

Dynamics of regime failure: Regime power analysis China-ASEAN illicit drug control

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ABSTRACT

The East and Southeast Asian region confronts complex challenges in combating the illicit drug trade originating from the Golden Triangle, a long-established narcotics trade hub. In 2000, China and ASEAN countries cooperated through the ACCORD as a comprehensive framework of regional drug control. However, the increasing number of methamphetamine seizures and the rise of new psychoactive substances indicate persistent challenges in the power of ACCORD's drug control regime. Hence, this study aims to analyze the ASEAN- China cooperation framework, particularly in the context of regime power formation. The concept of the International Security Regime is utilized to understand the complexity of the regime by integrating four dimensions of power, namely productive, structural, institutional, and compulsory. Through a qualitative approach and secondary analysis, this study reveals complex dynamics that affect the effectiveness of regional cooperation from the existing literature. First, productive power faces significant challenges due to intra-regional diversity, complex bilateral relations, and the declarative nature of ACCORD. Second, structural power is compromised due to power asymmetries and deep contestation. Third, institutional power suffers from significant weaknesses due to flawed institutional design. Fourth, compulsory power suffers because China's ability to exercise compulsion power directly, such as through sanctions or pressure, is limited within the multilateral framework of ACCORD. Therefore, cooperation needs to strengthen the network of normative discourse, political structures, and institutions, which affects the power drugs control regime. This paper successfully highlights the weaknesses in the power of the ASEAN-China-constructed international security regime.

Keywords:

ASEAN; China; illicit drugs; international security regime

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INTRODUCTION

The formulation of effective strategies to combat illicit trade and narcotics abuse presents formidable challenges globally, including in East and Southeast Asia (Emmers, 2007). This region's vulnerability to illicit trafficking and drug abuse is significantly influenced by the Golden Triangle, a geographical area encompassing portions of Myanmar,

China, Laos, and Thailand. with conducive geographical for opium cultivation since the 16th and 17th centuries (Sen, 1991). Since the 1990s, the Golden Triangle's narcotics trafficking network has extended to China's Yunnan Province (Lu & Zhang, 2011). Consequently, China has emerged as a pivotal transit point within the illicit narcotics trafficking network originating from the Golden Triangle. Multiple narcotics smuggling routes traverse China (Sheng, 2006), via routes encompassing Yunnan, Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau (UNODC, 2019). Hence, robust international cooperation, particularly among governments, is imperative for effective control measures (Xu et al., 2024). This paper, therefore, aims to analyze the cooperative framework between China and Southeast Asian countries through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional body.

In response to the problem of illicit trade and drug abuse in the Southeast Asian region, China and ASEAN member states have established structured cooperation. In 2000, the International Congress in Bangkok had the theme "Towards a Drug-Free ASEAN 2015: Sharing Vision, Leading Change". The Congress adopted the ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD), which aims to achieve a drug-free ASEAN by 2015. The ACCORD action plan establishes a comprehensive framework that includes raising public awareness of the dangers of drugs, data collection, prevention and treatment programs, information exchange, drug law enforcement, and alternative development programs (ASEAN, 2000). In addition, ACCORD also mandates the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of drug control activities in the region. The ACCORD is a concrete manifestation of efforts to establish a multilateral cooperation framework in drug control. Thus, in this context, the ACCORD plays a role as a regional regime that complements the previous regimes that have been established by ASEAN (Hidayat, 2020).

Despite cooperation efforts through the ACCORD mechanism, the problem of illicit drug trafficking in the Southeast Asian region and China still shows a worrying trend. According to data of UNODC (2024) presented in Figure 1, there is a periodic increase in the number of methamphetamine seizures during the period 2014 to 2023. In 2023, the volume of methamphetamine seizures even reached its highest point, which was 190 tons. Southeast Asia collectively accounted for 169 tonnes of the total seizures, representing 89% of the overall methamphetamine seizures in the East and Southeast Asia region. This record-breaking volume of seizures, along with a general decline in prices and an increase in stability or average purity, suggests an increase in the scale of production and trade of methamphetamine originating from the Golden Triangle. Drug trafficking cases also show a significant increase in complexity in the East and Southeast Asia region. This is reflected in the findings of 551 new psychoactive substances identified (UNODC, 2024). Although synthetic cannabinoids still dominate the market, there is a diversification of new psychoactive substances (NPS) with the emergence of various substances (UNODC, 2024).

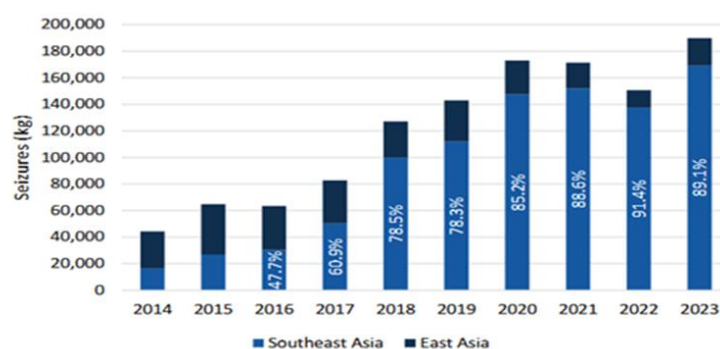


Figure 1. Methamphetamine seizure in East and Southeast Asia for the 2014-2023 period
Source: Taken from UNODC (2024)

The framework of cooperation through ASEAN in handling illicit drugs between countries in Southeast Asia tends to be less than optimal (Prayuda & Warsito, 2021; Wulandari & Kirana, 2023). ASEAN construction norms and values indeed provide the same perception of drug problems (Prayuda et al., 2019), but this principle of the "ASEAN Way" inhibits the regional framework (Prayuda, R., & Warsito, 2021). Wirawan & Novikrisna (2024) argue this principle creates a unique cooperation mechanism. It allows member states to harmonize their views, but as the result the program to combat narcotics crimes is not optimal (Wulandari & Kirana, 2023). Many studies have found that China's role is crucial in cooperation in tackling transnational crimes, including drugs in the East and Southeast Asia Region (Harper & Tempra, 2020; Mirasol, 2017; Wibisono, 2017). Previous studies tended to see the importance of China's presence in cooperation with ASEAN and ignored the data that the volume of illicit drug trafficking is still worrying. Previous research has not been able to explain how China-ASEAN cooperation, which is considered significant, has shown results that have not been maximized, especially from the perspective of the strength of the international security regime.

Therefore, regardless of the established framework of international cooperation between ASEAN and China through the ACCORD, the persistent escalation in both the volume and complexity of drug trafficking within Southeast Asia indicate underlying deficiencies in the regime's power formation. Consequently, a critical examination of this phenomenon is warranted to elucidate the structural and operational weaknesses within the regime's design and implementation. Specifically, it is important to discuss why the China-ASEAN cooperation framework through ACCORD has not been successful in tackling illicit drug trafficking. In fact, efforts to establish a regime for handling drugs have been carried out since 2000.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore various dimensions and nuances of complex social phenomena (Lamont, 2020). In other words, this method emphasizes understanding social phenomena through the interpretation of phenomena (Becker et al., 2012). The selection of this method is based on the aim of deeply understanding the efforts to establish a regime to handle illicit drug trafficking between ASEAN and China. Hence, it can identify factors that influence the process of regime building and the dynamics of interaction within it. This study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data, defined as official documents produced by governments, organizations, or other relevant actors (Lamont, 2020). This study utilizes publications from ASEAN, China-ASEAN member states, and other international organizations such as UNODC. Meanwhile, Secondary data is gathered through internet-based research, encompassing scholarly journals, academic e-books, organizational websites, and reputable media outlets (Lamont, 2020). This research analyzes the period from the establishment of the China-ASEAN ACCORD in 2000 to the most recent UNODC report in 2024, a timeframe selected to comprehensively assess the evolution of both the cooperative framework and the regional drug situation. The 2000 inception of the ACCORD serves as a starting point for evaluating the development of collaborative mechanisms and policy implementation. The inclusion of the 2024 UNODC report, which underscores ongoing concerns about illicit drug trafficking, provides a crucial endpoint for understanding contemporary challenges.

Data analysis is carried out by secondary analysis with a research method that involves the use of data that has been collected by other researchers for new research purposes. According to Bryman (2016), this method of analysis offers many opportunities to explore large and elusive data sets. Thus, this study uses pre-existing data to be viewed through a new conceptual lens based on the International Security Regime Theory by Hynek (2018),

which provides a more comprehensive explanation of efforts to form an international regime by offering a new perspective through a power approach. Hence, it can capture the complexity of the international security regime as a dynamic social construct by integrating four dimensions of strength, namely productive, structural, institutional, and compulsory. The reliance on secondary data presents methodological limitations, primarily concerning potential biases inherent in pre-existing datasets and the absence of direct access to primary actors. To mitigate these limitations, the study employed rigorous source triangulation, cross-referencing information from diverse sources such as official government documents, academic journals, and reputable international reports.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Regional cooperation between ASEAN and China in tackling the narcotics problem is structured under the framework of ASEAN+1 (with China as a partner) and ASEAN+3 (involving China, Japan, and South Korea). In 2000, ASEAN took a strategic step to expand the geographical scope of its anti-narcotics cooperation initiative by including China. This step is based on the recognition that narcotics production, trade, and consumption are significant transnational issues in the East Asian region, requiring a more comprehensive collective response. In addition, ASEAN expects China's participation to put additional pressure on Myanmar in efforts to eradicate narcotics trafficking (Emmers, 2007). The implementation of cooperation under the ASEAN+1 framework began in October 2000 through the International Congress in Bangkok. The result of this congress was the formulation of the Bangkok Political Declaration in Pursuit of a Drug-Free ASEAN 2015, which resulted in the adoption of ACCORD (ASEAN, 2000). ASEAN's decision to involve China is seen as a crucial step in deepening the regional cooperation process. Close collaboration with China, as well as the potential additional pressure that the country can exert, is believed to bring about significant changes in consultation mechanisms and encourage the establishment of new formal structures in regional efforts to counter narcotics trafficking (Emmers, 2007). The ACCORD was followed by the ACCORD Action Plan 2005-2010, which establishes a comprehensive cooperation framework, focusing on raising public awareness of the dangers of narcotics and adequate response at the Community level; data collection, prevention and treatment programs, and information exchange; narcotics-related law enforcement; alternative development programs. This action plan integrates the four pillars through the formation of a task force involving China and ASEAN countries (ASEAN, 2021).

Furthermore, the Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues was produced at the Sixth China-ASEAN Summit in 2002. This declaration places the eradication of illegal drugs as a top priority in the non-traditional security agenda. The document emphasizes the need for increased information exchange, personnel training, and capacity building in efforts to combat drug trafficking. ASEAN and China have also engaged in effective cooperation in various fields, including drug prevention education, drug law enforcement, rehabilitation, and alternative development, resulting in various important achievements. This collaboration has expanded the international influence of regional anti-drug efforts and strengthened the capacity to combat transnational drug crime. In preventive education, ASEAN governments have established special bodies and implemented various measures to promote drug prevention. To reduce demand, the government has opened rehabilitation centers, improved education, and provided re-employment training to reduce drug demand (Wang et al., 2025).

Cooperation within the framework of ASEAN+3 began its formation through the premier meeting of foreign ministers of ASEAN+3 member countries which focused on tackling transnational crime. The meeting, which was held in Bangkok on January 11, 2004, resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional

Security, which prioritizes the eradication of illicit drug trafficking as the main agenda among other non-traditional security issues (ASEAN, 2021). This memorandum of understanding also emphasizes the eradication of illegal drugs as the main agenda in non-traditional security issues (Emmers, 2007). To operationalize these commitments, ACCORD prepared the 2005-2010 Action Plan at the 2005 meeting in Beijing. The action plan establishes four focus areas, namely, increasing public awareness, reducing demand, law enforcement, and developing alternatives. A Chinese delegation emphasized the need to expand and increase drug control cooperation to achieve a drug-free zone (ASEAN, 2021). Apart from the various forms of cooperation that have been established and carried out by China and ASEAN, this is still not able to have a significant impact on the handling of illegal drug trafficking cases in the region. Then, it is important to look at the international security regime that has been created by looking at the aspects of the regime's power.

First, the analysis of productive power in the context of China-ASEAN cooperation in drug control reveals the complexity of the interaction between moral disagreements, cultural values, and efforts to shape a security discourse. A problem in the formation of the regime power because Southeast Asia as a region rich in cultural, linguistic, political, ideological, and historical diversity, presents significant challenges in coordinating an effective regional response to drug trafficking. The problem, for example, is shown in limited experience through the Border Liaison Offices (BLO) which shows language barriers, structural and organisational differences, as well as variations in training levels and data collection techniques. The problem is triggered by sensitive issues related to national jurisdiction, information sharing, and extradition laws, further complicating regional coordination (Emmers, 2007). This creates complex bilateral relations between member states that affect the ability to build strong cooperation. For example, the reluctance to cooperate with countries deemed unreliable, such as Myanmar, hampers collective drug control efforts. Persistent distrust between countries, such as Myanmar's suspicion of links between drug groups in the north and China, as well as Thailand's suspicion of Myanmar, hampered effective cooperation efforts. Differences in domestic political will, such as the assertiveness of Singapore, Thailand, and China compared to the challenges Myanmar faces due to the domestic insurgency, also create disparities in policy implementation (Emmers, 2007). In this context, the productive power realized through the narrative of humanity are often not balanced with adequate operational capabilities. Although constructive discourse appears virtuous and generates a positive emotional response, policy implementation on the ground is hampered by various factors, including differences in capacity, national interests, and complex bilateral relations.

The existence of legal differences in addressing illicit drugs presents significant challenges. This is highlighted in the case of how Thailand, Philippines and China perceive this problem differently. The Philippines employs a severe, repressive approach marked by extrajudicial killings, disregarding human rights and social consequences. Thailand, conversely, has transitioned from a similar hardline stance to a treatment-focused policy, acknowledging the ineffectiveness of its previous strategy and exploring drug law reform, including crop legalization. China, a major chemical and pharmaceutical producer, struggles with precursor and fentanyl export control, a key source of the synthetic opioid crisis, despite minimal domestic consumption. Discrepancies in legal standards and regulatory frameworks across the Indo-Pacific's rapidly expanding chemical industry exacerbate these challenges (Pardo et al., 2019). This is demonstrated, for example, by the case that increased control of precursors in countries such as China will limit synthetic drug production in Myanmar, with wider regional impacts, albeit for a short time (Coyne, 2022). Hence, effective international responses necessitate coordinated efforts that prioritize the rule of law,

political stability, and economic security (Coyne, 2022). Thus, policy harmonization is crucial to mitigate legal loopholes exploited by sophisticated transnational criminal networks.

National governments that prioritise domestic drug policies and conflicting national interests also impede regional cooperation. For instance, Myanmar's protracted ethnic conflict, where northern minority groups seek autonomy, illustrates this challenge. These groups, controlling territories politically, militarily, and economically, perceive central government drug eradication efforts as threats to their autonomy, relying on drug trafficking revenue for survival (Sheng, 2006). Consequently, the "war on drugs" narrative is rejected, as it contradicts their core values. This interplay of moral disagreements, local values, and international discourse politicizes the drug issue, hindering the regime's productive power. Ultimately, intra-regional complexities, operational disparities, and the non-binding nature of treaties diminish the effectiveness of the ASEAN-China drug control regime. Not only Myanmar, but other ASEAN member states tend to take an individualistic approach to foreign policy. While China's leadership, driven by economic and geopolitical interests, has influenced regional intervention (Harper & Tempra, 2020), it has also revealed opportunistic tendencies among some members, particularly those in the Golden Triangle (Nauvarian & Pramudia, 2022). This shows a lack of sense of togetherness that correlates with the idea of a shared regional vision, where member states can set aside their national interests and even their identities to achieve a larger and broader goal. By having it, the prescription for member states' behavior should be a priority towards a shared agenda, not a national agenda.

Furthermore, disparities in democratic development between ASEAN members and China, coupled with limited democratic capacity building, hinder effective non-state actor engagement in regional security efforts (Nauvarian & Pramudia, 2022). While the potential value of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Non-Traditional Security issues is recognized, particularly regarding resource mobilization and local-level implementation ASEAN's engagement with CSOs remains inconsistent. This inconsistency impedes the realization of collaborative potential, necessitating a shift from mere rhetorical participation to substantive partnerships (Allison & Taylor, 2017). Despite the existence of a formal procedural framework for CSO affiliation within ASEAN, East Asian governments and regional institutions, including ASEAN, have consistently demonstrated an inability to effectively utilize CSO capabilities. Substantive coordination remains largely aspirational, with CSO integration primarily limited to predetermined domains where governmental agendas have already delineated the scope and content (Sukma, 2013). This practice effectively relegates CSOs to a role of 'allocation of civil society functions and tasks' (Camilleri, 2003), rather than facilitating genuine engagement in critical decision-making and policy formulation processes. Consequently, the potential for collaborative security governance through meaningful CSO participation remains significantly unrealized, hindering the development of more inclusive and effective regional security mechanisms."

Second, the analysis of structural power in the international security regime. This problem can be seen especially in the context of anti-drug maritime law enforcement in the South China Sea. This reveals the complexity of actor interactions shaped by power asymmetry and deep contestation. Referring to the definition of actor capacity building through a mutually beneficial and position-oriented constitution through direct interaction, there are significant structural problems hamper efforts to build an effective regime. In this case, the contestation over natural resources and territorial sovereignty between China, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei creates a complicated security landscape where mutual trust is very low (Zhang et al., 2021). Anti-drug maritime law enforcement, which inherently involves significant national political action (Gould, 2017), has become an arena of intense contestation. The variation in the composition of maritime law enforcement power among

the parties to the dispute, which includes administrative, military, and paramilitary bodies, reflects the diverse characteristics and strengthens the political dimension of this cooperation. Hegemonic efforts to dampen regime proposals through structural and asymmetrical reproductive power are seen in the lack of a clear international legal framework for cooperation in anti-drug law enforcement in the region. Although international law suggests interim arrangements based on mutual understanding and cooperation, the existing international practice focuses more on joint development and protection of the marine environment (Chen, 2013), leaving little precedent for maritime law enforcement cooperation. As a result, without a robust legal framework, the risk of international conflict increases, potentially prompting countries to reduce their anti-drug law enforcement activities, thereby inadvertently allowing drug smuggling to increase (Wang et al., 2025). In this context, the "non-political" regime becomes an illusion, as any maritime law enforcement action is tied to deep political considerations, and efforts to establish an effective regime are hampered by the asymmetric reproduction of power and the lack of mutual trust.

Third, institutional power can have an impact on regime failure as a result of flawed institutional design or the ineffectiveness of actors with institutional power. In the context of drug control between China and ASEAN, there are strong indications of weakness in both aspects. Existing institutional designs, such as the "ACCORD Plan of Action," the "Beijing Declaration," and various memorandums of understanding, tend to be declarative and less binding. These documents, while containing calls for detailed arrangements, law enforcement, review procedures, and verification standards, have not been effectively implemented. The lack of clarity in the implementation mechanism and the lack of binding legal force indicate flaws in the institutional design. The weaknesses of institutional design are reflected in the inconsistency of regulations and legal procedures between member states. For example, differences in asset forfeiture regulations, the implementation of Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA), and forensic standards hinder effective cross-border cooperation in law enforcement (ASEAN, 2000). These inconsistencies create loopholes that transnational criminals exploit, weakening the regime's ability to respond to threats in a coherent manner.

The problem of institutional strength also lies in the lack of clarity in the expected goals and progress measurement methodology. The inability to establish a quantitative baseline at the beginning of the "Drug-Free ASEAN 2015" initiative and the absence of quantitative indicators in the ACCORD Plan of Action indicate institutional design flaws. This causes progress assessments to be relative and narrative, not based on measurable data. Actors with institutional power, i.e., member states, have shown efforts to improve the situation through the development of regional data collection systems since 2007. However, despite improvements in the quality and coverage of data shared regionally, weaknesses remain, especially in prevalence data and care coverage (UNODC, 2015). This indicates that although these actors seek to use their institutional power to improve the system, limited capacity and lack of uniform standards hinder their ability to create effective regimes. Thus, the inability to set clear goals, quantitative indicators, and a comprehensive data collection system undermines the institutional strength of the ACCORD, thereby reducing its effectiveness in achieving the goals of drug control in the region.

The problem of institutionalization at the regional level then leads to the problem of institutionalization at the domestic level. For example, in the case of maritime anti-drug law enforcement, international law, which primarily regulates relations between countries, requires integration into domestic law to be effectively enforced. Domestic anti-drug laws serve as the main basis for law enforcement cooperation, and the effectiveness of international law depends on the extent to which countries incorporate them into their legal frameworks. However, challenges arise when there are differences in the legal framework

and values of society between countries. Complex legislative procedures and differences in societal values often hamper domestic legislative transformation. For example, the difference in the classification of drug use as a criminal act or illegal act between international conventions and domestic law in some countries creates inconsistencies in law enforcement procedures (Wang et al., 2025). These differences undermine the orderly conduct of maritime anti-drug operations and underscore the importance of institutional power in the international security regime. Effective institutional power requires the ability to address differences in legal frameworks and societal values, as well as the ability to foster the integration of international law into domestic law. Without adequate institutional strength, maritime anti-drug law enforcement efforts will face significant challenges in achieving their goals.

In addition, institutional strength, which includes the ability to influence the rules, norms, and procedures of the regime, is hampered by the absence of effective information-sharing mechanisms. Although the "Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Non-Traditional Security Fields" has been signed, which theoretically provides a framework for increased information exchange, its practical implementation is still minimal. As a result, countries operate independently and face spatial and temporal constraints in drug smuggling cases, as well as difficulties in expanding the scope of transnational drug crime investigations (Wang et al., 2025). The inability to establish a systematic and structured information-sharing mechanism hampers coordination between law enforcement agencies during maritime operations, leading to lost opportunities to apprehend criminals. Thus, the lack of effective institutional powers, reflected in the inability to implement the provisions of the treaty and establish efficient operational mechanisms, indicates a flaw in the institutional design of the anti-drug maritime security regime between China and ASEAN.

Therefore, China-ASEAN drug control regime is experiencing significant weaknesses in institutional strength. Weak institutional design and lack of effectiveness of state actors have created loopholes that drug mafia networks have exploited. To increase the effectiveness of this regime, it is necessary to strengthen institutional design, harmonize domestic laws, and increase political commitment from all parties involved (Wang et al., 2025). The success of the level of institutionalization of this problem has been exemplified by the European Union (EU). The evolution of the European Union drug policy reflects a broader constitutional trajectory, positioning the EU as a key guarantor of member state security and public health. This mandate is explicitly articulated within the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which confers regulatory authority to combat illicit drug trafficking and mitigate drug-related health damage. To foster evidence-based policymaking, the EU also established the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), thus institutionalizing a research-driven approach (Colson & Bergeron, 2020). Hence, if the regime is not supported by strong institutional design and effective implementation, it will be hard to address the increasingly complex challenges of drug trafficking.

Fourth, compulsive power in the context of the international security regime, defined as the ability to coerce other actors through material resources and ideas, such as sanctions, pressure, or military force, is a crucial part. An analysis of the phenomenon of illicit trade in ASEAN, particularly within the framework of the ACCORD, reveals significant weaknesses in the implementation of compulsive power. This is because actors with institutional power, namely the Chinese government and ASEAN countries, have not effectively used their power. Inconsistencies in domestic laws, local political considerations, and different political agendas are the main obstacles. The failure to implement the regional cooperation and review mechanisms mandated by the ACCORD Plan of Action, as well as the absence of a law enforcement agenda in discussions, indicate a lack of political will and capacity to implement compulsive power (Sheng, 2006).

The analysis of compulsive power in the international security regime, particularly in the context of narcotics control efforts in Southeast Asia through the ACCORD, reveals complex dynamics that hinder the formation of effective working regimes. Based on the definition that a regime depends on the ability and willingness of actors with compulsive power to use material resources and ideas such as sanctions, pressure, or military force, the ACCORD phenomenon indicates a deficit in the implementation of such power. It is worth acknowledging that one prominent and clear aspect of the ACCORD is China's leadership strength. Without China, ASEAN's drug reduction strategy has historically failed to meet expectations; no single country has emerged as a leader, and a policy that is theoretically valuable and practically has been ignored (Harper & Tempura, 2020). Although China, as an actor with significant compulsion potential, has actively promoted anti-drug cooperation and shown a preference for effective regional structures, the multilateral implementation of compulsive power is hampered by various factors. Therefore, the ACCORD serves more as a forum for information exchange than an institutionalized work regime, with most anti-drug measures being carried out unilaterally or bilaterally. This suggests that China's ability to use compulsive power directly, such as through sanctions or pressure, within the multilateral framework of the ACCORD is limited.

Factors such as corruption, domestic pressure, capacity constraints, and high intra-regional variation in ASEAN countries are the main obstacles to the expansion of regional cooperation. These limitations force interested actors, including China, to rely on bilateral and trilateral initiatives as the first step toward the establishment of an embryonic regime. The main challenge faced is the tendency of regional countries to limit cooperation at the national and bilateral levels. This fundamental issue requires a resolution to achieve the set goals (Harper & Tempura, 2020). This approach reflects China's pragmatic strategy of gradually building trust and cooperation rather than imposing compliance through immature compulsion mechanisms. Although China has succeeded in increasing the level of institutionalization and putting pressure on certain countries such as Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to act, the transformation from national efforts to regional cooperation still faces significant challenges. Beijing's declaration shows China's desire to increase regional cooperation, but the reality is that this transformation takes time and depends on the evolution of domestic factors in Southeast Asian countries. Thus, although China has the potential for compulsive power, its effectiveness in the ACCORD regime is hampered by structural and political barriers, preferring a more adaptive and pragmatic bilateral and trilateral approach. This can be understood as a result of the absence of adequate compliance mechanisms, resulting in a lack of consequences for countries that do not meet expectations. Therefore, to realize the reduction and eradication of illegal narcotics production, trade, and consumption in the region, ASEAN and China need to intensify multilateral cooperation and adopt mechanisms that encourage compliance with ACCORD policies (Harper & Tempura, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the China-ASEAN cooperation framework through ACCORD, which has not been successful in tackling illicit drug trafficking. In fact, efforts to establish a regime for handling drugs have been carried out since 2000. This indicates underlying deficiencies in the regime's power formation. An analysis of the power of China-ASEAN drug-control regimes reveals that the ACCORD regime has problems in building productive, structural, institutional and compulsive power, which has failed to suppress illicit drug trafficking. Analysis of productive power reveals that this regime faces significant challenges due to intra-regional diversity and differences in national interests. Although the ACCORD has succeeded in articulating moral disapproval of narcotics and building consensus through

concrete programs, policy implementation is often hampered by factors such as capacity differences, complex bilateral relations, and national governments' preference for addressing drug problems at the domestic level. In addition, the declarative nature of the ACCORD and its lack of binding legal force limit its effectiveness. Analysis of structural power indicates a problem in deep power asymmetry and contestation. Efforts to build an effective regime are hampered by territorial disputes, a lack of mutual trust, and the absence of a clear international legal framework. Hegemonic attempts to dampen regime proposals through structural power and asymmetrical reproduction reinforce the political dimension of this cooperation, so that the regime's "non-political" becomes an illusion. In terms of institutional power, the China-ASEAN drug control regime has experienced significant weaknesses due to flawed institutional design.

This creates inconsistencies in legal regulations and procedures, ambiguity in goals and methodologies for measuring progress, and the lack of effective information-sharing mechanisms that undermine the regime's ability to respond to threats in a coherent manner. Compulsive power is also weakened because China's ability to use compulsive power directly, such as through sanctions or pressure, within the multilateral framework of the ACCORD, is limited. Although China, as an actor with significant compulsion potential, has actively promoted anti-drug cooperation and shown a preference for effective regional structures, the multilateral implementation of compulsive power has been hampered, preferring a more adaptive and pragmatic bilateral and trilateral approach. Therefore, ASEAN-China needs to strengthen the cooperation framework, especially in monitoring and reporting implementation to align perspectives and trust among them. As this study is limited to regional analysis, future research is needed to investigate the distinct at national level of ASEAN countries and China regarding drug issues.

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