
Let's forget about NATO in Southeast Asia: A practical analysis of the ASEAN Way of security cooperation

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ABSTRACT

Moving from material-based to ideational and practice-based perspectives, this paper suggests a new angle in the research on regional integration and security multilateralism in East Asia. It addresses tensions within the constructivist approach that tend to leave the theory of practice, culture and micro process of socialization under-explained. I argue that, 25 years after the Cold War, Southeast Asia is still lacking common interests, trust, and more importantly a shared identity: the basic foundations for a collective security framework. This fact renders the establishment of a NATO-type security structure extremely unlikely. Alternatively, this constructivist view emphasizes the establishment of a uniquely security culture; one which informal discourse of problem-solving and consensus seeking. The paper's theoretical focus will be supplemented the case study of the components of the ASEAN Way and how they are practised in everyday politics. This research makes three wider contributions. First, it enriches the existing understanding of security cooperation and regional dynamics. Second, the paper contributes to the "practice turn" in constructivist International Relations (IR) to incorporate the international practice of everyday politics into analytical focus. Finally, it ties into the emerging debate about the role of culture in IR and whether scholars have misinterpreted East Asia through over-reliance on the Occidental lens and its implicit Eurocentrism.

KEY WORDS: ASEAN Way, Southeast Asia, Constructivism, practice, security culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) are both relics of the Cold War. Yet, in its aftermath, each region chose distinctly different ways to ensure their security. Western Europe opted for the persistence of NATO in which participant states formally commit support to a member state if it is attacked by another outside state. Southeast Asian countries, instead, terminated SEATO existence and have instead favoured the bilateral security pacts, most usually with the United States (US).

South East Asia, with a population of over 600 million people, is a diverse and distinct region that presents a number of opportunities for security cooperation and regional identity building. These regions are renowned for its dynamic and increasingly integrated economies; once considered to be among the "Asian miracles". If ASEAN were one economy, it would be seventh largest in the world with a combined gross domestic product of \$2.4 trillion in 2013. It could be fourth largest by 2050 if growth trends continue. However, there are two sides to Southeast Asia; the 'Economic' and the 'Security' respectively, which have become increasingly irreconcilable. The latter has been characterized by constant conflict and political disputes within the region. There

are imminent economic risks, political uncertainties and security challenges in Southeast Asia that will affect the ability to turn theory into practice of regional cooperation. More than ever, my thesis is the answer to the call for a more robust and compelling study of the security in Southeast Asia, especially surrounding the viability of the region adapting and dealing with the post-cold war challenges, not least from the regional membership and rising power of China.

The theoretical discussion, as reflected in this paper, is to better defend the case for constructivism as a “new normal” in the study of Southeast Asia’s regional relations. It is important to revisit constructivism within the debate with rationalism because firstly, one cannot distinguish oneself as a constructivist advocator without engaging with their primary antithesis interlocutors- the rationalists. Moreover, certain questions need to be revisited and approached with a fresh perspective. With the rise of China and the pivot to Asia of US, scholars of Southeast Asia believe that realism should be more applicable to Southeast Asia since it focuses on great power and strategic utility. However, Southeast Asian security should be what its people and societies have constructed it to be. Constructivism thus recognizes the role of ideational forces, such as culture, norms and identity, as opposed to offering a purely materialistic perspective. Moreover it holds that country-states are not the only actor/agency in Southeast Asia’s regional order; opening the space for discourse as a larger domain of IR theory.

The main theoretical contribution of this paper, however, is the emphasis on practice perspective of the constructivist approach in regional security cooperation. The crux is the manner in which the constructivism story of Southeast Asia is ‘constructed’, such that it becomes a unique narrative. The theory of practice proffers an account of collective practices, based on shared cultural norms and culture; thus making it particularly efficient to analyse communities and regional cooperation. Practice significantly compliments the constructivist approach through materializing norms and ideas, addressing its critics in being idealistic and premature in its optimism. Also, like constructivism, theory of practice take agency as emergent; being continually reproduced by practices, capturing both discourse/knowledge and the material world. The agency of local actors and their distinctive way of institution-building are highly significant, and should not be viewed as a mere adjunct to great power balancing.

I have therefore developed an empirical narration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) practice of security cooperation. The extant practices (which is based on the ASEAN Way) that are realized in the public realm of actions and interactions that those practices open up generate and transform regional model of security cooperation. It is achieved by stressing how micro-processes of socialization interweave with shared understanding and tacit knowledge. This area, indeed, have been under analysed in much of ASEAN literature and Southeast Asia security study in general.

In this paper I ask: why is the constructivist logic of practice – shaped and strengthened by shared cultural values and experience – the right theoretical framework to conceptualize Southeast Asian security architecture? How do regional institutions put into practice their unique way of institution building and security cooperation? In order to answer those questions, the paper is outlined as follows. The next section makes the case for utilizing constructivist approaches to the study of Southeast Asia multilateral security framework, by engaging with their primary antithesis-the rationalists. The third section provides the central theoretical framework, which is the emphasis on practice perspective of the constructivist approach in regional security

cooperation. The fourth part examines the case study of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its political culture of adapting and dealing with the post-cold war challenges, not least from the regional membership and rising power of China. In spite of lacking dynamism, the current practices of ASEAN are deeply rooted in the Association's modus operandi, the so-called ASEAN Way, representing the preference and political culture of Southeast Asian states. I then conclude that regional community would be stronger and more credible if a sense of regional identity and ASEAN Community is developed, fostering mutual understanding and raising regional awareness among people of in Southeast Asia.

2. Rationalist perspectives on the no Southeast Asian NATO puzzle:

The puzzle of no collective security arrangement in Southeast Asia is not new in academic literature on regionalism in Southeast Asia. Both realism and liberalism, the two long-standing theories of International Relations, provide comprehensive understanding to the issue. There are three main realist explanations of why there is no NATO-like organization in Southeast Asia. The first argument concerns power disparity contending that the differing amounts of power held by the US and its possible associates are vital in how the US shapes its military alliances, either bilaterally or multilaterally. As such, this argument sets out that the US prefers multilateral arrangements with more powerful European countries and subsequently bilateral agreements with less powerful nations in Southeast Asia (Weber 1992, Crone 1993, Duffield 2010).

Second, realism points to the role of threat in security regionalization, and argues that there is no Southeast Asian NATO because there was no equivalent threat in this region during the Cold War period in comparison to the Soviet threat in Europe. It then goes on to argue that NATO's post-Cold War persistence is in response to the emergence of new non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, humanitarian or natural disaster (McCalla 1996, Schweller 1997, Waltz 2000).

The third realist argument notes that there is a connection between power-distributed polarity with allying strategy and security cooperation. Again during Cold War Europe, the ideology-based bipolar system led by the US and the Soviet Union generated two blocks of multilateral security/defence alliances namely NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In Southeast Asia, however, a multipolar system with no clear ideology dominance but rather complex intra-state relations and historical animosities – often regarded as the "noodle bowl" model – led regional countries to prefer separate bilateral security agreements with the US over a multilateral framework amongst themselves (Christensen and Snyder 1990, He and Feng 2012).

It could be seen that these realist arguments all place the onus on the role of the US in shaping the balances of material power in Southeast Asia. In this context, realists link the fortunes of Southeast Asian security institutionalism to external power dynamics. In other words, Southeast Asian regional institutions, such as ASEAN, are regarded as the by-products of US military presence in the region (Tow 2012). I do not dismiss the relevance of power or realism in the international relations of East Asia. Yet I do not think great powers are all that determined Southeast Asia's security architecture, as assumed by realists.

The other rationalist school - liberalism - places more importance on the utility of international institutions to deal with conflicts and the opportunity to legitimize collective security in a multilateral forum (Nye 1971, Keohane 1984, Martin 1992). There are two liberal arguments regarding the lack of an East Asian NATO. Firstly, the strategic restraint argument proposes that a

leading state - the US - set up a series of institutions in Europe, not to dominate the entire region or retreat into isolation, but to "lock in" other powers and legitimize the US engagement in Europe. However, the US does not hold a similar goal in Southeast Asia and thus rationally favoured a succession of joint agreements in lieu of a multilateral approach in this region. This is because multilateralism is considered to limit US policy autonomy more than separate bilateral pacts with individual regional countries (Walander 2000, Ikenberry 2003, 2004).

The second liberal argument stems from the democratic peace theory. It explains NATO's post-Cold War relevance by the admission and democratization of the former communist countries. On the Southeast Asian side, patterns of formal democratization are limited. A multilateral security organization thus was not established to promote and enhance the liberal democratization in Southeast Asia like NATO currently does in Europe (Doyle 1997, Bell et al 1995, Dieter 2005).

These arguments suffer from the expected-utility bias, since they prioritize the benefits of bilateral pacts over a multilateral arrangement as a convenient tool for strategic restraint, as well as the preferential order of Europe over Southeast Asia on the US's security agenda. Due to its highly diverse cultural, social and political contexts, Southeast Asia nations advocate a pragmatic and flexible approach to regionalism. Culturally, regional countries hesitate at the concept of 'pooled sovereignty' with their neighbours, making it difficult to sell the notion of a joint framework or supranational institutions that relinquishes national sovereignty. Also, Southeast Asian nation states have only been decolonized in the latter half of 20th century. As a result, their priority is national development and the establishment of national identities. To intensify the difference, there are greater disparities in economic development, social structures, and political systems in Southeast Asia compared to those in Europe. Cooperation among regional governments is thus less intimate and political-focused. It is limited to economic issues and compared to Europe, Southeast Asian integration is likely to be less institution-intensive (Capannelli & Filippini 2009).

Another problematic side of liberalism is that by linking the democratization and security institutionalization, these line of argument seems to advocate Western liberal democracy as the highest form of human governance and universally desirable to sustain regional security and stability (Fukuyama 1992). In so doing it ignores the 'dark sides' of liberal democracy model since the link between the democratic nature of a state and a peaceful inclination, at least towards other liberal states, is tenuous (Maoz & Russett 1993, Owen 1994). It also fails to see there are alternative path rather than liberal democracy model that seems to work at least in terms of development (Zakaria 1997, Li 2013). According to liberals, European security cooperation experience provides a useful benchmark for Southeast Asia economic integration. Yet, Southeast Asia may have to "calibrate" the European model to suit its own historical context, socio-economic and political conditions.

It could be seen that rationalist theories, either realism or liberalism, can explain Southeast Asian security cooperation in their own terms. However, such accounts put too much weight on the static, power-centric and externalist perspectives; being coloured by America's belief that the security of Europe was key to American security and subsequently the desire to build institutions in Europe. Meanwhile such an imperative is absent in Southeast Asia case. They fail to recognize that, Southeast Asian security should be what its people and societies have constructed it to be.

3. The constructivist insights on the practice of security cooperation

Constructivism thus recognizes the role of ideational forces, such as culture, norms and identity, as opposed to offering a purely materialistic perspective. According to constructivist perspectives, multilateral organization requires a coherently collective identity to prosper, which is derived from history, culture, language and rather equivalent economic power. Constructivists explain the lack of a Southeast Asian NATO to the US's preference of multilateralism in Europe over Southeast Asia; largely due to its conceptions of Europe as the "self" and Southeast Asia as the "other" (Hemmer & Katzenstein 2002, Goh 2008). This, however, remains a US-centred and externalist explanation, which has not addressed fully the exogenous versus endogenous angle of actors' preference insecurity cooperation². Hemmer and Katzenstein correctly postulate actors' interest, their environment and strategies are potentially all constituted through the process of interacting with one another. However, they still put the emphasis on interaction with great powers rather than recognizing the ability of weaker actors in constructing their own preferences for security cooperation.

This is why Acharya argues that the region's extreme diversity, rather than America's extreme hegemony, has created the norms favouring independence and against external interference (2004, 2005). Unlike Europe, Southeast Asia is a mix of various cultures, comprising Malay, Chinese, Indian and various indigenous cultures³. The nationalism in these countries is also strong because they had been colonized for centuries by foreign powers⁴. Southeast Asian extreme diversity is hence caused by a fragmented and hierarchical order under the Sino-centric and Indo-centric spheres of influence. Furthermore, although residing in a same region, they are geographically isolated: many are

Rationalists pay little attention to the source of these actors' goals, and treated as exogenously determined— anarchic environment or structure as such.

Brunei Darussalam is a mixture of Malay sultanate, with prominent Chinese community and a substantial expatriate population, including Filipinos, Indonesians and Malaysian. Cambodia's largely Khmer society includes a significant number of Chinese, Vietnamese along the common border, and a substantial number of Chinese, some assimilated, others not. Indonesia is almost 90% Muslim – the largest proportion for a country in the world, albeit of different forms, and is tolerant of other religions. Malaysia and Singapore are each made up of a delicate mix of Malays, Chinese, and Indians and Bangladeshi. Myanmar is politically dominated by the Barmars, but Yangon has yet resolve division with the large ethnic groups such as the Shan peoples. The Philippines and Thailand are predominantly Christian and Theravada Buddhist, but both also have Chinese populations in various degrees of assimilation. In addition, Filipinos speak a number of different but related languages. Vietnam is relatively homogenous but with several minority groups including Chinese, Khmer and scattered tribes.

From the 1500s to the mid-1940s, colonialism was imposed over Southeast Asia. All regional countries except Thailand fell under Western colonialism. There were seven colonial powers in Southeast Asia: Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, the United States, and Japan.

remote islands (Nakamura 2009: 135). This extreme diversity in turn has hindered the advent of multilateral association which address the issue of security in post-cold war period. Although there is a long history of animosities and mistrust among regional nations, the region remains a relatively peaceful order (Alappaga 2003, Kang 2003). Twenty-five years after the end of the Cold War, Southeast Asia is still lacking and a common identity and common interest - the basic foundations for a collective security framework; a glue to connect the powers in the region. Their preference to be independent rather than bound by a supranational power is a deep sentiment among Southeast Asian people.

My constructivist analysis suggests a potential research angle of not only explaining why there is no Southeast NATO, but also the regional unique way of institution building. Moving beyond the general constructivist insight on identity and socialization, this paper pushes one step further by contributing to a more comprehensive study of the practice perspective of constructivism approach.

Conceptually, practice is iterated interaction and continuous activities through which knowledge is constituted and social life is organized, reproduced and transformed. Inspired by (or perhaps, returning to) post structural IR's attention to the work of social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, IR scholar Emmual Adler and Vincent Pouliot advocate a "practice turn" in IR. They suggest that there is much to be gained in IR by paying attention to what practitioners of international relations actually "do" well or badly, by focusing on the contextual "manifold practices", which "are reproduced, changed and reinforced by international action" (Adler & Pouliot, 2011: 1). Accordingly, practices are:

"socially meaningful *patterns* of action, which, in being *performed* more or less *competently*, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify *background knowledge* and *discourse* in and on the *material world*"

Neumann (2002) contributes to the call for a practice turn in IR by his studies of diplomacy as a social practice. 'Everyday practice' of diplomacy, accordingly, would be socially recognized manoeuvre rests with what diplomats do with constraints in and through practice. Developed further from this thought, Pouliot suggests that the constitutive practice of security communities is peace. Peace exists in and through practice when security officials' practical sense makes diplomacy the self-evident way to the solving of inter-state disputes (2008:283). There are two important implications of this line of argument. Firstly, both Neumann and Pouliot did not work on contemporary diplomatic practice of security community outside Europe, thus such practice should not be seen as "right" or "normal".

The application of regional institution as constitutive practice for security elites when faced with interstate disagreements shows its potential in enhancing complexity and inclusiveness in research on alternative security community. It is thus worthwhile to see the non-Western traditions—Southeast Asia and the ASEAN Ways in this case - having a profound influence on security culture and practice-based regional studies. The second implication, as noted by Weber (2013:85), is that "practice theory overlooks how practices [these theorists identify] constitute the state's [behaviour]". These scholars limits their analysis to the practices of elite practitioners (state actors such a diplomat). In this way, they miss out on the ways that more seemingly mundane, every day practices are an inescapable part of the making of world politics.

This paper stresses the "patterns of cooperative practices" of indigenous security institution, based on the micro-processes of socialization of shared cultural norms in regional security cooperation. The micro-processes of socialization, which constructivist approach tends to be left under-explained, are social interactions where political actors' identities and interests get constructed and reconfigured. Through this process of socialization, the "we-feeling" identity is developed instead of the dichotomy of "self" and "others", and:

"a social fabric is built not only among elites, but also the masses, installing in them a sense of community. Gradually, this process becomes a matter of mutual sympathy and loyalties; of 'we feeling', trust, and mutual considerations, of partial identification in terms of self-images and interests; of mutually successful predictions of behaviour [...] In short, a matter of a perpetual dynamic process of mutual attention, communication, perception of needs, and responsiveness in the process of decision making" (Adler & Barnett, 1998: 7).

The current scholarship on the region's socialization process solely focus on the act of mimicking, persuasion and social influence; and usually between Southeast countries towards great powers such as the US or China (Johnston 2003, Ba 2006). Practice is thus particularly efficient to analyse micro-process of socialization among communities and societies. They makes local discourse on security cooperation "authentic" since they are articulated and grounded in the realities of the region. It gives the premise to examine the practice of local institution, where interaction of regional agencies so-called norm entrepreneurs, are most concentrated.

Practice significantly compliments the constructivist approach since materializes norms and ideas, addressing critics of constructivism who view it as being idealistic and premature in its optimism. It is achieved by rejecting the dualism of agency-structure and material-ideal. Theory of practice is particularly efficient in analysing communities, societies, and cultures since it is obtained from knowledge of the attributes of participating agents but not individuals. Theory of practice takes agency as emergent from, and being continually reproduced by, practices, which capture both structure and self, and discourse/knowledge and the material world. Participating agents generally exhibit a variable degree of competence as they conduct these practices in a socially meaningful and recognizable way. Practice is thus ontologically situated at the intersection of structure and agency, having its own "being" due to contingency⁵.

Since international practice consists of a number of actions and processes that are regularly performed from time to time, it also transforms the conception of knowledge. Power is exerted at the level of inarticulate knowledge, resulting from the constitution of shared ideas and cultural norms, in which actors learn, disseminate, persuade, and socialize others into. Culture and norms are fundamental since these define legitimate actors are what they ought to do in world politics. Culturalization is the practical understanding of the political and security landscape, creating the normative foundation for regionalism and security cooperation

Practice also rejects deductive hypotheses⁶ and instead advocate situation being sui generis – of its own kind. The practice of norm regress, as defined by Ryder McKeown, is "the retrogression of seemingly 'internalized' norms" (2009: 6). To rectify this oversight, McKeown extends Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle argument⁷, which chart norm progress, by including a norm death series, which charts "norm regress". In his observation, constructivists have made great strides in showing how norms arises and spread, however,

5 Contingency theory is a class of behavioural theory that claims that there is the possibility of multiple outcomes in socio-historical processes. It is thus no best way to organize a corporation or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation.

⁶A deductive approach usually emphasize on causality, whilst for inductive approaches the aim is usually focused on exploring new phenomena or looking at previously researched phenomena from a different perspective.

⁷ The norm life circle include 3 stages: first, they emerge and are proselytized by 'norm entrepreneurs'; second, if the norms resonate with a large audience, they may 'cascade' and be adopted by more and more actors who are driven by a quest for conformity and legitimacy; last, towards the end of this cascade the norms may be internalized (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998). Meanwhile, the norm death series also consists 3 parts, only it begins where Finnemore and Sikkink model ends: norm internalization. First regressed norms are challenged by norm revisionists. Then they experience a reverse cascade and suffer a "domestic" crisis of legitimacy. If this crisis is not resolved, then norm regress reaches the final stage of norm death series: the expiration of norm (McKeow, 2009:10-2).

These scholarship suffer a "nice norm" bias, which has limited recognition that ideas can have negative and persevere effects in world politics. This emphasizes the adaptability of norms transfer in differing cultural context - only suitable norms and ideas survive when implementing from one model to the next. In other words, practical understanding is the source and carrier of meaning, language and normativity. Theory of practice is thus mindful of the pitfalls of auto-Orientalism - acknowledging non-Western culture without practical observation.

I have therefore developed a narrative theory of the ASEAN Way of practice in Southeast Asia. Accordingly, regional interaction and cooperation are constituted, not only by the cost-benefit analyses the leaders make, or the ideas and knowledge people carry subconsciously, or the discourse (language) they use to communicate. Rather, what states do versus others is determined by the practices they share, based on cultural values and experiences (the ASEAN Way). On the contrary to a pessimistic scenario of a slow death of ASEAN, one could also argue that its persistence is the proof for the practice of the confidence-building measures. The fact that regional members and external great power still go along with the ASEAN Way is the insurance that diplomacy and non-violent resolution are still the common sense in regional security cooperation among countries in Southeast Asia. This will be analyzed in the next section.

4. The practice of the ASEAN Way of security cooperation

Established in 1967, throughout the Cold War period security cooperation was a sensitive issue for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as the Association did not want to be branded as a new-version of SEATO⁸. Such conclusion was drawn from SEATO's past failing experience; as well as the military cooperation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union during the Cambodian crisis⁹ (Wanandi, 2000: 25-34).

By the time ASEAN was founded, the Southeast Asian region was deeply divided. Almost every country in the region was newly-established, still imperial colonies or had territorial

⁸ The Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) was the NATO-like anti-communist and pro-Western military organization that was founded in Asia-Pacific region in 1954. Members of SEATO included Thailand, the US, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand. Due to its ineffectiveness, poor performance and its irrelevance after the fall of South Vietnam, its members decided to dissolve it in 1977.

⁹ During the Cambodian crisis (1968-1991), ASEAN strongly opposed Vietnamese intervention at both regional and international forums. ASEAN's opposition was only suspended after the complete withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. As Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar were about to join ASEAN in the 1990s, one of the criteria for ASEAN's acceptance of new membership was their signing of the TAC.

Disputes with one or more of its neighbours¹⁰. Today, the Association is a respectable, ten-independent-country-organization that has managed to create numerous important regional structures for peace and stability such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Plus three, East Asian Summit (EAS), etc. With the Six Party Talks on the nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula ended due to North Korea belligerence and Russia reluctant to allow China a big foothold in Central Asia through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), ASEAN has drawn attention as the most promising venue left for regionalism. However, ASEAN is facing risk and uncertainty in economic, political and security terms.

a. Regional order and current challenges in Southeast Asia

Economically, Southeast Asian prospect have the potential to create an impact at a worldwide level. Emerging economies in Southeast Asia are suffering badly from the trifecta of slowing global trade; the slowdown in growth of China and the collapse in commodity prices¹¹. The silver lining is that Southeast Asia is not on the brink of any financial crisis such as 1997 financial crisis¹². Nevertheless, their tools to response to the flagging growth in the environment of substantial economic problem are quite limited since it requires substantial structural economic reform. Another hurdle is to fill in the gap in differences of economic development between a "richer" ASEAN (comprising ASEAN-6) and a rather "poorer" ASEAN (comprising Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, known as the CLMV countries)¹³.

Politically, ASEAN member countries have often been considered 'soft authoritarian' states or young democracies, many of which have voting rights but limited freedom for

¹⁰ In 1967, Malaysia had just separated Singapore from the Malaysia Federation. Indonesia had gone through a political and social upheaval after the aborted communist coup d'état that brought Suharto to power and overthrowing Sukarno. And Malaysia and the Philippines had territorial disputes over Sabah territories. During the second half of the 1960s, the Vietnam War constituted the biggest threat to regional peace and stability. The US had mobilized more than half a million troops, including forces from Thailand and the Philippines for the war. Meanwhile, both China and the Soviet Union were trying to gain foothold in the region by trying for North Vietnam's favour with increased economic, political and military assistance.

¹¹ China's economy is slowing largely by design and well-anticipated as an effort to implement the latest Third Plenum - the plenary session of the latest elected Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. After the event of the summer 2015 where China responded to the collapse of the

Shanghai Stock Exchange Composite Index (SHCOMP) with a change to its renminbi exchange rate mechanism, the governmental riposte has been problematic. Meanwhile Japanese economic is also in a worrying situation. In September 2015, Standard & Poor (S&P), the third major bond rating index, downgraded Japan's sovereignty debt, making the risk of invest in this country higher than that of China and South Korea.

¹²These economies have built quite a substantial form of currency reserve and their debt is largely denominated in local currency.

¹³The difference in development between these two groups was quite striking with 2013 GDP per capital standing at Singapore (\$US 55,182) and Cambodia (\$US 1007). Meanwhile, Thailand's GDP alone (\$US 5779) was still much greater than that of Laos (US\$ 1661) and Vietnam (\$US 1911) combined (World Bank, 2013).

individuals and the media. Several regional countries face complex domestic political dynamics that are hindering effective policy making and institution building. Others face political uncertainties because of upcoming elections and potential transitions in near future¹⁴. Even in those countries where leaders have a relatively degree of domestic political mandate, they will enter their own election cycle which may further constrain their ability to make the necessary structural economic reform.

On security issues, ASEAN is facing challenges in both traditional and non-traditional domains (Caballero-Anthony, 2010). For the former, the biggest regional issue remains the territorial dispute in the South China Sea (SCS)¹⁵. What is worrisome is the scope and pace of China's land reclamation¹⁶, and its militarization of a three-meter-military-runway for combat aircraft and radar system for controversial air and land surveillance. The fact that China has reclaimed so much land poses new questions on whether it undertake this move to improve its bargaining position in the strategic waterway. In other words, will it stop at some point in the near future and then proceed to negotiations with ASEAN member countries? Or more disturbing – is China shifting into a new dimension as part of its strategy to create a de facto effective sea control over the nine dash line¹⁷. Either any of those avenues does not offer comfort to observers as both hold the prospect of substantially destabilizing Southeast Asia.

In terms of non-traditional risks, the most prominent and topical are counter-terrorism and the return of radicalized member of Islamic State (IS) in Syria to Muslim countries in Southeast Asia. In light of high-profile terrorist incident such as the 2016 attack in Jakarta, the 2015 bombing in Bangkok or 2002 Christmas Bombing in Bali, Southeast Asia indeed is

¹⁴ The democratic election in Burma in November 2015 with a landslide victory for the Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLP) Party certainly will have decisive effect in future economic and political trajectory of that country. In 2016, there will be major election in Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, and Mongolia; and in 2017, the China's Party Congress.

¹⁵This dispute originates from a group of small islands and atolls in the SCS, which are claimed in whole or in part by a host of nations; China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines. The contested area stretching, about the size of Iraq, promises nothing less than complication since the conflict zone harbours one of the busiest sea transport routes in the world, potentially lucrative oil and natural gas deposits, and fishing grounds that are still diverse and bountiful.

¹⁶The practice of land reclamation is not exactly of Chinese innovation. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNLOS) stipulates rights to different maritime features that are relevant to the SCS situation. Accordingly, fully-fledged islands enjoy territorial rights up to 12 nautical miles (nm), while their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) extends to a maximum of 200 nm. Most acutely, the EEZ setup increases the possibility for overlapping territorial claims in enclosed seas like the SCS. The result is that those nations which border the sea have hurried to establish settlements – in most cases by military outposts – on the small islands of the region in order to establish unique territorial claims to both an EEZ and a continental shelf.

¹⁷In 1947, China produced a map with 9 dotted lines (also called the U-shaped line), and has claimed all of the islands within those lines, which is now printed in all new Chinese passport. not immune to terrorism and extreme interpretation of Islamic concepts. In fact, according to the Singaporean Prime Minister, Southeast Asia is “Southeast Asia is a key recruitment centre for ISIS,” since it is estimated that at least over 500 Southeast Asian nationals have gone to Syria to fight for this extremist organization. Another major non-traditional security issue is natural disaster¹⁸. Although ASEAN members have recognized that attention must be given to sustainable development, the Association’s response remains problematic. It is still unclear as to whether this organization would be able to respond if travesty struck Southeast Asia. Such imminent economic risks, political uncertainties and security challenges in Southeast Asia certainly will affect the ability to turn theory into practice in terms of regional cooperation.

b. The ASEAN Way of Southeast Asia security cooperation

Owing to the lack of precedent version, the term ASEAN Way is often characterized by its conceptual ambiguity, which makes it difficult to grasp the essence of the concept. Generally, the term "ASEAN Way" refers to a series of established guidelines and unwritten codes of conduct of inter-state relations, informally binding on and observed by member states. But concerning dispute management, it refers to the unique techniques to find common areas of cooperation in the first place while shelving disputes for settlement at a later date. The basic principles of the ASEAN Ways are (Heller, 2005: 128):

- the consultation for compromises acceptable to all (musyawarah),
- consensus principle (mufakat),
- private talks (empatmata),
- extensive unofficial exploratory talks with all parties involved before initiatives are formally launched (feeler technique),
- a sense of community spirit (gotong-royong),
- decent and modest behaviour (nobody leads principle), and
- the search for a general agreement, even if there is yet no common understanding concerning the specifics of its realization (agreeing first, details later)

While scholars of the ASEAN Way share doubts over its substances and questions over its herence, their analysis is divided into two camps. Pessimists such as Narine (2002: 31), Emmers (2003, 22-7) and Collins (2000: 189) are reluctant to recognize any major influence of the ASEAN Way. Their studies focus on the gap between its promises and the outcome

¹⁸With incidents such as the 2004 Tsunami in Thailand and Indonesia, the typhoons Haiyan in the Philippines in 2014, as well as the regional haze pollutions from chronicle forest fires. Citing inefficiency within the association. On the other hand, optimists such as Leiffer (1982), Katsumata (2003) empathise with the ASEAN Way's potential to regulate and moderate a "particular mode of interaction" of the Association. Notably, Tamaki (2006) pinpointed that most existing literature on the ASEAN Way analyses the concept by describing ideas being represented, and the policy implication derived from it. These analyses have thus far been focusing on epistemology (how to understand the concept); but lack ontology (what is the concept).

Contrary to Nischalke's argument (2000), I would argue that the ASEAN Way has proven not to be a 'myth'. Despite the lack of dynamism, the ASEAN Way represents an on-going constructive practice towards peaceful security cooperation in Southeast Asia. What is amiss with the current ASEAN scholarship is that the ASEAN Way is fluid and amenable rather than static. While the ASEAN Way is certainly noxious to institutional evolution due to stressing consensus seeking and informal problem solving; these cultural norms helps creating favourable conditions for ASEAN to play a more visible role in addressing regional security issues. Based on iterated interactions, the persisting practice of the ASEAN Way is entirely consistent with ASEAN's *modus operandi* - method of doing.

The ASEAN Way can be attributed mainly to four political cultural components adopted and practiced by its members namely: (a) soft institutionalization; (b) informality or relation-based governance; (c) self-restraint or face-saving; and finally (d) *musyawarah* and *mufakat* (consultation and consensus).

Soft institutionalization

Firstly, one of the key components of the ASEAN Way in institution building and security cooperation is soft institutionalization. This is a metaphor for the organization's policy-making upon practices, procedures and documents that have no binding character as to their implementation or enforcement. Since the forum is clearly not a system of collective security and there is no enforcement mechanism, ASEAN members are only subject to peer pressure. Although, it is hesitated to use the term "pressure" since it is hardly ever exerted within ASEAN. These does not make sense from a functionalist viewpoint because there is no guarantee that member states comply with the decisions made within ASEAN. The consensus-based decision making procedures often delay decisions and actions, while protecting the principle of sovereignty, non-interference of internal affairs and producing lowest-denominator outcomes (Komori, 2009).

Termsak Chalermphanupap¹⁹ identifies the following areas where ASEAN's institutionalization was low as compared to Europe, whose institutions display rules with higher levels of obligation, precision and delegation.

- In contrast to the European Union (EU), ASEAN has no legislative body despite the growing web of agreements and political documents. The ASEAN Secretariat is certainly smaller, and its budget and personnel complement a tiny fraction of those of the EU commission.
- There is no equivalent of the European Parliament in ASEAN. The ASEAN Inter-Parliament Organization (AIPO) is only a consultative body of parliamentarians from ASEAN Member Countries. It is not part of the ASEAN structure; it has no direct role in the evolving legal framework in ASEAN.
- There is no ASEAN Court of Justice. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) provides for pacific settlement of disputes through regional processes. This includes the setting up of the ASEAN High Council on ad hoc basis to deal with security crisis in the region. However, the High Council does not adjudicate and its decisions are also based on consensus²⁰.

Miles Kahler (2000) recognized ASEAN legal short-comings and explains that Southeast Asian legal culture tends to differ greatly, ranging from common to civil law, and their hybrids²¹. Accordingly, both political homogeneity (a shared history of responding to colonialism) and heterogeneity (divisions over political regime and the status of domestic legal institutions) in most Southeast Asian societies undermine a move to a unified legalized institutions. During the colonial period, intra-regional trade and political affairs are monopolized by colonial royals, thus the independent class of capitalists, one the most powerful incentives for the legalization of public affairs, was absent.

¹⁹ Interview with Termsak Chalermphanupap (Special Assistant to the Secretary-General of ASEAN), Former Director of Political and Security cooperation APSC Department, 24th July 2014.

²⁰The High Council merely recommends to the parties in dispute any appropriate means of settlement such as good offices, mediation, enquiry or conciliation, and when deemed necessary, appropriate measures for the prevention of deterioration of the dispute or the situation.

²¹Common law forms the basis for the legal systems of Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore. Spanish and US laws have considerably influenced the Philippines' legal system. The Indonesian legal system derives from an amalgamation of continental common-law structures (Nakamura, 2009: 135).

There might be a source of tension between the ASEAN states that favour the gradualist approach of the "ASEAN way"; and other Western ASEAN dialogue partners who prefer the fast track and straightforward approach. Most critics highlight the inefficiency problem of soft-institutionalization when some specific security issues such as territorial disputes are avoided or cursorily discussed in numerous meetings. They even fear that the ASEAN then might suffer an eclipse of relevance and serve as a mere "talk-shop". Aware of the limitations that soft-institutionalisation is certainly pernicious to formal institutional change, ASEAN states have come up with the "ASEAN-minus X" formula. This change means that, in practice, member states might use the non-consensus and majority voting as an operational principle on ASEAN's unimportant and non-threatening issues. Singapore's position on the issue has been made clear by its Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar (1995: 1) who suggested that, "consensus had never meant unanimity. When the vital interests of any

ASEAN state were not threatened by any other ASEAN initiative, it allows the other members to proceed with it".

Informality or relation-based governance

The second component of the ASEAN Way is informality or relation-based governance. This norm utilizes informal arrangements constructed from mutual trust, perceptions and familiarity. It stresses personal relations among practitioners and policy-makers rather than rule-based governance which relies on formalized processes and treaties (Davidson, 2009: 227-8). This political characteristic dated back to feudal kingship's vassals and tributaries culture in Southeast Asia. Through the concept of "mandalas", the relations-based governing system rests on the assumption that a ruler is surrounded by concentric circles (mandalas) of foes and allies²². These cultural legacy has imprinted in the ASEAN Way with different pathway into modernity preserving the culturally more appropriate informal, personalist and often clientele's channels of interaction.

In nowadays practice, trust and familiarity are also built upon interpersonal relationships, usually among leaders, to enforce any agreements in a relationships-based governance system. The ASEAN Charter is intended to make ASEAN a more rule-based organization, however, informal or 'golf' diplomacy is still very much common in the way the member

²²Mandala, in this sense, is similar to Chinese imperial tributary system, which was the network of trade and foreign relations between China and China's "tributaries" that, for millennia, drove much of Southeast Asian affairs. First, it was premised on the belief that China was the centre of the universe and that all non-Chinese were uncivilized "barbarians". Second, since the Chinese ruler, "the Son of Heaven," was considered the ruler of all humankind, all other "barbarian" rulers were mere local chieftains owing allegiance to Bei jing. Thus, countries wanting to trade with China had to send "tribute" missions that legitimized China's superiority and suzerainty (via the ritual of ke-tou (kow-tow), which consisted of three kneelings, each involving three prostrations before the emperor and in return they could trade for a specified number of days at border points designated by Beijing.

States addressing their problems (Leviter, 2010). High-ranking ASEAN officials at different levels are encouraged to contact one another and establish personal relationships so that in the event of crisis they can pick up the telephone and call each other, thus increasing the possibility of containing any dispute. Carlos Romulo, former Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, once said, "I can pick up the telephone now and talk directly to Adam Malik or Rajaratnam [former Indonesian and Singapore foreign ministers respectively]. We often find that private talks over breakfast prove more important than meetings" (Khoo How San, 1977: 10). Therefore, frequent personal contacts of representative, combined with the joint organization of events and staff exchanges, contribute to increasing acceptance of shared norms and the process of socialization. However, these practices greatly rely on the dynamics of ASEAN leaders' relationships and their vision of the security community. Not to mention, as time goes by, there will be a change of generations in ASEAN leadership which may or may not result in the policy continuation (Tay, 2014)²³.

Self-restraint

The third component is self-restraint. This also manifests the uniquely 'Asian' approach to conflict resolution – that is, a calm and collected attitude towards disagreements, or "agree to disagree" – as opposed to a rather direct and confrontational Western approach. Katsumata (2003) refers to this

norm as 'quite diplomacy', while Jakarta's Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) identifies as the principle of sensitivity and politeness. "At a pace comfortable to all" is a favourite phrase in ASEAN documents. Together with the preference for informality diplomacy, this ASEAN Way's principle has served to save face and maintain good relations between the parties particularly when members have to tackle contentions issues. It is rightly criticized that this component of the ASEAN Way has contributed more to conflict avoidance among its members rather than to conflict resolution (Denoon & Colbert, 1998: 506). However, it should be given credit for significantly contributing to the regional stability since it avoids tension to escalate into open conflict and enhances a sense of understanding and interdependence.

This principle of the ASEAN Way is practised since the time of ASEAN formation. Despite conflicts with each other's, member states practiced self-restraint since they did not want to jeopardize the very existence of ASEAN during its early years²⁴. Recently, the South China

²³ Interview with Prof. Simon Tay, Co-Chair of the Asia Society Global Council, Chairman of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, and a law professor at the National University of Singapore, 22 July 2014

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In early 1968 the Singaporean government executed two Indonesian marines charged with subversive activities at the height of the Indonesian confrontation, also known as the MacDonald House bombing. Although President Suharto of the Sea dispute indicate the self-restraint principle of the ASEAN Way. ASEAN's position on the SCS issue so far is somewhat ambiguous, passive, and responsive. Most notably in 2012, the 21st ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh has come into history as the only summit ever failed to produce a Joint Communiqué, due to disagreement on the South China Sea issue. It is argued that Cambodia as ASEAN Chairman that year, in protecting its interest with China's support, refused any draft mentioning SCS. This is finally rebuked by the Philippines President Benigno Aquino interrupting Cambodia President Hun Sen's final remarks at the Summit. Ultimately, Aquino also refused to attend the final locking hand photograph at the end of every ASEAN summit, which is a symbolic and ritual practice of ASEAN consensus. In light of recent China's mass land reclamation activities in SCS, this statement was released at the Chairman statement of ASEAN Summit 2015:

"We share the serious concerns expressed by some leaders on the land reclamation being undertaken in the South China Sea, which has eroded trust and confidence and may undermined peace, security and stability"

It can be seen that this statement expresses concerns that the Chinese will be consolidating their control over the seaway. However, the passive tense is used "land reclamation" but did not mention China by name. It is also ambiguous in saying "some leader" but not Vietnam, the Philippines, or Brunei – the ASEAN member that has the most severe dispute with China on this issue.

There are several explanations for ASEAN's restraint in projecting a stronger position regarding the SCS conflict. To start with, only four ASEAN member states – the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia have ongoing territorial disputes with China over the SCS. Those without a direct stake in the SCS maritime disputes are opposed to antagonizing China over such an issue as, in their view, does not concern them. Stalemates arise since no ASEAN member with overlapping claims to SCS recognize the other's claims; nor is there is any ad hoc approach or an ASEAN Troika to

resolve this matter²⁵. The SCS reflects the ASEAN Way to settle disputes, which prefer consensual methods such as New Order Government of Indonesia had written a private letter to the then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew asking for clemency for the two condemned men because they had acted under the orders of the former government, his appeal was ignored. The execution sparked off a number of violent anti-Singapore demonstrations in Jakarta with cries to "teach" Singapore a lesson (Saragih & Aritonang, 2014). However, the two remain member in ASEAN and attended its annual summit. Bilateral relations only improved after Suharto agreed to receive Lee Kuan Yew in 1973.

²⁵ ASEAN Troika is constituted as an ad hoc body at the ministerial level in order that ASEAN could address more effectively and cooperate more closely on issues affecting regional peace and stability. The ASEAN Troika would be constituted as and when the situation warrants, as mediation over international legal process. Moreover China, being ASEAN's largest trading partner, has been eager to downplay the role of multilateral mechanisms in containing the dispute. ASEAN needs to practice self-restraint in this matter since China would rather to leave the forum than accept its decision if they were held to believe their national interests are being impinged.

'Musyawarah' and 'mufakat' (Consultation and consensus)

The final and unique component of the ASEAN Ways is enshrined in the term musyawarah and mufakat, which are Bahasa terms²⁶. The term musyawarah means decision-making on the basis of consultation and deliberation, while the term mufakat means consensus reached through the process of musyawarah. Writers have traced these terms and found out that they are of Arabic origin. When Islam spread to Southeast Asia in the 13th and 14th centuries, the Islamic scholars introduced these terms and their practice to local people, but modified them to fit local culture and requirements (Feith & Castle, 1970). This societal and village-level style of decision-making has been widely used at the national level in Indonesia and Malaysia; the two important founding states of ASEAN. Yet, other writers have indicated that similar forms of consultation and consensus are also found in Filipino and Thai culture (Gurthie, 1968).

The political culture of consensus is rooted from the community spirit, whereby the interests of the collective must not be secondary to those of the individual. This is called gotong royong or mutual help and cooperation. Such a notion is fundamental in the uniqueness of the Southeast Asian approach centring people-focussed community and better communication. This is also in line with the self-discipline and self-cultivation philosophy behind Confucianism and Buddhism which have considerable influence in the region. Accordingly, the search for one's identity is to confront and surmount those selfish and egocentric tendencies (Dahm 1999, Tarling 1999, Samovar et al 2015).

At the regional level, the practice of consultation and consensus has been widely used and proved to be of great importance for ASEAN unity as it has precluded the possibility of the majority imposing views on the minority. Over the years, the habit of consultation among the ASEAN countries has gradually developed with an increasing number of meetings and ²⁶ Bahasa, Bhasa, or Phasa is the word deriving from the Sanskrit word meaning "spoken language". In many modern languages in South Asia and Southeast Asia which have been influenced by Sanskrit or Pali, bahasa and cognate words are now used to mean "language" in general.

Discussions (currently up to 300 every year) at various levels. These, indeed, "has become part of an institutional culture that helps avoid and control conflicts" (Hoang, 1996: 67). The unanimous decision can be reached by a process, "which the majority and the minorities approach each other

by making the necessary readjustments in their respective viewpoints, or by an integration of the contrasting standpoints into a new conceptual synthesis" (Koentjaraningrat, 1967: 397). During this process, new positions, proposals or initiatives are floated for extensive consultation in informal meetings so as to make sure that consensus on major issues could be reached at later formal discussions or negotiations. This contributes significantly the regional identity building process since it enhances the exchange of ideas, increase mutual understanding and a sense of interdependence and inter-relatedness.

There are two main arguments explaining why the Southeast Asian states have repeatedly rejected the Western approach as to how the ASEAN-driven institutions should be moving forward and why European concepts and processes would not fit the conditions of the Asia-Pacific region. Firstly, ASEAN form of cooperation is less tangible than the legalistic Western way but it works. Its principle of consensus and consultation work like an insurance policy and thus have a stabilizing effect. Due to high peer pressure, there are increasing image cost of blocking a topic or damaging the institution as its legitimacy has increased to a wide range of players (Johnston, 1999: 306). The second concern states that ASEAN Way's "slow but sure" approach might hinder the Association from offering a quick response to a series of post-Cold-War issues which member states had never encountered before. This criticism mainly arises where expectations are not properly managed and ignored the fact that the ASEAN Ways does not block the region's institutional evolution (Heller 2005: 140). It shows that regional agents constantly refer to these idea of the ASEAN Way and reconstruct their practice in everyday activities. The ASEAN Way, in turn, reconstruct agents by socializing them into speaking the language of accepted behaviour in a mutually constitutive process. The ASEAN, with its emphasis on practice-oriented approaches, has been described as a *sui generis* organization with no established precedent to follow.

5. Conclusion– Southeast Asia in search of a security community

Cultural heritages and memories are indeed crucial in determining the securitization and political trend, particularly in Southeast Asia, as evident from the persisting practice of the ASEAN Way. Southeast Asia has a different normative history and environment to the West and these results in different ways of approaching security cooperation. There is thus no point in comparing ASEAN to the EU, or the ARF to NATO. ASEAN is an intergovernmental organization, while EU is a supranational entity of countries pooling part of their sovereignty. ASEAN is a voluntary association of sovereign states that does not yield their sovereignty to a central authority. Ultimately, there is no one-size-fit-all model of security cooperation and Southeast Asian institutions are practicing their cultural autonomy by creating their unique and more adaptive security discourse. Indeed, the 2003 Bali Concord II makes it explicitly clear that the envisioned ASEAN Security Community would not lead "to a defence pact, military alliance, or a joint foreign policy".

The dominant feature of the world and Asia today is not about multipolarity but multiplexity, in which interdependence also goes beyond economics, and there are powerful incentives to pluralistic and shared leadership among nation state. Constructivist analysis provides a comparatively more comprehensive analysis of the Southeast Asian security architecture, which aimed at reducing intraregional diversity and encouraging indigenous framework through non-military practice of

security cooperation. The current security mechanisms in Southeast Asia, in spite of lacking dynamism, have and will continue to play a vital role in sustaining the regional security order.

This paper have shown the importance of "patterns of cooperative practices" to identify and reinvigorate debates over non-military approaches to conflict resolution in Southeast Asia. The ASEAN Way represents Southeast Asian security culture since much of its components are ascertained from routine practices. The unique feature of Southeast Asian security culture following the ASEAN Way including formal and informal ways to settle the disputes among member states. In the early stages of security community cooperation, the grouping tended to use the practices of consultation and consensus and self-restraint to prevent tension escalating into regional violence. At the same time, they have begun to master the informal principles for its fellow members to handle their relations with one another through informality and soft-institutionalization.

The ASEAN Way, however, should be deemed neither out-dated nor static. These ideas have responded and are still responding to the change of Southeast Asia security architecture, recognizing that action needs to be taken. The ASEAN Way itself is evolving, and the ASEAN countries themselves are no longer faithful to the functions or the conventions they use in the 1960s. The revision and adaptation towards transparency in the ASEAN Way practices as well as the enhancement of institutionalization so far have been criticized by observers outside the region as too slow and too little. A gradualist approach, however, should be adopted into building a common security framework in Southeast Asia. Given the history animosities as well as the differences in political system, economic development, and norms perception; only a gradual approach based on patience will contribute to building a Southeast Asia identity. The biggest strategic challenge for policymakers in Southeast Asia is the peaceful integration of China into the international order. As China continues to grow economically and its interests and influence expand, its neighbouring countries will have to find a *modus vivendi* – way of living together - that fosters peaceful growth and cooperation. A fragmented Southeast Asia does not bode well for regional peace and security and for the economic vitality of the Asia-Pacific and of the world. That is why ASEAN Centrality should be emphasised when dealing with the rise of China.

Recently, there is an increasing trend of scholars from the Third World to find a new scope of IRT outside the Western framework. So far, mainstream IR has been to fear and/or fantasize the Other, be it another country, culture, religion or race. Future research, however, should move beyond the cultural globalization from the West-the Rest binary. The aim should be to raise specific questions associated with the dialogue, rivalry and domination between non-Western modernity (Katsumata 2011, Rother 2012). The notion on the neglect of non-Western perspectives and continued Western dominance in International Relations theory, however, does not seek to dismantle all IR theory originating from the West. Instead it highlights the possibilities for a genuinely representative broadening of the discipline. In other words, it is not to produce non-Other alternatives but advocate the participatory in genealogy of the International system.

The extent to which Southeast Asian IR challenges Western-cantered configuration of power between the exclusionary politics and marginalized voices could start with the philosophy behind the ASEAN Way. The ASEAN Way has been playing a decisive factor in the evolution of regional security cooperation since it localizes outside norms like the Westphalia norm in light of Southeast Asian experiences. This calls for participatory regionalism to bring the Southeast Asian

regional interaction and identity building process to greater light. That makes ASEAN Way relevant to the world and, above all, to its people.

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