THE EAST ASIA SUMMIT AND THE REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Ralf Emmers, Joseph Chinyong Liow, and See Seng Tan

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I. INTRODUCTION

On December 14, 2005, representatives from sixteen nations gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for the inaugural session of the East Asia Summit (EAS). The participants of that first meeting were the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan and South Korea, as well as Australia, New Zealand and India. As had been the case with China, Japan and Korea, the latter three states are dialogue partners of ASEAN and had either acceded or indicated their willingness to accede to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia. The Summit, however, was not just exceptional due to its composition. More important perhaps was the unique opportunity afforded its participants, through the EAS framework, to collectively shape the contemporary East Asian region in ways that would best maintain its economic dynamism, enhance regional security and preserve peace and stability.

Opinions differ, but many regional observers concur that the origins of this Summit go back to the 1990 proposal for an East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG) popularized by former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad. The rationale behind the EAEG concept was economic, ostensibly devised in response to the apparent post-Cold War gravitation towards the formation of regional trade blocs in Europe and North America. China had strongly supported Malaysia's initiative for an EAEG that would have excluded non-Asian states. The EAEG lapsed, however, in the wake of Japanese reticence and a strong US objection as Washington refused to be excluded from East Asian economic cooperation. Reactions from several ASEAN members, such as Indonesia, were also lukewarm. In response, Mahathir modified it to an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) in October 1991. The project was later revived through the ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan and South Korea) summit of heads of state and government that first met in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997 and eventually through the creation of the EAS in December 2005. The EAS was rapidly defined as a venue where regional leaders could advocate and encourage progress on various issues ranging from energy security to transnational threats.

Nonetheless, it was at first unclear to most what exactly the raison d'être for the inaugural meeting of the EAS was. Institutional

developments offered some clues, however, as to what might have been expected of the EAS. For more than a decade, multilateral cooperation in Asia – whether in the form of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) or most recently the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) – had been driven by ASEAN. The Association looked set to assume the leadership of this latest institutional expression of regionalism, one which included members outside East Asia. The ministers attending the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Vientiane, Laos in July 2005 affirmed their commitment to “keep the EAS open, outward-looking and inclusive with ASEAN being the driving force.” Furthermore, they welcomed the participation of countries such as China, Japan, Australia and India to the first Summit. Russia, Mongolia and Pakistan had also asked to join the EAS, but their applications were denied.

The purpose of this monograph is to consider the emergence and evolution of the EAS against the backdrop of trends in East Asian regionalism. While the EAS is proving to be a major pillar of the emergent regional architecture, it is still confronted by several major challenges arising out of three unresolved tensions in East Asian regionalism: between inclusive and exclusive regionalism, between process and membership, and finally, between ASEAN centrality and major power leadership. The monograph proceeds in the following manner. The second chapter discusses the origins and institutional evolution of the East Asia Summit against the backdrop of the changing security architecture in East Asia, paying close attention to a series of defense arrangements as well as cooperative security structures. Great attention is given here to the three main institutional arrangements that preceded the establishment of the EAS; namely, APEC, the ARF and the APT, before highlighting trends and driving forces in post-Asian financial crisis regionalism. The third chapter focuses specifically on the formation and institutional evolution of the EAS. It discusses in detail the ASEAN leadership, the U.S. factor in an expanded EAS, and assesses EAS achievements and shortcomings to date. The fourth chapter broadens the discussion by reviewing ongoing debates over the nature and model of East Asian regionalism. It focuses the EAS in broader trends of regionalism by examining the sustainability of the ASEAN centrality, inclusive versus exclusive regionalism as well as process versus outcomes as the motivation behind East Asian regionalism. Finally, the conclusion speculates on what one might expect from the EAS in the years to come.
II. THE EVOLVING SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN EAST ASIA

The evolving security architecture in East Asia, on the one hand, has traditionally been discussed in terms of bilateral defense versus multilateral cooperative arrangements. On the other hand, a growing number of analysts believe defense and cooperative security are not inevitably dichotomous and inherently competitive approaches, but can and indeed should be complementary or as William Tow has argued "convergent."

Defense Arrangements

During the Cold War period, bilateral security arrangements played a dominant role in regional security. In the wider Asia-Pacific region, the San Francisco System or "the hub and spokes model" grew out of the East-West ideological rivalry and featured a series of strong bilateral security agreements linking the United States to its regional allies. The U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, signed during the San Francisco Conference in September 1951, was at the core of this model. In Southeast Asia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, and to a lesser extent Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia saw the United States as a security guarantor. The San Francisco System was applied to Southeast Asia through the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951. The United States had military bases in the Philippines and Thailand and both states were indirectly involved in the Vietnam War. The Thai-U.S. Joint Military exercise (EX Cobra Gold) was established in 1982. All these bilateral ties were used to preserve U.S. interests.


in the region and the defense of its allies by deterring any possible
Soviet expansion. The Soviet Union also focused on bilateral agree-
ments, including a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed

Few multilateral defense arrangements existed in East Asia
during the Cold War era. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
(SEATO) was created in February 1955 as a result of the Southeast
Asia Collective Defense Treaty, or Manila Pact, of September 1954.
SEATO included Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Paki-
stan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States but never
played an active military role. It was eventually abolished due to
internal tensions and the absence of common strategic interests.4
Contrary to its involvement in Europe through the North Atlantic
Treaty Organization (NATO), the United States feared that a multi-
lateral collective defense system in the Asia-Pacific would under-
mine its bilateral arrangements while adding very little to its
military capabilities in the region. The Soviet Union did not form a
multilateral collective defense system either in Asia and instead fo-
cused, like the United States, on bilateral military agreements, in-
cluding a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed with Hanoi
in November 1978, less than two months before Vietnam invaded
Cambodia.

Beyond these defense structures, regional attempts were made
at creating cooperative security arrangements in the 1960s. The As-
sociation of Southeast Asia (ASA) was formed in Bangkok in July
1961 and included Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand. ASA was
affected by the deterioration of Malayan-Philippine relations over
Sabah and its operations were interrupted in mid-1963. Consisting
of Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines, Maphilindo was a loose
confederation created through the Manila Agreements of 1963. It
was no longer viable due to the Indonesian Policy of Confrontation.
Established in 1967, ASEAN would be more successful.5

Defense ties with the United States have continued in the post-Cold War era to be at the core of Japan’s foreign policy. In response to the post-Cold War strategic environment, Washington and Tokyo redefined their alliance through the Joint Declaration of April 1996 and subsequent provision for new guidelines. Yet, pressures on the alliance have also increased. However, the strength of the alliance was underlined when then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi passed legislation enabling Japan to send a small naval contingent in support of the US war in Afghanistan.

Bilateral security arrangements have also continued to play a central part in Southeast Asian security as well since the early 1990s. While not a formal ally, Singapore has further developed close military ties with the United States. The Philippine Senate denied a new base treaty with the United States in September 1991 leading to a complete withdrawal from Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base by November 1992. Yet the two countries have remained military allies through the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty. Moreover, Manila signed a Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States in February 1998. Post-9/11, the bilateral alliance was further reinvigorated in the context of the global war on terror and Washington gave the Philippines a major non-NATO ally status. Indonesia signed a security agreement with Australia in December 1995; later revoked by Jakarta in 1999 over the East Timor crisis. A new security pact, the Lombok Treaty, was eventually signed between Canberra and Jakarta in 2006 and came into force in February 2008.

**Multilateral Cooperative Institutions**

Multilateral cooperative institutions have significantly expanded and somewhat deepened since the end of the Cold War, with the Association enlarging its membership from six to ten between 1995 and 1999. In 2003 the ASEAN heads of state and government endorsed the Bali Concord II, adopting a framework for the establishment of a Security Community, an Economic Community and a Socio-Cultural Community in Southeast Asia by 2020. The creation of new multilateral instruments has been spectacular since 1989, including APEC, the ARF, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), APT and eventually the EAS.

**Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)**

The initiative to bring together the economies of the region in a manner through which closer trade relations could be fostered
was first conceived and proposed by then Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke in 1989, during a climate in which there was growing interdependence among Asia Pacific economies. The common consensus at the time among ASEAN members and its greater East Asian and Pacific neighbors was the need to maintain an open multilateral economic trading system. Termed “open regionalism,” the proposal for such a regional community came as a response to the intensification of inward-looking forms of regionalism around the world, especially with the institutional developments in Europe during the 1980s and the formation of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). This gradual emergence of trading blocs threatened to reconfigure the global trading system and resultant trading patterns to the detriment of free and open trading practice. Thus, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was formed.

The agenda of APEC was in essence, to fight against any exclusivist or “closed” trading behavior. Member economies agreed that economic growth needed to be sustained through open trade, freedom of market forces, as well as trade and investment liberalization, facilitation and cooperation. Underlying this was a hope that in creating an institution like APEC, the sense of trust and comfort that followed could serve as a bridge to bring together the different levels of development and the diversity among the member economies. To that end, APEC’s initial objectives were to advance the process of regional economic cooperation as well as to push for a positive conclusion to the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations.

Despite the common concerns, the process of formation was delayed due to disagreements among ASEAN members, Japan and the United States. The majority of Asian participants preferred APEC to remain a dialogue on trade and investment rather than an institutionalized body. In contrast, Washington and Tokyo would have preferred to see the emergence of a negotiating group. The breakthrough came in Seattle in 1993 when the Clinton administration displayed an unusual support for the conference and even suggested upgrading the meeting from one involving senior officials to the level of economic ministers. America’s support and emphasis on the importance of the Asian region to American interests resulted in a series of events that led to the Bogor Declaration in 1994.

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achieve free and open trade by 2010 for developed members and 2020 for developing member economies. By 1995, the roadmap for APEC was ironed out in the Osaka Action Agenda, which provided more detailed principles and directions on technical areas for cooperation known as Individual Action Plans (IAPs) and Collective Action Plans (CAPs) – a blueprint for achieving the Bogor targets.

Since its establishment in 1989, APEC has grown to become a major institution in the region, bringing together twenty-one economies. It is commonly considered the second largest economic grouping in the world, with a large geographical footprint that stretches from East Asia to South America. The success of forming its action plans in Osaka a mere two years after declaring its goals in Bogor, Indonesia is arguably an indication of the commitment and strong sense of shared concerns, among the diverse member economies. With this broad support base, APEC made remarkable progress from its ministerial-level gathering among twelve countries to an institution that has a permanent secretariat, and attracts twenty-one economic leaders to its annual summits. In addition, the APEC institutional structure is highly developed, comprising an elaborate multilevel process that allows heads of state, leaders of the various ministries, senior officials to work together in a whole variety of meetings. APEC’s method of creating consultative conditions to facilitate discussions is also significant in how it departed from the hard negotiations and tough bargaining that takes place in other major trade forums such as GATT and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The APEC summits are not without fanfare. Indeed, the often-publicized light-hearted duets during merrymaking sessions, and the trademark photo opportunity in the host nation’s cultural garment are the hallmarks of APEC define the informal nature of APEC discussions. Fanfare aside, when it was formed APEC served a critical function as a vehicle through which American commitment and engagement in the region could find substantive expression.

Procedurally, the extent of representation in APEC has offered opportunities for leaders to meet on the sidelines or in private to bilaterally discuss issues beyond APEC. Indeed, it was under such conditions that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Singapore and the US was negotiated in Brunei. Increasingly, in a reflection of both the changing institutional needs in the region as well as the fluid nature of the current security architecture, APEC is convening to discuss issues beyond the traditional agenda of trade and economic integration. For instance, APEC discussed the East
Timor crisis of 1999. APEC also took a concerted stand in response to the threat of terrorism when leaders met in Shanghai in October 2001. Notwithstanding the achievements, the credibility of APEC has been undermined by its inability to respond effectively to crises, in particular, the Asian Financial Crisis of the late 1990s.

Today APEC operates in a completely new global climate with different socio-political and economic conditions and the expectations remain high. The emergence of institutions such as the APT and the EAS, each with their own multilateral economic and trade agendas, have invariably diluted the role of APEC. APT’s Chiang Mai Initiative for financial cooperation and the idea of an Asian Monetary Fund as well as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia (CEPEA) are examples of the need for a more coherent relationship between relevant institutions and cognate agendas.

**ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**

Following the end of the Cold War, the security discourse in the region quickly turned on the matter of the formation of a regional security forum which could involve key regional stakeholders and would be able to initiate dialogue on pressing security issues that posed a challenge to regional stability and order. Initial overtures towards these ends were articulated by Australia and Canada. The response from ASEAN to these overtures noticeably lacked enthusiasm. While cognizant of the need for such a dialogue and the potential contribution of such a forum should one exist, ASEAN’s primary concerns were first, its relevance to the emerging security architecture, and second, the need for such initiatives to be carefully calibrated so as to create the necessary conditions for the participation of the two key players – the United States, which at the time was flirting with the idea of scaling back on its security presence in the region, and China, who was fast emerging as a power of potentially significant consequence in regional affairs, but whose intentions were not yet clear to the rest of the region.

ASEAN’s reticence had everything to do with concerns that the institution had to remain pivotal in any regional arrangements, for fear of being overshadowed or sidelined in the broad, complex security dynamic of the region. Against this backdrop, ASEAN leveraged on the consensus that was gradually taking shape towards a need for a new security architecture by floating the idea for the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum, which would be the first (and to date, remains the only) regional security forum that enjoys
representation from all the key regional players. Since its inaugural meeting in Bangkok on July 25, 1994, the multilateral security forum has been meeting annually along with the ASEAN Summit.

The dominant argument among scholars holds that the aim of the ARF was to maintain American military, if not political, engagement in the post-Cold War Asian region while maintaining cooperative relationships with external powers, not least of which was China. For many of the Southeast Asian states, the prevailing fear was that a power vacuum would emerge in the absence of an American presence, thereby laying the conditions for competition and rivalry among the major Asian powers. This situation was created by fears of a possible remilitarization of Japan on the one hand, and on the other, concerns that China would take advantage of the transformed security architecture to aggressively extend its influence. A delicate balance of power was necessary to maintain the tenuous post-Cold War peace, and a multilateral arena was considered the best means to attain the commitment and engagement of the relevant powers.

The official agenda of the ARF as outlined in the First ARF Chairman's Statement (1994) was to foster constructive dialogue and consultation among all participants on political and security issues of common interest and concern. Following the inaugural meeting in Bangkok, a Concept Paper surfaced in 1995 that mapped out the ARF's agenda in terms of its progress through a three-stage process towards the provision of security and stability in Asia - the first stage via confidence-building measures (CBMs), the second through the development of conflict resolution mechanisms, and the third through an elaborate approach to conflicts. Keeping with the ASEAN principles of consultation and consensus decision-making, the Concept Paper firmly emphasized that the ARF process would only move at a "pace comfortable to all participants."

The efficacies and contributions of the ARF have been an issue of debate among both scholars and policymakers alike. Ongoing tensions over the South China Sea dispute have highlighted the

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ARF’s limitations. Its failure to evolve beyond the first pillar of confidence building measures to preventive diplomacy has been a major criticism. That said, one cannot deny that since its formation in 1993, the ARF has served its primary aim to stabilize the Asian post-Cold War security environment and securely engage and involve all relevant major powers in a cooperative manner. At the earlier stages, the Chinese government came to see the value of the ARF to counter any dominance by the United States in the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific. This perhaps is what the ARF does best, by instituting consultative security dialogue among members as a norm – an argument favored by the constructivist school of international relations. Today, the painstaking diplomatic maneuvering by ASEAN to provide a vehicle for all major powers to express their interests and concerns in the region is a reflection of the ARF’s continued relevance and invaluable contribution to the region’s stability. Indeed, while the furor over the icy confrontation between the United States and China at the recent ARF meeting over the South China Sea and the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan demonstrated the reality of big power relations, it nevertheless illustrates the value of the ARF as a critical arena to address security issues in the Asian region.

Moreover, credit has to be given to the ARF for establishing a supplementary security structure to the existing bilateral alliances in the post-Cold war era. The ARF as a dialogue mechanism is a useful vehicle to establish and promote multi-polarity in the region. This is best demonstrated by the inclusion of the interests of big powers.

ASEAN Plus Three (APT)

The ASEAN Plus Three (APT) was born out of the regional financial crisis of the late 1990s, and was a product of the region’s

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pressing economic needs and challenges. The Asian financial crisis was a shock that engulfed many of the East Asian economies. It started in July 1997 with the collapse of the Thai Baht and triggered a financial and currency meltdown across the entire East Asian region. The countries hit hardest were Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. The affected countries had to rely on international help, especially from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The Asian financial crisis demonstrated the inter-connectivity of regional and global financial markets and reaffirmed the region’s economic insecurity. While this insecurity somewhat reshaped institutional structures and influenced their priorities, it also provided opportunities for negotiating new arrangements.

The shock was aggravated by the failure of regional institutions, especially ASEAN and APEC, to respond to the Asian financial crisis. ASEAN was powerless against the economic turmoil and the affected members had to depend on bilateral initiatives to overcome their economic difficulties. The effects of the crisis were aggravated by the fact that ASEAN was confronted with other difficulties, including the Haze Crisis of 1997 and problems of expanding to include Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. APEC’s response was also insufficient, leading to a loss of confidence in the arrangement as successive APEC summits failed to effectively adopt and implement measures to address the crisis. Finally, regional initiatives were rejected by Western powers. The Japanese Ministry of Finance had proposed in the early stages of the crisis the establishment of an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF). The latter was blocked by the United States, the European Union (EU) and the IMF at a meeting in September 1997. In short, the Asian financial crisis underscored the need for a new overlapping arrangement capable of better defending the East Asian countries against future shocks.

The APT idea had its genesis in the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) put forward in 1990 by then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. According to Mahathir’s plan, a caucus would be created that could provide a collective voice for East Asia at international trade negotiations and serve as a political counter-weight to external players who attempted to influence developments in the region. Despite the fierce objections to Dr. Mahathir’s plans by the U.S. and Australian governments, ASEAN leaders saw its value and continued to work on its realization, proposing to incorporate it into the APEC framework in 1993 and conducted in-
formal meetings to strategize its incorporation over the next few years.

The formal induction of the APT came about after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997/98 (AFC). On December 15, 1997 in Kuala Lumpur, leaders from ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea came together to deal with the financial crisis and to strategize support and recovery for the region. The speed with which the crisis spread from Southeast to Northeast Asia, demonstrated how interdependent the region's economies were. Further, there was palpable disappointment at the ineffectiveness of the global economic institutional framework in response to the crisis. It became imperative for Asian nations to have their own economic institution that would not only safeguard but have the interests of the Asian region at its heart. Hence in 1998, a joint statement was issued to clearly indicate the shared interests among all thirteen nation-states to press forward with an East Asian cooperative framework known as "10+3." The resultant APT has in essence been a stoic measure to provide an East Asian solution to East Asian problems.

Since its inception in 1997, the APT has made significant contributions to regional financial cooperation. For instance the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) launched in May 2000, was a regional framework that was agreed upon after the Asian Financial Crisis to establish bilateral swap arrangements among members of the region, preventing currency speculations and providing the foundation for further monetary and financial cooperation in the region.

The APT has also been essential in the broadening of free trade agreements (FTAs). Proceeding in a systematic, extensive multi-layered approach, each East Asian economic powerhouse has signed or is working on FTAs with ASEAN and with individual members. For example, the first APT FTA was the Chinese proposal to create a China-ASEAN free trade area. It was endorsed and signed by both parties in November 2001 and agreed to a year later. In May 2002, Japan followed suit by expressing interest in creating an East Asian free-business zone, roping in Australia and New Zealand. The enthusiasm among members has definitely contributed to deepening cooperation and a greater sense of regionalism as evidenced by the steady progress beyond economic cooperation to issues of security more traditionally associated with the ARF.

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Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)

The Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) is the initiative of former Thai premier, Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin felt that Asia should have its own forum to discuss Asia-wide political and economic cooperation (or, as its founder put it, issues pertinent to the "new Asian realism"\(^{13}\)). Involving all APT countries and Mongolia, South Asian countries (except Nepal and Maldives) and Iran, Gulf countries (Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia) as well as Russia and the Central Asian countries (except Turkmenistan), the ACD has been described as an initiative to promote Asian cooperation at a continental level, helping to integrate the separate regional organizations of political or economical cooperation. Some have even regarded it as a precursor to an "Asian Union." In terms of its geographic coverage, the ACD is the most extensive institution. The need for this "missing link" was formally put forward during the thirty-fourth ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Hanoi in 2001 and received broad support from ASEAN members. The first ACD Ministerial Meeting was held in 2002. The ACD has developed in two dimensions: dialogue and projects. On the dialogue dimension, the ACD Ministers’ Meeting is held annually, and on the project dimension, there are now twenty projects. The ACD has a weak – and, by some accounts, ineffective – institutional mechanism. It does not have a secretariat, but Thailand acts as the coordinator of a rotating coordination mechanism (Coordination Committee), which was created to ensure the implementation and follow up of ACD decisions. To support the development of ACD, Thailand has facilitated the creation of an ACD Think Tank Network. However, it has not taken off beyond the international symposium making its establishment.

"Minilateral" Initiatives

East Asian multilateral regionalism does not only comprise of initiatives of the participants like the ones discussed above. The academic debate on multilateralism distinguishes between multilateralism with big and small numbers of participants.\(^{14}\) Advocates of

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the latter proposition argue that smaller multilateral groupings – or minilateral clubs – tend to be more effective than big groupings at producing basic agreements and striking and keeping deals made among their members. A recent example is the claim by Moisés Nai̇m, former editor-in-chief of Foreign Policy magazine, that global forums and large multilateral gatherings are undergoing a crisis.

According to Nai̇m, the Group of Twenty – formed in 1999 following the Asian financial crisis in 1997 – offers a compelling case: since G20 member economies control among themselves nearly eighty-five percent of the world’s total trade, any significant global trade treaty should therefore be negotiated first among them rather than the worldwide majority of countries, most of whose economic activities have little impact on international trade. At the East Asian level, a number of minilateral initiatives have emerged, two of which – the Trilateral Summit and the Trilateral Security Dialogue – are discussed below.

Northeast Asian Trilateral Summit

December 2008 saw the formal launch of a Trilateral Summit (China, Japan and the Republic of Korea) that could be the beginning of the establishment of a major regional institution in Northeast Asia. The three countries have been meeting at the leaders’ level since 1999 but on the sidelines of the APT process. As a potential candidate for future institutionalism, the Trilateral Summit has yet to see the emergence of constituents in the three countries that form regional movements or coalitions as have been the case in the Asia Pacific region. Thus far, major think tanks in the three countries have begun collaboration to explore modalities for economic cooperation, including the desirability and feasibility of a free trade area. According to Kikuchi, if successful, the Trilateral Summit could potentially supplant the APT or EAS as the more important institution both regionally and globally.

17. However, Kikuchi has been cautious in describing the newly established Trilateral Summit as an institution that is still in search of a regional identity and of becoming a supra-structure institution underlined by a shared idea of Northeast Asia. See, Tsutomu Kikuch, “The Late Comers are Catching Up: Institution-Building in Northeast Asia” (2009), unpublished paper.
eration in the decades to come, although there are a variety of obstacles the three countries must overcome. Key to this is the major roles played by China, Japan, and South Korea as majority financiers of the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM) foreign reserves pool. The transformation of the bilateral swap arrangements under the CMI into a single contractual arrangement, CMIM, has led to the creation of an “offshoot” institution that has important implications for East Asian regionalism.

Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD)

The Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD) process has its origins in a proposal put forward by then Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, with the support of his counterparts from the United States, Colin Powell, and Japan, Makiko Tanaka, in July 2001. The motivations behind the TSD idea had to do with the perceived ineffectiveness of larger multilateral processes such as APEC and the ARF, and growing concerns by the three nations over both North Korea’s nuclear capability and a rising and militarizing China’s intentions with respect to Taiwan. Other security-related concerns, such as global terrorism, provided reasons for the three democracies to cooperate with each other. But equally significant was the perceived need to bring together the northern and southern “anchors” of the U.S. strategic presence in the Pacific – Washington’s security alliances with Tokyo and Canberra, respectively – in the hope that this would lead to better coordination, information-sharing, and formulating a common security approach among the three that was not possible under the system of security bilateralism. The TSD is viewed warily by Beijing as a “little NATO” against China. Chinese annoyance with such perceived encirclement peaked in September 2007 when the navies of TSD member countries – including India and Singapore – conducted exercises in the Bay of Bengal, close to China’s sea lanes to the Middle East. Moreover, Chinese suspicions were further fuelled by talk of a “quadrilateral dialogue” – comprising of Australia, Japan, China, South Korea, and India – which China regards as a threat to its sovereignty.

India, and the United States – in 2007, which nonetheless faded within the year.

**Norms and Principles**

The norms and principles adopted by the ARF, APT and more recently by the EAS have primarily emanated from the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Signed by the ASEAN leaders at their first summit in Bali in 1976, the TAC seeks to establish a norm-based code of conduct for regional inter-state relations. It refers to the principles of the UN Charter and the principles endorsed at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955.21 Among others, the TAC enunciates the following principles: “Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations”; “the right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion”; “Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another”; “Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means”; and “Renunciation of the threat or use of force.”22 Based on the UN Charter, most of these principles are well known in the study of International Relations as they represent the underlying foundations of the traditional European system constructed on the sovereignty of nation-states. Nonetheless, the adherence to a common set of norms and principles should be viewed as vital to the operation of a code of conduct for conflict management.

The TAC includes provisions for a dispute resolution mechanism, a High Council for establishing techniques of mediation and consultation. Yet, it stipulates that the use of a High Council’s techniques “shall not apply to a dispute unless all the parties to the dispute agree to their application to that dispute.”23 Consequently, the provision for a High Council, which is at odds with ASEAN’s basic norm of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states, has never been invoked by the ASEAN members. Instead, the latter have continued to rely on the TAC as an informal code of conduct.

23. Ibid.
Since 1976, the TAC has become the cardinal ASEAN document. It has provided ASEAN with a political identity, a shared approach to security and a code of conduct for regulating intramural relations and managing existing or potential disputes. Codified within the TAC, the code of conduct for conflict management has relied on a modest set of international norms and principles that has characterized the lowest common denominator among the regional partners. Respect for national sovereignty, in contrast to the notion of political integration, has been set forward as the core ASEAN principle. Through the TAC, ASEAN has continued to rely on dialogue and to operate through a mode of conflict avoidance and management. The TAC has emphasized the need for a peaceful and non-confrontational approach to cooperation and made clear that ASEAN would deal with security matters through political and economic means rather than by conventional military methods. The TAC has also strengthened a sense of regionalism amongst the members that further defined ASEAN as a regional entity.

The TAC has in recent years been signed by non-ASEAN members keen to deepen their relations with the Association. Significantly, China became the first non-ASEAN nation to sign the TAC in 2003, thereby seeking to indicate its accommodative foreign policy toward the Southeast Asian states. The Treaty has in the meantime been ratified by all the participants of the East Asia Summit (ASEAN plus China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, India, and New Zealand) as well as by France and most recently the United States. The European Union has also indicated its willingness to adhere to the Treaty. The attributes of the TAC have therefore been accepted beyond Southeast Asia, at least rhetorically. In that sense, the TAC has helped the ASEAN countries in partly redefining their relations with external powers.

Trends in Post-Asian Financial Crisis Regionalism

Some interesting trends have characterized East Asian regionalism since the Asian financial crisis of 1997/98. First, the region has since accommodated a greater variety of security structures, ranging from bilateral to multilateral arrangements. The nature of such arrangements has varied from military alliances to institutional

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expressions of cooperative and comprehensive security. Second, East Asia has seen the emergence of numerous new multilateral institutions, such as the APT and the EAS, as well as groupings operating at the Track one-and-a-half level such as the Shangri-La Dialogue. The Asia-Pacific terrain has therefore evolved from being “dangerously under-institutionalized” to a relatively crowded landscape of overlapping multilateral arrangements. Third, there has been a growing recognition of the close relationship between economics and security, particularly since the Asian Financial Crisis. The APT has sought, for example, to incorporate economic-security linkages as part of its cooperative structures. Likewise, ASEAN has perceived the construction of security and economic communities in Southeast Asia as complementary and mutually reinforcing. Finally, existing institutions in East Asia have taken on “new” security roles since 9/11 and the 2002 Bali bombings. ASEAN, the ARF and even APEC, originally formed to encourage trade and investment liberalization, had been accorded a role in the campaign against terrorism. Health concerns, transnational crimes and other issues have also increasingly been discussed at the multilateral level among policy and epistemic communities in the region.

Nevertheless, despite these developments and the presence of a growing number of overlapping structures, regionalism in East Asia has continued to suffer from weak structural capacities that limit its ability to respond to security challenges. The ARF has enjoyed some success in confidence-building but it has remained questionable whether it will ever succeed in moving toward preventive diplomacy. The ARF has also remained ill-equipped to address a series of security issues in the Asia-Pacific and is incapable of influencing the Taiwanese, North Korean and Kashmiri issues in spite of the fact that these flashpoints could seriously destabilize the

25. Emmers, Balance of Power and Cooperative Security in ASEAN and the ARF; also see Tow, Asia Pacific Strategic Relations: Seeking Convergent Security.


region. As mentioned above, the Asian financial crisis also highlighted the weaknesses of APEC. The crisis had by the late 1990s underscored the need for new overlapping arrangements capable of better defending the region against future financial instability. This shift in perception has led to the institutionalization of the APT grouping. This has constituted an ASEAN attempt at widening the scope of cooperation in East Asia by linking the 10 Southeast Asian countries to the large Northeast Asian economies. It has broken the institutional status quo by bringing the two East Asian sub-regions under the auspices of an embryonic unified economic and financial architecture. In particular, the expectation has been that the APT would tackle the economic sources of insecurity in the wider East Asian region through financial and other forms of cooperation. That said, the APT itself has so far failed to develop the necessary capabilities to address regional security challenges comprehensively as the complex relations between China and Japan have continued to undermine its effectiveness.

Since the end of the financial crisis, the driving forces for change in East Asian regionalism have arguably continued to be the level of U.S. participation, the nature of China's involvement, and the strength of regionalism in Southeast Asia. The United States can still be expected to remain the preponderant Asia-Pacific power for years to come although its exercise of power and influence in the region has been affected by the rise of China. As has been noted so far, the United States has generally been supportive of multilateral initiatives in the Asia-Pacific since the end of the Cold War era.

China has over the last decade or so added a discernable activism to its growing economic and military growth. The Chinese "charm offensive" toward Southeast Asia, including the negotiation of a free trade area with ASEAN and its immediate support for the EAS, has been in sharp contrast to China's previous suspicion of multilateralism. Beijing's activism with regard to the ASEAN-led institutions has been effective in not only changing the Southeast Asian perception of China but also in bringing new life to regional multilateral initiatives. The engagement between China and ASEAN has been particularly impressive. China and the ASEAN members signed in 2002 the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties

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in the South China Sea. The signing of the declaration indicated a desire by the different parties involved to pursue their claims by peaceful means. It openly denounced the use of force in the South China Sea and contributed towards the easing of tensions between the claimant states. The signatories of the 2002 Declaration also pledged to undertake cooperative activities and increase the possibility of agreements being reached on joint oil exploration and development schemes. Furthermore, the declaration was perceived as a sign that China was willing to respect the ASEAN principles and co-exist peacefully with its Southeast Asian neighbors. This accommodative position was further illustrated when China became the first non-ASEAN nation to sign the TAC in 2003.

Finally, the future of East Asian regionalism will continue to depend on the strength of ASEAN. Southeast Asia has been undergoing political transformations and has faced a series of non-traditional security challenges. Such changes in regional dynamics have raised a significant question for institution-building in the sub-region. Indonesia suggested at the thirty-sixth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), in Phnom Penh in June 2003, the establishment of an ASEAN Security Community (ASC) – later renamed the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) in acknowledgment of the region's political constraints – in Southeast Asia by 2020, following a Singaporean proposal to establish an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The ASC was later endorsed at the ASEAN Summit in Bali in October 2003. On the back of its own attempts to strengthen regionalism in its backyard, Southeast Asia has become an incubator of sorts, nurturing a form of Asian regionalism that is characterized by a whole myriad of regional institutions and the distinct slew of acronyms.

However, increasing doubts are being cast by skeptics who view Asia's increasingly cluttered regional architecture as detrimental and ultimately, strategically incoherent. According to them, the regional framework and its institutions have glaring inadequacies and they are quick to flesh out the failures of these institutions at moments where they should matter most. The reference point always goes back to the Asian Financial Crisis, where the weaknesses of ASEAN and the existing institutional framework were evident. Critics argue how the consequences of the crisis revealed how little substance there was to the claims of harmony and cooperation in

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32. The implementation of the ASEAN Community has since been brought forward from 2020 to 2015.
ASEAN. While ASEAN expanded its membership and attempted to export its managerial style – the "ASEAN Way" – and its loose, consultative manner of building positive norms to the wider region, the trajectory of regionalism in East Asia remains ambiguous and disputes on the other hand remain largely unresolved.

The ARF for instance, has been mocked for decades as a mere "talk-shop" and "deafeningly silent" on other occasions by its harshest critics. Moreover, critics have also berated the ARF for its complacency during the height of major security crises in the region, the latest being tensions in the Korean Peninsula with the sinking of the Cheonan and the South China Sea dispute, which emerged at the Hanoi ARF meeting in June 2010 as a major point of contention involving not just the traditional claimants, but now the US as well. Likewise, the APT has been taken to task as being a "misguided and deluded" attempt at an "Asian solution for Asian problems" in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis. Others have pointed out that the nebulous and inchoate geographic notion of "East Asia" would pose significant obstacles to any idea of a coherent East Asian regional form coming into being as the ambiguity of who belongs or should belong will remain a problem for East Asian Regionalism. Although membership can be negotiated, as Tow and Taylor suggest, it then also has "clear implications for the comprehensiveness and cohesion of a regional or pan-regional architectural vision." Hence, the tendency towards an open and inclusive approach to regionalism has resulted in the spillovers and overlaps in membership among the various regional groupings. This raises the question of how any regional architecture can be conceived to broadly and convincingly address the diversity of Asia.

III. THE EAST ASIA SUMMIT: FORMATION AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

After APEC, the ARF and the APT, the East Asian Summit is the latest institution to emerge on the regional landscape. The EAS grew out of the proposal of then South Korean President Kim Dae Jung, made at the second APT meeting in Vietnam in November 1998, for the formation of an East Asian Vision Group (EAVG) to explore the prospects for the formation of an East Asian commu-

Comprising 26 civilian experts, the group was tasked to research and recommend concrete measures that the APT could take to increase East Asian regional cooperation. It was obvious that the general consensus among all thirteen participants of the APT was a keenness to develop East Asian regionalism in a more concrete manner.

In 2001, the EAVG released the findings of its study in the form of a report titled "Towards an East Asian Community: Region of Peace, Prosperity, and Progress." Among the items in the report was the recommendation for the establishment of an East Asia Summit. Based on its observations of regional events and the developing regionalism, it envisioned East Asian nations moving towards establishing a truly regional community. It argued that such a community would be of benefit to the states in the region, and this could be achieved by building on the existing regional cooperatives and deepening the processes of institutionalization. The East Asian Summit, it recommended, would be a useful means to build community and pre-empt or resolve any future regional challenges that may arise.

Initial reactions to the proposal were cautiously positive. While states concerned broadly embraced the EAS idea as a further step to community building in the region, opinions differed over the vehicle through which this was to be actualized. Some states, such as China, remained inclined towards the APT, and believed the existing APT framework would provide the best means of bringing the EAS to fruition, whereby the APT would become the EAS itself with the chair rotating among the members. Certainly, in the case of Malaysia, initiatives such as the APT and EAS were seen as extensions of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's proposals, made fifteen years earlier and endorsed by the Chinese, for the creation of an exclusive East Asian grouping. On its part, and in response to initial indications that states like India, Australia, and the United States would be omitted from the EAS, Japan expressed its preference for inclusive regionalism. Concern for the erosion of their centrality to the building of regional architectures however, continued to define ASEAN's response, and explained their reluc-

tance to simply have the APT transformed into the EAS. Eventually, it was decided that the EAS would take the form of a separate institution altogether, complete with its own summit meeting.

Following the proposals of the EAVG, then Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi proposed at the APT summit in 2004 to materialize the recommendations for the EAS and offered to host the first meeting in Kuala Lumpur the following year. In December 2005, the East Asia Summit – comprised of ASEAN, China, Japan, South Korean, India, Australia, and New Zealand – met for the first time alongside the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, with Russia also present as observer at the invitation of the Malaysian hosts. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman’s Statement and Kuala Lumpur Declaration clarified that the EAS was to be an “open” forum “for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia.” Furthermore, the Chairman’s Statement also affirmed the role of ASEAN as the primary driver of the EAS, and that the gathering would be a leader-led meeting “for strategic discussions on key issues affecting the region and the evolving regional architecture.” To give the meeting some substance, an East Asia Summit Declaration on Avian Influenza Prevention, Control, and Response was also signed, committing members to deepen cooperation on policies to combat avian flu.

Originally scheduled for Cebu in December 2006, the second EAS was postponed because of concerns for disruption as a result of Typhoon Utor. The Summit eventually convened in January 2007 where further progress in trade and regional integration was made with the announcement of deeper study into the possibility of a CEPEA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia) agreement to be conducted at a Track Two level, with support from an Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), whose creation was confirmed at the third EAS meeting in Singapore in 2007.


39. Item 12 of the Chairman’s Statement read: “We welcomed ASEAN’s efforts towards further integration and community building, and reaffirmed our resolve to work closely together in narrowing development gaps in our region. We reiterated our support for ASEAN’s role as the driving force for economic integration in this region. To deepen integration, we agreed to launch a Track Two study on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia (CEPEA) among EAS participants. We tasked the
Together with the ASEAN Summit and APT, the fourth installment of the EAS to be hosted by Thailand was postponed and rescheduled on several occasions because of the internal crisis in Thai politics. The September 2006 military coup in Thailand precipitated widespread political protests as supporters and opponents of deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra tussled for primacy in Thai politics as street demonstrations became all too frequent. By September 2008, the animosity between both factions turned decidedly hostile with the outbreak of violence, forcing the Thai government to declare a controversial state of emergency. The fourteenth ASEAN Summit scheduled for December was subsequently postponed because of attendant security concerns. ASEAN leaders eventually reconvened in the central resort towns of Hua Hin and Cha-am between February 27 and March 2 in 2009. While the ASEAN Summit proceeded without distraction, Thai authorities took the decision to postpone the Association's meetings with dialogue partners yet again, rescheduling them for the resort of Pattaya on April 10–12, 2009. As ASEAN and regional leaders gathered in Pattaya, the deepening of Thailand's political malaise saw pro-Thaksin “red-shirt” supporters storm the Summit venue on April 10, forcing the besieged government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to suffer the ignominy of having to cancel the meeting at the eleventh hour and evacuate visiting leaders from ASEAN and its dialogue partners by helicopter to a nearby military airbase. ASEAN, the APT, and the EAS eventually met in Hua Hin and Cha-am in October 2009.

The sixteenth ASEAN Summit in Hanoi set the stage for the fifth EAS by outlining the focus of the institution. Specifically, discussions focused on the objectives of connectivity and CEPEA. Of further note at the summit was the explicit interest expressed by ASEAN leaders to draw both the United States and Russia into the EAS. To that end, the Chairman's Statement noted:

We recognized and supported the mutually reinforcing roles of the ASEAN+3 [APT] process, the East Asia Summit (EAS), and such regional forums as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), to promote the East Asian cooperation and dialogue towards the building of a community in East Asia. In this connection, we encouraged

ASEAN Secretariat to prepare a time frame for the study and to invite all our countries to nominate their respective participants in it.” The Chairman’s Statement of the Second EAS is available at http://www.aseansec.org/19302.htm
Russia and the US to deepen their engagement in an evolving regional architecture, including the possibility of their involvement with the EAS through appropriate modalities, taking into account the Leaders-led, open and inclusive nature of the EAS.  

Aside from providing another venue for the United States to demonstrate its commitment to the development of regionalism in East Asia, overtures to Washington and Moscow to join the EAS were also driven by the strategic move to generate countervailing power against increasing Chinese assertiveness in regional affairs. Following this, senior ASEAN officials also decided to impose a moratorium on EAS membership through the introduction of a period of "consolidation and reflection."  

When the EAS was established by ASEAN in 2005, two issues were critical for how they shaped the Association’s thinking on the role and underlying premises for the new institution. First, as in the case of the ARF, the ASEAN members were keen to further institutionalize great power relations within a multilateral cooperative structure. A core driver of Asia-Pacific regionalism has historically been the institutionalization of ties between these powers through and with the support of the ASEAN-led arrangements. The members of the Association have traditionally hoped to secure the commitment of the great powers to the promotion of regional peace and security in Southeast Asia and beyond.  

Second, when establishing the EAS, ASEAN was keen to preserve its driving role in East Asian regionalism. Advocates of multilateralism had continued to claim the relevance of ASEAN to East Asia’s stability and security, and see its cooperative initiatives as an essential contribution to regional community formation. It should be mentioned that ASEAN’s assigned leading role in the EAS was more by default than anything else since the prospect of either China or Japan at the helm of the EAS would in all likelihood be viewed as unacceptable, at least for the foreseeable future. This readily put to rest, at least in the short to medium term, early concerns regarding which country or coalition of the willing other than ASEAN could conceivably have emerged to take the reins of the Summit. That said, with the leadership of the EAS resting primarily with ASEAN, a fait accompli of sorts had already been estab-

40. Available at http://www.aseansec.org/24509.htm  
42. Interview with a senior foreign ministry official, Singapore, September 13, 2010.
lished. Indeed, the modality of the EAS was understood to be similar to those of other ASEAN-led institutions and defined by the norms and principles stipulated in the TAC. Unsurprisingly, proponents of the Association argued that the ASEAN-led formula had proven to be feasible in Asia, and hence should be applied to the Summit. The Association's critics understandably offered more circumspect and dismissive views.

Insofar as the scholarly community was concerned, the plan to materialize the East Asia Summit was met with considerable skepticism. After all, the existing ASEAN-led institutions have drawn considerable flak over the years for their arguable failure to achieve stated aims or progress beyond the confidence building stage. The inclusion of the EAS ignited the common criticism of the proliferating “alphabet-soup” of Asian groupings – a growing number of acronyms for a myriad of regional configurations with incoherent overlaps leading to a murky, informal, ambiguous state of regional affairs.

However, the EAS was envisioned as a form of response on the part of ASEAN – a demonstration of its commitment to the development and progress of regional architecture. Instead of adding to the “alphabet-soup” of groupings, the EAS was justified as a process of streamlining the ASEAN+ (ASEAN plus) meetings. For instance the APT meetings with China, South Korea, and Japan as well as ASEAN+1 meetings with other dialogue partners such as India, have been taking place alongside ASEAN summit meetings leading to extremely packed schedules for government officials, ministers and heads of state with series upon series of back-to-back meetings. For greater institutional efficiency and to limit the potential overlaps, ASEAN members argued that incorporating the ASEAN+ meetings into the EAS would be a prudent measure. By pulling all of ASEAN's dialogue partners in the Asian and closer Pacific region into the same forum for discussion and cooperation, regionalism in Asia seemed to be heading in a positive direction – more complementary to the preexisting structures as opposed to detrimental. The Asian region, it seemed, finally had a formal forum that was region-centric and focused, with a mix of membership that arguably better reflected the state of play in the region in terms of indigenous stakeholders.

**EAS Membership and ASEAN Leadership**

Established barely half a decade ago, the EAS remains in relative infancy. Cooperation on trade and energy were the first steps
of regional cooperation within the Summit. The process of community building remains a distant one with no clear blueprint as yet on the actions and steps to achieving an ultimate aim, which remains equally ambiguous. The issue of membership however, continues to be a contentious issue in the EAS. Critics are quick to point to the rift between China and ASEAN since the beginning in the determination of core membership. For instance, on the eve of the East Asian Summit in December 2005, China suggested that instead of ASEAN, existing APT members should form the core of the EAS and steer the development of East Asian regionalism. Premier WEN Jiabao had argued that the East Asian Summit should only be led by East Asian countries to prevent the focus of the grouping from being diluted by states outside of East Asia.\(^4\)

However, ASEAN members were determined to avoid the region becoming divided into American or Chinese spheres of influence and were against providing another plausible opportunity for China to lead regional development. After all, there have been arguments that suggest ASEAN has been struggling to ensure that the APT meetings do not lean too heavily under Chinese influence. Likewise, Japan, India, as well as Australia were similarly opposed to the Chinese proposal of a “two-tiered, exclusionary and discriminatory EAS Structure.”\(^44\) As a testament to their determination to set the balance right in the EAS, the ASEAN members also declined Chinese Premier WEN Jiabao’s offer to host the second EAS meeting.

Insistent as always to ensure that ASEAN remain the center of gravity of any regional development, ASEAN members chose a broad-based, inclusive approach and expanded the membership of the EAS to include India, Australia, and New Zealand – relevant dialogue partners in close proximity to the region with engaged trading relationships – making the Summit at present a sixteen-member unit. After all, ASEAN was responsible for the materialization of the concept proposed by the EAVG and this has allowed them to claim control over membership criteria such that only the ten governments of ASEAN have the ability to decide on admission to the EAS. All members of the Association have to unanimously agree to accept a request to join the EAS. ASEAN insists and continues to host meetings within Southeast Asia alongside


\(^44\) Ibid, p. 5.
ASEAN’s own summits. Interested parties also have to accede to ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, be a formal “dialogue partner” and have a positive record of substantial cooperative relations with the organization before they can be seek to gain membership at the Summit. Hence, the core management of the EAS continues to be ASEAN’s responsibility and the qualifying criteria for membership at the table has also been sufficiently detailed. This clear direction of the Summit allows ASEAN to maintain its centrality and prevents the institution from becoming overshadowed by greater powers and fading into the background. The evolution of regional architecture as expressed in the EAS thus continues to remain an essentially ASEAN driven process.

EAS Expansion: The U.S. Factor

The United States had in the 1990s been supportive of multilateral initiatives in the Asia-Pacific, as demonstrated by its active participation in APEC and the ARF. The United States was not, however, invited to join the EAS when it was first established in Kuala Lumpur in 2005. At the inaugural EAS summit, the latest institution was pitched as a predominantly Asian-centric forum concerned with community building and East Asian issues. It was viewed as an evolution of the APT into a more holistic East Asian body. At the time of its formation, the Bush administration had already repeatedly indicated its preference for flexibility and mobility over formal and institutionalized arrangements. As a result, Washington had been perceived regionally as increasingly disinterested in East Asian cooperation. For example, a non-active U.S. involvement in the ARF had been felt when then Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, decided not to attend the ministerial meeting in Vientiane in July 2005. Dr. Rice’s participation the following year somewhat eased concerns over the possible diminishing US commitment to existing institutionalized arrangements. Yet, she failed again to attend the following ministerial meeting in July 2007.

Nevertheless, initial statements from the Obama administration suggested a renewed U.S. interest in East Asian regionalism and an American willingness to move beyond the issues of terror-

ism and maritime security.⁴⁷ These statements were rapidly followed by the inauguration of an ASEAN-United States Summit held on the sidelines of the APEC meeting in November 2009. The inaugural summit was followed by a second successful gathering twelve months later. The Obama administration also announced the ratification of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation by presidential decree in July 2009. This opened the door for the United States to join the EAS. Indeed, as mentioned above, ratifying the treaty is viewed as a pre-condition to a full membership in the summit.

The issue of regional architecture and the possible inclusion of the United States and Russia to the EAS emerged as a dominant topic of discussion among regional leaders at the 16th ASEAN summit in Hanoi in April 2010. U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton made clear to her ASEAN counterparts America's willingness to join the EAS and consequently several leaders took to Singapore's proposal of an ASEAN+8 formula. However, the consensus within ASEAN was split between the expansion of the EAS on the one hand, and the ASEAN+8 proposal on the other. At the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting held in Hanoi the following month, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Laos expressed their preference for an expansion of the EAS rather than the introduction of an ASEAN+8.⁴⁸ For the most part, their reservations stemmed from concern that the creation of another grouping would render the existing regional architecture even more unwieldy, and that prescribing another additional platform to a framework (ASEAN+) that is still nebulous would only make Asian regionalism less coherent. Furthermore, there was a concern that the ASEAN+8 would overshadow the APT in a manner that would be an added detriment considering the momentum and progress the APT was enjoying. Whatever their concerns, the ASEAN foreign ministers were nonetheless united in their belief that the inclusion of these two major powers would enhance the value, weight and influence of the ASEAN bloc.⁴⁹ If anything, it reflected ASEAN's perennial desire to engage outside powers peacefully within


⁴⁹ Nirmal Ghosh, “Regional forum to include US, Russia,” The Straits Times, July 21, 2010.
frameworks that were premised on ASEAN as the core organization in the development of Asian regional architecture.

Given the success of APT and the "ASEAN+" model overall, Singapore envisaged in early 2010 an ASEAN+8 formula to accommodate the schedule of the new members in the event that their respective leaders were not able to attend the Summit. The ASEAN+ formula essentially allowed meetings to proceed without necessarily full attendance. If accepted, the new ASEAN+8 would have included all thirteen APT members as well as India, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States. The proposal was to convene a meeting every two years to coincide with the APEC Leader's Meeting when it was hosted in the region. This was to overcome the scheduling difficulties involved in bringing the American President to Asia and avoid any potential damage to the credibility of the EAS should the American leader not turn up. At the time, this was believed to be the most pragmatic solution that would not only allow ASEAN to engage the American and Russian heads of state but at the same time avoid diluting the focus of the EAS. For example, the EAS is currently working on a region-wide FTA through the CEPEA process. Expanding the membership to Russia and the United States was argued by some to be a possible complication for Asian-centric attempts at deepening regionalism such as CEPEA.50

The surprising inclusion of the United States could be the result of seizing the opportune turn of events. The Bush administration's treatment of ASEAN had led to years of perceived American disengagement with the regional body which subsequently allowed China to play a larger, leading role at East Asian regional platforms. The absence of the administration's Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the ARF meetings on two occasions in 2005 and 2007 had further intensified the sense of disengagement felt on the part of ASEAN. The Obama administration on the other hand appears to have reversed this policy. This was expressed most profoundly in the administration's decision to accede to ASEAN's TAC, which paved the way for American membership in the EAS, cemented American engagement with the region, and positioned ASEAN-United States relations for an upturn. In addition, the participation of the United States in the EAS serves as a welcome bal-

ance to the increasing domination and assertiveness of China not just within the EAS, but more broadly in regional affairs as well.

Signs of a more active U.S. participation in East Asian regionalism have certainly been welcomed in ASEAN capitals, especially if such participation comes hand in hand with an ongoing accommodative Chinese involvement in regional institutions. Indeed, an active U.S. participation combined with an accommodative Chinese involvement arguably constitutes the best possible scenario for ASEAN. That having been said, U.S. participation in the EAS raises the important question of how the Summit can complement existing cooperative arrangements and contribute to the emerging security architecture in East Asia. Specifically, one can argue that there is a risk that the EAS and APEC could end up competing with one another and cancel each other out to the benefit of the APT.

Successive U.S. administrations have approached APEC as the core institutional cooperative expression in the Asia-Pacific in tune with U.S. interests in the region. APEC was established in November 1989 as a regional economic dialogue. Its goal has been to encourage trade and investment liberalization. It is based on the concepts of “inclusive regionalism” and “open regionalism,” which means that the outcome of accords on liberalization is applied without discrimination within the regional grouping but also to non-APEC economies. This approach to regionalism particularly suits U.S. interests in East Asia. Among others, APEC includes the United States, Japan and China and, in contrast to the other arrangements, Taiwan. The first summit of the APEC heads of state and government was organized in Seattle in November 1993 after the scheduled session of finance ministers. The summit derived from a proposal made by US President Bill Clinton at the meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) in Tokyo in July 1993. Consequently, APEC has developed into an institutional structure that combines ministerial and heads of state and government meetings. By providing a framework for both multilateral and bilateral discussions, the arrangement has assumed security significance beyond its focus on economic issues. For instance, in response to the terror attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, the APEC summit in Shanghai in October that year produced a declaration on terrorism, even before the ARF or other arrangements had a chance to dis-
cuss the issue. At their next annual summit in Mexico two weeks after the Bali bombings of October 12, 2002, the APEC leaders adopted a series of anti-terror measures. APEC has also addressed other security concerns. For example, the East Timor crisis was discussed at the APEC summit in Auckland in 1999 while the United States, South Korea and Japan called on North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons development program on the sidelines of the Mexico summit meeting.

Hence, the EAS and APEC may share a similar dual agenda consisting of trade and finance liberalization on the one hand and traditional and non-traditional security issues on the other. In light of scheduling difficulties, it is questionable whether the American president will find the time to attend two summit meetings in Asia every year, especially if their focus is remarkably similar. This is precisely the reason why the ASEAN+8 initiative sought to pre-empt a possibly embarrassing situation where the American president would not attend the EAS every year by making it coincide with the APEC Leader's Meeting when it was hosted in the region. While the EAS and APEC risk cancelling each other out, one should note the rapid institutionalization of the APT since its formation in 1997. The first grouping linking all of the Northeast and Southeast Asian countries, with the exception of Taiwan, now consists of annual summits and fifty-five other bodies established (fourteen ministerial and nineteen senior official groups, two meetings of Director-Generals, eighteen technical level meetings, and two Track Two meetings). Therefore, to remain relevant, an EAS that includes the United States should not be regarded as a replacement for APEC, the ARF or the APT. On the contrary, the summit will need to complement existing cooperative arrangements and contribute to the emerging security architecture defined by the trends and driving forces discussed in the previous chapter.

Indeed, a major concern expressed by observers is the danger that the EAS could become indistinguishable from the ARF or APEC because of the complexion of the various memberships, which overlap. Some have lamented how debates over the role of the United States betrayed the lack of maturity of East Asian re-

gionalism, claiming that as long as the cold war politics of power balancing continues to maintain its hold on ASEAN states, any formation of a truly East Asian regional community with ASEAN involved will be difficult to materialize because of the perennial fear of falling under excessive Chinese or American dominance. Moreover, the expansion would seem to further dilute the political meaning of what “East Asia” actually is – something that the Summit was trying and did seem successful in concretizing at some point. The Chinese government has expressed disdain on several occasions at the reluctance of ASEAN to build a more definitive “East Asian” multilateral forum by adopting an inclusive approach and allowing pacific nations and other extra-regional great powers to be involved in the region. However, China has refrained from demonstrating its displeasure with the broadening membership of the EAS. In part, Chinese restraint can be attributed to the reluctance to appear overbearing and offend ASEAN members who desire American involvement. In addition to that, China is careful to avoid confirming ASEAN fears of China’s hegemonic intentions. This would have been counterproductive to the “peaceful rise” campaign that the Chinese government has been working on.

The EAS: What is it for?

There is arguably a coherence that can be read in the developments of the EAS. When one compares the relative infancy of the EAS to the APT, the former pales in comparison to the more matured APT platform which has not been streamlined into the Summit. Instead, it continues to meet and function alongside the Summit, committed to the FTAs and trading agreements that have been planned. Emmerson writes that the profile and activities of the EAS cannot compare to the cooperation and blueprints of development that the APT has already established within its more defined membership. From this point of view, the expansion of the EAS should not be simply read as a step backwards for East Asian regionalism. The potential of the EAS to further advance regionalism was given greater currency by Soesastro, who argued that before the creation of the EAS, none of the existing institutions had the right mix of members to fulfill the basic functions that the regional architecture would need to address: to provide a collective

54. See Christopher Dent, *East Asian Regionalism* (London: Routledge, 2008); Nair, “Regionalism in the Asia Pacific.”
forum for regional leaders and relevant partners to address the critical regional and global issues that affect the region, to facilitate the establishment of an environment, to strengthen and deal effectively with economic integration, and to address political and security issues as well.56

After all, while the initial idea was to streamline the various “ASEAN+” meetings into the EAS, the fact remains that none of the pre-existing meeting platforms were done away with. This appeared baffling – as if Asia did not have enough groupings, another was going to be added to the fray with no effort to reshape or streamline the regional architecture – and its was criticized as an “oddity,” neither a substitute for the APT nor a distinctively separate mechanism in its own right.57 The EAS by nomenclature lays claim to the geographical boundary called “East Asia” whereas the ASEAN+ framework is technically by definition a mere cooperative relationship established with a foreign partner outside of the Southeast Asian boundary. By mere reasoning, the EAS would have been the most suitable to lead the way for the development of an East Asian Community. Yet, a review of the Kuala Lumpur declaration in 2005 would indicate that the EAS was not meant as the pinnacle institution to drive community building. Instead, it was pitched as one of the means to building community. The rest of the existing frameworks were to work in tandem together with the EAS in strengthening Asian regionalism. It seems that a large number of the critics have been blindsided by the whole “East Asian Community” project and have imposed unwarranted expectations of the EAS.

Instead, as the EAS has taken shape over the years, it should be viewed more as a new grouping of eighteen members as opposed to an “ASEAN+3+3” framework. Dialogue partners such as India and Australia for example, have had scant opportunity to meet with the APT members or with each other on such a platform to deal with regional challenges or foster cooperation. Russia has been an observer at the Summit and the new addition of the United States in 2011 will bring all the major players who have deep interest (and stakes, it should be added) in the affairs of Asia at the same table. Hence, despite the problems with geographical definitions, in hindsight, it was fortuitous that the APT was not dissolved or subsumed

under the Summit. No one could have predicted the increased enthusiasm from greater powers such as Russia and the United States to be at the regional table, particularly given their lukewarm reactions in the earlier stages of the evolution of the EAS. Likewise, it would also seem foolish to reject their interest for the sake of preserving the “Asian-ness” of the Summit. The malleability of the EAS, paradoxically a consequence of its relative infancy, has allowed ASEAN to accommodate the interests of both great powers.

More inclusive than the APT and less expansive than the existing trans-Pacific platforms, the EAS functions as a suitable go-between that fits coherently in ASEAN’s aims for East Asian regionalism. Furthermore, the American and Russian agreement to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, which is the essential demonstration of commitment in ASEAN terms made the expansion of the EAS all the more appealing as opposed to creating a new “ASEAN+” configuration that would have been a more informal platform (not to mention the questionable utility of participation as a “+” member for the United States). By expanding the EAS, the Summit begins to take an inclusive, trans-pacific nature. After all, the concerns since the beginning against Dr. Mahathir’s proposal for an East Asian Caucus have been to avoid building an exclusionary, inward-looking regional organization.

The fact of the matter is that the dynamism of Asia will require a trans-pacific strategy to mediate. At the same time of course, as East Asian regionalism continues to develop, building a regional architecture that will aid the formation of an East Asian Community – a major objective of the EAS – has been featured prominently in the agenda of ASEAN. This is evident from the creation of the APT process to the evolution of the EAS as a proposed means of formalizing the APT configuration. While the expansion of the EAS would seem counter-intuitive to the development of East Asian regionalism, it should be noted that the building of any regional community does not come from merely establishing a summit. Particularly for the East Asian region as it lies at the crossroads of economic transactions and great power relations, building an exclusive multilateral platform is a harder, more challenging task. Even then, it remains to be seen how the EAS can aid community building. One should not forget that it is a compact, ASEAN-centric grouping that is “avowedly open, inclusive, transparent, and
outward-looking.” It is also new enough to be flexible and molded to suit today’s changing needs as evidenced by the expansion to include the United States and Russia. The EAS thus, can be seen as being further supported by the existing APT platform that although lacking in the proper nomenclature, is still the quintessential regional cooperative that functions reasonably well and is exclusively a Northeast and Southeast Asian grouping. When viewing how the EAS and APT can potentially work in a complementary tandem, building an East Asian community may not be as far away as detractors might think.

IV. THE EAS AND ONGOING DEBATES ON EAST ASIAN REGIONALISM

The politics surrounding the creation of the EAS speaks to several ongoing debates over the nature and model of East Asian regionalism. While this monograph does not intend to resolve any of these debates, a rehearsal of the key points of contention would be useful as it allows us to locate the EAS in broader trends of East Asian regionalism, and to set the context for its future evolution and development. To these ends, three debates are of particular salience.

ASEAN Centrality: Is it Sustainable?

Regardless of heated debate among academics, the centrality of ASEAN in Asia’s institutional architecture has hitherto never been seriously questioned. This is no longer the case, however. Officially, ASEAN remains in the “driving seat” of several existing regional arrangements which the regional association helped found, notably, the ARF, APT, and the EAS. In May 2010, the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus Eight (ADMM+8) defense track, whose membership is comprised of the ten ASEAN countries, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the United States was established, adding yet another “ASEAN+” arrangement in the burgeoning ASEAN-based institutional complex. According to an analyst, the inaugural ADMM+8 meeting constitutes “a historic meeting that will establish the basic modalities for a new regional security architecture designed to build confidence, practical cooperation among defense leaders and militaries,

and promote peace and prosperity in the dynamic Asia Pacific region." In the view of Ron Huisken, a long-time observer of the region, the ADMM+8, likely to take shape as "one of the most substantial pieces of Asia’s multilateral security architecture," makes it "an acronym to watch."  

Yet, as recent institutional developments at both the global and regional levels suggest, – in particular, arrangements such as the G20 and the China-Japan-Korea Trilateral Summit – there is considerably less inhibition these days among non-ASEAN states to undertake, apart from ASEAN, diplomatic and economic initiatives with potentially significant ramifications for regional architecture and cooperation in Asia.

Proposals on Asia’s institutional architecture have been floated from time to time. Where the recent spate of proposals appears to differ fundamentally from their predecessors is their view of the place and role of ASEAN in Asian regionalism. At least three have stemmed from heads of government.

First, in May 2008, Kevin Rudd, the former prime minister and current foreign minister of Australia, kicked off the process with his idea of an “Asia-Pacific community.” For the most part nebulous, Rudd’s vision consisted in an overarching institutional architecture, an umbrella organization that would serve as a “one-stop shop” for all things Asia, as it were. Furthermore, the community was to be based on a concert of regional great and middle powers – including Indonesia – with no visible role for ASEAN.  

Other than the expected chorus of protests from ASEAN leaders, the Rudd proposal evoked ambivalent reactions from China and the United States. For example, China’s Assistant Foreign Minister, HU Zhengyue, announced that the conditions were not “ripe” for the Rudd’s envisioned mechanism to be placed on the regional agenda just yet. And while Kurt Campbell, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for

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Asia and the Pacific, did not – as misreported by an Australian daily\textsuperscript{63} – oppose Rudd’s vision, neither did he offer the outright endorsement Canberra had likely hoped for.

Second, in March 2009, President LEE Myung-bak of South Korea presented his “New Asia Initiative,” which also envisaged key responsibilities for regional powers in Asian regionalism and a presumably global role for his own country.\textsuperscript{64} Third, not to be outdone, former Japanese premier Yukio Hatoyama, during a visit to Beijing in September 2009, called for a European Union-like community for East Asia, one centered on a Sino-Japanese core that presupposed a potential reconciliation and condominium between the two Asian powers, not unlike European regionalism’s reliance on the Franco-German base.\textsuperscript{65} Principally focused on Northeast Asia rather than ASEAN, the Hatoyama vision included the United States but not Australia. Much like the Australian proposal, the Japanese proposal received a cool response from Beijing and ASEAN.\textsuperscript{66}

There is a fourth proposal, one considerably more substantial than the preceding three. A report drafted by a PECC (Pacific Economic Cooperation Council) regional task force on regional institutional architecture called for the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Summit comprising the nineteen APEC participant states and India for high-level discussions on key issues. The report also urged the creation of an informal “G10,” a caucus consisting of the Asia-Pacific members of the G20, which could ostensibly voice the collective concerns of all Asia-Pacific countries.\textsuperscript{67} Noting that both the ARF and APT have suffered from their ‘southeast Asia-centric leadership,” the report conceded that ASEAN’s position in the “driving seat” of Asian regionalism is by default alone, given that it is the only option politically acceptable to all regional stakehold-

\textsuperscript{63} Brad Norington, “Barack Obama’s man Kurt Campbell junk’s Kevin Rudd’s Asia-Pacific plan,” \textit{The Australian}, June 12, 2009.


At the time of writing, the report remains unpublished, which implies possible disagreements could have arisen among PECC member countries about the report’s conclusions.

Without exception, the four visions discussed above signal a growing disenchantment, within and without the region, over East Asia’s regional architecture - its extant structures, conventions, modalities, and leadership. These visions share at least four commonalities.

First, in a reflection of academic debates alluded to earlier, they share an evident concern for the lack of overarching coherence in East Asia’s regional architecture. This concern is by no means new, not least for those who worry that Asia’s cluttered institutional landscape - its “variable geometry,” so-called - reflects the absence of any broad strategic vision and rationale among the architects of East Asia’s regionalism. Critics readily insist that the fault lies with ASEAN, which, so the conventional wisdom goes, went on an institution-building spree that privileged form over function and content. The consequence, as such, was a messy, incrementally enhanced, and heavily compartmentalized architecture comprising institutions formed on an ad hoc basis to meet quite specific aims - APEC for trade liberalization, the ARF for confidence-building, the APT for economic and financial cooperation. Yet non-ASEAN states must bear a measure of responsibility as well. For example, little is made today of China’s initial enthusiasm for the EAS in the light of its current coolness towards the Summit.

Second, while they accept that Asia’s existing regional organizations - most of them, at least - are here to stay, they also call for practical reform of those arrangements in line with the concern for overall architectural coherence. Proposed reforms include, inter alia, clarifying and streamlining institutional roles and responsibilities. Yet here too there is a fundamental disagreement. Hinted at in

68. Ibid., p. 16.
71. This concern also recalls the longstanding debate over the relevance and efficacy of existing institutions, whether their respective mandates and agendas are congruent or competitive, and so forth. See, Tan, “Introduction,” in Tan, Regionalism in Asia, Vol. III: Regional Order and Architecture in Asia, pp. 2-4.
the Hatoyama proposal but most forcefully asserted in the Rudd and PECC task force proposals is the perceived need for a major architectural alteration to overcome the compartmentalization of existing regional arrangements. This is usually expressed in terms of an overarching structure at the heads of government level – be it Rudd’s Asia-Pacific community or the PECC task force’s Asia-Pacific Summit idea – armed with a comprehensive, region-wide agenda. On the other hand, others insist that compartmentalization in itself is not a problem, but concede that existing institutions have suffered from rapid enlargements in membership and agenda and as such have not been as effective as initially hoped. They thereby argue for reclaiming the APEC mandate as an economic forum focused primarily on trade liberalization and investment – and, by implication, keeping security issues within the ARF – and strengthening those institutions as problem-solving or “action-oriented” mechanisms rather than just talk-shops. Significantly, it is the leaders of ASEAN countries, as much as anyone else, who are making such observations today.

Third, they assume that no regional architecture is possible without first establishing regional order. Crucially, the proposals share the view that order can only be underwritten by a concert or coalition of regional great and middle powers, although they differ slightly on which power is to be included. Japan’s proposal on the East Asia Community stood out for its explicit acknowledgement for Sino-Japanese rapprochement and collaboration as the anchor for the regional union, not unlike the Franco-German anchor for Europe. But whether the Asian powers in question are ready to form their own version of the Élysée Treaty, which effectively sealed reconciliation between the two European powerhouses and provided the framework for bilateral cooperation, is unlikely, so long as Japan resists issuing a comprehensive apology and related restitutions demanded by its Asian neighbors. As two analysts have noted elsewhere, “the future of the region depends on the rise of China and the revitalization of Japan; one cannot happen without the other. In other words, the future now depends on China and

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Japan thinking together.” Understandably, the respective progenitors of the four architectural visions see key roles and responsibilities for their own countries, whether in those power coalitions or as the (in their view) logical representative and mouthpiece for Asian or Asia-Pacific interests to the wider world.

Fourth and most crucially for our purposes, they relax the extant assumption of ASEAN centrality in regionalism in East Asia. Importantly, none dispute the Association’s significant contribution to Asia’s regional architecture. Indeed, ASEAN’s success laid in its ability, as a grouping of mostly small (other than perhaps Indonesia) and weak states, to institutionalize and regularize security relations among northeast, southeast and south Asia and the world’s great powers – China, Japan, Russia, the United States – beginning with the ARF in 1994. But even as ASEAN’s subsequent struggles with internal disunity and impotence raised doubts about its leadership of Asian regionalism and relevance to regional security, the consensus on ASEAN’s centrality held, for the most part, among its regional partners. While this obviously did not stop other regional states from starting their own multilateral initiatives, the courtesy of consulting with ASEAN was more or less observed. Of late, however, there have been worrying signs that the centrality consensus can no longer be taken for granted, such as in the case of recent key decisions taken by the “+3” countries, China, Japan and Korea, at the Trilateral Summit. And if the proposals considered above are any indication, the willingness to rethink a long-held nonnegotiable – ASEAN as the core of Asia’s institutional architecture and regional cooperation – has grown considerably.

ASEAN is clearly concerned about such doubts regarding its role in and relevance to the regional architecture. In the Association’s report on its forty-third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Hanoi in July 2010, much was made about ASEAN’s dialogue partner countries reaffirming “their unequivocal support for ASEAN Centrality,” as well as their declared hope that “ASEAN would continue to play a central role in the emerging regional architecture.” That it was necessary for such public expressions of support on behalf of ASEAN only serves to highlight the likely angst felt by the Association at the incessant stream of questions over its ability to “drive” Asian regionalism. At the same time, it is unlikely that the

criticism of ASEAN centrality will abate any time soon, so long as the state of Asia’s regional architecture remains as it is.

It should be noted too, that debates over ASEAN centrality are not only taking place outside of the Association. While all ASEAN states undoubtedly continue to press for ASEAN centrality, within the Association there have been rumblings of discontent as a result of differences between those who see ASEAN centrality as a means to the end of greater regional stability and integration on the one hand, and others who appear increasingly interested in ASEAN centrality as an end in itself on the other, and in so doing could frustrate the kind of malleability that is proving critical in the building of regional architecture on an immensely fluid geo-strategic terrain.

Inclusive versus Exclusive Regionalism

Another continuing problem for regionalism in East Asia has been the issue of whether Asia’s institutions ought to be region-centric. This concern goes as far back as former Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad’s proposal for the East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG), later changed to the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), which, as noted earlier, some have regarded as the precursors to both the APT and EAS.76 Memorably, the former Malaysian leader sought to keep Australia and the United States out of Asian regionalism.77 On its part, China has sought indirectly to limit the role and influence of the United States in regionalism.77 From a reluctant participant in the ARF, which it initially perceived as a tool for a Washington-led encirclement, China today has evolved into a clever connoisseur of multilateralism in the service of its own interests. The APT and ASEAN-China bilateral ties are good illustrations of Beijing’s growing influence in Asia as facilitated by regionalism.

At the same time, Beijing’s initial enthusiasm for the EAS fizzled when it became clear that others wanted the Summit broadened to include Australia, India, and New Zealand presumably to widen the area of economic integration, but also to countervail


against perceived Chinese dominance of the APT. Subsequent talk of possible interest on the part of the United States in joining the EAS, especially following Washington's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in July 2009, likely cooled Beijing's commitment to the EAS even further. In this respect, while China has not openly sought to exclude United States' participation in East Asian regionalism, it continues to treat very seriously what David Shambaugh calls the "balance of influence" in Asia, and has worked assiduously to enhance its image and influence over Asian countries relative to that of America. For example, Beijing's hosting of the first ever summit of the Mekong River Basin countries (including Myanmar) in April 2010 has been seen by some as a public diplomacy effort to balance out the goodwill earned by Washington from its accession to the TAC.

On the other hand, a key feature of Asia's institutional landscape is its open and inclusive character. As Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore remarked in his keynote address at the 2006 edition of the Shangri-La Dialogue concerning the regional institutional architecture, "the most robust and stable configuration for regional cooperation is an open and inclusive one." Analysts have also taken note of both the economic and security versions of "open regionalism" that ostensibly define Asia's brand of regionalism. It bears reminding that ASEAN's early years following Confrontation (Indonesia's undeclared war in opposition to the


82. On open economic regionalism, see Garnaut, Open Regionalism and Trade Liberalization: An Asia-Pacific Contribution to the World Trade System. On open security regionalism, see Acharya, "Ideas, Identity, and Institution building: From the ‘ASEAN Way’ to the ‘Asia-Pacific Way’."
formation of the Federation of Malaysia, lasting from 1963 to 1966) and during the Vietnam War were marked by concern over potential interference in Southeast Asia by extra-regional powers. The concern found rhetorical expression in the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) idea in the 1970s, but was never realized. Indeed, the regional aspiration for neutrality did not prevent ASEAN states from remaining defense allies of the United States (Philippines and Thailand) and as members of the Five Power Defense Arrangement (Malaysia and Singapore). But more than these, the developments that perhaps best embody ASEAN’s proactive engagement of external interactions is its “ASEAN+1” dialogue partner and Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) structures, which laid the groundwork for wider regional arrangements such as APEC and the ARF. If anything, the rocky road from ZOPFAN to the ARF highlights the gradual acceptance by the ASEAN states, particularly Indonesia, of the need to proactively engage the big powers rather than eschew them.

Open regionalism suggests that regionalism in East Asia is by no means a purely indigenous and hermetically contained enterprise. It also means that different models of regionalism could be accommodated – uneasily at times though – within open regionalism’s flexible parameters. Regional ambivalence has permitted traditionally “non-Asian” states to participate in various “Asian” regionalisms. As Julia Gibson has noted, “The changing shape of East Asian institutions and debates over the very meaning of the region provide ample space for their legitimate inclusion.”

The seemingly offhand way with which ASEAN sometimes treats questions regarding institutional architecture and membership composition could be attributed to the lack of a collective ASEAN position and policy on these issues. But at the same time, it also suggests that ASEAN’s ultimate concern is in ensuring its centrality in those institutions: “The core concern of the ten Southeast Asian members of ASEAN is not so much the scope of membership of regional institutions as in ensuring the centrality of Southeast Asia’s position

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within them. The approaches of individual Southeast Asian countries differ but they all want to secure a role for ASEAN in any regional architecture.\textsuperscript{85} At the very least, Asian regionalism has not been confined to geography for political as well as functional reasons. The relative inconsequentiality of geography in some regional arrangements only underscores the issue-specific or functionalist rationale that underpins them.\textsuperscript{86}

**Process versus Outcomes**

The foregoing discussion takes us to another important consideration alluded to earlier: so far as ASEAN is concerned, is its "default centrality" in Asian regionalism a means to an end, or purely an end in itself? This question is at the heart of the debate over whether East Asian regionalism is oriented towards process or results. In the immediate post-Cold War period, with its standing as primus inter pares (first among equals) in the Asia-Pacific more or less assured, ASEAN was celebrated as regional organization par excellence owing to a most unusual development in the annals of international relations: a Third World regional organization defining the terms of regional security in a region of acute interest for big powers.\textsuperscript{87} With its leading role in the creation of the ARF, a multilateral security forum servicing the entire Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN became not only the hub of a regional initiative involving the world's major powers (China, Japan, Russia, and the United States), but it in effect shaped the form and content of Asian regionalism.

As a result, much has been made of the ASEAN Way, the model of regional security to which ASEAN bestowed the ARF. With confidence-building very much at the core of the ARF's activities, it was argued that the ASEAN Way — which emphasizes consultation, flexible consensus, informality, institutional minimalism, cooperative security, and noninterference — so crucial to ASEAN's


own success story, was the appropriate model for Asia-Pacific security cooperation if not community building. And while newer regional institutions such as the APT and EAS do not claim (not publicly at least) the ASEAN Way as their diplomatic model, their status as ASEAN-centric arrangements effectively ensures that ASEAN’s way of doing business – no different really than how the world of sovereign states conducts its affairs, according to a former secretary-general of ASEAN – is equally the modus operandi of regionalism in Asia in general. Even then, analysts generally supportive of the ASEAN Way have also argued for the need for the model to evolve to satisfy the demands of an increasingly transnational Asia, where the logics of state sovereignty and noninterference are no longer universally applicable.

Others argue that neither the ASEAN Way nor ASEAN centrality deserve the valorizations accorded them by ASEAN’s backers. Critics contend that no matter the extent of regional aspiration expressed in the seminal documents and evolutionary plans of action common in Asian regionalisms, concrete institutional progress is not what those regionalisms are designed to achieve because ASEAN-led regional initiatives are all about maintaining ASEAN’s pride of place and little else – a conflation of means and end. Rather, the ASEAN Way is seen by its detractors as a key reason behind the yawning gap between upbeat institutional visions and harsh regional realities. Hence the contention that East Asian regionalism is all process, since – so the reasoning goes – few to no concrete results can come about, so long as the tacit aim of the ASEAN Way is essentially to preserve not revise the regional status

89. Against the notion that sovereignty, non-interference and the like are specific to the ASEAN Way, Rodolfo Severino writes, “It must be noted at the outset that the so-called “ASEAN Way” is actually the way of the world, the world being, like ASEAN, made up of sovereign states that are not subject to any extra-national authority.” Rodolfo Severino, “Regional Institutions in Southeast Asia: The First Movers and Their Challenges,” Background Paper 24, Asian Development Bank (ADB) Study Finalization Workshop on Institutions for Regionalism in Asia and the Pacific, Shanghai, December 2–3, 2009.
quo. Or, as the late Michael Leifer once put it, ASEAN – and, by extension, its complex of region-wide institutions – is all about conservation, not innovation.\textsuperscript{92}

A related criticism to the “East Asian regionalism is all process” claim is that institutional efficacy in the service of regional cooperation and integration ends up being sacrificed. There are five limitations that result in regionalism in East Asia to be characterized by institutional minimalism. First, the region’s institutions operate under few explicit procedural rules, delegate few tasks to standing secretariats – indeed, most institutions have no secretariats; the ASEAN Secretariat provides administrative support for the ARF, APT, and EAS, not to mention its parent organization, ASEAN – and specify few obligations for their members. Second, despite a growing web of overlapping institutions, regionalism in Asia is still predominantly intergovernmental in nature rather than supranational where sovereignties are pooled, or where authority is delegated to nongovernmental bodies. Third, as the early confusion over whether the APT or EAS is the appropriate regional vehicle for building the East Asian Community clearly showed, Asia’s overlapping institutions are potentially competitive with rather than complementary to one another.\textsuperscript{93} Fourth, reliance on a consensus-based decision making system – flexible rather than unanimous – and emphasis on preserving the “comfort level” of all participants, when combined especially with sizeable memberships, complicate attempts to reach agreements on effective cooperation.\textsuperscript{94} In the same vein, Richard Woolcott, the Australian special envoy tasked to promote Rudd’s Asia-Pacific community vision, has claimed regarding the ARF: “many believe it is too large and has made insufficient progress since its inception.”\textsuperscript{95} Finally, Asia’s institutions are primarily confidence-building exercises that aim at most to create an environment conducive to incremental integration.

Given these “limitations,” critics argue that the region’s arrangements are not designed for efficiency, concrete action, and

\textsuperscript{92} Michael Leifer, \textit{ASEAN’s Search for Regional Order} (Singapore: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore, 1987), p. 21.

\textsuperscript{93} Tan, \textit{Do Institutions Matter}?

\textsuperscript{94} According to Mansur Olson’s seminal work on group size and collective action, the larger the group \textit{ceteris paribus} the less likely its members will choose to cooperate for some joint gain. Mansur Olson, \textit{The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

\textsuperscript{95} Richard Woolcott, “Towards an Asia Pacific Community,” \textit{The Asialink Essays}, No. 9 (November 2009), p. 3.
progress commensurate with their self-professed ambitions. For the most part, they are not persuaded by ASEAN's establishment of a charter in November 2007, concerned that this apparent shift to a rules-based regionalism would only entrench Southeast Asia's intergovernmental character further as a consequence of codifying ASEAN's longstanding sovereignty and non-interference norms. As noted earlier, the chorus of appeals to streamline the extant regional institutional architecture stems from the concern for more effective institutions. “The Asia Pacific region has too many organizations, yet they still cannot do all the things we require of them,” as a prominent analyst has noted. “Instead of focusing on what we’ve got, we should look at what we need.” More recently, some have sought to reconcile the tension between process and outcome. Mostly unapologetic about regionalism in Asia, they note that a process-based regionalism constitutes a central feature of regional security management by a grouping of small states with particular security calculations and domestic power configurations.

V. CONCLUSION: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE EAS?

What might we expect of the EAS, particularly as it is still in its infancy? The EAS should at best be regarded as another confidence-building exercise, at least in the short to medium term, especially because of its possible expansion to include the United States and Russia. Critics see little institutional change deriving from the EAS due to its inability to meet regularly and failure to agree on a road map and a set of collaborative issues. They may add that the only point of convergence among its sixteen participants – eighteen, once the Americans and Russians are formally included – might


well be their willingness to let ASEAN assume the leadership of this latest institutional form. It can be argued, however, that the relevance of the EAS to Asia's stability will depend on two crucial factors.

First, the EAS should neither be regarded as a replacement for the ARF or the APT nor as an embryonic structure eventually constituting an alternative security architecture for East Asia. To be sure, there remains a low possibility that the EAS could inadvertently sideline the ARF, if only because the EAS is a leader-driven forum whereas the ARF is only a foreign ministers' conclave. But given that ASEAN serves as the hub for both arrangements, it is unlikely the Association would permit the ARF to lapse into irrelevance (although some might argue that has already taken place). On the contrary, the EAS ought to complement existing cooperative arrangements and contribute to the emerging security architecture defined by the trends and driving forces discussed above. However, much would be required not just of ASEAN but all regional participants to ensure that the agendas, interests and roles of the EAS and its institutional counterparts in East Asia are neither at odds nor duplicate one another's.

Second, the EAS should be viewed not only as a confidence-building enterprise—a central feature of all forms of Asia-Pacific institutionalism—but also as a future venue for substantive cooperation. In other words, the EAS will need to graduate from a nascent institution for addressing broad concerns and generalized confidence-building, to a regional mechanism armed with a thematic and problem-oriented agenda. This is a major challenge for not only the EAS, but all East Asian regionalisms. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the ARF is seeking to move beyond dialogue to practical security cooperation in the area of transnational and/or nontraditional security concerns. Likewise, the latest regionalism to be added to the mix, the ADMM+8, is aimed at facilitating and enhancing regional defense cooperation between and among the militaries of its member countries in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts, maritime security, and the like. While these illustrations hint at an emerging regional consensus on the need to move beyond talking and confidence-building, it remains to be seen whether these institutions will realize these new expectations, or (as

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their critics would insist) go the way of regionalism at large in emphasizing process over results. Similar questions confront the EAS, particularly where the medium to long term is concerned.

That being said, it is imperative, at this early stage of the game, that members of the EAS establish a level of comfort amongst themselves. While the ASEAN countries have had four decades of collective experience in regional reconciliation, such opportunities have not been extended to the Northeast Asian members of the EAS, whose relations with each other have largely been confined to bilateral ties and the Six Party Talks. Likewise, countries such as Australia, India and New Zealand also require time to establish confidence with their counterparts from East Asia. Needless to say, institutions with no other aim in sight other than confidence-building do not go far. It is therefore imperative that the EAS move forward in due course to substantive collaboration on the complex issues and challenges that affect the region. The EAS will therefore at some stage have to redefine itself in functional and issue-specific terms. Issues of interest and great urgency would include terrorism, maritime security, energy challenges and climate change, as well as health security. Importantly, such initiatives should be undertaken in greater complementation with the ARF in an effort toward more effective regional security cooperation.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACD  Asian Cooperation Dialogue
ADMM+8 ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus Eight
AEC  ASEAN Economic Community
AFC  1997/1998 Asian Financial Crisis
AMF  Asian Monetary Fund
AMM  ASEAN Ministerial Meeting
APEC Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APSC ASEAN Political-Security Community
APT  ASEAN Plus Three
ARF  ASEAN Regional Forum
ASA  Association of Southeast Asia
ASC  ASEAN Security Community
ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM Asia-Europe Meeting
CAP  Collective Action Plan
CBM  Confidence-building measure
CEPEA Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia
CMI  Chiang Mai Initiative
CMIM Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization
EAS  East Asia Summit
EAEC East Asian Economic Caucus
EAEG East Asian Economic Grouping
EAVG East Asian Vision Group
ERIA Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia
EU  European Union
FTA  Free Trade Agreement
G7  Group of Seven
G20  Group of Twenty
GATT General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IAP  Individual Action Plan
IMF  International Monetary Fund
NAFTA North American Free Trade Area
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PECC Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
PMC Post-Ministerial Conference
SEATO Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
TAC  Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
TSD  Trilateral Security Dialogue
ZOPFAN Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality