How Asia Pacific B2B Leaders Became Boundary Spanners to 21 APEC Governments and Civil Societies: Lessons in Multipolar Learning and Leadership for Africa Asia's Future

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Abstract

The protean development of Asia Pacific business-to-business (B2B) networks into regional and global economic systems is one of the power shifts in the contemporary era of globalization. Their extensive supply/value chains that boundary span borders, cultures and oceans have redirected global growth and reset geo-politics. Australia's chartering of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group of Pacific Rim economies in 1989, followed by their creation of the APEC Business Advisory Council in 1995, are efforts by the constituent governments to learn from, facilitate, and prosper the boundary spanning exchange systems that crisscross and challenge their sovereignty. The Asia Pacific B2B leaders appointed to ABAC are asked to bring their relational learning and innovation skills to this process; what WTO Director-General Paschal Lamy has described as moving trade policy and international cooperation from "them and us" divides to "an 'us' focus". This is the first paper from a multiyear qualitative study of how the focal Asia Pacific B2B leaders became boundary spanners to the 21 APEC governments and civil societies, and how their Africa Asia counterparts can learn from, benchmark and grow beyond their continuing dialogs. In this presentation, we explore the learning and leadership systems in the ABAC members' boundary spanning and global mindsets, the challenges to their collaboration that mirror those in B2B networks, and their concerns for the lack of public engagement and support for their efforts to increase regional trade, investment and capacity building. By this, we contribute to the current rethinking of international management and marketing in the Brexit era. Based on our findings, we propose certain initiatives Africa Asia B2B leaders may take to sustain collaborative progress with each other and their respective governments, and move their recently connected but historically distant polities to the preferred "us focus". We also suggest that regional and global supply and value chains are better described as International Production, Services and *Policy* Networks (IPSPNs); recognizing their nearly constant interface with governments and thereby inviting their intentional, inclusive and empowering boundary spanning with the civil societies and educational systems they depend upon for productive citizens and consumers.

Introduction

The boundary spanning decades from the 20th to the 21st century produced a new, world-changing rim of actors: Asia Pacific business-to-business (B2B) leaders. From the 1970s to the Great Financial Crisis, Asia's participation in regional and global supply and value chains (RGSVCs) quadrupled, surpassing every other region. This is just one of the remarkable telemetries from the "the most momentous rocket engine" of the last 100 years: emerging economies being able to join RGSVCs and jump start their production and services sectors, and soon thereafter, the global reach of their increasingly smarter and more competitive companies (Baldwin 2013, p. 23; Santos and Williamson 2015).

The resulting redirection of economic power reset geo-politics, while the increasing complexity of RGSVCs continue to challenge policymakers around the world. The multiplying and far reaching cross-border B2B networks require what Baldwin named the "*deeper disciplines*" (2013, p. 39, emphasis added). Basically, new ways of thinking and governing to make sense of and manage the resulting convergence of international and domestic policy for trade facilitation and regulation. As WTO Director General Lamy summed it up: the long standing policy silos of "them and us" needed to move to "an 'us' focus" (Elms and Low 2013).

While a roster of the deeper disciplines is not this study's mission, their formulation in increasingly sophisticated regional trade agreements has been trying to keep up with the revolution from trade in goods to FDI to trade in tasks. From "my goods for yours" to "my factories for your reforms" to "lets facilitate the complete interface of our production and services sectors for something the WTO calls 'made in the world'". As the search continued, the number of trade agreements grew from 200 to 2000 between 1978 and 2008 (Baldwin 2013, p. 26). Most connecting Asia with itself and the rest of the world.

This is a qualitative study of how a select group Asia Pacific B2B leaders joined the region's search for the deeper disciplines as members of the APEC Business Advisory Council – ABAC. It is the most formal and transparent dialogues of its kind between the B2B leaders driving RGSVCs and the governments these crisscross and challenge. Indeed, APEC itself – the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation process – is a history defying search for the deeper disciplines. Designed and first convened in 1989 by an Australian Prime Minister well aware of how "the rocket" was redesigning the region beyond the reach of existing trade and diplomacy frameworks (Hawke 1994), it asks 21 Pacific Rim economies previously linked by conflict and colonialism to voluntarily cooperate for shared prosperity and stability (APEC 2016).

This is the first paper of four from our study of how these Asia Pacific B2B leaders serve as boundary spanners to the 21 governments and civil societies their extensive exchange networks connect. In this one, we explore:

- How their early life lessons and B2B (and sometimes multisector) relational learning skills prepared them for their roles in ABAC;
- How certain challenges to even the best Asia Pacific B2B networks – i.e., different perspectives of time, status and position, and the dynamics of relational velocity and transformative events – are reflected in their interactions; and
- Their lessons learned and hopes for more public participation in and support for APEC's mission.
- By our findings we believe and propose how Africa Asia B2B leaders can benchmark and go beyond the first 21 years of ABAC.

Our research contributes to the growing interest in the beyond-the-business impacts of regional/global trade in international management and marketing literature (e.g., Santos and Williamson 2015; Jai et al. 2016; Luo 2016) and the related commercial confidence-building-to-peace studies in international relations literature. (e.g., Tønnesson 2009; Chan 2009; Koschut 2014). The Brexit vote and similar combinations of anti-trade, nationalism, and populism movements in many developed economies – e.g., the speed bumps and stalling of the Trans Pacific Partnership and its Atlantic-focused counterpart – will likely lead to even more focus on the work, rewards and risks of the boundary spanning economic systems and their principals that challenge the multiple polities they connect.

We now turn to the relevant research that informed our interviews. We start with a brief history of APEC and ABAC; both presaged by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) pioneering of relational governance in the region. Next, the learning and leadership systems in B2B boundary spanning and the so-called "global mindset" that ABAC's success depends upon – and some of their challenges. We then turn to current thinking on how decades of cross-border/cultural and commercial learning in Asia Pacific B2B networks have made position and status in them more important drivers of trust and commitment than culturally sensitive processes. From this, we look at how the dynamics of relational velocity and transformative events can influence their direction and continuity. We continue by describing our choice of qualitative methodology and then, present our first findings and propositions. We conclude with a discussion of their management and societal implications for Africa Asia B2B networks, and how our work's limitations might spur more research into some of the deeper issues underlying the search for the deeper disciplines.

<div align="center">**Relevant research**</div>

From ASEAN to APEC and ABAC

Relational governance, voluntary multilateralism and the rewards of relational learning are central to the mission of APEC and ABAC. These were pioneered in the region by ASEAN – one of least known yet most important economic engines and models for the emergent multipolar world.

In 1967, as the American war in Vietnam worsened, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand chartered themselves into ASEAN. After centuries of cross-border conflicts, colonization and perpetual poverty, they bet that regional cooperation based on strategic mutuality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs promised a better future for Southeast Asia than continuing to going it alone. At ASEAN's launch, Philippine Foreign Minister Narciso Ramos stressed there was no other way to "marshal the still untapped potentials of this rich region." (His son, Fidel Ramos, hosted the first meeting of ABAC as President of the Philippines and Chair of the 1996 APEC Leaders Week.) Singapore's Foreign Minister highlighted the new multidimensionality in ASEAN's boundary spanning: "We must now think at two levels…We must think not only of our national interests but posit them against regional interests: that is a new way of thinking about our problems" (Flores and Abad 2016).

Obviously ASEAN did not base its charter on B2B boundary spanning studies. Yet its win-win, boundary spanning basics of voluntary cooperation for the better have been rich soil for the dyads, strategic alliances and clusters that thrive in the RGSVCs its members host. Trade within and outbound from the region regularly leads Europe's and the Americas' (Baldwin, 2013). Since 2001, ASEAN's collective GDP has grown over 300% and its routine annual growth rate has supplanted China in wowing the world (Vinayak, Thompson and Tonby 2014). The differentiated and history-defying rise to global prominence of Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar reflect both the wisdom and formative power of the ASEAN Way.

By all accounts, Australia's then-Prime Minister Bob Hawke was "walking about" the ASEAN Way in the mid-1980s when he began envisioning a new, economic-focused, strategic alliance of Asia Pacific nations (Elek 2005). Drawing on his boundary spanning success in bringing four of ASEAN's five founders into the new Cairns Group of agricultural exporting nations in 1986 – and Australia's increasing economic consultations with its ASEAN and Northeast Asia trade partners (supplanting former security issues) – Hawke began to sketch the outlines of APEC.

Symbolic of APEC's stretch assignment for the Pacific Rim and ABAC's eventual role in it, Hawke chose the Korean Business Association in Seoul to present his formative vision of APEC in early 1989. Seeking to "capitalize on the extraordinary complementarity" of the region's economies, and the "enormous opportunities" for its developing economies, Hawke described a "formal, integrative vehicle of regional cooperation capable of analysis and consultation on economic and social issues, not as an academic exercise but to help inform policy development by our respective governments" (Hawke 1994; p. 430). In sum, a search for the deeper disciplines for trade, investment and capacity building through voluntary, consensus-driven multilateralism.

APEC held its first meeting less than a year after Hawke's speech. Australia convened the first 12 members in Canberra in November, 1989. It now has 21 member economies. On Asia's side of the Pacific: Australia, Brunei, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Russia and Vietnam. On the America's side: Canada, the U.S., Mexico, Peru and Chile. Without any of the legislative or regulatory structure of the European Union, and only a small Secretariat in Singapore, APEC's sixty plus working groups and task forces have helped accelerate the region's dynamic growth (APEC, 2016).

From the start, Hawke was strategically leveraging the business-to-government connectivity already provided by the exponentially growing Asia Pacific B2B networks linking the focal economies, and asking their respective governments to join them in thinking differently about regional economic cooperation (Terada 1999; Hawke 1994). Given its defining purpose of economic cooperation, organic girding by Asia Pacific B2B networks, and how new the APEC concept, process, and nomenclature were at its launch in 1989, a formal advisory role for the region's B2B leaders was nearly inevitable. A two-year gestation of the concept by an ad hoc, APEC-inspired group of business leaders known as the Pacific Business Forum, concluded with its adoption by the APEC Leaders at their 1995 APEC Japan meeting. Formally launched in 1996, ABAC conducts four meetings a year to develop and finalize its recommendations to the APEC Leaders at their face-to-face dialogue at the APEC Leaders Week each fall (ABAC Report to the Leaders, 1999; ABAC, 2016).

As noted, ABAC represents the only charter for permanent and routine engagement between business and government leaders in a multilateral economic group. Each of APEC's 21 Economic Leaders can appoint up to three members for a total of 63 when complete. There are now 21 years of ABAC Members to interview and learn from for Africa Asia B2B boundary spanners and the emerging multipolar world; and the search for deeper disciplines to address and resolve the related commercial, capacity building and civil society concerns.

Boundary spanners and the global mindset

Research on boundary spanners in international marketing channels and the global mindsets of their CEOs started in earnest in the 1980s, shortly after studies of supply chains gained speed and prominence. Both reflect the learning genome in RGSVCs.

Boundary spanners have been the alpha and omega of every era of globalization (Schaffer et al., 2009). Yet globalization's counter dynamics of connectivity and uncertainty create huge risks for its practitioners. Role ambiguities, relational conflicts and becoming *invisible* to one's home market by trying to be everywhere else at once are just some of the liabilities of having multiple addresses (Liu et al., 2014).

B2B researchers have labeled them "relationship promoters": marketing-oriented managers who play crucial economic and social roles by facilitating collaborative learning while solving inter-firm conflicts (Walker and Gemünden, 2000, p 87-88). Science and technology studies show they are indispensable in global knowledge-diffusion networks (Spencer, 2003).

In the progression from Asia Pacific B2B dyads to IPSPNs that sets the panorama for this study, their abilities to successfully span cultures and make sense from asymmetries has been essential (Moller and Svahn, 2004; Stahl et al., 2016). They are said to have "global mindsets" (Levy et al., 2006), meaning, in part, they can stretch their "Global Me" (Zachary, 1999) to bring others together in a "Global Us" (Lisak and Erez 2015).

Although researchers continue to add to the seemingly "endless" lists of the cognitive and strategic dimensions of the global mindset (Levy et al., 2006; Cohen, 2010, p. 9), there is one constant for its development and maturation that echoes early international joint venture studies: "first-hand global leadership experience" (Terrell and Rosenbusch (2012, p. 1057).

By these so-called "stretch assignments", boundary spanners first learn to navigate and then steer the "power of differentiation" for innovation and success. Over time, they extend their interdependent leadership to "create direction, alignment and commitment" across and between borders created by hierarchies, specialization, constituencies, demographics, and distance (Lee et al., 2013, p. 4). The search for the deeper disciplines is said to allow policymakers to do the same across and between the "richer, more complex, more interconnected set of cross-border flows of goods, investments, technologies, services, technicians, managers and capital" (Baldwin, 2013, p. 39). But even global mindsets – or a "team of teams" (McChrystal, 2015) of them that RGSVCs and ABAC represent –

must contend with the challenges of "globality" (Sirkin, Hemerling, and Bhattacharya 2011), a world where everyone from everywhere competes for everything.

R/G learning and leadership are resource sensitive – and even more so for multisector boundary spanners. This, due to the time and number of stretching assignments required for the global mindset to absorb and master the many "languages", "protocols" and "perspectives" necessary to compass and engage the relevant principals at their many cognitive and strategic addresses (Webb, Darling, and Alvey 2014). Indeed, having to navigate what seems too many diverse cultural voices and institutional agendas can make even the best global mindset steer clear of regional heterogeneity that might otherwise propel the power of differentiation (Arregle et al., 2016). Similarly – and in what may the most telling context by analogy for our focus – SMEs are said to continually reassess the advantages of learning and leveraging with large firms and B2B knowledge networks against the costs in time, absorptive capacities, and immediate benefits to current customers (Wegner and Antonello 2013).

Fundamentally, it takes time to achieve the successful coalescing of multicultural, global teams – i.e., the space and pace for getting from the Global Me to a Global Us; a form of *requisite time by variety*. The previously unconnected team members need it to first, alchemize their diversity and then, co-create languages of learning and vision in order to become teammates (Solak-Borowska 2015; Lizak et al. 2016).

But sometimes even the best learning and trust in Asia Pacific B2B relationships cannot keep pace with the desire for and pursuit of new opportunities. Especially when the successful transcendence of cultural differences empowers global mindsets to calculate the next best use of their network capital.

Relationship velocity in the exchange of know how and why for know who, where and when

As experienced Asia Pacific B2B Boundary Spanners, ABAC members have already navigated distance, foreignness, and the other challenges of being "strangers in a strange land" that once dominated international business studies. Network centrality and capital now more likely drive relationship velocity in maturing Asia Pacific B2B networks.

Decades of cultural and commercial exchanges may now make a firm's position and status in RGSVCs more important than culture in determining the processes of trust and commitment (Cheung, Myers and Mentzer 2011; Shi et al., 2015; Gould, Liu and Yu, 2016) Boundary spanning may now be just part of the job. What was once perceived as primarily an exchange of "global" *Know How and Why* for "local" *Know Who, Where and When* (Liu et al., 2014; Gould, Liu and Yu 2016), is now more likely a hybrid firm finding out *How the Continuously Transformed Know How and Why Works in the Here and Now*

It is important to recognize RGSVCS can stream all the related networks' embedded learning histories, knowledge resources and multicultural perspectives through the key participants' presumed national "containers of culture". As a result, these can soon become colanders for shifting and choosing between the many economic, social and political inputs (Caprar et al., 2015, pp. 4, 19). The strategic combination of this network capital can spur further exploration for more such opportunities and competitive advantages (Huggins 2010; Santos and Williamson 2015).

Palmatier and colleagues' (2013) deeper look into relationship age and life cycle theories finds that trust and commitment can disengage as the relational learning peaks. Indeed, even if the foundational trust continues, the search for more opportunities stretches the sights of one or more partners beyond the primary relationship:

[T]rust, communication, and investment capabilities influence commitment velocity; [these] capabilities drive [commitment] velocity by enabling the continual exploration (through communication) and exploitation (through investment) of opportunities (March, 1991). Yet trust and

communication capabilities have less impact as a relationship matures, whereas investment capabilities become more important... (p. 14).

Certain transformative events (Harmeling et al. 2015) – e.g., change in position and status – can increase relationship velocity. Eventually, the search may become unilateral, possibly in the former dyad partner's home market. And when the Ecclesiastical-like seasons of exploring and exploitation merge into a season for new investments, the original boundary spanners may be benched. (Liu and Gao 2013; Liu et al. 2014; Santos and Williams 2015).

To explore how the foregoing studies and theories may be reflected in the preparation and participation of the focal ABAC members, we chose constructive methodology.

Critical incident interviews

We studied the focal ABAC members' APEC boundary spanning through the constructive methodology of Critical Incident Technique (Bitner 1999); conducting indepth interviews with three cohorts of ABAC members from ABAC's 21 years: 1995 to 2000; 2001 to 2008; and 2009 to the present. The first spans from ABAC's first convening to the tapering of the Asian Financial Crisis; the second, the events from September 11, 2001 to the Great Financial Crisis; the last, the years since and Brexit. This methodology is regularly used in similar studies of R/G CEOs and senior executives (Levy et al. 2006). We also researched 21 years of ABAC archives and added interviews with senior government officials who were ABAC's minders for their respective economies to further inform the process.

First findings and propositions for Africa Asia B2B leaders

Boundary spanning and global mindsets

Our interviews confirmed that every ABAC member had early and continuing stretch assignments that contributed to their success as Asia Pacific B2B leaders and in ABAC and other R/G multisector dialogs. These early life lessons in boundary spanning ranged from (and sometimes combined) multicultural and immigrant families, multi-sector parents (military-diplomacy-business) and (a few) first mover R/G business families. These led to multiple cross-border moves in childhood, university and early career. These soon matured into a series of international/multisector assignments. Some also witnessed major transformational eras in their home economies/regions and chose to be transformative leaders to further them. Our findings show that the (reportedly) most resourceful, creative, collaborative and long-standing ABAC members came from ASEAN and smaller economies; their interviews revealed they were tested early by stretch assignments in larger, more developed economies.

As an example, a number of multisector savvy ABAC members from ASEAN and smaller economies sought more routine and informal platforms for ABAC's interaction with APEC senior government ministers and the APEC Leaders. A few took the lead in developing larger dialogues between business and APEC Leaders via the creation and expansion of the annual APEC CEO Summit. More recently, ASEAN ABAC members chairing their economies' host year have added more creative media channels to expand participation in and distribution of both formal and informal dialogues. It seems the more cross-referencing experience an ABAC member had in both government *and* civil society, the more likely they embraced and (reportedly) improved the ABAC process.

Opportunities and challenges

Relatedly, in ABAC's first years, ASEAN and other ABAC members who had pioneered their developing economies' rise in one or more sectors – and thus, saw APEC and ABAC as opportunities to pioneer even more – championed and sought to extend the relational learning and innovation opportunities for the deeper disciplines. By contrast, some members and their senior government

advisors from large developed or state-run economies were less inclined. A few actually opposed what they believed was an unwelcome intrusion by business leaders into policymaking. Others simply did not want to get ahead of their governments. As discussed in 3.2.1, below, in later years, government advisors and ABAC members from the large developed economies sought strategic leverage after certain transformative events. More recently, younger ABAC members from developing economies who saw the rocket decades as empowering their generation embrace the entire process as part of the multidimensional realities of global mindsets in a world of intermediaries.

The (reportedly) less resourceful, less collaborative, and more self-recusing (i.e. resigning after a year or two) ABAC members came from C-chairs in large economies, both developing and developed, whose status seemed to contribute to their impatience with ABAC's collaborative, boundary spanning mission. For these, status and time challenges were apparent. "What am I doing here?" frustrations became vocalized when the need to process 20 other ABAC members' perspectives apparently detoured high status CEOs' single sector/company agendas or expectations of succinct and short CEO-with-the-board (or state)-like meetings.

ABAC members from smaller economies and younger ABAC members seem to have a much different sense of time and progress, i.e. after a season of highly committed and creative/ service in ABAC, they said it was time to go on to other boundary spanning opportunities to further learn and innovate. Some to home economy leadership roles, some to more R/G roles; some to start families. Almost all these increased their role in civil society; many to support leadership development programs stretching new generations of global mindsets.

Proposition 1: With these findings in mind, in order to foster resourceful and progressive boundary spanners and global mindsets to enrich the growth of Africa Asia B2B networks and the search for deeper disciplines in the region, we encourage Africa to develop as many young, stretch assignment-wise B2B leaders as possible, with a requisite variety of intentional and integratively-designed business, government and civil society experiences.

While the major Asia economies investing in Africa have graciously built bi-lateral young leaders programs (e.g., China-Africa Young Leaders Forum), we believe multilateral, multisector and multi-discipline rotations better sensitize for inclusive, boundary spanning leadership. Given ASEAN's success in boundary spanning past tragic histories to host and prosper R/G B2B networks, it may be the best partner among equals for this mission. In addition, based on their success in navigating between the larger economies in APEC, New Zealand and Chile can be wise resources as well. Priority should be given to learning the reflective and capacity building processes of the encompassed governments and civil societies that may struggle with the faster paced relational learning, innovation and growth of the overarching Africa Asia B2B networks.

Position, status and relationship velocity

Histories of colonization or invasion seemed to make ABAC members from certain developing economies more inclined to be defensive/protective-minded listeners rather than advocates in their first ABAC years. Most ABAC members from smaller yet developed economies carefully learned the rhythms of ABAC and worked within those. ABAC members from larger, more government-tied economies seemed to "go slow" for internal political reasons.

A number of ABAC members from developing economies sensed that the more rapid trade and commerce pace of the larger developed economies drove the overall process, and that the smaller, developed APEC economies that had transformed themselves earlier by embracing deregulation and globalization held a related advantage. This may reflect either the real or perceived influence of "status and position" in the ABAC process.

For almost all ABAC members, a continuing series of transformative events – i.e., the Asian Financial Crises, September 11th, 2001 (and the ensuing "War on Terror"), SARS, massive earthquakes and

tsunamis, the Great Financial Crisis, and China overtaking Japan as the world's second largest economy – kept interrupting ABAC's long-term view and sometimes dramatically shifted and/or shelved work in progress. In particular, for some ABAC members from the larger developing economies, the focus on security after the attacks on the World Trade Center seem to forever detour capacity building initiatives.

Specific to relationship velocity, for some developing economy ABAC members, it seemed that as most APEC economies matured and ABAC's role became more accepted and perhaps, repetitive, the larger developed economies began to appoint fewer CEOs and more government relations experts who were in or near C-suite offices. This may also reflect the increased attention to the Trans Pacific Partnership after 2008; arguably a desire for new investments despite the sustaining trust within APEC itself. Some ABAC members indicated that by 2010, more inclusive strategies became less important to developed economies than speeding up APEC's growth agenda. The Great Financial Crisis and China's overtaking Japan as the world's second largest economies were sometimes mentioned in this context, but not emphasized.

Proposition 2: Informed by the previous findings, we propose that senior B2B and government leaders from Africa's small and developing economies need to be proactive and intentionally build collaborative strategies to continuously monitor and address both subtle and overt actions by the most developed nations in Africa Asia trade and investment that appear to or are leaving them behind.

To do so, these leaders may wish to charter and maintain interlocking alliances, possibly adding regional forums with their counterparts from Asia facing similar challenges. Again, ASEAN's developing economies may be the best partners in this process. Furthermore, to deal with the direct (explicit) and indirect (implicit) perceptions that expediency (exploitation) by developed economies is overtaking co-capacity building (exploration) for developing economies, Africa B2B and government leaders may wish to pioneer new metrics and benchmarks for both absorptive capacity and assimilation of R/G trade agreements/systems by their economies and civil society. We add to this idea in our Discussion section.

Bringing citizens and consumers into the "Global Us"

Even before the Brexit vote, many ABAC Members lamented their perceived lack of means and progress for increasing public support for their and APEC's mission. Now, nearly unanimous. Interestingly, ABAC members and their senior advisors whose economies had previously hosted an APEC Leaders Week are particularly sensitive to this. It seems that the ability to host APEC presents ABAC members and their staffs with the very dear goal of engaging as many businesses and communities in their home economy as possible with the opportunities represented in APEC's mission. Yet it passes too fast and often their progressive steps in this direction both fall short and are not carried forwarded by the next APEC Host Economy. To be sure, the ABAC members from still-developing economies who get a second chance to Host APEC Leaders Week (and, thereby, Chair ABAC for its host year), are even more committed and creative in their goals of inclusion, participation and support from their publics the second time around. An exemplary ASEAN ABAC chair produced an engaging and informative animation series and spotlighted a classroom in the annual recommendations to the APEC Leaders. Both, first time additions to what is generally an executive summary-like report between sector leaders. Still, the lament of an ABAC member from a small developed economy with enormous credibility in the world echoes in every interview (paraphrasing): we need to bring everyone along with us. A senior ABAC advisor similarly placed speculated that the larger developed economies felt they didn't need to work at this because, for them, it not essential, while developing economies face time and focus challenges.

Proposition 3: Mindful that no ABAC delegation is satisfied with what has been done to date, we propose Africa Asia B2B leaders be first movers for the world by pressing their governments for the time and collaborative resources to create and test multiple platforms for informed public participation

in the business-to-government dialogs that grow Africa Asia trade and investments – and the capacity building resources to be able to benefit from them.

Two potential initiatives are first, to adopt and then enrich the ABAC model to include civil society representatives and a regular schedule of listening tours throughout the least developed regions and development impacted communities. Second, to radically design and connect its educational systems with Asia's to incorporate the integrative circuitry, positive globality, and relational learning and continuing innovation resources of the International Production, Services, and Policy Networks (IPSPNs) that we believe RGSVCs have now become. We pause to explain this re-conceptualization/definition as it informs much of our discussion of the management and societal implications of our findings.

In their origins and development, RGSVCs not only depended upon new forms and applications of relational learning and innovation, they invited, invented and then, multiplied the world changing information and coordination technologies that allow them to prosper at nearly the speed of light (Baldwin 2013). The search for the deeper disciplines has let challenged governments try to catch up, improve the enabling public infrastructure, and set some speed limits. Yet so far, neither the RGSVCs nor the governments they crisscross and challenge have developed the still deeper disciplines for "bringing along" the citizens and consumers they depend upon for their sustenance. Indeed, consistent with a risk all boundary spanners take, these complex R/G systems (and their principals) have become nearly invisible to the publics in their home and related polities.

With regard to our redefinition of RGSVCs to IPSPNs, we (encouraged by New Zealand's Gary Hawke, 2016) argue that the conventional "supply," "value" and "chain" terminology is dated and limits the public's ability to understand and engage with the R/G networks of production, service and policy actors who continuously interact and drive the global economy beyond almost any one government's, sector's or community's comprehension. The addition of *Policy* also ends the fiction that policymaking is still separate from RGSVCs (cf. Hawke 2106; Elms and Low, 2013; Spencer 2003; Lee 1994). ABAC, itself, is an example of the nearly constant interface. The recent appointment of government relations executives to ABAC by the larger developed economies leaves no doubt. Moreover, putting "policy" into the definition highlights the fact that civil society not only deserves but is owed a role; the extent of which is a metric of corporate social responsibility and government accountability.

Discussion and managerial and societal implications

Two of the most important we suggest defy history – and thus can be world changing: Africa B2B leaders need to press their Asia partners not to ignore the lessons learned and best practices of APEC and ABAC and to collaboratively better them. One of the many benefits of the ABAC model and its still active pioneers is the ability to benchmark and engage them in our (or better) propositions. Specifically, whatever form it takes, the proposed ABAC-like *Africa Asia Business and Civil Society Advisory Council* should meet with Africa's and Asia's Economic Leaders *twice* a year, with C-SPAN-like transparity and distribution. The newness and pace of Africa Asia trade and investment require more focused and frequent attention than APEC and ABAC currently provide for these challenges in the Asia Pacific. Africa Asia is not just economic cooperation, it is a form of restorative justice. And unnecessary detours of restorative justice continue to empower tragic history; in this case, "contact" and colonization.

With this in mind, we suggest Africa Asia B2B leaders have an extraordinary opportunity (and responsibility) to lead a 21st century revolution in educational systems by connecting theirs in a first mover model for the multipolar world. Consider the fact that relational learning and the rewards of innovation are the genome for practically the entire Asia Pacific B2B ecosystem that gave rise to APEC and ABAC and serve as their foundational and strategic values. For the past 30 years, IMP studies that have combined organizational, network and social capital theories of relational learning and innovation to define the processes and prescribe best practices for their strategic management

(e.g., Cheung, Myers and Mentzer 2011; Weil 2013; McNamara and Ballingall 2016). Indeed, organizational learning and strategic supply chain management are said to be complementary disciplines (Opengart, 2015).

Squaring up to that, one soon senses that the lack of public participation in and support for the search for the deeper disciplines (and their expression in major trade agreements and the resulting supranational systems) is because the public – citizens, consumers and their families – are never (or seldom) invited into the learning and rewards of the commercial winners. Indeed, similar to the previously noted constraints some SMEs face, students, working people and seniors do not have the space, time and absorptive capacity to leave aside their daily "to do" lists in order to learn and appreciate what it takes years of trade negotiations to make sense of. (It is well to remember that one of the senior ABAC advisors from a developing economy stepped away from the work to "start a family".)

Accordingly, we suggest the most critical "relational learning" challenge for IPSPNs going forward is also the least acknowledged: their cybernetic (Ashby 1956) learning and knowledge transfer systems run (and are rewarded) at a much faster pace than the similar yet much slower socially constructed learning in the economic and security communities they encompass (cf. Radaelli and Dunlop, 2013). The Brexit vote and similar debates in some APEC economies suggest that the B2B boundary spanning that created the worldwide commercial wealth represented by IPSPNs has failed to grow a Global Us from all our "Global Me's. Instead, many seem to be running for proffered "exits" in an increasingly *G-Zero World* (Bremmer, 2013).

That is why one of our paper's most lasting contributions may be to the education sector. Following our subjects' learning and leadership journeys from Asia Pacific B2B knowledge networks to collaborative transformers of APEC's 21 member economies, one senses that global commerce and the related civil society skills might now be similar to what the OECD calls "intermediate global goods and services" (Miroudot et al., 2009). That is, continuously re-created, re-tested and refined by a worldwide roster of B2B actors in IPSPNs – and therefore, only able to be fully learned and practiced in schools mirroring them.

A long time ago, the barn built the school house. By the mid-20th century, the many windowed factories and corporate monoliths were reflected in school buildings that look like rectangular punch cards. IPSPNs have now become the world's dominant economic model. Accordingly, we suggest their technologically empowered, relationally created knowledge systems employed in their co-creation of value provide a global, process-based, cross-border/cultural model for the long-overdue revolution in education. Mastering R/G boundary spanning for continuous learning from (and alongside) IPSPNs can become the new secondary diploma and undergrad degree. Better now than later for the emerging (however haphazardly) multipolar world.

For Africa Asia IPSPNs, again, history should be a prime motivator. The two regions have experienced enough hardships from third party "contact" to want to prove theirs can be different.

Limitations

In addition to the possibilities of selective memory and professional/political constraints, one of the greatest limitations may be that most ABAC members are still thinking through its mission and their experiences in the face of so many challenges to the originally envisioned, consistent collaborations of wise, practical and seeing-beyond-their companies CEOs. The previously noted transformative events did not allow for much continuity. Lately, the South China Sea controversies and resurgent populist/nationalists politics in the related nations provide more challenges to reflection. Accordingly, there have been more fragmented reflections than we anticipated. One way we have been addressing this is to add more interviews with ABAC senior advisors and the chief government aides who saw APEC and ABAC through two or more cohorts. More of their reports will be included in our subsequent papers addressing both the benefits and challenges of small state leadership in

ABAC; the benefits and occasional tensions of senior government advisors in the ABAC process; and the larger question of how to sustain momentum in cross-border/culture relational learning when the overarching and seemingly-post cultural IPSPNs seem to make it less important. Following both Stahl and colleagues (2016) and Caprar and colleagues (2014) challenges to conventional theories on culture and distance, our limits in securing indepth reviews from most ABAC members should spur further research with other Asia Pacific B2B pioneers before the maturation of their networks overrun important contextual skills needed for the emergent multipolar world.

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