Deepening Intellectual Network in East Asia: Emerging Frameworks and Challenges

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Research question

- This paper aims to examine the emerging frameworks of intellectual network in Asia in form of dual track approach (soft and hard forces) and the challenges involved.
Outline of the presentation

• Intellectual network in Asia
  -- A Historical Review
  -- Current Contexts
  -- Conceptual Basis
• Emerging Frameworks: Soft, Hard and Hybridized Forces
• Challenges at Different Levels
• Conclusions: A more dynamic and complementary synergy
Intellectual Network in Asia: Historical Review, Current Contexts and Conceptual Basis
The Establishment of ASAIHL

• In 1956 Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL) was established in Bangkok, Thailand.
• The association aims to foster the development of the institutions themselves, the cultivation of a sense of regional identity and interdependence and liaison with other regional and international organizations concerned with research and teaching.
• “Universities in Asia must be instrumental themselves in providing the international community a basis [for] understanding the culture of our continent. . . .” (Carlos Romulo, 1963?)
Regional conference on University Cooperation and Asian Development

• International conference: “University Cooperation and Asian Development” (University of Hong Kong, 1966) (Nelson, 2011)
• Participating countries: Japan, Taiwan and Philippines under the support of America
• Objectives: To deepen mutual cooperation with other countries and leading institutions in order to serve the needs of national development and economic growth in Asia.
Contexts for the Emergence of Intellectual Network: The Rising Asia

- Strong economic performance: little four tigers, China, and ASEAN countries
- Accelerated growth in scientific and innovative creation
- High proportion investment in education and research and development (Marginson, 2011)
- Emerging horizontal mobility of technology, knowledge, production and innovation among Asian countries

- Kishore Mahbubani (2008): The New Asia Hemisphere - “The rise of the West transformed the world. The rise of Asia will bring about an equally significant transformation. --An enormous renaissance of Asian societies
Conceptual Basis: Dual Track

• Two different types of forces driving the formation of intellectual network

• **Soft forces**: organic and bottom-up approach with the initiatives of non-governmental and non-coercive forces (such as universities themselves or NGOs)

• **Hard forces**: structural and top-down approach initiated by governmental/coercive forces (Yavaprabhas, 2014)

• I would argue that both forces are critical, complementary and intertwined.
Emerging Frameworks: Soft, Hard and Hybridized Forces
University Alliances: Soft and Organic Forces

- Higher education institutions take the lead
- Many academic linkages and exchanges have been established for the past two decades

- The Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL)
- Southeast and South Asia and Taiwan Universities (SATU)
- Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU)
- Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE)
- University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP)
- International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU)
- Universitas 21 (U21)
Hard Forces: Governmental Initiatives

• Nation state has been the driving force

• Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
• ASEAN, ASEAN+3 or ASEAN+6 (East Asia Summit)
• Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN)
• Southeast Asian Minister of Education Organization (SEAMEO) established in 1965
Semi Autonomous: Hybridized Forces

- Combining efforts both from soft and hard forces
- ASEAN University Network (AUN)
- Campus Asia: Collective Action of Mobility Program of University Students (China, Japan and Korea)
Emerging Frameworks: Bilateral vs. Multilateral

- **Bilateral** cooperation has increased at national and institutional levels: For example, joint research projects between Taiwan’s National Science Council and Vietnam or Philippines; sister university and MOUs among universities
- **Multilateral** intellectual network expanded rapidly: APQN, SATU or Campus Asia etc

- Multilateral cooperation aims to promote common ground and general purpose while bilateral relationship acts as special interests and concerns
- However, bilateral relationship tends to be more stable, concrete and continuous than multilateral one.
# Overall Functions of Emerging Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Organizations/Frameworks</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility of students and staff</td>
<td>UMAP, Campus Asia, MIT/AIMS</td>
<td>Exchange, joint courses, credit transfer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic/research development</td>
<td>Universitas 21, APRU</td>
<td>Research projects, joint research center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity building and training</td>
<td>ASAIHL, SATU, APAIE</td>
<td>Academic development and general university development</td>
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<td>Quality assurance and qualification recognition</td>
<td>APQN, ASEAN-QAN</td>
<td>Mutual recognition, common standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy dialogue and formation</td>
<td>APEC, ASEAN, SEAMEO</td>
<td>Common statement, joint policy goals</td>
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Challenges at the Regional, National and Institutional levels
Challenges: Regional and National levels (I)

- Huge differences of developmental levels: hard to harmonize or coordinate academic standards and interests
- Variety of languages and ethnicities
- Lack of adequate political support or commitment (Hawkins, 2012: 103)
- Political tensions among China, Korea, Japan & Taiwan (such as Senkaku Islands or 竹島)
- Fear of neo-colonialism and large powerful nations (US, Japan or China) (Chao, 2014)
Challenges: Regional and National levels (II)

- Multilateral regulatory frameworks are still at early stage (Need some inputs/experiences from Bologna Process) (Kuroda, Yuki & Kang, 2010)
- Lack of uniform quality assurance standards
- Scattered actors: Ranging from individuals (right now), universities/institutions, regional agencies, to international organizations
- Focused area: Northeast Asia? Southeast Asia? or East Asia? (how about South and West Asia?) even Asia-Pacific (Chao, 2014)
Challenges: Regional and National levels (III)

- Differences in credit system, curricula and grading system (Hawkins, 2012:103)
- Weak emerging frameworks to play an active role in building cohesive community
- Nation state and individual institution seem to dominate the outcome of intellectual network (need reference).
Challenges: Institutional level

- Weak or low institutional autonomy/freedom due to the regulatory or bureaucratic constraints imposed
- Underfinanced for participating the intellectual network
- Different priorities for linkage: Western universities/organizations are preferred than Asian counterparts (Kuder & Obst, 2009).
- Substantial or superficial? Many linkages are lip service without follow-up or concrete actions such as sister universities or exchange programs
Conclusions: A more dynamic and complementary synergy
Conclusions

• Robert Scalapino argues that ‘the diversities within Asia far exceed the commonalities [....] Asia has nowhere near the cultural affinities of West Europe’ (Terada, 2003:273)

• Although mobilizing both soft and hard forces in a systematic manner is effective for building sustainable intellectual networks, however, for the time being, soft forces are critical due to a wide range of social-geopolitical inhibitors among Asian countries.

• Regional regulatory frameworks have to be strengthened.

• Multilateral organizations such as WTO or World Bank may be able to coordinate/facilitate the process (Prado Yepes, 2006).
• Nguyen (2009) points out ‘Asia is lagging far behind other regions of the world in promoting even the most basic level of policy harmonization to achieve common objectives and interests in the area of higher education’ (p. 79).

• Intellectual network could not be separated from the broader diplomatic and geostrategic interests of the nations involved.
• Regional networking in higher education was closely linked to the pursuit of geopolitical soft power underpinned by nationalist interests

• A greater devolution of decision-making power and better financial support to individual universities/organizations is desirable for effective network.
Thanks for listening!

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