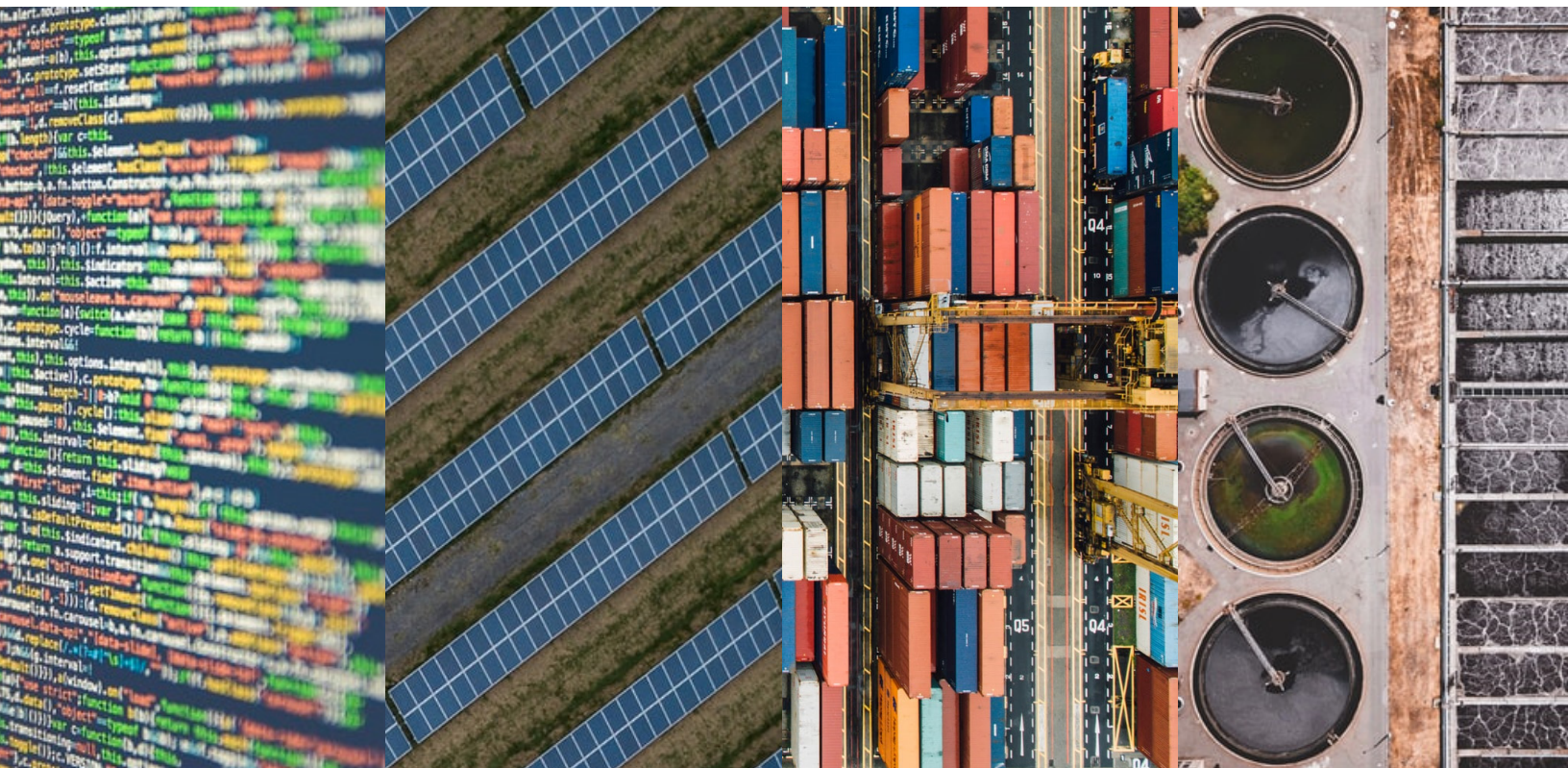
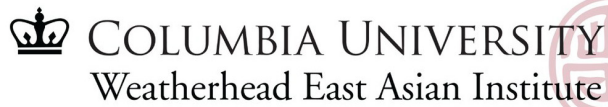


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THE ASIA PACIFIC AFFAIRS JOURNAL

FUTURE IS ASIAN ■■



THE ASIA PACIFIC AFFAIRS JOURNAL

The APAC Journal is a periodical published by Columbia University's Asia Pacific Affairs Council at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute. Released bi-annually by Columbia students, the APAC Journal is dedicated to fostering an understanding of vital issues through the exchange of professional expertise and personal experiences spanning the Asia Pacific region.

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EDITORS' FOREWORD

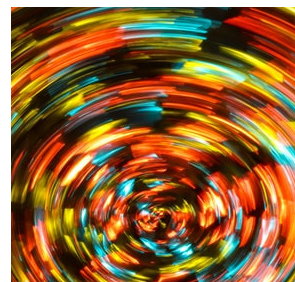
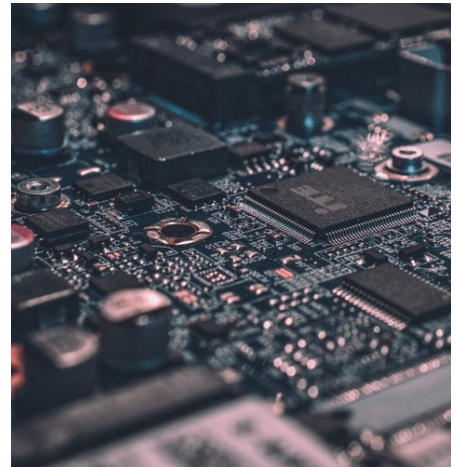
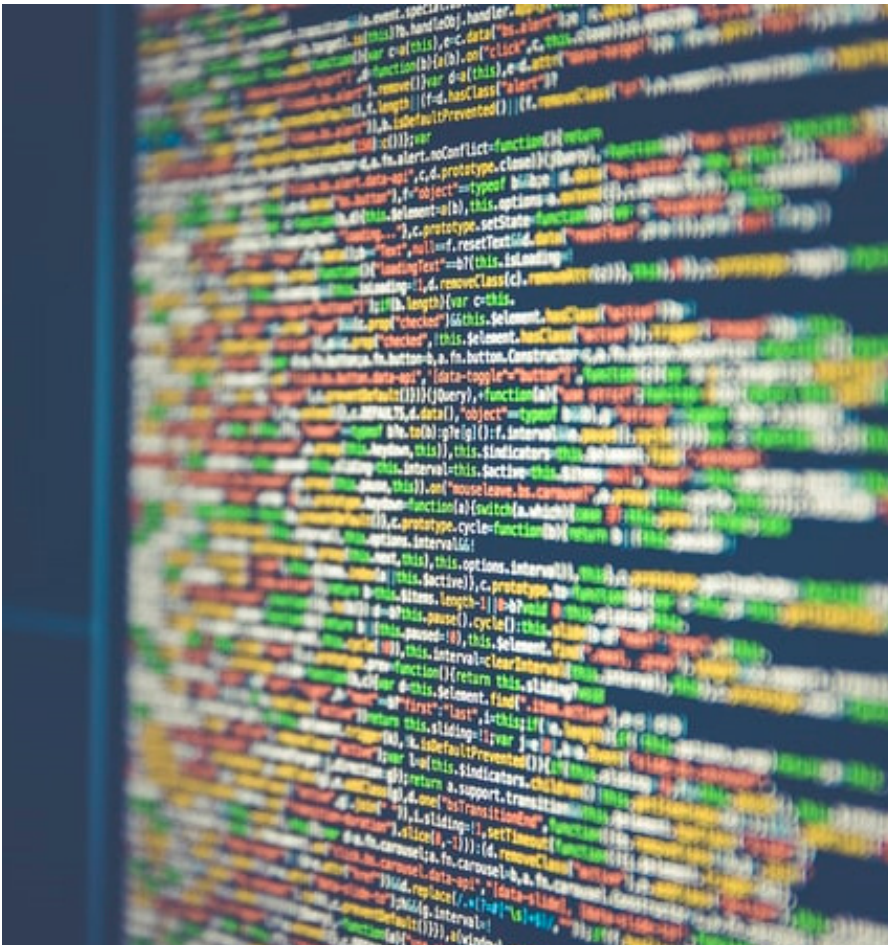
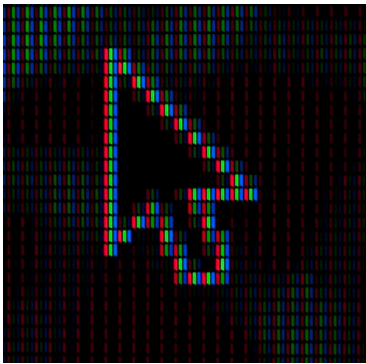
Welcome to Spring 2021 edition of APAC Journal published by Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University in the City of New York. Whether you are a WEAI or APAC or Columbia alum, an affiliate or student, we are thrilled that you found our journal and confident that in it you'll find thoughtful and innovative policy solutions to some of the most pressing issues of the 21st century.

When we began to scope a theme for this edition in mid-2020, the Editorial Board was closely monitoring the incalculable and unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. While the pandemic curve fluctuated across different parts of the world, several Asian countries were setting precedent in pandemic response for others to follow. From climate actions and public health to flow of trade and investments and the rise of Asia in the multipolar world, this past year's events forced policy experts to re-imagine Asian future and the role of Asian economies in our common future.

In this edition, *Future is Asian*, a thoughtful selection of six pieces touches on the role of Asian economies in responding to challenges of cybersecurity, public health, trade and investment and decarbonisation. These pieces, and evidence-based policy perspectives articulated by the authors elucidate the need to reconsider the role of Asia in public policies and international development dialogues.

Envisioning intellectual and inclusive dialogue, debate and knowledge sharing, we hope you will enjoy reading these exemplary works.

TECHNOLOGY



Nor am I Out of It: Visions and Reality for ASEAN Cybersecurity

By Aidan Alexander Berkey

For both economic and geopolitical reasons, Southeast Asia is among the most complex cyber threat environments on the planet. The rapid growth of digital businesses in the region generates lucrative opportunities for cybercriminal actors: the consultancy A.T. Kearney estimates sector growth to surpass \$1 trillion within the next decade. At the same time, nearby states which aggressively sponsor cyberattacks, particularly China and North Korea, have targeted the region as a vulnerable hunting ground. They are joined by domestically-based cybercriminals, many of whom have developed distinctive national specializations.

Vietnam's dynamic hacking community is one of the largest in Asia, while Nigerian fraudsters have a substantial presence in Malaysia.¹ The result is a diverse ecosystem of state-backed and independent cybercriminal organizations well-poised to exploit vulnerable infrastructure throughout the region. Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) activity levels in Southeast Asia exceed global averages, while in 2018 CSIS estimated that the region lost \$171 billion annually to cybercrime, nearly a third of the global total.² Under the cover of criminal activity, meanwhile, regional actors and nearby powers target ASEAN governments and key institutions such as the financial services and media sectors.

Fireeye, a global threat intelligence firm, has documented at least 13 APTs targeting governments in the region.³ For any state, business, or individual operating online in the region, robust cybersecurity is of the utmost importance.

Signs suggest that ASEAN governments are increasingly alert to the threats posed by cybercriminals and state actors alike. Although public acknowledgement of cyber threats remains low, due in large part to diplomatic and political sensitivities around admitting vulnerabilities, ASEAN states in recent years have recognized the need to overhaul their national cybersecurity capabilities.⁴ In recent years Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, among other countries, have published their first national cybersecurity strategies, while Indonesia and Thailand established government agencies devoted to cyber defense.⁵ Moreover, since the June 2016 ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting, the organization has invested significant time and effort into the construction of resilient regional cyber norms.⁶ Given the complex threat environment facing the region, governments have sought to develop multilateral coordination as its primary risk mitigation tool, collaborating both with each other and with global cyber powers such as the U.S. and Russia to develop normative structures for restraining cyber

conflict.⁷ ASEAN countries are increasingly vocal in the UN and other global forums for cybersecurity, and accordingly take positions that emphasize de-escalation and fostering open internet and associated internet governance.

Nevertheless, this focus has only translated into limited results so far. Both public and private spending on cybersecurity in Southeast Asia significantly lags global norms, with the exception of Singapore. And while funding is ultimately a blunt indicator of capacity, in this case it reflects deeper limitations. Resourcing for investment in the protection of critical digital infrastructure is constrained throughout the region,⁸ while (reflecting global trends) undersupply of domestic cybersecurity talent and services constrain attempts to develop viable long-term defenses.⁹ Outside of Singapore, most states in the region lack structured plans to invest in domestic cybersecurity talent, while Malaysia and Singapore are the only states that have thus far translated their strategies into public awareness building, multilateral cooperation, or other tangible manifestations of increasing responsiveness to the cyber threat landscape. This raises the question: what do ASEAN countries prioritize in cyberspace, and why?

On one end of the spectrum, Singapore has taken a leadership position in regional cybersecurity, not just through its own investments but in its efforts to foster greater cooperation and capacity development amongst its neighbors. Unlike most countries globally, Singapore has emphasized cybersecurity for both the government and private actors; as a % of GDP, Singaporean spending on cybersecurity is 3rd in the world (the only ASEAN country above the global average).¹⁰

The Singaporean government, however, has invested not only in resilient IT infrastructure for its own sake, but has funded capacity expansions such as training programs for its neighbors through the ASEAN Cyber Capacity Program.¹¹ By funding and hosting the ASEAN-Singapore Cyber Center of Excellence, representing the region in international dialogues, and developing a world-class domestic cyber response capability, Singapore is at the forefront of developing an ASEAN model for regional cybersecurity—focused on collaborative capacity-strengthening in its near-abroad.¹²

While these investments have not fully insulated Singapore from malicious actors, as illustrated by recent incidents such as the hacks of SingHealth and ST Engineering Aerospace, they have established Singapore as a beacon of proactive cyber planning not just in Southeast Asia but worldwide.

Like Singapore, Vietnam has established itself as one of the leading cyber powers in Asia. Yet its developmental path is both less closely aligned with the ASEAN normative ideals and, in some respects, more representative of regional developments. In early 2019, Vietnam became one of several Southeast Asian countries to ratify new cybersecurity laws and policies. However, unlike the Singaporean model, Vietnamese cybersecurity policy appears to prioritize a domestic rather than an international focus.

Cybersecurity is interpreted as more directly related to state power, with control of information and development of domestic hacking capabilities prioritized. Thus the new cybersecurity law's passage was quickly followed by clampdowns

on individual internet usage and media content disagreeable to the government.¹³ Vietnam is far from the only country to pursue such a policy; among others in the region, the Philippines, Thailand, and even Singapore have passed new laws or expanded existing ones in order to restrict undesirable internet content.¹⁴

While Vietnam is one of the most targeted ASEAN countries for cybercriminals, particularly from China,¹⁵ the status-quo seems to have encouraged the government to reinvest in its own offensive cyber capabilities: APT-32 (“OceanLotus”), widely believed to be sponsored by the Vietnamese government, has targeted the governments of Laos, Cambodia, and the Philippines, as well as car companies and other multinationals operating in the region.¹⁶

It is not that Vietnam is unique in this regard — although its offensive capabilities are more developed, it is far from the only ASEAN country to covertly back the hacking of its neighbors. But encouraging this behavior threatens to undermine the cooperative cyber-dynamics that ASEAN seeks to foster, even as attempts to control the internet delay the growth of digital literacy necessary to establish self-reliant cybersecurity.

It is far from clear which of these two models will win out. On a spectrum from self-interest to normative cooperation, ASEAN countries are, for the most part, exploring both poles; many countries subscribe publicly to the Singaporean model of normative cooperation even while instituting more restrictive controls on their domestic internets. But as the stakes for regional cybersecurity grow ever higher, neither model can succeed without sufficient investment. Combatting the range

of sophisticated threat actors in southeast Asia, from outside APTs to domestic cybercriminals, requires comprehensive focus on building regional resilience.

While Singapore has taken the lead in domestic cybersecurity prioritization and recognizes the importance of increasing regional capacity, a normative policy depends on wholesale commitment from its partner states — a commitment not backed up so far by financial or policy focus. The more nationalistic Vietnamese model, meanwhile, may bolster state capabilities and control, but overlooks resilience altogether while heightening the security dilemma neighboring states face.

Resolving these challenges can be done, but only if ASEAN states wake up to the necessity of bolstering regional cyber capabilities. Sustained investment in developing local cyber-talent and hardening infrastructure can make a meaningful difference and lay the groundwork for a uniquely cooperative approach to regional cybersecurity. But doing so will require the region to make hard choices and translate its language of norms into material commitments.

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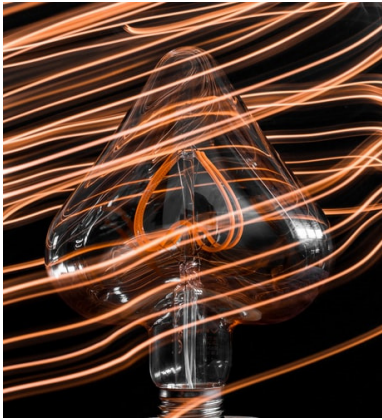
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ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Asia: Powerhouse for Future Energy Transition?

By Yushan Lou

In 2021, as one of his first acts in the Oval office, President Biden signed an executive order rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement. Promising a transition towards a zero-carbon future, the Biden-Harris administration has a lot to catch up on. In the years the U.S. left the Paris Agreement, Asian countries have emerged as the key players in the decarbonization race.

In the 21st century, Asia has emerged as the global powerhouse for producing renewable energy-related products. The story of Asia becoming the manufacturing center of the renewable world is not a new phenomenon. It's manufacturing roots can be traced to Japanese companies that dominated the global trade post-World War II by exporting manufactured products for economic reconstruction. Soon after, in the 1960s, South Korea emerged as the leading exporter for semiconductors and electronics. In 1978, China became a global manufacturer for a wide variety of goods, and the famous tiger cub economies of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and other southeast countries soon augmented their manufacturing capacities too. With economic reforms in the early 1990s, India too expanded its manufacturing diversity and capacity. This manufacturing story of Asia is dynamic and continually expanding.

From their initial low-cost manufacturing, Asian economies have gradually developed to provide better quality products to overseas markets. This series of developments in enterprises and technology across Asia also extends to the clean energy field. In the list of top ten solar photovoltaic manufacturers, eight are Asian companies.¹ In 2018, China accounted for 73% of the world's solar photovoltaic module production followed by South Korea and Malaysia accounting for 6% and 5%, respectively. In contrast, Europe and the U.S. account for 3% and 1%, respectively, of the global solar photovoltaic manufacture share.²

Similar Asian dominance is noted in the wind turbine manufacturing industry. Of the top ten largest wind turbine manufacturers, six are based in China.³ In addition, Asia is charging ahead of several developed economies in the decarbonization race as it is expanding its manufacturing strength for electric vehicle batteries. Out of the top five lithium-ion battery producers, four of them are Asian. China alone accounts for two-thirds of the world's production capacity for lithium-ion batteries, with Japan and South Korea accounting for second and third highest shares of global production capacity, respectively.⁴ With hydrogen gaining traction as an alternative fuel for hard-to-decarbonize sec-



Global primary energy consumption by region (2010-2050)

quadrillion British thermal units

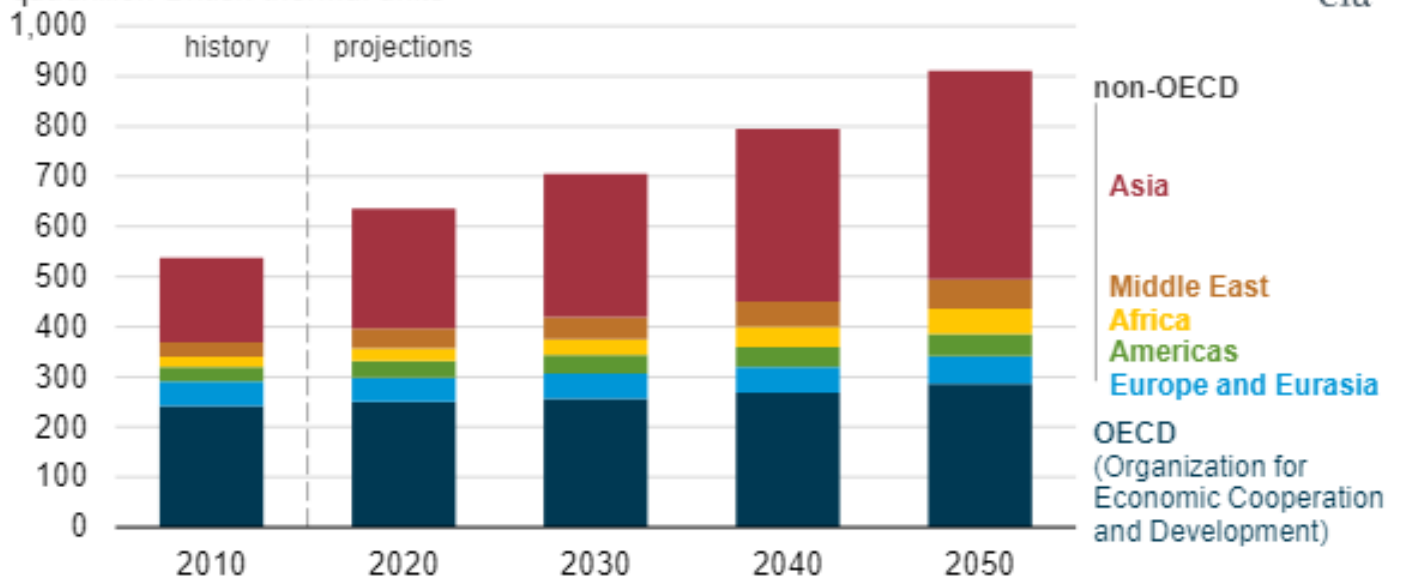


Figure 1. Global primary energy consumption by region (2010 – 2050)⁷

tors such as heavy industries and heavy transports, Japan is setting itself ahead of others by establishing the world's largest green hydrogen production plant in 2020 using solar and a 10MW electrolyzer.⁵

At the same time, Asia's economic growth and rising standard of living is projected to make the region one of the largest energy consumers in the world for the foreseeable future. The region is expected to contribute to 60% of global economic growth and be responsible for 90% of the new members of the middle-class entering the global economy.⁶ These newcomers will be the robust force driving continuous economic expansion as well as rising energy consumption. As a result, Asia is on a path to use more than half of the world's energy supply by 2035 and contribute to 50% of the increase in world energy usage by 2050 — resulting in a far-reaching impact in the global energy

markets.⁷ Therefore, the choice of energy source Asian countries select will have a profound impact on the global energy mix and future GHG emissions.

In essence, Asia is set to alter the future energy mix of the world — as the biggest energy consumer and supplier of renewable energy. However, challenges lie ahead for Asia when it comes to energy transition. As much as China, Japan, and South Korea invest in renewable energy, all three countries still invest more in coal and gas. It is clear that the choices Asian economies make in the present will impact the climate trajectory of the planet, and ultimately those living in it. If the world were to achieve a zero-carbon future successfully, Asia will need to leverage its manufacturing supremacy to supply the world with renewable energy products, as well as take urgent, impactful steps to decarbonize the energy mix.

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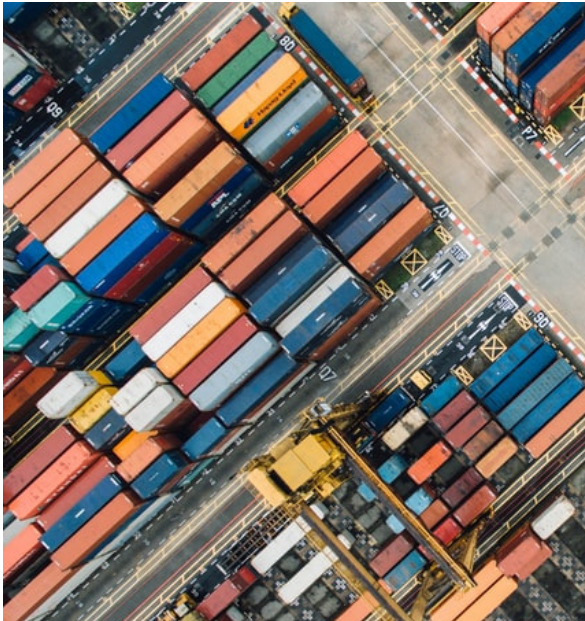
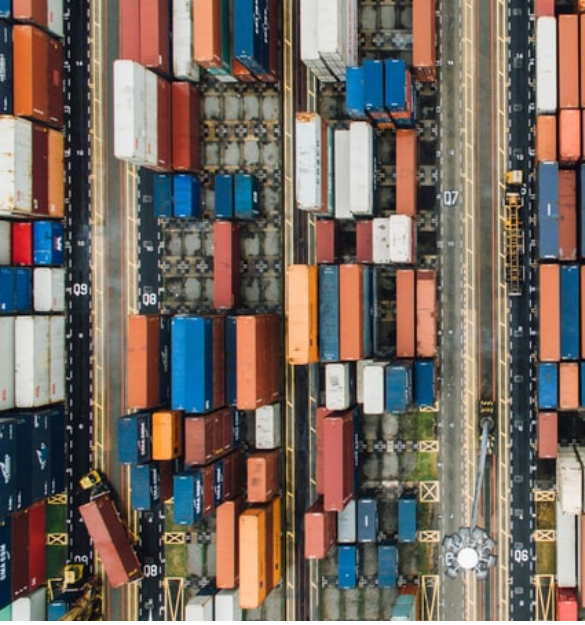
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TRADE & ECONOMY



The Future of Trade is Asian

By Rebecca Purba

Globally economic power has been held by mostly western countries as evidenced by agreements such as the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In the past few decades, however, Asian countries have emerged as economic successes. In the 1980s, Japan became the second-largest economy behind only the United States. It was followed by other Asian countries such as China, South Korea, and Singapore—all of which experienced rapid economic growth. Several countries in Asia expanded their economic opportunities by uniting under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in an effort to promote economic growth and stability within the region (ASEAN 2016). The members include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Although the western world has traditionally played a leading role in international trade agreements, Asian nations that have focused on regional trade agreements have experienced rapid economic growth and development.

In response to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a large free trade agreement that was initially dominated by the US and excluded more than half of the ASEAN members, Asian economies began part-

nering with each other. For example, in 2011, per Indonesia's suggestion for an expanded ASEAN, a regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP) discussion commenced with six new trading partners: Australia, the People's Republic of China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand (Gultom 2020). This expansion was undertaken to strengthen economic linkages, enhance trade and investment-related activities, and minimize the development gap among countries in the region, which had been exacerbated by the TPP. The purpose of the TPP was to establish consistent rules for global investment; but the high standards automatically excluded most developing Asian countries and therefore, allowed them to fall further behind.

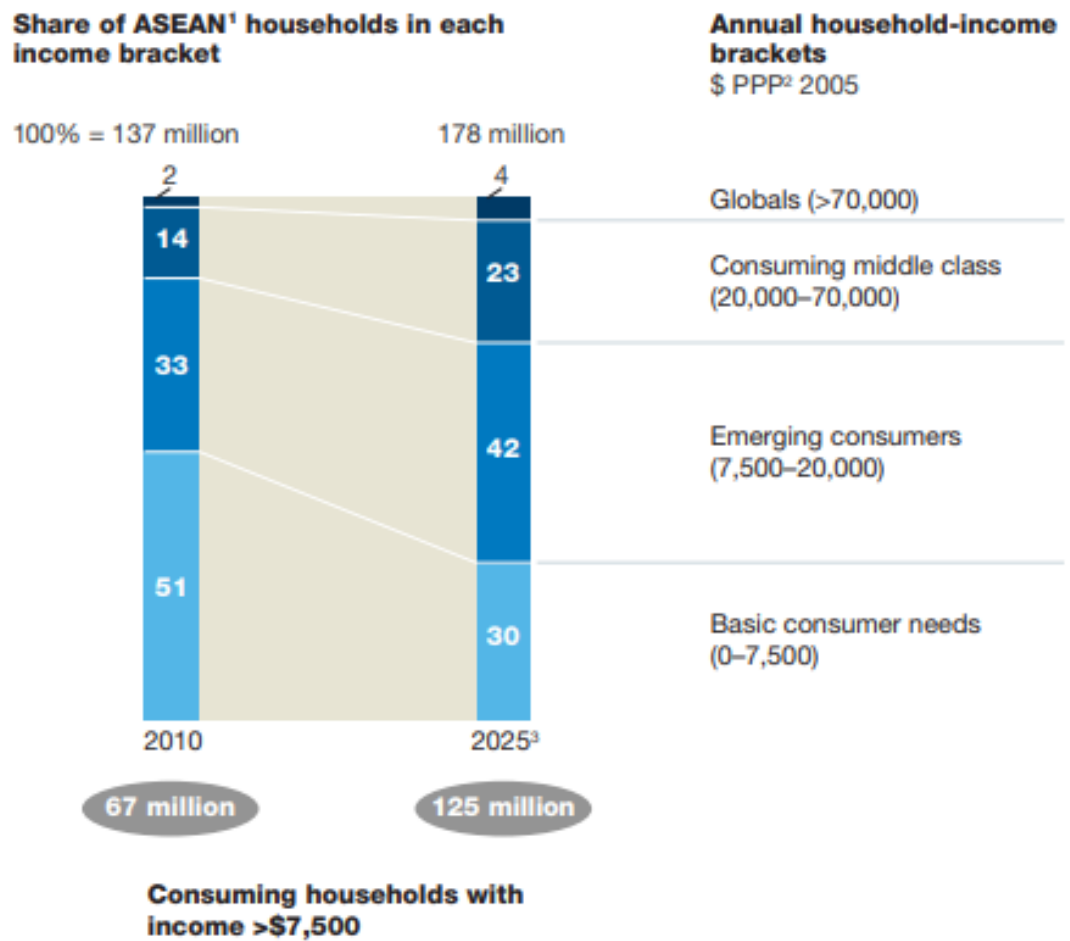
The RCEP, signed in November 2020, is currently the world's largest trading bloc. The member countries account for almost half of the world's population, contribute about 30% of global GDP, and are responsible for over a quarter of the world's exports (ASEAN 2016). Compared to the TPP, which was supposed to be the "gold standard" for international trade, the RCEP has been deemed considerably more accommodating exemplified by its success in reducing the existing trade barriers between nations (Aggarwal 2016, 5). The agreement incentivizes supply chains

across the region while also catering to the political sensitivities facing several nations (Petri and Plummer 2020).

The ASEAN countries are culturally incredibly diverse. For example, Indonesia is home to the world’s largest Muslim population, 80% of Filipinos are Roman Catholics, and 95% of Thai people are Buddhist (Breene 2016). Nonetheless, the agreement has been successful in bringing together these culturally diverse nations

under economic policies that are favorable to all members. ASEAN, hailed as the most successful inter-governmental organization in the developing world today, has a declaration that prioritizes cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, technical, and educational fields, among others. The ASEAN Declaration also promotes regional peace and stability through ensuring respect for justice and the rule of law, and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter (Flores and Abad 1997).

Figure 1.
The number of consuming households in ASEAN is expected to almost double by 2025



¹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations; excludes Brunei.

² Purchasing power parity adjusts for price differences in identical goods across countries to reflect differences in purchasing power in each country.

³ Forecast; figures may not sum, because of rounding.

Source: McKinsey Global Institute Cityscope database and Institute analysis

Table 1. Trade deals in force among original RCEP countries

	ASEAN	Australia	China	India	Japan	New Zealand	South Korea
ASEAN	NA	Yes, with New Zealand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, with Australia	Yes
Australia	Yes, with New Zealand	NA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
China	Yes	Yes	NA	No	No	Yes	Yes
India	Yes	Yes	No	NA	Yes	No	Yes
Japan	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	NA	No	No
New Zealand	Yes, with Australia	Yes	Yes	No	No	NA	Yes
South Korea	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	NA

Source: Governments of Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea

The benefits from ASEAN membership are primarily related to trade and the free flow of peoples. Specifically, member nations gain access to more export markets and regional supply chains, increase the diversity of goods for sale in their countries, improve tourism opportunities through relaxed ASEAN travel requirements, benefit from trade and investment linkages, and allow citizens greater access to diverse jobs (Intal, Jr. et al. 2017, 4). ASEAN will continue to benefit from creating more free trade agreements with associated trade partners and is expected to overtake the European Union in economic growth measures within a generation (Breene, 2016). Based on the success of ASEAN, it is clear that RCEP will expand industrial and value chains in the region — further strengthening economic integration (Ying 2021, 49).

ASEAN is a growing hub of consumer demand, with the number of consuming households expected to double by 2025 (HV, Thompson, and Tonby 2014). This makes ASEAN incredibly attractive as a market entry point for developed countries hoping to become more involved in the region. However, because ASEAN consists of ten different countries, one of the main issues facing RCEP is the overlapping and complicated rules involved in each agreement (Elms and Nguyen 2019, 9).

Since the ASEAN countries and the six additional RCEP countries already have standalone free trade agreements, uniting the efforts under RCEP would in theory be more effective. This will position Asia to be a coherent trading zone similar to the EU. Some of the benefits in combining these many regional FTAs include lowered tariffs,

standardized customs rules and procedures, and new market access in regions without preexisting trade deals (Lee 2019).

Often labeled as the “China-led” trade agreement, the RCEP, in reality, was brokered primarily by ASEAN members. In fact, without “ASEAN centrality”, this large FTA might not have been launched in the first place. While China will benefit plenty from the partnership — primarily through strengthening its relations with other Asian countries and therefore accelerating Northeast Asian economic integration — RCEP ensures mutually beneficial growth across its member nations (Petri and Plummer 2020).

RCEP is arguably one of the most positive responses by world leaders to the global protectionist trends evident in the past decade (Cali 2020). RCEP is estimated to significantly benefit Southeast Asian countries by adding nearly \$200 billion to the global economy and increasing the GDP of its members by 0.2% per year (Petri and Plummer 2020). Northeast Asian countries will also benefit to a lesser extent because they already have FTAs with their partners. The countries represented in the RCEP are unique in that they are ambitious but also respectful and accommodating towards diversity. Unlike other trade agreements that established high standards for global investment which widened the development gap within Asian countries, RCEP focuses on a more inclusive approach.

In the age of trade wars, RCEP’s eight years of patient negotiations, called the “ASEAN way”, focused on ensuring all participating countries respected each other. The unusually slow, but consensual and flexible way of negotiation was actually the deal’s greatest strength (Petri and Plummer

2020). During RCEP talks, developed countries understood that in order for their own economies to grow, they needed to be flexible with developing countries and help them to move up the ladder. Therefore the whole region could reap the benefits of development.

Most of the RCEP members are located in the Asia Pacific region and the strength of this regional agreement will weaken America’s influence in the region (Chen 2020). Takashi Terada of Doshisha University argues that the diminishing power of the U.S. in the region and the rise of the RCEP will reduce Asia’s dependence on the U.S. market. Goods and services from America would be less favorable compared to the Asian market due to the higher tariffs imposed on exports from the United States, which will negatively impact America’s economic growth (Terada 2018). One simulation hypothesized that if RCEP materialises, 0.16% of U.S. economic growth will be potentially suppressed (Kawasaki 2017, 13).

Instead of relying on economic giants such as the United States as the catalyst for economic growth, countries in the RCEP are rising together as one and lifting each other up. Together, they are slowly filling in the vacuum of economic power that has resulted from recent protectionist policies. If the current U.S. approach of economic nationalism and isolationism continues, it will eventually put America “last” in the regional trade order rather than “first.” Looking towards the future of the RCEP, the region is moving ahead on its own, without the United States, signaling the shift of global economic leadership from the western world to Asia.

Figure 2. Signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement on 15 November 2020



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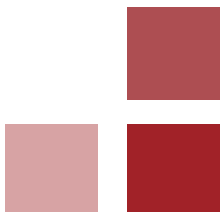
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PUBLIC HEALTH



Equity in Sanitation: The Forgotten Pillar

By Abhishek Narayan and Mahak Agrawal

Sanitation is inextricably linked to the public health and economic development of any country. In the last decade, it has received enormous international attention, especially when the United Nations recognized it as a human right and prominently featured it in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 6). Despite that, in the Asia-Pacific region, more than a billion people still lack

access to basic sanitation services (UNICEF and WHO 2019). Most low- and middle-income countries in Central, South and East Asia still do not have sanitation that is safely managed from toilets to treatment (Figure 1).

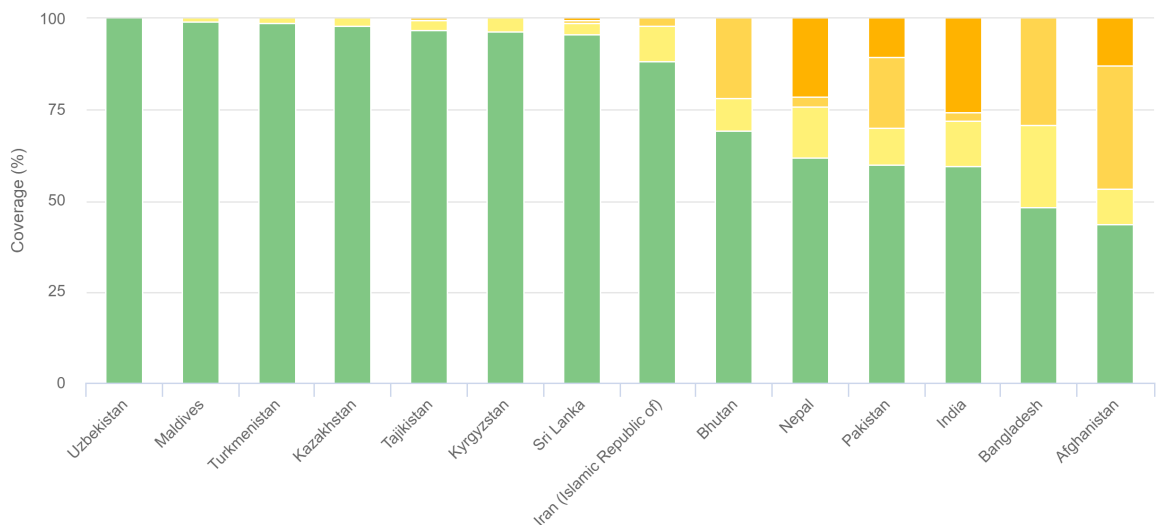
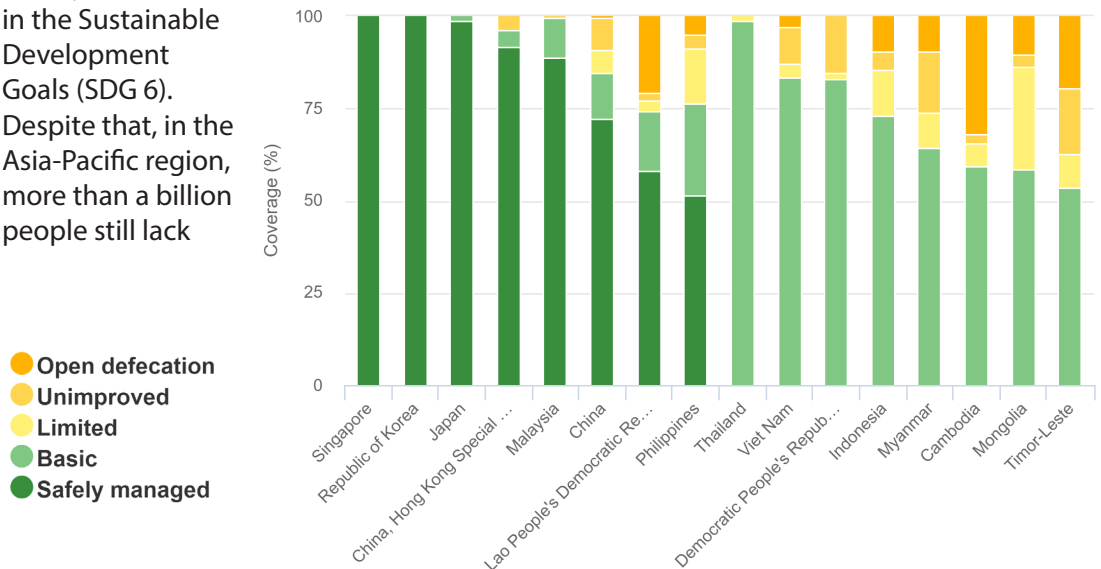


Figure 1. Access to improved sanitation to select countries in Central, South and East Asia regions (UNICEF and WHO 2019)

The economic cost of poor sanitation manifests itself in health expenditures, loss of economic productivity, and environmental pollution. A recent analysis with the example of the island nation, Kiribati, showed that this multifaceted loss could account for 2-4% of the country's GDP (Asian Development Bank 2014).

The sanitation sector has yet another unique challenge, which is the taboo it faces in most Asian cultures. Therefore, in addition to the disease and economic hardship, the communities deprived of sanitation also face a significant cultural burden associated with raising this issue. India, for example, has tackled this problem by launching the world's largest behavioral change campaign, which included the release of a high-grossing Bollywood film focused on improving hygiene (Curtis 2019).

Sanitation is a public good that is largely serviced by the state. However, due to domestic politics, corruption, and competing priorities, public funds provide private sanitation services that often do not reach the bottom of the pyramid (Chaplin 2011).

Across the board, the poorest quintile of every country is disproportionately worse off when it comes to access to sanitation services (UNICEF and WHO 2019). The inequities that arise from this, compounded by rapid urbanization and water insecurity due to a changing climate, place the poor in an increasingly vulnerable position.

Subsidies – An ineffective mechanism

Subsidies are financial instruments that allow users to pay less for a product or service, while the rest of the costs are covered by the government or future generations. The demographic differences that arise from users' income levels are tackled primarily through subsidies. Every year over 300 Billion USD is spent on subsidizing water and sanitation services. However, a recent report released by the World Bank found that 56% of such subsidies go to the richest quintile of the population while a meager 6% is left for the poorest quintile (World Bank 2019).

This shows how the mechanism is working against the poor: they are the ones subsidizing expensive sewers for the rich



Figure 2. Understanding the difference between Equality, Equity and Justice in the Water and Sanitation Sectors. © Eawag-Sandec

whilst paying a higher price for substandard service levels of communal toilets and fecal sludge emptying. Further, since sanitation fees are collected as part of the water tax in most Asia-Pacific countries, the poor also pay for services that they do not necessarily receive.

What is equity in sanitation?

Firstly, it is important to understand the difference between the concepts of equality, equity, and justice in the context of the water and sanitation sector. Consider rich and poor settlements in a generic town, where the rich households are nearer to the river, a water source (Figure-2). If equality is enforced, despite equal lengths of pipes, the poor do not have the same access to water. If equitable measures are taken, then both the rich and poor enjoy equal standards of access. However, for justice to be achieved, the environment must also be considered, and locally appropriate solutions must be implemented — which in the case of sanitation could be non-sewered solutions as well. For example, a vacuum truck could do the work of a sewer.

Why is it important?

Inequity in the sanitation sector can arise as a result of marginalization based on income level, gender, urban-rural divide, disabilities, religion, and caste, among other issues. It is important to ensure that these factors are not overlooked when designing and implementing sanitation solutions to ensure communities are not left behind. For example, women are disproportionately impacted by the day-to-day burden of water and sanitation-related tasks yet are underrepresented in policy framing and decision-making. Due to the differences in biological, social,

and cultural needs, solutions need to take gender into account when considering location, number of stalls, and toilet designs and must also support menstrual hygiene, pregnancy, childcare, and privacy.

In South Asia, two distinct dimensions of inequity exist: (1) the unavailability of sanitation infrastructure in rural areas, and (2) the inaccessibility of standard facilities in urban areas, which exclude access to communities with low socio-economic levels and cannot be used by physically disabled people. Rural areas in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal have some of the highest levels of open defecation and lack of basic sanitation in the region (UNICEF and WHO 2019). India, which previously had the highest open defecation levels in the world, launched the “Clean India Mission” to eradicate this practice between 2014 and 2019 with the construction of 9 million toilets, mostly in rural areas.

While the country declared that the Clean India Mission had achieved its initial targets, there is still much debate considering whether toilet coverage directly translates to usage (Agarwal and Boehman 2020). It is clear that sustaining the success of changing open defecation culture in rural areas will continue to face challenges going forward. Conversely, urban areas struggle from the absence of infrastructure rather than poor planning and management. In many cities across India, public toilets are poorly designed, and this affects usage. This includes toilets built in insecure locations, insensitively placed next to religious structures, or lacking disability access.

How to operationalize equity?

First and foremost, equity must be prioritized to ensure that marginalized groups

have access to sanitation services. This will require a significant shift from the 'one-size fits all' approach, coupled with the implementation of creative initiatives to ensure that these services can be accessed by all.

Equity and inclusion go hand in hand. The sanitation planning process must be comprehensive and ensure that various stakeholders are involved, while amplifying the voices of marginalized and vulnerable communities. This will be possible only when there are clear, inclusive targets. Conventional top-down planning methodologies fall short in taking into account the dimensions of equity. Therefore, new planning frameworks and policies, that are consciously equitable, need to be developed.

One encouraging trend in the sector is Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS), which is shifting the understanding of this challenge by focusing on equity as a key pillar in successful sanitation systems (Narayan and Luthi 2020). Several sanitation projects in the Asia-Pacific region that are funded by international development organizations are currently taking this approach to operationalize equity in their interventions. Looking toward the future, equitable sanitation cannot not remain a forgotten pillar. Instead, to overcome the sanitation challenge by 2030 and ensure sustained success into the future, it must become a mandatory target for all implementing agencies, including local governments and international organizations.

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Japan's Global Health Diplomacy

How can the global society maintain our public health as a global public goods?

By Yuri Kawase

In 2013, Japan announced health as a crucial element of its global diplomacy efforts — with the notification of Japan's Strategy on Global Health Diplomacy. With this strategy, Japan envisaged to prioritize global health in its foreign policy as well as promote universal health coverage (UHC) (MOFA 2013).

Development of Japan's Global Health Diplomacy

In the development spectrum, Japan is known for its universal health insurance system, healthy lifestyle and increasing longevity. The island nation also has a comparative advantage in preventing, preparing and responding to non-communicable diseases.

In terms of international affairs and foreign policy, Japan has played a strong role in shaping the international health community — by introducing health as a key point of the G8 agenda and initiating the establishment of a Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and other initiatives. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, close ties between global security and health have become more prominent than ever before. Japan's strategy towards global health diplomacy promises multifaceted benefits to the island nation as well as the international community. A study argues that the ultimate goal of Japan's GHD strategy is to promote the presence and reliability of Japan in international society, and to further develop

the Japanese economy (Kato, Mackey, and Heng 2019, 13).

Central to Japan's global health diplomacy (GHD) is the promotion of UHC programs. UHC envisages effective access of basic, quality health to all people while ensuring that the use of these services does not exacerbate financial hardships to the user (WHO n.d.). Achieving UHC is also specified in the Basic Design for Peace and Health — a health-specific cooperation policy based on the Development Cooperation Charter (MOFA 2015) approved in September 2015.

In 2016, Japan held the G7 Ise-Shima Summit and the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD6), and promoted its vision for global health diplomacy and pathways to realize UHC (MOFA 2017). In 2019 Japan placed UHC as one of the major agenda at G20 Osaka Summit and TICAD7 (MOFA 2019).

Japan's emphasis on UHC is also evident through its assistantship for developing countries. For example, in March 2020, the Japanese government signed a partnership with UNICEF to support the achievement of UHC in Ghana (UNICEF 2020). Aligned with the global goals' vision of leaving no one behind, UHC has been a critical element for Japan's international cooperation and diplomatic ties amid the pandemic (MOFA 2020a). In essence, Japan's leadership in UHC initiatives are likely to have some tangible impact on

global health and reposition Japan in the international development aid community (Kato, Mackey, and Heng 2019, 14).

Global Health Cooperation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the demand for global cooperation to stop the spread of the virus and mitigate the pandemic's multifaceted damage to vulnerable countries and populations. Equitable access to vaccines has emerged as a heated topic of international cooperation.

The World Health Organization warns against "vaccine nationalism," where countries prioritize domestic needs (UN News 2020; Kretchmer 2021). Several wealthy nations have indeed secured billions of doses of COVID-19 vaccines for their citizens while several developing and undeveloped economies are struggling to secure supplies. However, there are multiple activities to support vaccine supply in developing countries. Collaboration through the COVAX Facility is one of them.

COVAX Facility is a global framework led by the WHO to promote vaccine development and equal supply by pooling financial and scientific resources from 156 participating economies, including Japan (WHO 2020). As of January 21, 2021, Japan has secured doses for 72 million people – more than half of its population of 126 million (Japan Times 2021). While working hard to secure vaccines for its citizens, Japan has committed to equal access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Japan is a founding donor of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) accelerator, which is a multilateral cooperation scheme to accelerate the end of COVID-19 pandemic by supporting the development and equitable distribution of tests, treatments and vaccines, and strengthening the health system (WHO

2021). It also responded rapidly to the call for contributions to the COVAX Facility (MOFA 2020b). In fact, Japan is one of the biggest contributors to both frameworks.

Global Health Diplomacy – Dynamic development in East Asia

Interestingly, China has emerged as another East Asian economy advocating for global health diplomacy amid the pandemic. In 2015, Chinese government announced its plans for "Health Silk Road" (Mardell 2020), with a vision to improve public health in countries along China's Belt and Road initiative (Lancaster, Rubin, and RappHooper 2020, par.4).

In May 2020, President Xi offered to provide the Chinese vaccine as a public good at an affordable price in the 73rd session of the World Health Assembly (Xinhua Net 2020). Vaccines developed by China's Sinopharm and Sinovac are rolled out in several countries, including Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (Reuters 2021, par.5). As Italy grappled under the perils of COVID-19 in 2020, President Xi Jinping promised the support of medical teams and medical supplies, while working with Italy to build a "Health Silk Road" (Lancaster, Rubin, and RappHooper 2020, par.1).

Future of Global Health Diplomacy

Health diplomacy has always been crucial. COVID-19 amplified the demand for it. As we move ahead into a world where emergence, re-emergence and dispersion of infectious diseases like COVID-19 is expected to increase, Japan sets a precedent for other nations to follow to promote international cooperation to protect international public health as a global public good.

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Health Governance and Pandemic Response in Asia: An Interview with Dr. Nicholas Thomas

By Rhe-Anne Tan

Dr Nicholas Thomas is an Associate Professor in the Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong. He has published on a range of health policy issues: from SARS and Bird Flu to Anti-Microbial Resistance and health governance. In addition to health security, Dr Thomas also publishes on Chinese foreign policy and non-traditional security issues in Asia. He currently coordinates the One Health cluster in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and is the PhD coordinator for his department. In 2017, Dr Thomas won the Teaching Excellence Award at the City University of Hong Kong.

Q: Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with us. To start off, could you give us a little background on your work in public health and governance in Asia?

A: I first started studying public policy and infectious diseases in Asia about seventeen years ago or so, working with a consultancy for the Hong Kong government. This was at the time of SARS and later bird flu. We studied a range of responses across China and Southeast Asian countries, as well as how Hong Kong could position itself to contribute and adopt best practices. Since then, I have had different strands of interests that I work on, one of which is health governance. One thing that fascinates me is that in the academic literature, there is an assumption of linear rationality — where A leads to B leads to C — and we proceed through these stages as we combat a health threat. However, it quickly became apparent from my work

that the rational objective of addressing a disease is not necessarily the reason why actions get undertaken. They could also be undertaken for political or cultural reasons, due to alignments of policy and resource constituencies and interests within the country.

In my research with Catherine Lo on anti-microbial resistance in China, we found that there was a real gap between what the academic literature suggests you should find and the reality on the ground. For example, China has signed up to the UN program on anti-microbial resistance, developed a national action plan, and invested in sentinel hospitals. In theory, everyone down the line should be on board with operating procedures, and a unified structure exists to address the issue. However, as we talked to people on the ground, a different story emerged. Sentinel hospitals might not necessarily share disease data with others, as they hope to

leverage that information to secure more resources, be it financial or technical. Doctors cooperate to share clinical data in closed WeChat networks, which might be odds with what is being reported further up the policy chain. Similarly, despite official discourses of “One Health,” there is often very little policy alignment between vets and zoologists and the doctors. Real schisms between these groups exist in many societies and, of course, that came to a head with COVID-19.

This raises the question of how policy communities fit into our model of governance, and suggests that the end product of a pandemic response is never going to be just about the “science.” If suboptimal outcomes are built in as a result of resource competition, that has implications for how we learn between outbreaks, and how institutions ought to adjust to combat new threats over time.

Q: It seems as if the range of COVID-19 pandemic responses and outcomes has really highlighted that aspect of your work, that there is a great deal of contingency within the policy process when it comes to public health?

A: Part and parcel of the pandemic response has been addressing the health threat, but at the same time, there is a degree of local politics that affects the policy formulation across all states. I’m currently doing work with the media on vaccines, which is very much at the forefront of policy competition right now. One of these projects looks at trust: the question of how much we trust governments and medical authorities, and how that filters down into our daily practices of using hand sanitiser, wearing masks, and social-distancing. Another is studying vac-

cine nationalism in India, and how nationalist attitudes shape public response.

This addresses pre-2020 assumptions in the literature, namely that democracies and economically-developed states are better equipped to handle disease outbreaks. These are usually seen as dispassionate variables, but taken together they indicate that North American and Northern European states, as well as countries like Japan and South Korea, should have the most effective response. But what we are seeing flips a lot of those assumptions on their heads: entrenched policy communities in Western states are competing for resources in a manner that leads to far from optimal responses in the US and UK. Turning to the Asia-Pacific region, China has obviously had a stunning success against COVID, but so have less-developed countries like Vietnam. On the other hand, democracies such as the Philippines or Indonesia have not fared so well.

These cases suggest that neither democracy nor economic development are the key factor in predicting pandemic response, so then what exactly is it? This is where the research is heading, bringing together trust, regime typologies, and economic systems. While our old assumptions are not necessarily irrelevant, they are being challenged. For instance, conventional wisdom used to dictate that large-scale lockdowns and mass quarantines do not work. With COVID-19 however, China proceeded to lock down Wuhan and other major cities, and that model is now being used in other countries, to varying degrees of success. The current pandemic upends a lot of our ingrained biases; it challenges us to ask what matters, and which lessons we should actually take away to improve public health and quality of life.

Q: In the media, we frequently see the success of states such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, or South Korea in containing the virus attributed to a model of technocratic Asian governance. Given your work on resource competition and log-rolling between various policy communities, does that paradigm of efficiency manifest in reality, and how does that intersect with the question of public trust?

A: To a certain extent. I personally see the focus on technology and vaccines almost as a form of buck-passing by governments. Undoubtedly, the technological infrastructure that Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore were able to deploy, in terms of track-and-trace and rapid testing, is a critical aspect of any response strategy. But fundamentally, absent a vaccine, the way humanity has always dealt with pandemic outbreaks has remained the same since 1347. Back then it required isolation, letting the infection burn itself out, and rebuilding afterwards. The modern equivalent is practicing physical distancing, suspending large scale gatherings, enforcing mask mandates, using hand sanitizer, and so on.

So the technocratic aspect is important, but it's presented as an easy fix: if we bring in the technology, the problem will be resolved. Of course, there is absolutely a role for those technologies: they help alleviate suffering, and allow us to identify asymptomatic infection much more readily. But in a way, "technology" becomes a solution that is easy for politicians to provide, whereas it is far harder to tell a population, especially one committed to individualistic forms of behaviour, that masks and distancing are mandatory. Yet look at countries such as New Zealand,

Australia, Taiwan; all of which have managed to effectively disrupt local transmission without a vaccine.

Beyond that, however, the critical difference that sets Asia apart is experience, and both technology and social behaviour feed into this. Asian countries have been through SARS, bird flu, and swine flu. While not every country was equally affected by those outbreaks, a shared threat perception has developed across the region. When I travelled to Vietnam during the MERS outbreak, there were signs at the airport listing symptoms and providing guidance for travelers, even though the country was not facing high risk of transmission. The same was observed with Ebola in 2014-15, even though it did not affect the region. Since 2003, there has been a reinforcement of the necessity of social forms of infectious disease control, which the technocratic side is then overlaid upon. On the other hand, Europe and North America were not as badly affected, and this common understanding was not established. So I think that focusing on the technocratic side ignores the far harder question of socio-behavioural practices and change.

Q: Do you believe there is weight to the argument that "collective" societies are better at achieving that kind of socio-behavioural learning and cooperation?

A: Not necessarily. There are quite a number of individualistic cultures in Southeast Asia, just as there are more socially-oriented societies in the West as well — take the Scandinavian countries, for instance. I think it is more a question of the learning curve between the diseases that has filtered through. In Hong Kong, when news

of the COVID-19 outbreak first emerged, people started wearing masks even before an official government directive was released. That kind of social-embeddedness is important, but also much harder to translate across societies without direct historical experience.

Q: Does this suggest that the “best practices” offered by Asian states have more to do with institutional culture and social learning than technical systems? If so, how can states foster the “social-embeddedness” and ensure that lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic are internalised, in a manner equivalent to Asian societies experience with SARS or bird flu?

A: Absolutely. I think Taiwan is an exemplar, in terms of the infrastructure they have developed with social media to make public health fun and engaging for a range of ages. The Taiwanese technology minister has cited their use of emojis, cats, and dogs on social media in attempts to appeal to and capture the public’s attention. It sounds akin to gamification, but the messaging is effective. This is then coupled with a comprehensive database of information that maps nearby pharmacies, availability of masks and supplies and so on, as well as a very strong regime of contact tracing and testing.

Crucially, this all comes together in a society that is both very democratic and attached to individual rights — freedom of speech, civil liberties, travel, and so on — but also has high levels of public trust in the government. Likewise, the government only attributes these powers to itself in extreme cases, and there are sunset clauses in the legislation that ensure regular review of these emergency measures.

The critical point with Taiwan is that science led, and there was minimal political involvement or resource competition that distorted the process. In this respect, I see South Korea and Japan as equally competent technologically, but there was a high degree of political and personal freedom still allowed within the pandemic response. So I think the “best practice” is a combination of both social learning and technology.

The US and other countries now need to take the lead, not in demanding that a particular social narrative be embedded, but at least in cultivating a deeper sense of social responsibility and a common understanding of what practices are effective in combating the virus. Of course, this also entails respect for individual freedoms and rights, but within a social contract that establishes how people should act for the common good. If so, were another major pandemic to break about, the learning curve would come into much sharper relief. I believe that there would be greater success in averting the costs and following the science than we have seen.

This gets back to the question of trust: how much does the population trust the government to be transparent with information and to allocate resources equitably. Likewise, in terms of centralisation, it is important to note the role of universal healthcare systems and the ways in which regional governments have been able to draw on state-owned or state-commanded health resources, or leverage public-private partnerships to provide resources to citizens free of charge. Government leadership is important in these domains, and in doing so, people will come to trust the government to do what is right for their needs in emergencies.

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