Collective Identity Formation in Asian Regionalism: 
ASEAN Identity and the Construction of the Asia-Pacific Regional Order

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Abstract: 
This paper addresses the role of ASEAN identity in constructing Asia-Pacific regional order and its implications for regional cooperation and the US role. The key argument is that ASEAN identity, however nascent and evolving, does matter in shaping security politics, regionalism and international relations in the Asia-Pacific. The argument is assessed in terms of the sources of ASEAN identity (i.e. ideas, norms, values, culture and history, multilateralism, diversity) and limitations of ASEAN identity (i.e. intra-regional tensions and conflicts, the effects of globalization on non-traditional security issues, saliency of national identities, political heterogeneity), as well as the policy implications in light of ASEAN centrality, US engagement of Asia, and the institutional socialization of the emerging powers.

1. Introduction

Constructing regional order is no mean feat – more so when it is the Asia-Pacific regional order given the variety of powers involved and their different instrumental and normative interests, different conceptions of regional and global order and their perceived roles in it, as well as different identities having impact on their interstate relations and the future directions of the Asia-Pacific regionalism. Placing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – an institution of small, fragile, and developing states in Southeast Asia - at the center of regional experimentation makes it any less difficult. But as things stand, there is no other available grouping that is palatable for all great powers of the global system – i.e. the United States, China, India, Japan, Russia – that can make them pursue their respective interests in the Asia-Pacific. Only ASEAN can provide the impetus, guidance, and meaning to regional cooperation –at least for now. ASEAN is able to do this because of its normative regionalism (Acharya 2006a) – a kind of regionalism that puts premium on ideational variables such as ideas, norms, and identity more than the materialist variables such as relative gains and balance of power. It is exactly this kind of regionalism that creates enabling and facilitative conditions for regional cooperation, with the view to engage, enmesh, and ensconce the major powers, particularly the United States and China. And such normative regionalism is anchored on ASEAN identity.

The argument of this paper is straightforward: ASEAN identity, however nascent and evolving, does matter in shaping security politics, regionalism and international relations in the Asia-Pacific. The central idea is that the very constitutive elements of such ASEAN identity – i.e. ideas, norms, and values – help construct Asia-Pacific regional order by laying its normative foundations beyond the material regional balance of power. This ASEAN identity-based regional order provides ample space for peaceful regional cooperation as the common interest of all regional stakeholders. The causal logics of the argument are the following. First, the lack of alternative institutions in the Asia-Pacific region capable of serving as normative fulcrum in balancing the interests of regional stakeholders and legitimizing state behavior
naturally ascribes ASEAN with a role-cum-identity as the institutional hub of Asia-Pacific regionalism. Second, ASEAN’s primordial identity - as a nascent security community - lays the foundations for normative regionalism, with the ASEAN Way (informal, non-legalistic, consensus-based, process-driven diplomacy), ideas 1 (e.g. “One Southeast Asia”, ASEAN Community), norms (both substantive and procedural, as well as legal political and socio-cultural) all constitutive of such identity serving as the normative framework for region-building. Third, ASEAN-led institutions are guided by a certain type of socialization 2 that enable states to pursue instrumental and normative goals based on the logic of consequences and logic of appropriateness. 3 And lastly, ASEAN norms create the possibility of changing the interests and identities of regional actors, with the view to transforming regional order beyond modus vivendi and “generating counter-realpolitik behavior in states that are being socialized” (Johnston 2003).

The discussion is divided into several sections. In the first section, key concept of identity is given an analytic disambiguation. This includes definitions of identity: its typologies in terms of its layers, levels, forms, and types; and its dimensions encompassing the cultural, economic, and political aspects. ASEAN identity is given an analytical purchase in light of the definition, typologies, and dimensions. In the second section, the sources of ASEAN identity are discussed. The sources include ideas, norms, values, culture, history, multilateralism, diversity, and some surveys as evidence of ASEAN identity. In the third section, the convergence between ASEAN identity and foreign policies of each member state is discussed, as evidenced by the individual countries making ASEAN the cornerstone of their foreign policy. The fourth section discusses the limitations of ASEAN identity which include intra-ASEAN tensions and conflicts, the effects of globalization on non-traditional security issues, the saliency of national identity, and political heterogeneity. Section five provides critical analysis of ASEAN identity in terms of its centrality in regional architecture and its key policy implications for regional cooperation, the US role, and the other major powers. The last section concludes about the uncertainty of international politics in Asia Pacific and how ASEAN can make itself relevant despite such uncertainty.

Before proceeding, three caveats are in order. First, arguing for the importance of ideational variables (e.g. identity) in the Asia-Pacific regionalism does not make material variables (e.g. distribution of power) unimportant. It only means that identity should be factored in together with power politics as an equally,

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1 For Alice Ba (2009a:225), there are “two big ideas” shaping regional order. These are: “The first is the belief that there does exist some space called Southeast Asia and the ‘Southeast Asia’ should provide ASEAN its organizing principle. The second big idea is resilience – states’ common understandings of themselves as weak, fragmented powers and the understood vulnerabilities of that division, especially in relation to various foreign forces.”

2 For a discussion on the differences between hegemonic socialization and socialization by weaker states, see Acharya (2003, 222-223).

3 Logic of arguing as the third type of logic of social action should complement the two types - i.e. appropriateness and consequences - that have been traditionally ascribed to ASEAN. Three reasons are in order: (1) Since ASEAN and the ASEAN-led institutions are “sites of normative contestation, creation, and localization” (Acharya 2011a), then actors can be viewed as being guided by logic of arguing in justifying their validity claims (interest-based or values-driven); (2) regional actors do not simply talk, they argue not against but with others for consensual decision-making in ensuring/producing regional public goods such as peace, stability, and prosperity, thus addressing the unfair criticism that ASEAN and ASEAN-led institutions are nothing but talk shops; (3) logic of arguing may well cohere with the logic of persuasion underlying socialization. Thomas Risse (2000), for example, suggests this third logic of action. He says: “Argumentative and deliberative behavior is as goal oriented as strategic interaction, but the goal, is not to attain one’s fixed preferences, but to seek a reasoned consensus. Actors’ interests, preferences, and the perceptions of the situation are no longer fixed, but subject to discursive challenges. Where argumentative rationality prevails, actors do not seek to maximize or to satisfy their given interests and preferences, but to challenge and to justify the validity claims inherent in them – and they are prepared to change their views of the world or even their interests in light of the better argument.”
if not the more important variable; otherwise the explanatory framework would be parsimonious but partial. Although the relation—either dialectical or dialogical⁵—between the material and the ideational is hard to establish, it makes more analytical sense to posit the complementary relation between the two.⁶ In this paper, however, the ideational trumps the material owing to the transformative effects of norms, socialization and identity on power politics.⁷ Second, arguing for ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture by virtue of its normative appeal to all great powers should not be viewed as romanticizing its power. ASEAN does have a normative influence but as to whether that translates into a kind of power is subject to varied interpretations. Third, while ASEAN may be viewed as “no more than the sum of its sovereign component parts” (Emmerson 2008, 53–54), ASEAN identity, it is argued here, is more than the sum of the national identities constituting it. The regional perspective—or the “woods of the region” perspective (Acharya 2006a:84) – provides for a regional identity that is socially constructed out of each member state’s national identity but goes beyond the complementarity or convergence of the regional and the national because of the collective nature of regional identity formation (a la Roussean general will).

2. ASEAN Identity and its Analytic Utility

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⁴ Emphasizing “explanation” does by no means relegate “understanding” to unimportance which is exactly what characterizes constructivism as the theoretical foundation of ideational argumentation. In other words, Weberian vertehen is presupposed in the constructivist explanation or explanatory framework.

⁵ For the difference of the two in relation to the relation between the “self” and “others”, see Newmann’s reading of James Der Derian’s geneology of diplomacy (1987). According to Newmann (2009, 301), “The point I am trying to make is that, at the moment when the self/other problematique finally reached the discipline of international relations, there was a repetition of the shift away from a dialectical to a dialogical reading which had taken place in social theory at large some 20 years earlier.”

⁶ For example, constructivists such as Wendt (1999), Kowert and Legro (1996) and Adler and Barnett (1998), however rejecting the realist fixation on purely material forces, would acknowledge the import of both the normative and material worlds as foundations/bases of their sociological inquiry. Wendt (1999, 110), for instance, would have no problem with “rump materialism” whereby brute material forces affect international relations in three ways: (1) distribution of actor’s material capabilities; (2) technological composition of material capabilities; and (3) geography and natural resources. In Wendt’s world in other words, “material forces are not constituted solely by social meanings” (Wendt 1999, 111). Kowert and Legro (1996, 490-491) on their part would argue, “While the sociological perspective rejects the realist preoccupation with uniquely material forces, students of norms cannot afford to ignore the material world. Norms do not float ‘freely,’ unencumbered by any physical reality. They are attached to physical environments and are promoted by real human agents (though norms, of course, are not themselves material). But the relationship of normative to material structures is rarely examined or explicitly theorized, despite the likelihood that the influence of norms may be related to the characteristics of the material structures in which they are embedded or the qualities of the actors that adopt or promote them. Norms backed up by the United States are likely to become more widespread and effectual than otherwise similar norms originating in Luxembourg. While the differing capabilities of these two nations are undoubtedly a matter of interpretation, it is difficult to ignore the overwhelming material contrasts.” In discussing the “trigger mechanisms” in creating institutions or organizations for a nascent security community, Adler and Barnett (1998, 51-52) acknowledge the material and normative bases of such mechanisms, to wit: “In general, the trigger mechanisms for a security community are likely to have material and normative bases. Other material and normative factors can include, for instance: rapid shifts in the distribution of military power; cataclysmic events that produce changes in material structures, mindsets and sensibilities, and new ways of thinking about organizing political life; and, transnational, domestic, or international processes that generate common interests.” For an attempt at addressing the undertheorization of the relation between material and the ideational, see Sorensen (2008, 5-32).

⁷ Power for Wendt is constituted by interest which in turn is constituted by ideas. See Wendt (1999, 135). And in relation to interest and identity, Wendt (1992, 398) argues that “identities are the basis of interests”. For Jepperson et al. (1996, 60), “identities both generate and shape interests.”
Identity\textsuperscript{8}, like the regional concept of Southeast Asia and ASEAN\textsuperscript{9}, is an essentially contested\textsuperscript{10} concept owing to its fluidity, indeterminancy, and complexity, thus making its analytic utility somehow problematic.\textsuperscript{11} Its essential contestedness can be explained by at least four problems. First, there is a problem of definition - leading to questions such as how to define identity, what is its differentia (defining characteristics that separates it from a wider concept, i.e. ideational, where it falls under), and what are its denotata (the logical term for the examples of the definiendum) as evidence of its unequivocal manifestation. Second, there is a problem of measurement. How exactly to measure identity, despite it being qualitative, and with what quantitative methodology and assessment indicators to use in understanding and explaining it is not an easy task.\textsuperscript{12} Third, there is a problem of causation and correlation, that is, whether to take identity as an independent variable, dependent variable, intermediate variable, and/or intervening variable and for what grounds. And fourthly, there is a problem of identification and delineation—how to identify and delineate identity in order to have a better grasp of its nature, nuances, and complexities.

However essentially contested identity is, there has been attempts at addressing these problems to give it an analytical purchase. As Lebow (2008, 474) opines: “Identity is one of those concepts whose meaning was always fluid but in recent years has become stretched to avoid the charge of ‘essentialism’. Addressing the first problem of definition, Lebow (2008, 474) infers from Rogers Brubaker and Frederick

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\textsuperscript{8} Wendt (1996, 50-1) differentiates between corporate identity and social identity. “Corporate identity refers to the intrinsic qualities that constitute actor identity...The corporate identity of the state generates several basic interests or “appetites”: (1) physical security, including differentiation from other actors; (2) ontological security or predictability in relationships to the world, which create as desire for stable social identities; (3) recognition as an actor by others, above and beyond the survival through brute force; and (4) development, in the sense of meeting the human aspiration for a better life, for which state are repositories at the collective level...Social Identities (or “roles”) are sets of meanings that an actor attribute to itself while taking the perspective of others – that is, as a social object. In contrast to the singular quality of corporate identity, actors normally have many social identities that vary in salience. Also, in contrast, social identities have both unit-level and social structural properties, being at once cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine “who I am/we are” in a situation, and positions in a social roles structure of share understandings and expectations. As such, they are ontologically dependent on relations to others; for example, one cannot be an “anticommitst” if there are no communists around, nor a “balancer” if there is no one to balance. In this respect, social identities are a key link in the mutual constitution of agent and structure, embodying the terms of individuality through which corporate agents relate to each other.” See also Wendt (1999) for his discussion of collective identity vis-à-vis cultures (Hobbesian, Lockeian, and Kantian).

\textsuperscript{9} For a good discussion about Southeast Asia as a region, ASEAN, and regional identity, see the papers in Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science Vol 27, No. 1 (1999).

\textsuperscript{10} See Acharya’s (2009c) summary argument on the essential contestedness of ASEAN as an institution vis-à-vis the claims and counter-claims with regard to ASEAN’s strengths and weaknesses by different authors in the Cambridge Review of International Affairs Vol 22, No. 3, September 2009.

\textsuperscript{11} For a critical discussion of identity within the context of political theory and international relations, see Lebow (2008,473-492); for a discussion of identity in terms of the concepts “self” and “other” in social theory and international relations, see Neumann (1996, 139-74). And for an incisive discussion of identity in international relations, seeing it as an “eye opener” which reshuffles the way we think and tell stories about international politics”, see Berenskoetter (2010, 3595-3611).

\textsuperscript{12} Michael Horowitz in his article, “Research Report on the Use of Identity Concepts in International Relations” for the Harvard Identity Project (2002), attests to this indeterminancy of the use of identity in international relations. According to Horowitz: “Attempting to isolate the use of identity in international relations is incredibly difficult. Most generically, identity is the subtext of almost any argument in international relations. For example, in order to understand Russian decisions about arms control, one has to know what Russia is, what a Russian is, and why Russia evaluates its self-interest in a given way. Theories regarding institutions are also indebted to concepts of identity. The reputation costs incurred by defecting from an international regime only matter when the state in question cares about being labeled as a certain type of state. Finally, even the democratic peace theory may rely heavily on conceptions of identity. Risse-Kaplan’s 1995 article in the European Journal of International Relations argues democracies do not fight each other because their similar domestic political orientations create a sense of common interest that prevents dispute escalation. The overarching influence, especially implicit, of identity concepts on international relations makes it difficult to isolate and understand the specific uses of identity in an international relations context.”
Cooper’s five uses of the term identity, namely: “as a ground or basis for social action or political action, a collective phenomenon denoting some degree of sameness among members of a group category, a core aspect of individual or collective ‘selfhood’, a product of social or political action, or the product of multiple and competing discourses.”

For the quantitative aspect of the second and third problems, Horowitz (2002) and Bruland and Horowitz (2003) investigated identity by looking at eight important international relations journals during the period 1990-2002 and seven major journals in comparative politics for the period 1990-2002, respectively. For both studies, identity was “evaluated along several axes, testing for frequency, the type of identity.”

For the qualitative aspect of the second and third problems, Abdelal, et al. (2006) advance an analytic framework for studying identity as variable. Collective identity is defined as a social category that straddles between content and contestation, with the former describing collective identity based on constitutive norms, social purposes, relations comparisons with other social categories, and cognitive models, while the latter “refers to the degree of agreement within a group over the content of the shared category.”

In light of the foregoing analytical disambiguation, how should one understand ASEAN identity then? First, in terms of definition, ASEAN identity maybe understood as a collective identity defined “as a process and framework through which its member states slowly began to adapt to a ‘regional existence’ with a view to reducing the likelihood of use of force in inter-state relations” (Acharya 1998, 208).

Secondly, at least for the qualitative aspect of the problem of measurement, and borrowing Abdelal, et al.’s (2006) characterization of collective identity as having content and contestation, the content of ASEAN identity has to do with (1) constitutive norms (or those legal-political and socio-cultural norms that have been developed and evolved since ASEAN founding in 1967 such as the principle of non-interference, pacific settlement of disputes, respect for each other’s independence, and respect for each

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13 For the more or less similar results of these studies, see Horowitz (2002) and Bruland and Horowitz (2003).
14 Abdelal, et al. (2006, 696) defines these non-mutually exclusive types of content as follows: “Constitutive norms refer to the formal and informal rules that define group membership. Social purposes refer to the goals that are shared by members of a group. Relational comparisons refers to defining an identity group by what it is not, i.e., the way it views other identity groups, especially where those views about the other are a defining part of the identity. Cognitive models refer to the worldviews or understandings of political and material conditions and interests that are shaped by a particular identity.”
15 This infers from Robertson’s idea of globalization as glocalization whereby the global-local nexus is emphasized or the blending of the global and local cultures, without one privileging the other. See Robertson (1992). For the relation between the global and local in the international relations of the Asia-Pacific, see discussions in Tow (2009).
16 Acharya (1991: 159) observes: “Since its inception, the chief political goal of ASEAN has been to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in the region.”
other’s territorial integrity); (2) *social purposes* (regional autonomy\(^{17}\), regional resilience\(^{18}\), and regional cooperation\(^{19}\) that have been written either implicitly or explicitly stated in ASEAN documents since its very founding); (3) *relational comparisons* (self-acquired identity of ASEAN not as a collective defense community but a security community) (Acharya 1991, 2009a); (4) *cognitive models* (the common worldview of Southeast Asian elites about the uncertain Cold War and Post-Cold War worlds. First, ASEAN leaders’ *welstanchauung* about the uncertainty of the Cold War world was evident in US-USSR great power rivalry, the Nixon’s doctrine manifested in the retrenchment of US after the Vietnam War, Vietnam’s expansion in Indochina, China’s export of communist revolution fueling domestic insurgencies in Southeast Asia, nation building after decolonization. Secondly, ASEAN leaders’ *welstanchauung* about the uncertainty of the post-Cold War world was evident in US unipolarity, the rise of China and India, the economic stagnation of Japan, domestic transformation of Russia, the saliency of intra-state tensions and conflicts as a form of human security, negative effects of globalization, and non-traditional security issues). In terms of *contestation* of the content of ASEAN identity, this has been evident in the level of agreement on the theoretical and practical applications of norms, social purposes, evolving nature of ASEAN identity vis-à-vis other regional and global actors of world politics, and the conceptualization of worldviews by policy elites vis-à-vis their peoples, as well as their national counterparts in Southeast Asia.

Thirdly, in the ASEAN context, collective identity is an intervening variable wherein ASEAN identity constrains or limits, permits or enables, and shapes and influences policy orientations and choices. Material variables such as relative capabilities, international system structure, and geography are not determinative of policy options and outcomes, albeit defining a possible range of choices.\(^{20}\)

Fourthly, ASEAN identity is understood in both its typologies and dimensions which while they overlap are mutually constitutive. In terms of *levels*, ASEAN identity is subdivided into local identities (e.g. local peoples’ identification with their local counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries), national (each nation-state’s identity vis-à-vis other Southeast nation-states) and regional (the collective identity formation by policy elites who have imagined themselves as belonging to a region called Southeast Asia with their common interest in regional cooperation as key to regional peace, stability, and prosperity). In terms of *layers*, ASEAN identity must be viewed as having ethnic (different ethnic groups struggling for cultural integrity and identity), state (the national government’s attempt at forging identity despite diverse domestic composition of their populace), and transnational/Glocal (especially for urban locals imagining themselves as glocal citizens having multiple transnational and/or glocal identities. With regard to *forms*, ASEAN identity must be disambiguated as having dichotomies such as individual-state (Thai individual vis-à-vis Thai government), individual-nation (Filipino individual vis-a-vis nation as an imagined Pilipinas), society-nation (Singapore society with its diverse ethnic composition and the Chinese-

\(^{17}\) Weatherbee (2005) would even contend that the very raison d’être of ASEAN since its founding is regional autonomy or the struggle for autonomy by overcoming global social, economic, and political forces.

\(^{18}\) Based on Indonesia’s juxtaposition of national resilience and regional resilience as a way to strengthen the collective defense (with emphasis on the non-military aspects) of the Southeast Asian states struggling against being subordinated in great power rivalry in Asia and the onslaught of communism from the Eastern and Western hemisphere.

\(^{19}\) It should be remembered that in the 1967 Bangkok Declaration, the founders aimed for establishing for an “Association for Regional Cooperation” named ASEAN. It might be interesting to note that “regional cooperation” has been mentioned a number of times in ASEAN founding documents to emphasize its normative value for regional project of collective identity formation and community-building. See Handbook of ASEAN Documents (ASEAN Secretariat 2003).

\(^{20}\) Martha Finnemore (1996) would argue that norms have permissive than determinative quality.
influenced national identity), nation-state (collective consciousness of Burmese people vis-à-vis the state’s SPDC-based national Myanmar identity), national-regional/collective identity (all Southeast Asian national identities vis-à-vis their regional collective identity manifested in ASEAN identity). In terms of types, ASEAN identity can be either elite-centered or people-centered (an identity formed since the founding when policy elites mainly influenced, if not determined, policy choices and outcomes for the whole of Southeast Asia, and up to at least the Bali Concord II when ASEAN was deemed to be people-centered by taking more seriously Southeast Asian peoples participation in regional identity formation).

In terms of dimensions: culturally ASEAN has to be seen as having multiple identities in light of diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious groups compositions, with impact on regional enculturation and socialization across national boundaries. Economically, ASEAN identity is diversified in terms of the countries’ different economic development (especially evident in two tiers of economically developed countries such as Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam and the least developed such as Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar), and manifested in policies such as the Initiative for ASEAN integration (IAI) aimed at narrowing the development gap and deepening regional economic integration. Politically, ASEAN identity is stratified in terms of different regime types (authoritarian and democratic governments with their variants as soft and hard), level of political development (in relation to each regime type and depending on the political goals that they want to achieve such as people empowerment for the democratic type and welfare of the people for authoritarian types), and level of cooperation (in terms of regional cooperation on both traditional and non-traditional security issues, intra-regional conflict management and resolution, extra-regional balance of influence).

3. Sources of ASEAN Identity

Being a nascent security community is the primordial identity of ASEAN (Acharya 2006a, 2009a). Drawing from Karl Deutsch’s (1957, 5) idea of security community as a community where “real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way,” ASEAN has become a security community in that Southeast Asian states have grouped themselves together for regional cooperation, have shared stable expectations of peaceful change, and have ruled out the use of force in settling disputes and problem solving. Equally important,

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21 Although Deutsch’s idea serves as an inspiration to ASEAN, certain differences must be highlighted. First, Deutsch and his associates did not apply their concept to Third World counties such as Southeast Asian states because the background conditions – i.e. liberal politics and market economies – are missing from non-North Atlantic states. (Acharya 2009a, 17-18, 32-36). Emmanuel Adler is also guilty of the correlation between security communities and the presence of liberal democratic values and economic interdependence. According to Adler: “Members of pluralistic security communities hold dependable expectations of peaceful change not merely because they share just any kind of values, but because they share Liberal democratic values and allow their societies to become interdependent and linked by transnational economic and cultural relations. Democratic values, in turn, facilitate the creation of strong civil societies... which also promote community bonds and common identity and trust through the process of free interpenetration of societies” (Adler 1992, 293 quoted in Acharya 2009a, 33). Second, Deutsch’s idea of security community as the terminal condition from an initial condition of transaction and interactions among participating units is contrary to the evolution of ASEAN as a security community wherein the “imagined community” as envisioned by its founding fathers set the initial condition as the normative groundwork for the kinds of interactions and interdependence that ensued. “ASEAN’s approach to community building was quite different from the path outlined by Deutsch. For Deutsch, a security community is the end product or terminal condition, of a process of integration which is driven by the need to cope with the conflict-causing effects of increased transactions. The growing volume and range of transactions – political, cultural or economic – increases the scope for possible conflict among actors, forcing them to devise
ASEAN has become such a security community because of the deepening “we-feeling” that they share as constitutive of collective identity formation. Also, ASEAN has become a “pluralistic security community” in contrast to “amalgamated security community” in that they have not amalgamated themselves into formal political merger but have remained pluralistic in retaining their sovereignty and independence. Further, and more importantly, borrowing from Adler and Barnett’s (1998, 50) idea of a nascent security community where states “begin to consider how they might coordinate their relations in order to: increase their mutual security; lower transaction costs associated with their exchanges; and/or encourage further exchanges and interactions,” ASEAN has become a nascent security community in that Southeast Asian states have increased their mutual security through regional cooperation, have forged regional identity without diluting their national identities, and have practiced soft regionalism without making ASEAN a supranational organization emasculating their sovereignty and independence. At minimum, ASEAN has become a security community because its member states have made war unthinkable in their part of the world – its tangible measure of success as an institution serving as model for other institutional frameworks in the developing world.

It must be underscored that ASEAN identity is never a fait accompli, but a quest or “identity in the making” (Acharya 2000; 2006a, 83). Its main strength lies on its processual nature – the ever-present possibility of evolving from nascent to ascendant and finally to mature security community. However, its

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institutions and practices for peaceful adjustment and change. But in the case of ASEAN, regional cooperation was undertaken in the absence of high levels of functional interdependence or interaction. ASEAN evolved as a sort of an ‘imagined community’, despite low initial levels of interdependence and transactions, and the existence of substantial political and situational differences among its members. In this sense, the vision of community preceded than resulted from political, strategic and functional interactions and interdependence” (Acharya 2009a, 286).

Deutsch (1957, 6) differentiates between amalgamated and pluralistic security communities, with the former referring to the existence of a “formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some type of common government after amalgamation” while the latter pertains to a situation where a community ‘retains the legal independence of separate governments’.

The theoretical value-added of Adler and Barnett is that of providing a framework that identifies three stages in the development of security communities, namely, nascent, ascendant, and mature. The ascendant phase is “defined by: increasingly dense networks; new institutions and organizations that reflect either tighter military coordination and cooperation and/or decreased fear that the other represents a threat; cognitive structure that promote ‘seeing’ and acting together and, therefore, the deepening of the level of mutual trust, and the emergence of collective identities that begin to encourage dependable expectations of peaceful change” (Adler and Barnett 1998, 53) The mature phase, Adler and Barnett argue that the more expectations in the ascendant phase become “more institutionalized in both domestic and supranational settings, the more war in the region becomes improbable.” They further add that: “At this point, regional actors share an identity and, therefore, entertain dependable expectations of peaceful change and a security community now comes into existence. A threshold has now been crossed; it becomes increasingly difficult for the member of this ‘region’ to think only in instrumental ways and prepare for war among each other. At this we want to distinguish between the loosely and the tightly-coupled variants. In the former, minimalist, version: states identify positively with one another and proclaim a similar ‘way of life’; there are multiple and diverse mechanisms and patterns of interaction that reinforce and reproduce the security community; there is an informal governance system based on the shared meaning and a collective identity; and while there remains conflicting interests, disagreements, and asymmetric bargaining, there is the expectation that states will practice restraint” Adler and Barnett (1998, 55). In a nutshell, the “nascent phase is marked by common threat perceptions, expectations of mutual trade benefits, and some degree of shared identity. The ascendant phase is marked by tighter military coordination, lessened dears on the part of one actor that others within the grouping represent a threat, and the beginnings of cognitive transition and intersubjective processes and collective identities ‘that begin to encourage dependable expectations of peaceful change.’ The main characteristics of the mature phase are greater institutionalization, supranationalism, a high degree of trust, and low or no probability of military conflicts” (Acharya 1998, 202). Further, Adler and Barnett’s framework not only modifies Deutschian framework but also makes the distinctions between security regimes, institutions, and communities more of an overstatement that does not account for the transition from one security arrangement to another. For security communities and other frameworks of security cooperation, see Acharya (1995, 175-200).
weakness hinges on this very evolving process, with the possibility of declining from one stage backward, if not stagnate in just one stage against the perceived collective goal of maturing into a higher stage. Such strengths and weakness of ASEAN identity would have to heavily depend on the continuity and change that the sources upon which it is based would undergo in grounding its very instrumental and normative foundations. These sources are ideas, norms, values, culture and history, multilateralism, diversity, and Southeast Asian peoples’ perception about ASEAN and the Southeast Asian region as determined through sample surveys.

Ideas

The idea of “One Southeast Asia” – The membership of all Southeast Asian states in ASEAN in the post-cold war period has breathed life to the idea of “One Southeast Asia” identity. One of the authors of this paper characterizes such significant project as “a conscious region-building exercise seeking to redefine the Southeast Asian political space” and the “logical extension of the political settlement of the political settlement of the Cambodian conflict following the Paris Agreement of 1991” (Acharya 2000, 134). ASEAN-10 have been striving to juxtapose this material geographical unity with ideational unity, that is, forging a sense of regional identity beyond geographical location and dealing with the challenges of extending ASEAN. For Alice Ba (2009a, 30-1), regional resilience “is what makes the idea of ‘One Southeast Asia’ meaningful”.

“ASEAN Community” - Since it’s very founding, ASEAN has been a diplomatic tool in realizing the foundation for a “prosperous and peaceful community” in Southeast Asia. The 1967 ASEAN Declaration stipulates this as one of the aims and the purposes of ASEAN, to wit:

To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South-East Asian Nations

In ASEAN Vision 2020 declaration in 1997, after 30 years of ASEAN existence, its leaders would resolve to build on their achievement of having “created a community of Southeast Asian nations at peace with one another and at peace with the world, rapidly achieving prosperity for our peoples and steadily improving their lives” by envisioning

ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies...

ASEAN as an effective force for peace, justice and moderation in the Asia-Pacific and in the world...

ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by a common regional identity.
In 2003 The Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II)\textsuperscript{24}, ASEAN leaders would seek to realize the ASEAN Vision 2020 into reality by setting the goal of building an ASEAN Community by 2020 comprising three pillars, namely, political-security community, economic community, and socio-cultural community, all of which are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing for the purpose of ensuring durable peace, stability and shared prosperity in the region (Roadmap for ASEAN Community, 2009-2015).

Such ASEAN community-building has always been a way for ASEAN to strengthen and deepen its regional cooperation and reinvigorate its quest for collective identity, as well as a way to adopt and adapt to the exigencies of international politics such as power shift in Asia and its concomitant great power game in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, in 2011 Bali Concord III, ASEAN leaders would declare an “ASEAN common platform on global issues” with a “strengthen ASEAN community” as one of its pillars:

A strengthened ASEAN Community centered on ASEAN as a rules-based organization, with the ASEAN Charter as the foundation, while upholding the fundamental principles, values and norms of ASEAN

\textit{Norms}

\textbf{Legal-Rational Norms and Socio-Cultural Norms.} The norms for intra-regional relations that have constituted ASEAN identity are divided into two main typologies: those relating to legal-rational norms such as “respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in another state’s domestic affairs and renouncing the threat or use of force in settling disputes”\textsuperscript{25} and those relating to socio-cultural norms such as the ASEAN Way which includes “flexible consensus and organizational minimalism…proto-multilateralism” (Acharya 2009b, 109). These can be further divided into four main categories: “those dealing with the non-use of force and pacific settlement of disputes; those concerning regional autonomy and collective self-reliance; the doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of states; and last but not the least, the rejection of an ASEAN military pact and the preference for bilateral defence cooperation” (Acharya 2009a, 55).

\textsuperscript{24} The deadline for building the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) has been moved to 2015. Although all the targets and goals will not be achieved by 2015, the important thing is the incremental institutional change that such region-building has elicited, and its impact on forging a sense of regional identity among Southeast Asian states. Moreover, expectations should be calibrated in order to consider such 2015 deadline not as an “absolute cut-off date” but a “work in progress”. “Against the background of not just the Thai-Cambodia dispute, but also persistent problems in implementing agreements on economic integration, ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan attempted in June 2011 to manage expectations regarding the ASEAN Community. In his assessment, 2015 ‘will not be an absolute cut-off date...it is going to be a work-in-progress... not an end-date. A lot of work needs to be done’” (The International Institute for Strategic Studies 2011, 402).

\textsuperscript{25} These are from M. Leifer. See Acharya (2006a, 80).
**Importance of socio-cultural norms.** The socio-cultural norms are more important in constructing ASEAN identity in that they are unique to Southeast Asia and have helped ASEAN overcome contestations and compromises about the very meanings of the legal-rational norms. “While both legal-rational norms and socio-cultural norms are significant in the construction and expression of collective identities, the latter may be more important in making a particular social group ‘distinct’ in relation to non-group actors. While the sources of ASEAN’s legal-rational norms lay within the structure and dynamics of the international system at large, the notion of the ‘ASEAN Way’ was founded on elements, especially informality, consultations (musyawarah) and consensus (mufakat), that were claimed as being unique to Southeast Asia’s cultural heritage. And it is these norms that helped ASEAN to overcome initial contestations and reach compromises over the meaning and scope of the legal-rational principles” (Acharya 2009a, 55).

**Values**

Another source of ASEAN identity is the values that Southeast Asian elites have struggled to realize since 1967. In one way or another, they have struggled to realize these values in their quest for identity such as “respect for justice”, “rule of law”, “freedom”, “sovereignty”, and lately, “democracy” and “human rights”. For their peaceful collective co-existence, they have struggled for “regional cooperation”, “regional resilience”, “regional autonomy”, “regional independence”, “regional peace, harmony, stability, and prosperity.” The collective desires for common goals and values they have enshrined in their declarations attest to this, namely:

- **DESIRING** to establish a firm foundation for common action to promote regional cooperation in South-East Asia in the spirit of equality and partnership and thereby contribute towards peace, progress and prosperity in the region (The ASEAN Declaration, 1967).

- **DESIROUS** of bringing about a relaxation of international tension and of achieving a lasting peace in South East Asian Nations (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration, 1971).

- **DESIRING** to enhance peace, friendship and mutual cooperation on matters affecting Southeast Asia consistent with the spirit and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Ten Principles adopted by the Asian-African Conference in Bandung on 25 April 1955, the Declaration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations signed in Bangkok on 8 August 1967, and the Declaration signed in Kuala Lumpur on 27 November 1971 (Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 1976).

- **DESIRING** to contribute to the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, 1995).

Rodolfo Severino, former ASEAN Secretary General, has observed that ASEAN has unified itself amidst diversity through common values. According to Severino (2006, 379):

- ASEAN *has* pronounced itself on some common values in the past: the peaceful settlement of domestic political disputes (foreign ministers’ 1986 state on the situation of the Philippines), a peaceful transition to democracy (joint communiqué of the 2003 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting),
“free and peaceful elections” as the way to “a just, democratic and harmonious Southeast Asia” (joint communiqué of the 2004 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting), the need for the involvement of ‘all strata” of society in the political process (joint comminque of the 2004 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting).

Culture and History

Pre-Colonial Pattern of Statehood and Inter-State Relations. ASEAN identity is constitutive of the historical and cultural heritage of Southeast Asia. The pre-colonial regular pattern of statehood and inter-state relations has made salient “not only the politico-cultural attributes among the units, but also to the meaningful levels of interaction and interdependence among them” (Acharya 2000, 20). Constructing such precolonial regular pattern of statehood and inter-state relations are based on (a) “mandala system” that consisted of overlapping concentric circles governed by a king enjoying personal hegemony over his allies and vassals; (b) the notion of “galactic polity” referring to the “domain of a universal king that rules not as an absolute monarch but the “king of kings”; and (c) the idea of “theatre state” in Bali that describes the politics and interstate relations of the 19th century Bali (Acharya 2000, 17-29).

Commerce and Southeast Asian Region. Commercial trade made Southeast Asian states. “The earliest Southeast Asian states were established along trade routes between India and China. This included states in the third century in the lower Mekong area and on the isthmus of the Thai-Malay peninsula. In the 6th century, other states emerged in Sumatra and west Java on the maritime route between India and China” (Acharya 2000, 29-30). Commercial intercourse or maritime trade not only created states, but also the Southeast Asian region. According to Anthony Reid, “Maritime intercourse continued to link the peoples of Southeast Asia more tightly to one another than to outside influences down to the seventeenth century. The fact that Chinese and Indian influences came to most of the region by maritime trade, not by conquest or colonization, appeared to ensure numerous elements from those larger centers. What did not happen (with the partial exception of Vietnam) was that any part of the region established closer relations with China and India than with its neighbours in Southeast Asia” (Reid 1988, 6 cited in Acharya 2000, 31).

Colonialism and the Making and Unmaking of the Region. The advent of European colonialism in Southeast Asia disrupted and eroded the shared consciousness and sense of region developed during the “Age of Commerce”, as well as the classical inter-state system of Southeast Asia. There was also a severe “disruption and eventual disintegration of the Asian trade network.” Further disintegrative effects had to do with the drawing of artificial boundaries that was done based on geographical location rather than on ethnic belonging and loyalties. “Thus, the idea of ‘national’ frontier in Southeast Asia was applied despite lack of the essential attributes of nationhood…The territorial limits did not match ethnic, social, political, or economic realities. Boundaries often reflected the accidental nature of colonial takeovers” (Acharya 2000, 33).

Nationalism, Cold War, and Regional Order. Post-War Southeast Asia was shaped by historical forces such as nationalism, decolonization, the struggle to establish stable political regimes and national economies, and the Cold War. The complex interaction of these historical forces had varying impacts on regionalism. Southeast Asian states gained only limited national and regional autonomy. International relations in Southeast Asia was dominated by the external powers, with superpower rivalry replacing
colonialism. The weakness of newly-independent states and intra-regional divisions caused by contending nationalisms and Cold War power dynamics made it difficult, if not impossible, for Southeast Asian states to practice regional autonomy and self-reliance in developing “regional solutions to regional problems”. The creation of ASEAN in 1967 marked the beginning of creating a “security community” among Southeast Asian states, at least as envisaged by the founding fathers of the first 5 member-states. “ASEAN founders were largely inspired by the goal of developing a regional social community rather than an institutionally integrated economic and military bloc, which could overcome the divisions and separations imposed by colonial rule and lead to peaceful relations among the newly independent states of the region” (Acharya 2009a, 285).

**Regional Identity and the Post-Cold War Order.** In the post-Cold War period, ASEAN identity becomes a function of bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality in the development of ASEAN norms; bridging the gap between Governments’ ASEAN and People’s ASEAN; maintaining ASEAN’s position in the “driver seat” of Asian regionalism, with the end in view of making its ASEAN Way (albeit needing reinvention) relevant in the wider Asian region; and realizing the goal of “ASEAN Community” by 2015 and beyond.

**Multilateralism**

Multilateralism makes ASEAN unique and distinct because its practice is not based on any formal institutionalism. The ASEAN Way is at the core of the multilateralism for its informalism – the kind of multilateral modality that has served well its member states, has helped them pursue mutual interests, and has forged collective identity. “The contribution of multilateralism to community-building lies not in providing a formal institutional mechanism for conflict resolution, but rather in encouraging the socialization of elites which facilitates problem-solving” (Acharya 1998, 208).

**Diversity**

One defining source of ASEAN identity is the diversity among its member states and peoples. The variegated ethnic composition of the ASEAN countries; cultural heritage, history, and traditions; geographical divide between and amongst continental and maritime states; political systems and values; and national interests bespeak of the ASEAN identity-cum-diversity. But this very diversity in history, geography, and culture bounded the Southeast Asian peoples together. As the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia stipulates: “existing ties of history, geography and culture, which have bound their peoples together.” Rather than seeing this as a source of weakness, ASEAN has capitalized on it as strength for regional cooperation, identity formation, and community-building. In ASEAN Vision

26 Alice Ba (2009a, 5-7) would speak of the political significance of this ASEAN diversity. She argues that diversity has been a source of vulnerability of ASEAN states in their interactions with the major powers which has affected “how ASEAN elites conceive, approach, and practice regional cooperation.”
2020, ASEAN leaders have acknowledged this ineradicable fact of diversity characterizing their collective co-existence:

Our rich diversity has provided the strength and inspiration to us to help one another foster a strong sense of community.

In fact such diversity has made it possible for Southeast Asian leaders to work for regional unity amidst diversity. One evidence for such regional unity is the common fears that the Southeast Asian states shared since its founding. For S. Rajaratnam (1992), the first Foreign Minister of Singapore and one of the five ASEAN founders, it was common fears not common ideals the prompted founders to establish ASEAN. In his own words:

ASEAN was born on 8 August 1967 out of fear rather than idealistic convictions about regionalism. As one of the two still surviving founder members of ASEAN (the other being Dr Thanat Khoman) I can attest to the triumph of fear over ideals.

The quest for regional identity and community building would translate such rational fears anchored on collective action problem into socio-psychological collective mindset of imagining themselves in defining and delineating a “normative space” for establishing “the Association” that would represent the collective will of the nations of South-East Asia to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity (Bangkok Declaration 1967).

As an important component for community building and identity formation, however, such rich diversity need to be protected and promoted. As the Declaration on ASEAN unity in cultural diversity stipulates:

Whilst recognizing and respecting cultural diversity, ASEAN Member States will strengthen their cooperation to protect and promote the diversity of their cultures consistent with their respective international obligations. Furthermore, ASEAN Member States will ensure the utilization of their cultural diversity with a view to achieving the establishment of the ASEAN Community.

Surveys

Survey 1. ASEAN Identity: Common Bond. The general finding of survey jointly conducted in October–November 2005 by leading newspapers in six ASEAN countries – The Jakarta Post (Indonesia), Straits Times (Singapore), Star (Malaysia), Nation (Thailand), Philippine Daily Inquirer (Philippines) and Vietnam News (Vietnam) – shows that people in Southeast Asia are beginning to share a common identity as members of ASEAN. Six out of ten people, or 60% of those interviewed felt that Southeast Asian people identified with each other. “Remarkably, in Vietnam, one of the new ASEAN member countries, the highest percentage of people was found who felt that people in ASEAN identify with each other – 86 percent” (Katsumata 2006). The fact that surveys are not that definitive, and those interviewed were urban elites in six countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) do not make the survey results any less indicative of the evolving identity among ASEAN peoples. As Acharya puts it: “the elites are important part of the process of imagining regional identity,
just as they play a key role in developing national identity, and in democratic transitions. At the very least, the survey says that identity is an important factor in regionalism, that is has to be taken into account, and that it is evolving” (Acharya 2006b, 160). The following is a summary of the survey:

**Survey 2. Attitudes and Awareness toward ASEAN: Findings of a Ten Nation Survey.** A on-campus survey conducted in September-November 2007 among more than 2,000 students in key universities of ASEAN countries by Dr. Eric C. Thompson (National University of Singapore) and Dr. Chulanee Thianthai (Chulalongkorn University) measured the students’ (i) attitudes towards ASEAN as a whole; (ii) knowledge about the region and Association; (iii) orientation towards the region and the countries in it; (iv) sources of information about the region; and (v) aspirations for regional integration. Some of the survey questions were: (a) Do youth today consider themselves to be citizens of ASEAN? (b) Are the region’s youth enthusiastic or skeptical about ASEAN? (c) How well do the region’s youth know ASEAN and its members? (d) What are their concerns for the Association and the region?

**General Findings.** “Dr. Thompson and Dr Chulanee Thianthai point out that the responses indicate a perhaps embryonic but nonetheless perceptible sense of ownership in ASEAN, as citizens of the region. The survey, however, also indicates some clear differences in knowledge and opinions or even
ambivalence on certain matters, which deserve further attention and study if ASEAN is to achieve some semblance of regional identity and of being a regional entity” (Thompson and Thianthai 2008, p. xiii).

Specific Findings: The findings are the following: For question (i) on attitudes towards ASEAN as a whole, 75% felt they are citizens of ASEAN and demonstrated generally positive attitudes towards the Association. For the question (ii) on knowledge about the region and the Association, students showed strong knowledge about the Association and the region, with 75% of them being able to identify ASEAN flag, 50% of its year of founding, and students could list nine out of ten ASEAN countries and identify seven on a map of Southeast Asia. For question (iii) on orientation towards the region and the countries in it, students found Thailand and Malaysia as the most salient countries, and Thailand and Singapore as the most familiar. “Generally, students are most aware and familiar with countries in their own sub-region. Within Mainland Southeast Asia, other countries are more salient than familiar. In other words, students in Mainland nations feel more familiar with some Maritime countries (Singapore, Malaysia) than with neighbors.” Moreover, over 90% were interested to know more about the ASEAN countries, with the strongest interest coming from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines, while the weakest interest coming from Myanmar. For question (iv) on sources of information about the region, the primary sources were television, school, newspapers, books; secondary sources were internet and radio; other sources included sports, advertising, and friends; and least important sources included family, travel, movies, music, work. The notable trends were that: “ Everywhere, Internet rated less important than television and newspapers; Importance of Internet reveals a linguistic bias (rather than wealth bias); Media environments differ, for example Radio is especially important in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos; but not so elsewhere.” For question (v) on aspirations for regional integration, the most important to least important were: (1) Economic Cooperation, (2) Tourism, (3) Development Assistance, (4) Educational Exchange, (5) Security and Military Cooperation, (6) Sports, (7) Cultural Exchange, and (8) Political Cooperation.

Survey’s Policy Relevance. According to Dr. Thompson and Dr Chulanee Thianthai, the findings “provide useful input for ASEAN policy makers involved in the business of promoting regional awareness and identity, and suggest where interventions can be most effective in engendering a shared sense of ASEAN-ness among the 567 million people in ASEAN, who will one day be part of the ASEAN community-building endeavor” (Thompson and Thianthai 2008, p. xiii).

27 Students’ attitude towards ASEAN range from the very enthusiastic and positive, to the ambivalent and skeptical, although that skepticism comes mainly from students in Myanmar, and even then, only from one particular segment of the respondents there. Overall, Myanmar students retain a positive attitude towards ASEAN. Ambivalence is more widespread, and appears mostly in the ASEAN countries which have been member of the Association longest – most notably in Singapore. Philippine students are among those least knowledgeable about ASEAN but they demonstrate a keen desire to learn more about the region. Enthusiasm ranks the highest in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam” (Thompson and Thianthai 2008, p. xiii).
4. ASEAN Identity and Foreign Policy

Southeast Asian states reflect and manifest their ASEAN identity in their foreign policies. The evidence for this is the way they conceive and practice ASEAN as the cornerstone of their foreign policy. They do this either explicitly stating ASEAN as the “cornerstone” (e.g. Malaysia, Brunei) or “context” (e.g. Philippines) of their foreign policies or implicitly by stating the importance of ASEAN in terms of economic integration (e.g. Vietnam), strengthening ASEAN (e.g. Thailand) and duty to take leadership in ASEAN and its vision of ASEAN community by 2015 (e.g. Indonesia) as can be found in their foreign policy statements.

For Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, in their pursuit of regional cooperation and the maintenance of regional peace and stability, ASEAN serves as the cornerstone of their foreign policies, to wit:

In Malaysia's foreign policy, regional cooperation has always been its major preoccupation. ASEAN remains our cornerstone. In this respect, Malaysia attaches vital importance to relationship with countries in our own Southeast Asian region. ASEAN will continue to be the cornerstone of our foreign policy and the predominant forum for maintaining regional peace and stability through dialogue and cooperation. The peace, prosperity and stability that Malaysia enjoys today are to a large extent, due to ASEAN's role as an organisation that fosters trust and confidence amongst its member states. (Italics added) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Brunei Darussalam joined ASEAN as its sixth member soon after assuming her full independence in January 1984.... Since then, ASEAN became the cornerstone of Brunei's foreign policies. Through ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam participates in various other regional frameworks including ASEAN regional Forum, ASEAN Plus Three and East Asia Summit. (Italics added) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

For the Philippines, in line with the eight foreign policy realities outlined by President Aquino III is the contextualizing of the country’s foreign policy decisions in ASEAN. According to its Department of Foreign Affairs:

Philippine foreign policy decisions have to be made in the context of ASEAN

In terms of economic integration, Vietnam considers “comprehensive and efficient cooperation with ASEAN and Asia-Pacific countries” as stated in its foreign policy.

Proactively and actively engage in international economic integration following a roadmap in conformity with the national development strategy till 2010 and the 2020 vision. Make proper preparations for the signing of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements. Promote comprehensive and efficient cooperation with ASEAN and Asia-Pacific countries. Consolidate and develop reliable bilateral cooperation with strategic partners; effectively take advantage of opportunities and minimize challenges and risks following our accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). (Italics added) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

As a component of its major foreign policy statement, Thailand seeks inter alia, to “strengthen ASEAN” and “realize the goal of creating an ASEAN community”.

Promote cooperation to strengthen ASEAN during Thailand’s chairmanship as well as to realize the goal of creating an ASEAN Community as stipulated in the ASEAN Charter by making ASEAN a people-centred organization, encouraging member countries to collectively respect human rights, pushing for ASEAN to play a leading constructive role in international fora, and expanding cooperation with other Asian countries through various cooperative frameworks both within Asia and between Asia and other regions. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

On the part of Indonesia, ASEAN is a major part of the directions and strategies of its foreign policy, as evident in the following:

**To take on a more significant role and leadership in ASEAN and in the establishment of ASEAN Community 2015**

Some efforts to take on a more significant role and leadership in ASEAN particularly in the establishment of ASEAN Community in 2015 are as follows:

(i) **The development and implementation of the grand design of ASEAN community** which will be used to introduce ASEAN Charter plan of action and to gain the commitment of all stakeholders in Indonesia to the implementation of the plan of action in economy, politics and security as well as social and culture. The support from domestic stakeholders will strengthen the role and leadership of Indonesia in ASEAN.

As the Chair of ASEAN in 2013, Indonesia should focus its attention to the support that is required to prepare for its performance.

(ii) **The improvement of technical coordination and introduction of ASEAN blueprint.** Indonesia’s role and leadership in ASEAN is also determined by its consistent effort in performing what is stated in the ASEAN blueprint. To that end, technical coordination between ministries involved in the technical matters and the local government for the integration of the blueprint into the national law and for its implementation must be ensured. In addition, the introduction of ASEAN blueprint is necessary to affirm the commitment of domestic stakeholders, i.e., the central government, local government and the people. The commitment of and support from the central and local governments in the development will surely minimize the development between Indonesian and other ASEAN countries.

(iii) **Indonesia’s active participation in each and every ASEAN forum**

The country’s active participation is required to maintain and increase trust, demonstrate commitment and win the battle of ideas to direct ASEAN to the collectively desired path. (Emphasis in original) (Department of Foreign Affairs)

Equally important in correlating domestic foreign policies of Southeast Asian states with their ASEAN identity is the formulation process of their respective foreign policy and the dynamics involve. Two
Southeast Asian states – Malaysia and Indonesia – have sections regarding this formulation process and dynamics in their respective ministry and department of foreign affairs, respectively.

For Malaysia, foreign policy is “basically an extension of Malaysia’s domestic policy”, thus it is subject to domestic decision-making processes and actors owing to “diversity of views regarding the perception and explanation of foreign policy.” Without expounding on this process and actors in their Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, the following is the diagram illustrating this foreign policy formulation processes and actors.

(Malaysia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Indonesia identifies the actors involved in the domestic formulation process of its foreign policy. According to its Law Number 37 of 1999, foreign relation is performed by a collage of actors, namely:

Foreign Relation is any activity in relation to regional and international aspects performed by the central and local governments, or Indonesian institutions, state institutions, legal entities, political organizations, civil society organizations, NGOs, or Indonesian people (Department of Foreign Affairs)
5. Limitations of ASEAN identity

ASEAN identity as a social construct is not without limitations. Key among these are intra-regional tensions and conflicts, globalization with its effects on non-traditional issues, saliency of national identity, and political heterogeneity. The commonality of this confluence of factors that are inhibiting, diluting, emasculating, and effacing ASEAN identity – in one way or another - results from an admixture of “religious” adherence, cautious deference, adroit dilution, and “closet” revulsion of the sacrosanct principle of ASEAN sovereignty with its corollary norms of non-intervention and non-interference.

Intra-regional tensions and conflicts

Although ASEAN has become a nascent security community that has made war unthinkable in the Southeast Asian region, it has not made intra-regional tensions disappear, and thus has not discounted the possibility of intra-regional conflicts brewing in the offing. There remain a number of sources of inter-state and regional tensions in Southeast Asia, which can be grouped into three categories:

The first was the spillover effects of domestic conflicts, especially ethnic, political, and ideological challenges to state structure and regime security…A second source of intra-ASEAN conflict related to disputes over territory…Third, relations between Southeast Asian countries are also tested by lingering animosities which have ethnic, cultural, religious and nationalist roots. (Acharya 2009a,149-156)

In the post-Cold War era, examples for intra-ASEAN tensions in the first category could be about the spillover effects of lingering domestic insurgencies in member countries such as in southern Philippines, southern Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and Indonesia. These kinds of intra-regional tensions are a problem for at least two reasons. One, the exodus of refugees has become a burden to neighboring countries, economically, politically, and culturally. Indonesia-Malaysian relations in the 1980s and 1990s were severed because of the influx of refugees from Aceh to Malaysia, The Thai-Burmese relations were also severed in the 1990s because of Karen separatists taking refuge in Thai borders, and in 2001 of Shan State rebels found in Thai territory in Mae Sai. Second, it is a problem because of the support – real or imagined – given by a neighboring ASEAN state to separatist movements. Malaysian-Philippines relations have been severed because of the perceived support given by Malaysian authorities in Sabah to the Moro separatists in Mindanao, as well as the Malaysian-Thai relations in view of Thailand’s perception that Malaysia has been supporting separatists in Southern Thailand.

For second category, territorial disputes –both maritime and continental - have always severed relations among Southeast Asian countries. Examples of these include the lingering Malaysia-Philippine dispute over Sabah (the very first bilateral tension that could have doomed the fate of ASEAN just like its institutional precursors such as SEATO, ASA, MAPHILIDO); Thai-Malaysia dispute over their common
border; the Malaysia-Singapore dispute over the Pulau Batu Puteh/Pedra Blanca Island in the Singapore Strait (which was settled by the International Court of Justice in 2008 in favor of Singapore but with lingering disputes over issues on maritime boundaries such as boundary demarcation, exclusive economic zones, fishing rights, and resource exploitation issues; Burma-Malaysia dispute over Limbang; and the Malaysia-Indonesia dispute over the Sipadan and Litigan Islands in the Sulawesi Sea near the Sabah-Kalimatan Border (which was settled by ICJ in Malaysia’s favor but with lingering tensions leading to near clashes between their navies); the Indonesia-Vietnam dispute over Natura Islands in the South China Sea; and the Thai-Laos and Thai-Burma border disputes.

For the third category, lingering animosities continue to sever ASEAN relations. Examples of these include Singapore-Malaysian relations that was exacerbated by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, with Malaysia accusing Singapore of not providing enough financial assistance in order not to avail of extra-ASEAN assistance with too stringent conditionalities; and the Singapore-Indonesia relations suffered for almost the same financial reason during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, with former President Habibie unhesitatingly criticizing Singapore for not being a “friend in need” (Straight Times, 1998, 16); and the Thai-Cambodia relations severed in 2008 because of the Preah Vihar Temple.

Aside from these examples for the three sources of intra-regional tensions, there are intra-ASEAN flashpoints such as, inter alia, how to deal with China and the increasing arms race among Southeast countries. First ASEAN have been divided as to how to deal with the rise of China, the South China Sea disputes, and China’s increasing regional influence on ASEAN countries, particularly on the late entrants to ASEAN. ASEAN countries are divided on how to deal with China, that is, whether its rise should be treated as a threat or an opportunity for Southeast Asian countries (Ba 2003, 2005, 2006, 2009; Ravenhill, 2006; Tsunekawa 2009; Yang 2010; Beeson 2010; Goh 2005, 2007, 2011); whether to favor bilateral than ASEAN-wide dispute settlement with regard to South China Sea dispute (Odgaard 2003; Emmers 2009; Acharya 2011c); and whether to stand by the wayside while China’s gains influence over Cambodia, Burma, and Laos through its charm offensive diplomacy or take ASEAN-wide diplomatic policy actions to ensure that these late entrants establish such good relations with China not at the expense of ASEAN and its community-building projects especially on the economic and security areas. Secondly, the increasing arms race among ASEAN countries in terms of defense spending and arms imports may not lead to security dilemma but continuing concerns about the rationale for such an increase. For example, Siemon Wezeman (2010), an expert from Stockholm Peace Research Institute, warns that “The current wave of South East Asian acquisitions could destabilise the region, jeopardising decades of peace.”

Globalization

Globalization limits ASEAN identity. This is evident in its effects on non-traditional issues such as financial crisis, pandemics, natural disasters, and terrorism.

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28 According to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, there was a “dramatic increase between 2005 and 2009 with Malaysia ramping up its arms imports by 722 percent, Singapore 146 percent and Indonesia 84 percent,” as well as making Singapore “the first member of ASEAN to make SIPRI’s list of top 10 biggest arms importers since the end of the Vietnam war, giving the nation seventh place overall”. “Singapore first among ASEAN to make list of top 10 biggest arms importers,” http://jacob69.wordpress.com/2010/03/30/singapore-first-among-asean-to-make-list-of-top-10-biggest-arms-importers-and-then theres-the-iron-dome/
Although ASEAN countries have fared well in coping with the 2008 Global Financial Crisis compared to the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis that almost strained their relations and embarrassed ASEAN’s unpreparedness and inability to deal with the crisis, there is no room for complacency. Decoupling with the economies of Western developed economies in order to lessen collective dependency on the West, and re-coupling with those of China and India, for example, pose its own challenges. Some of these challenges are: (1) vulnerabilities of ASEAN economies to the emerging economies of China and India, which are in turn, vulnerable to the global economic crisis; (2) asymmetrical interdependence whereby ASEAN economies may increasingly become more dependent on China and India’s economies; (3) regional influence of these emerging economies on ASEAN countries, with implications on their economic and security policies, as well as ASEAN unity.

Pandemics such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Avian flu such as highly pathogenic Influenza A (H5N1) virus in 2005 and H1N1 in 2009 are serious threats to ASEAN economies and societies (Caballero-Anthony 2008, 201). Their continued threat to Southeast Asian societies has impact on ASEAN identity in terms of how each country deals with the problem and avoids spillover effects to neighboring countries. World Health Organization, for example, reports that pandemic influenza is still active in some parts of Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand and Malaysia. Although there have been improvements in decreasing overall intensity of diseases, virus transmission still poses human threats.

In Southeast Asia, pandemic influenza virus transmission has remained active and geographically widespread in Thailand since mid February 2010 and has been increasing since early March in Malaysia. In Thailand, the overall intensity of respiratory disease activity was reported to be low to moderate, and activity now appears to decreasing since mid March 2009; 10-22% of sentinel respiratory samples from patients with ILI tested positive for pandemic influenza during the most recent reporting week. In Malaysia, limited data suggests increasing detections of pandemic H1N1 cases over the past two weeks, although the extent and severity of illness is not currently known. Low numbers of seasonal influenza B viruses continue to be isolated in Thailand and in other parts of Southeast Asia. (WHO 2010)

Natural disasters such as 2004 Tsunami and the cyclone Nargis in 2008 that affected Indonesia and Burma respectively are beyond the control of each country. But the effective response to these natural disasters is within the control not only of these affected countries but also ASEAN. However, “control” maybe a big word insofar as adherence to norms of non-intervention and non-interference is concerned, which makes other ASEAN countries maybe willing but unable to respond effectively because of sovereignty issues and regional disunity. The same goes with Indonesian forest fires that have been causing transboundary haze and has cost billions of dollars in terms of human health and economic opportunities (Glover and Jessup 1999; Butler 2008). Lack of political will and capacity for disaster management may hamper regional cooperation and identity-building.29

29 One may wonder what these two cases of natural disasters have to do with climate change, and thus lead to ask the question about how ASEAN is effectively addressing climate change and its future impact on regional unity and identity. The “ASEAN Leaders’ Statement on Joint Response to Climate Change” make declarations about working “towards a global solution to the challenge of climate change at COP 16/CMP 6” and “towards an ASEAN Community resilient to climate change.” It would be interesting to see how individual ASEAN countries have committed and implemented such regional and international obligations.
Terrorism makes evident the vulnerability of the Southeast Asian region owing to the multiethnic composition of the countries and their insurgency problems. Countries like Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines are the most vulnerable. Jemmah Islamiah (JI) has found it rather easy to penetrate their societies because of some Muslim populations sympathetic to their cause, shared goals and mutual dependency between terrorists and insurgent groups, porous borders, and the cumbersome democratic process to deal with terrorism. Not only can terrorism cause lives and properties, it could also cost regional identity by offering alternative conception of Southeast Asian identity with the JI’s goal of pan-Southeast Asian Islamic state. Thus, the absence of more effective individual country and regional frameworks for combating terrorism will continue to make Southeast Asia the second front to the global war on terror, with corrosive effects on regional identity.

National Identity
Another limitation to ASEAN identity is the saliency of the national identities of member states where it is basically anchored upon. There are at least three reasons why this can be the case.

First, ASEAN countries do not identify with one another. Former President Habibie’s comment that Singapore is a “little red dot in a sea of green” smacks of racism - pitting the Chinese--dominated Singapore against Malay-dominated region. This perpetuates Singapore’s siege mentality owing to its geographical weakness in the face of its two big neighbors Malaysia and Indonesia which both have historical baggages against the city-state. Another example is Indonesia’s status as primus inter pares – being the largest country in the region – which has hegemonic tendencies (in Mearsheimer’s domination sense) since ASEAN’s founding, if not self-ascribed hegemony (in the Gramscian consensual sense) to which its neighbors should heed and pay respect. Other examples have to do with self-exceptionalism (i.e. Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam), with negative implications for ASEAN regionalism and regional identity-building. Singapore’s self-exceptionalism is attributable to its “unusual characteristics, struggle with national identity, overriding economic imperatives for national survival” (Thompson 2006). One could ask the question of what really makes Singapore part and parcel of Southeast Asia, geographically, economically, and culturally. Thailand’s identity is based on the historical fact of being the only country in Southeast Asia that was not colonized due mainly to the adroit leadership of their ancestors and the favorable historical circumstances such as Western Powers’ preoccupation with other parts of Southeast Asia (Wyatt 1984). The Philippines’ identity as the only country in Southeast Asia that was “relatively untouched” by “Indianisation” and “Sinicisation” during the pre-colonial system has been labeled the “third category” of cultural and political influence. This “third category” identity has had political ramifications such as the development of unique polities during the classical era compared to its neighbors whose polities were influenced culturally by India and China (Acharya 2000, 19-20). One could add to Philippines’ self-exceptionalism that of having a national hero - Jose Rizal - as the first Asian nationalist whose influence preceded that of Sun Yat Sen, Tagore, Gandhi. Lastly, Vietnam’s identity as the only country in the region that was able to win the war against two Western Powers (US and France) during the Cold War.
Second, ASEAN identity can only be robust and “sublime” if and only if it is a product of peoples’ imagining, not just an elite invention. The ASCC is aimed at making ASEAN a people-based institution. Complementing that is the ASEAN Charter’s aims

To promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building;

To promote an ASEAN identity through the fostering of greater awareness of the diverse culture and heritage of the region (ASEAN Charter 2007)

Intention is one thing, implementation is another. If the action plans for such noble normative goals for a people-centered ASEAN identity fall short of collective expectations, then ASEAN identity would continue to be elite-centric, without the benefit of peoples’ “imagined” construction and contestation.

Third, and related to the second, ASEAN identity must be constructed out of democratic multiculturalism, that is, with ethnic groups in each ASEAN country having democratic space in vying for “national identity” construction, first at their national level, and then at the regional level. The problem is that too much diversity makes this easier said than done. It other words, ethnic diversity of Southeast Asia makes the elite-led ASEAN identity suspect, if not problematic. Owing to multiethnic composition of the societies, one could ask whether ASEAN identity is indeed a collective identity for the Southeast Asia region. If ASEAN identity is an imagined identity, one could ask “whose imagined identity?” Perhaps, due to the authoritarian regimes that proliferate in Southeast Asia, it is not far-fetched to imagine that such ASEAN identity was a product of authoritarian fiat without the benefit of different ethnic societies’ “imagined construction”. And if it’s a product of democratic process based on multiculturalism (Brown 2006, 478-69), then still one needs to ask what makes the ASEAN identity formation multicultural.30 The bottom line is that if national identity as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) is problematic in itself in view of the different ethnic groups competing to make their ethnic identity the “national identity”, then it makes even more imperative to problematize the identity formation at the regional level in view of the different potential ethnic-based, people-oriented collective imaginings.

**Political Heterogeneity**31

The different political systems and values of Southeast Asian countries pose limits to ASEAN identity. There are three reasons for this. First, ASEAN prides itself as a nascent security community as its primordial identity that has not required its member states to become liberal democratic polities as a prerequisite for membership. As argued in the previous section, this has been a radical departure from Deutschian and Adlerian conceptions of security communities making liberal democracy as an indispensable requirement. In the context of ASEAN, the pragmatic aim of establishing an association for

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30 Another suggestion is creation of multinational state. Jonsson (2008,14) opines: “A way to solve the problem is to become a multinational state which guarantees ethnic rights to the nations within it, something that, for example, Burma /Myanmar has chosen not to do.”

31 Due to space constraint, no diagram from the Freedom House can be supplied.
regional cooperation despite diverse political systems and values outweigh the normative liberal aim.\footnote{Jones (2008, 277) observes:}

ASEAN’s durability reflects the craft of its statesmen. The limited, conservative project that its founders instantiated in 1967 reflected what was possible at the time, in the postcolonial context of the Cold War. ASEAN was not the product of a normative preoccupation with human rights or democracy. Its first generation of leaders was pragmatic. They recognized the limitations of regional cooperation.

But liberal democracy may indeed become a requirement considering the values that other Southeast countries are placing on democracy, with the ultimate goal to “transform ASEAN into a ‘democratic entity’” in order to “revitalize itself in response to the new and complex challenges of the twenty-first century” (Sukma 2008, 137). This was evident in the original proposal of Indonesia, being supported by Thailand and the Philippines, for an ASEAN Security Community as a “‘Democratic’ Security Community” (Sukma 2008, 139). Although the final version of the proposal was a mere watered down version of the original Indonesian proposal, it “did give ASEAN a democratic agenda to work on.” As Sukma puts it:

This victory for the Indonesia position was in some ways more apparent than real. Both the VAP and the ASCPA watered down Indonesia’s original ‘democracy agenda’ for ASEAN. Neither document referred, for example, to general elections as a key ingredient of democracy, or to the need to widen political participation by holding them. The ASCPA did, however, make democracy an objective of ASEAN when it called on member states to promote ‘political development’ in order to ‘achieve peace, stability, democracy and prosperity in the region’ (emphasis added). It also stated that ‘ASEAN member Countries shall not condone unconstitutional and undemocratic changes of government’ and included promoting ‘human rights’ as one strategy for political development, although the full phrase used ‘human rights and obligations.’ However imperfect this result, it did give ASEAN a democratic agenda to work on (Sukma 2008, 139-40).

ASEAN’s democracy agenda may not augur well for the recalcitrant\footnote{Emmerson (2008, 11) contends that there is a “contrast between the global ‘third wave’ of political reform and the regional ‘recalcitrance’ that persists in Southeast Asia.” See also Emmerson (1995). For the correlation between democracy and insecurity, particularly the reduction of domestic violence, see Acharya (2010, 335-358).} non-democratic member states who question the “possible damage that such a ‘democracy agenda’ might do to ASEAN’s cardinal principles.
of non-interference, national sovereignty, consensus, and quiet diplomacy” (Sukma 2008, 138). This does have an implication to ASEAN identity that while being built on the member states’ diverse political regimes is also evolving to having “democracy agenda”, if not liberal democracy with Southeast Asian characteristics.

Second, liberal democracy may indeed become a requirement considering the political values that other Southeast countries are placing on human rights. This is evident in Chartering ASEAN, that is, in not only giving it a “legal personality” to enable it to realize the three pillars of ASEAN Community, but more importantly, of promoting and protecting human rights (Alatas 2007; Emmerson 2008; Caballero-Anthony 2008; Acharya 2009a). Like the original Indonesia proposal for ASC, the final ASEAN Charter written by the High-Level Task Force (HLTF) was a watered down version of the report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on the ASEAN Charter that was established in the 11th Summit with the mandate to recommend “on the directions and nature of the ASEAN Charter.” As Sukma (2008, 141) observes:

The actual Charter, adopted at the ASEAN’s 13th Summit, in Singapore in November 2007, did retain ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ as legitimate goals of the Association. In the HLTF’s closed-door deliberations, the case for omitting such references altogether had not prevailed. Yet the Charter as finally revealed in Singapore was not an unalloyed instrument for the pursuit of democracy in Southeast Asia. In particular, ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ were retained in the Charter only in a general reference to the need for member states ‘to strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.’ The Charter does not explain how these goals might be pursued, or what, if anything, will happen to the members that do not pursue them.

Thus, although ASEAN states have crafted themselves a Charter to promote and protect human rights and practice democracy, it remains to be seen whether they will really go beyond mere rhetoric in doing so. 34 It remains to be seen whether they will go from mere mimetic adoption of “isomorphic” Western norms such as human rights (Katsumata 2007, 2009) to “constitutive localization” (Acharya 2004, 2009b) of such global norm. For the problem of ASEAN, as the EPG laments, is not any “lack of vision, ideas, and action plans. The real problem is one of ensuring compliance and effective implementation of decisions” (EPG Report 2006). Whether the “human rights agenda” of ASEAN will prosper could have both negative and positive impacts on the “ASEAN Way” and the regional project of identity formation and community-building.

Third, in line with the construction of ASEAN Community by 2015, the Charter as its legal framework, and the “democracy and human rights agenda” underpinning them, is the requirement for participatory regionalism – a kind of regionalism that provides enabling and facilitative conditions for “real” participation of all stakeholders in ensuring both a People’s ASEAN and a Government’s ASEAN (Katsumata and Tan 2007; Acharya 2011d). Although this “non-official regionalism” need not oppose, if not replace, the “official regionalism” – the elite-driven regionalism that has characterized ASEAN - it may have an impact on ASEAN identity considering the proclivity of the former to offer alternative

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34 For an incisive discussion of ten constraints in realizing the “democracy agenda” – i.e. non-interference principle, official regionalism, comfortable inconsistency, nationalist feelings, diverse regimes, different motives, problematic democracy, stability first, disinclined neighbors, and global backlash, see Sukma (2008,141-6).
conception not just of regional order but also of ASEAN identity formation. ASEAN has given “democratic space” for non-state organizations with the constructive engagement between Tracks I and II (primarily think tanks composing ASEAN Institutes for Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)), but how “democratic” is the space it could give to Track III grouping (composed of NGOs with a regional and transnational membership and agendas and more radical than those think tanks in Track II groupings), remains a daunting challenge. It should be underscored that there is a difference between non-state regionalism composed of semi-official regionalism (Track II) and non-official regionalism (Track III). The fundamental difference is that: “While semiofficial regionalism is sovereignty-confirming, nonofficial regionalism is sovereignty challenging” (Acharya 2011d). Thus, the ASEAN identity that has been partly constructed out of the “sovereignty-confirming” meetings of Tracks I and II may have to be redefined in view of the “sovereignty-challenging” nature of nonofficial regionalism.

6. Policy Implications

Maintaining ASEAN Centrality
ASEAN centrality has been anchored on ASEAN identity as a nascent security community. ASEAN has become the “leader”, the “driver”, the “architect”, the “institutional hub”, the “vanguard”, the “nucleus”, and the “fulcrum” of regional processes and institutional designs in the Asia Pacific because of its unique style of regionalism that provides a normative framework conducive to regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Endogenous and exogenous factors have both made it possible for ASEAN to attain such position of centrality. Endogenously, ASEAN, through deepening regional cooperation since its founding, has catapulted itself to being a nascent security community that has made war unthinkable in the Southeast Asian region, as well as provided regional goods for mutual benefits and burdens of its member states. Exogenously, the post-Cold War era has induced a “power vacuum” that no major powers can fill in by themselves except ASEAN whose “leadership” has been accepted as non-threatening. Thus, exogenously, ASEAN, through broadening regional cooperation, could influence great powers’ behavior, if not change their identities through socialization. Such is the ration d’etre for identity-based ASEAN centrality. To maintain such centrality – both from within and from without - ASEAN has to focus on the following strategic, material, and ideational considerations:

Form and Substance. First, ASEAN has to define what centrality means as befits its “leadership” role. Drawing from ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan’s distinction between “centrality of substance” and “centrality of goodwill”, the definition of centrality must go beyond the “form” of centrality – that is, being just at the center of institutional arrangements such as ASEAN +1, ASEAN +3, ARF, EAS, and APEC – and provide the “substance” of centrality – setting the regional agenda, for example.

Setting the Normative Regional Agenda – Second, ASEAN can flesh out the “form” of its centrality by formulating and setting a normative regional agenda. What could be ASEAN’s substantive “regional agenda”? Regional agenda on pursuing non-traditional issues, for example, would be a step in the right
direction. Another would be that of proposing its own conception of regional order (which may be undergirded by ASEAN Community) especially now that there seems to be a power shift to Asia (Tellis 2010, Bisley 2010). Still another could be the establishment of an Asian Secretariat (ADBI 2012) that will serve as the bureaucratic operationalization of the “complex patchworks” (Cha 2011) of institutions in the Asia Pacific, in conjunction with ASEAN Secretariat in avoiding “spaghetti bowl” effect. Further, without punching above its weight, ASEAN could lead in creating a Pan-Asian identity, or better yet, an Asia-Pacific Security Community anchored on its experience of building a nascent security community in its backyard, as well as on its evolving community-building project, i.e. ASEAN Community.

ASEAN can claim a modicum of achievement for having all major powers of the global system engaged in the region, and obligated to adhere to its TAC for their relations. But far more important as an achievement would be to see it craft a substantive regional agenda with TAC as its normative basis, and with great powers following its lead in realizing such agenda; thus addressing the criticism that it is leading these great powers only by default.

**Institutional Change.** Third, ASEAN has to reform and strengthen its institutions - foremost of them is the ASEAN Way. ASEAN Way has worked well for ASEAN regionalism. Whether it can be transported to the Asia Pacific region remains to be seen (Acharya 1997). Broadening regional cooperation by enmeshing great powers of the Asia Pacific (Goh 2008) might have to entail rethinking its ASEAN Way to make it more effective for problem-solving than the old habit of “sweeping issues under the carpet.” ASEAN need not throw the baby out of the bathwater. It needs just to figure out how to reform and strengthen its institutions such as the ASEAN Way in order to effectively and sustainably meet the challenges of charting the role and future of “ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations” as the theme of the 19th ASEAN Summit (ASEAN Secretariat 2011). Another major institutional change could involve the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEAN cannot meet the challenges of the 21st century unless it capacitates its own bureaucracy. ASEAN leaders have acknowledged the importance of this in the Bali Concord III:

> A strengthened capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat which is able to support the vision and development of the ASEAN Community in a global community of nations.

**Adaptive Normative Politics.** Fourth, ASEAN must practice adaptive normative politics to maintain centrality – more adroitly than in the past. ASEAN has catapulted itself to its position of centrality because it has succeeded in practicing adaptive politics that helped it achieved its regional goals of autonomy, resilience, identity, and community-building. Its regional project of ASEAN Community by 2015, anchored on ASEAN Charter, is evidence of its adaptive normative politics of making itself relevant in the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific region. But now more than ever, it must practice adaptive politics through normative regionalism by effectively socializing the great powers in the ASEAN-led institutions in order to balance their influence (Goh 2008, Ciocari 2009), tame their behavior, and shape their identities. The power of its norms and the substance of its regional agenda can make headway in this regard.
Cohesion, Unity, and Purpose. Fifth, ASEAN cohesion, unity and purpose are absolute prerequisites in maintaining ASEAN centrality from within. Although ASEAN has become a nascent security community, this has not “aggregated” the different national interests of its member states. But the same regional rallying point of regional cooperation that drove their founders should help propel them to aspire for higher collective goals as a way to address the more daunting contemporary challenges. Back then, Thanat Khoman (1992), one of the ASEAN founders, recalls the reasons for building an “organization for co-operation”, namely:

But why did this region need an organization for co-operation?

The reasons were numerous. The most important of them was the fact that, with the withdrawal of the colonial powers, there would have been a power vacuum which could have attracted outsiders to step in for political gains. As the colonial masters had discouraged any form of intra-regional contact, the idea of neighbors working together in a joint effort was thus to be encouraged.

Secondly, as many of us knew from experience, especially with the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization or SEATO, co-operation among disparate members located in distant lands could be ineffective. We had therefore to strive to build co-operation among those who lived close to one another and shared common interests.

Thirdly, the need to join forces became imperative for the Southeast Asian countries in order to be heard and to be effective. This was the truth that we sadly had to learn. The motivation for our efforts to band together was thus to strengthen our position and protect ourselves against Big Power rivalry.

Finally, it is common knowledge that co-operation and ultimately integration serve the interests of all-something that individual efforts can never achieve.

Presently, the demands of centrality include no less than ASEAN cohesion, unity, and purpose. Otherwise, member states might easily be engulfed, cajoled, and influenced by the big powers if they merely pursue their individual national interests at the expense of regional interests. Such cohesion,
unity, and purpose will not only help ASEAN maintain its centrality and leadership, it could earn respect for such a position. As ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan (2009) puts it:

> ASEAN Centrality and leaderships need to be earned. It has both external and internal dimensions. First and foremost, it must be based on the inner strength of the ASEAN Community. It requires ASEAN Member States to stay united, increase coordination and participate as a cohesive group with clear common objectives, and with active support of a strengthened ASEAN Secretariat. Secondly, it will depend on ASEAN’s continuing external engagement, as well as the content of that engagement.

_Altimate Scenarios_. There should be a room for critical and creative thinking insofar as the future directions of regional architecture is concerned. Since uncertainty defines international politics, ASEAN cannot be certain that its ASEAN-centric multilateralism that works at the moment could be sustained in the offing considering the regional dynamics and future trajectories. Thus there is a need for ASEAN to find a way on how to fit in certain alternative scenarios, better yet, to still retain its “driver’s seat” as the vanguard of normative regionalism. For example, if the great powers could mitigate their conflicting interests, correct their stereotyped identities, and establish a “Concert of Asia” (Acharya 1999a; 1999b; Smith and Khoo 2001), then ASEAN would have to know how to work its way in such a system without getting itself marginalized. The recent claim for “equal partnership” by the major powers before the 6th EAS must serve as warning to ASEAN that its position of centrality may not always be viewed by the great powers to be in their interest (Chongkittavorn 2011). In any eventuality, ASEAN must be adroitly prepared to position itself against the tide of power politics by making its normative influence more appealing to the great powers for their long-term interests. There should be no room for complacency for ASEAN. It must start reinventing itself (Acharya 2007a). It must start thinking of the “what-ifs?” scenarios or the counter-factual conditionals. Doing so would be a way to flesh out the declarations on the need for a “more coordinated, cohesive, and coherent ASEAN” as stated in Bali Concord III as follows:

> A more coordinated, cohesive, and coherent ASEAN position on global issues of common interest and concern, based on a shared ASEAN global view, which would further enhance ASEAN’s common voice in relevant multilateral fora;

> An enhanced ASEAN capacity to contribute and respond to key global issues of common interest and concern which would benefit all ASEAN Member States and its peoples.

_US Re-engagement_  
The recent US diplomatic overtures to Southeast Asia have helped “overcome some of Southeast Asian ambivalence and wariness over Washington’s episodic high-level attention and often offensive unilateral attitudes” (Sutter 2009, 205). This has been evident through the launching of “forward-deployed diplomacy” strategy in the region made manifest in the following:

* President Barack Obama’s participation in the 6th EAS in November 2011
* US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton’s attendance in the 18th ARF in July 2011
Aside from these diplomatic overtures, US-ASEAN relations have been supported by the following key arrangements:

- ASEAN-U.S. Cooperation (2002)

Considering the renewed US commitment to ASEAN as evidenced by these diplomatic overtures and deepening partnerships and agreements, one must ask how the mutual pro-engagement between the US and ASEAN should be conducted in the face of burgeoning challenges and uncertain strategic environment in the Asia Pacific.

**Form and Function.** First, there should be complementarity between US proclivity for hard regionalism (function over form) and ASEAN soft regionalism (form over function) especially on political and security issues that may be unpalatable to other major powers in the region. Pundits may understand the causal logic of why function followed form in the ASEAN context. But they cannot make head or tail of why Asian institutions should continue to follow such kind of multilateralism.

It is not, to be sure, difficult to understand why and how so many Asian institutions took form, not function, as their touchstone. ASEAN, whose members have historically lacked mutual trust for many reasons, is the best example. In the case of ASEAN, putting form first was not an alternative to putting some useful function first, but an alternative to the member states' continued near isolation. Form helped ASEAN countries, or at least the original six, become comfortable with one another and familiar with nearby leaders. But more than forty years have passed since ASEAN took shape. And whether in ASEAN or in Asia writ large, disparities of capacity and conflicting objectives make it difficult to address functional challenges in large groups or most established institutions (Feigenbaum and Manning 2009, 15).

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36 Once could argue that the fallacy of false dilemma is being committed here. For ASEAN is not all about form but also function. Nonetheless, the assumption here is based on the common perception or criticism of ASEAN as being merely about form. See Jones and Smith (2007, 148-184). See also Katsumata, Jones, and Smith (2008, 182-188) for the critical debate.
The impatience for changing the way things are done in the ASEAN-led institutions would go so far as to suggest America – given its power capabilities – in taking the lead in pursuing a function multilateralism over abstract geometry, as can be inferred from the following:

The lesson is straightforward: first identify the functional problem, and then assemble the right group of players. Put differently: avoid geometry for its own sake. Form should follow function, and any multilateral group in Asia is more likely to be effective if it assembles those with the greatest power and capacity and has a clear, agreed purpose. Heads of state, ministers, and senior officials can and must meet on some regular basis, both regionally and globally. For this reason, having an overarching forum where leaders come together on a regular basis can be a useful foundation from which to assemble effective mechanisms, whether ad hoc or more enduring. But durable and effective groupings are more likely to emerge from demonstrated common purpose than from abstract geometry (Feigenbaum and Manning 2009, 15).

But the US would be well-advised in finding the right balance between form and function considering that it is a new face at the table in ASEAN-led meetings, so to speak. This means that it has to be more sensitive to the ASEAN Way (process-based regionalism) while not totally disregarding its “White House Way” (results-based regionalism). ASEAN process-based regionalism maybe slow and all-about-talk, but it must be underscored that it is this kind of regionalism that has made possible, inter alia, the peaceful engagement of all major powers of the global system, the US included. Besides, it is this process-based regionalism or ASEAN soft institutionalism or normative regionalism that has “produced” both ideational and material positive effects. As Alica Ba (2009a, 5) opines:

In this sense, traditional and conventional approaches to ASEAN are quite correct. As a dialogue-driven process, ASEAN regionalism is in fact a lot of talk; however, it is not talk without substantive, material effects. ASEAN’s talk shop has produced new social norms, a new culture of regional dialogue, as well as new social and institutional practices, that stress respect (manifested most notably in a consensus-based regionalism) and nonconfrontational, inclusive engagement. The practical effect of such changes is a regional system based on the nonviolent resolutions of problems and the normative believe that states should word toward regional solutions. One can criticize ASEAN’s norms and practice on a variety of grounds – they are too statecentric undemocratic, and time inefficient – but they are also why interstate conflicts have not escalated to breaking points the way that they did before ASEAN. At the very least, if one considers regional stability a precondition of economic growth, then these norms and ideas provide important foundation on which ASEAN’s new economies have been allowed to grow.

Finding the right balance for America would be finding the right pacing befitting ASEAN-centric Asia-Pacific order.

**Bilateralism and Multilateralism.** Second, America’s penchant for bilateralism must be balanced with multilateralism. Bilateral alliances and partnerships have been useful in underpinning Asia Pacific security order. In the security area for example, US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia alliances are important tool of US grand security strategy. Add to this, US-Thailand, US-Philippines, and US-Singapore alliances and security partnerships, respectively, have been crucial to ensuring regional peace and stability. But as America maintains such bilateral relations, and forge new relationships, both in the
security and the economic realms, it must do so not at the expense of multilateral frameworks such as ASEAN. In other words, as it deepens its US-Southeast Asian bilateral relations – with Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, and Vietnam, for example (Limaye 2010) – it must learn how to deal with ASEAN multilaterally, that is, as a corporate entity with collective identity.

Needless to say, there are some adjustments that the US has to make (Pempel 2010, 484). One adjustment could be that of taking a “pluralist approach” for a “consultative engagement” of ASEAN that takes into account the latter’s “viewpoints, interests, and constraints” (Ba 2009b, 392). The other adjustment could take a form of “convergent security” framework whereby US moves from bilateral to multilateral strategy in dealing with its small partners. Convergent security is a “managed transition from a regional security system based predominantly on multilateral security arrangements” (Tow 2001, 9; Tow and Acharya 2007, 32; Tow and Loke 2009, 453). Further, and related to “convergent security”, US would need to forge a strong linkage between its “minilateralism” such as its Trilateral Security Dialogues involving Australia, Japan and the United States and its “multilateralism” at least as it relates and impacts on its relations with ASEAN and its ASEAN-led institutions.

Broadening the Regional Agenda. Third, mutual proactive re-engagement between US and ASEAN entails having to broaden the regional agenda – encompassing broad political and security as well as economic issues (Acharya 2011c) – in order to avoid China’s perception of containment or encirclement. In the EAS, for example, the US can add new issues such as maritime security, disaster and humanitarian response, and non-proliferation to the historical five priority areas for cooperation, i.e. education, finance, avian flu, disaster management, and climate change. Also, in the ARF, broadening the agenda could mean a preference for framing political and security issues as a matter of principle, as in the case of South China Sea, than singling out China (Capie and Acharya 2011).

Redefining American Identity. Mutual US-ASEAN engagement can be an impetus for America to redefine its identity from having a manifest destiny to that of having a shared destiny with Asia (Chew 2009), if not just with ASEAN. Historically, the United States has harbored an identity dissonance with Asia because it has perceived the latter as the ‘other” and Europe as the “self” – one explanation why NATO did not develop in Asia (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002; Acharya 2004). Perhaps a change of perspective is needed to help redefine US manifest destiny especially when the present regional exigencies demand for a different way of looking at/mirroring each other. Thus, in mutually engaging each other, they would not only construct an Asia-Pacific regional order as a shared destiny but also, if not more importantly, of fashioning an identity that could make such construction possible and sustainable.

Emerging Powers
Asian regional order is in flux, and is characterized by strategic uncertainty (Khong 2004). At the moment, ASEAN is able to address such strategic uncertainty by entangling, enmeshing, or engaging the major powers - mainly the US, China, Japan, India, Russia – via multilateral institutions that guarantee a comfortable level of trust, multilateral frameworks, norms-based interactions and socialization. Entangling the US in order to address its systemic neglect (Ba 2009b) or benign neglect (Mauzy and Job
2007) of Southeast Asia, as well as China in order to address its non-transparent intentions and interests ensures an effective way of coping with strategic uncertainty. Thus, absent better alternative frameworks for Asian regionalism, ASEAN-led regionalism must continue to shape international politics in Asia. This entails retaining ASEAN as the “anchor” of Asian regionalism. The ASEAN way (albeit needing reinvention) will continue to apply beyond Southeast Asia in developing, guiding and managing Asia-Pacific and East Asian institutions such as ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS). As one of the authors (Acharya 2009a, 289; Acharya 1997, 342) of this paper argues:

> “Under ASEAN’s guidance, the development of these institutions has been, and is likely to remain cautious, slow, non-legalistic and consensual, minimizing formal and direct measures. The ASEAN way faces considerable obstacles in guiding these institutions to become effective instruments of regional order. The norms of ASEAN were developed in the subregional context of Southeast Asia; they are not going to be easily transplanted into larger and more complex security theatre such as Asia-Pacific or even East Asia. While the ARF faces questions about its effectiveness and progress in moving towards a preventive diplomacy role, the East Asian Community idea itself faces questions about its own future owing to differences over membership, and the potential for Chinese dominance (or failing that, Chinese disinterest).”

Thus, as this quotation makes clear: ASEAN, despite some limitations, will have to continue being the “fulcrum” of regional architecture. The emerging powers therefore must play by ASEAN rules and norms because it is in their interest to do so, with the following implications.

**Institutional Socialization.** If institutions are “the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North 1990,3), then ASEAN is the “rule of the game” in the Asia-Pacific regionalism. And ASEAN’s rules are nothing but the norms that have defined its ASEAN identity as a nascent security community, as well as have catapulted it to its position of centrality. Emerging powers need to be socialized into these norms for restrained behavior, if not changed identities. ASEAN becomes a “social environment” where emerging power negotiate their interests and identities through process of interactions and social learning (Ba 2009a, 27; Johnston 2003, 2008). Thus, ASEAN region-building, albeit an ongoing process of being constructed out of ASEAN norms, identity, and community, has provided for impetus in socializing and shaping the behavior, interests, and identities of regional stakeholders, especially the great powers. ASEAN has been able to provide a kind of socialization where ASEAN-led institutions create enabling and facilitative conditions for pursuing instrumental and normative goals based on the logic of consequences and logic of

37 As value-added to the literature, Type III Socialization (Acharya 2011) supplements “Checkel’s Type I (states acting in accordance with group expectations ‘irrespective of whether they like the role or agree with it’), and Type II in which there is real value and interest change leading agents to ‘adopt the interests, or even possibly the identity, of the community of which they are a part’ (Checkel 2005, 804). According to one of the authors of this paper, “Type III internalization to refer to a condition in which agents act both instrumentally and normatively, concurrently, and on a more or less permanent basis. Moreover, in Type III internalization a key factor in determining the outcome may be the logic of expediency. Creating a room for states to determine their own pace within regional institutions and agreements is an important enabler for Type III internalization, in which states act both instrumentally and normatively, concurrently, and to support regional cooperation and integration. In this situation, states tend to pursue new initiatives or new directions at a pace comfortable to all stakeholders. Yet this is no short-term shift from purely instrumental calculation and behavior, the shift is irreversible, even though it may or may not lead to Type II internalization, in which values and interests change permanently” (Acharya 2011,13). See also, J. Checkel (2005, 801–826).
appropriateness. There must be a calibration and assessment of strategies beyond cost-benefit analysis (utilitarian calculus) so as to include ideational variables (norm localization and internalization). The noble aim is for ASEAN norms to help create the possibility of changing the interests and identities of regional actors, with the view to transforming regional order beyond *modus vivendi* and “generating counter-realpolitik behavior in states that are being socialized”.

**Peaceful Development.** ASEAN-led institutional socialization of China provides it with a venue to make its rise known as a peaceful development. The pacifying effects of ASEAN’s socialization of China create a “social environment” where other major powers could continually perceive its rise not as a threat but an opportunity – that is, as a force for good for the regional and global order. And despite some setbacks due to China’s aggressive behavior in the South China Sea (Fravel 2012, Emmers 2009), ASEAN-led institutional frameworks are its last resort to make transparent its peaceful intentions and reinvigorate its “Charm Offensive” diplomacy.

ASEAN-centric multilateral frameworks also provide venue for the “social process of interaction and learning” to the other emerging powers such as India, Japan, South Korea, and Russia as they venture into their own peaceful development.

**Identity and power.** ASEAN-led socialization will also be a venue for making identity an important factor in great power relations. Providing a venue for the major powers to interact peacefully not only makes them pursue their national interests, but also manifest their identities. Part of the conflictive relations between and among the great powers stem from their mistaken assumptions about the identity and self-images that they have about one another, with the negative implications of constructing a stereotyped “other” based on “imagined” historical, cultural, and materialist biases and prejudices. This has a negative impact on regional cooperation. For example, the mutual suspicion of China and US (Lampton 2010) stems in a major way on their “dueling identities” – with China having a “repressed victim identity” and the US as having a “global protector and pacifier in East Asia identity” (Morris 2012). The identity crises of both China and Japan take on the same “selective othering” based on historical and cultural determinants, resulting to each government perpetuating negative construction of the other’s identity (Wirth 2009). In providing a normative framework for peaceful co-existence, ASEAN can continue to socialize these great powers to help them “negotiate their identities”, leading to taking a positive view of the “others” through social learning and unlearning.

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38 Critics, however, can pose questions of whether socialization is asymmetrical or unequal, that is, proceeding from ASEAN to the other major powers. It might be presumptuous to claim that small powers are able to socialize the major powers (e.g. China and US) and shaping their behaviors, interests, and identities. Compliance of ASEAN norms by the great powers (albeit not without problems) should not be confused with *norm internalization*. Perhaps the causal logic for the great powers’ norm compliance is the logic of consequences rather than logic of appropriateness. Katsumata (2009; cited in Acharya 2011) opines that: “the ARF has had a substantial impact on the strategic preferences and behavior of the PRC, Japan, and the US, the three principal powers of the Asia-Pacific”). Further, Johnston supports this by saying that ARF has been able to induce cooperative behavior from the PRC (Johnston 2008, esp. Chapers 1 and 4). The interplay of both logics of appropriateness and consequences characteristic of Type III Socialization addresses the second part of the argument of consequences-based norm compliance.
7. Conclusion

The regional project of collective identity formation of ASEAN has gone a long way. The elusive regional autonomy that its founders aspired and worked on did provide a normative space to negotiate the material and ideational foundations of region-building, national and regional resilience, and identity formation. In its 45 years of tumultuous but fulfilling existence, ASEAN has made it possible for Southeast Asian states to define and delineate the regionness of Southeast Asia, deepen regional cooperation, build community, and forge collective identity. The reason being is that ASEAN has served as “the rule of the game” for the member states. This has led to ASEAN becoming a nascent security community.

The primordial identity of ASEAN as a nascent security community has led to its acquiring another layer of identity – the “fulcrum of regional architecture” as Secretary Clinton would describe it. The regional autonomy that it has long aspired for and lived by has been redefined into ASEAN autonomy within the framework of normative engagement with the great powers. ASEAN finds itself at the center of Asia-Pacific regional order because it has successfully engaged, enmeshed, and ensconced the great powers within its ASEAN-led normative institutional framework underpinned by its non-threatening and mutually benefitting style of multilateralism. Simply put, it has made possible regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific beyond the imagination of the cynics and skeptics. ASEAN has become the “rule of the game” of the great powers. In an important way, it has tamed power politics through the power of its socialization. Put differently, the great powers have engaged themselves in ASEAN-led social processes of interaction that have shaped their behavior. They have found it useful to play the Lilliputian game, so to speak. At least in this regard, Mearsheimer (2001) seemed to have gotten it all wrong when he spoke of the tragedy of great power politics. For as ASEAN has been pointing out, great power politics need not be tragic but tamed. More to the point, Mearsheimer seemed to have gotten it all wrong when he speaks of international politics as being mainly about great powers without paying attention to the “normative power” of small powers.

But the position of ASEAN centrality in shaping great powers’ behavior, interests, and identities, as well as in constructing Asia-Pacific regional order is subject to changing dynamics of material and ideational dimensions of international politics. Material interests such as relative gains in terms of power, wealth, and prestige may override ideational interests such as collective identity, shared community, and legitimate behavior. In simple parlance, the balance of normative influence would give in to balance of power. In such future scenario, the great powers would change the rules of the game to suit their varying national interests at the expense of the collective interests gained through ASEAN-led socialization. ASEAN would find itself struggling for autonomy and relevance in such a future scenario. ASEAN would play the Gulliver’s game once again. Hypothetical as it may sound, but such scenario is not unlikely in view of the uncertainty, unpredictability, and volatility of international politics.

ASEAN has the normative influence to make itself relevant in any eventuality. As long as norms and identity matter in international politics, then ASEAN will always have something to bargain for. As long as normative regionalism is crucial for regional cooperation, especially of the great powers whose conflictual interests may lead to war, then ASEAN will always find itself the niche of regional politics.
Besides norms have transformative effects in great powers’ behavior and identity. In other words, norms-based socialization has a sticking power. “Once accepted, norms develop a sticky quality and tend to reproduce themselves” (Acharya 2011a, 3). Thus, once great powers are socialized, the transformative effect of such norms-based socialization will have a lasting impact on their behavior and identities. This is the “ASEAN Way” of making the uncertainty of international politics (Waltz 1979) not all about unknown unknowns. ASEAN could make the unknowns known through normative regionalism. This is the “ASEAN Way” of following Hamlet’s “the readiness is all” (Shakespeare, V ii, 234-237). Southeast Asians just have to work on its ASEAN cohesion, unity, and clear regional purpose of the trajectory of Asia-Pacific regionalism and its role in it. But equally important, they have to make the Southeast Asian peoples have a sense of ownership in the continued quest for ASEAN identity and its role in building Asia Pacific Community; otherwise, any community building and regional identity projects would be satisficing but unsustainable.

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