



“We Are Used to It”: Regional Disaster Diplomacy of Typhoon Haiyan 2013

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Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 was one of the most destructive events in modern Southeast Asia. The Philippines and Vietnam suffered the greatest loss with more than 7,000 deaths and an economic damage of more than 10 billion USD. This research examines the tropical monsoon and its effects on regional disaster diplomacy, namely, the role of the disaster and its management in ASEAN. The methodological framework of the study is the Complex Adaptive System (CAS), which is applied through four properties and three mechanisms. According to the results, the events can be considered quite controversial in a diplomatic sense: despite the level of global humanitarian assistance, ASEAN states were characterized by aloofness and fear of sovereignty. As a result, disaster relief and recovery efforts were also ineffective. Nevertheless, in its official communication, ASEAN recorded typhoon-related disaster prevention cooperation as a success story.

Keywords: CAS method; Disaster diplomacy; Philippines; Storm; Typhoon Haiyan



INTRODUCTION

The 2013 Typhoon Haiyan, also known as Yolanda, is widely regarded as one of the strongest tropical storms of modern times. The disaster primarily affected the Philippines, and to a lesser extent, Vietnam, Taiwan, China, and the islands of Micronesia, causing enormous destruction in terms of both human life and economic goods. In addition to this damage, Haiyan was the second strongest (approximately 314 km/h) landfalling tropical storm based on recorded observations (Tsai et al., 2020). The extent of the devastation is clearly shown by the fact that in January 2014, the bodies left behind by the typhoon were still found in the central part of the Philippines (Tran, 2014).

The case was widely discussed in the international academic literature (Barmania, 2014; Chiu, 2013; Dalisay & De Guzman, 2016), which has examined all phases of disaster management, from forecasting to rescue operations and the aftercare of the victims. In addition, many ASEAN documents (ASEAN, 2013, 2015; Barber, 2014) have been prepared on the subject. Nevertheless, Haiyan was not investigated from the perspective of disaster diplomacy, whose gap this study attempts to fill.

Disaster diplomacy is a relatively new field. Its core premise is that disaster management cooperation develops regional relations and promotes political cooperation (Petz, 2014, p. 35). As cooperative disaster relief is a task that requires close, coordinated cooperation, it carries significant political potential (Pusterla, 2017). However, this short principle, which is easily understood by the academic community, needs explanation and even supplementation. According to Feria-Miranda (1994, p. 249), in the 20th century, political leadership around the world recognized that the importance of emergency and disaster management was rapidly increasing, and that disaster risk management was also incorporated into political practice (Abney & Hill, 1966). This way, disaster management processes were not only the responsibility of the profession but were also increasingly emphasized in political decision-making. According to Albrecht (2017), the way in which disasters are handled by a given government greatly influences political trust and culture. Thus, the occurrence of a catastrophe does not necessarily damage the political system; rather, it prompts the government to mobilize its resources to manage and communicate the threat (Abney & Hill, 1966). Hollis (2018) also points out that disaster is not an independent variable itself, as it is highly dependent on economic, political, and social vulnerability. The phenomenon of disasters must, therefore, be examined in more depth, as a kind of political event, together with its response, communication, and other long-term effects (Olson, 2000). At present, Ilan Kelman (2007a, 2007b, 2012) is considered the most respected researcher in this still-underdiscussed area, according to the published peer-reviewed literature (Papp & Pal, 2021). According to him, all transnational activities related to disasters and disaster management constitute disaster diplomacy (Kelman, 2012, p. 12). Werker (2010, p. 3) argues that disasters bring opposing parties together, albeit for a shorter period. However, this principle is refuted by the events observed so far, which explain that during disasters, even if the relations between the states concerned are conducive, mutual information retention is typical, and even after the incident, the blame for the other party may even worsen¹. Disaster diplomacy is thus merely an opportunity to forge closer links between affected people and the risk-takers, but it is not self-evident that it will bring states closer to another. According to the scientometric analysis of the field (Papp & Pal, 2021), disaster diplomacy discourse is conducted merely in journals, with most articles appearing in the 2010s. As a new academic field, the subject has only a few authors, and Ilan Kelman is the most prominent scholar. However, as a multidisciplinary field, disaster diplomacy is fundamentally linked to three major disciplines: the social sciences (mainly international relations), the natural sciences (earth and environmental science), and the medical sciences (environmental health and health diplomacy).

The theory of disaster diplomacy is applied to the region of Southeast Asia where the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)² is the most significant international cooperation of the region. From the aspect of political economy, ASEAN is not a homogeneous community, moreover, it does not constitute a supranational practice (Jones, 2015). ASEAN institutions are shaped by the uneven distribution of power and resources (Carroll et al., 2020; Hill, 1997), and Jones (2015) argues that the most significant ASEAN norm of non-interference even impedes integration in the region. Resource inequities and economic powers create new imbalances in

¹ The former can be observed, for example, between India, China, and Nepal regarding the 2017 floods, where the disaster could have been prevented if the affected states would not have withheld their flood forecasting information (Adhikari, 2017).

² ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management. The Jakarta-based organization plays a liaison and enforcement role among the disaster management units of ASEAN member states. One of its most important tasks is the training of the primary regional intervention staff, the Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT).

wealth, access to technologies, education, and public services which can be observed in trans-boundary environmental governance as well. Intergovernmental governance is significantly underregulated (K. Koh & Robinson, 2002; Miller et al., 2020, 2022) and it is realized only at individual political decision-makers. Hirsch (2020) even argues that regional governance regarding environmental goods positions institutions towards a regional scale where the main task is coordinating overly aggregated national benefits, costs, and risks. The lack of concrete instruments for a united regional environmental management leaves disaster management to the national-level. Elliott (2012) states that regional structures are more like ‘invited spaces’ that cannot create an effective channel for communication or democratic representation of a wide range of stakeholders.

Therefore, the characteristics of regional environmental governance involve an apparent contradiction regarding regional disaster diplomacy. The central analytical puzzle of this study is that limited operational effectiveness coexists with an officially declared success. The article argues that within the ASEAN framework, the notion of ‘success’ in disaster diplomacy is not primarily evaluated through the effectiveness of disaster relief or recovery outcomes. Instead, it is shaped by deeply embedded norms of non-interference, political autonomy, and the avoidance of intra-regional tension. As such, disaster diplomacy in Southeast Asia reflects a form of political success that prioritizes the preservation of regional harmony over operational efficiency. Typhoon Haiyan thus provides a critical case through which the divergence between diplomatic success and practical effectiveness can be examined.

The study is structured as follows. First, it details the applied methodological framework, the underlying scientific theoretical framework, and the applied Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) method. Then follows the description of the event, the circumstances of the disaster, and its management. In the disaster diplomacy section, the analysis can be read according to the variables of the CAS methodology. Finally, the study summarizes the most important points and draws conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

As a new discipline, disaster diplomacy draws on several theoretical works (Dahlberg et al., 2016; Kelman, 2007a; Mustafa, 2004; Nelson, 2010; Pelling, 2003; Pelling & Dill, 2010). This theoretical basis is supported by some practical studies investigating events (Cohen, 2012; Gailard et al., 2008; Kelman, 2007b), a certain geographical location (Glantz, 1976; Mavrogenis & Kelman, 2013; Petz, 2014) or a specific problem of the field (Field & Kelman, 2018; Whittaker et al., 2018). As the disaster diplomacy methodology is under development, only a few attempts have been made to develop a unified framework (Comfort, 2000; Kelman, 2012), and there is currently no single, generally accepted methodology. The present article applies a qualitative analysis technique through a case study and connects this empiricism with a formal method, the Complex Adaptive System. The CAS method is attributed to Holland (1995) and can be used to examine any complex system (for example, organizations, human groups, etc.), as well as in the natural and social sciences, economics, and IT. The existing framework was adapted for disaster diplomacy by Comfort (2000) and was expanded with additional aspects by Kelman (2012). The conceptual model centers on the transition among social, economic, and political states in the context of continuous change. It recognizes that social systems are all interconnected at different levels due to continuous interaction with the environment, constant learning, and development. The academic literature of the CAS method focuses on two main problems: (1) the conditions of general complex systems and (2) the properties and mechanisms determining their operation (Comfort, 2000, p. 280). The defined variables of the method are

identified as four properties – nonlinearity, diversity, flow, and aggregation – and three mechanisms – tagging, internal model, and building blocks.

Nonlinearity as the first property indicates a phenomenon where the consequences of small changes during the system’s operation differ greatly over time (Comfort, 2000, p. 282). A good example of this is when a single person notices the signs of a tsunami (a small component), which can warn an entire stretch of the coast and allow time for evacuation, potentially saving thousands of lives (Chapman, 2005). Diversity means that individuals or units with similar characteristics react to the same effect in different ways, thereby initiating new processes (Comfort, 2000, p. 282). In disaster diplomacy, ‘individual’ refers to the actual participants, i.e., diplomats, politicians, international organizations, NGOs, the media, the private sector, and others (Kelman, 2012, p. 78). Flow is the third property, according to which the flow of actions, materials, ideas, and people within the same environment serves as a catalyst among independent individuals (Comfort, 2000, p. 282). Aggregation refers to the ability of individuals to interact with one another in recurring patterns for the sake of a common goal (Comfort, 2000, p. 281). Aggregation, therefore, represents a platform for international disaster management.

The mechanisms defined in the CAS framework are as follows. Tagging covers the connection of different units in order of assistance, aid, or cooperation (Comfort, 2000, p. 282). In international relations, association also means the connection of states seeking similar interests (Kelman, 2012, p. 79). Internal model refers to the common assumptions that influence the interaction between subsystems or components of a system (Comfort, 2000, p. 283). In disaster diplomacy, this can be applied to two governments whose ideologies, foreign policies, visions, or behavior towards the third party are similar (Kelman, 2012, p. 79). The last mechanism is building blocks. These are the units of the system being applied to create a complex system of recurring interactions – for example, steps of communication (Kelman, 2012, p. 79).

Not unexpectedly, the application of the CAS method also has a few limitations, which make it difficult to isolate the research results and establish cause-and-effect relationships. Individual interests, individual intentions, and the interests of politicians and executives greatly influence disaster diplomacy, and this is a practically undetectable and unanalyzable phenomenon. Furthermore, the analysis aspects themselves (four properties and three mechanisms in Figures 1 and 2) may or may not be detectable in a physical system, but they are constantly present in international relations, only their quantity and quality change (Kelman, 2012, pp. 79-82). To overcome this limitation in the present research, the results will be determined by the variables’ degree and other factors, as a certain level of presence is expected to be observed consistently.

While the CAS framework provides a useful lens for identifying patterns and system properties, its application in the context of ASEAN requires further critical reflection. The model tends to treat interactions as functionally adaptive processes, without sufficiently accounting for structural inequalities and asymmetrical power relations between actors. In the case of ASEAN, these asymmetries are particularly relevant, as member states differ significantly in terms of economic capacity, political influence, and institutional preparedness. Therefore, the present study complements the CAS approach with a political economy perspective, arguing that the observed properties and mechanisms are not only emergent system features, but are also shaped by unequal regional relations and by normative constraints such as non-intervention.

Nonlinearity	Diversity	Flow	Aggregation
• Small changes with great consequences • Constant presence during disaster events	• Different reactions of individuals, units, and actors with similar characteristics • Individuals: diplomats, politicians, international organizations, NGO-s, the media, private sector, and others	• Flow of actions, materials, ideas, and people • Catalyst between independent individuals • Personnel, relief supply and information flow through social media, e-mail, telephone, or documents	• Ability of individuals to interact within recurring patterns for a common goal • Disaster management frameworks, channels, platforms, and protocols

Figure 1. Four properties of the CAS method (author's compilation)

Tagging	Internal model	Building blocks
• Connecting the different units of assistance, aid, or cooperation • Tagging and deployment of rescue teams and any related disaster management actors	• Common assumptions influencing the subsystems or system components • Coordinated actions • Governments or related actors with shared ideology, foreign policy, vision, or behavior towards a third party	• System units applied to recurring interactions • Units used in disaster management or platforms used in diplomacy—e.g. meteorological stations and official forums • Not narrowed down only to specific units, but their mobilization as well

Figure 2. Three mechanisms of the CAS method (author's compilation)

RESULTS

Due to the Philippines' unfavorable geographical features, the archipelago can be considered one of the most disaster-prone regions in Southeast Asia and worldwide (Bildan, 2003). In addition, ocean-driven storms are widespread, posing a constant threat to residents due to the high population density along the coast. Climate change further aggravates the situation: according to an analysis (Yusuf & Francisco, 2009) assessing the vulnerability caused by climate change, the country's vulnerability to storms will most certainly increase in the future. The country's vulnerability is evident in the fact that one of the survivors commented on the 2013 typhoon, saying they are used to such disasters ("We are used to it" / "Sanay na kami dyan") (Dalisay & De Guzman, 2016).

As for the regional disaster prevention mechanism, ASEAN had built its regional disaster prevention framework by 2013, so, in theory, the tropical cyclone impacted a well-prepared community on November 8. As for the legal base, the disaster protection framework, that is the Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) (ASEAN, 2020), has been in force since 2009, and the executive body of AADMER, the AHA Centre³, has been operating since 2011. Before the disaster, between May 7 and 11, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the region's major security consultation forum (Borchers, 2014), conducted a disaster prevention exercise in Thailand, and organized a military exercise simulating a typhoon in Brunei from June 17 to 20 (Graham, 2013). Based on these, it was assumed that ASEAN would be able to handle a disaster affecting several of its member states properly, through regional cooperation.

The circumstances of the event

Although the disaster caused extraordinary destruction, it was not without precedent in the region. On October 8, 1881, Typhoon Haiphong struck southern Vietnam and the northern Philippines. At least 23,000 people died during the event, which, according to records at the time, became the region's deadliest catastrophe (Ribera et al., 2008). Currently, the Philippines experiences dozens of typhoons each year, half of which make landfall (Brower et al., 2014), yet Haiyan was the first to reach the value of 6 on the Saffir-Simpson scale (Nicoll, 2014).

In 2013, Haiyan was the 30th named storm, the 13th typhoon (a storm that forms in the western Pacific Ocean), and the fifth super typhoon (a storm with winds of at least 190 km/h). The storm began in the Micronesian archipelago, where it formed over an area of low air pressure on November 2, 2013. As it moved westward, the atmospheric environment strengthened it into a low-pressure storm, which already showed signs of becoming a tropical storm by November 4. From then on, the storm's strength increased rapidly, and on November 6, the Hawaii-based Joint Typhoon Warning Center issued a warning that a Saffir-Simpson scale Category 5 storm was expected in the eastern region of Southeast Asia in the coming days (Tsai et al., 2020).

After that, several forecasting agencies, including the Japan Meteorological Agency and the Hong Kong Observatory, indicated that based on the measured wind speed data, the region was facing an extremely high-intensity tropical storm (AHA Centre, 2013a). Haiyan reached the eastern coast of the Philippines on November 7, and its intensity gradually decreased thereafter. Crossing the islands, it continued toward the South China Sea, and then turned to central and northern Vietnam on November 9, with wind speeds of approximately 160 km/h (Figure 3) (AHA Centre, 2013b).

³ The AHA Centre (ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management) is an inter-governmental organization based in Jakarta, Indonesia that coordinates disaster management and emergency responses across the 10 ASEAN member states.



Figure 3. The route of Typhoon Haiyan. The affected areas in the Philippines are highlighted in red, and the areas in Vietnam are highlighted in blue. Created by the author with Tableau software based on Chiu's analysis (Chiu, 2013)

The devastation caused by the typhoon was enormous, Table 1 summarizes the data collected by the International Disaster Database. At first glance, the data indicate that the loss suffered by the Philippines was extraordinary, and although Vietnam was also affected by the disaster, the damage was not as significant.

In terms of the number of victims, the devastation caused by Haiyan – although it was enormous – cannot be called outstanding: among the modern events in the region, the 2004 tsunami and the 2008 cyclone Nargis (Papp, 2023) had a much larger number of victims, in the order of hundreds of thousands. At the same time, it should be noted that there were extremely different estimates regarding the number of casualties for Haiyan (Tran, 2014). On the other hand, the number of people affected by the disaster was over 16 million, which is considered extremely high. The storm hit the most densely populated coastal cities and destroyed most of the residential buildings there, leaving the locals unhoused. Furthermore, the most serious impact of the event was the economic damage, which was estimated at approximately USD 10 billion. In addition to the destruction of the natural environment, the urban environment – residential buildings, infrastructure, transport routes, health centers, and documentation, etc. (Barmania, 2014) – was practically razed to the ground. The affected settlements had to be rebuilt from scratch, hence the damage classified Haiyan as the modern-day disaster with the greatest material damage in Southeast Asia.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Death</i>	<i>Affected</i>	<i>Economic damage (million USD)</i>
<i>Philippines</i>	7354	16 107	10 000
<i>Vietnam</i>	16	13	734
<i>Total</i>	7370	16 120	10 734

Table 1. Human loss and economic damage caused by Haiyan in ASEAN states. Created by the author based on the data of the International Disaster Database (Guha-Sapir et al., n.d.)

Disaster management

Regarding the ‘prevention phase, a very detailed and thorough international flow of information can be observed. As early as November 2, 2013 the Hawaii-based Joint Typhoon Warning Center detected a low-pressure storm east-southeast of Micronesia, which was headed to Southeast Asia and carried the possibility of becoming a typhoon. The Japan Meteorological Agency classified the phenomenon as a tropical storm on November 3 (Tsai et al., 2020).

The AHA Centre was involved in the alert once the international flow of information began. It separately warned member states to prepare for a large-scale tropical storm, as foreign forecasting agencies identified the emerging storm as a potential threat (AHA Centre, 2013a, p. 28). It is important to mention that the AHA Centre did not carry out its own measurements, but facilitated the international information flow.

On November 6, the Philippine government issued an alert, but at first it activated only the lowest category of the four-level scale, for two areas: the Visayas and Mindanao. On November 7, the classification was changed to the highest level, extending the alert to the central counties of the country; on November 8, to additional counties. However, the forecast did not reach the population as a whole, especially those who were poorer or more vulnerable, as they had more difficulty accessing the platforms used by the public administration: television and social media (Ehrenfeld et al., 2015). That is why the evacuation did not occur in time; a prime example is the city of Tacloban, where the local government did not carry out any evacuation activities. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the population's awareness of disasters proved a disadvantage during protection efforts (Matthies, 2017). As people in the vulnerable areas were used to tropical storms, they did not take the warning seriously and stayed in their homes, underestimating the strength of the storm. This explains the higher number of deaths in these areas (Esteban et al., 2016).

Although based on the forecasts, it was not possible to be certain that Vietnam would also be seriously affected by the storm, the Vietnamese government evacuated 850,000 people from the coastal areas of the central and southern parts of the country as a preventive measure (AHA Centre, 2013b). This measure presumably greatly contributed to the fact that, in addition to the significant economic damage, there were only 16 confirmed deaths nationwide as a result of the storm.

During the intervention phase, both the Philippines and Vietnam reacted immediately. The president of the island nation, Benigno Aquino, mobilized the military and sent helicopters to the alerted areas before the storm hit the coast. However, the quick action did not achieve its goal: due to inadequate preparation, the number of people affected was enormous, and the country's resources were insufficient to rescue the population and provide them with health care. According to local news reports, even five days after the typhoon, the victims were not provided with food (Nicoll, 2014). The situation was further aggravated by the fact that, in addition to the size of the affected area, there were not enough disaster prevention specialists, especially health professionals, so providing care to the population was a practically impossible task (Cranmer & Biddinger, 2014). World Health Organisation (WHO) representative Julie Hall commented on the incident: “Because of the geography of the Philippines, an archipelago of many islands, and the fact that so many have been hit by the typhoon, it is essentially like mounting at least seven separate, simultaneous relief efforts. This multiplies the logistical challenges associated with the response.” (Chiu, 2013, p. 1692)

Emergency Response and Assessment Teams (ERAT) trained by the AHA Centre participated in the intervention phase as well. Although these professionals may be associated with

the ASEAN Regional Disaster Management Mechanism, they actually worked in the Philippine administration. Therefore, they had an obligation to participate in the prevention and primarily joined the operations at the behest of their government, yet the AHA Centre considered them as its own experts in its reports (Barber, 2014, p. 35). However, an ERAT team from Brunei also arrived in the area after the typhoon passed for recovery work (AHA Centre, 2013a).

The other affected ASEAN state, Vietnam, performed well in the prevention phase by evacuating the population from affected areas. Accordingly, after the storm reached the coast, the population was safe. It should be noted that the Vietnamese government tried to evacuate the crews of Chinese, Malaysian, and Indonesian ships working near the coast even before the storm. The military was mobilized immediately, and because the typhoon's strength was not severe and the number of people affected was small, the government was able to control the situation (K.-L. Koh & Eisma Osorio, 2015).

Typhoon Haiyan is considered a milestone in the history of modern Southeast Asia for another reason besides the damage it caused. This was the first disaster in the region where social media played a major role in tracking the population. Since the traditional communication channels – such as landlines – did not work properly, the survivors could log in online to indicate that they were safe, thereby notifying their family members (Tandoc & Takahashi, 2017).

During the 'recovery phase', the international community showed itself to be extremely generous, but at the same time, it focused exclusively on the Philippines and did not contribute significantly to Vietnam's losses. In addition to the International Red Cross, the help of Great Britain, worth GBP 130 million, the USA USD 87 million (USAID, 2014), Australia AUD 40 million, South Korea USD 20 million, and USD Japan 52 million should be highlighted ('Japan Triples Philippines Aid Package to over \$30 Million', 2013). In addition, the USA deployed its marines in the affected areas, while Japan played a significant role in the reconstruction of infrastructure (Mas et al., 2015).

ASEAN as a community, on the other hand, reacted very slowly and with little effectiveness. Although this was the AHA Center's 'first competition' (Barber, 2014, p. 61), it still organized disaster management in an unprepared, chaotic manner.

ASEAN ordered the activation of the regional executive body, the AHA Centre, three days after the disaster (ASEAN, 2013). The organization's specialists were several weeks late before they even began estimating the damage, and the mobilized resources proved limited (Berthelsen, 2013). The phenomenon is well exemplified by the fact that President Aquino did not even mention ASEAN's assistance in his initial statements (Keithley, 2013).

From November 19 to 22, ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh visited the affected city of Tacloban in the Philippines with a team and officially handed over the aid sent by ASEAN (ASEAN, 2013). After the visit, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was formed from representatives of ASEAN, the AHA Centre, and the Philippine Office of Civil Defense to coordinate disaster recovery together.

By April 2014, the AHA Centre prepared a damage assessment for the region, although its methodology was not made public – it is not known by whom and on what basis the assessment was carried out. However, even in 2015, ASEAN leaders decided to rehabilitate settlements damaged by the typhoon. Indirectly, however, Haiyan led to the adoption of the regional disaster prevention work plan, 'One ASEAN, One Response' (ASEAN, 2016), which can be considered one of the basic documents of regional disaster management and envisages a joint fight against natural hazards.

The recovery phase took an extremely long time, years after the disaster, the liquidation of the damage and the reconstruction were not completed. Even in 2018, survivors protested against the government’s mistakes and the ‘disappearance’ of recovery funds (CNN, 2018).

ASEAN member countries, along with the international community, tried to support the Philippines’ recovery efforts. At the same time, this willingness was extremely low and slow, well below what was observed after, for example, the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami (K. J. Lee, 2014). Loh notes that, because the natural disaster struck within the community, the states were afraid to interfere with the work of the Philippine government and instead donated smaller recovery contributions (Loh, 2016).

The amounts and other assistance offered by ASEAN member countries are summarized in Table 2. This suggests that more developed economies, such as Indonesia or Thailand, made larger contributions (USD 1 million and USD 2.7 million, respectively), while less developed countries, such as Laos or Cambodia, contributed to the costs in a rather symbolic way. As for additional contributions, states sent mainly food and medical supplies: Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore mobilized troops from their personnel. Among the countries, Brunei, Malaysia, and Thailand sent the shipment through the AHA Centre, Indonesia also cooperated with the center, and other countries contacted the Philippines directly (Barber, 2014).

<i>Country</i>	<i>Financial aid (USD)</i>	<i>Other aid</i>
<i>Brunei Darussalam</i>	n. a.	food, 4-member ERAT team, medical supply
<i>Cambodia</i>	100,000	n. a.
<i>Indonesia</i>	1,000,000	food, medical supply
<i>Lao PDR</i>	50,000	n. a.
<i>Malaysia</i>	1,000,000	food, medical supply, field hospital, medical personnel of 53
<i>Myanmar</i>	100,000	rescue tools
<i>Singapore</i>	260,000 (in items)	food, medical supply, civil defense personnel of two
<i>Thailand</i>	2,700,000	food, medical supply
<i>Vietnam</i>	100,000	n. a.

Table 2. ASEAN member states contribution after Typhoon Haiyan. Created by the author based on the AHA Centre’s report (Barber, 2014)

The amount of aid fell well short of the willingness of the international community. While the great powers offered sums of tens of millions of USD, among the ASEAN member countries, only Thailand exceeded the threshold of USD one million. In addition, military personnel and equipment, which can be used effectively in disaster management, were not mobilized, whereas, for example, the USA sent planes and ships to clear routes to affected cities and ensure passenger transport (K.-L. Koh & Eisma Osorio, 2015, p. 475).

In alignment with the “ASEAN way” framework, member states maintained a commitment to domestic non-intervention while concurrently evaluating their regional disaster management operations as a success (Barber, 2014). The AHA Centre and the entire ASEAN did not contribute significantly to the prevention, intervention, and recovery phase of disaster management beyond information sharing and coordination.

DISASTER DIPLOMACY ANALYSIS

Although Typhoon Haiyan was Southeast Asia's greatest economic disaster, it affected mainly two countries in the region: the Philippines and Vietnam. However, the international disaster diplomacy processes focused exclusively on the former: the losses suffered by the island nation were enormous, and it was unable to deal with the emergency within the framework of a nation state, as the international community and ASEAN also directed their aid towards the Philippines. The present study thus omits Vietnam's disaster management and analyzes only the aspects of regional cooperation in the Philippines.

The nonlinearity was less noticeable: all ASEAN member states participated to some extent in rescue and restoration efforts, and none of the actors made a significant decision that would affect the entire disaster prevention activity in the long term. On the other hand, the property of diversity was present to a significant extent. The member states reacted to the disaster to varying degrees: while Brunei and Malaysia also sent personal aid, the other states only made monetary offers. Regarding the flow, the cooperation was marked by chaos and disorganization. Several rescue operations were underway in the affected areas at the same time, with light coordination from the Philippine government. Therefore, the property of flow was present, but only to a limited extent. Aggregation was significant: The regional disaster protection framework, AADMER, had been in force since 2009; thus, the legal basis for cooperation was available to the states. This basic document effectively enabled emergency management cooperation, and its provisions were already enforced by the organization during the 2008 Nargis cyclone (Papp, 2023). In addition to the legal framework, the executive body of AADMER, the AHA Centre, also operated from 2011. As a result, the framework for regional cooperation was fully available.

The first mechanism, i.e., tagging, was present to a limited extent: The AHA Centre tried to fulfill the role of associates by sharing information and coordinating assistance. However, the majority of ASEAN member states also addressed the Philippines directly, so the association of regional disaster-prevention elements remained limited. However, the internal model was less noticeable: Regional action can only be achieved practically in the deployment of an ERAT team and an extremely limited aid process. Disaster prevention management was therefore not characterized by a regional struggle but by broad cooperation within the international community, in which the ASEAN member states participated individually rather than as a compact unit. The last mechanism, building blocks, was present to a limited extent: The building blocks primarily consisted of the already discussed ERAT team, medical teams, and the offered material and monetary donations. However, their mobilization was quite slow, and their scale fell short of what was experienced before.

As observed, the properties and mechanisms were generally present in moderate amounts during the event. The property of diversity and aggregation was noticeable to a significant extent, while the property of nonlinearity and the mechanism of internal model were only slightly noticeable. It is also clear from the above analysis that the event and its management can be interpreted in terms of disaster diplomacy as uneven: Although the ASEAN states showed a willingness to cooperate, the level of cooperation was far below the level of possible cooperation. This phenomenon is also striking as the affected Philippines did not refrain from helping at all; several states (e. g., the USA) took an active role in the defense and in the recovery phase as well.

The observation that the Philippines and Vietnam had two distinct approaches to managing Typhoon Haiyan entirely supports the narrative of regional political economy as well as

environmental governance. Previous experiences with Mekong governance or haze in South-east Asia have demonstrated that the norm of non-interference is widely applied rather than cooperation (Elliott, 2012). Typhoon Haiyan also showed that, despite the loss of life and economic damage, political decision-makers might act independently, treating a transboundary issue as an internal problem.

Despite all this, in its official communication, ASEAN cited typhoon-related disaster prevention cooperation as a success story. According to official documents, the gathering and the AHA Centre were in place and fully fulfilled their community responsibilities. At the same time, the picture is clouded by the fact that, in a 2015 document, the cooperation is still seeking its place in regional disaster management (ASEAN Secretariat, 2017).

The case of Typhoon Haiyan highlights a fundamental paradox in disaster diplomacy: the coexistence of limited effectiveness in disaster response with the political framing of success at the regional level. This raises a critical question: Does successful disaster diplomacy necessarily lead to effective disaster relief and recovery? The findings of this study suggest that the answer is no. Within the ASEAN context, success is not primarily measured by the speed, scale, or coordination of material assistance, but rather by the extent to which cooperation occurs without violating the principle of national sovereignty.

In this sense, ASEAN's response can be interpreted as successful precisely because it avoided political friction. Member states provided assistance in a manner that did not challenge the authority of the Philippine government, nor did it impose external coordination mechanisms that could be perceived as intrusive. Consequently, the relatively weak coordination and delayed response are not anomalies, but rather consistent outcomes of a governance model that prioritizes autonomy over integration.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the regional disaster diplomacy of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. After establishing the theoretical background of the academic field and explaining the applied methodological criteria, the circumstances of the event were outlined, and the disaster diplomacy processes were analyzed using the given variables.

The present research challenged the application of the CAS method in disaster diplomacy research. The widely applied method supports analyzing complex systems and is also used in disaster diplomacy, generally in bilateral aspects. However, its main limitation is in defining its variables and, more importantly, whether disaster diplomacy itself is a failure. Furthermore, the properties and mechanisms are always present at a certain level in regional disaster events; therefore, their application might become misleading. The present article conducted a CAS analysis at a regional event and investigated its regional management. The results showed that the CAS variables were all present at a certain level, as, within a regional framework, these variables are always observed. Therefore, the present article argues that a regional disaster diplomacy analysis can be supported by the CAS method; however, relying exclusively on these variables might be misleading.

Based on the results, the events of 2013 can be evaluated as a missed opportunity in terms of diplomacy: Although the affected Philippines gladly accepted foreign aid, the states of the region were still characterized by aloofness, restrained reaction, and passive attitude. This phenomenon is also surprising, as by 2013, Southeast Asia had already experienced several catastrophic events and managed them, with more or less success – for example, the 2004 tsunami and the 2008 Cyclone Nargis. Moreover, by this time, an extensive legal and institutional

framework for disaster protection was in place, providing a suitable backdrop for disaster diplomacy processes.

The political aspect of ASEAN clearly shows how the Philippines and Vietnam responded differently to the disaster. The ASEAN is deeply inflexible both economically and ecologically.

It is important to emphasize that success in the context of disaster diplomacy is not related to the effectiveness of disaster management; rather, its essence lies in channeling political processes into the environment of disaster management. In connection with the event, it can be observed that the United States of America and Japan, with their dominant presence in the region (Lee & Lee, 2016; Sutter, 2009), participated to a large extent in the elimination and restoration of the damage caused by the storm. Although the ASEAN member states had greater potential than the former ones for regional cooperation, they tended to stay out of regional emergency management. This way, the Haiyan typhoon of 2013 can be characterized as a diplomatic opportunity that the regional states did not use properly.

The findings of this study challenge the assumption that disaster diplomacy inherently contributes to improved disaster management outcomes. Instead, the Haiyan case demonstrates that diplomatic success and operational effectiveness can diverge significantly. In the ASEAN context, disaster diplomacy functions less as a tool to maximize collective response capacity and more as a mechanism to maintain political cohesion under conditions of crisis. This distinction is crucial for understanding why repeated large-scale disasters in the region have not necessarily led to deeper institutional integration or more effective collective action.



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