its members, as the visionary leader will immediately become a mentor.

Develop as a member's coach. Giving or asking members of the organization to solve problems (ask the people to solve the "problem"), providing solutions and strategies (offer solutions and strategies), listening to members' goals, interests, and fears (listen to people's objections, concerns, and fears), and knowing and acknowledging members' fears are all examples of how leaders can introduce changes (acknowledge their fears). and invite and request contributions from its members (invite people to offer ideas) ([Alma'arif](#), 2015).

**c. Revise and Finalize the Change Plan**

To assist the transformation process, the leader's contribution of ideas, both from within and outside the business, is at least revised and finalized. Adaptive leaders should assist organizational members in recognizing hidden possibilities, determining the shape of change based on their members' requirements/viewpoints, and developing creative and inventive solutions. Adaptive leaders' key responsibility in modifying and completing the change planning process is to encourage organizational members to develop creative answers to issues about upcoming changes and to adjust to shifting vision, strategy, and planning ([Alma'arif](#), 2015).

**d. Stabilize and Sustain the Change**

The next function of adaptive leaders is to stabilize and preserve the sustainability of such changes by the times once organizational changes have occurred and are regarded to be able to adjust to the circumstances and scenarios of environmental obscurity. Develop action measures to implement changes, as well as performance measurements to assess those changes. Make revisions to vision and strategy changes to reflect new thinking and insights, and urge organizational members to be open to new challenges. For organizational leaders, these four processes in sustaining the stability and sustainability of change are critical ([Alma'arif](#), 2015).

## Conclusions

The ASEAN Chair is rotated every year in accordance with the English alphabetical sequence of ASEAN member nations' names. This indicates that empowerment through delegated authority is the source of leadership in ASEAN organizations.

Vietnam is the ASEAN Chairman in 2020, the theme of which is "Cohesive and Responsive", supported by five priorities: (i) to actively contribute to the regional environment of peace, security and stability; (ii) to bring prosperity through regional integration and connectivity, enhancing ASEAN's adaptability to the 4th Industrial Revolution to seize opportunities; (iii) to raise awareness of the ASEAN Community and Identity; (iv) strengthen partnerships for peace and sustainable development, and promote ASEAN's role and contribution in the international community; and (v) improve ASEAN's operational capacity and efficiency.

The future of ASEAN is not only influenced by the leadership style of the ASEAN Chairman but also by the leadership styles of ASEAN member states. ASEAN's leadership style in recent years does not seem to have had a significant impact. Asean's potential and strength cannot be optimized.

Taking into account the conditions of each different ASEAN member, the Modern Leadership Style: Adaptive and Visionary, can be applied by the Chairman of ASEAN, so that the function and role of ASEAN are more optimal.

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