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**Co-Chairing Asia-Pacific Defence Diplomacy:
The Case ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus**

By

Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit and Nantasit Klaisringoen

Asia-Pacific defence diplomacy has been fostered via several platforms ranging from ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). Despite increased cooperation, empirical research on negotiation processes underlying regional defence diplomacy is scarce. Most past studies concerning the construction of the Asia-Pacific security architectures tend to focus on the roles of structural and ideational factors in shaping such development. Nevertheless, micro-processes – namely bargaining strategies and tactics negotiators adopt to affect agreement terms – have been little explored. Such intellectual neglect concocts serious practical consequences. Because negotiation determines the success and failure of cooperation, lacking insights concerning bargaining dynamics, governments may fail to devise feasible solutions to reconcile their interests and arrive at agreed modalities to pursue collaboration. A deadlock hence results and a negotiation can breakdown, jeopardizing an opportunity for further developing regional defence architectures.

Our work focuses on negotiation processes. It seeks to contribute to a broad field of International Relations (IR). Illustratively, realist scholars examine how the distribution of power affects international outcomes and tend to suggest that weaker parties cannot use strategies and tactics to achieve their goals from negotiations because they are limited by their meager capabilities (Gowa 1995; Krasner 1983; Mansfield 1995; Waltz 1979). Attempting to extend the literatures on power and influence, we scrutinize the role of agency in altering international cooperation outcomes, and on how the agency obtains their influence

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3 to shape the outcomes in their favour (Keohane 2005; Ravenhill 2013). Specifically, our
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5 study examines how less powerful states via bargaining achieve their preferred outcomes.
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7 The central question is “How did Thailand -- the lesser power in terms of material and
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9 diplomatic resources -- successfully shape Asia-Pacific security cooperation outcomes in its
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11 favour?” Insights from our negotiation analysis not only bolster the study of power and
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13 influence in the IR discipline, but also provides practitioners with lessons useful for
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15 conducting defence diplomacy and enhancing security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and
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17 beyond.
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21 This paper particularly probes into the roles of co-chairs in altering agreement terms
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23 because the practice of co-chairing is commonly adopted in the conduct of Asia-Pacific
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25 defence diplomacy. As certain countries serve as co-chairs to manage and facilitate talks,
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27 investigating their influence over collaboration results is crucial. Ignoring this aspect would
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29 render the understanding of regional defence cooperation incomplete. As co-chairing parties
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31 often have similar roles and responsibilities and operate under the same institutional
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33 conditions, the conventional wisdom maintains that they should have equal influence in
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35 affecting international agreements. However, reality suggests that certain chairmen were able
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37 to create a greater impact on the arrangements than their equivalents. This raises a puzzle:
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39 “Why are some co-chairs more effective than the others?” “Effectiveness” refers to the ability
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41 to shape outcomes in one’s direction. We contend that co-chairs’ effectiveness is not borne
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43 out of resource possession but in fact derived from their ability to manage the resources. To
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45 be effective, co-chairpersons must transform the available resources at hands into their
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47 bargaining leverage.
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53 To validate our argument, we analyse the military medicine (MM) collaboration under
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55 the ADMM-Plus framework. We demonstrate via this case how the Thai co-chairs bargained
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57 with its Russian counterpart to affect the terms of the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine
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(ACMM). Military medicine (MM) refers to the management and distribution of required medical services and personnel to areas in need of such support, and encompasses “the activities . . . performed both under conditions of war and in times of peace [including] diagnostic and curative medical and surgical . . . forms of mass medicine, pharmacy [and] administrative, organizational and logistical activities associated with missions” (ICMM 2013).

We chose to examine the MM bargaining under the ADMM-Plus framework for the following reasons. First, ADMM-Plus is the most advanced multilateral platform fostering non-traditional security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. As a result, the ADMM-Plus can significantly set the future trajectories of regional defence diplomacy and security architectures. More crucially, MM is a significant driver of the developments in the other areas of ADMM-Plus cooperation such as counter-terrorism and disaster relief because their successful missions require the use of MM. For example, counter-terrorism and disaster relief operations usually involve casualties, rendering the need for the deployment of medical services and equipment to tend the injured. Thus, a less advanced MM arrangement can scupper the regional states’ ability to collectively push forward counter-terrorism and disaster management collaboration. In addition, the fact that each of ADMM-Plus’ Experts’ Working Groups (EWGs) are presided over by two co-chairs -- one ASEAN country and one Dialogue Partner -- renders it suitable for exploring co-chairs’ effectiveness. That these co-chairpersons operate under the same ADMM-Plus framework allows us to compare their performance to reveal what factors enabling one co-chair to wield greater influence over bargaining outcomes than the other.

This paper is organized as follows. First, the previous literatures on regional security architectures, middle powers, chairs’ roles in international negotiation are reviewed to show their limitations in explaining the intricacies of ADMM-Plus MM arrangements. To bridge

such limitations, we present three propositions detailing the elements of co-chairs' effectiveness. The second section outlines the background and progress of ADMM-Plus MM cooperation. Our methodology is described in the third part. The fourth section analyses the interactions between the Thai and Russian co-chairs regarding the ACMM details, discussing them in relation to the three propositions on the efficacy of co-chairs. The last section concludes the findings, examine our study's limitations, and suggests ways for future research.

I. Explaining MM Cooperation under ADMM-Plus

1.1. Previous Research on Asia-Pacific Defence Diplomacy

Although there is no direct study on the factors affecting the MM cooperation under the ADMM-Plus, some insights could be gleaned from the literatures on regional security architecture. Concerning the development of regional security architectures, the most influential justifications are structural and ideational accounts. The structural explanation, focusing on the effects of material factors on institutional building, argues that the rise of Asian security arrangements reflect states' power politics calculations (Scalapino 2004; Leffler 2016). For example, Weeks (2011) found that a bilateral security arrangement between Australia and Japan was part of these nations' response to aggressive Beijing. Moreover, Jackson's (2014) analysis unveiled that ASEAN's multilateral initiatives including ADMM-Plus reflected the Organization's hedging strategy to manage the China-U.S. dynamics. In contrast, the ideational account highlights the roles of ideas and norms in shaping regional defence diplomacy. For instance, *via a constructivist lens, Ba (2009) unveiled how ASEAN through its dialogues with other powers framed regional interactions and affected security cooperation. Likewise, Acharya (2014) relied on a constructivist approach to show the evolution of ASEAN norms and how they shaped regional security order and community. In addition, Capie's (2013) work demonstrated that the emergence of*

Asia's multilateral security architectures was mainly due to the elites' beliefs rather than catalytic effects of external shocks or inter-state power configurations. Because the Southeast Asian defence policymakers localized and embraced the idea of security multilateralism put forth by ASEAN's external partners, several multilateral cooperation frameworks including ADMM and ADMM-Plus were formed.

Also, works focusing ASEAN institutions' roles in affecting wider regional security order have contributed to our knowledge regarding regional defence diplomacy. For example, Katsumata's (2010) analysis unveiled how Southeast Asian nations used ARF to promote their cooperative security norm and altered non-ASEAN countries' policies. Goh (2014) found that ASEAN played an important role in convincing powerful nations to commit to ASEAN-based regional security architectures. Moreover, recent literatures on middle powers focusing on these powers' behaviour and influence over regional security governance have shed more light on our understanding of Asia-Pacific defence diplomacy (Öniş and Kutlay 2017). For example, using a systemic impact approach, Carr (2014) demonstrated Australia's ability to affect several regional arrangements in economic and security areas. Also, Emmers and Teo (2015) found that middle powers in the Asia-Pacific were likely to resort to multilateralism to alter the trajectories of regional security governance.

Their contributions notwithstanding, these literatures tend to ignore the microprocesses of international negotiations namely bargaining techniques that states use to achieve outcomes. As a result, they fail to determine which specific details among a range of possible options were selected and included in the final agreement. Illustratively, Laksamana (2012) demonstrated that ASEAN nations invited the U.S. to join the ADMM-Plus process to proportionally engage both Washington and Beijing. Nevertheless, his study cannot pinpoint why and how particular ADMM-Plus details were chosen among a range of possible alternatives and cannot shed light on puzzles such as "How did the bloc's members select

MM, not other issues, to tighten their collaboration?” and “How were ACMM’s work scope and authority determined?” While Capie (2013) unveiled how some ideational factors accounted for the rise of ADMM and ADMM-Plus, he did not assess why and how the stakeholders determined the specific details of the ADMM-Plus arrangements. Thus, our work aims to complement the literatures above by demonstrating how chairing agency shapes particular outcomes of Asia-Pacific defence diplomacy within an environment characterised by shifting balances of powers and norms.

1.2. Chairs’ Roles in International Bargaining

While extant studies on chairs’ roles in negotiation have enhanced our understanding about international cooperation, they tend to focus on the functions and responsibilities attached to a position of a chair and use them to explain chairs’ power. In short, they assume that chairs’ influence is derived from these functions and responsibilities. Such assumption limits these works’ ability to shed light on why only some chairs which possess the same functions and responsibilities as their counterparts end up wielding greater clout in shaping outcomes. Illustratively, negotiation analysts claimed that chairmen’s influence stems from their functions as a mediator (Quaglia and Moxon-Browne 2006; Wagner 2008), as a meeting convener (Högenauer 2016), and as an actor which announces when the consensus is reached (Starkey et al. 2015: 20). However, their works do not sufficiently assess what successful chairmen do to effectively influence the outcomes. What did successful chairs exactly do during the mediation process to resolve clashes? Our paper attempts to bolster this strand of literatures by scrutinizing what chairpersons actually do when they perform their functions and responsibilities in order to explain why some chairs fare better than the others in affecting the outcome.

Also, the past literatures usually scrutinize the roles played by a single chairman. Therefore, an actual comparative analysis of how two co-chairpersons together affect

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agreement terms is absent. Without such assessment, the generalizability of the findings to other cases is limited as chairing parties in other fora may manoeuvre in different settings and times and interact with dissimilar stakeholders. For instance, the strategies and tactics deployed by the chairs of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to affect the bloc’s arrangements may be inapplicable to those chairing ARF. By examining co-chairing dynamics, our analysis departs from the existing work, enabling us to give additional insights into the understanding of chairs’ roles in shaping international negotiation and cooperation.

Elements of Co-chairs’ effectiveness

As aforementioned, co-chairs’ influence over bargaining results emerges from their resource management. In short, what distinguishes more effective co-chairs from less effective ones is the former’s better ability to convert the available resources into bargaining leverage. Some elements of co-chairs’ effectiveness are as follow. First, utilizing knowledge about other actors’ preferences enables co-chairs to alter bargaining results. For example, Odell (2005) revealed that World Trade Organization’s chairs able to extract the stakeholders’ interests shaped the bargaining outcomes in their favors (Odell 2005). Moreover, chairpersons have been reported to utilize data on players’ preferences to resolve disputes and conclude a negotiation. As Tallberg (2002) showed, when dissimilar actors have different yet reconcilable interests, the chairmen using the others’ preferences could identify the zone of agreement and seal a deal. To sum up, co-chairs can use knowledge about other players’ preferences to craft outcomes in their direction. Formulated as a proposition:

Proposition 1: Co-chairs which used the other actors’ preferences were likely to be more effective in shaping agreement details than their counterparts.

ASEAN has emphasized the idea of ASEAN Centrality as a main principle fostering the bloc’s external affairs. For example, Article 1.15 of the ASEAN Charter posits that that the Organization’s purpose is to “maintain the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN as the

primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture” (ASEAN Secretariat 2007, 5). While there exists no consensus regarding the definition of ASEAN Centrality, within the academic society, this concept is usually defined by the Organization’s role as a node linking non-ASEAN actors in the networks of regional governance architectures, and the entity’s ability to affect the development of architectures (Caballero-Anthony 2014).

This study pays attention to the latter definition. Southeast Asian governments have leaned on the Centrality concept to alter the development of multilateral arrangements. Humaidah (2012)’s analysis unveiled that despite being an aid recipient in particular infrastructure projects, ASEAN was able to invoke ASEAN Centrality and manage the implementation of the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity to serve its own interests. Acting as a broker, the Organization was able to allocate the resources contributed by its external players to its less developed members where needs were greater. Furthermore, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) “is an initiative to restore ASEAN centrality to Asian regional integration” (Pomfret 2013, 37). As stated in the Guiding Principles and Objectives, “[n]egotiations for the RCEP will recognize ASEAN Centrality” (ASEAN 2011, 1). The non-ASEAN players accommodated the diverse preferences of individual ASEAN members by incorporating into the RCEP agreement the provision for special and differential treatment which grants some flexibilities to the less developed Southeast Asian participants in terms of the latter’s delayed implementation of the earlier agreed elements (ASEAN 2011, 1).

To summarize, ASEAN Centrality has been found to shape specific aspects of multilateral cooperative arrangements. Co-chairs can incite the concept of ASEAN Centrality to gain an upper hand in bargaining and influence final outcomes. Hence, the second proposition is:

Proposition 2: Co-chairs which invoked the notion of the ASEAN Centrality were likely to be more effective in shaping agreement details than their counterparts.

Some negotiations involve solving complex technical issues. For instance, in the realm of cyber-security, expertise helps stakeholders choose suitable modalities of information sharing, design a security breach detecting system, and determine rules for building joint databases on criminals' profiles. Thus, "expertise" or technical knowledge about the matters being negotiated is crucial as it enables governments to gain credibility in the other parties' eyes, coin practical solutions, and arrive at an agreement in their favour. For example, Tallberg (2008) discovered that at the European Council (EC) meetings, the nations' expertise produced a larger impact over agreement terms than their size. In a similar vein, Warntjen (2010) unveiled that expertise was a key source of the member's influence at the EC gatherings.

In short, co-chairs utilizing technical knowledge regarding issues under negotiation can influence a talk and walk away with more favourable deals than their equivalents. Therefore, the third proposition is:

Proposition 3: Co-chairs which exercised their expertise over issues being negotiated were likely to be more effective in shaping agreement details than their counterparts.

These three propositions concerning co-chairs' roles in international negotiations are to be tested in the case study of ADMM-Plus' collaboration on MM as demonstrated below.

II. Military Medicine Cooperation in ADMM-Plus

Since ADMM-Plus was inaugurated in October 2010, the collaboration has encompassed six aspects: humanitarian and disaster management (HADR), maritime security, peacekeeping operation, counter-terrorism, humanitarian mine action, and MM. Six Expert Working Groups (EWGs) were set up to drive the process in each area at the operational level. In the MM realm, the EWG on Military Medicine (EWG on MM) was created in

Singapore in July 2011. Singapore and Japan acted as the co-chairs in the first cycle (July 2011 - June 2013), and Thailand and Russia assumed the positions in the second cycle (July 2014 - June 2016). Under the Singapore-Japan co-chairmanship, the points of contact in each nation, an inventory of each member's medical support capabilities and the Standard Operating Procedures for Joint and Combined Medical Operations were created. The joint Humanitarian Assistance/Military Medicine (HADR/MM) exercise took place in Brunei Darussalam in June 2013, involving all ADMM-Plus participants (Ng 2015).

One main achievement during the Thailand-Russia co-chairmanship was the official launch of ACMM in Bangkok, Thailand. The Center's roles include fostering "practical, effective, and sustainable cooperation among military medical services of ASEAN Member States and Plus countries, both in normal and crisis situations" (ADMM 2015, 3). The formation of ACMM began with the drafting of the three-year Workplan in November 2013, which set the deliverables for the second cycle. After the text was adopted by the Working Group of ASEAN Defense Senior Officials' Meeting-Plus (ADSOM-Plus WG) in Myanmar in April 2014, the Concept Paper on the Establishment of the ACMM outlining the entity's scope, responsibilities and functions was composed. The Concept Paper was endorsed at the 9th ADMM in Malaysia in March 2015, constituting a formal decision to establish the ACMM in Bangkok, Thailand.

Before showing how the Thai co-chair managed to bargain its way to get the outcomes it desired, let us discuss the methodology used in our analysis.

III. Methodology

We adopt a case study approach, investigating in detail the interplay between the Thai and Russian co-chairs in affecting MM bargaining. Among several layers of the ADMM-Plus process, we opted to assess the negotiation at the EWG because the platform's main tasks are to "facilitate information sharing and professional exchanges through visits, workshops, and

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3 seminar . . . [and] examine how to build upon and contribute to existing security initiative in
4 these areas” (Singapore Ministry of Defence 2010). In other words, the EWGs are where
5 ideas are incubated, sharpened and proposed for approval at higher levels namely ADSOM-
6 Plus and ADMM-Plus. Another reason was because the EWGs’ participants consisting of
7 working-level officials interact more frequently than those in the fora at the higher levels.
8 While ADMM-Plus (a Minister-level meeting) gathers once every two years and ADSOM-
9 Plus (a Director-General-level meeting) convenes annually, the EWG’s working-level
10 authorities meet several times a year to conduct many activities such as drafting the agendas
11 and workplans, and organizing field exercises. Hence, such high degree of interactions
12 permits us to explore co-chairs’ influence in shaping the ACMM details.
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26 To assess the MM negotiation dynamics, the archival study of public documents such
27 as official reports, joint statements, newspaper archives, and press releases was conducted to
28 tease out the meetings’ outcomes and bargaining techniques the parties employed. Accounts
29 from the authors’ interviews with the involved officers, think-tanks, and academics from
30 December 2013 to June 2016 were incorporated to further investigate how the co-chairs
31 shaped the agreement terms. The informants were asked about the dissimilar priorities and
32 preferences of ADMM-Plus members, and how these parties arrived at their ACMM details.
33 To improve the reliability of the primary data provided by these informants, they were cross-
34 validated or triangulated with relevant archival materials and technical manuscripts. The use
35 of these sources allowed us to verify the collected information, leading to a comprehensive
36 understanding of co-chairs’ roles in shaping the ADMM-Plus outcomes. Given the sensitive
37 nature of the issues discussed (such as states’ perceptions and views on other nations), all
38 interviewees were promised confidentiality except those who allowed their identity to be
39 revealed.
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Our method of analysis is process tracing or “the technique of looking for the observable implications of hypothesized causal processes. . . within a single case” (Bennett 2010). It is aimed at reconstructing a story and establishing a causal pathway between independent and dependent variables (Beach and Pederson 2013). For this study, the mechanism is between the elements of co-chairs’ effectiveness and negotiation outcomes. We tracked down the evidences and pieced them together to demonstrate how the co-chairs worked to resolve disagreements among the stakeholders and shape the ACMM details.

As we have discussed the case and methodology, let us assess how Thai co-chair bargained with its Russian counterpart to get the outcomes in the former’s favour.

IV. Co-chairs’ Influence over the Terms of the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM)

Before delving into how the ACMM terms were negotiated, the Thai and Russian co-chairs’ objectives in the MM talk were as follow. For Bangkok, it desired to co-chair the negotiation, viewing that doing so would enable it to craft certain MM collaboration rules the way it wanted, and get more favourable terms in other security deals with greater powers, namely the U.S. and China via issue-linkage. Thailand also aspired to host the ACMM as doing so could attract more resources (e.g. technology, know-hows) to the state, ultimately strengthening its bargaining leverage in future MM talks. For example, particular acquired know-hows can heighten Bangkok’s MM expertise which can be wielded in next MM rounds to convince the other parties to adopt the former’s ideas (Thai government officer 2013).

As for Russia, it was particularly keen to serve as the MM co-chair because of the following reasons. First, the Kremlin wanted to take part in a regional security cooperation process to pave a way for enhancing future ties with regional states. Regarding Asia as the world’s future geoeconomic center and market for the state’s oil and gas exports, the country aspired to ride on the coattails of this rising region (Sussex 2017). Because that security and

economics are intertwined, the Kremlin believed it needed to participate in the ADMM-Plus process. Doing so would foster regional peace and stability, providing a feasible environment for achieving joint development and prosperity (Chufrin 2016). As Victor Sumsky (2016, 115) precisely summarizes,

Russia's own modernization plans envisage progressively greater trade and investment cooperation with East Asia's economic "miracles." Stronger interactions and links in the military-political field are viewed in this context as having the potential to arrest the further growth of strategic uncertainty, if not fully then at least partially. This is one probable explanation for why, from the Russian perspective, the value of the ADMM-Plus as a strategic dialogue platform may be relatively high.

Another motive was that MM was seen by Russia as less politicized topic, lowering the likelihood of disputes between itself and the others regional players (Kashin 2015). Moreover, Moscow projected that it could easily carry out its MM co-chairing functions by drawing from its existing resources such as the well-endowed Emergency Ministry. Additionally, the state's prospective arms sales to other nations might partially shape its decision to co-chair the MM negotiation. Its increased interactions with the other ADMM-Plus members via MM talks may yield opportunities for future transactions (A Russian contact 2016).

4.1. Knowing Others' Preferences: The Choice of a Co-Chairing Partner and Decision to Adopt a Harmonization Approach in MM Collaboration

Even though both Russia and Thailand were keen to co-chair the MM negotiation, they could choose to pair up with the other ADMM-plus nations. Thus, a puzzle is: What accounted for the Thailand-Russia co-chairmanship? This incident was partly explained by Bangkok's utilization of its knowledge about other players' preferences (Proposition 1). Through their interactions with the Russians during the first cycle of MM cooperation (July 2011 - June 2013), the Thai negotiators were able to extract Russia's interests. Bangkok learned that the Kremlin wanted to bolster its cordial ties with the Asia-Pacific nations and

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3 was keen to select MM as a topic of its ADMM-Plus engagement as this subject matter was
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5 neither likely to be politicized nor generate clashes between itself and the other parties (A
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7 Thai medical services staff 2015).
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10 Moreover, Thailand was able to discern that Russia envisaged that its co-
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12 chairmanship with the former could be a stepping stone to utilize untapped economic and
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14 security potential in both states, spurring bilateral relations. Bangkok was Moscow's largest
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16 trading partner in Southeast Asia. Their bilateral trade in 2014 stood around US\$ 4 billion,
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18 and Russia's exports to Thailand reached US\$ 1.75 billion or a 37.8 percent rise from the
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20 previous year (Russian Embassy 2018). As a result, Bangkok in about a few months before
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22 the first cycle invited Moscow to serve along itself as the co-chairs, and the latter accepted
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24 the invitation (A Thai medical services staff 2015).³⁴ In conclusion, Bangkok's leverage on
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26 the information concerning Moscow's preferences released during earlier meetings enabled
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28 the former to successfully pair up with the latter as the co-chairs of the MM negotiation.
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33 A path towards the Thailand-Russia co-chairmanship began with their self-
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35 nomination. The selection criteria outlined in the 2013 Concept Paper on the Transition of the
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37 ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group Co-Chairmanship posit that
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40 Priority should be given to the ASEAN countries with the fewest previous co-chair
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42 record. This will be irrespective of the number of times the non-ASEAN partner has
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44 co-chaired previous EWGs . . . [and] consideration shall be given to the number of
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46 times the Plus country has co-chaired previous EWGs, whereby the country that has
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48 co-chaired fewer times will be given preference (ADMM-Plus 2013, 2)
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51 Based on these rules, the Bangkok-Moscow pair was given a priority above the other
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53 contenders as both did not serve as the co-chairs in the first cycle (July 2011 - June 2013).
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55 The duo assumed the positions after being officially endorsed at the 2nd ADMM-Plus
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57 Meeting in Brunei on 29 August 2013.
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60 After the MM co-chairs were selected, the ADMM-Plus nations proceeded to discuss
the establishment of ACMM. Such talk was far from smooth. The parties bickered over the

mechanism's authority and modalities. The governments disputed over the extent to which ACMM could exercise its power over sovereign states' decisions. Some members argued for a standardization modality – the adoption of common military codes in joint operations – claiming that this would make it easier for personnel from different countries to efficiently execute the missions. However, the others disagreed as they wanted to adopt a harmonization approach instead. Neither sides showed signs of backing down. The negotiation reached a deadlock. Nevertheless, the participants finally settled their conflicts and reached a deal regarding these elements (Thai negotiators 2016).

How was such stalemate broken? It was primarily because of Thai and Russian co-chairs' use of information about others' preferences (Proposition 1). Having observed the clashes, two co-chairmen intervened. As one source notes, these authorities suspected that some rationale existed behind the dissenting players' tough stances, and should such reasons surface, there would be room for reconciling their positions (Thai negotiators 2016). Aiming to tease out the stakeholders' views and opinions, Bangkok and Moscow organized expert-exchange workshops in the second half of 2013. Unlike ADMM-Plus meetings convening only government officers, the conferences engaged policymakers as well as independent, non-public scholars. Such composition made the workshops' discussion dynamics informal and put less pressure on the participants, rendering them more comfortable in revealing their deeper concerns behind their arguments made at previous gatherings (A Russian contact 2016).

The released information was utilized by both co-chairs to shape the outcomes of the 5th EWG on MM in Thailand in October 2014. Regarding the ACMM's power, some ADMM-Plus stakeholders confessed at the conferences their real reasons behind their opposition to the Center's potential supranational authority. For instance, because medical services personnel and equipment are deployed to the fields during crisis situations such as

national disasters, these states feared that the Center would assume a command-and-control authority and override the former's mobilization decisions, ultimately eclipsing their sovereignty. The two co-chairs strongly stressed that ACMM would never possess a command-and-control function. It is because under crisis circumstances, the Center's main tasks are to merely evaluate the needs for medical services in the field and recommend matchings between host countries' needs and supporting states' capacities. Decisions to deploy and receive the assistance are determined by the participating nations respectively (Niratsai 2016).

Concerning the Center's operational modalities, some Muslim countries expressed at the experts' workshops their reluctance towards a standardization approach on cultural and religious grounds. To them, it is inappropriate for male physicians to touch or examine female patients. With such information at hand, the Thai and Russian co-chairs assured these nations that no ADMM-Plus government is required to undertake standardization. When and where standardization is infeasible, harmonization of rules and regulations gearing towards the inter-operationality of different operational codes may be pursued. Hence, the members can perform own religious-based or cultural-based practices in joint MM missions (Niratsai 2016).

To conclude, the co-chairs' use of others' preferences explained an agreement on ACMM's authority. When the talks were stuck, the Thai and Russian co-chairs organized the experts' workshop to extract the stakeholders' concerns which caused the logjam. Bangkok and Moscow then used such revealed information to accommodate some players to settle clashes and reach an agreement.

4.2. Invoking ASEAN's Centrality and the Drafting of ACMM Concept Paper

Under the ADMM-Plus, the ACMM Concept Paper was to be drafted by the co-chairs of EWG on MM. The matter of composing the elements of the text was negotiated bilaterally

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among the co-chairs. Our analyses revealed that they at first fought over the division of labour, mainly centering on which country would devise which aspects of the ACMM. At the end, it was agreed that Bangkok was in charge of designing the Center’s scope, responsibilities, and roles, and Moscow would perform language-checking and legal-scrapping tasks to lessen the likelihood of potential misinterpretations of the texts (A Russian contact 2016).

What explained this arrangement? It was partly due to the Thai co-chair’s activation of the ASEAN Centrality notion (Proposition 2) to alter the division of labour in its favour. Southeast Asian governments have embedded the Centrality idea within regional security arrangements. As Rolls (2012) contends, “ASEAN has consciously sought to position itself at the heart of the developing security architecture in both East Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific and this ‘ASEAN Centrality’ has been widely accepted by the extra-regional powers who participate in it.”

Leaning on this Centrality element, Bangkok reminded Moscow that ADMM-Plus is an ASEAN-centered process and the Centrality idea has influenced the mechanism’s development since its inception by citing several documents. For example, the Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus (ADMM-Plus 2007, 3) posits that “ASEAN is at the centre of the ADMM-Plus. ASEAN shall be the primary driving force in the ADMM’s interactions with ASEAN’s friends and Dialogue Partners.” Also, the Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus Configuration and Composition (ADMM-Plus 2010, 2) echoes that “ASEAN centrality must be protected and preserved in the ADMM-Plus process to ensure that ASEAN Member States remain the driving force.” In short, the Thai co-chair invoked the Centrality notion to gain greater clout over its Russian counterpart in composing the ACMM Concept Paper. The latter eventually yielded to the former’s demand and assume a supporting role in the drafting process.

Why did Moscow let Bangkok have its way? Why did it not insist on increasing its roles in the writing process and shape the ACMM details? It was mainly because the Kremlin has long been socialized about ASEAN's norms and principles via its prolonged interactions with the Organization. Southeast Asian countries and Russia have fostered political and security cooperation even before the relation was formalized in early 2000s when Russia signed onto the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2004 to become ASEAN's dialogue partner (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004). This led to intensified ties between Moscow with Southeast Asian nations as such dialogue partner status allowed the former to take part in several ASEAN-centric blocs, namely ARF, Post Ministerial Conferences (PMCs) 10+1, East Asia Summit, and ADMM-Plus.

As Allison-Reumann (2017, 14) maintains, when external players "become part of ASEAN-led fora it is then possible for ASEAN to engage with its partners and members and incorporate them into an ASEAN sphere of influence." Such logics were proven true for Moscow. One interviewee highlighted that the Kremlin had recognized ASEAN as a grouping which plays a critical role not only in maintaining regional peace and stability but also propelling Asia-Pacific security cooperation (Chufrin 2016). The state's prolonged engagement with the Organization has inevitably firmed up the its understanding and acceptance of ASEAN's principles and norms, including ASEAN Centrality, when interacting with the latter. As a result, this notion was taken into consideration when the Russian diplomats dealt with ASEAN policymakers in the MM negotiation (A Russian contact 2016).

Some conditions underlying Thai co-chair's successful use of the ASEAN Centrality concept against its Russian counterpart deserve to be mentioned. They were: (1) Russia's domestic politics, and (2) Western sanctions on the country following its annexation of Crimea. Regarding the former, one informant recalled a lack of consensus among Russia's

public authorities over clear and specific strategies towards the region. Despite a consensus that Moscow should reorient its foreign policy towards the Asia-Pacific, its key policymakers harshly disagreed on the state's policy directions to engage Asia (A former Australian military attaché 2015). This fact turned out to limit Russia's influence in the MM negotiation. Without being given clear mandates from the Kremlin, the Russian co-chair had little idea what ACMM would do for the country, preventing him from projecting his clout in regards to the text's writing process.

Another underlying condition was the Western sanctions on the Kremlin following the latter's annexation of Crimea in early 2014. Observing the sanction from the outside, Bangkok presumed that Moscow needed hard currencies because its economy was hit by the sanctions and hence the country might be keen to sell arms to the former. Consequently, the Kingdom used the ASEAN Centrality concept to negotiate for its preferred division of labour. In other words, Bangkok, when playing up its 'ASEAN Centrality card' in the MM talks, hinted Russia that the latter's consent would create a more favourable atmosphere for possible future defence trade deals with the former. The Kremlin finally accepted the arrangement and allowed Thailand to wield greater clout in drafting the ACMM terms (Thai negotiators 2016).

Such deal was followed by several high-level visits of both countries' leaders and eventual arms trade. From September 2014 to February 2016, Thailand's Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha and Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev met three times. In April 2015, the Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan told the press that the cabinet considered purchasing aircrafts and other military equipment from Russia (The Nation 2015). In February 2016, a talk about Bangkok's procurement of Moscow's helicopters took place (Sputniknews (2016)). A few months later, in May 2016, Russia's Minister of Industry Denis Manturov announced that his country

would deliver two Sukhoi Superjet (SSJ-100) airplanes to the Royal Thai Air Force.⁷² The Kremlin delivered two SSJ-100 jets and two Mi-17V-5 helicopters to Thailand in August 2016 and September 2017 respectively.

In sum, the Thai co-chair's invocation of the ASEAN Centrality notion accounted for why it took a lead in the drafting of the ACMM Concept Paper and Russia assumed a supporting role. Socialization process partially resulted in Russia's understanding and acceptance of ASEAN's principles and norms. Also, the Kremlin's lack of consensus regarding the policy directions towards Asia as well as Western sanctions on the country following its annexation of Crimea underlay Thailand's successful invocation of the ASEAN Centrality concept.

4.3. Exercising Expertise and the Launch of the ACMM in Bangkok, Thailand

Another contentious aspect emerged during the MM negotiation was the location of the ACMM. As one authority recalled, the ADMM-Plus members earlier agreed to an idea that the Center should be hosted by a Southeast Asian state, thus such issue was to be determined by ASEAN (A former Australian military attaché 2015). Among ten ASEAN parties, reaching this deal was far from smooth. At the 9th ADMM in Langkawi, Malaysia in March 2015, the participants dissented over the adoption of the below paragraph in the Joint Statement (Thai negotiators 2016).

Adopt the concept paper on the *structure and mechanisms* of the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM), which establishes practical, effective, and sustainable cooperation among military medical services of member states and task ADSOM to work out the operational details and modalities *and approved by ADMM before its implementation*

[Note: The italics were made by the authors to highlight the differences between the draft and final Joint Declarations.]

The Thai negotiators were not fond of the phrase "*and approved by ADMM before its implementation*" as it implied that the Center cannot be set up without ADMM's endorsing

all of the Center's operating procedures and modalities. Seeking the ADMM's prior approval ran a risk of the talk being dragged on, which could eventually prevent the state from reaching the country's aspiration of hosting the ACMM. In contrast, particular Southeast Asian governments wanted to adopt the above paragraph as they were not convinced that Bangkok possessed sufficient capabilities to operate the Center (A Thai medical services staff 2015). Therefore, the ADMM's prior approval was required to ensure that the host had adequate capacities. These nations refused to budge, making the prospect of Thailand's hosting the ACMM grim. Nevertheless, against all odds, the ASEAN parties allowed the country to establish the mechanism in Bangkok, Thailand.

What explained such result? The answer could be found in the Thai co-chair's exercise of its expertise on MM (Proposition 3) to bolster its image projection as a country with adequate resources including personnel with skills necessary to run the Center. Bangkok presented itself as a capable ACMM host by citing its past involvement in international MM missions, internationally-acclaimed performance at 2nd ADMM-Plus Joint HADR/MM Exercise, and organizational and managerial skills. First, to showcase its long track record of MM experiences, the state referred to its previous participation in international peacekeeping operations in Cambodia (1991-1992), Timor Leste (2002), Burundi (2004-2006), Afghanistan (2003), and Iraq (2003-2005) as well as international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) projects in Iran (2003), Afghanistan (2005), and Nepal (2015). Bangkok argued that these missions helped its medical personnel to hone technicalities necessary to run the ACMM (Thai negotiators 2016).

Second, Thailand cited its remarkable and internationally-applauded performance at the 2nd ADMM-Plus Joint HADR/MM Exercise in Brunei Darussalam in June 2013. The Field Exercise was purposed to assess the ADMM-Plus' MM cooperation via a series of simulations, creating an opportunity for the members to showcase their personnel's skills in

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3 responding to crisis scenarios. The Thai team, along with the 17 teams from the other
4
5 ADMM-Plus members, took part in the MM exercise in Kampong Biang, Brunei. The group
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7 became the highlight because it was the only one able to accomplish all of the scenario's
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9 objectives within the time limit, and transform ordinary tools at the site such as a fishing rod
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11 into a rescue equipment. Its performance was witnessed and highly praised by the other
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13 ADMM-Plus parties including His Majesty Hassanal Bolkiah, the King and Prime Minister
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15 of Brunei, who was the event's honorary observer (A Thai medical services staff 2015).
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19 Finally, the Thai co-chair presented evidences that the country possessed
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21 organizational and managerial competency. Such expertise is essential because the ACMM's
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23 host must know how to organize seminars and conferences and provide venues for the
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25 involved stakeholders to exchange their views on MM and ACMM matters. Bangkok
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27 reminded the dissenting Southeast Asian voices that it on several occasions successfully
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29 organized prominent multilateral MM gatherings namely Asia-Pacific Military Medical
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31 Conference (APMMC) and International Conference on Military Medicine (ICMM) (Tjen
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33 2015). APMMC was inaugurated in 1990 as an annual platform "for military medical
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35 professionals in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss scientific and military medical issues,
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37 developments and cooperation" (National Archives of Singapore 2018). ICMM is an
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39 intergovernmental organization created in 1921 aimed at fostering "the bonds of professional
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41 collaboration between members of the Armed Forces Medical Services of all States" and
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43 promoting "free exchange of medical knowledge [and] international medical co-operation"
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45 (ICMM 2018). Thailand contended that it co-hosted the APMMC meetings four times,
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47 including the one with the U.S. in 2012. It also hosted the ICMM's 2nd Pan-Asia-Pacific
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49 Regional Congress on Military Medicine in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2012.
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51 Additionally, Bangkok was elected to chair the Congress from 2012 to 2014, and co-chair the
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53 Regional Working Group of ICMM's Regional Assembly in June 2014 and May 2015.
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By flagging its previous MM experiences, performances, and organizational and managerial competency, the country was able to persuade the opposing ASEAN parties to believe in Bangkok's MM expertise. The latter eventually trusted that Thailand possessed adequate skillsets and experiences to host the ACMM. As a result, all Southeast Asian members agreed to amend the above paragraph to allow an instantaneous opening of entity. The phrase "structure and mechanisms" was replaced by "establishment", and the phrase "and approved by ADMM before" was changed to "for." The final Joint Declaration of the 9th ADMM thus reads:

Adopt the concept paper on the *establishment* of the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM), which establishes practical, effective, and sustainable cooperation among military medical services of member states and task ADSOM to work out the operational details and modalities *for* its implementation (ADMM 2015).

[Note: The italics were made by the authors to highlight the differences between the draft and final Joint Declarations.]

These terms unlocked the ACMM's formation. The mechanism could be launched without ADMM's prior consent of all of its operating procedures and modalities, enabling Bangkok to accomplish its objective of founding the mechanism.

V. Conclusions

Our study has shed light on research regarding Asia-Pacific defence diplomacy and chairs' influence over negotiation processes and results. The analysis confirmed our argument that chairs' effectiveness does not automatically stem from their resource possession, but from their ability to transform the available resources into bargaining leverage. Our research on MM negotiation dynamics unveiled the factors enabling particular co-chairs to be more effective in shaping cooperation details than the others: utilizing the others' preferences, invoking the notion of the ASEAN Centrality, and exercising their expertise over issues being negotiated.

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3 Notwithstanding the findings above, our study contains some limitations, warranting
4
5 future research. First, we have focused our examination only on the interplay between the
6
7 Thai and Russian co-chairs over MM bargaining. More analyses concerning co-chair
8
9 interactions should be undertaken. For instance, interested scholars can compare between the
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11 Singapore-Japanese and Thai-Russian co-chairmanship to assess how each pair shaped
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13 regional MM architectures. Admittedly, carrying out this research could be challenging as the
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15 countries assumed the positions in different times and contexts. Yet, such assessment is
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17 valuable because it would enrich our understanding of Asia-Pacific defence diplomacy and
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19 chairs' roles in international negotiations. Also, as our study focuses on the roles of co-chairs
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21 in shaping the MM outcomes, we did not examine other factors such as bilateral military
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23 affairs among all ADMM-Plus stakeholders which could alter the outcomes. Because these
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25 elements could impact the bargaining dynamics and regional defence cooperation, they
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27 should be incorporated into future studies to help formulate a more comprehensive picture
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29 concerning the development of regional security architectures.
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