CHAPTER-2
THEORY AND CONCEPTUALIZATION
"...that there is a way of looking at or interpreting or organizing the evidence that will reveal superficially disconnected and diverse phenomenon to be manifestations of a more fundamental and relatively simple structure".


Analysis and explanation of political process leads to resort to theories. A theory is not simply some grand formal model with hypothesis and assumptions; rather a theory is some kind of a simplifying device that allows one to identify the right facts. Social system, evolved through several civilizations generating various ideas, many and most of which, gets percolated as a result of custom, folklore, culture, peer group ideas, etc. Formal education, also contributed to generating ideas. All these millions of ideas tend to get conflicted and confused in our psychological setup, thereby blurring us from understanding the right perspective. From this point of view, theory is also required to analyse and understand as to the why's and the how's. In the case of 'Thailand- ASEAN relationship', various theoretical prerogatives of International Relations related to integration, regionalism, will be explored in understanding the unfolding of events leading to the present situation.

The several phases of development of International political relations or International Relations(IR) since inception did lead to path-breaking development in analyzing and understanding the innate paraphernalia of regional groupings, connectivity, integration, etc. While many of these have exerted itself as problems which is often difficult to analyse from the traditional perspective of IR, they certainly make us understand the changing dynamics of international relations. Such is the case of the rise of ASEAN as a regional organization.
IR has told a fairly consistent story about its history. The textbooks tell one (or occasionally both) of two main versions of the story. The first tells the story of the discipline's development in terms of chronology, starting with the dominance of idealism in the interwar years, progressing to the dominance of realism after the Second World War and, then, after an interregnum during which a variety of approaches vied for dominance, a period of debate between neo-realism and neo-liberalism in the 1980s—debate which eventually led to the formation of a consensus in the mainstream in the 1990s. Ole Waever has dubbed this new consensus the 'neo-neo synthesis'. The other version of the story is one of debate between competing positions. Here, the main claim is that the discipline has advanced by a series of 'great debates' between idealism and realism in the late 1930s; between traditionalism (realism) and behaviouralism in the 1960s; between state-centric and trans-nationalist approaches in the 1970s; between three competing paradigms (realism, liberalism and Marxism in the so-called inter-paradigm debate in the 1980s; and then the latest debate, between the neo-neo synthesis (also known as rationalism) and a set of alternative approaches (known as reflectivism) since the early 1990s. The problem with each of these popular readings is that they importantly


misrepresent the history of the discipline. They serve to suggest that there has been far more openness and pluralism than has in fact been the case and that there has been 'progress' as the discipline gets nearer and nearer the 'truth' about international relations. More significantly, they are very much views from somewhere, in that they are used to justify a particular reading of the history of thinking about world politics and to set up the terms of debate about the nature of relevance and appropriateness for current debates over the role of particular approaches. This systematic misrepresentation has been illustrated by the path-breaking work of Brian Schmidt, who has shown that both the chronological and the 'great debates' versions of the history of IR are misleading. Focusing on the work emanating from the US, Schmidt has studied the origins of the distinct discipline of IR (origins that usually start with the formation of the first department of the discipline at Aberystwyth in 1919) and the nature of the scholarly debate within that field in the interwar period. He has found two main misrepresentations. The first is that the subject of IR was studied long before the First World War and, thus, the date usually given for its foundation is wrong. However, it is important to note how convenient it is to claim that the discipline emerges out of the carnage of the First World War: it makes it so much easier to present a (political) reading of the character of this new discipline as idealist, since it naturally focused on how to prevent such events from occurring again. For Schmidt, the work undertaken between 1880 and the outbreak of the First World War: 'is absolutely essential for understanding the interwar discourse of international relations. It was this earlier conversation that provided the most important discursive framework for those who were studying international relations after World War 1'. His second main finding is that there was not a dominance of what is now called idealist work in the interwar years; there were a variety of approaches and most of them were concerned with developing what might be called a 'realistic' account of world politics. As he writes:

"... contrary to conventional accounts of the history of the field in which international relations scholars of the interwar period are characterised as 'idealists', the distinctiveness of their contribution lies not in their idealism but in their explicit attempt to mitigate the international anarchy ... although [they] may have been optimists, in that they believed something could be done about the existing international situation, they were not idealistic in the sense that they failed to face the real character of international politics... "

In 1919, thus, IR emerged formally as a separate discipline to inundate the world politics with new ideas. The rigid chores of Realism, has made way for Liberalism, which according to some scholars is a formal variation of the concept of 'liberty'. With its own merits and demerits, Realism by its own way, has established some hard facts of 'state-relationship" into mainstream international relations. One of it is 'national interest', well-categorized by Hans. J. Morgenthau on. A jurist by training and a philosopher by inclination, Morgenthau only reluctantly dedicated himself to the study of international relations because in the wake of World War II, when he began to focus his attention on the subject, it was increasingly evident that if the rising power of the Soviet Union was not balanced, freedom itself would be lost. As Robert J. Myers, who was a student of his at that time, has noted, for Morgenthau "rallying the West against this threat through rapid rearmament was the immediate goal," while idealism "was blind to this menace, and its reliance on such ideas as collective security through the United Nations and goodwill toward the Soviet Union, which was gobbling up Eastern Europe, seemed a reckless stewardship of the national interest."91 Morgenthau was the founder of the National Committee and the chief theorist of national interest. To define the complexities of the term, Morgenthau read the writings of the founders of America—the Federalists—for an explication of what has become the most important term in the lexicon of international relations. Morgenthau articulated

90 Ibid., p. 191
91 For more details refer to, Hans. J.Morgenthau., Politics Among Nations, 1948
in the first edition of his 'Politics Among Nations'—a classic work that "altered the way international relations was taught in the United States" by putting "the pursuit of specific American national interests at the center of foreign policy analysis while qualifying that objective with a strong commitment to ethical imperatives and restraints"\(^{92}\), which become his realist theory of international politics, an approach that, he argued, had the advantage of being concerned "with human nature as it actually is, and with historic processes as they actually take place." Morgenthau distilled three precepts underlying the conception of the founders of American interest in foreign affairs and nine rules that govern the art of diplomacy. Although there are many variations of realism, all of them make use of the core concepts of "national interest" and the "struggle for power". In the framework that Morgenthau elaborated, every political action is seen as directed toward keeping, increasing, or demonstrating power. In short, the "animus dominandi", the desire to dominate, is the social force that determines political activity.\(^{94}\) On the international plane those behavioral patterns translate into policies of the status quo, imperialism, and prestige. The first has as its objective the maintenance of the existing balance of power, whereas the second seeks to acquire more power and the third seeks to show off strength in order to keep or expand power. Consequently, Morgenthau argued that "interest" was at the heart of all politics and thus on the international stage it behooved each state to pursue its national interest, generally defined as power. Above all, it is always to be remembered that it is not only a political necessity, but also a moral duty for a nation to always follow in its dealings with other nations with one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: "The National Interest". Although Morgenthau conceived of "interest" and "power" as forces "inherent in human power," he did not claim for them a


\(^{93}\) Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman, "Ethical Realism and Contemporary Challenges," American Foreign Policy Interests, vol. 28, no. 6 (November=December 2006), p. 414.

meaning ‘fixed once and for all.’ Rather, he held that changes occur constantly and thus environment plays a major role in shaping the interests that determine political action. He subsequently clarified that the emphasis on power must be adapted to the changing circumstances of international politics. “When the times tend to depreciate the element of power, [the discipline of international relations] must stress its importance. When the times incline toward a monistic conception of power in the general scheme of things, it must show its limitations. When the times conceive of power primarily in military terms, it must call attention to the variety of factors which go into the power equation.

Power domination did played an important role in the South East Asian region, given the fact that most of the states were struggling to make her presence felt in the region, and at large in the world. States like Cambodia faced the problem of underdevelopment, and negative governance. Therefore, elements of power exerted by Cambodia is almost negligible, the outcome of which is borne by its population. In concern of individuals, and in the long-term arrangement of security of the states, the growth of the idea of ‘human security’ both as security concepts has developed. In the mid-1970s, the field of security studies began a dramatic resurgence. In addition to a noticeable increase in professional activity and published work on security-related topics, security studies become more rigorous, methodological, sophisticated, and theoretically inclined. Scholars continued to differ on specific policy issues, but competing views were increasingly based on systematic social scientific ideas. Thus, in case of ASEAN and Thailand, it is more of the views and aspirations of the individual states and their leaders in specific rather than the united effort of the people of the region.

International Relations (IR) seeks to go beyond the ephemeral and common-sense: to reflect more deeply on events, structures, processes and actors, and to offer explanations, interpretations and normative analyses. The

Ibid., 8.
study of international relations is thus so simple and not reducible to what
happens in particular countries, even though it may include this. Political
machinations in other countries, especially powerful ones, always hold
particular interest. However, in IR, any interest in the politics of other countries
will be determined by how these impact on or play out in the international
sphere or how they are shaped by international forces. Further, IR is not
reducible to foreign policy analysis, though once again it includes this within its
scope. The adjective 'international' was coined by the English political
philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, in 1780. The purpose of neologism was to
capture in a single word 'relations among nations'. Although 'international'
literally means relations among nations, it has for most of its existence referred
to relations among sovereign states. It may be noted that Bentham's period did
not distinguish 'nation' and 'state', and they were often used interchangeably,
so that the meaning was closer to what can be probably called as 'interstate'
relations. In any case, international relations have been distinguished first and
foremost from domestic politics, and Prof. Ian Clark,100 1999 rightly calls this
the 'Great Divide'. According to the 'Great Divide', domestic politics is what
takes place inside the states whereas international relations is what takes place
outside, as if they were two mutually exclusive realms. Domestic politics is
premised on the presence of a central authority or government that has
monopoly control over the instruments of violence, which can lay down and
enforce law, establishes and maintains order and security, and permits justice
and peace to be delivered to the community of citizens. International relations
thus, can be termed as the negative image of domestic politics. By contrast, with
the domestic realm, the international is premised on the absence of an
overarching authority or government that can lay down and enforce the law
because the instruments of violence are dispersed and decentralised. This
establishes ripe conditions for insecurity, where injustice and war are permanent

See Kenneth Waltz, Theories of International Politics, Mc-Graw Hill, 1979
99 See, Hidemi Suganami, A Note on the word International, British Journal of International
100 Ian Clarke, Globalization and International Relations Theory, Oxford University Press, 1999.
potentials and regular actualities for states. It is a world of friends and enemies where power rather than justice will determine international outcomes, and where states cannot afford to put their trust or security in others. States are trapped in a 'security dilemma' where measures taken to enhance their security lead others to take similar counter-measures and in the process generate further mistrust and insecurity. The significance of the term "security dilemma" has not been properly recognized has been the result of orthodox thinking failing to give due credit to the work and insights of its major early theorists (John H. Herz and Herbert Butterfield, and later Robert Jervis)\textsuperscript{101} and at the same time missing the opportunity (as a result of paradigm blinkers) to appreciate the extent of the theoretical and practical horizons it opens up. By the term existential it specifies that it is not an occasional and passing phenomenon but rather an everyday part of the existence of individuals and groups. While dealing with ASEAN-Thailand, it can be argued that the existential conditions have pre-empted the natural progression of ASEAN, and thereby hindered cohesion.

In the context of International Relations, the existential condition of uncertainty means that governments (their decision-makers, military planners, foreign policy analysts) can never be hundred per cent certain about the current and future motives and intentions of those able to harm them in a military sense. This situation can be termed as one of un-resolvable uncertainty, and see it as the core of the predicaments that make up the 'security dilemma'. In the case of Thailand and ASEAN, the innate 'dilemma' can be analyzed through the above paradigm.

The dominant international relations paradigm of the late 1980s and early 1990s assumed that regions represented the necessary structures that underpinned an emerging post-Cold War global order. This regional re-ordering, it was asserted in works like Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson's \textit{Globalization}
in Question (1996)\textsuperscript{102} and Susan Strange's *The Retreat of the State* (1997)\textsuperscript{103}, would occur at the expense of the nation-state. These authors, and many others like them, believed that a complex web of transnational processes that spanned the activities of non-governmental organizations, corporate and media conglomerates on the one hand, and international institutions on the other, would continue to erode state sovereignty from above and below. From this paradigm, the rise of ASEAN may be termed as the erosion of state sovereignty.

The scholarly and media commentary regarding the perception and description of this apparent shift towards regionalization was often accompanied by the overt promotion of multilateral arrangements as the necessary corollary to the new post-Cold War order. In other words, the post Cold War International regime has seen the rise of regional cooperation through formation of regional organization. Nowhere was the enthusiasm for building multinational institutions that reflected the seemingly inexorable transition of the international system from a state-centric into a regionally based order more noticeable than in the Asia-Pacific. In particular, scholarly zeal focused on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as the exemplar of this evolving regional emphasis. ASEAN, and its expansionist offshoots, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), together with the Australian initiative of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and later the ASEAN Plus Three framework embracing China, Japan and South Korea, represented the building blocks of a distinctive Asian trading region and security community. Prior to the financial crisis of 1997 many of these arrangements, it was also maintained, intimated a shift in the global order towards a new Pacific Century premised on multilateral practices of cooperation and dialogue that reflected a regional diplomatic culture of consensus and noninterference. Indeed, multilateralism based upon what Ken Booth and Russell Trood in *Strategic*
Cultures in the Asia-Pacific, 1999 deemed a sensitivity to the strategic cultural preoccupations of this evolving region would facilitate a burgeoning and largely benign interdependence. Even relatively recent works like Mark Beeson's edited volume, Reconfiguring East Asia, 2002 continue to maintain that an East Asian region, as opposed to individual states, is 'increasingly consequential in political practice [and] economic decision making'. That explains that multilateral cooperation will remain the main theme for the ASEAN for the Asian Century to come.

The regional economic crisis of 1997-98, followed by political breakdown in Southeast Asia, the recrudescence of suppressed ethno-religious tensions and the emergence of a regional terror network with links to al-Qaeda, along with the region's conspicuous inability to coordinate a coherent response to transnational threats in the form of diseases like SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or natural disasters like the 2004 tsunami, challenged many of these regionalist and multilateralist assumptions, exposing them as fallacies. The multilateral orthodoxy which sustains these fallacies has strongly resisted reasoned counter-argument. Instead, it maintains faith in the regional verity, despite evidence to the contrary, which regional commentators repeatedly played down, overlooked, misunderstood or just ignored. Analytical weakness, combined with ideological faith, seems to have sustained a delusion that became entrenched in the field of Asian international relations. This delusion incidentally became the dominant study of the Southeast Asian, and the wider East Asian region. The assessment is thus, as to how it can achieve the status of an intellectual orthodoxy, and also a possible explanation of its persistence, which continues to impede an accurate understanding of regional affairs. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis, along with the new agenda posed by the forces of economic globalization and the low intensity

106 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
107 See Ojendal, Joakim, 'Back to the future? Regionalism in South-East Asia under unilateral pressure', International Affairs, 80 (3), 2004, pp. 519-23
conflicts that bedevil Southeast Asia and the wider Pacific region more generally, requires a thorough understanding and re-evaluation of both the political economy and the security arrangements in Pacific Asia, that are essentially the product of the Cold War and immediate post-Cold War era. Through this paradigm it can be argued that ASEAN as a regional economic forum has failed to address the political and economic problems that became increasingly evident after 1990. Further, it could not even address the severe human problem of the region, leading to the questions on ASEAN inability of coping up with human development.

While scrutinizing these failings, it can be argued that the weakness of ASEAN is set in the context of the broader economic and political incoherence that afflicts the Asia-Pacific region more generally and which, according to Gilbert Rozman, *always rendered the promotion of regional interdependence flawed*. In other words, we shall analyse the economic, political and ethno-religious tensions that beset the wider region through the distorting prism that is ASEAN. That can begin with an examination of the manner in which an ASEAN scholar-bureaucracy and its western fellow travellers promoted flawed regionalism in the course of the 1990s. It can be argued that in particular, ASEAN has been erroneously came to be seen in the 1990s as a new form of security cooperation that could, in its extended version of the ARF, apparently effortlessly embrace Northeast Asia. In addition, the rising levels of low-intensity conflict generated by the forces of globalization threaten to undermine irrevocably the economic and political integrity of Southeast Asia. This hypothesis reinstate the argument of the dissertation that while promotion of regional interdependence of ASEAN is contested and according to some scholars 'flawed', some countries [read Thailand] has been successfully able to use it to maneuver its position in the Southeast Asian region.

The political philosopher, Michael Oakeshott, coined the term 'imitation states' to describe the incomplete nation building of many newly formed countries in the post-colonial world\textsuperscript{1}. Driven by the ethnic, social and economic fissures these states struggled to establish themselves in a decolonized world. Developing this line of thought, one of the colleague of Oakeshott at the London School of Economics, Elie Kedourie, argued that leaders of imitation states 'labour under strong feelings of insecurity generated by their lack of legitimacy. The product of fake elections or military coup d'etat their unrestrained power does not rest on the loyalty of those whom they rule'. \textsuperscript{no} As an imitation community rather than an imagined one, the ambivalence of the ASEAN continuance is exposed in the wake of the competing forces of economic integration and identity politics. That has left it quite ill-equipped to serve as the template for a post-Cold War regional order. Furthermore, the seemingly insoluble Cold War flashpoints in Northeast Asia can be observed, which is coupled with Chinese irredentism and American ambiguity towards both People's Republic of China (PRC) and Japan. It has left the balance of power in Northeast Asia both complex and uncertain. Moreover, the forces of globalization with its economic process of communication, internet based trade and markets may have a more centrifugal rather than a centripetal impact on the region. These processes will be further exacerbated by the impact of the 'war on terror' and its spillover into Islamic radicalism in both Southeast and South Asia. Going by these hypothesis, the future of ASEAN seems quite complex, where the role of individual states [read Thailand] will be, inevitably of immense importance, being one of the leading nations of the region.


\textsuperscript{1,2} Ibid.,
With globalization in progress, it is argued by some scholars that on the question of state security, it will provide affordable opportunities for stronger states to quell internal dissent while exploiting comparative advantage. In the context of Southeast Asia, the global active powers like the United States, China, Japan and Australia, as a result, will thus, naturally exercise increasing soft power, going by the above hypothesis. Contrarily, the process of globalization may find the less adaptable Asian developmental states eroding. At the global level there may be difficulty in adapting to the post-meltdown market requirements and at the sub-state level by a global black market in guns, drugs and human trafficking/smuggling network. There also remains the possibility of active interaction of the sub-state actors in sustaining the long-standing separatist movements. Thus the weaker states of Southeast Asia, like Indonesia, Burma, Malaysia and the Philippines, will either federalize or fragment. China, meanwhile, will constitute an evolving problem: on the one hand, seeking to re-establish a dominant relationship with its pre-eighteenth century area of regional influence. Going by this hypothesis, active involvement of comparatively stronger and stable states is required to carry ASEAN to its desired goal as envisaged as *regional resilience by promoting greater political, security, economic and socio-cultural cooperation*.

**DIPLOMACY UNDER ASEAN**

For a clear understanding of the 'ASEAN way' or the 'ASEAN process'\(^{114}\), it is imperative to have an understanding of the theory of constructivism, which was seen as an attempt to respond to the realist approach regarding factors determining state interactions in Southeast Asia. Constructivist scholars conceive that through a shared collective identity, ASEAN has built a set of norms defining states' behaviour that each member state is required to adhere

\(^{113}\) The ASEAN Charter, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, January 2008. Available online on ASEAN Website: [www.asean.org](http://www.asean.org)

to. From the broader perspective, these ASEAN values or norms are 'the hybrid offspring of an Asian value system' and the development of ASEAN' has been guided in part by the underlying beliefs and principles of Asian values\textsuperscript{116}. Unfortunately, they do not reflect the value system of the people of ASEAN as a whole. Arguing that 'the development of a non-elite and more popular sense of common ASEAN identity' may be hindered \textsuperscript{117}, Noor stated that 'the ascendancy of an elite discourse based upon a common elite political culture and value framework [of the traditional ruling elite] may well retard the progress and development of an ASEAN organization that is dedicated to the interests of ASEAN citizens themselves'. Indeed, the ASEAN way, if any, provides a sense of regional identity only at the intergovernmental level. Thus, arguable a people's ASEAN has yet to be realized. As echoed by a former Thai Foreign Minister, the future of ASEAN should become 'an ASEAN of the people, [and] not just an ASEAN of government leaders' \textsuperscript{119}. As the ASEAN way is an evolving interactive process, it difficult thus, to define. Haacke noted that there are at least three distinct conceptualizations of the ASEAN way. First, it is 'an intramural approach to dispute management and confidence building'. Second, it is a decision-making method associated with the principles of musjawarah (consultation) and mufakat (consensus) that is originally a native political process built on ancient Javanese customs which basically express ways of resolving political and personal differences through lengthy consideration concluding in unanimous decision.\textsuperscript{121} The third refers to Acharya's conceptualization that is a 'process of identity building which relies upon

\textsuperscript{116} Noor, Farish 'Values in the Dynamics of Malaysia's Internal and External Political Relations'. In Han Sung-Joo (ed.). Changing Values in Asia: Their Impact on Governance and Development. Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange: 1999. pp. 146-76.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 166.
\textsuperscript{119} Pitsuwan, Surin Future Directions for ASEAN. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Singapore, 2001. p 8
conventional modern principles of interstate relations as well as traditional and culture-specific modes of socialization and decision-making\textsuperscript{122}. Interestingly, thus, all the basic international norms and the socio-cultural norms steering interaction among the ten Southeast Asian members is followed as the key features, which iterates mainly respect for sovereignty, non-interference, non-use of force, quiet diplomacy (which may include informality and saving face), non-involvement of the organization in bilateral disputes and mutual respect (for the sensitivity of others), frequent consultations, consensus-building, accommodation, discretion and conciliation. From this hypothesis, it can be argued that while ASEAN was formulated with the intention of a regional cooperation, it has remained, however, largely a forum of government leaders. A part of the argument of this dissertation will be cooperation at the human level, initiation by leading states like Thailand in converging the region to build a strong resilience through connectivity programmes, mutually beneficial development programmes, combating common human causes of suffering like human-trafficking, illicit drug-trafficking.

**FACTORS FOR A SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL GROUPING;**

Going by precedence, it is evident that there is no hardfold criteria for a successful regional grouping. While EU is called as a successful regional grouping, so is ASEAN, although the thrust and the pace of development and integration of both are different. Walter Mattli in his book *The Logic of Regional Integration Europe and Beyond* points out that the success of a voluntary regional integration plan depends critically on the demand and supply condition. An area with a significant cross-border exchange of trade will lead to strong market pressure for integration, which Mattli labels as a *demand condition*\textsuperscript{124}. Conversely, the integration process will come to a halt if the potentiality for gain is very low due to certain factors like the lack of complementarity among


\textsuperscript{123} Mattli, Walter, *The Logic of Regional Integration Europe and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999.

\textsuperscript{124} Mattli, Walter, *The Logic of Regional Integration Europe and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999.
regional economies or the absence of vital economies of scale. Success, according to him, is defined as the realization of 'stated integration goals'.

As for the supply condition, each plan or scheme must have the presence of a munificent leader/country that will act as a central figure in the coordination of rules, regulations, and policies and assist in easing tensions that may 'arise from the inequitable distribution of gains from integration'. Those two conditions above are considered by Mattli as of primary importance. A third less-crucial condition, according to him, would be the creation of 'commitment institutions' as third party enforcers in helping to catalyze the integration process by improving 'compliance with the rules of cooperation' and preventing reneging. Conditionally speaking, if the first two conditions are applicable then ASEAN did have leadership of Thailand and Indonesia in implementing the integration process. However, going by the third condition, ASEAN can be termed as a failed one, since there is no committed institution creation by the ASEAN till date.

Another key point put forward is the notion that political leaders who face economic difficulties at home will promote regional integration if they are convinced that their political survival depends on it. Two current integration schemes that satisfy Mattli's primary conditions are the EU and NAFTA, led by Germany and the United States respectively. In the case of the EU, the European Commission and the European Court of Justice are seen as examples of 'commitment institutions' fostering integration. However, the work of Mattli was objected by Douglas Webber briefly through six objections or reservations, questioning the conditions of Mattli regarding a successful integration. He notes that: firstly, policies to integrate markets in creating a free trade area or common market should not be the only focus as there can also be emphasis on the

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125 Ibid., p. 39
126 Ibid., p.40
127 Ibid., p. 42.
128 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
129 Webber, Douglas 2001. Two Funerals and a Wedding?: The Ups and Downs of Regionalism in East Asia and Asia-Pacific after the Asian Crisis.' The Pacific Review 14(3);,
'integration or coordination of other kinds of policies' in some regional integration schemes, although it stopped short of explaining what are those kinds of policies and how they are related to the success and failure of integration; secondly, there should be an explanation of interregional variations of 'stated integration goals' such as why the EU's integration agenda seems to be more thorough and far-reaching than NAFTA's; thirdly, 'a coalition of leading states' apart from a hegemonic state do stand a chance to provide the obligatory leadership for successful integration citing the close bilateral relationship of France and Germany as a more realistic interpretation of EU’s success; fourthly, 'commitment institutions' should not be seen as only a pre-condition but they can also emerge as the consequences of successful integration; fifthly, economic difficulties as a condition may not necessarily encourage regional cooperation and even if it does, it may help to explain the attempt at, rather than the success/failure of regional integration; and lastly, the stipulation of leadership role is not only determined by hard variables (economic size, population, and military strength) but may also be dependent on soft variables (foreign policy strategies, history, and collective memories). While accepting Mattli's first two 'strong' conditions and rejecting the others, Webber put forth another two of his own - the 'degree of economic and political homogeneity' and the role of the United States (US) in influencing regional integration projects.

**IDENTIFYING THE IMPENDING FACTOR OF ASEAN**

Based on the above mentioned conditions, both Mattli and Webber analyzed ASEAN as a regional integration proposal. As part of their analysis, some daunting factors emerged. Mattli provided three reasons and Webber four as to why ASEAN would not succeed in its 'stated integration goals'. Both Mattli and Webber agreed and argued that the 'low and non-complementary intra-regional trade' cannot be simply understood in economic terms but should be put in a historical context. ASEAN as an organization was borne out of regional

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132 Ibid., p. 347.
conflict whereby the founding leaders had no agenda of integrating member economies even though that notion was not alien to them as they were much aware of what was transpiring in Western Europe. Moreover, the economic success of the Southeast Asian countries, especially among the ASEAN-five, prior to the economic crisis, were achieved through individual efforts under the directives of the national economic policies of each nation. While most of them share the same markets and compete in the same industrial sectors, according to history, the bulk of early cooperation among member-states was in the areas of security, first with the communist insurgencies, followed by superpower rivalries and the invasion in neighbouring Indochina (Vietnam-Cambodia issue). Thus, going by the above hypothesis, if ASEAN can be argued as a successful regional organization, then it is only because of the success of the individual nations within it, and not otherwise. That implies that the collaborative effort towards mutually beneficial development effort is yet to be fulfilled.

Serious economic cooperation only took off after the Cold War ended, mostly attributed to the trepidation of the integration plans of NAFTA and the EU. This is also related to the unsuccessful attempt of an East Asian Economic Group/Caucus (EAEG/EAEC) proposed by Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in 1990. Had the EAEG proposal gone through, AFTA might not have come about or may have been realized in a different form. While economic integration has been somewhat expedited since then, more so after the economic crisis, intra trade has generally remained low. In 1993, trade among the ten Southeast Asian countries stood at around 22 percent of total exports and in 2002 it was only at 24 percent\textsuperscript{134}. There are two possible reasons to this. First, ASEAN is incapable of drawing up any kind of treaty like the

\textsuperscript{134} WTO Trade Statistics, 2003.
1957 Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community. A treaty with clear rules and procedures would have arguably bound and ensured commitment from member-states. This inability is tied to a political culture, which holds sovereignty and non-interference sacred, as enshrined in TAC [see Appendix]. As the Association becomes more firmly enclosed within its norms, it faces a tougher time to create institutional structures that are essential in increasing intra-trade and deepening economic integration. However, the 'ASEAN way' helped to achieve political stability in the region and so provided a conducive environment for foreign investment but it failed to enable member-states to capitalize on such opportunities collectively. Second, the generally authoritarian nature of Southeast Asian governments kept the region 'divided' and limited economic integration. From a realist perspective, the dominant goal of authoritarian leaders is to remain in power, thus the survival of the individual leader surpasses the interest of the state. Closer economic integration or the establishment of a treaty would lead to a trans-national organization and the subsequent loss of power in directing their respective national economies. Thus ASEAN norms (sovereignty, non-interference and consensual decision-making process) augment authoritarianism and preserve the divisions of nation-state identities. Those norms also provide an escape route if member states fail to agree on a common policy. As countries pursue their own economic agendas, they face difficulties in collective coordination of their economies, eventually leading to competition rather than complementarity. The formation of AFTA and the signing of various economic agreements reflected the awareness of external market forces like globalization rather than strong internal needs for market integration. Implementations of those agreements continue to remain a problem, as pointed out by Funston that the practice of non-intervention has caused 'plans for economic cooperation [to gather] dust as countries adhered to

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135 This is based on Steven David's theory of omnibalancing, which argues that the main actors of Third World countries in international politics are individual rulers and not the state. David, Steven, 'Explaining Third World Alignment.' World Politics 43(2): 1991, pp. 233-56.
protectionist policies and refused to make concessions to neighbours. The second reason was that ASEAN does not have an undisputed leader or a coalition of leaders to guide the organization. Indonesia, with the largest population and one of the strongest military, is often looked upon as the organization's leader. Indeed, the stationing of the Association's secretariat in Jakarta shows the recognition of Indonesia's importance in the region. Even the concept of *musjawarah* and *mufakat* originated from the traditional Indonesian village system, which became the standard norms of conduct for ASEAN. The fall of Suharto and the political and economical uncertainties that befell Indonesia thereafter are partly blamed for the disruption of ASEAN's goal in achieving an integrated community. Indonesia was important to ASEAN at the time of inception because of her size and military strength. By getting Indonesia to commit to ASEAN, it was hoped that any future mischief could be deterred. But within ASEAN, Indonesia could hardly assert its leadership role as others were skeptical of her intentions or downplayed her position. Referring back to history, it is possible to provide a few examples. Like, when Suharto first tried to lead the other founding members, towards embracing nonalignment as a response to foreign power rivalries, none followed. Malaysia and Thailand were subdued as Philippines had no intention of giving up their strong bilateral defence ties with the US and the Singaporeans wanted to continue relying on British protection. Obviously, they saw external actors as vital in preventing Indonesia from dominating the region. Another case of interest was the Vietnam-Cambodia issue - the invasion and occupation of Cambodia by Vietnam from 1978-90. Geographical proximity and external power interference were threatening ASEAN's security and thus saw the need to pull their strengths together. On the surface, it showed unity and managed to gain recognition from the international community. However, things were murkier below the surface. Indonesia, which received the backing of ASEAN as interlocutor in that issue,
was later undermined by Thailand's own independent approach in solving the matter. Such tacit manoeuvring clearly showed the limitation of reputation of Indonesia within the organization. A third example is best displayed by the proposal of EAEG [East Asian Economic Group/Caucus]\(^{139}\) by Malaysia. The unilateral approach taken not only irked the Indonesian camp but also put the headship of Indonesia into question. Furthermore, while Indonesia may be strong militarily, it is relatively weak in economic terms. This has greatly prevented it from becoming the 'regional paymaster' in easing any distributional problems unlike what Germany was capable of doing for the EU. The limitation of Indonesia or any other members to hold the role of undisputed leader is manifested in the ASEAN process. The norms of procedure deny Indonesia any outright leadership role.\(^{140}\) Under *musjawarah*, a leader is not allowed to act capriciously or forcefully and any suggestions given should take into consideration the views and feelings of fellow members. *Mufakat* will be achieved when all members agreed to those suggestions. The outcome is not only slow but reflecting the lowest common denominator. In this sense, the alleged hard and soft variables that determines an undisputed leadership role as submitted by Webber is less applicable in the case of ASEAN due to the presence of those unique norms of diplomacy that sets the organization apart from other regional entities. As for the third reason based on Mattli's 'commitment institutions', it is obvious that ASEAN lacks third-party enforcement machineries and this becomes very clear when compared to the EU.

Under Thailand's Premier, Chatchai Choonhavan, a series of initiatives were taken towards the Indochina states. First, a change in economic policy gradually increased export items to Laos and the normalization process let to Chatchai's visit in 1988. Second, Chatchai departed from the established Thai policy to recognize the Phnom Penh government by welcoming Prime Minister Hun Sen to an informal meeting in 1989. Third, Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila formally visited Vietnam in 1989 under Chatchai's persuasion. The visit not only signalled support from the Thai Foreign Ministry for the prime minister's diplomacy but also brought home successful trade negotiations and the acknowledgement for neutralization of Cambodia (See Sudo, Sueo. *Tounan Ajia Kokusai Kankei no Kouzu: Riron Chiikigaku wo Mezashite* [Composition of Southeast Asian International Relations: Towards a Theoretical Area Study]. Japan: Keisou Shobou 1996, pp. 64-68).

\(^{139}\) East Asian Economic Group/Caucus (EAEG/EAEC) proposed by Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in 1990

However, this reasoning irrespective of whether it is a pre-condition or a consequence of successful integration as Webber would argue has to be understood from the political culture that ASEAN operates in. Going by this hypothesis, critics can argue that ASEAN is no an integrative model; its initial thrust was on security and not economy; the economic integration as envisaged is not the integration of the whole region but the individual integration of the economy of the nation-states in it. Thus, it can be argued that the crisis of ASEAN, as we observe today is but a long-drawn historical one.

Member-states of ASEAN have been frequently accused of not being willing to shift any decision-making authority to higher supranational bodies. Any bilateral disputes that arise between members are mostly handled through quiet diplomacy where the organization is not involved. Disputes that cannot be settled are often put off to a later period. A case in point is the claim of Philippines over Sabah in the 1960s. It was suppressed after President Ferdinand Marcos came into power in Philippines and gave verbal assurance, but since no official treaty was signed, future dispute still remains highly possible. If trouble becomes unbearable, it is then referred to an outer international body and not ASEAN itself. This is true in the case between Malaysia and Indonesia over the jurisdiction of Sipadan and Ligitan islands\(^\text{141}\). The same holds for the dispute between Malaysia and Singapore over the strategic island of Batu Puteh (or Pedra Branca). The inability to draft its own effective 'commitment institutions' and the reluctant reliance on international dispute settlement mechanisms could be seen as due to the practice of the ASEAN way that greatly puts constraint on the viability and implementation of such institutions. It clearly brings into question the norms of sovereignty and non-interference that are at the very centre-piece of the foreign policy of ASEAN. There is indeed an underlying factor over the idea of 'commitment institutions'. Prior commitment and resolution to these norms and compliance is inevitable, in order to make the


\(^{142}\) [http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/special_events/pedrabranca.html](http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/special_events/pedrabranca.html)
'committed institution' successful. However, that would not be possible since it would greatly undermine the powers of the individual leaders and the sovereign statuses of member countries, all of whom, with the exception of Thailand, experienced the harsh realities of colonialism and thus prize those values more highly than their Western counterparts. Thus, under the banner of ASEAN, submission of individual member-states sovereignty is a far cry.

However, the goals of ASEAN go beyond the narrow definition and norms alone, which obviously remain inferior to legal rules. As Nischalke points out in his research, there were instances when those fundamental principles have been breached. In 1999, there were calls for more concrete measures to be taken in solving problems that had beset the organization. Saying that the ASEAN way can no longer be maintained, former Indonesian foreign affairs advisor Dewi Fortuna Anwar called for a crisis-management centre similar to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to be set up. What transpired was the creation of the ASEAN Troika (2000) and the ASEAN High Council (2001). Some may tend to argue that they do represent a form of 'commitment institutions' with the purpose of providing a channel to manage and resolve disputes among members. Briefly, the ASEAN Troika is meant to deal with sudden flare up of disputes while the High Council is intended to deal with long-term disputes. They are claimed to be seen as a small step away from the traditional diplomatic culture of ASEAN. Indeed, it does reflect a shift from the traditional norm of non-involvement of the Association in any bilateral disputes. However, their effectiveness is also put into question. Several reasons could be identified. First, that the ASEAN Troika has failed to materialize as a permanent institution at the ministerial level. Instead it ended up as an ad hoc body. Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's proposal to institutionalize the Troika concept was seen by others as a 'clever effort to revitalize Surin

Nischalke, Tobias Ingo. 'Insights from ASEAN's Foreign Policy Co-operation: The 'ASEAN way', a Real Spirit or a Phantom?' Contemporary Southeast Asia 22(1): 2000, pp.89-112.

144 International Herald Tribune, 22 April, 1999.
Pitsuwan's proposal of flexible engagement in different garb.\textsuperscript{145} Second, it is not allowed to make any decisions on its own but only to offer recommendations in assisting the ASEAN Foreign Ministers.\textsuperscript{146} Third, the Troika is subjected to the guidelines of the norms of procedure, specifically non-interference and consensus.\textsuperscript{147}

All these point to the fact that the ASEAN way has not been diminished but rather enhanced. Not only it is important to prevent intervention from outside powers but also individual leaders are still reluctant to involve other regional members in their respective domestic affairs. Comparably, troika of ASEAN is unmatched to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] even though principles of sovereign equality, non-intervention, peaceful settlement of disputes, territorial integrity, etc are also enshrined in the OSCE. On the rules of the procedure of the ASEAN High Council, Haacke clearly noted that 'some of the rules of procedure reinforce rather than undermine existing norms of the ASEAN way'.\textsuperscript{148} In contrast to the OSCE that allows any member nation to call for a dispute to be brought up before a commission, the High Council could be invoked only by the state involved in the dispute, hence very much in line to the norms of non-interference and sovereignty. Whether they are just political gestures or have the might to solve the woes of ASEAN are yet unknown. But even as the ASEAN six may try to reinvent the organization in a more structured fashion, the ASEAN-four (Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar - CVLM countries) will continue to resist and clam tight the diplomatic culture that they have come to identify with. Further, it has been argued that ASEAN is incapable of achieving closer or successful integration primarily because there are high disparities in the economic level of member-states that would obstruct any efforts toward collective actions. In other words, the political and economic climate in Southeast Asia is too heterogeneous to achieve a 'sense of community' or a common identity, which

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, p. 73
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., p. 75.
he believes to be the prerequisite for a successful regional organization. Here, the EU is once again evoked as a comparison. But while disparities may obstruct the integration process, it is not necessarily a strong argument. Claiming a degree of homogeneity among state actors in a region as a variable for comparison does, to some extent, deny the fact that until today there has not been any regional organization visible in Northeast Asia where the countries of China, Japan and Korea share more similarities in many respects than the countries in Southeast Asia. Japan and Korea exhibit a wide range of economic and cultural resemblance. Economic cooperation through trade between the two countries has generated extensive business networks. Japanese trade and investment, not to mention developmental assistance, with China and China's shift to a market economy should have brought about some form of organizational structure for cooperation in the region. Or, even the fact that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) established in 1981 among countries with similar cultural traits has remained weak and insignificant for two decades. Discrepancies in political and economic systems or lingering historical animosities are as or could even be more essential hurdles to regional integration in comparison to religious or cultural qualities. The ability of ASEAN to bring the three Northeast Asian countries into economic cooperation through the ASEAN+3 Process stand to further weaken Webber's point above. A more fundamental factor in the obstruction of collective action and crisis management in ASEAN should be directed at the norms of procedure that have developed over a long period of time. The seeing of themselves as feeble states and hence the need to uphold power and maintain sovereign rights not as a region but as individual states has exacerbated foreign policy divergence and, coupled with the overarching of protectionism especially among newer members, do not bode well in breaking down the walls of political divisions. The ASEAN way has been 'highly successful at altering the interactions' of members but it is neither capable nor designed to 'alter their definitions of their national interests' 9. This

limitation is a key factor in hindering the cooperative process towards shared common political values and goals of the organization.

While understanding the external perception, especially the US perception of regional integration plans in regions that fall under its sphere of influence, it has been observed that sometimes the US Administration approved and played a critical role, and because of it ASEAN have come to life. ASEAN received US support due to its anti-communist *raison d’etre*, which was 'entirely congruent' with the US objectives of that time, while its current attitude towards the Association is one of "benign indifference". The view that ASEAN succeeded in its creation because of US approval is rather misleading. ASEAN's initial focus on communism may have run parallel to President Johnson's Asian policy but its formation was much less of a US influence. As Yamakage clearly points out that ASEAN was never a part of any US anti-communist strategy. Indonesia, which proposed the name of ASEAN and wished to incorporate the principle of nonalignment into the organization, was never aware of any attempts to use ASEAN as an anti-communist satellite. Policies taken by ASEAN governments were actually disassociated from US policy. He notes that on the contrary, fear of US withdrawal from the region and over dependence on the US were factors that led Southeast Asian countries to form ASEAN.

Nonetheless, the US factor can be best understood when the failed EAEG is taken as an example. The reason for the failure of the EAEG [East Asian Economic Group/Caucus] plan was principally the mistaken exclusion of US from the equation. Other factors notwithstanding, had the EAEG been defined along the lines of open regionalism and assured US interests, an East Asian organization could have emerged. But, as Webber admits, it is a factor


152 Ibid.,

153 Ibid., pp. 17-31.
concerning the success or failure of attempts at regional integration for states that are susceptible to American pressure. US presence may help accelerate the integration process by providing security and maintaining stability in a region or decelerate it by influencing the policies of regional states. European integration plans in the early period were strongly supported by the US, which provided the security role of containing Germany, thus giving France adequate confidence to construct a bilateral relationship with Germany. US presence in Southeast Asia has also played an integral part in stabilizing the region. However, it does not qualify as a pre-condition for successful regional integration. The US factor failed to be sustainable as is clearly proved when ASEAN asserted its independence and voted to admit Myanmar in 1997 in plain defiance against the US stance. Although admitting Myanmar remains a controversial issue, ASEAN went a step closer to achieving its long-term goal of uniting all of Southeast Asia. Therefore, even if the US shows 'benign indifference' to ASEAN, there should be no grounds for the organization to derail from its course. What is obstructing the path of ASEAN to closer integration seems not the US but rather the lack of a shared vision and political unity among the members. The ASEAN process that defines how ASEAN operates clearly limits the ability of the organization to move towards stronger and deeper integration. It is more of an internal condition than an external factor. Many acknowledged experts on Southeast Asian and Pacific affairs have consistently misread regional prospects, their assessments and prognostications consistently and undermined the subsequent turn of events. The contention, though, is not that these analytical errors, despite the best of intentions, the

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155 Ibid.,
156 Ibid.,
product of the simple inability to predict the future. Most of the study of Asia-Pacific relations is themselves in mirage due to the following reason, seriously flawed understandings of regional developments that produced a systematic misreading of the character of international relations that inevitably disfigured any attempt to discern the trends and patterns in regional affairs. Illusions may be defined as the 'mistaken beliefs that are maintained in spite of strong evidence to the contrary'\textsuperscript{159}. The reason for this illusion is quite complicated. The term itself derives from psychoanalysis and denotes various dichotomous conditions where internal beliefs fail to conform with any wider, more objective or inter-subjectively understood ideas of reality. Hence, the term is associated with psychiatric disorder: illusion of grandeur, illusion of persecution or illusion of reference. In these respects, the idea of illusion is often located within states of extreme narcissism\textsuperscript{160}. The said psychotic behavior/condition can be observed in, the business or academic who, despite corruption, mismanagement and incompetence, demands that his board or faculty feed his or her illusion. This is called mono-symptomatic illusion and manifests itself in ego-driven behaviour and a tendency to intellectual hubris, and can be found in some degrees in many walks of life and most modern universities\textsuperscript{161}. In the mono-symptomatic understanding, the world must fit my view of it. Interesting and potentially fruitful though, the psychoanalytical approach may be, somewhat reluctantly rejected as an explanatory tool of analysis. Academics do not possess any formal psychiatric training. Further, since psychoanalysis rarely yields itself to decisive external verification, it has led to the rise of political philosophers, and sociologists like Ernest Gellner and Karl Popper, to argue that it is inherently

speculative and its conclusions ultimately unfalsifiable. Thus, the psychoanalysis understanding of ASEAN is not unfalsifiable.

Over a period of time, however, a contradictory understanding grew up around the various security dilemmas that ASEAN was originally designed to address. The approach of the ASEAN came to exercise an attraction to an eclectic assortment of scholarly opinion both within Southeast Asia and beyond, ranging from soft-realists and liberal-institutionalists on the one hand to post-Marxists, constructivists and post-colonialists on the other. This broad and inclusive church gained particular currency in the immediate post-Cold War era, developing into an orthodox understanding of regional relations where ASEAN's unique style of multilateral diplomacy became seductively modish. This consensus, is again was based on a illusion. An investigation of the recent history of Southeast Asian international relations, in this respect, reveals an interesting case study in teleology. This teleology held that the post-Cold War world would witness increasing global interdependence based on multilateral cooperation in which the consensual practices of consultation and dialogue would forge shared regional values and identities that would render established patterns of inter-state relations redundant. Going by this hypothesis, it can be argued that ASEAN as a multilateral cooperation has forged a somewhat shared regional values and identities. However, against the established argument of reduction of inter-state relations, relations between states under ASEAN have observed much high under particular heads of states. This thesis will address this question.

**ASEAN THROUGH THE LENS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**

Most notably, during the 1990s, a time in which theories of multilateralism, constructivism and strategic culture proliferated in the previously theoretically bereft study of international relations, the international profile of ASEAN grew on the back of its appeal as the prototype of such forms.

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of regional, economic and security cooperation. In terms of Southeast Asia specifically, some scholars argue that neoliberalism and realism remain the two dominant theoretical perspectives in security studies, but that liberalism is likely to become more influential in the future. For others, such as Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, however, 'the debate about East Asian security is dominated by two theories of the future', namely realism and liberalism, but the realists 'may be closer to the truth'. In a preliminary assessment of contemporary studies on security in East Asia, Sorpong Peou contends that realism, liberalism, and constructivism have become the most prominent perspectives. Of these, both realism and constructivism have now been established as the key intellectual competitors in Southeast Asian security studies. However, constructivism is more insightful than 'balance-of-power' realism, but it is more likely to conform to a sophisticated balance-of-threat theory.

Today, on Southeast Asian security, Realism can be termed as the oldest perspective. Neoliberalism, which once sought to challenge realism, however lacks the empirical content necessary to prove itself worthy of proper recognition. Constructivism has thus replaced neoliberalism as the most credible challenger to realism in Southeast Asian security studies. Realism prevailed over idealism because of the Second World War and are 'both offensively-oriented and defensively-oriented'. Realists downplay the 'democratic peace' thesis and disregard the impact of liberal and non-liberal values on state behavior. As Robert Jervis puts it, 'To conceive of international politics as a Hobbesian state of nature means not that warfare is constant, but only that it is always a


possibility and that actors understand this’ . It should thus come as no surprise that the literature on international relations of Southeast Asia during the 1960s and 1970s 'were permeated with implicit realist assumptions regarding the nature of the international system'\(^\text{169}\). There is no 'peace dividend' in Southeast Asia after the Soviet collapse; some of them see the region as one rife with growing bilateral tensions after the Cold War, which 'provided a certain ideological coherence and congruent threat perceptions for ASEAN'\(^\text{170}\). Jiirgen Ruland defends the utility of realism in ASEAN whose 'policy mix is closer to the realist than the institutionalist pole'\(^\text{171}\). Of all the realists who have studied Southeast Asian security, however, Michael Leifer was no doubt the most influential. Known as the 'dean' of Southeast Asian security studies, he wrote extensively on this region and painted a realist picture\(^\text{172}\). The extent to which liberalism remains a theoretical vision for the future of Southeast Asia is not difficult to assess. Kantian internationalism, which posits that democracies have almost never fought each other, has never been influential in Southeast Asia, because only three of the ten states of the region have become liberal democracies: Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, all of which are young. The rest remain semi-democratic (Singapore, Malaysia and possibly Cambodia), communist (Laos and Vietnam), monarchical (Brunei), or under military rule (Myanmar).

Neoliberal institutionalism as a distinct theoretical perspective and a challenger to realism, was first advanced by Robert Keohane, whose work stresses the importance of rationalism in explaining international regime formation and the existence of international institutions. This rationalist

perspective draws on insights from economics in its emphasis on the virtue of transaction-cost reduction. Under conditions such as those modeled by non-cooperative prisoners' dilemma games, high transaction costs and asymmetrical uncertainty could lead to suboptimal outcomes. But neoliberal institutionalists see the benefit of institution building as a more effective way to cope with uncertainty rationally by helping states to achieve their objectives more efficiently. Institutions are significant, as they provide information, which could help states overcome their worst-case assumption of the intention of each other in an uncertain, anarchic world. Information concerning the economic gains could be achieved from cooperation, which can help 'settle distributional conflicts' and assure member states 'that gains are evenly divided over time'.17

Neoliberal institutionalism, thus shows some relevance in the study of Southeast Asian security. ASEAN regionalism based on economic cooperation manifested in the institutionalization of the ASEAN Free Trade Areas (AFTA) appears to lend some support to this theory. Sheldon Simon thus acknowledges that this perspective coexists with realism and the two may reinforce each other. Each of these two theories 'explains some of the variance in regional security outcomes but that increasingly neo-liberalism will explain more of the region's future security orientation'.174 So far, however, realists and constructivists alike have seen little utility in neoliberal institutionalism, which 'have not been very relevant in explaining ASEAN's successes or failures, especially in the political and security arena'.176 Also, 'the emergence and consolidation of ASEAN took place with fairly low levels of intra-mural transactions and interdependence'.177

More and more scholars have now turned to constructivism for insights in explaining ASEAN regionalism. Constructivism has increased in influence since

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177 Ibid., p. 199.
the late 1980s and is said to possess more explanatory power than neoliberal institutionalism. The latter can explain the death of institutions whenever their members no longer have 'incentives to maintain them', but the former can account for their persistence when incentives no longer exist. John Ruggie and Alexander Wendt represent this intellectual tradition. Constructivism takes into account the importance of culture, ideas, ideology and socialization. State leaders are key actors in international politics, but cultural norms, values and identities (embedded in specific historical contexts) can shape or define their policy preferences. Constructivism rests on the basic assumption that the international system is socially constructed. Ideology, history and socialization matter. Material capabilities, for instance, do not explain why '500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons'. As well, 'History matters', claims Wendt. International anarchy is socially constructed: '[A]narchy is what states make of it'. An anarchy of friends differs from one of enemies, one of self-help from one of collective security, and these are all constituted by structures of shared knowledge. Anarchy can thus be transformed into a 'security community' defined as a 'social structure . . . composed of shared knowledge in which states trust one another to resolve disputes without war'. It was not until the late 1980s that this cultural and sociological approach to security began to permeate Southeast Asian security studies. In fact, Southeast Asia was the region that put to the test the assumptions and methodology of rational choice theory, a


180 Ibid., p. 422.


183 Ibid., p. 418.

theory that became popular in the 1950s and early 1960s. This theory also encountered new challenges, especially after the US 'defeat' in the Vietnam War in the early 1970s. Although one of the world's two superpowers, the US failed to prevent its South Vietnamese ally from falling victim to communist North Vietnam. In as early as 1966, Bernard Gordon published his work, which was seen as 'the most important general survey of Southeast Asian international relations'. He refers to the writings of such scholars as Ernst Haas and Karl Deutsch, whose theoretical insights have inspired today's constructivists. Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl's doctoral dissertation, completed in 1975 and published in 1982, was 'the first extended analysis of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia'. This study concluded that ASEAN 'represented "a significant move toward" a sense of community in the Deutschian conception within non-communist Southeast Asia'. In 1986, Noordin Sopiee further took up the idea when describing ASEAN as a 'quasi-security community'. Since the late 1980s, other leading Western scholars, such as Barry Buzan and Sheldon Simon, also came to recognize ASEAN as a 'security community'. As a theoretical approach to Southeast Asian security, however, constructivism remained peripheral until the early 1990s. Writing in 1994, Richard Higgott correctly argues that, 'Even the most sophisticated and conceptually oriented policy analyses of contemporary development and change in the Asia-Pacific region ignore the significance of underlying ideational questions'. Constructivism has since made headway in Northeast Asian security studies. While Johnston gives weight to 'domestic strategic culture', Katzenstein and Berger emphasize 'domestic political attitudes'. The same can be said of Southeast Asia, where the

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186 Ibid., P. 235.
187 Ibid., p. 237.
study of ASEAN regionalism and regional security and debate over 'Asian-values' have also engendered a growing number of sophisticated works with a constructivist bent. Identity, perception, norms, ideas, culture - all these discursive, or non-material, factors have been taken into account in security policy analysis.

Among the constructivists who have studied Southeast Asian security, Amitav Acharya is arguably the most authoritative. As the Cold War thawed in the early 1990s, he was among the first to conceptualize this region as a security community. In 2000, he published a major work entitled The Quest for Identity: International Relations of Southeast Asia. One year later, he produced another impressive volume: Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of a Regional Order. Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia has enjoyed lavish praise from two leading constructivists in security studies. Peter Katzenstein wrote (on the book’s back cover): 'This groundbreaking study illuminates brilliantly ASEAN's novel approach to issues of national and international security. Theoretically sophisticated and contextually grounded, Amitav Acharya is the rare scholar who succeeds fully in engaging intellectuality both security and area specialists'. Also Emanuel Adler commends the book as 'one of the best, most interesting and comprehensive studies on ASEAN and offers a compelling rationale for the security community approach to international relations'. On The Quest for Identity, Dianne Mauzy comments that she 'did not think that yet another book about ASEAN and efforts at regional cooperation could offer much that was very new or interesting. However, Amitav Acharya's book is interesting because of the breadth of the analysis and the fact that it goes beyond a strict


international relations paradigm’. In the preface of the book, Anthony Reid makes a similar statement: 'This book is a landmark in the process it describes. Southeast Asia's "quest for identity", its imagining of a common destiny, has found a worthy chronicler and analyst in Amitav Acharya. . . . For the first time in this field, he has pursued the origins of Southeast Asian identity and diplomacy into a distant pre-colonial past'. From Michael Leifer's Realist perspective, the liberal argument that international relations could be explained in terms of growing economic interdependence is unconvincing. Although ASEAN was formed out of the need for economic cooperation, 'Economic relations have been limited and disappointing in terms of expectations' 193. Underneath Leifer's implicit criticism of liberalism also lies his belief that ASEAN's 'corporate interest . . . does not exist' 194. In his view, 'economic cooperation [within ASEAN] has been obstructed by structural conflicts of interest' 195. According to him, thus, multilateral undertakings are ineffective. ASEAN is an 'underdeveloped institution'. One example, often referred to in his criticism of institutionalism, was the perfunctory nature of the ASEAN High Council provided for in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation - a mechanism for peaceful settlement of disputes among the member states. This institutional provision 'has not yet been put into effect' 196, the mechanism 'has never been constituted'. National interest reigns supreme, and regional machinery 'is distinguished by the primacy of the national foreign ministries' - the 'primacy' that 'reflects the national government's determination to prevent centrist tendencies from developing in the form of cooperate institutions with more than a minimal service function' 197. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was also viewed as analogous to 'Hebrew slaves in Egypt who were obliged to

194 Ibid
195 Ibid., p. 142
196 Ibid., p. 150.
197 Ibid., p. 142.
make bricks without straw’. International institutions may be able to cope with some uncertainties, but they will never overcome the perennial ‘problem of power’, especially when powerful states or rising powers are bent on disrupting the status quo. To Leifer, ASEAN was an ‘internal collective security arrangement’, a ‘diplomatic community’, and an ‘embryonic security community’ 199. However, ASEAN had ‘never been more than an intergovernment entity’ with ‘a strong disposition against any supranational tendency’200. ASEAN’s regional ‘identity’ was largely the byproduct of members’ ‘interests’ that were shared but ‘rarely held truly in common’. ASEAN of course practiced the politics of consensus, but this ‘practice . . . has never entailed full uniformity in foreign policy’ . The Soviet involvement in Indo-China was a factor, but the Soviet Union was an ‘incomplete’ superpower and was not as powerful as the United States. Following the Cold War, ASEAN states did not have ‘a common strategic perspective’, even in the midst of an external threat from the rising power of a revisionist China. ASEAN ‘cannot. . . be expected to integrate Vietnam within a conventional collective defense structure designed to contain any creeping assertiveness in the region by China’; there was no ‘lobby within ASEAN with an interest in so confronting China’ .

Instead, ASEAN helped create the ARF - ‘without provision for either collective defense or conventional collective security’ - incapable of creating a balance of power 204. Thus, ‘the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific has been left primarily to the United States to uphold’205. Amitav Achary while dissecting his ontological and epistemological Claims, rejected liberalism and realism, double-checking the evidence he provides, and determining whether his

200 Ibid., p. 153.
201 Ibid., p. 148.
202 Ibid., p. 144.
theory supplements or supplants realism. Intra-ASEAN differences, intra-mural polarization, factionalism, interstate territorial disputes and outside intervention - all these 'posed a threat not only to the survival of some of the region's new states, but also to the prospects for regional order as a whole'\(^ {206}\). These dangers were thus as 'real' to Acharya as they were to Leifer. While acknowledging that states in the region have also practiced balance-of-power politics, Acharya differs from realists in that he sees this politico-military strategy as a social construct, and not the only option available to ASEAN. The group seeks 'to use multilateralism to moderate and maintain a stable balance of power' and sees 'multilateralism not as a substitute for US military supremacy and its bilateral alliances, but as a necessary complement to the latter'\(^ {207}\). Multilateral security dialogues are seen by states in the region as a strategy that can 'supplement' a balance-of-power approach\(^ {208}\). In the short term, multilateralism 'may help shape the balance of power by providing norms of restraint and avenues of confidence building among the major powers'. In the long term, however, 'it may even enable states to transcend the balance of power approach'\(^ {209}\). The theoretical foundation Acharya has built to explain international relations in Southeast Asia is rather ambitious, even radical; one that projects itself as a meta-theory that subsumes both realism and liberalism and ultimately supplants them. His books rely on evidence that ASEAN has somewhat transcended power politics: by the early 1990s, it had emerged as a 'nascent security community'. The concept of a 'security community' means that member states rule out war against each other and when in conflict seek to settle their differences in a peaceful manner, although they may not do so with non-member states. According to Acharya, 'by the early 1990s [the ASEAN] members could claim their grouping to be one of the most successful experiments in regional cooperation in the developing world. At the heart of this claim was ASEAN's role in moderating intra-regional conflicts and significantly reducing the

\(^{207}\) Ibid., p. 182.
\(^{208}\) Ibid., p. 181.
\(^{209}\) Ibid., pj. 184.
likelihood of war’. The states in ASEAN did not behave according to the dictate of balance-of-power logic: they have not been bogged down in an arms race driven by the usual security dilemma dynamics, nor have small states - Singapore and Brunei in particular - grown increasingly vulnerable to the larger member states. As a nascent security community, ASEAN rests on two key pillars: norms for collective action and identity-building initiatives. ASEAN's norms with transformative power include non-interference, non-use of force, regional autonomy, avoidance of collective defense and the practice of the 'ASEAN way'. The 'ASEAN way' includes the following characteristics: compromise, consensus building, ambiguity, avoidance of strict reciprocity and rejection of legally binding obligations. Acharya has further demonstrated that ASEAN member states' externally directed behaviors were generally norm-consistent. They abide by the norms of non-interference and non-use of force. Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia (against non-interference) led to an outcry from ASEAN, which also showed a willingness to negotiate with Vietnam rather than to form a military alliance against it (non-use of force). The ASEAN 'policy of "constructive engagement"' - that led to the full admission of Burma as a member in 1997 - was also consistent with the norms of non-interference by other member states and by extra-regional powers (regional autonomy). Furthermore, ASEAN did not heed the call by Western powers to isolate and punish Burma for its domestic human rights violations. Regarding non-use of force, they have managed their conflicts peacefully. ASEAN's collective identity is another crucial aspect of community building in Southeast Asia. A security community is defined as a social construct, evolving as 'a sort of an "imagined community"' - a vision which preceded rather than resulted from political, strategic and functional interactions and interdependence, and as such it must be understood in non-material terms. ASEAN is a community similar to Benedict Anderson's classic formulation of the nation-state as an 'imagined

211 Original Idea is by Anderson, Benedict, Imagined Community, Verso Publisher, 2006.
community'. By collective identity, he does not suggest that the region is not culturally diverse, although states in the region share some 'cultural similarities'. Neither does he see identity building as a process based on malignant hegemony in realist terms. In Southeast Asia, hierarchy had existed in the pre-colonial interstate system, but it was not based on 'relative preponderance of material power, military or economic'. When faced with centrifugal tendencies, the ruler 'resorted to ritual and symbol to hold the state together, instead of by carrying out a military expedition'. Acharya argues that the 'we feeling' in ASEAN does not rest on the liberal logic of economic interdependence or democracy. He traces the 'we feeling' back to the cultural and social process within the region. Both norm creation and identity formation are not simply the by-product of 'a common cultural identity' shared by its members because of 'the social and cultural diversity' among them. Wisely avoiding the pitfall of cultural determinism, he writes: '[I]n the case of ASEAN, it was not so much that culture created norms', but rather that 'norms also created culture'. 'The ASEAN Way itself resulted not so much from preordained cultural sources'; it 'emerged not only from the principles of interstate relations agreed to by the founders of ASEAN, but also from a subsequent and long-term process of interaction and adjustment'. The process of regionalization is also shaped by local actors, who think regionally, as well as by social interactions; it 'was indigenously constructed rather than exogenously determined'. Since the Second World War, 'the idea of one Southeast Asia has been consciously nurtured by regional elites'. After the Second World War they made efforts to restore its 'cultural unity' and 'regional coherence' in the larger pan-Asian or

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213 Ibid., p. 28.
216 Ibid., p. 72.
217 Ibid., p. 71.
218 Ibid., pp. 71-72.
220 Ibid., p. 169.
Afro-Asian context (allowing leaders to meet one another), but not to create a regional identity. Although these efforts made important steps toward regionalism at the time, 'a Southeast Asian community remained a distant concept'. But 'the "ASEAN Way" has been at the core of efforts to build a Southeast Asian regional identity in the modern era' Acharya's constructivism is criticized as that it appears a bit radical: he offers a noble vision that would transcend politics altogether. But evidence still shows little of how this vision might eventually come to pass. It remains unclear why some ASEAN states' behavior was more norm-consistent and others' is less so. Indonesia and Malaysia, for instance, have adopted a regional approach that 'was fully consistent with' ASEAN's norm of regional autonomy (against military pacts). In contrast, Singapore and Thailand have sought 'close and direct backing from the major external powers, thereby compromising the norm of regional autonomy'. Moreover, ASEAN's norms can also be undermined by material factors - membership size, for instance; noninterference could also erode as a result of membership expansion. ASEAN's fears concerning China and Japan do not appear to be associated with aggregate power, otherwise its member states would find the US more threatening than either of its Asian neighbors; rather, these fears seem to be determined by geographical proximity, ideology and historical legacies. Constructivism has incorporated realism into its security analysis, but time will tell whether it will one day succeed in getting rid of the latter. Balance-of-power realists should also be careful about claiming that a balance of power is a sufficient condition for peace. Balance-of-power politics often leads to war. Acharya's constructivism is closer to the truth than balance-of-power realism in that it seeks to explain regional security by looking at a wide range of ideational, inter-subjective as well as material factors. But his theory still lacks systematic treatment of security issues and runs the
risks of trying to explain everything and nothing. More closely examined, it shows potential compatibility with a more sophisticated balance-of-threat theory that can also lend support to the idea of a 'security community'. Even in today's mature democracies, lest one forget, many political problems continue to persist, and institutional checks and balances remain vital for the maintenance of domestic peace and freedom. A balance of threat without the pacifying effect of democratic values remains war prone, but a 'democratic zone' without a stable international democratic system may not enjoy perpetual peace either. Southeast Asia may thus serve as fertile ground for advancing 'minimalist' or 'soft' realism - a sophisticated balance-of-threat theory - if systematic analysis of material as well as discursive sources of danger to regime and national security can be made.

This, however, obscured major fault lines in the theory and practice of ASEAN that misread its past, overestimated its capacity to manage the affairs of the region and ignored or underestimated new threats and challenges to the regional order. ASEAN came into being in 1967, after a series of faltering attempts at regional security cooperation among the non-communist states of Southeast Asia. Few hopes were invested in ASEAN's formation. Its agenda was vague and its direction uncertain. As Singapore foreign minister S. Rajaratnam observed after an ASEAN ministerial meeting in 1974: 'You may recall at the first meeting in 1967, when we had to draft our communique, it was a very difficult problem of trying to say nothing in about ten pages . . . we ourselves, having launched ASEAN were not quite sure where it was going, or whether it was going anywhere at all' (quoted in Business Times 1992, 15 January). The Association was rescued from this road to oblivion by a series of fortuitous international events that would change the security dispensation in Southeast Asia and boost ASEAN's profile.

Finally, it will be argued that the notion of Asian values, manifested organizationally in shared ASEAN values during the 1990s, constituted an illusion that both masked emerging tensions between Asian states and actively obscured political and economic weaknesses, with ultimately disastrous
consequences. Ironically, the extent to which Southeast Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific more generally can sustain the status quo and avoid a possible Middle Eastern fate will reflect the balancing role played by the west, in the shape of the US across the Pacific region and Australia in Southeast Asia.

The following chapter will deal with the historical background of ASEAN since birth.

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