Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia
ASEAN and the problem of regional order

Amitav Acharya

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Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is regarded by many as one of the most successful examples of regional cooperation in the developing world. In the post-Cold War era, however, ASEAN faces serious challenges, not least from an expanded membership and the rising power of China. This book examines whether ASEAN can cope with these challenges and contribute to peaceful change in Southeast Asia, or whether it will crumble under the weight of its burdens, sparking a new spiral of regional conflict.

Developing new theoretical insights into the rise and decline of security communities in international relations, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* offers the first serious investigation into the prospects for a security community outside the Euro-Atlantic region. It examines several key issues which will determine the future stability of the Southeast Asian and Asia Pacific region, including:

- the effect of expansion on ASEAN’s intra-mural solidarity
- whether the ASEAN model of conflict management can be applied to the wider Asia Pacific region
- the threat posed by territorial disputes in the South China Sea
- domestic instability in Myanmar and Cambodia
- the impact of military acquisitions on intra-regional relations
- recent debates over ASEAN’s non-interference doctrine and calls for a ‘flexible engagement’ approach
- the impact of the Asian economic crisis on regionalism and ASEAN’s response to the crisis

This book contains the most comprehensive and critical account available of the evolution of ASEAN’s norms and the viability of the ASEAN Way of conflict management. It is an invaluable resource for students and scholars of Asian Studies, International Relations and Politics.

*Amitav Acharya* is Professor in the Department of Political Science at York University, Toronto, Canada. He has been a Fellow both of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and of the Harvard University Asia Center, and has taught at the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Sydney University and Harvard University.
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Monarchy in South-East Asia
The faces of tradition in transition
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ASEAN and the problem of regional order

Amitav Acharya
To Julia Greenwood Bentley
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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has enjoyed a mixed institutional experience since its advent in August 1967. The past three decades and more have seen the Association manage intra-mural tensions with some success and also act as a diplomatic community speaking with a single voice during the course of the Cambodian conflict. Since the end of the Cold War, ASEAN has assumed a diplomatic centrality within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ART) but has also faced evident difficulties in sustaining collective consensus as a result of the impact of regional economic crisis and an enlargement of membership to coincide with geographic Southeast Asia, exempting East Timor. Professor Amitav Acharya has drawn on this mixed institutional experience to address the subject of constructing a security community. At issue in this volume is what kind of model does ASEAN provide for confronting the problem of regional order identified in the sub-title? Professor Acharya has taken as his intellectual point of reference the concept of ‘Constructivism’, whereby cooperation among states is understood as a social process that can have a positive, and even transforming, effect on their relations through internalising regulatory norms. Indeed, he is a member of the academic school that maintains that norms can have a life of their own and are capable of influencing the behaviour of states so that they come to share a common habit of peaceful conduct.

Professor Acharya is exceptionally well qualified to address this subject and its regional context. He has acquired a wealth of regional field experience and also has established a prodigious record of scholarship combining theoretical perspectives with empirical data. In this volume, he examines and assesses the merits of ‘the ASEAN Way’ and whether or not the nascent security community is in the ascendant. He sets ASEAN’s institutional experience within a structured framework of enquiry, which serves not only as a basis for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the Association but also as a vehicle for the wider comparative analysis of regional organisations. In the process, he takes the study of ASEAN beyond an account of its historical record. The attendant intellectual appeal extends beyond specialists in Southeast Asian security to the wider community of students of regional and international security.

Michael Leifer
Acknowledgements

A number of people and institutions in four continents made it possible for me to complete this book. In Toronto, the York Centre for International and Security Studies has been my main intellectual home since 1993 and its director David Dewitt is unfailingly supportive of my intellectual endeavours. The University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies under Paul Evans’ directorship always found a way of sponsoring my travel and research in the region. I thank Dewitt, Evans and Bernie Frolic (who succeeded Evans as the Centre Director) for all their warmth, generosity and companionship through the years.

During the writing process, I returned to the region repeatedly. I thank the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore for hosting me during the summer of 1997. The newly established Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies in Singapore provided a year of fellowship enabling me to bring closure to the manuscript. I am deeply indebted to its founding director, S.R.Nathan (now President of the Republic of Singapore), for making my stay at IDSS during 1998–1999 a most pleasant and productive experience.

The Department of Government at Sydney University, headed by Martin Painter, was my gracious host during February-June 1998 and provided a vibrant intellectual climate.

Without Michael Leifer’s encouragement, advice and criticisms this book would most likely have remained an idea. David Capie and Evelyn Goh read sections of the manuscript and offered frank and perceptive appraisals of how the book might go down with the crucial graduate student community. I am grateful to Peter Katzenstein and Etel Solingen for helpful comments on portions of the draft manuscript. Richard Stubbs shared some of his own research to strengthen the arguments of the book. And I note with profound sadness the untimely death of Gerald Segal, a vibrant intellectual who encouraged and oversaw the publication of my 1993 Adelphi paper on ASEAN which in turn developed into the present book.

Ken Boutin offered vital research assistance throughout the writing of the book. His has been a most critical role in the completion of the manuscript. I also thank Samantha Arnold for helping with the initial editing of the manuscript.
Thanks are due to my friends Arun Mahizhnan, M. Ramesh and Ananda Rajah for making my travels in Southeast Asia and Australia so very enjoyable.

A special note of gratitude must go to Ezra Vogel, a person of exceptional charm and intellect, for inviting me to Harvard to share with him the teaching of the ‘New Institutionalism in Asia’ Seminar during the spring term of 2000 and allowing me to benefit from his deep insights into Asian affairs.

At Routledge, I thank Craig Fowlie, Vicky Smith (who has since left Routledge), Milon Nagi, Allison Bell, Neville Hankins and Katie Myers for seeing the manuscript through. I have been really fortunate to have an exceptionally dynamic and professional editorial/production/promotion team.

This book, a product of over thirteen years of research into ASEAN, draws extensively from a vast range of primary sources, including interviews and formal and informal (important in the ASEAN context) discussions with over two hundred government officials who have been directly involved in ASEAN-related issues. The list includes several distinguished statesmen who were present at ASEAN’s creation, including S. Rajaratnam, Thanat Khoman, Mohamad Ghazali Shafie and S. R. Nathan. In addition, I have interviewed retired and serving foreign ministers, foreign secretaries, armed forces chiefs of staff, chiefs of intelligence and numerous civil service officials and military commanders at all levels in Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Cambodia, and to a lesser extent, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Laos. It is not possible for me to mention their names individually here, not least because many spoke on the condition of anonymity. But I am deeply grateful to all of them for giving me their time and sharing their wisdom, especially on matters deemed highly sensitive by their governments. While these encounters with public officials in ASEAN form the most important source for this book, I alone bear responsibility for its contents.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACMR</td>
<td>Air Combat Manoeuvring Range</td>
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<td>AFTA</td>
<td>ASEAN Free Trade Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIJV</td>
<td>ASEAN Industrial Joint Venture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMM</td>
<td>ASEAN Ministerial Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regional Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF-SOM</td>
<td>ARF Senior Officials Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASA</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASCU</td>
<td>ASEAN Surveillance Coordinating Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN-ISIS</td>
<td>ASEAN Institutes for Strategic and International Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN-PMC</td>
<td>ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN-SOM</td>
<td>ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEM</td>
<td>Asia Europe Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>ASEAN Surveillance Process</td>
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<td>ASTSU</td>
<td>ASEAN Surveillance Technical Support Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIMP-EAGA</td>
<td>Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBM</td>
<td>Confidence-building Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGDK</td>
<td>Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>Communist Party of Malay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Communist Party of Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSBMss</td>
<td>Confidence-and Security-building Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCA</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCAP</td>
<td>Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSIS</td>
<td>Centre for Strategic and International Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Democratic Kampuchea</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAEC</td>
<td>East Asian Economic Caucus</td>
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<tr>
<td>EASI</td>
<td>East Asia Strategic Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEZ</td>
<td>Exclusive Economic Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>EHD</td>
<td>Environment, Human Rights and Democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEPSEA</td>
<td>Economy and Environment Programme for Southeast Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPDA</td>
<td>Five Power Defence Arrangements</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUNCINPEC</td>
<td>Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Independant, Neutre, Pacifique et Cooperatif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSP</td>
<td>Generalised System of Preferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICJ</td>
<td>International Court of Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICK</td>
<td>International Conference on Kampuchea</td>
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<td>ICM</td>
<td>International Control Mechanism</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMC</td>
<td>Informal Meeting on Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMET</td>
<td>International Military Exchange and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMT-GT</td>
<td>Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISDS</td>
<td>Institute of Strategic and Development Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISG</td>
<td>Inter-sessional Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIM</td>
<td>Jakarta Informal Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>JLP</td>
<td>Joint Logistics Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>KPNLF</td>
<td>Khmer People’s National Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAPHILINDO</td>
<td>Malaysia-Philippines-Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIMA</td>
<td>Maritime Institute of Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NETs</td>
<td>Natural Economic Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPCSD</td>
<td>North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS</td>
<td>Organization of American States</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Preventive Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECC</td>
<td>Pacific Economic Cooperation Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMC</td>
<td>Post-Ministerial Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRK</td>
<td>People’s Republic of Kampuchea</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEANWFZ</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEATO</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIJORI</td>
<td>Singapore-Johor-Riau</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLORC</td>
<td>State Law and Order Restoration Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>Supreme National Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOM</td>
<td>Senior Officials Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTAC</td>
<td>United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZOPFAN</td>
<td>Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The evolution of ASEAN-Ten
A chronology

8 August 1967 (Bangkok)  
Birth of ASEAN. ASEAN Founders from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand signed the ASEAN Declaration in Bangkok.

27 November 1971 (Kuala Lumpur)  
Zone of Peace Freedom and Neutrality Declaration.

23–24 February 1976 (Bali)  
First ASEAN Summit.

24 February 1976 (Bali)  
Declaration of ASEAN Concord; Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia; Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat.

4–5 August 1977 (Kuala Lumpur)  
Second ASEAN Summit.

7 January 1984 (Jakarta)  
Admission of Brunei Darussalam.

14–15 December 1987 (Manila)  
Third ASEAN Summit.

21–22 July 1992 (Manila)  
Applications for Observer status from Laos and Vietnam approved; Instruments of Accession of Laos and Vietnam to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia were accepted.

23–24 July 1993 (Singapore)  
Laos and Vietnam at the 26th AMM as Observers; Cambodia at the 26th AMM as Guest.

22–23 July 1994 (Bangkok)  
Laos and Vietnam attended the 27th AMM as Observers; Cambodia and Myanmar attended as Guest.

17 October 1994  
Vietnam applied for membership in ASEAN.

25 October 1994  
Cambodia applied for Observer status.

24 January 1995  
Cambodia acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

12 July 1995  
Myanmar applied for Observer status.

28 July 1995  At the 28th AMM, Vietnam was admitted into ASEAN as the seventh member; Cambodia became an Observer; Laos announced its wish to join ASEAN in two years’ time; Myanmar attended as Guest.

14–15 December 1995  The Fifth ASEAN Summit; the first meeting of the seven ASEAN Leaders and their counterparts from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar; Signing of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone by the Leaders of the ten Southeast Asian countries.

15 March 1996  Laos applied for membership.

23 March 1996  Cambodia applied for membership.

12–13 July 1996  Myanmar became an Observer.

12 August 1996  Myanmar applied for membership.

30 November 1996  The First Informal ASEAN Summit; ASEAN Heads of Government declare commitment to simultaneous admission of CLM (Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar) countries to ASEAN; informal meeting between the ASEAN Heads of Government and the Heads of Government of the CLM countries.

31 May 1997  Special Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Kuala Lumpur reaches unanimous decision to admit the CLM (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar) countries in July 1997.

10 July 1997  ASEAN Foreign Ministers ‘delay the admission of Cambodia into ASEAN until a later date…’ following the ‘coup’ in that country, but agreed that the admission of Laos and Myanmar ‘will proceed as scheduled’.

23 July 1997  Laos and Myanmar admitted into ASEAN, one day before the start of the 30th AMM.

15 December 1997  The Second ASEAN Informal Meeting, leaders of the nine ASEAN members agree to ‘consultations…so as to enable Cambodia to join ASEAN as soon as possible, preferably before the next ASEAN Summit’ [in Hanoi in mid-December 1998].

16 December 1998  Sixth ASEAN Summit decides to admit the Kingdom of Cambodia.

30 April 1999  Cambodia admitted as tenth ASEAN member.

Southeast Asia
Cartography by Gary Haley, PCS Mapping & DTP.
Introduction

Security communities and ASEAN in theoretical perspective

Identifying the conditions under which states avoid the recurrence of war and establish a durable peace is one of the most difficult challenges for practitioners and theorists of international relations. While there is an abundant literature on the causes of war, what leads states to self-consciously abandon war as a means of policy towards other states has been a far more problematic issue, and one that has received considerably less attention. Thus, it is hardly surprising that one of the most promising concepts used to explore peaceful change in international relations, that of ‘security community’ developed by Karl Deutsch and his associates in the 1950s, has been more or less ignored by a discipline traditionally dominated by the realist paradigm which accepts competition possibly leading to war as an inevitable and permanent condition of international relations.

The concept of security community describes groups of states which have developed a long-term habit of peaceful interaction and ruled out the use of force in settling disputes with other members of the group. In international relations theory, especially for the purpose of this book, the concept has two-fold significance. First, it raises the possibility that through interactions and socialisation, states can manage anarchy and even escape the security dilemma, conditions which realist and neo-realist, and neo-liberal, perspectives take as permanent features of international relations. Second, the concept offers a theoretical and analytic framework for studying the impact of international (including regional) institutions in promoting peaceful change in international relations. This framework not only challenges the assumptions of realism and neo-realism, but also goes beyond the intellectual parameters established by the neo-realist-neo-liberal divide, which have formed a major part of the theoretical debate in international relations in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The theory of ‘security communities’ was among the first major attempts in the period after the Second World War to raise the possibility of non-violent change in international relations. It challenged the dominance of realism with its attendant focus on the security dilemma. The concept of ‘security dilemma’, proposed by John Hertz in 1950, described how the imperative of self-help guiding the behaviour of states under conditions of anarchy could fuel arms races and conflict. It conceptualised international relations as a ‘vicious circle of security and power accumulation’ as states are ‘driven to
acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. The idea of security community, by contrast, was integral to a perspective that saw international relations as a process of social learning and identity formation, driven by transactions, interactions and socialisation. It recognised the possibility of change being a fundamentally peaceful process with its sources lying in the ‘perceptions and identifications’ among actors. Such processes could explain why states may develop greater mutual interdependence and responsiveness, develop ‘we feelings’, and ultimately come to abandon the use of force to settle problems among them. International relations could thus be reconceptualised as a ‘world society of political communities, consisting of social groups, a process of political communication, machinery for enforcement, and popular habits of compliance.’

While theoretically challenging, the concept of security community remained in the sidelines of international relations theory. The work of Deutsch and his associates on security community formed an integral part of regional integration theory which dominated the study of regional organisations in the 1960s and 1970s. Along with Ernst Haas’s neo-functionalist approach, Deutsch’s work (called ‘transactionalism’) provided powerful and popular conceptual tools for ‘investigations into peaceful transnational problem-solving’. But interest in regional integration theory declined sharply with the faltering state of the European Community. The theory was considered ‘obsolescent’ when EC members failed to respond collectively to the Middle East oil crisis and the American technological challenge in the 1970s. Moreover, as a Euro-centric theory, the liberal-pluralist explanation of regional integration proved to be inapplicable in the Third World context.

The major reason for the lack of interest in security communities, however, had to do with the orthodoxy of a discipline. As Adler and Barnett have put it, international relations scholars have been generally uncomfortable with the language of community—‘the idea that actors can share values, norms, and symbols that provide a social identity, and engage in various interactions in myriad spheres that reflect long-term interests, diffuse reciprocity and trust, strike fear and incredulity in their hearts’. This was especially evident when integration theory was superseded by theories of complex interdependence and international regimes. The latter proved especially influential in the study of international organisation from the late 1970s. Although it retained some of the insights and concerns of regional integration, especially their ‘curiosities about international collaboration via transnational processes within settings of interdependence’, the study of international organisations came to be dominated by the rationalistic predispositions of neo-liberal institutionalism. Missing from the picture was the integration theorists’ emphasis on the sociological nature of state interactions, especially Deutsch’s focus on the development of collective perceptions and identifications, which could lead to a fundamental transformation of the security dilemma. Under Keohane’s intellectual leadership, neo-liberal institutionalism accepted the realist premise concerning anarchy as a given of the international system and that cooperation
among states, while possible, would arise only in response to states pursuing their short-term self-interest.

The so-called debate between neo-realists and neo-liberals in the 1980s and early 1990s established a relatively narrow parameter for explaining change in international relations. Neo-realism, to a much greater extent than classical realism, is sceptical of the prospects for peaceful change. International institutions, a key agent of peaceful change, are viewed by neo-realists as creatures of great power self-interest with only a marginal effect in regulating the behaviour of states. For neo-realists, change occurs as a consequence of shifts, often violent, in the balance or distribution of power. Neo-liberalism accepts that change can occur peacefully through the working of international institutions. Institutions facilitate cooperation by providing information, reducing transaction costs, helping to settle distributional conflicts, and, most importantly, reducing the likelihood of cheating. But while disagreeing with neo-realism that institutions matter only on the margins of international relations, neo-liberal institutionalism would still grant them a limited role. It accepts the basic neo-realist premise that institutions reflect and are conditioned by the distribution of power in the international system. Moreover, institutions are created by self-interested states, and at most constrain state choices and strategies. They do not fundamentally alter state interests and identities (as self-interested egoists). Like neo-realism, neoliberalism takes state interests as a given. Interests remain exogenous to the process of interstate interactions taking place in a given institutionalised setting. Such interactions do not fundamentally transform the condition of anarchy.

During the heyday of neo-liberal institutionalism, the idea of security community was kept alive mostly in the work of a handful of scholars working on regional security organisations. ASEAN, along with regional institutions in post-Cold War Europe, was among them. Mainstream international relations theory would only return to the concept in the wake of the constructivist revolt against neo-realism and neo-liberalism. Subsequently, constructivism has been the main theoretical framework for the study of security communities. This is not the place to provide a detailed elaboration of the assumptions and arguments of constructivism. Suffice it to say that constructivism’s influence in shaping the new discourse on security communities can be found in three areas.

The first is the social construction of security communities. For constructivists, just as power politics (which is viewed by realists as a given of international politics) is but socially constructed, cooperation among states is also to be understood as a social process that may redefine the interests of the actors in matters of war and peace. The habit of war avoidance found in security communities results from interactions, socialisation, norm setting and identity building, rather than from forces outside of these processes (such as the international distribution of power).

Second, constructivist scholarship has injected into the Deutschian literature on security communities a clear focus on the transformative impact of norms. To be sure, all theories of international organisation, including neo-liberal institutionalism, recognise the importance of norms. But constructivism allows
for a much deeper impact of norms in shaping international relations. Norms not only ‘regulate’ state behaviour as in neo-liberal institutionalism, but also redefine state interests and constitute state identities, including the development of collective identities. By focusing on the constitutive effects of norms, constructivism has thus restored some of the original insights of integration theory regarding the impact of socialisation in creating collective interests and identities. As described in the following chapter, norms play a crucial role in the socialisation process leading to peaceful conduct among states, which form the core of security communities.

Third, constructivism allows us to look beyond the impact of material forces in shaping international politics. Neo-realism and most liberal theories take state interests to be shaped by material forces and concerns, such as power and wealth; perceptual, ideational and cultural factors derive from a material base. According to constructivists, while material forces remain important, intersubjective factors, including ideas, culture and identities, play a determining, rather than secondary, role in foreign policy interactions. Thus, constructivism provides important insights into the role of cultural norms and the emergence of ‘we feelings’ that Deutsch identified as a crucial feature of security communities.

But despite offering valuable insights, can constructivism adequately explain the rise and decline of a regional institution like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations? Empirical work on regional security communities remains scarce, and the constructivist research agenda has yet to inspire an adequate body of literature dealing with regional institutions. Moreover, as this book will show, constructivism remains a somewhat linear perspective, predisposed against the study of crisis points in cooperation which would explain the decline of institutions. In this book, an attempt will be made to examine ASEAN’s record in managing regional order by focusing on both its accomplishments and failures, using a framework that incorporates, but goes beyond, the linear constructivist logic. Overall, this book makes a case for sociological approach to the study of complexities of regionalism, focusing on the role of norms, socialisation and identity as central explanatory tools in the making and unmaking of security communities.

Why ASEAN?

ASEAN provides an important and rich area of investigation into the study of security communities. Since its formation in 1967, ASEAN has lived through a major shift in the regional strategic environment of Southeast Asia. In the 1960s, the outlook for regional security and stability in Southeast Asia was particularly grim. The region was portrayed variously as a ‘region of revolt’, the ‘Balkans of the East’, or a ‘region of dominoes’. The weak socio-political cohesion of the region’s new nation-states, the legitimacy problems of several of the region’s postcolonial governments, interstate territorial disputes, intra-regional ideological polarisation and intervention by external powers were marked features of the geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia. These conflicts 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. Cold War Southeast Asia was polarised as a result of efforts by the revolutionary communist governments in Indochina to export their revolution to the neighbouring states. Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in 1978 rekindled intraregional tensions and set the stage for renewed great power intervention and rivalry in the region. While the Sabah dispute between the Philippines and Malaysia and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Konfrontasi (meaning confrontation) were the defining features of its regional security environment in the early postcolonial period, Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia and the ASEAN-Indochina polarisation marked the high point of the second Cold War in Southeast Asia.

Against this background, the establishment of ASEAN in August 1967 did not inspire much hope for peace and stability in the region. Indeed, the very survival of ASEAN was placed in doubt as interstate disputes (such as that between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah) escalated. Functional cooperation, including trade liberalisation, was also slow to emerge. ASEAN’s declaratory blueprint for regional order in the 1970s, such as Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), remained just that—a blueprint that engendered no concrete progress.

But ASEAN survived. What is more, by the early 1990s its 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 likelihood of war. The original ASEAN members, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines, had not fought a war against each other since 1967 when they founded the grouping.26 In addition, ASEAN could claim an ability to manage regional order by virtue of its leadership role in steering the peace process that culminated in the Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia in 1991. Buoyed by the international recognition ASEAN received for its role, some of its leaders questioned the utility of Western models of regional cooperation (based on legalistic and formalistic institutions) vis-à-vis the ASEAN model, or the so-called ‘ASEAN Way’, which emphasised informality and organisational minimalism. Such was ASEAN’s credibility in the wake of the settlement of the Cambodia conflict that the countries of the Asia Pacific region accepted its nominal leadership and institutional model as the basis for creating a regional multilateral security dialogue, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). ASEAN itself aspired to a role in regulating the behaviour of major powers and in creating a stable post-Cold War regional order in the Asia Pacific.

By the late 1990s, however, ASEAN’s image had suffered a major setback. To be sure, ASEAN was never short of critics.27 But many of them seized on the Asian economic crisis to highlight the shortcomings of the organisation.28 They pointed to the persistence of intra-ASEAN disputes and ASEAN’s failure to develop concrete institutional mechanisms and procedures for conflict resolution. They also cited the continuing differences and disagreements among its members over how to deal with non-members and external powers (such as the differences over ZOPFAN in the 1970s and over Vietnam in the 1980s). ASEAN’s tendency to
deal with intra-mural conflicts by ‘sweeping them under the carpet’, rather than resolving them, and its slow pace and modest record in developing economic cooperation, could be cited as further testimony to the limitations of the ASEAN Way. Moreover, in the late 1990s, ASEAN had been criticised for not dealing effectively with human rights issues, or transnational problems such as the forest fires in Indonesia that have caused severe air pollution among neighbouring states. In the wake of the Asian economic crisis, ASEAN’s critics have also highlighted its inability to provide a united front in dealing with the challenges of globalisation. Intra-ASEAN differences over longstanding norms such as non-interference, evident in the wake of the expansion its membership to include all ten countries of Southeast Asia, have aggravated perceptions of ASEAN’s weaknesses. Finally, the ASEAN-led ARF was seen as little more than a talk-shop, much like ASEAN itself. The ASEAN Way of soft institutionalism and dialogue process seemed ineffective in laying the foundations of an Asia Pacific regional order.

The shifting perceptions of, and debates about, ASEAN invite several questions. How did ASEAN survive its shaky beginnings? How does one explain ASEAN’s role in regional order in Southeast Asia? What explains its decline in the late 1990s compared with the 1980s and early 1990s? Is the so-called ASEAN Way, often credited with ASEAN’s effectiveness in the past, a myth or a reality?

This book argues that the concept of security community, originally developed by Deutsch and his associates and recently resurrected and modified by constructivist scholarship, provides the most useful framework for addressing the above questions. This perspective views ASEAN regionalism as a process of interaction and socialisation and focuses on the norms which underpin this process. It also examines identity formation in ASEAN, explored by looking at the claims made by ASEAN elites about regionally specific ways of problem solving and cooperation. The book does not assume, a priori, that ASEAN has already become a security community in Deutsch’s terms—or perhaps become a full-fledged security community. Rather, the purpose of this exercise is to use the idea of security community as a framework within which to examine the evolution and nature of ASEAN’s political and security role and identify the constraints it faces in developing a viable regional security community.

Such a perspective on ASEAN’s role in regional order is scarcely found in the available literature. Despite its abundance, the literature on ASEAN has been and remains overwhelmingly atheoretical, and thus does not lend itself to any neat classification into realist, liberal, constructivist or other categories. But it can be safely concluded that the available literature on ASEAN rarely deals with the question of norms and identity in explaining the evolution and role of ASEAN.

At the risk of oversimplification, one could discern, however, a body of writings on ASEAN that could be described as ‘realist’, in the sense that it calls into question ASEAN’s capacity to shape regional order. For the realist, ASEAN’s survival and role have been dependent on, and shaped by, a wider regional balance of power system underpinned by the US military presence. Underlying this view is the quintessential realist assumption that the smaller and weaker states of the
international system, whether acting individually or through multilateral institutions, lack the capacity to play a managerial role in ensuring international order and must therefore depend on the resources and leadership of the great powers.31

Another body of literature on ASEAN may be termed ‘institutionalise, in the sense that it takes a generally more optimistic (although the degree of optimism varies considerably) view of ASEAN’s capacity for managing intra-mural conflicts and creating the basis for a stable regional order.32 From a theoretical standpoint, this type of work embraces a broad range of perspectives, including liberal institutionalist (including integrationist) and neo-liberal institutionalist (including regime theory) perspectives. Generally, however, liberal institutionalist perspectives have not been very relevant in explaining ASEAN’s successes or failures, especially in the political and security arena. ASEAN was not a major empirical focus of regional integration theory (which had already become ‘obsolescent’ by the time ASEAN came into the international limelight).33 Moreover, most liberal theories of cooperation assume background conditions, such as a shared liberal-democratic domestic environment (republican liberalism) and a relatively high degree of mutual economic interdependence (commercial liberalism), for regionalism to succeed. Neither of these conditions, to be discussed in Chapter 1, has been a marked feature of ASEAN.

Neo-liberal perspectives, including regime theory, do not share the belief of integrationist models regarding the sovereignty-eroding potential of institutions. In the case of ASEAN, a small body of literature has investigated its emergence and function as a regional security and economic ‘regime’ that allows each member to preserve its sovereignty and pursue its own ‘national’ interest.34 Thus, Don Emmerson has characterised ASEAN as a ‘security regime’, the latter defined as formal or informal arrangements among states ‘to maintain their sovereignty in conditions of peace among themselves and with outside states’.35 Some of the work on ASEAN economic cooperation also represents this type of approach. Such work views the role of ASEAN as that of a policy-coordinating body, a forum for trade liberalisation, information sharing, and a platform for collective bargaining over such functional issues as access to foreign markets or securing better prices for the primary commodity exports of members. Regional order is enhanced by growing interdependence fostered through trade, investment and other economic linkages.36 But ASEAN remains primarily a vehicle through which its members pursue their national interests, the content of which remains unchanged (ASEAN as a regime can constrain the aggressive pursuit of national self-interests but not transform them). Regionalism remains largely an exercise in utility maximisation without any sovereignty-eroding or collective identity-shaping impact.

Neither the realist nor the vast majority of institutionalist writings have spent much time in discussing questions central to this book: such as what are the key norms of ASEAN? To what extent have they been upheld in practice? What effect have they had on the national interests and identities of the ASEAN members? Some available literature on ASEAN displays a constructivist flavour by investigating the elements of the ASEAN Way, and exploring the possibility of
identity change. This study is intended to analyse systematically the role of ASEAN’s norms in the management of regional order and their effect in the development of collective interests and identities. Proceeding from a constructivist perspective, it examines ASEAN as a security community and, in doing so, hopes to provide a better and more complete understanding of ASEAN than already available.

The conceptual framework of this study goes beyond the neo-realist-neoliberal divide. It argues that the successes and failures of international and regional institutions are not predetermined for them by forces exogenous to their social practices. This includes the distribution of power emphasised by the realist school. Nor can ASEAN be understood through the neo-liberal prism. While regime theory’s view of ASEAN as an informal security arrangement is helpful in understanding ASEAN’s role, the accompanying neo-liberal belief that institutions work by ‘constraining’ state preferences through provision of sanction mechanisms to prevent cheating is not applicable to regional groupings in the Third World. ASEAN, for example, has made no effort to develop such sanctioning mechanisms. Instead, ASEAN has worked by focusing, in a more positive manner, on the task of defining and redefining Southeast Asia’s regional identity and developing norms of collective action. As most observers of ASEAN would agree, the organisation’s approach to regionalism has been geared to inducing cooperative behaviour from its members through socialisation, rather than ‘constraining’ uncooperative behaviour through sanctions. A neo-liberal approach predisposes us from examining such constructs as the ASEAN Way and to investigate whether it has led to the emergence of new interests and identities which reflect shared understandings and expectations about regional peace and stability.

In other words, the main reasons for ASEAN’s successes and failures can be found by looking at the nature and quality of its socialisation process and the norms that underpin it. This perspective is constructivist in orientation. It assumes that state interests and identities derive from their social practices and are not simply exogenous to them. Institutions provide crucial settings within which states develop their social practices and make them understood, accepted and shared by others in the group. ASEAN is not moulded exclusively by material conditions such as the balance of power or material considerations such as expected gains from economic interdependence. Its frameworks of interaction and socialisation have themselves become a crucial factor affecting the interests and identities of its members. The idea of security community, sociologically understood, enables us to analyse ASEAN as a regional institution which both regulates and constitutes the interests and policies of its members on matters of war, peace and cooperation. ASEAN’s role in regional order can be studied and evaluated by looking at the extent to which its norms and socialisation processes, and identity-building initiatives, have shaped the attitudes and behaviour of its members about conflict and order in the region, and the extent to which they have led to the development of common understandings, expectations and practices about peaceful conduct.
Notes and references


2 The important exception to this is Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

3 The important exception to this is Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, ‘Governing Anarchy: A Research Agenda for the Study of Security Communities’, *Ethics and International Affairs*, vol. 10 (1996), pp. 64–10.


11 Transactionalism (Karl Deutsch) examined how increased communications and transactions among societies can redefine their perceptions and relationships and lead to the establishment of security communities in which the use of force becomes illegitimate as a means of problem solving. The other major school of regional integration theory was neo-functionalism (Ernst Haas and Joseph Nye) which held that cooperation in areas of ‘low politics’ would produce a ‘spillover’ effect into areas of ‘high politics’. Neo-functionalism was a revised version of classical functionalist theory, which, as formulated by David Mittrany, held that the prospects for integration could be enhanced if actors focused their initial efforts on issues of
low politics’, i.e. functional and technical issues, before moving into issues of ‘high politics’, such as political and military affairs. But classical functionalism was not concerned with the role of institutions in promoting higher and more centralised forms of political authority. This was a gap filled by neo-functionalism, developed by Ernst Haas, who also took an expanded view (compared with the functionalist emphasis on technocrats) of the range of actors involved in the integration process, including elements of civil society (e.g. pressure groups).

Regional integration theorists were accused by their critics to have overestimated the durability and broader applicability of the conditions that had led to the creation of the EC. Critics argued, for example, that European conditions after the Second World War were somewhat unique; the decline of European nationalism was temporary owing to the scale of devastation caused by the war. Integration theorists had wrongly assumed the end of ideology and the decline of nationalism in postwar Europe. This became further apparent when the EC, despite its evident success in turning age-old rivals France and Germany into members of a permanent security community, failed to come up with a collective response to external challenges, such as the Middle East oil crisis of 1973. That external events could cause states to go their separate ways and opt for national strategies over regional collective action was evident in several cases. For example, when faced with the US technology challenge, Britain, France and Germany ignored the possibility of collective response through the EC, instead adopting national responses. Similarly, Britain joined hands with the USA in response to the 1973 oil crisis, thereby ignoring and undermining the possibility of a collective response by the EC. All this served to undermine the game plan of the integration theorists, who found the relationship between regional integration and transregional interdependence to be too uncertain and ‘turbulent’, to justify the view of regional integration as an incremental or linear process.

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Wars in Southeast Asia since 1967 include Vietnam’s invasion and occupation of Cambodia between 1978 and 1989, and a border war between Thailand and Laos in 1986. In addition, a near-war situation obtained between Vietnam and Thailand during much of the 1978–1989 period. But Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos became ASEAN members in 1995, 1999 and 1997 respectively, while Myanmar joined in 1997. Thus, it can be said that the ASEAN countries have not fought a war among themselves as ASEAN members.


This type of scholarship is best represented by Michael Leifer. Sharing important assumptions of both neo-realism and the English School, Leifer has argued that...

Leifer, however, is not entirely dismissive of ASEAN’s role in mitigating intra-regional conflicts. In a 1995 paper, he argued that: ‘one can claim quite categorically that ASEAN has become an institutionalized vehicle for intramural conflict avoidance and management…ASEAN has been able to prevent disputes from escalating and getting out of hand through containing and managing contentious issues’. Leifer, *ASEAN as a Model of a Security Community?*, in M.Hadi Soesastro (ed.), *ASEAN in a Changed Regional and International Political Economy* (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1995), p. 132.

Such a view is persuasive to some extent, given the fact that many ASEAN leaders themselves have repeatedly acknowledged the impact of the US military presence as a key factor behind regional order and prosperity. Yet, it does not explain the fact that while the US strategic dominance in East Asia remains relatively unchanged in the post-Cold War period, the fortunes of ASEAN have changed over the past decade. It is also at odds with the fact that the most hopeful prospects for regional order in Southeast Asia emerged in the early 1990s, a period when doubts about the US military presence were at their strongest, while today, while US strategic dominance has been reaffirmed, the prospect for regional order and ASEAN’s role in managing it is facing its most serious test.


Ibid., p. 34.

See for example some of the essays on economic cooperation in: Hadi Soesastro (ed.), ASEAN in a Changed Regional and International Political Economy (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1995); Hadi Soesastro and Anthony Bergin (eds), The Role of Security and Economic Cooperation Structures in the Asia Pacific Region (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1996); M. Hadi Soesastro, ASEAN’s Participation in the GATT, *Indonesian Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1 (January 1987), pp. 107–127. Marjorie L. Suryanmongkol, *Politics of ASEAN Economic Co-operation: The Case of ASEAN Industrial Projects* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988). Soesastro is one of the few scholars of ASEAN who straddles political economy and security studies. Richard Stubbs is another scholar to investigate both the economic and security role of ASEAN. He argues that regional stability in Southeast Asia is a function of rapid economic development in a climate of regional stability. While conceding the contribution of ASEAN, however, Stubbs traces Southeast Asia’s prosperity-induced stability to the US strategic involvement in the region, especially as a provider of economic, military and technological aid during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. See: Richard Stubbs, ‘War and Export-Oriented Industrialization in East and Southeast Asia’, *Comparative Politics*, vol. 31 (April 1999), pp. 337–335.

Introduction


39 Ibid., p. 177.
1 Constructing security communities

How do states develop the ‘long-term habit’ of interacting and managing disputes with others peacefully? The Deutschian framework explained this puzzle by focusing on transaction flows, the spread of transnational values, the development of shared understandings, and the generation of mutual trust. Interactions between states (as well as interaction between social groups) can lead to greater mutual interdependence and responsiveness, including ‘discovery of new interests’ and recognition of collective identities that would progressively render war illegitimate as a means of problem solving. Constructivist theory offers a range of new insights by further developing and refining the Deutschian framework (which had been criticised for an excessive preoccupation with measuring transactions). The main contribution of constructivism includes its insights into the interplay of institutions, norms and identities that goes into the social construction of security communities.

This chapter provides a framework for understanding the processes and dynamics underlying the making and unmaking of pluralistic security communities. It draws upon the work of Deutsch and his associates, as well as the more recent work on security communities by constructivist scholars. The chapter proceeds in five parts. The first defines security communities and differentiates them from other forms of international and regional orders. The second section analyses how multilateral (including regional) institutions can play a security community-building role by specifying norms of state behaviour and providing a framework for socialisation that could regulate the behaviour of states and lead to the development of collective interests and identities.

The next section looks at the applicability of the concept to the Third World. Like many concepts and theories of international relations, the concept of security community is West European in origin. When Karl Deutsch and his associates first proposed the idea of security community, they were seeking to explain the emergence of cooperation among the developed states of the North Atlantic region. Neither they, nor most of the scholars who have used the concept since, have given consideration to the possibility of security communities in the developing world. Applying Deutsch’s model to Third World regions such as Southeast Asia is therefore problematic, because many of the background conditions he and other integration theorists identified as important in the North
Atlantic, such as liberal politics and market economics, are often missing from most Third World regions.

The fourth section discusses the emergence and decline of security communities. It identifies the key developments and indicators in the various stages of their evolution. It also discusses the possibility, often ignored in other constructivist studies of international cooperation, how community-building efforts may suffer setbacks or be reversed as a result of increased socialisation and expansion. In other words, this section will outline an evolutionary but non-linear perspective on the construction of security communities. The final section draws the framework of the book, providing brief introductions to chapters and outlining the key questions in terms of which the evolution of ASEAN and the impact of ASEAN’s norms will be investigated.

Defining security communities

A security community, as Deutsch defined it, is a group that has ‘become integrated’, where integration is defined as the attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group with ‘reasonable’ certainty over a ‘long period of time’. Such communities could either be ‘amalgamated’ through the formal political merger of the participating units, or remain ‘pluralistic’, in which case the members retain their independence and sovereignty.

This book is concerned with pluralistic security communities among sovereign states. A pluralistic security community may be defined as a ‘transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change’. Such a community could be identified in terms of several features, but two are especially important. The first is the absence of war, and the second is the absence of significant organised preparations for war vis-à-vis any other members. Regional security communities, as Yalem notes, are groups of states that have ‘renounced the use of force as a means of resolving intraregional conflicts’. The absence of war or organised violence need not, however, imply an absence of differences, disputes or conflicts of interest among the actors. Holsti observes that ‘some serious differences have arisen among states in security communities’, although ‘some special characteristics of these relationships have prevented the quarrelling governments from adopting forms of behavior typical in conflicts involving threat or use of force’. Thus it is an ability to manage conflicts within the group peacefully, rather than the absence of conflict per se, which distinguishes a security community from other types of security relationships. To quote Deutsch,

..., even if some of the prospective partner countries [in a security community] find themselves on the opposite sides in some larger international conflict,
they conduct themselves so as to keep actual mutual hostilities and damage to a minimum—or else refuse to fight each other altogether.\textsuperscript{7}

Security communities are also marked by the absence of a competitive military build-up or arms race involving their members. Within a security community, ‘war among the prospective partners comes to be considered as illegitimate’, and ‘serious preparations for it no longer command popular support’.\textsuperscript{8} States within a security community usually abstain from acquiring weapons that are primarily offensive in nature. Neither are they likely to engage in contingency planning and war-oriented resource mobilisation against other actors within the community. To the extent that

\textit{the absence of such advance preparations for large-scale violence between any two territories or groups of people prevents any immediate outbreak of effective war between them…it serves for this reason as the test for the existence or non-existence of a security community among the groups concerned.}\textsuperscript{9}

Viewed in this light, the absence of arms race behaviour or contingency planning becomes a key indicator of whether states have developed ‘dependable expectations of peaceful change’ and thereby overcome the security dilemma. As Deutsch put it, ‘the attainment of a security community can thus be tested operationally in terms of the absence or presence of significant organized preparations for war or large-scale violence among its members’.\textsuperscript{10}

The task of developing a framework for the study of security communities requires us to differentiate them from other forms of multilateral security cooperation. For the purpose of this book, it is important to distinguish security communities from three other, apparently similar, types of regional security systems. First, a distinction may be made between a security community and a security regime.\textsuperscript{11} In a security regime, as Buzan points out, ‘a group of states cooperate to manage their disputes and avoid war by seeking to mute the security dilemma both by their own actions and by their assumptions about the behaviour of others’.\textsuperscript{12} This may seem similar to security communities; however, there are important differences. A security regime normally describes a situation in which the interests of the actors ‘are neither wholly compatible nor wholly competitive’.\textsuperscript{13} Indeed, a security regime may develop within an otherwise adversarial relationship in which the use of force is inhibited by the existence of a balance of power or mutual deterrence situation. In this context, the common interest of the USA and the former Soviet Union with regard to nuclear weapons and non-proliferation measures has been cited as an example of a security regime.\textsuperscript{14} A security community, on the other hand, must be based on a fundamental, unambiguous and long-term convergence of interests among the actors regarding the avoidance of war. While international regimes do not always or necessarily work to ‘constrain’ the use of force and produce cooperation, in the case of security communities, the
non-use of force is already assumed. Furthermore, security regimes do not necessarily imply that participants are interested in, or already bound by, functional linkages, cooperation, integration or interdependence, while this is an essential feature of security communities. Thus, the Concert of Europe or the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe during the Cold War constituted examples of security regimes, while the relationships between the USA and Canada, and among the members of the EC, are better described as having the attributes of a security community.

Security regimes are more akin to what Deutsch called a ‘no-war community’. The latter is a first step towards a full-fledged security community, but unlike a security community a no-war community is one in which ‘the possibility of war is still expected and to some extent preparations are made for it. Sanctions may include continuing defensive preparations for self-help by members.’ In a no-war community, prospects for use of force are suppressed by specific circumstances, such as common threat perceptions. War avoidance is based on short-term calculations, rather than on ‘dependable’ and ‘long-term expectations of peaceful change’. Such a community may be relatively easily disrupted by internal or external developments. It is a short step from cooperation and war avoidance to an arms race and military rivalry. Moreover, security regimes are marked by the absence of the ‘we feeling’. Institutions for conflict resolution are at best rudimentary or nonexistent.

Another important conceptual distinction between a security regime/no-war community and a security community may be made. A security regime implies a situation in which each member of a group may come to believe in the undesirability of war without being sure whether others in the group share the same belief. In contrast, each member of a security community comes to know with reasonable certainty that all others in the group share the same belief in the undesirability of war.

The idea of a security community is also distinct from that of an alliance. The imperative of war avoidance must be distinguished from that of collective defence. An alliance is usually conceived and directed against a pre-recognised and commonly perceived external threat. Security communities, on the other hand, identify no such threat or may have no function of organising a joint defence against them. A security community implies a relationship of peace and stability among a group of states without any sense of how they might collectively relate to external actors. To be sure, security communities can develop out of an advanced alliance. Moreover, alliances can exist bilaterally or multilaterally within a security community (and such arrangements usually indicate a mature security community with a fairly well-developed collective identity). But this is not to be regarded as an indispensable or even essential characteristic of security communities.

The difference between “security community” and alliance could be highlighted by applying Lynn Miller’s distinction between the ‘peace’ and ‘security’ role of regional organisations. The ‘peace’ role, central to a ‘security
community’, refers to the ‘potential of a regional organization, through its peacekeeping machinery and diplomatic techniques, for controlling the forceful settlement of conflicts among its own members’. The ‘security’ role, which might be considered integral to a ‘defence community’, denotes ‘the potential of the organization to present a common military front against an outside actor or actors’.\textsuperscript{17}

To be sure, Western security communities usually feature alliance relationships (most EU members are also part of NATO). But, while a defence community may be subsumed within a larger security community (and vice versa), this is not a necessary feature of the latter. The key aim of a security community is to develop the common interests of actors in peace and stability, rather than to deter or balance a common threat. In this sense, a security community is the antithesis of a ‘security complex’ which may be characterised by an ‘interdependence of rivalry’ among a given group of states as much as an interdependence of shared interests.\textsuperscript{18} Conflict avoidance and the peaceful resolution of disputes, which are among the most important shared interests in security communities, are not defining characteristics of security complexes.

Although security communities may be constructed on the basis of shared interests and identities, rather than the perception of a common threat, their identities are usually defined in opposition to the identity of other actors. During the 1980s, ASEAN thrived by consciously emphasising the ideological, economic and political differences between its own members and the Indochinese states. It continues to highlight its own distinctiveness as a regional multilateral institution vis-à-vis other multilateral institutions such as those in Europe. Brian Job notes that ‘the multilateralism of a security community is intensive among members, membership itself is restricted and, in practice, closely guarded by members’.\textsuperscript{19} Security communities usually bring together a group of ‘like-minded’ actors who often develop common criteria of inclusion and exclusion. But a security community does not need to involve the features of an alliance directed against another state or group of states.

Finally, it is important to distinguish a security community from a collective security arrangement. Although both thrive on a ‘we feeling’, a major difference relates to the means employed to ensure war avoidance. A collective security system (which is always multilateral, while security communities may develop bilaterally) deters war within a group of states by threatening to punish any act of aggression by one member of the grouping against another (although the aggressor is not pre-identified). The idea of security community, by contrast, prevents war through the development of reasonably strong and enduring institutions and practices. Second, a collective security system is more concerned with punishing aggression than providing for pacific settlement of disputes. Although collective security institutions such as the UN have developed mechanisms for the pacific settlement of disputes, ultimately, the credibility of collective security depends on the credibility of its punishment mechanism. A security community, on the other hand, seeks to ensure conflict prevention through integrative processes and formal or informal mechanisms for conflict
resolution. Third, a security community completely delegitimises the use of force within it. In other words, the use of force has no place in the management of relations among the members of a security community. But war (against an intra-mural aggressor) remains a legitimate instrument in a collective security system.

Unlike a security community, a collective security system is a legalistic device that does not require or anticipate functional cooperation, commercial interdependence or a high degree of transactions. Finally, while viable collective security systems usually require cooperation among the major military powers of the international system, security communities can emerge among any group of states, weak or strong. The idea of collective security is based on a preponderance of physical force, whereas security communities are based on shared norms concerning the non-use of force. Thus, while it will be difficult for regional coalitions of weak states, such as ASEAN, GCC or ECOWAS, to develop self-reliant collective security systems, collective military weakness need not prevent them from developing into viable security communities.

In sum, the distinctive character of a security community, in contrast to collective security (or concert) arrangements, is the cognitive transition that has taken place whereby states, in principle, no longer regard or fear force as a mode of conflict resolution among themselves.20

Unlike collective security arrangements in the international system, which had been instituted by legal agreement in a quick-fix manner (the League of Nations and the UN) to prevent recurrence of major war, security communities are founded upon norms, attitudes, practices and habits of cooperation which are multidimensional and evolutionary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Security communities and other frameworks of security cooperation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security regime:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Principles, rules and norms that restrain the behaviour states on a reciprocal basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Competitive arms acquisitions and contingency planning usually continue within the regime, although specific regimes might be created to limit the spread of weapons and military capabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The absence of war within the community may be due to short-term factors and considerations such as the economic and political weakness of actors otherwise prone to violence or to the existence of a balance of power or mutual deterrence situation. In either case, the interests of the actors in peace are not fundamental, unambiguous or long-term in nature.</td>
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Constructing security communities

Security community:

- Strict and observed norms concerning non-use of force; no competitive arms acquisitions and contingency-planning against each other within the grouping.
- Institutions and processes (formal or informal) for the pacific settlement of disputes.
- Long-term prospects for war avoidance.
- Significant functional cooperation and integration.
- A sense of collective identity.

Collective defence:

- Common perception of external threat(s) among or by the members of the community; such a threat might be another state or states within the region or an extra-regional power, but not from a member.
- An exclusionary arrangement of like-minded states.
- Reciprocal obligations of assistance during military contingencies.
- Significant military interoperability and integration.
- The conditions of a security community may or may not exist among the members.

Collective security:

- Prior agreement on the willingness of all parties to participate in the collective punishment of aggression against any member state.
- No prior identification of enemy or threat.
- No expectation of and requirement for economic or other functional cooperation.
- A collective physical capacity to punish aggression.

Socialisation, norms and identity

Constructing security communities involves developing shared understandings about peaceful conduct, whereby interests previously pursued through war are instead pursued through peaceful means. In its Deutschian formulation, security communities come about as a result of transactions (measured in terms of such indicators as content analysis of mass media, survey data on border crossings and mail flows), a method which led Deutsch to be criticised for an excessive preoccupation with quantitative measurement. Recent writings on security communities have adopted a qualitative and sociological approach, one which focuses on institutions, norms and the intersubjective process of identity building in the making of security communities.
Institutions

The Deutschian project on security communities was primarily concerned with studying the process of social interactions in its broadest aspect, rather than with the creation and maintenance of specific multilateral institutions or organisations. The development of a security community need not presuppose institutional integration. Security communities may develop on a bilateral basis (e.g. USA-Canada). They can also emerge among actors without the benefit of common membership within a strong and cohesive multilateral organisation such as NATO or the EU, rather than the OECD or the UN. But even though they are not requisites of security communities, formal or informal institutions may provide a framework conducive for their development. The fact that the most important example of a pluralistic security community today, the EU, is also a strong multilateral organisation, reinforces this link. Adler has dubbed such organisations as ‘security community-building institutions’. Like the EU or the OSCE, ASEAN may be considered as a security community-building institution.

How do institutions contribute to the making of security communities? Neoliberal institutionalist theories claim that institutions can mitigate anarchy and facilitate cooperation by providing information, reducing transaction costs, helping to settle distributional conflicts and, most importantly, reducing the likelihood of cheating. This takes a rationalist, utility-maximising and sanction-based view of cooperation. Constructivist theory offers a more qualitatively deeper view of how institutions may affect and transform state interests and behaviour. In this view, institutions do not merely ‘regulate’ state behaviour, they can also ‘constitute’ state identities and interests.

To elaborate, neo-liberal institutionalist scholars, like their other rationalist cousins, neo-realists, simply assume state interests without investigating them. Neo-liberal institutionalism accepts that institutions can constrain state action, but it does not concern itself with studying whether institutions may define/create or redefine/recreate the interests of states. The focus is restricted to how existing state interests are pursued by rational state actors through cost-benefit calculations and choice of actions which offer maximum gain (utility maximisation). Constructivists, on the other hand, argue that state interests are not a ‘given, but themselves emerge from a process of interaction and socialisation’. This is a sociological rather than rational or ‘strategic interaction’ view of international cooperation. It helps to illuminate the institutional politics of security communities, covering a deeper and wider terrain. Following Adler, one could argue that investigating regional security community-building institutions:

requires studying the role that international and transnational institutions play in the social construction of security communities. By establishing, articulating and transmitting norms that define what constitutes acceptable and legitimate state behaviour, international organizations may be able to
shape state practices. Even more remarkable, however, international organizations may encourage states and societies to imagine themselves as part of a region. This suggests that international organizations can be a site of interest and identity formation. Particularly striking are those cases in which regional organizations have been established for instrumental reasons and later and unexpectedly gained an identity component by becoming a new site for interaction and source of imagination.28

Thus, using a sociological lens to study the development of a regional pluralistic security community would mean going beyond the study of how states pursue or hope to realise their national interests through utility-maximising functional measures (such as reduction of tariffs, or creating a dispute-arbitration mechanism) and investigating the extent to which the said regional institution also facilitates:

- the development of trust, especially through norms of conduct;
- the development of a ‘regional culture’ built around common values such as democracy, developmentalism or human rights;
- the development of regional functional projects that encourage belief in a common destiny (examples include common currency, industrial projects); and
- the development of social learning, involving ‘redefinition’ and ‘reinterpretation’ of reality, exchange of self-understandings, perception of realities and normative expectations among the group of states and their diffusion from country to country, generation to generation.29

Adopting such a framework does not necessarily lead to a more positive evaluation of institutions. But it certainly provides for a broader canvas. For example, rationalist assessments of ASEAN’s record have criticised it for never invoking its formal dispute-settlement mechanism, the ‘High Council’ provided under the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. But an adequate evaluation of ASEAN’s role in dispute settlement must look into its norms and processes of interaction, which are less tangible but may have a more significant impact in keeping intramural peace. By investigating the sociological and intersubjective questions and linkages often ignored by rationalist theories, such an approach looks beyond the formal bureaucratic apparatus and legal-rational mechanisms of institutions. Earlier theories of international organisation and regional cooperation, especially regional integration theory, ‘remained closely tied to the study of formal organizations, missing a range of state behaviour that nonetheless appeared regulated and organized in a broader sense’.30 But as recent institutionalist theories (including neo-liberal theories) acknowledge, the existence of formal institutional structures or legal-rational modes of cooperation do not exhaust the possibility of multilateralism and community building. Multilateralism could involve the ‘less formal, less codified habits, practices, ideas, and norms of international society’.31 These could be developed through consultations, dialogue
and socialisation; indeed, the absence of formal legal-rationalistic cooperation may be more desirable (especially in the case of developing countries sensitive to the issue of sovereignty) than the establishment of a formal intergovernmental authority.32

Norms

All social communities rely on norms of behaviour. The definition and functions of norms vary. Kratochwill offers a widely used definition: norms are ‘standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations’.33 The chief function of norms in this sense is to prescribe and proscribe behaviour. Norms help actors to distinguish between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ behaviour and ‘to coordinate expectations and decrease uncertainty, to influence decision making, and to legitimate their actions and the actions of others’.34 Norms contribute to international order by forbidding actions which are subversive of collective goals, by providing a framework for dispute settlement, and by creating the basis for cooperative schemes and action for mutual benefit.35

While all theories of international organisation, including neo-liberal institutionalism, recognise the importance of norms, constructivism allows for a much deeper understanding of norms in shaping international relations. Briefly stated, the constructivist definition incorporates both ‘regulatory’ and ‘constitutive’ aspects of norms and their effect on state behaviour. Norms not only prescribe and regulate behaviour (the regulatory effect), they also define and constitute identities (constitutive effect).36 To put it differently, norms not only establish expectations about how particular actors will behave,37 they also ‘teach’ states, which are exposed to norms, new interests and identities.38

Moreover, once established, norms have a life of their own. Norms are not epiphenomenal or part of a superstructure shaped by material forces such as balance of military power or wealth. They have an independent effect on state behaviour, redefining state interests and creating collective interests and identities. This is key to understanding the constructivist claim that agents (states) and structures (international norms) are mutually reinforcing and mutually constituted.39

Norms help to coordinate values among states and societies. By making similar behavioural claims on different states, norms do create parallel patterns of behaviour among states over wide areas. This helps ensure that the principles and practice of peaceful conduct and war avoidance are shared among states and contribute to the development of a sense of community. Moreover, the existence of a security community implies that the norms of the given group of states have already had a constitutive effect, by transforming the identity of states from being that of egoistic and sovereignty-bound actors to members of a social group sharing a common habit of peaceful conduct.

A good way to illustrate the difference between the regulatory and constitutive impact of norms is to look at Deutsch’s distinction, discussed earlier, between no-war communities and security communities. No-war communities merely
reflect the regulatory impact of norms concerning peaceful conduct among states. In security communities, however, norms have been adopted and adapted to an extent where they constitute the identities of states, reflecting an advanced level of mutual identification producing a ‘we feeling’.

Another relevant distinction in assessing the role of norms in security communities is that between legal and social norms made by Katzenstein in his study of the role of norms in shaping national security policy in Japan. A key area of difference between the two is the informality of the latter; legal norms, which are formal and rationalistic principles of law, ‘become mostly effective when informal social controls break down’.40 Social norms are what create the basis of those informal social controls. This distinction is important in understanding not only the effects of norms, but also their sources. This is because the notion of security community implies an intra-mural relationship that goes well beyond legally binding and enforced commitments. Deutsch stressed that security communities require the emergence of ‘some degree of generalized common identity or loyalty’,41 including ‘the deliberate promotion of processes and sentiments of mutual identification, loyalties, and ‘we’-feelings’.42 In security communities, war avoidance becomes a social habit, rather than a mere legal obligation backed by sanctions.

Drawing upon Katzenstein’s work, I would further differentiate between legal and social norms (which I slightly redesignate as legal-rational and socio-cultural norms) with a view to facilitating a better understanding of the normative basis of security communities and also to understand the sources of norms. Apart from the issue of informality, the two may be differentiated in terms of their primary sources. The most common (if not exclusively so) sources of legal-rational norms in international relations are the universal principles of the Westphalian state system which constitute the basis of modern international law. All international and regional organisations are based on the Westphalian norms of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force in interstate relations and the pacific settlement of disputes.43 Like the UN itself, regional organisations are vested by the UN Charter with a mandate to seek compliance with those norms.44 Socio-cultural norms, on the other hand, are usually more specific to a group (in the sense that they are more likely to reflect the historical and cultural milieu of the actors), which may explain why they may be effective even as informal instruments.

In Southeast Asia, the norms that underpin ASEAN regionalism include both the legal-rational and social-cultural variety. As Michael Leifer’s authoritative account of the origins of ASEAN points out, the political and security role of ASEAN was founded upon ‘a common adherence to conventional international norms’ which included ‘respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter’.45 But in addition to these norms, the ASEAN process was also distinguished by the ‘principle of consensus which…meant that policy initiatives can only arise on the basis of a common denominator’.46 What enables the ASEAN members to assert the ‘unique’ character of their own brand of
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regionalism, especially when compared with the legal-rational institutionalism of Western regional institutions (such as the EU), is not just their adherence to the legal norms of non-interference and non-intervention, but the principle and practice of consensus that is ‘justified with reference to a regional cultural style which has enthroned consensus as the *modus operandi* of the Association’.

As will be discussed in Chapter 2, ASEAN’s members do not necessarily claim that the most important of ASEAN’s legal norms are unique to the region. The principle of non-interference and the principle of non-use of force (and the related principle of pacific settlement of disputes) are common to all international organisations of the modern era. The source of a third principle, that of regional autonomy, may be traced to the ‘universalist-regionalist’ debate that accompanied the drafting of the UN Charter at the San Francisco Conference. Another important ASEAN norm emphasised in this study, that of avoidance of an ASEAN military pact, grew out of a concern of the ASEAN members with the dangers of superpower rivalry. This danger was highlighted by the platform of Third World countries (especially the Non-Aligned Movement) to which several ASEAN members belonged (especially Indonesia, which had been an influential founding member). The pro-Western outlook of ASEAN members and existing defence ties between individual ASEAN members and the Western powers (such as the US-Thailand and US-Philippines alliances, and the Britain-Australia-New Zealand-Malaysia-Singapore Five Power Defence Arrangements) were conspicuous. In the circumstances, ASEAN members were worried that even if an intra-ASEAN military pact could be formed without directly involving any outside Western power, it would still invite the wrath of the communist powers, Vietnam and China, which had already branded ASEAN as a front for Western imperialism and an alliance system to replace the defunct SEATO. While the sources of ASEAN’s legal-rational norms lie within the dynamics of the international system at large, the notion of the ASEAN Way, which became commonplace in the years following its establishment, is founded on elements, especially informality, consultations (*musyawarah*) and consensus (*mufakat*), which are claimed as unique to Southeast Asia’s cultural heritage.

In addition, socio-cultural norms play a crucial role in moulding the interaction and socialisation processes through which actors may develop a collective identity. While both legal-rational 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.

**Identity**

This consideration leads us in turn to the notion of identity, the third key element in the making of security communities. For realism and most liberal theories, state interests are shaped by material forces and concerns, such as power and wealth; perceptual, ideational and cultural factors derive from a material base. According to constructivists, intersubjective factors, including ideas,
culture and identities, play a determining, rather than secondary, role in foreign policy interactions.

Security communities are like other social communities in which members ‘have attributes in common, who display mutual responsiveness, confidence, and esteem, and who self-consciously self-identify.’\textsuperscript{50} Deutsch viewed the development of security communities as an exercise in identity building, defined as ‘some degree of generalized common identity or loyalty’.\textsuperscript{51} In the development of security communities, ‘the objective compatibility or consonance of major values of the participating populations’ must be ‘supplemented by indications of common subjective feelings of legitimacy of the integrated community, making loyalty to it also a matter of internalized psychic compulsion.’\textsuperscript{52} He also spoke of ‘identification’ as one of the instruments of integration, with ‘identification’ being defined as ‘the deliberate promotion of processes and sentiments of mutual identification, loyalties, and ‘we’-feelings.’\textsuperscript{53}

Identity is an intersubjective notion. Simply stated, it refers to the ‘basic character of states’.\textsuperscript{54} Identity formation entails developing a collective sense of not only ‘who we are’, but also ‘how we differ from others’.\textsuperscript{55} It also involves securing outside recognition of the community’s own distinctiveness.\textsuperscript{56} Ted Hopf defines identities in terms of their

three necessary functions in a society: they tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are. In telling you who you are, identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in particular domains, and with respect to particular actors.\textsuperscript{57}

The construction of identity is central to the kind of ‘we feeling’ that Deutsch identified as a key feature of security communities. The notion of identity runs deep into the heart of constructivist approaches because of its central claim that the development of a collective identity can ameliorate the security dilemma among states.\textsuperscript{58} Like norms, collective identities can make and redefine state interests and move them beyond the logic of power politics. The collective identity of a social group, like the notion of culture, is not a given that is derived exclusively or even largely from fixed or preordained material sources. Just as norms ‘are contested and made and remade through politics’,\textsuperscript{59} collective identities are made and remade through interactions and socialisation, rather than being exogenous to those processes. For example, until recently, our understanding of the idea of ‘region’ relied heavily on such immutable or preordained features such as geographic proximity, a given physical location, cultural and linguistic similarities among the peoples, and a common historical experience. Today, there is a much greater tendency among scholars to define regions as imagined communities, created by processes of interaction and socialisation which may lead to different conceptions of what constitutes a given region at different points of time.

Benedict Anderson’s analysis of nationalism provides an important conceptual
basis for a constructivist understanding of the emergence of security communities. Anderson sees the construction of nationalism as one vast exercise in learning, adaptation and collective self-imagination. This process overcomes significant cultural, linguistic, political, and other differences and conflict of material interests between social groups inhabiting different geographic areas and lays the basis of the formation of the nation-state. Like nation-states, security communities can be conceptualised as ‘imagined communities’. Imagined security communities involve ‘a social construction of generative and self-reinforcing attitudes and behaviours’ that may gradually lead to ‘the definition and realization of “common identity”’. Viewed in this light, ASEAN regionalism in general, and the expression ASEAN Way in particular, may be viewed as a continuing process of identity building which relies upon conventional ‘modern’ principles of interstate relations as well as traditional and culture-specific modes of socialisation and decision making prevalent in the region. The founders of ASEAN had little conception of a regional identity. But they clearly hoped to develop one through regional cooperation. ASEAN came to play a critical role not only in developing a sense of regional identity, but also laying down the boundaries of Southeast Asia as a region. It drew upon the indigenous social, cultural and political traditions of its members and borrowed, adapted and redefined principles and practices of cooperation from the outside world. Sometimes, supposedly foreign principles and models of regionalism, after having been rejected for lacking ‘relevance’ in the Southeast Asian context, have been subsequently incorporated into the ASEAN framework after being redefined and adjusted so as to conform to the needs and aspirations of ASEAN’s members. Moreover, the supposedly cultural underpinnings of ASEAN regionalism have been developed and refined in a self-conscious way through years of interaction since ASEAN’s formation. All these remain very much part of an ongoing process. ASEAN regionalism began without a discernible and pre-existing sense of collective identity among the founding members, notwithstanding some important cultural similarities among them. Whether such an identity has developed after more than thirty years of interaction is debatable. But this should not detract from the serious nature of the efforts by ASEAN members to overcome their security dilemma and establish a security community through the development of norms and the construction of an ASEAN identity that would be constitutive of their interests.

Measuring identity formation is one of the most difficult challenges for academic theorists. When can we know that a group of states have achieved a ‘we feeling’? The question of collective identity of a social grouping can be examined from several points of reference. One is to look at the overlapping ambit of the national identities of individual member states, and their respective constitutive norms. In the context of ASEAN, for example, this would mean ascertaining the compatibility and overlap between the national identity and preferred norms of one member country, say Thailand, and those of another, say Myanmar. A second point of reference is the collective identity of a group taken as a whole, for example the notion of the ASEAN Way, which is developed
Constructing security communities

through socialisation and which forms the basis of its collective action. The two points of reference can reinforce each other, but may evolve separately. In other words, a group can develop an identity and approach of its own even if their national identities and constitutive norms remain different. The ASEAN Way, in other words, can develop and function despite differing kinds of national identity prevailing among its members.

While there can be several indicators of collective identity, three are especially important. The first is a commitment to multilateralism, including a desire to place an expanding number of issues on the multilateral agenda which have been previously tackled through unilateral or bilateral channels. A second measure of collective identity is the development of security cooperation, including collective defence, collaboration against internal threats, collective security and cooperative security measures. Third, identity formation can be sensed from the boundaries and membership criteria of the group. In the case of regional security communities, the definition of what constitutes a region and commonly held notions about who is included and who is excluded are important indicators of collective identity.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the interplay between norms and socialisation in the making of security communities. The central focus is on the role norms, both legal-rational (such as non-interference in the internal affairs of members, and non-use of force) and socio-cultural (such as consultations and consensus), could play in the socialisation process which may redefine the interests and identities of the ASEAN members. The role of norms is investigated with respect to their regulatory as well as constitutive effects, the latter being crucial to the emergence of security communities.

The framework presented above contests rationalist approaches to the study of international institutions, including ASEAN. The study of ASEAN as ‘a

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**Figure 1.1** Norms, socialisation and security communities
security community-building regional organisation’ requires us to go beyond a rationalist lens for several reasons. First, ASEAN has made little use of formal and legalistic measures of cooperation. Thus, evaluating it solely or largely by looking at the presence or absence of such mechanisms would yield a limited and misleading picture. Second, a rationalist perspective would limit the scope of investigation to such questions as whether and to what extent ASEAN has enabled its members to realise their predefined national interests. It would be concerned primarily with ASEAN’s record in solving disputes and conflict between its members and implementing cooperative projects such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). ASEAN’s attempts at regional redefinition and community building (such as the ASEAN Way’ or ‘One Southeast Asia’) would be deemed unimportant in the absence of its development of concrete institutionalised mechanisms for cooperation. Little attention would be paid to ASEAN’s interest in constructing a new regional identity, including the redefinition of what constitutes Southeast Asia as a region. Moreover, rationalist evaluations, as noted earlier, often have a materialist bias, assuming that norms and regional identity are ‘superstructural’, their effect conditioned by such material forces as the economic prosperity and the balance of power. This too contributes to a tendency to ignore or dismiss the role of cultural norms and social practices as superficial and having no real impact on the ASEAN states’ interest and policy towards each other and in dealing with outside actors.

The point being made here is not that rationalist perspectives and criteria for evaluating ASEAN’s record as an evolving security community are irrelevant or unimportant, but that they are unnecessarily limited and unduly restrictive. The perspective adopted here is both broader and deeper and allows us to look at aspects of ASEAN regionalism ignored by most rationalist perspectives. It does not necessarily lead to a more positive evaluation of ASEAN’s record, but it provides for a more comprehensive and credible evaluation.

Security communities in the non-Atlantic world?

As noted at the outset, Deutsch’s original work on security communities was concerned with the Western world, especially Europe and the North Atlantic.63 One could identify several examples of amalgamated security communities, including the USA (originally created by the federation of thirteen colonies), the UK (created out of the merger of Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England) and Germany (the amalgamation of several hundred principalities, dynastic states, townships and cities).64 In so far as pluralistic security communities are concerned, Sweden and Norway after 1905, and the USA and Canada after 1815, could be counted as examples of bilateral security communities. Other examples of such communities are the USA and Japan and Australia and New Zealand. The most prominent example of a multilateral pluralistic security community is the EU, a ‘cluster of non-warring peoples in an arena of peaceful conflict-resolution’.65 In the post-Cold War era, the concept has been further extended. Barry Buzan, for example, speaks of ‘a security community among the leading capitalist powers’
which draws together Europe, North America, Japan and Australia in a relationship that is of a ‘more profound quality than the collective expectation and preparation to use force against someone else that is the essence of alliance relationships’.66

In contrast, the label is rarely applied to any segment of the developing world. This is hardly surprising, since the developing world has been, and continues to be, much more prone to conflict and war than the West. As a study by Evan Luard estimated, only two of the 127 ‘significant wars’ during the Cold War (between 1945 and 1986) occurred in Europe, while Latin America accounted for twenty-six, Africa thirty-one, the Middle East twenty-four and Asia forty-four. According to this estimate, the developing world was the theatre of more than 98 per cent of all international conflicts.67 The situation is unlikely to be different in the post-Cold War period. While Western theorists have predicted increased stability in relations among the developed countries, they have been far more pessimistic about the prospects for the developing world. For example, Goldgeier and McFaul argue that the post-Cold War international system will consist of a ‘core’ sector of stable major powers within which interdependence and shared norms minimise the risk of armed conflict, and a ‘periphery’ sector (e.g. the developing world) featuring fragile regional security systems marked by a high degree of conflict and disorder.68 Barry Buzan similarly contrasts the emerging security community among the capitalist Western countries with the continuing anarchy in the developing world.69 Against this backdrop, finding a suitable case study of a security community, whether bilateral or multilateral, in the Third World has been especially difficult (with the possible exception of ASEAN and the Southern Cone of Latin America, which has good prospects for developing into a security community).

A second problem in applying the concept of security community to the Third World relates to a widespread assumption among liberal theorists that such communities require a quintessential liberal-democratic milieu featuring significant economic interdependence and political pluralism. Although Deutsch’s work was not explicitly rooted in assumptions about the pacific effects of liberal democracy and interdependence, the very fact that his main area of investigation was the Euro-Atlantic economic and political milieu has encouraged an implicit correlation between economic and political pluralism and the existence of security communities. This linkage has been made even more explicit in recent writings about the concept. For example, Emanuel Adler argues that:

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 the free interpenetration of societies.70

Both Adler and John Vasquez explicitly invoke the Kantian notion of democratic peace as the philosophical basis of Deutsch’s work on security communities.71 In this view, a true security community is ‘a democratic security community’, since liberal democracies tend to be more pacific, or, at least, seldom fight each other.

Apart from democratic peace, the idea of security community has been also linked to another well-known liberal dictum popularised by Kant, Adam Smith, Richard Cobden, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Paine, asserting a positive correlation between economic interdependence and peace.72 The Kantian proposition that ‘the spirit of commerce sooner or later takes hold of every people, and it cannot exist side by side with war’,73 is the centrepiece of neofunctionalist and interdependence theories that gained prominence in the 1970s. Although Deutsch’s transactionalist approach was concerned with more than just economic interdependence—he used a wide range of indicators to measure integration, including international trade, mail flows, student exchanges and travel—the very idea that an increased volume of interactions may have pacific effects on state behaviour may theoretically apply to all kinds of interactions, including commercial ones. Most theoretical challenges to realist orthodoxy have found it impossible to de-link community from commerce. The postwar surge of theoretical interest in the moderating and transforming impact of trade, interdependence and international regimes on power and anarchy, stimulated by the work of Keohane and Nye, Rosecrance and others, has proven to be a natural complement to Deutsch’s transactionalist view of security community.

Economic interdependence may significantly facilitate the development of security communities. Indeed, Yalem contends that security communities require a ‘high degree of political and economic integration as a necessary precondition of peaceful relationships’.74 Theories of regional integration have viewed economic regionalism (including the creation of free trade areas, customs unions and economic unions) as a necessary precondition for improved prospects for regional peace and security. Of particular interest here are insights from the neofunctionalist approach associated with Ernst Haas (which grew out of the classical functionalist theory of David Mittrany), and theories of international interdependence (which incorporated many aspects of neo-functionalist regional integration theory). Both assume the notion of a ‘spillover’, or a belief that exchanges and cooperation among independent national actors in areas of ‘low politics’ such as economics and trade could incrementally create common stakes among them in areas of ‘high politics’. This serves to make the use of force within such a setting increasingly costly (in terms of its ‘uncertain and possibly negative effects on the achievement of economic goals’)75 and promotes cooperative management of regional peace and security issues.76 Haas sums up the arguments of the liberal theory in the following terms:
Increased trade and cross-national investment, especially free trade and capital flows, result in a more highly articulated international division of labour; any disruption in that division of labour causes the belligerents to incur heavy losses of welfare; fearing such losses, countries are less willing to go to war. (2) Increasing popular demands for services on the part of the government limit the amount available for armaments and war; any disruption of welfare services is resented and will cause domestic strife leaders prefer to avoid. (3) Societies committed to welfare-enhancement spin off interest groups dedicated to safeguarding their entitlements; when the nature of the international division of labour creates mutual dependencies among several welfare states, the groups concerned will organize transnationally and thereby outflank their home governments. (4) The more such groups expect of transnational arrangements, the less they expect from their home governments. (5) The more cosmopolitan the knowledge (on which the deepened international division of labour depends) becomes, the less the beneficiaries of that knowledge are willing to disrupt things by war.77

But international relations theory is divided on the question of whether interdependence reduces the likelihood of war. No causal connection can be demonstrated between interdependence and war avoidance. As Haas himself has conceded, ‘even to assert a simple causal connection between international interdependence and international violence is to skate on theoretical ice which is too slippery for comfort’.78 Interdependence is ‘too patchy and temporary’ to permit a causal link with peace.79

Furthermore, while interdependence may be strong among Western countries sharing liberal democratic political systems and mature capitalist economies, it tends to be weak among the developing countries. In addition to their illiberal setting, regional subsystems in the Third World tend to be marked by a relatively low level of transactions, especially economic linkages and cooperation.80 Thus, if the development of security communities is linked to liberal politics and economics, then the possibility of such communities in the Third World would appear to be very remote indeed. Illiberal politics tend to be the hallmark of most Third World states, something recognised by integration theorists as they sought to explain the limits of EC-style regional integration in the Third World:

Many of the general characteristics of politics in less developed countries are difficult to reconcile with quiet functionalism. Leadership tends to be personalistic; heroes have trouble cooperating. The gap between the literate elite and the illiterate masses, the scarcity of organized interest groups, and the cultural cleavage between city and countryside, which might seem to free the hands of the elites for international integration, have more often resulted in insecurity, isolation, and diversion of attention to internal integration. Scarcity of middle level administrative manpower results in weak governmental and political institutions, which are susceptible to disruption by the relatively
organized institutions such as the army. The adaptability of governments under these conditions tends to be low.\textsuperscript{81}

In general, regional economic interdependence and integration in the Third World has been much more elementary than in Europe, ‘more obscure in purpose and uncertain in content’.\textsuperscript{82} Thus to assume that economic interdependence is a necessary background condition for the development of security communities would make it difficult to use as a framework for analysing and understanding the origins of ASEAN. At the time of its formation and subsequent evolution, ASEAN members neither shared liberal democratic values, nor were bound by a high degree of mutual interdependence. Indeed, a study applying Deutsch’s transactions model to the original five members of ASEAN published in 1978 found no evidence of community formation.\textsuperscript{83}

But the question may be asked whether a liberal democratic and interdependent setting is a necessary precondition for the emergence of security communities. To restrict the idea of security community to a liberal political-economic setting may needlessly limit the utility of the concept. Whether or not ASEAN can be rightfully regarded as a security community, the conceptual framework is useful for understanding and assessing its evolution and achievements. To explain the emergence of ASEAN, one has to rethink the notion of security community developed by Western scholars. Can a convergence of authoritarian values generate cooperation and war avoidance on a long-term basis? Southeast Asia, and more specifically ASEAN, attests to the fact that community building can proceed despite the absence of a common liberal democratic political culture. Can security communities develop even in an initial absence of economic interdependence?\textsuperscript{84} Should interdependence and democracy be viewed as essential preconditions for the development of pluralistic security communities? It may be argued that while common values are necessary for community building, these need not be liberal democratic values. A shared commitment to economic development, regime security and political stability could compensate for a lack of a high degree of economic interdependence. Moreover, if the former conditions are present, they could pave the way for greater economic and functional cooperation. In other words, interdependence could follow, rather than precede, an initial and deliberate attempt at community formation. As the next chapter will show, these factors were central to the evolution of norms and principles of cooperation in the formative years of ASEAN.

The evolution and decline of security communities

In an important recent contribution to the literature on security communities, Adler and Barnett have sketched a social constructivist and path-dependent approach to the origin and evolution of such communities.\textsuperscript{85} They identify three stages in the development of security communities, each of which is marked by a number of characteristics. The nascent phase contains a number of ‘triggering mechanisms’ including threat perceptions, expected trade benefits,
shared identity and organisational emulation (learning from the experience of other multilateral organisations). The *ascendant phase* is marked by tighter military coordination, lessened fears on the part of one actor that others within the grouping represent a threat, and the beginnings of cognitive transition towards intersubjective processes and collective identities ‘that begin to encourage dependable expectations of peaceful change’. The main characteristics of the *mature phase* are greater institutionalisation, supranationalism, a high degree of trust, and low or no probability of military conflicts. A mature stage may be ‘loosely coupled’ or ‘tightly coupled’ depending on ‘their depth of trust, the nature and degree of institutionalization of their governance system, and whether they reside in a formal anarchy or are on the verge of transforming it’.86 Loosely coupled security communities are minimalist in nature. They are ‘a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change’. Members of this group expect no military threats from each other and observe self-restraint. Tightly coupled security communities have more stringent standards, including a ‘mutual aid society’ providing for collective and cooperative efforts to help each other and offer joint solutions to common problems. They should also have some characteristics of supranationalism, or a ‘post-sovereign system’, which might include common national institutions as well as supranational and transnational institutions, and some form of collective security. Moreover, a tightly coupled community requires ‘a system of rules that lies somewhere between a sovereign state and a regional, centralized, government’.87

What makes security communities get off the ground? Here, Adler and Barnett have gone beyond Deutsch’s emphasis on transactions to suggest a number of possible ‘triggering mechanisms’. These consist of both material and normative elements.88 The material elements include, among other things, common threat (external and/or internal); prospects for capitalising from the existence of the international division of labour or gains from trade; cultural, political, social and ideological homogeneity; and rapid shift in distribution of military power. In addition, security communities can be triggered by ‘cataclysmic events’ which change the material structures and mindsets and produce new ways of thinking about politics and security. Furthermore, certain domestic, international and transnational factors which create common interest can initiate the push for security communities; these may include a common drive towards democratic polities, or the impact of globalisation. The normative triggers for security communities could include new ideas about cooperation. Important examples of ideational triggers for security communities are the notions of ‘common security’ and ‘cooperative security’, ideas which have been particularly important in the development of security institutions in the Asia Pacific region.

The list of triggers mentioned here is not exhaustive. Moreover, the distinction between ‘loose’ and ‘tight’ security communities cannot be a sharp one, and there may be considerable overlap between the nascent, ascendant and mature stages. The suggested pathway does not exhaust all the possible approaches to security community building, nor does it capture all the features of a particular
stage. But they do provide a useful basis for understanding why and when security communities may emerge, and the nature of the interactions that set them apart from other types of security systems.

The idea of security community is often taken as a terminal condition, rather than as a process. Because such communities are by definition supposed to have developed ‘dependable expectations of long-term peace’, the literature on them does not tell us much about the conditions under which a security community may decay or be disrupted (this is one of the limitations of the new research agenda on security communities developed under Adler and Barnett).

This book does not see socialisation and institution building as linear processes. Even constructivism is often viewed as a theory of global peace and harmony, but it should, and can, explain both cooperation and conflict. A major theory of international politics should explain failure as well as success, progress as well as setback, of efforts at socialisation and institution building.89

A security community, even if it appears to be well established, may unravel in response to a variety of internal and external circumstances. Deutsch himself recognised the possibility of decay in security communities, although he did not specify the conditions that might lead to it. Yet, his assertion that

[w]hether any specific security community will continue to function in the long run will depend on the ability of its facilities for peaceful adjustment to keep ahead of the strains and burdens which any growth of social transaction may throw upon them90

does provide a clue to how security communities may decline. The key point here is the impact of ‘strains and burdens’ created by increased interactions and socialisation. This provides the basis for a sociological, rather than power-based, explanation of when and how security communities may unravel. An understanding of how security communities may unravel, offered in this book, would thus be a necessary and important complement to explanations of how they come about in the first place.

To elaborate, neo-realist theory would explain major changes in the international system, including the decline of international cooperation, in terms of major shifts in the distribution of power such as that from bipolarity to multipolarity. Such shifts may produce new security threats for states, prompting new external alignments among some of the members that may prove unsettling and divisive for existing groups of states. For example, faced with a rising external power, some states may prefer bandwagoning, while others may prefer balancing.91 This could generate new insecurities for states and unravel whatever cooperation that might have existed among them. Neo-liberal theories are rather reticent to speak about crisis and decline in institutions. But their assumption that the character of international institutions is ‘structured by the prevailing distribution of capabilities’92/******/carries an implicit admission that shifts in the balance of power
could be the ultimate determinant of the rise and decline of cooperative institutions, including pluralistic security communities.93

In contrast, a constructivist explanation of security communities would posit that the sources of decline of security communities are not necessarily external to the socialisation process that constitutes them. Security communities could unravel when they widen or deepen their cooperation. Security communities which have developed new forms of cooperation, or deepened existing forms of cooperation, may face a situation where resources available to them or the principles governing the conduct of cooperation prove to be inadequate in addressing the new tasks. Similarly, the widening of an existing security community could alter its socialisation dynamic. Since the development of security communities is fundamentally a social process, the induction of previously ‘unsocialised’ actors could impose new psychological burdens on the community and test its capacity for intra-mural conflict resolution. Moreover, an expanded security community will need to address the specific security problems of the new actors. There may be new material burdens too, especially in cases where the community, having already developed a high degree of economic integration, has to accommodate new entrants which have a lower level of economic development.

Socialisation processes within security communities and those between them and the outside world could be affected by changing norms and ideas about cooperation in the international system. These changes could undermine the ways in which a security community manages intra-mural relationships and deals with external pressures. For example, changing norms concerning sovereignty and the doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of states at the global level have affected the way many regional organisations such as ASEAN have conducted intra-mural relations as well as relations with extraregional powers in the past. Security communities, existing or aspiring, which fail to adapt to these changing external conditions could find themselves in crisis.

Framework of the book

This book seeks to analyse ASEAN’s role in regional order and the obstacles to it. ASEAN regionalism is conceptualised as the process of building a security community in which states develop a reliable pattern of peaceful interaction, pursue shared interests and strive for a common regional identity. Against this backdrop, Chapter 2 provides a historical examination of the development of interstate norms in Southeast Asia. It identifies both legal-rational norms such as the non-use of force, non-interference, regional autonomy and avoidance of military pacts as well as socio-cultural norms such as consultations and consensus and a preference for informality over legalistic mechanisms, which are the core elements of the ASEAN Way. The origin and evolution of these norms is examined and how they were institutionalised and expressed within the ASEAN framework is analysed.
Chapter 3 looks at the extent to which ASEAN’s norms shaped and were shaped by its handling of the Cambodia conflict. Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia was one of ASEAN’s biggest crises and it tested the organisation’s collective action agenda. What were the norms at stake, to what extent were they observed, what was the extent of deviation from these norms, and how did they contribute to the political settlement of the conflict? Were ASEAN’s policies consistent with its professed norms and corporate culture, and did ASEAN’s policy serve to reinforce or undermine the latter?

Chapter 4 discusses how ASEAN’s norms and identity have been affected by the expansion of its membership. It assesses whether ASEAN’s expansion has been carried out in a manner consistent with its norms. It also addresses whether expansion will affect the future observance of norms and if it might compromise norms such as the principle of non-intervention and the ASEAN Way. This is discussed with particular reference to ASEAN’s handling of the entry of Cambodia and Myanmar, both which tested ASEAN’s norms. Also considered is the extent to which an expanded membership reflects the construction of a new form of regional identity, expressed in concepts such as ‘One Southeast Asia’. Will this impose major new burdens on ASEAN, and explain or precipitate its decline?

Chapter 5 examines key developments in intra-ASEAN relations in the post-Cold War period with a view to assessing how they have affected ASEAN’s norms and identity as a regional grouping. Five major areas are covered. The first concerns existing and emerging bilateral problems among the ASEAN members, and the prospects for dispute settlement. The second is the military modernisation programmes undertaken by the ASEAN members. Is this development leading to the possibility of an arms race that would subvert ASEAN’s claim to be a security community? Third, ASEAN’s approach to the Spratly Islands dispute is examined. Although it involves non-member states, this dispute is affecting intra-ASEAN norms and cohesion in a significant way. The fourth area is the development of intra-ASEAN economic cooperation, which could test the impact of economic interdependence on regional peace and provide an indication of the expanding scope of multilateralism, a key indicator of collective identity. Finally, intra-ASEAN defence cooperation, including policy coordination against internal threats, is examined, once again for its implications for multilateralism and collective identity. Overall, this chapter seeks to ascertain whether the handling of these issues by ASEAN members conforms to its norms and processes and whether the grouping has begun to devise new ways of coping with security challenges.

Chapter 6 assesses ASEAN’s role in the development and functioning of Asia Pacific multilateralism, i.e. the ASEAN Regional Forum. It examines the extent to which the evolution of the ARF has been based on ASEAN’s norms, including the ASEAN Way. As such, it also addresses the question whether ASEAN’s norms can provide a credible approach to security cooperation at the wider Asia Pacific regional level. Furthermore, the chapter analyses the burdens
imposed on ASEAN by its supposedly ‘driver’ role in the ARF, which could impede its progress towards a viable security community.

Together, the aim of these chapters is to ascertain not only whether the norms of ASEAN have had a regulatory impact, but also the extent to which they might have created a sense of regional community (constitutive impact) to foster the long-term habit of war avoidance. But measuring what is ‘regulatory’ and what is ‘constitutive’ is not an easy research task. The theory of norms has provided no standard indicators to measure these effects, although Wendt and Adler and Barnett have made helpful contributions.94 For the purpose of the book, the framework presented in Figure 1.2 is used to assess the effects of ASEAN’s norms on regional order. The framework consists of a number of

![Table]

**Questions about norms in dispute settlement**

1. In handling disputes, has the use of force been seriously envisaged?
2. Has there been any indication of competitive arms acquisitions and military planning during the course of the dispute?
3. Does the group provide for institutional mechanisms to settle disputes between members?
4. How often do members resort to such mechanisms?

**Questions about norms in collective action**

1. Does the group follow its norms in devising functional cooperation, such as economic cooperation?
2. Does the group follow its norms in dealing with outside actors?
3. What is the level of support provided by other members of the group to a member who is involved in a dispute with an outside actor?
4. How does the group handle disunity or breaking of ranks by any member(s) over cooperative and collective action problems?

**Questions about collective identity**

1. Has there been a growing resort to multilateral approaches to problems compared with the past, including new issues which have been brought under the purview of multilateral cooperation?
2. Has cooperation led to formal or informal collective defence (including policy coordination against internal threats), collective security and cooperative security arrangements?
3. Has it involved and produced new ways of expressing social identity, such as redefining the region?
4. To what extent do countries outside the group recognise its new social identity?

*Figure 1.2 Constructing security communities: a framework*
questions grouped under three categories: (1) dispute settlement (management of intra-mural issues); (2) collective action (development of cooperative programmes, including functional cooperation and collective postures vis-à-vis outside powers); and (3) collective identity (practices which contribute towards the emergence of a regional identity such as multilateralism, collective defence, etc.). Of these categories, the first helps us measure the regulatory effects of norms; the second straddles both regulatory and constitutive effects; and the third is most directly concerned with assessing the constitutive effects of norms.

Together, these questions constitute a measure of comparability between the chapters and provide an overall framework of discussion for the book, the findings of which will be presented in the conclusion.

It should be noted that the empirical chapters in the book deal with different mixtures of these categories. Chapter 2, analysing the evolution of ASEAN, covers all the three areas, i.e. dispute settlement, collective action and identity formation. Chapter 3, focusing on ASEAN’s role in the Cambodia conflict, addresses the questions about collective action listed in the second part of Figure 1.2. Chapter 4, dealing with ASEAN’s expansion, assesses questions about collective action as well as identity listed in the third part of Figure 1.2. Chapter 5, analysing the management of intra-regional relations in the post-Cold War era, deals with questions about all three areas, but in the post-Cold War context. Finally, Chapter 6, covering ASEAN’s role in Asia Pacific security cooperation, is primarily concerned with questions about collective action and common identity.

Together, the questions listed in the figure permit an evaluation of both the regulatory and constitutive impact of ASEAN’s norms. The former is indicated by assessing compliance, while the latter is indicated by the extent to which ASEAN members have adjusted and redefined their national security postures as to conform to the collective expectations about behaviour related to matters of regional conflict and order. It is also seen from the identity-building practices of ASEAN, such as its claims about the ASEAN Way and its efforts to develop a ‘One Southeast Asia’ paradigm of intra-regional relations. The project to construct a pluralistic security community in Southeast Asia can thus be assessed by looking at ASEAN’s record in dispute settlement and war avoidance, the progress of collective action, and the development of ‘we feelings’.

Notes and references


Ibid., p. 276.


Ibid., p. 99.


Barry Buzan, who coined the term ‘security complex’, defined them as ‘local sets of states…whose major security perceptions and concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national security perceptions cannot realistically be considered apart from one another’. While security complexes may feature both amity and enmity among the actors, the latter usually is the more crucial determinant. ‘Unlike most other attempts to define regional subsystems, security complexes rest, for the most part, on the interdependence of rivalry rather than on the interdependence of shared interests.’ Barry Buzan, ‘A Framework for Regional Security Analysis’, in Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi (eds), South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 3–33. See also: Buzan, ‘Regional Security’, Arbejdspapirer, no. 28 (Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research, 1989).


Ibid.

Donald Puchala, ‘The Integration Theorists and the Study of International Relations’, in Charles W. Kegley and Eugene R. Wittkopf (eds), The Global Agenda: Issues and Perspectives (New York: Random House, 1984), p. 187. Deutsch’s preoccupation with empirical measurement has been criticised by a number of scholars. Haas argued that Deutsch’s transactionalist approach ‘does not tell us the content of the messages…. It does not explain when and how trust and responsiveness among actors, elites as well as masses, are to occur…. Politics, in the sense of demands, negotiations, institutionalization, evolution of tasks, is not really


35 Kratochwill outlines three ordering functions of norms. First, by ‘ruling out’ certain methods of individual goal seeking through the stipulation of forbearances, norms define the area within which conflict can be bounded. Second, within the restricted set of permissible goals and strategies, rules that take the actors’ goals as given can create schemes or schedules for individual or joint enjoyment of scarce objects. Third, norms enable the parties whose goals and/or strategies conflict to sustain a ‘discourse’ on their grievances, to negotiate a solution, or to ask a third party for a decision on the basis of commonly accepted rules, norms and principles. Friedrich V Kratochwill, *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 70.


37 Ibid., p. 54.


39 Ibid., p. 328.


41 Three other conditions are: (1) mutual relevance of the units to one another; (2) compatibility of values and some joint rewards; and (3) mutual responsiveness. Karl Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations* 3rd edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988), p. 271.

42 Ibid., pp. 271–272.


46 Ibid., p. 27.

47 Ibid. p. 27.

48 During the drafting of the UN’s Charter at the San Francisco conference, the so-called ‘universalists’, led by the USA, viewed regional arrangements as a potential impediment to the realisation of a universal collective security system. The ‘regionalists’ (including delegates from Latin America and Middle East), on the other hand, argued that regional organisations would have a better understanding of threats to peace and stability in their own areas and would be in a better position to intervene in such situations than the distant UN bureaucracy. They also pointed out that investing exclusive authority for settlement of international disputes in the Security Council would amount to ‘denying permission to small states in regional groupings the chief responsibility for their own security’. Lynn H. Miller, ‘The Prospect for Order Through Regional Security’, in Richard A. Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz (eds), *Regional Politics and World Order*, (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman,
The outcome of this debate was a compromise in which regional organisations were allowed a role in managing peace and security issues, albeit subject to the overall authority and jurisdiction of the UN. Thus the UN Charter listed mediation by regional agencies as one of the techniques of international conflict control (Article 33/1, Chapter VI), while UN members were encouraged to ‘make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements’ (Article 52/2, Chapter VIII), before taking up the matter with the Security Council. For analyses of the universalist and regionalist positions, see: Minerva Etzioni, *The Majority of One: Towards a Theory of Regional Compatibility* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1970).


Ibid., p. 272.

Ibid., p. 272.


The term identity comes from social psychology, where it refers to ‘the images of individuality and distinctiveness (“selfhood”) held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant “others”’. Ibid., p. 59.

This conception of identities is similar, if somewhat more specific, to that offered by Ted Hopf, ‘The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory’, *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998), p. 175.

Ibid., p. 175.

This is implicit in Wendt’s assertion that ‘through interactions, states might form collective identities and interests’. Alexander Wendt, ‘Collective Identity Formation and the International State’, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 2 (June 1994), p. 384.

In using the idea of culture, I share Katzenstein’s view that culture is product neither of deep continuities nor discontinuities (product of specific events) of history. Instead of ‘invoking history as the autonomous creator of particular aspects of culture, we should be able to point to political processes by which norms are contested and contingent, politically made and unmade in history’. Peter Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Post-War Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 2 and 38.


Constructing security communities


78 Ibid., p. 108.

79 Ibid.

80 For example, the Central American Common Market, once regarded as the very model of the neo-functionalist approach, suffered a long paralysis. The Latin American Free Trade Area was abolished in 1980, as members realised the futility of developing a free trade area and a common market due to different levels of development and conflicts over the distribution of benefits among them. In Africa, similar trends characterised integration efforts with the eclipse of the East African


84 Deutsch’s notion of security community does lend itself to interpretations other than those provided by liberal scholars. A careful reading of Deutsch will reveal that he spoke of compatibility of values, not necessarily liberal democratic values. Pluralistic security communities are characterised by the ‘increasing unattractiveness and improbability of war among the political units of the emerging pluralistic security community as perceived by their governments, elites and (eventually) populations’. This initial emphasis on the role of governments and elites, in my view, does not rule out the possibility of such communities developing in societies which are not highly democratic, but which may be on the path towards democratisation.


87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., pp. 50–52.


93 However, this would be a misreading of the neo-liberal institutionalist position, which makes an important, if implicit, distinction between the concept of balance of power as a situation (as a given distribution of power), and balancing strategies employed by states to achieve that distribution. Generally, a neo-liberal would accept the conditioning role of the former, but would claim that institutions can constrain and displace the latter.

2 The evolution of ASEAN norms and the emergence of the ‘ASEAN Way’

ASEAN was formally established at Bangkok on 8 August 1967. It brought together five countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines—in one of the most remarkably divergent group of states. Not only were its members very dissimilar in terms of their physical size, ethnic composition, socio-cultural heritage and identity, colonial experience and postcolonial polities, they also lacked any significant previous experience in multilateral cooperation. Since cultural and political homogeneity could not serve as an adequate basis for regionalism, the latter had to be constructed through interaction. Such interactions could only be purposeful if they were consistent and rule based, employing those rules which would ensure peaceful conduct among the member states. To this end, ASEAN’s founders over a period of a decade from its inception adopted and specified a set of norms for intra-regional relations. A Malaysian scholar, Noordin Sopiee, would later describe them as the ‘ground rules of inter-state relations within the ASEAN community with regard to conflict and its termination’.¹

The important question about norms is not only what they are but also where do they come from. Regional institutions, including those which exhibit the characteristics of a security community, may learn their norms from global organisations, or other regional groups. Their norms also derive from the local social, cultural and political milieu. ASEAN’s norms came from a mix of these two sources. The former have been enshrined in a variety of documents. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation signed at Bali in 1976 outlined the following principles: (1) ‘Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of all nations’; (2) ‘The right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion and coercion’; (3) ‘Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; (4) ‘Settlement of differences and disputes by peaceful means’; and (5) ‘renunciation of the threat of use of force’. The first ASEAN summit in Bali in 1976 confirmed an emerging consensus to keep ASEAN from becoming a military alliance by limiting defence cooperation among members to a bilateral level outside of the aegis of ASEAN.

The following sections will analyse the evolution of ASEAN’s norms and principles by dividing them into four core categories: those dealing with the non-use of force and the 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. This will be followed by a discussion of the ‘ASEAN Way’. The final part of the chapter will assess the gap between rhetoric and reality in the development of ASEAN’s norms, before examining their impact on ASEAN’s political and security role in various issue areas in the subsequent chapters.

Non-use of force and pacific settlement of disputes

The first set of norms to emerge in ASEAN was an agreement among its members to refrain from the use of force to resolve interstate disputes. As Chatichai Choonhavan, Thailand’s Foreign Minister, stated in 1973, ‘[t]he immediate task of ASEAN…is to attempt to create a favourable condition in the region whereby political differences and security problems among Southeast Asian nations can be resolved peacefully’. The founding Bangkok Declaration of 1967 outlining the aims of ASEAN stressed the promotion of ‘regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of the law in the relationship among countries in the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter’. The 1971 Kuala Lumpur Declaration specifically mentioned several principles of the UN Charter as the source of these ASEAN norms, among them ‘abstention from the threat or use of force’, and ‘peaceful settlement of international disputes’.

The establishment of ASEAN was the product of a desire by its five original members to create a mechanism for war prevention and conflict management. The need for such a mechanism was made salient by the fact that ASEAN’s predecessor had foundered on the reefs of intra-regional mistrust and animosity. An earlier attempt at a regional association in Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), had been made in 1961, but it had collapsed over the Philippines’ claim to the former British colony of North Borneo (Sabah), which had opted to join the Malaysian federation. ASA was followed by MAPHILINDO, an acronym for a loose confederation of three independent states of Malay stock (Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines) but without displaying an institutional form. Its demise was ensured by Indonesia’s challenge to the legitimacy of newly independent Malaysia through a coercive diplomacy known as Konfrontasi. The members of the newly formed ASEAN were involved in a number of serious disputes among themselves. War-like tensions obtained between Singapore and Malaysia, and Singapore and Indonesia, reflecting a general distrust of Chinese-dominated Singapore by its Malay-Muslim neighbours.

The idea of ASEAN itself was conceived in the course of intra-regional negotiations leading to the end of confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. President Sukarno’s Konfrontasi had been a prime example of the use of force, however limited, by a postcolonial state in Southeast Asia against a neighbour. In wrecking the prospects for MAPHILINDO, Konfrontasi had underscored the importance of regionalism by demonstrating the high costs of
the use of force to settle intra-regional conflicts. After fundamental political change, Indonesia’s decision to renounce *Konfrontasi* served as a model for its neighbours and raised the possibility of a regional order based on the non-use of force in inter-state relations. While interest in regionalism among the five member states of ASEAN was a result of varied geopolitical considerations, all recognised ASEAN’s value as a framework through which to prevent a return to a *Konfrontasi*-like situation. As a regional forum under Indonesia’s putative leadership, ASEAN would first and foremost constrain Indonesia’s possible return to belligerence.

Indonesia’s membership within ASEAN would reduce the possibility of threat to their security posed by their giant neighbour…Indonesia would appear to be placed in what amounts to a ‘hostage’ position, albeit in a golden cage. For the new leadership in Jakarta…it is within ASEAN that Indonesia might be provided with an opportunity to realize its ambitions, if any, to occupy a position of primacy or primus inter pares without recourse to a policy of confrontation.5

ASEAN’s emergence also served to dampen the prospect of force being used against its smallest constituent, Singapore. Singapore, acutely conscious of its vulnerabilities as ‘a Chinese island in a sea of Malays’, could use its participation in ASEAN to gain acceptance as part of Southeast Asia and play a bigger role by being able to influence other like-minded countries on issues of mutual interest. Subsequently, another small state, Brunei, would see the usefulness of ASEAN in a similar light. ASEAN membership helped to reduce Brunei’s sense of vulnerability against its bigger neighbour, Malaysia. The ASEAN norms of non-interference would lessen the possibility of Kuala Lumpur sponsoring subversion against the monarchy in Brunei which, unlike Sabah and Sarawak, had refused to join the Malaysian federation.

While the experience of *Konfrontasi* accounted for the emergence of the principle of non-use of force, its first major test was the Sabah dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines. Between April 1968 and December 1969, relations between Malaysia and the Philippines worsened considerably over the latter’s claim to Sabah, a state within the Malaysian federation. Although the dispute dates back to 1961, the immediate spark for the bilateral crisis was reports appearing in the Manila press in March 1968 that a secret army was being trained on the island of Corregidor in preparation for an impending invasion of Sabah. While the government of the Philippines denied any involvement in such a plan, its reaction to the so-called ‘Corregidor affair’ demonstrated a renewed pursuit of its claim on Sabah. The affair not only plunged Manila’s relationship with Kuala Lumpur into a crisis, but also threatened the very survival of ASEAN barely six months after its creation in August 1967.

At first, other ASEAN members carefully avoided voicing any views publicly on the dispute that might be construed by the disputants as an indication of partiality. Their neutrality deprived Manila of the kind of international diplomatic
support it needed to pursue its claim effectively. It might also have discouraged further action by President Marcos in escalating the dispute. Although Thailand and Indonesia proffered their good offices in urging the two sides to reach a negotiated settlement, both shied away from directly mediating in the dispute. Initially, the rest of the ASEAN members tried to keep the Sabah issue separate from ASEAN, hoping that this would limit the dispute’s damaging effects on the fledgling organisation. But as bilateral talks between Malaysia and the Philippines in June 1968 failed, followed by a suspension of diplomatic relations and Malaysia’s refusal to take part in any further ASEAN meetings where the Philippines might raise the Sabah issue, the linkage between ASEAN and the Sabah dispute could no longer be avoided.

In a bid to contain the crisis, ASEAN’s meeting of foreign ministers in Jakarta in August and in Bangkok in December 1968 persuaded the two sides to minimise their public airing of the dispute and accept a ‘cooling-off period’. Statements by Thailand and Indonesia urged restraint on both sides for the sake of ASEAN. Until their suspension, various ASEAN ad hoc and standing committees provided crucial channels of communication between the two sides when no others existed. In March 1969, Manila agreed not to raise the Sabah issue at future ASEAN meetings, thereby indicating a new flexibility. It was an ASEAN committee meeting in Indonesia in May 1969 which brought the two countries together for the first time in eight months with the exception of an ad hoc foreign ministers meeting in December 1968. The softening of Manila’s stand was due partly to the ASEAN factor, since the prior suspension of all ASEAN meetings had deprived Manila of a major channel to pursue its claim and threatened its relations with other ASEAN members—Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore.

At an ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in December 1969, Malaysia and the Philippines agreed to resume diplomatic relations, thereby effectively putting the issue on the back-burner. This episode gave ASEAN a new confidence and sense of purpose. The avoidance of any further escalation of the Sabah dispute was all the more significant because it took place at a time when the degree of economic interdependence within the region was not significant enough to serve as a constraint on interstate tensions. In the words of the joint communiqué of the December meeting, the resumption of diplomatic ties was possible ‘because of the great value Malaysia and the Philippines placed on ASEAN’.

ASEAN did not and could not resolve the Sabah dispute, which continues to elude a decisive settlement. Neither did ASEAN play the role of conflict mediator/manager in a formal and legalistic sense. But ASEAN members, through direct and indirect measures of restraint, pressure, diplomacy, communication and trade-offs, did succeed in preventing any further escalation of the crisis, which might have led to armed hostilities and destroyed the organisation. Thus, the Sabah dispute is an important milestone in ASEAN’s early approach to conflict avoidance and was indicative of what was to be known later as the ASEAN Way of conflict management.

The need for the pacific settlement of disputes was held in such importance by ASEAN’s founders that they were willing to create formal mechanisms to
support this principle within the ASEAN institutional framework despite their known aversion to institutional legalism. Thus, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation signed in 1976 provided (under Chapter IV, Articles 13 to 17) for an official dispute-settlement mechanism, called a High Council, consisting of ministerial-level representatives from each member’s state. This Council, as a continuing body, was supposed ‘to take cognizance of the existence of disputes and situations likely to disturb regional peace and harmony’ and ‘in the event no solution is reached through direct negotiations’, to ‘recommend to the parties in dispute appropriate means of settlement such as good offices, mediation, inquiry or conciliation’. Although this mechanism has never been invoked, this very fact has been cited by ASEAN leaders as indicating an enduring commitment to the non-use of force in intra-regional relations as well as a sign of the grouping’s success in intra-mural conflict avoidance and management.

Regional autonomy or ‘regional solutions to regional problems’

One of the major points of contention and constraints on regionalism in Southeast Asia since the Second World War had to do with the dependence of the regional countries on extra-regional powers for protection against internal as well as external threats. The strong security links of Thailand and the Philippines with the USA, and those of Malaysia and Singapore with Britain made security through regional cooperation less urgent. The membership of the Philippines and Thailand in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) also created a schism in the strategic perspectives between these two states and Indonesia. The latter was a strong advocate of non-alignment and, even with the advent of a pro-Western regime, opposed any security role for outside powers in the region.

Against this backdrop, the emergence of the principle of regional autonomy was bound to be controversial. Yet, the need for greater self-reliance in managing the region’s security problems emerged as a key ASEAN norm. Adam Malik, Foreign Minister of Indonesia, explained this norm most forcefully in 1974:

Regional problems, i.e. those having a direct bearing upon the region concerned, should be accepted as being of primary concern to that region itself. Mutual consultations and cooperation among the countries of the region in facing these problems may…lead to the point where the views of the region are accorded the primacy they deserve in the search for solution.6

ASEAN’s formation was aided substantially by a common concern among its founding members about the changing role of external powers in the region. Despite their dependence on external security guarantees, all ASEAN members saw dangers in Great Power rivalry in Southeast Asia as its principal manifestation underwent a process of change towards the end of the 1960s, with the Sino-Soviet rift and a new competition for regional influence assuming prominence
over traditional Cold War patterns. The prospect of China emerging as the
dominant force in the region and, as Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore
was to put it later, the related prospect of Southeast Asia becoming ‘to her what
the Caribbean is to America or Eastern Europe to the USSR’7 had already
constituted one aspect of ASEAN members’ collective apprehensions regarding
the role of great powers in the region. Sino-Soviet competition, featuring a Soviet
quest for regional influence through establishing links in Indochina, its proposal
for an Asian Collective Security Arrangement’ and Chinese warnings concerning
Soviet ‘hegemonism’ made the ASEAN countries appreciate the need for a
united response to the new form of Great Power rivalry. At the same time, the
relaxation of tensions between the USA and the Soviet Union on the one hand
and the USA and China on the other aroused a different kind of concern, that
such Great Power compromises would leave the security interests of the ASEAN
countries either ignored or undermined. Malaysia’s Prime Minister Hussein
Onn was to put it succinctly on the eve of the Bali summit when he noted that
the big powers
can create tension in any area...especially, when they try to settle their
differences and impose their ideologies forcefully in other countries...there is
a Malay saying that when two elephants fight, the mouse deer wedged in
between will suffer.8

In this context, the usefulness of regionalism lay in its potential to enhance the
bargaining power of small and weak states in their dealings with the Great
Powers. Regionalism might not enable the ASEAN states to prevent the Great
Powers from interfering in the affairs of the region, but it could, as Lee Kuan
Yew pointed out, help them to ‘have their interests taken into consideration
when the great powers make their compromises’.9 Adam Malik echoed the
sentiment:

Southeast Asia is one region in which the presence and interests of most
major powers converge, politically as well as physically. The frequency and
intensity of policy interactions among them, as well as their dominant influence
on the countries in the region, cannot but have a direct bearing on political
realities. In the face of this, the smaller nations of the region have no hope of
ever making any impact on this pattern of dominant influence of the big
powers, unless they act collectively and until they develop the capacity to
forge among themselves an area of internal cohesion, stability and common
purpose. Thus regional cooperation within ASEAN also came to represent
the conscious effort by its member countries to try to re-assert their position
and contribute their own concepts and goals within the ongoing process of
stabilization of a new power equilibrium in the region.10

ASEAN’s norm of regional autonomy was also influenced by Britain’s initial
announcement in 1967 of its decision to withdraw its forces from ‘east of Suez’
by the mid-1970s and that by President Nixon in 1969 of a new US doctrine ruling out future US military involvement in a land war in Asia. He urged US Asian allies to accept the primary responsibility for their own conventional defence with only indirect US assistance. One immediate impact of the Nixon doctrine was to stimulate further Thailand’s efforts to steer a more independent course in foreign policy and move towards regionalism. A similar motive lay behind the interest of the Philippines in ASEAN at a time when Manila was keen to shed its image as a client of the USA and to assert its Asian identity. Subsequent US withdrawal from Vietnam was a blow to the credibility of Western security guarantees that had already been undermined by the announcement of Britain’s military withdrawal from the region. Reliance on Britain and other Commonwealth partners (Australia and New Zealand) for protection against both internal as well as external threats suffered when Britain’s withdrawal was announced at a time when the development of the region’s indigenous defence capabilities was still at a rudimentary stage. Although the impact of that withdrawal was mitigated somewhat by the creation of Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) in 1971 involving Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia, the latter was only a consultative arrangement backed by a small air defence force (centred on Australian combat aircraft) as well as a ground force component (with contributions from Britain, Australia and New Zealand, but Britain and Australia withdrew from this force by the mid-1970s, leaving a New Zealand battalion in Singapore until the end of the 1980s). Against this backdrop, Singapore’s Foreign Minister, S.Rajaratnam, observed:

The British decision to withdraw from the region in the seventies brings… to an end nearly two centuries of dominant European influence in the region. The seventies will also see the withdrawal of direct American influence in Southeast Asian affairs. For the first time in centuries, Southeast Asia will be on its own. It must fill what some people call the power vacuum itself or resign itself to the dismal prospect of the vacuum being filled from the outside…. We can and should fill it ourselves, not necessarily militarily, but by strengthening our social, economic and political foundations through cooperation and collective effort.11

In developing a norm of regional autonomy, the ASEAN members shared two major beliefs concerning the perils of dependence on Great Power security guarantees. The first was that while such guarantees might be useful against a threat of outright aggression, they could not address likely scenarios of revolutionary social challenge. Adam Malik drew attention to this danger when he warned that ‘[m]ilitary alliances or foreign military presence does not enhance a nation’s capacity to cope with the problem of insurgency. The price for such commitments is too high, whereas the negative ramifications for the nation are too great’.12 Mohamad Ghazali Shafie, a top Malaysian official who later became the country’s foreign minister, wrote in 1975 that:
External support for internal insurgencies or for governments combating insurgencies, have the effect of raising the level of violence and complicating both conflict management and the peaceful resolution of conflicts through political means. Internal stability cannot after all be imposed from the outside.13

Second, to seek the help of external powers in situations of domestic instability could undermine the legitimacy of the threatened regime; after all, the most important and painful lesson of the Vietnam War was that relying on external backing in domestic upheavals could ‘easily serve to insulate it [the threatened regime] from political and economic realities and render it insensitive to the social forces with which in the long run it must come to terms if it is to survive on its own’14

The ASEAN members’ heightened fear of Great Power rivalry and declining faith in external security guarantees lay behind the proposal for creating a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia. This initiative followed discussions among the region’s elite about the possible ‘neutralisation’ of Southeast Asia, which had been advocated by Malaysia.15 Malaysia’s proposal was inspired by both external and domestic concerns, including the May 1969 race riots, which had exposed the acute tensions between the Chinese and Malay communities. The riots had increased the ruling Malay elite’s perception of the threat from China. They feared that Beijing might seek to exploit the pro-China loyalties of Malaysia’s Chinese, a fear aggravated by its assumption of China’s seat in the UN. In one respect, Malaysia’s neutralisation proposal sought to limit China’s influence in the region. A strict neutralisation approach was deemed unfeasible by other ASEAN members for two reasons. First, neutralisation under international law would require formal guarantees from the Great Powers. This precondition provoked serious reservations on the part of Indonesia, which saw it providing the latter with an undue say and influence over regional security. For Jakarta, neutralisation under international law meant in effect conceding ‘policing rights’ to the USA, the Soviet Union and China. Indonesia pushed for a different approach, one that expressed the right of the regional countries to have the exclusive responsibility for managing regional order.16 A second, and more implicitly acknowledged, obstacle to neutralisation was the fact that in order to be credible, it would have to involve strict legalistic prohibitions against foreign military bases and the existing alliance relationships of ASEAN members. Under the neutralisation framework originally envisaged by Malaysia, the regional countries were required to abstain from military alliances with the Great Powers and prevent the establishment of foreign military bases on their soil, while the Great Powers were asked to ‘refrain from forging alliances with the neutralised states, stationing armed forces on their territory, and using their presence to subvert or interfere in any other way with other countries’.17 But while ASEAN countries were keen to espouse the principle of regional autonomy, they were pragmatic enough to realise that complete self-reliance was not feasible under the present circumstances. ASEAN members such as Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore saw their security links with Western powers as a vital ingredient of national security and regional order.
The language of the ZOPFAN Declaration which emerged on 27 November 1971 from a meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur was a classic example of the emerging ASEAN Way of compromise, consensus building, ambiguity, avoidance of strict reciprocity, and rejection of legally binding obligations. The Declaration was far more soft and open-ended than the abortive neutralisation framework. It referred to neutralisation as a ‘desirable objective’. But instead of laying down specific legalistic measures and going by Indonesia’s preferred approach, it restated the principle in the 1967 Bangkok Declaration that ‘the countries of Southeast Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development’. It also restated the Bangkok Declaration’s call for ensuring the region’s ‘stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation’. Unlike the original neutralisation proposal, the ZOPFAN Declaration did not explicitly deal with foreign military bases or alliances, although these were generally understood to be temporary and only with the expressed agreement of the countries involved, a formulation already laid out in the Bangkok Declaration. Nonetheless, the ZOPFAN ideal contained within it all the principal security considerations and objectives which underpinned the origin and evolution of ASEAN, including the norms of non-interference, non-use of force and regional autonomy. It reflected Malaysia’s and Thailand’s disenchantment with external security guarantees as well as Indonesia’s convictions regarding the dangers of being engulfed by the machinations of the Great Powers. At the same time, it contained enough ambiguity to allow for the continuation of the existing security relationships between the ASEAN members and external powers.

The tension between the ASEAN members’ aspirations for regional security autonomy and the continued dependence (however undesirable) of several of them on external security guarantees has remained the principal stumbling block in the way of realising ZOPFAN. This contradiction was reflected in intra-mural disagreements within ASEAN with Singapore and Thailand stressing the need for external security linkages as opposed to the pro-autonomy views of Malaysia and Indonesia. It was compounded by differing threat perceptions among ASEAN members. The ability of China to pose a long-term security threat to Southeast Asia was a prospect that was viewed more seriously by Indonesia and Malaysia than by other ASEAN partners. Malaysia moved quickly to normalise its ties with the PRC in 1974 partly in order to demonstrate its commitment to ZOPFAN, since the PRC was to be one of the external guarantors under the original neutralisation proposal. Indonesia, however, remained concerned that such a move would encourage Chinese subversion in the region. Thailand and Singapore, for their part, were less optimistic about Vietnam’s postwar intentions towards its ASEAN neighbours than Indonesia. Another major area of disagreement was the need for Western security guarantees. Here too the views of Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines regarding the need for a US presence in the region was at variance with the professed principles and objectives of the Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur Declarations, which were strongly
espoused by Indonesia and Malaysia. Singapore, reflecting its support for a strong US presence in the region, warned that the ZOPFAN concept made the continuation of US presence all the more necessary since there was no certainty that all the other Great Powers would abide by the restraints required on their geopolitical behaviour by the concept. As Lee Kuan Yew put it, ‘in the event of one or more great power not respecting, it may be useful that there would be some [US] naval and air base facilities so that some balance can be maintained’.

These intra-mural obstacles to ZOPFAN came to be obscured by the outbreak of the Cambodia conflict in December 1978 and the accompanying revival of Great Power rivalry (Sino-Soviet) in Southeast Asia. For a long time, ASEAN was able to hold to the convenient position that the realisation of ZOPFAN had to await the resolution of the Cambodia conflict. In this context, ASEAN shifted its attention to a more specific aspect of ZOPFAN, a proposal for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Southeast Asia. The SEANWFZ idea had been mooted in the ZOPFAN Declaration of 1971, but it was not seriously pursued until the 1980s. Since the realisation of SEANWFZ did not depend upon the settlement of the Cambodia conflict, it was viewed by ASEAN as a step towards ZOPFAN. But some of the problems encountered in the realisation of ZOPFAN, especially intra-ASEAN differences, manifested themselves with regard to the nuclear-weapon-free zone proposal. Moreover, the latter was much more strongly resisted by the USA. The USA argued that a regional nuclear-weapon-free zone covering only the ASEAN states (since Vietnam was unlikely to embrace such an idea) would impose a one-sided restriction on US military deployments in the region, undermining its nuclear deterrence posture without imposing similar constraints on the Soviet Union which would be free to extend its nuclear umbrella to its regional ally, Vietnam. The US objection, in turn, caused greater ambivalence in the attitude of Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore towards the proposal. While the former two states remained tied to the US defence umbrella through bilateral security treaties, Singapore’s strong belief in the US role as a regional balancer conflicted with Indonesia and Malaysia’s preference for an autonomous and non-aligned regional security framework. In the end, the SEANWFZ proposal remained ill-defined until 1995, with few specifics as to the area to be covered by the proposed zone, the kind of nuclear activities to be prohibited by it, its impact on security arrangements between ASEAN members and external powers, and problems of verification and compliance. Furthermore, intra-mural differences within ASEAN as well as the adverse US reaction meant that for ASEAN the political costs of SEANWFZ would outweigh its potential benefits for regional security. As a result, the realisation of the nuclear-free-zone concept had to await the end of the Cold War and was not concluded in treaty form until December 1995 (and even then without the approval of the nuclear powers). At the same time, ZOPFAN was further undermined by ASEAN’s post-Cold War pursuit of a regional security framework which would ‘engage’, rather than exclude, the outside powers. This initiative, culminating in the ARF, will be discussed in Chapter 6.
The doctrine of non-interference

Arguably the single most important principle underpinning ASEAN regionalism is the doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. As one ASEAN foreign minister put it in 1997, ‘[n]on-interference in the affairs of another country was…the key factor as to why no military conflict had broken out between any two member states since 1967’.  

The salience of the doctrine of non-interference in Southeast Asia has long predated ASEAN. As a well-established principle of the modern Westphalian state system, it was firmly enshrined in the charter of the UN as well as the founding documents of numerous regional organizations, such as the OAU, the OAS, and the Arab League. In Southeast Asia, it was a key principle reaffirmed at the Bandung Asian-African Conference in 1955. The doctrine was incorporated in all the major political statements of ASEAN, from the very outset. The founding Bangkok Declaration of 1967 called upon Southeast Asian states to ‘ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation’. This injunction was intended to apply not only to interference by extra-regional powers, including the major powers such as the USA, Soviet Union and China, but also by Southeast Asian countries in the affairs of their own neighbours. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the ZOPFAN of 1971, while providing a framework for ASEAN’s relations with extra-regional powers, also committed ASEAN’s members to ‘the worthy aims and objectives of the United Nations’, including ‘respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states’ and ‘non-interference in the affairs of States’. It also recognised the ‘right of every state, large or small, to lead its existence free from outside interference in its internal affairs as this interference will adversely affect its freedom, independence, and integrity’. Article 2 of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, adopted by ASEAN at its Bali summit in 1976, also contained a statement of the principle of ‘non-interference in the internal affairs of one another’. The Declaration of ASEAN Concord, also adopted at Bali, stipulated that ‘member states shall vigorously develop… a strong ASEAN community…in accordance with the principles of self-determination, sovereign equality, and non-interference in the internal affairs of nations.’

That the ASEAN states as a group of newly independent (with the exception of Thailand, which was never a colony) developing countries should make non-interference the central tenet of intra-regional relations was hardly surprising. The sources and exceptional salience of this principle have to be understood, however, in the context of the grouping’s search for internal stability and regime security. The norms of non-use of force and regional autonomy reflected ASEAN’s concern for security against interstate disputes and extra-regional threats, but the doctrine of non-interference can only be understood in the context of the domestic security concerns of the ASEAN states. As new political entities with ‘weak’ state structures (e.g. lack of a close congruence between ethnic groups and territorial boundaries) and an equally problematic lack of
strong regime legitimacy, the primary sources of threat to the national security of the ASEAN states were not external, but internal. The threat from within outweighed the threat from without. The domestic conflicts of the ASEAN states were aggravated by foreign factors, including interference from close neighbours, but the domestic sources of instability had a ‘spillover’ effect, causing friction in interstate relations. No framework for regional security cooperation could be meaningful for ASEAN unless it countered the internal enemy and enhanced regime security. Regional order could not be maintained without an agreement on the fundamental importance of regime security anchored in the principle of non-interference.

ASEAN’s doctrine of non-interference was, in important part, an expression of a collective commitment to the survival of its non-communist regimes against the threat of communist subversion. This emphasis on internal stability was best illustrated in Indonesia’s concepts of ‘national resilience’ and ‘regional resilience’, phrases that were to become rallying slogans for all ASEAN countries. According to the Indonesian view, domestic stability within the individual ASEAN states was an indispensable prerequisite for regional security and regional collaboration. The concept of national resilience emphasises the non-military, internal dimensions of security. It is

an inward-looking concept, based on the proposition that national security lies not in military alliances or under the military umbrella of any great power, but in self-reliance deriving from domestic factors such as economic and social development, political stability and a sense of nationalism.23

The emphasis on national security and nationalism might seem to go against the spirit of regionalism. The Indonesian view conveys the opposite intent; as Jusuf Wanandi, an Indonesian scholar, has put it: ‘if each member nation can accomplish an overall national development and overcome internal threats, regional resilience will automatically result much in the same way as a chain derives its overall strength from the strength of its constituent parts’.24

In operational terms, the obligations imposed by ASEAN’s doctrine of non-interference on its members had four main aspects: (1) refraining from criticising the actions of a member government towards its own people, including violation of human rights, and from making the domestic political system of states and the political styles of governments a basis for deciding their membership in ASEAN; (2) criticising the actions of states which were deemed to have breached the non-interference principle; (3) denying recognition, sanctuary, or other forms of support to any rebel group seeking to destabilise or overthrow the government of a neighbouring state; (4) providing political support and material assistance to member states in their campaign against subversive and destabilising activities.

Several examples of the first aspect of non-interference in ASEAN may be found during the Cold War period. For example, deference to the principle of
non-interference was a reason for ASEAN’s refusal to address the genocidal acts of the Pol Pot regime during 1975–1978.25 (Although it should be remembered that Cambodia was not then a member of ASEAN.) Another example was ASEAN’s response to the ‘People’s Power’ revolution in the Philippines in 1986. ASEAN’s initial stance of ignoring the revolt against the Marcos regime was rooted in the doctrine of non-interference. Prior support for Marcos from fellow ASEAN members had included Indonesia’s dispatch of military transport aircraft to help the regime fight communist insurgents. ASEAN did not cease its implicit support for Marcos until the dying stage of his regime, only after strong international condemnation and the withdrawal of US support had stripped it of international legitimacy. It then issued only a mild expression of concern.26 Subsequent examples of non-interference include ASEAN’s non-response to the Thai military’s crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in May 1992, its decision to admit Vietnam in July 1995 despite its communist political system and, more importantly, its approval of Myanmar’s entry into ASEAN in July 1997 despite international concerns about the legitimacy of the regime (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

The main example of the second aspect of ASEAN’s non-interference doctrine can be found in its response to Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in December 1978. ASEAN criticised the invasion as a serious violation of the doctrine. The invasion was especially galling to ASEAN which had earlier made conciliatory gestures towards Vietnam. It had tried to secure an acceptance of ASEAN’s norms, only to be rebuffed by Hanoi. ASEAN foreign ministers, in their first collective response to the invasion, issued on 9 January 1979, urged all countries in the region to ‘respect each other’s independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political system’ and to ‘refrain…from interfering in each other’s internal affairs, and from carrying out subversive activities, directly or indirectly, against each other’. What was significant about this statement was its explicit mention of the object to be protected, i.e. the ‘political system’ of another country, in addition to its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the identification of the type of activity that it considered as interference, namely ‘subversive activities, directly or indirectly’.

The third obligation imposed by ASEAN’s non-interference policy on its members was the denial of sanctuary and support to rebels fighting the central authority of a member state. The origin of this policy was rooted in a concern that the transboundary movement of insurgents could become a major source of interstate tension, as reflected in the strained relations between Malaysia and Thailand over the activities of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and Muslim separatists in southern Thailand. (It is worth noting that the hostile attitude of the governments of the Philippines and Malaysia to NGO-sponsored conferences on East Timor in their respective territories provides a post-Cold War example of the continued reluctance of ASEAN states to provide a platform to the dissidents and critics of the governments of fellow members.) While ethnic separatists and rebel groups from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia have found sanctuary in Thai territory (with varying degrees of knowledge and
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connivance of the authorities in Bangkok), Thailand proved to be less tolerant of insurgencies against fellow ASEAN members, such as Malaysia, notwithstanding past Malaysian allegations regarding an allegedly ‘soft’ attitude by the Thai authorities toward CPM holdouts in southern Thailand. (With the admission of these three countries into ASEAN, the prospects for rebel groups from neighbouring states securing sanctuaries inside Thailand are likely to be significantly diminished.)

As noted, the doctrine of non-interference in the context of ASEAN has not meant indifference to each other’s domestic needs or strict impartiality in their domestic power struggles. It has meant that ASEAN members have been willing to provide assistance to help each other to counter threats to domestic stability, such as communist insurgency. Thailand, in an apparent willingness to compromise its sovereignty, has even been willing to grant Malaysia the right to engage in cross-border military incursions in ‘hot pursuit’ of communist guerrillas. As will be discussed in the following section, a series of intra-ASEAN bilateral border security arrangements against cross-border insurgencies, formal and informal extradition agreements, and a strict policy of not providing sanctuaries to rebels from neighbouring states, especially between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, attest to this practice of positive action in support of each other’s domestic order. While Thailand provided sanctuary to rebels fighting non-ASEAN members such as Burma, Cambodia and Laos, it was less tolerant of insurgencies against ASEAN member Malaysia (although this did not prevent periodic Malaysian complaints about Thai toleration of communist insurgents challenging the Malaysian state).

Moreover, ASEAN’s support for regimes threatened from within took political as well as material forms. This was evident from its backing for President Aquino in the Philippines. If ASEAN was slow to recognise the inevitable in Marcos’ Philippines out of loyalty to the principle of non-interference (and possibly to a founding member of ASEAN), it was firm in throwing its weight behind Mrs Aquino as she struggled with challenges posed by the communists on the one hand and disgruntled military officers on the other. The decision by all ASEAN leaders to attend the Manila summit in December 1987 despite serious security concerns was celebrated by the media and ASEAN officialdom as a clear endorsement of President Aquino as well as a show of ASEAN solidarity. As Philippine Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus noted,

> the very holding of the meeting itself…is the supreme achievement of the hour…they [the ASEAN heads of government] came here in spite of advice from security persons and in spite perhaps, even of their own instincts, in a magnificent show of resolve.27

The episode demonstrated ASEAN’s support for a member regime vis-à-vis its internal enemies.28
No military pacts and preference for bilateral defence cooperation

ASEAN’s founders were opposed to any form of multilateral military cooperation within their institutional framework. In view of Vietnam’s propaganda offensive which dubbed the grouping as the ‘new SEATO’, military cooperation among the ASEAN countries would have been an act of provocation. The US debacle in Indochina and the USA’s call to ASEAN members to assume the primary burden of their own defence through regional cooperation did not alter ASEAN’s position on this issue. For example, in the course of preparations for the first ASEAN summit in 1976, an Indonesian study paper had suggested the formation of a ‘joint council’ for defence cooperation and the holding of joint military exercises among the ASEAN states. After this idea had been discarded by the leaders at the summit, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Hussein Onn, stated:

It is obvious that the ASEAN members do not wish to change the character of ASEAN from a socio-economic organisation into a security alliance as this would only create misunderstanding in the region and undermine the positive achievements of ASEAN in promoting peace and stability through co-operation in the socio-economic and related fields.

While rejecting formal multilateral defence cooperation, the ASEAN leaders did, within the framework of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord signed at the Bali summit, express their approval for the ‘continuation of cooperation on a non-ASEAN basis between the member states in security matters in accordance with their mutual needs and interests’. This constituted an endorsement of bilateral border security arrangements and intelligence sharing that had already developed among ASEAN states on a bilateral basis. For ASEAN members, bilateralism offered several advantages over a formal multilateral alliance system. Mohamad Ghazali Shafie, Foreign Minister of Malaysia, provided the following rationale for bilateralism:

projects under ASEAN (and other regional bodies) are generally limited in scope and necessarily restricted to the lowest common denominator which is acceptable to all member countries…. The limitation of regional cooperation within a formal framework should not prevent countries of the region from trying to forge the closest possible links on a bilateral basis with one another. It may be, for example, that country X would be willing to establish such links on specific subjects and would be prepared to engage in consultations including exchange of information, etc, with country Y which she might not consider either appropriate or necessary to have with some other third country on a multilateral basis. Such bilateral contacts on any subject and at whatever level which may be mutually acceptable should be pursued as far as possible. In this way, an important criss-crossing network of bilateral links will be
established between and among the countries of Southeast Asia. In pursuance of this policy, Malaysia has entered into close bilateral economic/cultural and security/military arrangements with a number of countries in the region. Malaysia’s joint border operations with Thailand in the Thai/Malaysian boundary and with Indonesia on the Sarawak/Kalimantan border of East Malaysia as well as cooperation with Singapore in the context of the Five Power Defence Arrangement, are cases in point in the field of security and defence.31

Security cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand to suppress communist insurgency along their common border had been in train since the 1950s. A similar agreement to control border movement was signed between Indonesia and the Philippines in 1964. After the end of hostilities between Indonesia and Malaysia, the two countries entered into active cooperation involving their land, air and naval forces to curb communist insurgency as well as piracy and smuggling along their common border. These bilateral security arrangements expanded in scope following the establishment of ASEAN. A new security agreement between Malaysia and Thailand, signed in 1970, provided for combined operation as well as ‘hot pursuit’ of insurgents into each other’s territory. Similar joint operations against communist insurgents were carried out by Indonesia and Malaysia in 1971. Although ASEAN states deliberated over the need for a multilateral security arrangement against communist subversion (such a move was proposed by President Marcos of the Philippines), bilateral and multilateral intelligence exchanges on the activities of communist and other political opposition groups had become a regular practice by the time of the Bali summit in 1976. The general nervousness felt by ASEAN regimes about their own domestic position in the aftermath of the communist takeover in South Vietnam led to the expansion of such bilateral ties, but not to multilateral defence links.

Moreover, ASEAN’s rejection of a military pact was maintained in response to the emergence of a strong Soviet-Vietnamese security partnership and a Soviet naval presence in the region in the early 1980s. Alarmed by the Soviet move, Lee Kuan Yew called for multilateral military exercises among the ASEAN members.32 Thailand opposed the move.33 Indonesia also rejected the Lee proposal while reiterating its view that existing bilateral linkages among ASEAN states were sufficient to deal with the emerging security threats and any multilateral exercises, which would be provocative to the ‘other side’.34

The conscious decision by ASEAN’s founders that it should not deal with military issues and that security cooperation should be undertaken only on a bilateral basis had a major impact on ASEAN’s ability to manage intra-mural conflict. Many of the intra-ASEAN bilateral security agreements were geared to managing border security problems. As Mohamad Ghazali Shafie put it, the ASEAN countries were wise to create ‘mechanisms or apparatus...to resolve border problems locally and not at the capitals which would turn a pimple into a boil due to undue publicity’.35 In this sense, bilateral security cooperation in ASEAN served as a basic building block of multilateralism.
ASEAN’s social-cultural norms: the ‘ASEAN Way’ in historical perspective

The norms of interstate relations described above, though of central importance to the political and security role of ASEAN, are by themselves hardly unique. As already noted, the doctrines of non-interference, non-intervention and pacific settlement of disputes are cardinal principles of the Westphalian international system, and are well enshrined in the Charter of the UN and other regional organisations. But what made ASEAN really distinctive were the norms which came to be known as the ASEAN Way.

The ASEAN Way is a term favoured by ASEAN’s leaders themselves to describe the process of intra-mural interaction and to distinguish it from other, especially Western, multilateral settings. But there is no official definition of the term. It is a loosely used concept whose meaning remains vague and contested. Speaking at the height of regional economic crisis three decades after the formation of ASEAN, Singapore’s Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar offered a rare account of the principles that are considered to be integral to the ASEAN Way. In his words, ‘the Asean Way stresses informality, organization minimalism, inclusiveness, intensive consultations leading to consensus and peaceful resolution of disputes’. But other ASEAN leaders and scholars may take a much more broad or narrow view of the term. Moreover, there is considerable room for doubt whether it has been upheld in practice. The ASEAN Way has been criticised as rhetoric and a hyperbole that ASEAN officials indulge in defensively to deflect attention from the grouping’s shortcomings in ensuring more substantive cooperation. It would be a fair assertion that while the ASEAN Way, especially the elements that refer to informalism and ad hocism, might have been true of intramural interactions during ASEAN’s formative years, it has been somewhat diluted in later years, especially in the 1990s. Moreover, it has been especially discredited following the outbreak of the regional economic crisis in 1997. With these caveats, however, the concept needs to be examined critically and in its historical context, as it provides an important part of the debates about Southeast Asian regionalism.

The origin of the term is obscure. Some of its early usages implied the close interpersonal ties among the ASEAN leaders. General Ali Moertopo, a senior intelligence official of Indonesia, was one of the first policy-makers in ASEAN to have used the term, when, in 1974, he argued that the success of ASEAN was due to ‘the system of consultations that has marked much of its work, what I may call the ASEAN Way of dealing with a variety of problems confronting its member nations’. He ascribed the ASEAN Way to ‘the fact that most of the leaders representing the ASEAN member countries for the past seven years or more of its existence have mostly been old friends who know one another so well’. Moertopo went on to criticise such an excessively personal approach (‘we cannot continue to rely on such a situation that cannot be possibly maintained over a long period of time’) and called for ‘efforts…towards further institutionalisation of regionalism in Southeast Asia’. Ironically, the basis for Moertopo’s criticism was subsequently recognised as a major strength of ASEAN.
Some scholars and policy-makers viewed the ASEAN Way as a by-product of cultural similarities among the ASEAN societies. In a recent commentary, Malaysia’s Mohamad Ghazali Shafie argued that ‘our common cultural heritage’, especially the *kampung* (village) spirit of ‘togetherness’, not only was a key factor behind secret Malaysia-Indonesia negotiations to end *Konfrontasi*, but also formed the basis of the establishment of ASEAN.41 Estrella Solidum, a Philippine scholar who is perhaps the first academic seriously to investigate the term, asserted that the ASEAN Way ‘consists of cultural elements which are found to be congruent with some values of each of the member states’.42 In reality, however, the ‘cultural’ underpinnings of the ASEAN Way of managing disputes and advancing security cooperation could be overstated. Several elements of the ASEAN Way are hardly different from the ordinary qualities of pragmatism and flexibility that are found in national decision-making styles in other cultural settings. Moreover, the so-called cultural underpinnings of the ASEAN Way are not fixed or static, but have been subject to continuous adjustment in response to national, regional and global developments.

The ASEAN Way is usually described as a decision-making process that features a high degree of consultation and consensus. It is a claim about the *process* of regional interactions and cooperation based on discreteness, informality, consensus building and non-confrontational bargaining styles which are often contrasted with the adversarial posturing, majority vote and other legalistic decision-making procedures in Western multilateral negotiations. Aspects of the ASEAN Way can be found in what Peter Boyce, an Australian scholar, once called the ‘distinctive and novel’ aspects of Southeast Asian styles and techniques of negotiations:

(1) a disposition to favour summit meetings, especially through the 1960s [this underscores the highly elitist nature of ASEAN decision-making process],
(2) a recourse to *musyawarah* principles and concepts in the conduct of high level conferences, (3) a preference for concealed and often ‘unofficial’ preliminary transactions by special agents prior to formal ministerial conferences, (4) a preference for *ad hoc* rather than institutionalized practices, (5) an avoidance of judicial or arbitration machinery for the settlement of disputes, (6) readiness to accept mediation or good offices from friendly third parties in the region, and (7) a tendency of at least three ASEAN members [Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines] to use the recall of an envoy or down-grading of a mission as a diplomatic practice.43

Of the many attributes and elements of the ASEAN Way, two are of particular importance. The first is the preference for informality and a related aversion to institutionalisation of cooperation. The first ever summit of ASEAN leaders did not take place until eight years after the grouping’s formation and there were only four summits in the first twenty-five years of ASEAN’s existence. (From 1992, ASEAN began holding a formal summit every three years and from 1996, ‘informal’ summits were held in between the official summits.) Until the
1990s, the ASEAN Secretariat was kept very small, and its head was called the Secretary-General of the ASEAN Secretariat, rather than the Secretary-General of ASEAN. A former secretary-general of the ASEAN Secretariat justified this situation by pointing out that it was ‘ economical not to have any kind of cumbersome and expensive bureaucratic body like the EEC commission’. As ASEAN evolved, the value of close interpersonal contacts among senior government officials came to be increasingly recognised. Carlos Romulo, the Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, was believed to have said: ‘I can pick up the telephone now and talk directly to Adam Malik [Indonesia’s Foreign Minister] or Rajaratnam [Singapore’s Foreign Minister]. We often find that private talks over breakfast prove more important than formal meetings.’ As for the latter, it was decided that most of the formal coordinating work in ASEAN would be handled by national ASEAN secretariats located within the foreign ministries of each member country, with the country hosting the annual ministerial meeting assuming the chair of the ASEAN Standing Committee. Managed by the foreign ministers, this vehicle has remained the most active and regularised framework of consultations and decision making in ASEAN.

Explaining the rationale behind the informal setting of ASEAN, Malaysia’s Prime Minister, Hussein Onn, observed at the 1976 Bali summit: ‘ASEAN has been able to absorb national differences because it is a relatively informal organization without rigid rules of procedure and without elaborate structural machinery’. For Mohamad Ghazalie Shafie of Malaysia, the very fact that the Bangkok Declaration was called a declaration and not a treaty (unlike the Treaty of Rome) was significant, because ‘treaty presupposes lack of trust’. Moreover, the word ‘association’ was meant to differentiate ASEAN from an ‘organisation’ and thereby convey a sense of looseness and informality. ASEAN’s founders believed that such informality was necessary in view of the diversity of views and positions held by the ASEAN members. Agerico Lacanlale, a Philippine scholar, has pointed out that ASEAN’s organisational set-up was:

- flexible enough to accommodate a diversity of interests without causing the collapse of the organization...it is the reluctance to commit themselves to rigid rules of conduct that seems to have strengthened ASEAN. The less the member states feel bound by certain rules, the more willing they are to consult with one another and adopt a common position on common concerns. The fact that the coercive element in their collective conduct is minimized means that joint decisions are arrived at out of free choice and in the spirit of consensus and cooperation.

The looseness and informality that marked ASEAN’s formative years became less apparent in the 1980s and 1990s. A proliferation of ministerial and bureaucratic consultations has covered an expanding range of issue areas. There are now numerous ASEAN-related meetings involving ministers, senior officials and parliamentarians coordinating policies in areas ranging from environment, through shipping traffic, to tourism. Indeed, every year, the grouping holds over
200 official meetings under its auspices, a ritual that has become a serious drain on the limited resources of new members like Vietnam and Laos. This has led one analyst to argue: ‘ASEAN today is one of the most extensively institutionalised regional associations’, with further institutionalisation likely as a result of membership expansion. Since 1995, as noted earlier, ASEAN summitry has become much more frequent. The Singapore summit in 1992 also decided to expand the secretariat, and upgrade the status of the secretary-general to cabinet rank, with the office redesignated the Secretary-General of ASEAN. Nonetheless, ASEAN has not developed an EU-style bureaucracy with supranational decision-making authority. The ASEAN Secretariat remains subordinate to national secretariats, and its work continues to be limited to economic and technical issues.

ASEAN has remained a loose and informal grouping in many other respects. J.N.Mak, a Malaysian scholar, has noted that the ASEAN dialogue process remains ‘unstructured, with no clear format for decision-making or implementation’ and often lacks a formal agenda; issues are negotiated on an ad hoc basis ‘as and when they arise’. While this may be somewhat overstating the case, the proponents of the ASEAN Way continue to acknowledge the virtues of looseness and informality in raising ‘the level of comfort’ among interlocutors and creating a flexible decision-making environment. This has been especially important to the development of security dialogues and cooperation not only within ASEAN, but also in the wider multilateral grouping in which ASEAN plays a crucial role, the ARE.

Rear Admiral R.M. Sunardi, a senior official in Indonesia’s Defence Ministry under President Suharto, once contrasted the ‘Southeast Asian way of enhancing security from that adopted by other sub-regions’ of the world. As he saw it, security cooperation in most other cases would be ‘framed in a formal structure’ because informality would be ‘considered improper for the sake of accountability’. He cited the example of confidence-building measures as a primary example of such a formal approach to security cooperation. Referring to the legalistic and mathematical nature of CBM regimes (which must be ‘tabulated’ and their ‘implementation’ schedule fixed in advance), Sunardi viewed them as being ‘quite a new concept’ in Southeast Asia. In his view, for Southeast Asians ‘to have confidence in another party does not prescribe any tabulation of what should be done, let alone a fixed schedule for implementation (sic).’

A related aspect of the ASEAN Way is the role of the so-called Track-Two dialogue and consultative mechanisms in formulating ideas and contributing to the policy debate. Although the idea of Track-Two is by no means unique to Southeast Asia (a Western example would be the Ditchley Park conferences in Britain), it has been quite significant to the evolution of ASEAN’s security role in the 1980s and 1990s. Track-Two processes are meetings (both bilateral as well as multilateral) sponsored by NGOs (usually think-tanks) that bear explicitly and directly on policy-relevant issues. Such mechanisms have two main characteristics. First, the think-tanks involved are, in most cases, closely linked to their respective national governments, and rely on government funding for
their academic and policy-relevant activities. As Stuart Harris puts it, Track-Two diplomacy is dependent ‘upon the consent, endorsement and commitment, often including financial commitment, of governments’. Second, these meetings feature participation by government officials alongside academics and other non-official actors, although officials usually participate in their private capacity. Although the participating officials seldom venture beyond the position of their respective governments, the principle of ‘private capacity’ enables governments to test new ideas without making binding commitments and, if necessary, back-track on positions.

ASEAN-ISIS, formally set up in 1988 (although the network of institutions comprising it had existed for some time), has played a pioneering role in the development of Track-Two mechanisms that supported official regionalism in ASEAN, especially in the regional security arena. It is the oldest Track-Two regional mechanism in Southeast Asia, and despite a proliferation of think-tanks dealing with a variety of issues (such as the Maritime Institute of Malaysia, the Institute of Policy Studies, Malaysia, and the Centre for Information and Development Studies, Jakarta) not affiliated with ASEAN-ISIS, those comprising the latter remain the most influential in policy circles. The official mission of ASEAN-ISIS is to ‘encourage cooperation and coordination of activities among policy-oriented ASEAN scholars and analysts, and to promote policy-oriented studies of, and exchanges of information and viewpoints on, various strategic and international issues affecting Southeast Asia’s and ASEAN’s peace, security and well-being’.

ASEAN’s tendency to limit institutionalisation has been particularly evident in the area of intra-ASEAN dispute settlement. As noted earlier, the very fact that the High Council provided under the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation has never been put to test (although, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, Indonesia raised the prospect of its use for settling its dispute with Malaysia over the Sipadan and Ligitan Islands in 1995) has been justified by ASEAN officials not as a failure of regionalism, but as a testimony to the ASEAN members’ ability to avoid serious confrontation without resort to formal measures. Indeed, in the mid-1980s, the head of a Malaysian think-tank pointed to ‘the intangible but real “spirit” of ASEAN’, in ‘sublimating and diffusing conflicts as in actually resolving them’. In reality, the High Council framework was at least premature. ASEAN remained, and remains, unwilling to put it to the test for formal intramural dispute settlement, even as two intra-ASEAN bilateral disputes between Malaysia and Singapore and Malaysia and Indonesia are now being referred to the International Court of Justice for formal adjudication (as will be discussed in Chapter 5).

Next to informality and aversion to formal institutions, the ASEAN Way is characterised by the concept and practice of consensus building. As Singapore’s Foreign Minister S.Dhanabalan put it in 1987: ‘We have avoided the obvious danger of majority decision-making…. We have relied on the principle of consensus, which has stood us in good stead for almost two decades. Although consensus building is considered to be a common feature of decision making in
many Asian societies, in the ASEAN context, the origin of the term is usually traced to a particular style of decision making within Javanese village society. This process has two related components: *musyawarah* (consultations) and *mufakat* (consensus).

As Herb Faith points out, decision making through *musyawarah* and *mufakat* is based on an understanding that

a leader should not act arbitrarily or impose his will, but rather make gentle suggestions of the path a community should follow, being careful always to consult all other participants fully and to take their views and feelings into consideration before delivering his synthesis conclusions.

*Musyawarah* may be viewed as a pre-negotiation stage of ‘intensive informal and discreet discussions that in the end bring out the general consensus of the community’.

During this stage, differences can be aired and the possibility of common ground ascertained before the issues are submitted to more formal official meetings. As Hoang puts it, during the informal pre-negotiations stage, ‘new positions, proposals or initiatives are floated for extensive consultation…so as to make sure that consensus on major issues could be reached at later formal discussions or negotiations’. This practice, Hoang, adds, excludes ‘the possibility of the majority imposing views on the minority’.

In a related vein, two Filipino scholars define *musyawarah* as ‘consultation on the basis of equality, tolerance and understanding with overtones of kinship and common interests’. In this view, *musyawarah* is a form of ‘soft diplomacy as contrasted to sabre-rattling, gunboat diplomacy of the colonial and Big Power variety’. Thus, an important aspect of the consensus-building process is the psychological setting of consultations, which must be non-hostile. Even before the formation of ASEAN, Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, Dr Subiandro, had contended that negotiations in the *musyawarah* and *mufakat* would take place ‘not as between opponents but as between friends and brothers’. Mak Joon Num notes that in the ASEAN context, consensus means searching for ‘an amalgamation of the most acceptable views of each and every member’ in a socio-psychological setting in which ‘all parties have power over each other’.

Sensitive handling of intra-mural differences is a hallmark of consensus building. While parties can debate and disagree on the merit of a particular position behind closed doors, they must refrain from airing these differences in public. Even in situations where ASEAN members find it impossible to arrive at a common position, they must speak and act as though a certain level of unity has been achieved on that particular issue. This means a tendency to play down or give a positive spin to intra-mural differences. A great deal of care must be taken not to isolate or embarrass any individual ASEAN member in international fora. Even when an ASEAN member has advanced a position that is not acceptable to other members, the latter will refrain from acting in ways that may make the latter ‘lose face’ publicly.

The idea of consensus is not an abstract notion, but was conceived as a
pragmatic way of advancing regional economic and political cooperation in Southeast Asia. For example, the concept was initially applied to overcome hesitancy and indifference among the ASEAN members towards intra-ASEAN economic cooperation, including ASEAN industrial joint ventures and tariff reductions. As Lee Kuan Yew observed in the context of ASEAN economic cooperation (at a time when ASEAN consisted of only five members: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore): ‘When four agree [to a certain scheme] and one does not, this can still be considered as consensus and the five-minus-one scheme can benefit the participating four without damaging the remaining one.’ In this context, consensus building was seen as a way of advancing regional cooperation schemes despite the reluctance of some of the members to participate in it. Lee Kuan Yew described the process in the following terms:

So long as members who are not yet ready to participate are not damaged by non-participation, nor excluded from future participation, the power of veto need not be exercised...when four agree and one does not object, this can still be considered a consensus, and the four should proceed with a new regional scheme.

Consensus as understood in the ASEAN context is not to be confused with unanimity. Rather, it represents a commitment to finding a ‘way of moving forward by establishing what seems to have broad support’. In a consensus situation, ‘not everyone would always be comfortable’, but they tend to ‘go along so long as their basic interests were not disregarded’. Although the understanding that consensus need not involve unanimity imparts a great degree of flexibility to decision making at the national and international level, it is also clear that ASEAN-style consensus may be of limited effectiveness in dealing with issues that engage fundamental national interests, including issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a former secretary-general of the ASEAN Secretariat put it, ‘[t]he principle of consensus in decision-making is a safety device to assure member states that their national interests will not be compromised and nothing can be done against their will’. Moreover, a consensus approach runs the risk of becoming ‘a process of determining the realistically achievable objectives given the limits imposed by each member-country’s interests’. Bilson Kurus argues that ASEAN’s practice of consensus means that ‘each and every action taken in the name of ASEAN must either contribute to or be neutral, but not detract from, the perceived national interests of the individual ASEAN member states’. In this sense, the ASEAN Way may be described as a pragmatic and highly deliberate attempt to gloss over national differences that could not be reconciled within a multilateral framework.

In its Javanese conception, the art of forging a consensus requires the strong guiding hand of a village elder. This leads to the question whether, at the regional level, such leadership could be available or desirable.
the ASEAN Way has been criticised for creating a tendency to filter out or exclude contentious issues from the formal multilateral agenda. It is geared more towards conflict avoidance rather than conflict resolution and has led to conflicts being ‘swept under the carpet’. This may be helpful in distracting attention from a dispute and buying more time for its final settlement, but critics have found it to be of limited value as conflicts may reappear in the future.

The consensus approach stresses the need for a non-threatening multilateral setting, guided by a shared commitment to moderation and accommodation. This may create enough goodwill among the participants to encourage self-restrained political and military behaviour, based on ‘feelings of brotherhood and kinship’. ASEAN’s practice of not bringing sensitive issues to the multilateral agenda does not mean that multilateralism has been irrelevant to conflict resolution. It means that multilateralism was viewed by its members not as a legal or formal framework for interactions, but as creating a conducive socio-psychological setting for intra-mural problem solving. Jorgensen-Dahl captures this aspect of ASEAN multilateralism:

ASEAN served a useful purpose by providing a framework within which the parties could discuss their differences in a ‘neutral’ atmosphere…. The multilateral framework allowed the parties to remain in contact in circumstances which either had caused a collapse of bilateral channels or placed these channels under such stress that they could no longer function properly…. Through the steadily increasing scope and range of its activities… it produced among government officials of the five, attitudes which were much more receptive and sensitive to each other’s peculiar problems, and which made compromise solutions to conflicting interests a much more likely outcome than before…the multilateral setting served to discourage extreme behaviour, modify extravagant demands, and inspire compromise.

The avoidance of sensitive issues on the multilateral agenda by the ASEAN members was also partly due to a recognition that such issues were better dealt with at the bilateral level. Thus, throughout the existence of ASEAN, many issues that are deemed too complicated and sensitive to be placed on the multilateral agenda have been deliberately left to bilateral channels. (As will be discussed in Chapter 5, some ASEAN members opposed a policy of ‘flexible engagement’, or open discussion of sensitive domestic and bilateral issues at the ASEAN level, on the ground that this would lead to escalation and regionalisation of tensions.) While Western theories of multilateralism have viewed the two as mutually incompatible, in the case of ASEAN, bilateralism has served as a basic building block of multilateralism.
Norms and identity in ASEAN’s evolution

Norms clearly had a major impact on the making of ASEAN regionalism. Speaking in 1985, Musa Hitam, a former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, argued:

Because of ASEAN, we have been able to establish the fundamental ground rules for the game of peace and amity between us all. What are these fundamental ground rules? First, the principle of strict non-interference in each other’s internal affairs. Second, the principle of pacific settlement of disputes. Third, respect for each other’s independence. Fourth, strict respect for the territorial integrity of each of the ASEAN states. The ASEAN states have declared these ground rules...we have enacted them, we have imbibed them, and most important, we have acted and lived by them.81

Norms also played a central role in the development of a nascent regional identity sought by ASEAN. Identity had been a concern of Southeast Asian leaders even before the creation of ASEAN. While some of the leaders of the countries that eventually formed ASEAN did take part in efforts to develop pan-Asian unity undertaken by Prime Minister Nehru of India, or Afro-Asian unity championed by President Sukarno of Indonesia, they also believed that Southeast Asia should have a distinctive place in the Asian regional order and therefore an identity of its own.82 The idea of a distinctively Southeast Asian grouping had been raised by Aung San of Burma before his assassination in July 1947.83 The creation of ASEAN reflected a new quest for regional identity building. The Declaration of ASEAN Concord adopted at ASEAN’s first ever summit, held in Bali in 1976, urged member states to ‘vigorously develop an awareness of regional identity and exert all efforts to create a strong ASEAN community’.84 Similarly, while the ASEAN Bangkok Declaration of 1967 had assured its members that the grouping would ‘preserve their national identities’, founding Foreign Minister S.Rajaratnam of Singapore argued that this objective needed to be reconciled with the development of a ‘regional existence’. In his view, the success of ASEAN depended on ‘a new way of thinking about our problems’. Since the ASEAN member states had been used to viewing (intra-mural) problems from the perspective of their national interests or existence, the shift to a ‘regional existence means painful adjustments to those practices and thinking in our respective countries.’85 Rajaratnam’s words would indicate an interest on the part of ASEAN’s founders to develop an important aspect of community building, what Solidum would later call ‘the growth of regional ways of thinking, doing and valuing’.86

While identity is sometimes thought of in terms of its traditional cultural roots, it may be argued that the concept of an ASEAN identity was to be derived substantively from its socialisation process. The ASEAN Way itself resulted not so much from preordained cultural sources, Javanese or otherwise, but from incremental socialisation. 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. Thus, in the case of ASEAN, it was not so much that culture created norms, norms also created culture. As Malaysia's Foreign Minister, Abdullah Badawi, would put it later, ASEAN’s ‘norms have become very much part of the ASEAN culture’. Among these norms were both legal-rational and socio-cultural varieties, the latter including those associated with the ASEAN Way.

Yet, as noted earlier, the norms of ASEAN, including those associated with the ASEAN Way, were not always upheld in practice. As discussed in subsequent chapters, there would be several instances where individual ASEAN members failed to consult their fellow members. Moreover, the practice of consensus seeking would not always produce decisions and agreements acceptable to all members. Although the features of the ASEAN Way might have been crucial in the formative years, where a common fear of domestic insurgency and Vietnamese expansionism helped shape intra-ASEAN unity, they became less important later as the challenges to regional stability have become much more complex and indeterminate. Intra-ASEAN interactions have become progressively more regularised with frequent summits and a large number of regular meetings over a broad range of functional issues. There would be a tendency towards legalism in ASEAN and a willingness to resort to formal procedures, evident in the decision of members to resort to international judicial arbitration to settle their bilateral disputes in the 1990s. With the expansion of its membership, ASEAN would face additional uncertainty as to whether the new members could be socialised into the ASEAN Way.

Many of these difficulties faced by ASEAN in ensuring compliance to its norms and developing common approaches to regional problems would be evident in its handling of Vietnam’s invasion and occupation of Cambodia on 25 December 1978. The event not only represented the most serious threat to regional order that ASEAN was trying to manage, it also severely tested ASEAN’s unity and purpose, as the examination of ASEAN’s response to the Cambodia conflict in the following chapter would show.

Notes and references

3 The Text of Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967, ibid., p. 86.
4 Text of Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 27 November 1971, ibid., p. 90.
7 Lee Kuan Yew quoted in *Straits Times*, 11 May 1975.
8 *Straits Times*, 7 February 1976.
9 *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 18 March 1978.
19 *Straits Times*, 6 February 1976.
21 Singapore’s Foreign Minister, S.Jayakumar, reported in the *Straits Times*, 25 July 1997, p. 29.
24 Jusuf Wanandi, ‘Security Issues in the ASEAN Region,’ in Karl D.Jackson and M. Hadi Soesastro (eds), *ASEAN Security and Economic Development*, Research Papers and Policy Studies no. 11 (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1984), p. 305. The idea that regional resilience would automatically result from the achievement of national resilience by all ASEAN members may be questioned. A more accurate interpretation of the Indonesian concept is that regional resilience can only come about with the help of cooperation through ASEAN in addition to the realisation of national resilience by all its members.
26 This stance was broken only in February 1986 with a statement calling upon Philippine leaders to resolve their differences peacefully. The wording of the statement is revealing:

As member states of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, have followed with increasing concern the trend of events following the presidential elections in the Philippines.
A critical situation has emerged which portends bloodshed and civil war. The crisis can be resolved without widespread carnage and political turmoil. We call on all parties to restore national unity and solidarity so as to maintain national resilience.

There is still time to act with restraint and bring about peaceful resolution. We hope that all Filippino leaders will join efforts to pave the way for a peaceful solution to the crisis.


Whether the statement constituted official ASEAN policy may be contested, since its signatories did not include, for obvious reasons, the foreign minister of the Philippines. But it went as far as ASEAN could go in commenting on the domestic affairs of a member state. It is also important to note that the statement not only did not mention any persons or parties by name, but was also decidedly non-committal about the direction in which the Philippine situation might evolve. Although this statement may be viewed as a way of urging (rather than warning) Marcos to refrain from a bloody suppression of the demonstrations, it may also be interpreted as an indication of ASEAN’s willingness to accept Marcos if he was able to restore political order and secure his own position as head of the government.

27 The Other Side of the Summit (Manila: Department of Foreign Affairs, no date).
29 Frank Frost, ‘The Origins and Evolution of ASEAN’, World Review, vol. 19, no. 3 (August 1980), p. 10; Tim Huxley, The ASEAN States’ Defence Policies, 1975–81: Military Response to Indochina?, Working Paper no. 88 (Canberra: Australian National University, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1986), p. 52. See also: Straits Times, 10 February 1976. An indication of Indonesia’s interest in greater ASEAN military cooperation was the composition of the Indonesian delegation to the pre-summit meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers at Pattaya. The Indonesian delegation included at least four senior military and intelligence officers. Also important was the timing of a strong statement by Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik on the Chinese threat to the region. Just prior to the Pattaya meeting, Malik criticised the complacency that he sensed in the attitude of his ASEAN partners, especially Thailand, towards China. His statement was seen as an attempt to put defence and security at the top of the Bali summit agenda. Straits Times, 22 December 1975; 7 February 1976; 10 February 1976; 12 February 1976.
30 New Straits Times, 1 April 1976.
34 New Straits Times, 17 September 1982.
37 For example, while the ‘ASEAN Way’ usually refers to a particular style of decision making, some scholars have defined it as a combination of both norms and style. Noordin Sopiee provides an elaborate list of thirteen principles which he claims to
be the core principles of the ASEAN Way: (1) rejection of internal and external collective military pacts; (2) rejection of emphasis on peace through military deterrence; (3) the advocacy and practice of ‘true peace’ measures: the building of confidence, trust, predictability, goodwill and friendship, national resilience, a rich web of productive and warm bilateral relations; (4) the principle of actively seeking and maximising solidarity, common ground, agreement and harmony; (5) the principle of sensitivity; politeness, non-confrontation and agreeability, emphasising ‘the ability to agree to disagree without being disagreeable’; (6) the principle of decision making by consensus; (7) the principle of mutual caring; (8) the principle of respect for territorial integrity; (9) the principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs; (10) preference for quiet diplomacy and aversion to excessive public washing of dirty linen and diplomacy through the media and mass mobilisation; (11) the principle of pragmatism; (12) the preference for content rather than form, substance rather than process, non-addiction to Cartesian [approaches] and to legalism; (13) the principle of egalitarianism. While repetitive and in some cases debatable (e.g. many analysts would contest principle 12, which says that ASEAN prefers substance over process; indeed, the ASEAN experience seems to emphasise the ‘process over the product’), this is a useful list of the most salient aspects of the ASEAN Way, incorporating both norms and style. Noordin Sopiee, ‘ASEAN Towards 2020: Strategic Goals and Critical Pathways’, Paper presented to the 2nd ASEAN Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 20–23 July 1997, p. 9.

39 Ibid., p. 16.
40 Ibid., p. 16.
42 Solidum identifies three sources of the ASEAN Way: (1) the organisational structure and procedures of ASEAN; (2) principles adopted from earlier regional attempts at cooperation; and (3) known cultural similarities. She defines culture as:

an organized group of learned responses of a particular society. Culture represents an integration of past experiences, and forms a configuration of parts which are to some degree interrelated. Culture consists of social integration, adjustment of traits comprising a way of life, ethos on how life should be lived, and social relationships such as drinking together, worshipping in common, organizations, organic solidarity and desire to stay together.

43 Peter Boyce, ‘The Machinery of Southeast Asian Regional Diplomacy’, in Lau Teik Soon (ed.), New Directions in the International Relations of Southeast Asia: Global Powers and Southeast Asia (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1973), p. 175. The first of these features, a disposition to summitry, may seem to go against what many think to be another key aspect of the ASEAN Way—aversion to institutionalisation. But until the 1990s, ASEAN summits had been an irregular and informal affair. Mere gathering of leaders/officials should not be confused with ‘institutionalisation’ as the latter involves a degree of bureaucratisation and resort to formal procedures and mechanisms.
Constructing a security community in SE Asia


46 Michael Leifer’s study of ASEAN’s evolution provides several examples of the ASEAN members’ reluctance to create elaborate institutional mechanisms. The rejection of the EC model of a central permanent bureaucracy was evident from the very outset when ASEAN’s founding Bangkok Declaration provided for no such body and instead decreed the creation of national secretariats located within the foreign ministries of member states to ‘carry out the work of the Association on behalf of that country’ and to service various ASEAN ministerial and committee meetings. Even the meeting of the foreign ministers (called ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, or AMM), the top managerial body of ASEAN, was initially supposed ‘to be convened as required’, although it did become an annual event with the exception of 1970. There was no provision in the Bangkok Declaration for meetings of ASEAN heads of government. The first summit was held in Bali in 1976, where it was decided that further such meetings would be held ‘as and when necessary’. While a second summit was held in 1977 in Kuala Lumpur, the third summit could not be held until 1987. This was due to an understanding that the third summit should be held in Manila, but the continuing dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah had made Malaysian participation in such a meeting unlikely, thereby delaying the event. In Manila, the ASEAN leaders decided to hold summits every three to five years, but only if ‘necessary’. Another important ASEAN institution is the Senior Officials Meeting (ASEAN-SOM), comprising the permanent heads of the member states’ foreign ministries. This is where much of the initial consultations and consensus building in ASEAN usually takes place; the annual meeting of the foreign ministers usually endorses the recommendations of the SOM. Despite its importance, the SOM process was not formally recognised in ASEAN’s institutional structure. Further indication of ASEAN’s aversion to a permanent, supranational bureaucracy can be found in the role of the ASEAN Standing Committee. The Committee consists of the foreign minister of the state due to host the annual ministerial meeting plus the resident ambassadors and high commissioners of the other member states. As such, it has to be reconstituted every year. An ASEAN Secretariat was established in Jakarta in 1976 as a permanent body, but its responsibilities were confined to overseeing economic and technical cooperation, and its secretary-general was made subordinate to the Standing Committee. The secretary-general was not given the authority to represent ASEAN in dealings with non-member governments. Moreover, the ASEAN Secretariat had no authority over national ASEAN secretariats. An ASEAN task force set up by the foreign ministers in 1982 recommended several measures to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat incorporating aspects of the institutional experience of the EC. But these recommendations were rejected by the ministers in 1984, except minor increases in staff strength and budget. Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 24–28. (It should be noted that no major change in the institutional apparatus of ASEAN was made until the fourth ASEAN summit in Singapore in January 1992, and even then the main change was in the area of staff strength and the status or the secretary-general, rather than the role and authority of the ASEAN bureaucracy.)

ASEAN norms and the ‘ASEAN Way’


51 As Chin Kin Wah points out, following the Singapore summit, the ASEAN Secretariat moved to acquire more openly recruited staff, in contrast to the previous practice of being served by nationally seconded staff. The total staff strength more than doubled from the pre-1993 figure of fourteen nationally seconded staff. In addition to the secretary-general, ASEAN has a deputy secretary-general, five bureau directors overseeing general affairs, economic cooperation, functional cooperation, ASEAN cooperation and dialogue relations, and the AFTA Unit. The number of assistant directors increased from ten in 1994 to sixteen in 1997. Ibid., p. 7.


55 According to Jusuf Wanandi, Track-Two networking ‘is basically a nongovernmental academic activity, where government officials also participate in private capacity. This brings official input but also flexible and free discussion in the networking.’ Jusuf Wanandi, ‘The Regional Role of “Track-Two” Diplomacy: ASEAN, ARF, and CSCAP’, in Hadi Soesastro and Anthony Bergin (eds), The Role of Security and Economic Cooperation Structures in the Asia Pacific Region (Jakarta: CSIS, 1996), p. 152. Note that this definition overstates the ‘academic’ nature of the discussions and does not mention the involvement of the private sector, which has been crucial to Track-Two processes such as PECC (Pacific Economic Cooperation Council) dealing with regional economic cooperation.

56 The original members of the ASEAN-ISIS group included: Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Jakarta); Singapore Institute of International Affairs; Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Kuala Lumpur); Institute for Security and International Studies (Bangkok); and Centre for Integrative and Development Studies (Manila; subsequently, the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, under the same director, took over the membership of ASEAN-ISIS). Brunei subsequently participated through officials of its foreign ministry. Of the ASEAN-ISIS members, ISIS-Bangkok is university based (Chulalongkorn University) while ISDS-Manila, though with the significant participation of faculty at the University of the Philippines, is not formally part of the university. The CSIS in Jakarta used to have closer connections with the military than with the foreign ministry, as well as the private sector, from which it receives funding. In the wake of ASEAN’s expansion, ASEAN-ISIS gained two new members, the Institute of International Relations, an arm of the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, and the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (more loosely tied to the government than its counterpart in Hanoi). Burmese and Laotian participation was expected following their admission to ASEAN in 1997.
It should be noted that some of these think-tanks have been very creative in suggesting ideas of regional cooperation that goes beyond the pro-sovereignty stance of their ASEAN-ISIS counterparts. MIMA developed an unofficial arms register for Southeast Asia, an important confidence-building measure, while the Institute of Policy Studies, a think-tank allied to the then Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, prepared the groundwork for Anwar’s idea of ‘constructive intervention’. On the MIMA register, see: Bates Gill, J.N. Mak and Siemon Wezeman, *ASEAN Arms Acquisitions: Developing Transparency* (Kuala Lumpur: Maritime Institute of Malaysia, 1995). On constructive intervention, see: Anwar Ibrahim, ‘Crisis Prevention’, *Newsweek*, 21 July 1997, p. 13, and Abdul Rahman Adnan, ‘Asean Turns to “Constructive Intervention”’, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 30 September 1997, p. 10.


In reality, what might have really contributed to the lack of need to invoke the High Council is the existence of direct bilateral mechanisms and avenues for negotiation, including the previously discussed joint border committees. Moreover, high-level bilateral channels have been used to diffuse interstate disputes, such as the Philippine-Malaysia, Indonesia-Malaysia and Thailand-Malaysia territorial disputes, with the Sabah dispute providing a rare example of successful informal third-party mediation (by Indonesia in May 1969).


Anh Tuan Hoang, ‘ASEAN Dispute Management: Implications for Vietnam and an Expanded ASEAN’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 18, no. 1 (June 1996), p. 67. It should be noted that musyawarah and mufakat are highly elitist processes. As an Indonesia scholar puts it, such decision making is ‘not really a democratic process because decisions are made first, and then people are told about it’. Comments by Dr Almin Siregar at the ASEAN Inter-University Seminar of Social Development, Pekan Baru, Sumatra, Indonesia, 16–19 June 1997.


Cited in the *Straits Times*, 13 November 1994, p. 17.

Cited in the *Straits Times*, 13 November 1994, p. 17.
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Lucian Pye has provided an interesting description of the consensus building in Javanese society:

"In Indonesian villages the process of consensus is wonderful to watch: young hotbloods will expound their views with dramatic passion, the middle-aged will strive to hit the right note so as to suggest wisdom, and then, without the slightest hint that closure might be at hand, an elder will calmly define what the consensus is and deliberations will cease."


Pushpa Thambipillai and Johan Saravanmuttu, ASEAN Negotiations: Two Insights (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985).


Keynote address by Datuk Musa Hitam delivered at the East-West Conference on ASEAN and the Pacific Basin, Honolulu, 29 October 1985, pp. 5–6.

Abu Hanifa, one of the Indonesian representatives to the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi convened by Nehru in 1947, wrote later that the idea of a wholly Southeast Asian grouping was conceived at the conference in response to the belief among the Southeast Asian delegates that the larger states, India and China, could not be expected to support their nationalist cause. At the meeting, delegates from Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia: ‘debated, talked, and planned a Southeast Asian Association closely cooperating first in cultural and economic matters. Later, there could be perhaps a more closely knit political cooperation. Some of us even dreamt of a Greater Southeast Asia, a federation.’ Cited in Christopher E. Goscha, Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of Vietnamese Revolution, 1885–1954 (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), p. 255.


Keynote address by Haji Abdullah bin Haji Abdullah Badawi, Foreign Minister of Malaysia, at the 2nd ASEAN Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 20–23 July 1997.
3 ASEAN and the Cambodia conflict

A regional solution to a regional problem?

The invasion and the decade-long occupation of Cambodia by Vietnamese forces from December 1978 posed the most serious security challenge to ASEAN since its inception. Not only did ASEAN see Vietnam’s action as a blatant violation of its norms, but the Cambodia conflict also tested intra-ASEAN relations, thereby threatening its emerging culture of unity and consensus. Differences among ASEAN members as to how to deal with the conflict challenged ASEAN’s professed role in the peaceful settlement of regional disputes without interference by outside powers. This chapter reviews ASEAN’s role in the Cambodia conflict with the particular purpose of ascertaining the extent to which it contributed to the consolidation of ASEAN’s norms and conformed to its professed goal of providing a ‘regional solution to the region’s problems’.

ASEAN’s normative stakes in the Third Indochina War

Norms helped to define ASEAN’s stake in the Cambodia conflict. In a strict sense the invasion and the ensuing crisis was outside of its framework of seeking a peaceful settlement of regional conflicts: neither Vietnam nor Cambodia were members of ASEAN. For a number of reasons, however, it was of serious and urgent concern to ASEAN. First, ASEAN had for some time considered the possibility of including Vietnam (as well as Laos and Cambodia) within its fold. Its governments had hoped that Vietnam would accept its vision of regional order and adhere to ASEAN’s norms of interstate behaviour even if it did not accept formal membership. Despite past criticisms of ASEAN as a front for Western imperialism, in 1978 Vietnam had raised hopes of a constructive relationship through a brief but visible diplomatic effort to cultivate ASEAN’s goodwill. Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in the same year was a setback to ASEAN’s framework for regional order, which had aspired to a partnership with Indochina. The military action taken by Vietnam to overthrow Pol Pot’s regime and install a puppet alternative also violated ASEAN doctrine of non-interference and non-use of force in interstate relations. Furthermore, Vietnam’s action was a serious blow to ASEAN’s norm of regional autonomy. The conflict over Cambodia precipitated by Vietnam’s intervention was, from ASEAN’s point of view, not just a local conflict but
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engaged much broader Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-Soviet and US-Soviet rivalries. Because of strong Soviet backing for Vietnam and militant Chinese opposition to the invasion (including a punitive attack on Vietnam in February/March 1979), ASEAN saw Vietnam’s action as dashing its hopes for a reduced Great Power role in Southeast Asia. Instead, it marked the beginning of a period of heightened Great Power rivalry with Sino-Vietnamese confrontation aggravating an existing Sino-Soviet rivalry.

ASEAN’s norm of no military pacts within the grouping was also challenged by Vietnam’s action. This norm was under pressure as the ASEAN members perceived a direct military threat to one of their number from the instability in Indochina. The removal of Cambodia as a buffer between Vietnam and Thailand and cross-border operations into Thailand by Vietnamese forces against Khmer resistance guerrillas made Thailand the ‘frontline’ state of ASEAN. The exodus of ethnic-Chinese refugees from Indochina to their shores was also seen by Malaysia and Indonesia as highly destabilising of their delicate social and demographic balances, leading to calls within ASEAN for some form of collective military response to Vietnam.

Norms not only shaped ASEAN’s perception of the crisis, but also formed the basis of its response to it. In their first collective response to the crisis issued on 9 January 1979, ASEAN’s foreign ministers urged all countries in the region to ‘respect each other’s independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political system’. They also asked all sides to ‘refrain…from interfering in each other’s internal affairs, and from carrying out subversive activities, directly or indirectly, against each other’.2 ASEAN’s response to the crisis was consistent with ASEAN’s key norms and included the following objectives:

- to deny legitimacy to the Vietnamese-installed Phnom Penh government;
- to ensure the international isolation of Vietnam;
- to secure the unconditional withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia;
- to prevent Vietnamese encroachment into Thailand;
- to ensure a peaceful, neutral and democratic Cambodia; and
- to ensure ASEAN’s leadership in the peace process so that the eventual settlement would protect ASEAN’s security interests and would not be completely dictated by outside powers.3

While norms influenced ASEAN’s objectives, they did not produce a consensus over the means to achieve them. ASEAN’s decade-long involvement in Cambodian peacemaking was to be marked by a tension between two approaches. One was a diplomacy of accommodation that sought to address the conflict within an essentially regional framework in which the role of external powers would be kept to a minimum. This approach was favoured by Indonesia and Malaysia and was fully consistent with ASEAN’s norm of regional solutions for regional problems, with minimal intervention by outside powers. The other was a strategy of confrontation, the objective of which was to seek Vietnam’s isolation from the international community and raise the diplomatic and military costs of
its occupation of Cambodia. The latter strategy, identified with Thailand and Singapore, involved organising a resistance coalition front against Vietnam, as well as occasional proposals for intra-ASEAN military cooperation, thereby drawing ASEAN closer to a violation of its norm against military pacts. It also meant seeking close and direct backing from the major external powers, thereby compromising the norm of regional autonomy. Moreover, as these two approaches were often in conflict, they threatened ASEAN’s norm of consultations and consensus through the Cambodia conflict.

Regional autonomy versus dependence on outside powers

The formidable challenge facing ASEAN in seeking a political settlement to the Cambodian conflict within a regional framework that would uphold its norms was evident, first and foremost, in the difficulty experienced in getting the various parties directly or indirectly involved to agree to a suitable negotiating forum. The disagreement was shaped by the conflicting interpretations of the causes of the conflict held by the two opposing camps: Vietnam and the regime it installed in Phnom Penh (which had renamed the country the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, or PRK) on the one hand, and the combination of ASEAN, China and the Cambodian resistance factions on the other. Vietnam had presented the conflict as a domestic power struggle between rival Cambodian factions, the outcome of which had been the overthrow of the genocidal Pol Pot regime by a Cambodian ‘salvation’ front. Hanoi’s deployment of troops to Cambodia to sustain the Heng Samrin government in power was justified under the terms of a subsequent 1979 security treaty. Hanoi acknowledged the wider geopolitical dimensions of the Cambodia situation, if only to justify its invasion as a defensive move to counter the threat of Chinese expansionism. However, Hanoi rejected the view that it was a direct party to the Cambodia conflict and insisted that the withdrawal of its troops required the prior request of the Heng Samrin regime, the sole legitimate Cambodian government. Further, such withdrawal would only be possible after the Chinese threat had receded.

Such a presentation of the conflict shaped Hanoi’s attitude towards peace negotiations. According to Hanoi, the situation in Cambodia, i.e. the rule of the Heng Samrin regime, was ‘irreversible’ and hence non-negotiable. However, if the regional countries, especially Thailand and other ASEAN states, felt threatened by developments in Cambodia, then this could be addressed by direct talks between Bangkok and Phnom Penh. Vietnam would also be willing to participate in direct talks with the ASEAN states to discuss Thai security concerns within the framework of ASEAN’s professed regional security formula, the ZOPFAN. But since Hanoi did not view itself as a direct party to the civil war in Cambodia, it would not submit to the authority of an international forum, including a 1981 UN-sponsored international conference on Cambodia that it had boycotted.
Vietnam’s position was clearly articulated in a four-point proposal that emerged at the end of a conference of foreign ministers of the three Indochinese states, held in Vientiane on 17–18 July 1980. The proposal, made in the name of the Cambodian government (PRK), was purportedly addressed to the problem of Thai-Cambodian border tensions. It presented the worsening regional situation as one requiring a mutual understanding between ASEAN and the Indochinese states that would entail acceptance by the two sides of each other’s ‘legitimate security interests’. It proposed, among other things, the creation of a demilitarised zone along the Thai-Cambodian border to be supervised by a joint commission and discussions between the two countries to resolve other ‘relevant’ issues of mutual concern, to be confirmed ‘by an international conference or by some form of international guarantee’. The proposal was prefaced by a reference to an earlier offer, made in January 1980 by the Indochinese foreign ministers, expressing a willingness to sign non-aggression treaties with Thailand and other ASEAN countries. On 25 September 1980, Vietnam and PRK confirmed their rejection of the idea of an international conference on Cambodia as put forward by ASEAN that would include all the belligerent parties. Instead, Hanoi tried to persuade Thailand to accept a limited withdrawal of its forces to be decided by Hanoi and Phnom Penh.

Vietnam’s presentation of the Cambodia situation conflicted sharply with the view held by the ASEAN states. To the latter, the central issue in the Cambodia conflict was Vietnam’s invasion, rather than a domestic power struggle among the Cambodian factions, as Hanoi would have liked the international community to believe. In responding to Vietnam’s invasion, therefore, the immediate priority of ASEAN was to deny Vietnam a fait accompli in Cambodia. If Vietnam’s action went unopposed politically, it could have created a dangerous precedent. ASEAN focused on denying recognition and legitimacy to the Heng Samrin government, to mobilise support for Pol Pot’s Democratic Kampuchea (DK), which had been overthrown by Hanoi, and to ensure Hanoi’s international isolation both diplomatically and economically. Moreover, ASEAN held that any meaningful negotiation to settle the conflict had to have as its main focus the unconditional withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia.

Despite its seemingly hardline stance, ASEAN also had to show that it was serious about its professed norm of the peaceful settlement of disputes. Thus, even as it sought to isolate Hanoi internationally, ASEAN had to come up with a framework for negotiations with Vietnam. In order to facilitate a solution, the ASEAN states were willing to accept a phased, rather than immediate withdrawal. Indonesia and Malaysia were not entirely opposed to a partial withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia pending a political settlement over the crucial issue of power sharing among the Cambodian factions. This position carried the implication that if such a settlement were not to be achieved, Vietnamese forces could remain as a guarantor of the Heng Samrin faction. But ASEAN also insisted that any negotiations to settle the Cambodia conflict had to focus on Hanoi’s invasion, and that such negotiations could best be conducted within the framework of an international conference. From the outset, ASEAN had
focused its diplomatic energies at the UN, mobilising the international censure of Hanoi and securing approval for an International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK). At the same time, it rejected Hanoi’s stated willingness to carry out limited troop withdrawals from the Thai-Cambodian border and its offer of talks between Bangkok and the PRK regime or a dialogue between the ASEAN and the Indochina states to discuss mutual security concerns. In ASEAN’s view, such a bilateral or regional dialogue would be tantamount to accepting Vietnam’s invasion and the legitimisation of the illegal PRK regime. A related factor was the suspicion that Hanoi would use any ASEAN-Indochina conference to divert attention from its military occupation of Cambodia by raising the issue of China’s strategic ambitions and role in the region, an issue on which ASEAN remained divided. To this end, ASEAN was willing to rely on an international conference, rather than settle for a diplomatic process consistent with its norm of regional autonomy.

The tension between a regionalist approach and one that sought to internationalise the conflict with a view to isolate and punish Vietnam with the help of China, the USA and the international community was to plague ASEAN’s diplomacy on the Cambodia conflict for a long time. The regionalist approach was favoured most by Malaysia and Indonesia, for reasons described below, and was most clearly represented in the so-called Kuantan Doctrine (also known as the Kuantan principle), jointly enunciated by the President of Indonesia and the Prime Minister of Malaysia at a meeting in the Malaysian town of Kuantan on 26–28 March 1980. The Kuantan Doctrine contained elements of a possible trade-off between the security interests of Vietnam and those of ASEAN as defined by Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta. Accordingly, Vietnam was to heed the latter’s desire to see an end to its dependence on the Soviet Union in exchange for a recognition by ASEAN of Vietnam’s security interests in Indochina enshrined into a political settlement of the Cambodia conflict.

As such, the Kuantan Doctrine was clearly consistent with ASEAN’s norm of regional autonomy. It reflected the concerns of two key ASEAN members, Indonesia and Malaysia, that the conflict in Cambodia, if unresolved, would become a grave threat to the security of all regional states. In particular, the conflict could aggravate the domestic instability of Thailand, which was already threatened by a massive refugee influx and subjected to repeated threats by Hanoi and the PRK for providing sanctuary for the Cambodian resistance guerrillas. But more importantly, it could pave the way for unwelcome Great Power meddling, especially Chinese, in Southeast Asian affairs, especially in the wake of the belligerent Chinese response to the crisis in the form of a military offensive against Vietnam in February/March 1979.

The Kuantan Doctrine reflected an intra-ASEAN divide. Malaysia and Indonesia held the view that China posed the real long-term threat to Southeast Asia, and that Vietnam could be a bulwark against Chinese expansionism. This view conflicted with the strategic perspectives of Singapore and Thailand, both identified with the so-called ‘hardline’ camp within ASEAN, which saw Vietnam backed by the Soviet Union as the main threat to regional peace and security.
The Kuantan Doctrine proved unacceptable to Thailand, whose security it was intended to strengthen. In rejecting the formula, Thailand pointed out that in view of Vietnam’s refusal to withdraw troops from Cambodia, any concession to Hanoi by ASEAN, such as recognition of its security interests in Indochina, would be ill-timed. Singapore described the Kuantan principle as a ‘bad mistake’. The principle was to suffer an early demise, as indicated by the response of the ASEAN foreign ministers to the border crossing by Vietnamese troops into Thai territory on 23 June 1980 in hot pursuit of Cambodian resistance guerrillas. At a meeting on 26 June 1980, the ASEAN ministers closed ranks and reverted to their original position by calling for the total withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, reaffirming their continued recognition of the DK regime and the idea of ‘an independent, neutral and non-aligned Kampuchea, free from foreign interference’. No hint of recognition of Vietnam’s security interests in Indochina was offered. Although individual ASEAN countries, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, hinted that a dialogue with Hanoi should resume, the attitude of compromise evident in the Kuantan principle was no longer apparent. The Kuantan episode confirmed the polarisation of ASEAN into so-called ‘hardline’ and ‘moderate’ camps and contributed to the Cambodia stalemate by strengthening Hanoi’s belief that ASEAN’s internal divisions would favour its strategy of holding out until international opinion changed.

### ASEAN and the Cambodia conflict: 1977–1982

December 1977-January 1978: Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh visited all ASEAN states (except Singapore) on a ‘peace offensive’ while Vietnamese and DK (Khmer Rouge) forces were clashing along their border. He indicated his approval of Southeast Asian initiatives designed to achieve ‘peace, independence and neutrality’. He called for enhanced bilateral relations and cooperation between ASEAN and other states in the region.

December 1978: Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia, overthrew the Khmer Rouge government and installed a government of defectors from the Khmer Rouge led by Heng Samarin.

January 1979: At a meeting in Bangkok, ASEAN foreign ministers issued a statement condemning ‘foreign aggression’ in Cambodia.

September 1979: ASEAN successfully thwarted a Vietnamese challenge to the credentials of the DK (the ousted Khmer Rouge government) at the UN. The UN General Assembly passed an ASEAN-supported resolution calling for a cease-fire and the convening of an international conference on Cambodia.

March 1980: The President of Indonesia and the Prime Minister of Malaysia enunciated the ‘Kuantan principle’ at a meeting in Kuantan,
Malaysia, 26–28 March. The Kuantan principle suggested the possibility of ‘trading off’ between the security interests of Vietnam and ASEAN, the latter as defined by Indonesia and Malaysia. It involved Vietnam distancing itself from the Soviet Union in exchange for ASEAN recognition of its legitimate security interests in Indochina.

June 1980: On 26 June, at a meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers, there was a reversion to the original ASEAN position which called for a complete withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia.

September 1980: On 25 September, Vietnam and the PRK confirmed their rejection of an offer of an international conference on Cambodia proposed by ASEAN.

January 1981: Following a meeting of Indochinese foreign ministers in Ho Chi Minh City, they issued a proposal on 28 January calling for a regional conference involving the Indochinese and ASEAN states, at which they could discuss their differences. Vietnam further offered to withdraw a portion of its forces from Cambodia or at least from the area near the border with Thailand, conditional upon Thailand relocating Cambodian resistance forces deep into Thailand.

July 1981: The International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) was held in New York, largely at the instigation of ASEAN. China participated, but Vietnam, the PRK and the Soviet Union boycotted it. At this forum, it was agreed that it was necessary to implement a cease-fire and obtain the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, which was to be verified by a UN peacekeeping or observer group; the Cambodian factions were to be prevented from employing their forces to interfere in the electoral process; law and order was to be maintained until the coming to power of a government elected in free elections; and free elections were to be held, in which all Cambodians were to be eligible to participate. Plans to disarm the Cambodian factions and to establish an ‘interim administration’ were dropped, however.

June 1982: On 22 June, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) was established.

With the failure of the Kuantan formula, ASEAN moved closer towards its strategy of internationalising the search for a settlement to the conflict with the holding of the first International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK). But the ICK, held in July 1981, did little to advance the search for a political settlement in Cambodia. First, the meeting was boycotted by Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Second, it exposed sharp differences between ASEAN and China over the terms of a settlement.\(^7\) ASEAN’s own formula (envisaging total withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, simultaneous disarming of all the four Khmer factions, and the setting up of an interim administration to rule Cambodia pending free elections under UN supervision) did signal a measure of accommodation towards Hanoi by addressing its concern about the return of the Khmer Rouge to power. But China, backed by the USA, rejected the ASEAN proposal on the ground that it would give the Vietnamese aggressor and the resistance factions equal status, and insisted that a restored DK government was capable of holding free and fair elections by itself. The ICK exposed the risk that ASEAN’s strategy of internationalising the conflict would give external powers such as China a great deal of clout over the terms of the peacemaking.\(^8\) While ASEAN needed China’s support in order to ‘punish’ Hanoi for its use of force in Cambodia, this goal could be realised only at the expense of regional autonomy. Strikingly, Indonesia, despite its considerable empathy with Vietnamese nationalism and its greater suspicion of China’s strategic designs in Southeast Asia, went along with this. Jakarta seemed to have little choice, since the alternative would have been to risk the collapse of ASEAN, which it had helped to nurture as a powerful symbol of its post-Sukarno moderation and pragmatism in regional affairs. In return, Indonesia was confirmed as the political leader of ASEAN, by being designated as ASEAN’s official interlocutor with Hanoi for all negotiations on Cambodia.

While the regionalist approach based on a formula of accommodation with Vietnam preferred by Indonesia and Malaysia faltered, ASEAN did seek to limit the influence of China on the Cambodia situation (also in the interest of regional autonomy). One key aspect of this move was its backing for a coalition of Cambodian resistance factions, called the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). The CGDK was organised in June 1982 partly as a political move by the Western countries who felt they could not directly support the ousted Khmer Rouge regime in the UN unless it was part of a broader coalition of Cambodian resistance factions. The CGDK, headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, included his royalist faction FUNCINPEC as well as a nationalist faction, called the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF), led by Son San, a former prime minister. ASEAN’s support provided political legitimacy to the coalition. Afraid of growing Chinese influence and aware that the unsavoury reputation of Khmer Rouge had made unacceptable a political settlement of the conflict that would return it to power, ASEAN’s backing for the CGDK was partly inspired by a belief that a Khmer coalition might counter China’s confrontational stance centred on the superior military muscle of the Khmer Rouge, to which China was directing most of
its military aid. But any hope that the non-communist partners in the coalition would eclipse the Khmer Rouge militarily proved unfounded. The Khmer Rouge remained the dominant military faction, with some 25,000 fighters, compared with 5000 for the KPNLF, despite ASEAN’s efforts to channel some military support to the non-communist members of the coalition. Moreover, lack of unity shown in the demise of the Kuantan formula had undermined ASEAN’s collective ability to distance itself significantly from China. This was confirmed by a brief but unsuccessful effort in 1983 by Malaysia to advocate another regionalist approach to conflict management by calling for direct talks between ASEAN, Vietnam and Laos under a ‘five-plus-two’ formula. Serious Chinese objection doomed this initiative, marking an end to prospects for any immediate breakthrough in peacemaking.9

Since both ASEAN and Vietnam seemed to share a belief that a military defeat of the other side was a feasible option, the result was a prolonged stalemate on the ground as well as in the diplomatic arena, significantly delaying ASEAN’s goal of a peaceful settlement of the crisis. As Carl Thayer observed, ‘None of the diplomatic approaches and counter-responses [between ASEAN and Vietnam] in the period prior to 1985 appeared seriously designed to bring a peaceful end to the conflict.’10

Another near casualty of ASEAN’s policy, as previously hinted, towards the Cambodia conflict was its norm against military cooperation within the grouping. The danger to this norm was evident not so much in terms of the prospective emergence of an ASEAN military alliance to deal with the threat perceived from Vietnam. Rather it was in terms of deliberations over possible contingency assistance to Thailand in the event of a spillover of the conflict within Cambodia. Even Indonesia, which had previously denied that it would be obliged to aid Thailand in the event of aggression,11 came to assert that it would provide aid to any ASEAN nation facing such a prospect. Singapore and Malaysia came up with similar pledges of help to Thailand against Vietnamese attack.

Coming to terms with Thailand’s ‘frontline’ status became the focal point of ASEAN’s dilemma concerning security collaboration. Although none of the ASEAN partners gave any specific commitment about the kind of aid envisaged, provision of military aid was assumed to be included. Indonesia’s Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, General Panggabean, stated that Indonesia’s assistance could take the form of economic as well as military aid. ‘If they [the threatened nation] are short of ammunition, we can give them ammunition.’12 It was not clear whether this statement reflected the official Indonesian position (a similar comment by him in late 1970 that Indonesia would provide military assistance to its ASEAN neighbours against attack had been dismissed by Foreign Minister Adam Malik).13 But it fuelled speculation concerning a major shift in Indonesia’s thinking on ASEAN security cooperation. Malaysia was less forthcoming in so far as direct military aid was concerned. Mohamad Minister Ghazali Shafie (then Home Minister) stated that ‘[o]ur contribution will be in the form of helping the Thais build up their resilience or by sending goods they are short of.’14 This indicated that Malaysia envisaged
provision of logistics support, rather than troop assistance, as the major form of aid to Thailand in the event of a Vietnamese attack. Singapore’s position was more or less similar, although the Republic, with its advanced defence production capability, was in a much better position than Malaysia to provide logistics support as well as armaments to its threatened neighbour.\textsuperscript{15}

While ASEAN leaders generally hinted that any contingency aid to Thailand could be provided on a bilateral, rather than multilateral, basis,\textsuperscript{16} it was evident, as Lee Kuan Yew asserted, that the Vietnamese action had prompted ASEAN policy-making circles to rethink their position on military cooperation.\textsuperscript{17} President Marcos appeared to be more receptive to the idea of intra-ASEAN military cooperation, which he thought was necessary as a measure ‘to stem the tide of insurgency’.\textsuperscript{18} Adam Malik, who had opposed a military role for ASEAN while in office, now proposed that ASEAN should hold a military exercise of 10,000 troops on the Thai-Cambodian border to demonstrate its unity to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{19} Thailand, while taking a cautious and ambivalent view towards the need for an ASEAN alliance (because the ‘time is not [ripe] yet’), nonetheless supported the idea of joint ASEAN military exercises as a response to the new security situation. In June 1979, Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanan had declared that:

If the ASEAN governments desire to hold joint manoeuvres, why can’t we do it? But we have to wait for the proper time.\textsuperscript{20}

At the same time, he expressed readiness to participate in such exercises:

However, if anyone would like to have joint exercises, we are ready. Manoeuvres can be held in Thailand or if they are held elsewhere, we can send forces there.\textsuperscript{21}

Translating the pledges made by Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore to provide contingency support to Thailand into a framework for ASEAN-wide measures against external threats proved to be elusive. Any temptation to form an ASEAN military arrangement to provide contingency support to Thailand against Vietnam needed to be tempered by the realisation that ASEAN lacked any collective capacity to stand up to an all-out Vietnamese attack. As Lee Kuan Yew warned: ‘there is no combination of forces in Southeast Asia that can stop the Vietnamese on the mainland of Asia’.\textsuperscript{22} More importantly, the differing perspectives within ASEAN on Sino-Vietnamese rivalry, telescoped by the Cambodia crisis, proved to be a major barrier to greater intra-ASEAN political and security cooperation. This aspect reflected a lack of agreement over the identity of a common external threat that might have served as the basis of multilateral security collaboration. Thailand’s policy of seeking China’s support against Vietnam served to exacerbate these differences. While the Thai position was based on the calculation that Chinese pressure on the Vietnamese border reduced the threat to Thailand, the Chinese pledge of assistance to Thailand was not conducive to forging an ASEAN
security consensus. Malaysia and Indonesia expressed misgivings about the Thai position,\textsuperscript{23} eschewing a military role for ASEAN which would have provoked and further alienated Vietnam at a time when both Malaysia and Indonesia continued to harbour hopes of an eventual rapprochement. Moreover, the logistical (especially lack of air transport capability) and operational (lack of practice in joint operations with Thai forces) barriers to such an arrangement were enormous and recognised in Thai contingency planning. (For the Thais, seeking assistance from the USA (under the auspices of the 1954 Manila Pact and the subsequent Rusk-Thanat agreement) was a much more credible policy against the Vietnamese threat than relying on its ASEAN partners. In fact, it was highly doubtful that the ASEAN states would have ventured to come to Bangkok’s aid in the event of a major Vietnamese offensive without some sort of US security guarantee against possible retaliation by Hanoi.)

While the norm against intra-ASEAN military cooperation survived, it paradoxically increased ASEAN’s dependence on external powers, thereby eroding the norm of regional autonomy. The US commitment to Thai security against Vietnam was reaffirmed and Washington’s military aid to Bangkok was substantially enhanced. Thailand’s relations with China acquired the quality of a \textit{de facto} alliance, backed by large-scale arms transfers and an implicit Chinese commitment to provide direct and indirect support to Bangkok in the event of the Vietnamese attack. Indonesia and Malaysia, despite substantial misgivings about China’s long-term intentions, acquiesced in the Sino-Thai alliance, while Singapore encouraged it.

\section*{ASEAN and the Cambodian endgame}

The foregoing analysis shows that the evolution of ASEAN’s role in the Cambodia conflict was shaped by two goals: a desire to punish Vietnam for its violation of its norms of regional conduct on the one hand and a desire to seek a peaceful settlement of the Cambodia conflict without giving too much ground to the external powers on the other. In other words, while seeking to uphold its norm of non-use of force, ASEAN was also trying to maintain its norm of regional settlement of regional conflicts. These goals were not mutually exclusive but they did contribute to an ambivalence in ASEAN’s posture, which became even more pronounced as the Cambodian conflict neared its endgame.

As the 1980s drew to a close, ASEAN’s policy towards Cambodia was reaping some successes. Vietnam had been isolated internationally, as reflected in increased majorities at the UN General Assembly for ASEAN-sponsored resolutions condemning Hanoi. (For example, the 1989 resolution was approved with 124 in favour, 17 against and 12 abstentions.) Thanks partly to ASEAN’s efforts, the cost of the conflict to Vietnam in human, political and economic terms was increasingly steep. Hanoi had been deprived of access to international capital and aid needed for urgent economic development, thus increasing Vietnam’s dependence on the Soviet Union which was resented by the highly nationalistic Vietnamese.
ASEAN and the Cambodian peace process: 1987–1991

April 1987: Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar journeyed to Vietnam for the first time in two years, giving cause for hope for the stalled peace process.

July 1987: Discussions on 27–29 July between Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach in Ho Chi Minh City resulted in a joint statement calling for the convening of an informal meeting on Cambodia involving the two sides on an equal basis ‘without preconditions or labels’. A first stage of this process would be limited to the Cambodian factions themselves, to be followed by a second stage to which interested regional powers, such as Vietnam, would be invited.

August 1987: At an ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in Bangkok on 16 August the Mochtar-Thach accord was discussed, and it was decided that such a process would only be implemented if Vietnam began to participate immediately after the initial informal discussions of the Cambodian groups.

July 1988: At Bogor on 24–28 July the Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM I) took place. This involved the four Cambodian factions and focused on ‘internal’ aspects of the conflict. It did not result in any breakthrough. The PRK did abandon efforts to exclude the Khmer Rouge from the post-conflict political scene and Sihanouk dropped his demand for an international peacekeeping force, downplayed his demand that the PRK administration be dismantled before the holding of elections, and suggested that Cambodia’s UN seat could be left vacant, however. JIM I set a procedural precedent in which the Cambodian groups met in the morning, and were joined in the afternoon by ASEAN, Laos and Vietnam. An informal working group was established to continue discussing the issues.

January 1989: On 6 January, Vietnam offered to withdraw all of its forces from Cambodia by September, dependent on a political solution being reached by then.

January 1989: PRK Prime Minister Hun Sen visited Thailand to enhance dialogue on the Cambodia conflict.

February 1989: JIM II talks were held on 16–21 February, but no progress was achieved due to the wide gulf over the question of power sharing. This appeared to herald the end of regional initiatives to produce a peaceful resolution to the conflict. However, France agreed to explore the idea of another international conference on Cambodia.

July-August 1989: The first Paris Conference on Cambodia was held. It did not produce the desired resolution to the conflict, but did identify a number of fundamental issues: the verification of a Vietnamese troop withdrawal; cessation of military assistance to the four factions; recognition of the importance of refugee problems and other humanitarian issues; the need to reconstruct Cambodia; the prevention of a return to power by the Khmer Rouge; the need to establish an International Control Mechanism (ICM); the question of Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia; and power sharing, establishing an interim government and the holding of general elections.
February 1990: The First Informal Meeting on Cambodia (IMC) was held in Jakarta on 26–28 February between the four Cambodian factions. It released a joint communiqué calling for the following in the interim period: a UN presence at ‘appropriate levels’; and the establishment of a ‘supreme national body’.

September 1990: The Second Informal Meeting on Cambodia (IMC) was held on 9 September in Jakarta. All four factions participated and made conciliatory speeches. They agreed to establish a Supreme National Council as the sovereign representative of Cambodia. The SNC was formally established the next day, with representatives from all four factions.

December 1990: At a meeting in Paris on 21–22 December, the two non-communist resistance factions indicated their willingness to accept a UN role in Cambodia, the total demobilisation of all armed forces, and the holding of elections on the basis of proportionality. The PRK still opposed these things, but the two sides agreed to hold further talks on this.

June 1991: At a meeting in Pattaya, Thailand, on 24–26 June, the Khmer Rouge and PRK appeared to support Sihanouk’s plan for the SNC to serve as a ‘collegial presidency’ led by a relatively weak secretary-general, and to maintain the status quo, without establishing an interim coalition government, leaving the four factions with autonomous zones. The resistance factions wanted a monitored truce with the demobilisation of forces, a UN peacekeeping force, and a UN role in running the country until elections, but these things were rejected by the PRK.

August 1991: At a meeting of Cambodian factions in Pattaya on 26–29 August, agreement was reached to disarm 70 per cent of each faction’s forces and relocate the remainder to UN-supervised cantonment areas, to a proportional representation electoral system, and to a liberal, multiparty political system with freedom of association and political activity. The UN was also invited to establish a peacekeeping and peacebuilding mission to ensure the implementation of the agreement during the transitional period.

September 1991: A peace agreement ending the conflict in Cambodia was adopted at the reconvened Paris Conference on Cambodia.

But whether the strategy contributed to the settlement of the conflict itself is more debatable. Until 1986, the situation in Cambodia had been a complete stalemate, on the battlefield as well as at the negotiating table. The stalemate owed much to the fact that both Vietnam and China had remained confident of achieving a military solution to the conflict; China still hoped to oust the regime in Phnom Penh, while Hanoi continued to think of its action in installing a puppet regime in Phnom Penh as ‘irreversible’. In this context, ASEAN’s persistence in seeking a solution was helpful in breaking the diplomatic stalemate. This occurred in July 1987 when the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, met with his Vietnamese counterpart, Nguyen Co Thach, in Ho Chi Minh City and agreed on a two-stage formula dubbed ‘Cocktail Diplomacy’, underscoring the informal nature of the contacts towards a settlement of the Cambodia conflict. The first stage of the formula was to include a dialogue among the Cambodian factions themselves, including the PRK regime in Phnom Penh, and the three Cambodian resistance factions. This would be followed by a second stage to include the relevant regional parties, including Vietnam and the ASEAN members.

This seemingly ‘regionalist’ formula upheld ASEAN’s desire to be at centre-stage of the peace process. It could not be easily implemented in the near term owing to divisions among the Cambodian factions themselves, especially the PRK’s refusal to sit at the table with the ousted Khmer Rouge leaders, and to the continuing differences and ambivalence among ASEAN members, some of whom were still suspicious of Vietnamese goodwill. To be sure, ASEAN’s regionalist approach did pave the way eventually for direct talks between Prince Sihanouk, as the leader of the CGDK, and Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the PRK. It also led to two rounds of regional meetings, called the Jakarta Informal Meetings, in July 1988 and February 1989. These meetings dealt with the complex issue of power sharing among the Cambodian factions, the key to the eventual settlement of the conflict.

But one cannot deny that developments at the international level were significant factors in driving the peace process. While ASEAN was pursuing a regionalist solution to the problem that would limit the role of China and other outside powers, the changing relationship among the USA, the Soviet Union and China created favourable conditions for advancing the peace process. Among the most important developments was Mikhail Gorbachev’s assumption to leadership in the Soviet Union and his ‘new thinking’ on regional conflicts, under which Moscow, keen to improve relations with the USA and seeking to reduce the economic burden of supporting its Third World clients, began to push Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia. The gradual thawing of the US-Soviet Cold War was subsequently joined by rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing. Beijing, which had always viewed Vietnam’s occupation of Cambodia as a direct consequence of Soviet support for Hanoi, had made the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia one of the key conditions for normalising relations with Moscow (the other issues being the settlement of the Sino-Soviet border dispute and the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan). As Moscow
complied with Beijing’s demands by encouraging Vietnam to end its occupation of Cambodia, Beijing began to distance itself from the Khmer Rouge, the key element of its ‘bleed Vietnam white’ strategy.

While the end of the Cold War was steadily rendering the international context of the Cambodia conflict more conducive to a settlement, ASEAN as a group was becoming somewhat sidelined in the peace process, notwithstanding Indonesia’s co-chairmanship of the two Jakarta Informal Meetings, and the two sittings of the Paris Peace Conferences on Cambodia (in 1989 and 1991). This view is reinforced by the instrumental role played in the Paris peace process by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, as well as the initiatives proposed and undertaken by Australia (which included the comprehensive draft plan for an interim UN administration in Cambodia following the peace settlement, something which would lay the conceptual groundwork for the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia).24 And during the last stages of the conflict, ASEAN’s own involvement and approach in the peace process was marred by external pressures and intramural disunity.25

For example, ASEAN’s leadership role in the peace process suffered a major setback in July 1990 when the USA announced its decision to withdraw recognition from the CGDK, the Cambodian resistance coalition that included the Khmer Rouge. To the extent that the coalition was the brainchild of ASEAN, and the centrepiece of its diplomatic efforts, US de-recognition was unsettling.26 The US action also marked the end of its hitherto practice of following ASEAN’s lead in the Cambodian peace process, a trend that had already been evident with respect to other external players in the Cambodia conflict. To the former Foreign Minister of Singapore, S.Rajaratnam, the architect of the hardline policy on Cambodia, the US move meant that ‘the Cambodia problem has been unceremoniously snatched out of Asean’s hands by its Western allies’.27

This development was compounded by intra-ASEAN differences starkly evident towards the final stages of the peace process. Indeed, the idea of ‘cocktail diplomacy’ mooted by Indonesia following the above-mentioned Mochtar-Thach accord of July 1997 had caused a serious rift within ASEAN as Thailand and Singapore indicated their strong disapproval of such a process. This served to undermine ASEAN’s clout over the peace process. It is a matter of considerable irony that while ASEAN dithered over the formula envisaged under the Mochtar-Thach accord, this was precisely the course of action over which the interests of the principal external players, the Soviet Union and China, increasingly converged. As the annual general assembly vote on Cambodia approached in 1987, the Soviet Union voiced strong support for the national reconciliation process among the Cambodian factions and criticised ASEAN’s backtracking on the Mochtar-Thach accord. China also indicated its approval of the ‘cocktail party’ concept. Even more significantly, Beijing appeared ready to drop its earlier demand that the restoration of the DK regime must remain an integral part of any Cambodia settlement.
An even more severe test of ASEAN’s unity came in the wake of Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan’s celebrated call for ‘turning the Indochinese battlefields into marketplaces’. Thai economic and political initiatives that flowed from Chatichai’s policy put ASEAN’s political unity and credibility under its most severe stress. Bangkok’s move to invite Prime Minister Hun Sen to Bangkok in January 1989 not only brought to the surface deep divisions within the Thai government between the hardline foreign ministry and the prime minister’s office, but also caused discomfort and apprehension in other ASEAN capitals, especially Singapore and Indonesia. The former Thai Foreign Minister and a founder of ASEAN, Thanat Khoman, accused the Chatichai government of having ‘broken away’ from ASEAN. In Singapore, another founding foreign minister of ASEAN, S. Rajaratnam, warned that the Thai initiative could seriously damage ASEAN’s credibility as one of the few successful examples of regional political cooperation in the Third World.

Although the Indonesian government did not voice any public criticism of the Thai move, there were indications of considerable disquiet within its military and foreign policy elite over the implications of the Chatichai initiative for ASEAN. A magazine published by the powerful Alumni Association of the National Defence Institute in Jakarta found Thailand’s policy ‘violating the ASEAN consensus, wherein not a single ASEAN country is justified to make a commitment which is directed to help Vietnam before a comprehensive settlement has been found to the Cambodian problem (sic)’. Singapore and Thai hardliners voiced apprehension that the invitation to Hun Sen would legitimise Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia. Later Thai policy was blamed for the hardened position taken by Hanoi and Phnom Penh at the Second Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM II) negotiations to settle the conflict, thereby perhaps derailing the prospects for a settlement at the first sitting of the Paris Conference on Cambodia in 1989.

 norms, identity and ASEAN in the Cambodia conflict

The Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia was signed at the end of the second sitting of the Paris conference on 23 October 1991. It was greeted by the ASEAN states with a strong sense of euphoria and self-congratulation. Speaking at the concluding session of the Paris conference, the Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee, Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus of the Philippines, ‘acknowledge[d] with pride and rejoicing the successful contribution of ASEAN to the process that produced this triumphal event’. Malaysia’s Foreign Minister reminded the conference delegates that ASEAN had ‘always, despite the many obstacles, persisted in its search for a peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Cambodian conflict’ and should therefore be entitled to ‘a sense of fulfilment and achievement’. Tommy Koh, Singapore’s former Ambassador to the UN, put it differently: ‘Without ASEAN there would have been no Cambodia issue.'
Because if we had not taken up the cause of Cambodia in early 1979, and steadfastly championed it, it would have disappeared.\(^{36}\)

The foregoing discussion has referred to the tensions between ASEAN’s desire to punish Vietnam so as to defend the sanctity of its norms of non-interference and non-use of force in Southeast Asia’s regional order and its desire to seek a peaceful settlement of the conflict so as to uphold its norms of peaceful settlement of disputes and regional solutions to regional problems. The problem for ASEAN, as mentioned earlier, was that it saw itself both as a party to the conflict (given the violation by Vietnam of a key norm of ASEAN) and as a conflict manager committed to a peaceful settlement of the conflict without significant interference by the outside powers. While the two goals were not mutually exclusive, they did create the basis of considerable ambivalence in ASEAN’s approach.

It has become increasingly evident in the course of the foregoing analysis that ASEAN’s role in the Cambodian peace process had paradoxical effects on its norms and identity. ASEAN was instrumental in raising the profile of the Cambodia issue in the international diplomatic arena. This, in turn, propelled the hitherto obscure grouping into the global limelight. ASEAN could be justly credited with keeping the Cambodia conflict on the international agenda at a time when the international community had little interest in Southeast Asia. The Cambodia conflict had positive effects for ASEAN’s pursuit of a regional identity. After having unsuccessfully sought the co-option of Vietnam into a system of regional order founded on its norms, ASEAN presented the Vietnamese invasion as a gross violation of the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states as well as the principle of non-use of force in interstate relations.\(^{37}\) While organising an international campaign to isolate Vietnam and spearheading a diplomatic settlement of the conflict, ASEAN lost no opportunity to present itself in a more favourable international light vis-à-vis Hanoi. Vietnamese ‘expansionism’ was contrasted with ASEAN’s ‘good-neighbourliness’ and desire for regional political stability (implying a territorial and political status quo in Southeast Asia), Vietnam’s alliance with the Soviet Union with ASEAN’s professed goal of a ZOPFAN in Southeast Asia, Vietnam’s intense nationalism and ideological fervour with ASEAN’s pragmatism and developmentalism, and Vietnam’s military suppression of the Cambodian rebels with ASEAN’s efforts for a political settlement of the conflict. ASEAN’s Cambodia posture served not only to enhance its international stature (hence giving it a distinctive identity in international diplomacy), but also, at least initially, to strengthen its intra-mural solidarity. It motivated ASEAN members to overcome conflicting security interests and territorial disputes within the grouping, thereby moving it further on the path towards a security community. The Paris Agreement did conform to terms set by ASEAN from the very outset, including the reversal of Vietnam’s occupation and the replacement of the regime installed by its invasion through free and fair elections. ASEAN’s diplomatic unity, though severely tested by the Cambodia
ASEAN and the Cambodia conflict

ASEAN and the Cambodia conflict, had not collapsed entirely. As Tommy Koh put it ASEAN ‘always succeeded in evolving a consensus which we could live with’. But this claim should be kept in perspective. The Cambodia conflict was also a serious threat to ASEAN’s unity and cohesion. As the conflict moved towards a political settlement, Ali Alatas, the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, remarked that it is ‘a widespread but historically incorrect assumption that Cambodia is the cement of ASEAN’. As he saw it, the Cambodia issue had been ‘divisive’.

Tim Huxley has argued that ASEAN’s preoccupation with the Cambodia conflict and its handling of the peace process might have distracted it from its original aims, especially the construction of national and regional ‘resilience’, entrenched the polarisation of Southeast Asia, and contributed to the militarisation of the region. ASEAN’s role in the Cambodia conflict also threatened to compromise its norms. Despite professing a role as a conflict manager, ASEAN was exploiting international concerns about Cambodia in order to isolate and punish Vietnam and pursuing a balancing posture vis-à-vis Vietnam and its external backer, the Soviet Union. This strategy relied heavily on securing political and military support from ASEAN’s Great Power allies. Whether it secured ASEAN’s objective of securing the removal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia might be debatable, but it certainly entailed serious compromises to ASEAN’s desire for regional autonomy. The prolonged Cambodia stalemate sustained Chinese influence over the security concerns of the grouping; by accepting China’s support and role against Vietnam, ASEAN effectively postponed its professed goal of reducing Great Power meddling in the region. ASEAN’s strategy of internationalising the Cambodia conflict also increased its political, economic and military dependence on the USA.

For ASEAN, the need for maintaining solidarity against Hanoi at the international level took precedence over diplomatic formulae that might have offered Hanoi the chance of a face-saving exit from Cambodia through regional reconciliation. Instead of providing a neutral political framework for conflict resolution through regional dialogue, ASEAN assumed the role of a subregional political, if not military, alliance against Hanoi in concert with China. The fact that several ASEAN countries stepped up mutual defence cooperation and offered military assistance to Thailand in the event of a Vietnamese attack served to project an alliance posture, thereby undermining ASEAN’s role as conflict manager and threatening its norm against defence multilateralism.

In other words, ASEAN’s role in the Cambodia conflict came, at least to some extent, at the expense of its norm of providing ‘regional solutions to regional problems’. Part of this can be attributed to the nature of the Cambodia conflict, which, despite its roots in historical animosities and cleavages within the Cambodian society, was also a product of Great Power rivalry at the global level. While ASEAN was able to play on this rivalry to isolate Vietnam, it remained hostage to developments at the global level before the realisation of its other major objective, a political settlement of the conflict acceptable to ASEAN, could be reached. As one Indonesian scholar predicted in 1988:
if ASEAN's policy by itself is aimed at finding a final solution to the Kampuchean conflict, then ASEAN has failed or is bound to fail. It is unlikely that separately and on their own any of the countries of the region can possibly solve the problem. The desire that regional problems should be solved regionally without external interference will continue to be what it is—essentially a slogan, at best an aspiration, at least as far as the Kampuchean problem is concerned. In consequence, it is more likely that a solution of the Kampuchean problem will only be reached if the major powers also play their roles.42

The Paris settlement opened the door to the broader process of reconciliation between ASEAN and Indochina, especially Vietnam. The objectives of ASEAN’s policy towards Indochina were to change in fundamental ways. Instead of seeking a balance against Vietnam, ASEAN moved towards pursuing a vision of ‘One Southeast Asia’ which would encompass the Indochinese states (and Myanmar) in a system of regional order. The following chapter examines the extent to which ASEAN’s norms figured in this reconciliation.

Notes and references
1 As Muthiah Alagappa notes:

ASEAN did not envisage conflict prevention, containment and termination roles in regard to external conflicts. It hoped to eventually include all 10 states in the region, and that—pending inclusion—ASEAN’s proposals for peace and security should cover all of Southeast Asia and not just the ASEAN subregion. The Indochinese states and Burma, however, did not subscribe to this view and accede to the 1976 Treaty. Thus, the conflict prevention measures of the Association have not applied to non-ASEAN Southeast Asia.

(Muthiah Alagappa, ‘Regionalism and the Quest for Security: ASEAN and the Cambodia Conflict’, Journal of International Affairs (Winter, 1993))

2 For the text of the Bangkok Declaration and all other ASEAN documents mentioned in this paper, see: ASEAN Documents Series, 1967–1988, 3rd edition (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 1988).


5 Larry A.Niksch, ‘Vietnam and ASEAN: Conflict and Negotiation Over Cambodia’, Paper prepared for the conference on ‘Southeast Asia: Problems and Prospects’

6 Ibid., pp. 516–521.
8 China’s position was disturbing to ASEAN, as it confirmed suspicions that Beijing’s main interest was not in finding a compromise, but to use the Cambodia situation to bog down Hanoi in a protracted engagement in Cambodia that would seriously damage Hanoi’s capacity to contest with China for influence in Southeast Asia. Faced with Chinese intransigence, the ICK was rescued only by a last-minute attempt by France to put forward a compromise statement saving it from total failure. The final statement of the conference called for ‘appropriate arrangements to ensure that armed Kampuchean factions will not be able to prevent or disrupt the holding of free elections, or intimidate or coerce the populations in the electoral process’. But despite the face-saving gesture, the failure of the ICK was a major blow to the Cambodian peace process, aggravating the stalemate that had already taken root over the refusal of the Indochinese states to accept ASEAN’s proposed formula for peace negotiations.

11 *Straits Times*, 1 August 1977.
15 This was confirmed by General Saiyud Kerdphol, the former Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces, in a personal interview with the author. According to General Saiyud, both Malaysia and Singapore were informally involved, along with the USA, in a plan to provide contingency assistance to Thailand in the event of a major escalation of the Cambodia conflict spilling over into Thailand. This plan, worked out by General Saiyud himself and dubbed ‘Joint Logistics Plan’ (JLP), envisaged provision of armaments, including ‘common items’ such as ammunition and 105 mm and 155 mm guns, by Singapore and Malaysia from the latter’s own stocks. According to General Saiyud, steps were taken to ‘identify and mark’ such items for emergency shipment. The JLP was a ‘classified’ plan worked out at the ‘highest level’ of the governments of the countries involved. It was to be activated in the event of a major threat to Thailand, not minor skirmishes on the border, but if Thailand faced the prospect of an open attack by Vietnam backed by the Soviet Union, resulting in seizure of Thai territory. Personal interview, Bangkok, 26 June 1989 and 28 July 1989.
16 *Straits Times*, 27 June 1979.
17 *Straits Times*, 7 March 1979.
18 *Straits Times*, 4 March 1980.
21 Ibid.


27 ‘Cambodia: time for Asean to call it a day’, Straits Times, 3 August 1990.

28 For an excellent discussion of the implications of the Chathchai initiative, see: Donald Weatherbee, ASEAN: The Big Loser in Thai Race for Profit in Indochina’, Straits Times, 5 May 1989.


35 Statement by HE Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, at the Paris Conference on Cambodia, 23 October 1991, p. 2.

36 Tommy Koh, Singapore’s former Permanent Representative to the UN, cited in Asean’s resolve to prevent a fait accompli pays off’, Straits Times, 22 October 1991, p. 6.


4 Extending ASEAN norms
Benefits and burdens of ASEAN-Ten

If ASEAN had developed the attributes of a ‘community’ towards the end of the Cold War, then its scope was clearly less than ‘regional’, with membership limited to only one—ideologically ‘like-minded’—segment of Southeast Asia. ASEAN was not identical with Southeast Asia. Its framework for regional order, including a ZOPFAN, was boycotted and vigorously opposed by the Indochinese states notably at the Non-Aligned summit in Sri Lanka in 1976. Moreover, the peaceful relations among the ASEAN members and hence its claim to be a regional security community owed much to common concerns over the domestic threat from communism and to cooperative efforts regionally to balance Vietnamese power. ASEAN functioned more as a subregional alliance than a regional security community. With the settlement of the Cambodia conflict, which removed the principal source of polarisation in Southeast Asia, ASEAN’s role in building a Southeast Asian security community required a fresh appraisal. It had developed as an inward-looking subregional entity, but was faced with the challenge of developing a wider regional security community involving Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

ASEAN policy-makers were not unaware of this challenge. Not long after the Paris Agreement, Thailand’s Prime Minister, Anand Panyarachun, contended that ASEAN would have to seek a new regional order that embraces all nations of Southeast Asia in ‘peace, progress and prosperity’.¹ Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, offered an even loftier challenge, which was consistent with the declaratory security doctrine of ASEAN as enunciated from 1967:

one quintessential dividend of peace in Cambodia to strive for would be the dawning of a new era in Southeast Asian history—an era in which for the first time Southeast Asia would be truly peaceful and truly free to deal with its problems in terms of its own aspirations rather than in terms of majorpower rivalry and contention; an era marking the beginning of a new Southeast Asia, capable of addressing itself to the outside world with commensurate authenticity and able to arrange its internal relationships on the basis of genuine independence, equality and peaceful cooperation.²
This chapter examines ASEAN’s efforts to realise its professed goal of ‘One Southeast Asia’, a grouping of the ten countries of Southeast Asia. The expansion of ASEAN is important in assessing its prospects of becoming a security community for two main reasons. First, given the different political and ideological characteristics of the new member regimes and their domestic vulnerabilities, the process of expansion itself has provided a major test of the very norms underpinning ASEAN regionalism, such as the doctrine of non-interference. Second, an expanded ASEAN means new political, economic and strategic challenges for the grouping. As discussed in Chapter 1, the theory of security communities holds that an increase in the scope and intensity of interactions may impose new ‘burdens’ or strains on an emerging security community, and even lead to its unravelling. ASEAN’s expansion, aimed at developing a wider regional community of One Southeast Asia, also makes regional interactions more complex and introduces a greater diversity to the political and security predicament and outlook of the members of the grouping. It generates new sources of intra-mural tensions involving the new members that must be managed and renders the task of maintaining a common position vis-à-vis external powers more difficult. By increasing the scope of regional interactions, and seeking to socialise the new member into a regional community, ASEAN expansion also puts pressure on the ASEAN Way with respect to conflict prevention and consensus building.

The process of regional accommodation: Vietnam

The Paris Peace Agreements on Cambodia in October 1991 dramatically transformed ASEAN’s policy towards Vietnam. However, the beginning of the end of ASEAN-Vietnam rivalry can be traced to a thaw in its core element, namely Thai-Vietnamese rivalry, which in turn was helped by domestic changes in both countries. The most important of these occurred in Vietnam. In 1986, the ruling Communist Party adopted sweeping reforms to its domestic economy under a policy of ‘renovation’ or ‘doi moi’. This signalled, among other factors, Hanoi’s acknowledgement that its occupation of Cambodia had entailed severe economic costs that it could no longer afford. Managing the economic crisis at home to ensure regime survival became a more important concern for Hanoi than maintaining its occupation of Cambodia, justified as a response to external threats. The objective of Vietnamese reform, to create a ‘market mechanism economy’ with the help of foreign investment and export promotion, dictated necessary adjustments to its foreign relations with the objective of ending its international isolation and improving the political climate for economic ties with its ASEAN neighbours.

Initially, the ASEAN states more or less ignored or dismissed the implications of Vietnamese reform for ASEAN-Indochina relations, choosing instead to focus on Hanoi’s continued occupation of Cambodia. Although Singapore and Thailand noted that Vietnam’s reform priorities would improve the outlook for a settlement of the Cambodia conflict, Thailand’s Foreign Minister Siddhi
Constructing a security community in SE Asia

Savetsila cautioned in June 1987 that Hanoi’s commitment to reform appeared ‘dubious’ and did not signal an end to its attempt to impose ‘military rule’ on Cambodia. But the advent of a new government in Bangkok under the premiership of Chatichai Choonhavan in August 1988 produced a major shift in Thai policy towards Hanoi. Recognising the political and economic opportunities offered by Vietnam’s reforms, Chatichai declared that Thai policy would now aim at ‘turning the Indochinese battlefields to marketplaces’. Bangkok indicated a willingness to tolerate some Vietnamese influence in Indochina with the hope that the economic liberalisation of Indochina assisted by trade and investment links with Thailand would gradually reduce the scope for Vietnamese domination and enhance Thai influence in Indochina. The new Thai policy also sought to exploit a similar reform process initiated by the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party at its Fourth Party Congress in 1986. Called ‘New Economic Management’, the package of reforms aimed at decentralising the management of public enterprises, encouraging the private sector, and envisaged closer economic cooperation with neighbours, ‘in particular, trade relations with Thailand’.

The new Thai policy was ahead of the official ASEAN position, however, and was greeted with suspicion by some of its members. Not only was Bangkok accused of seeking unilateral economic advantage by promoting rapid trade and investment links with Indochina, but Chavit’s political initiatives on the Cambodia conflict undermined ASEAN’s consensual diplomacy. In particular, his invitation to Prime Minister Hun Sen to Bangkok in January 1989 caused apprehension in other ASEAN capitals, especially in Singapore and Indonesia. Critics saw Thailand’s ‘battlefields to marketplaces’ strategy as being driven by selfish considerations of economic gain, which would damage ASEAN’s hitherto steadfast opposition to the Vietnamese-installed regime in Phnom Penh. As noted in Chapter 3, hardline military officials in Indonesia feared that the Thai initiative represented a breakdown of the ASEAN consensus on one of the most vital issues of security and stability in Southeast Asia.

The critics of the new Thai policy argued that it would legitimise Vietnam’s occupation of Cambodia and ease the pressure on Hanoi to make concessions at the negotiating table over Cambodia’s political future. Indeed, the failure of the Jakarta Informal Meetings hosted by Indonesia in 1988 to produce an agreement on power sharing among the Cambodian factions was blamed by Chatichai’s critics on Vietnamese intransigence, which had supposedly resulted from the Thai government’s premature offering of an olive branch to Hanoi.

Against this backdrop, Hanoi’s declaration on 5 April 1989 that it would unconditionally withdraw its troops from Cambodia by September failed to produce a coherent ASEAN response towards improving the climate for ASEAN-Indochina relations. There was no question that the Vietnamese initiative removed two of ASEAN’s most serious concerns about its occupation of Cambodia: first, Vietnam’s ability to pose a security threat to Thailand, and second, Vietnam’s alleged desire for domination of Indochina as a single
Extending ASEAN norms

strategic unit. Yet, ASEAN waited for clear proof of Hanoi’s sincerity before
pronouncing an end to the regional rivalry.12 Moreover, differences surfaced
over whether the end of Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia was a sufficient
basis for welcoming Vietnam into the ASEAN fold, both as a partner in
functional cooperation and as a formal member of ASEAN.13 On the one
hand, both Malaysia and Indonesia hinted that such a development should
not await domestic transformation in Vietnam. As Malaysia’s Prime Minister,
Dr Mahathir Mohamed, put it, ‘if Vietnam subscribes to the ideas of ASEAN,
the system of government it practices should not be something that stands in
the way of becoming a member of ASEAN’.14 General Try Sutrisno, then the
commander of Indonesia’s armed forces, argued that by accepting Hanoi into
its fold, ASEAN could ‘rid the region of antagonisms and be a force for
cooperation, even with …[Vietnam’s] communist ideology’.15 On the other
hand, Lee Kuan Yew proffered the view that the Indochinese countries should
change their economic and political systems before being allowed into
ASEAN.16 Arguing that ‘antagonists do not become bosom friends overnight’,
Singapore’s Trade and Industry Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, stressed the need
for the Cambodia issue to be fully resolved before the issue of Indochinese
membership ‘can be put on [ASEAN’s] agenda’.17

Intra-ASEAN divisions and doubts over improved relations with Indochina
persisted through 1990. This was evident at the time of President Suharto’s
historic visit to Hanoi in November 1990. Suharto, who became the most senior
ASEAN leader to visit Hanoi since Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia, held out
the possibility of increased economic cooperation between Indonesia and
Vietnam. This prospect was not immediately welcomed by some of Jakarta’s
neighbours, especially Singapore. The Singapore media warned that ‘[un]due
haste in helping Vietnam’ might offset the economic and political pressures that
had already led Hanoi to seek improved relations with ASEAN. In this view,
ASEAN should ‘not allow the potential lucrateness of the Vietnamese market
to detract the grouping from the basic objective of rewriting the history of
Vietnamese hegemony in Cambodia.’18 It is ironic that, despite these protests,
Singapore had already developed significant ‘unofficial’ trade relations with
Vietnam and Cambodia.

The process of ASEAN-Indochina reconciliation also revealed the competitive
aspect of intra-ASEAN relations, especially in the economic sphere. The Thai
concept of ‘Suwannaphum’, or Golden Peninsula, developed by Prime Minister
Chatichai, suggested a belief among sections within the Thai elite that Thailand
could become the core of a continental segment of Southeast Asia comprising
the three Indochinese states and Myanmar. In this domain, Thailand would
aspire to be the principal engine of growth as well as the leading nation in
shaping foreign policy and national security priorities. Such a segment of
Southeast Asia might compete with a maritime domain comprising Indonesia as
the political leader, and Singapore as the financial and communications hub,19
thereby paving the way for a new polarisation of Southeast Asia.20 Although
subsequent Thai policy towards Indochina was more subtle than Chatichai’s,
and Thai business ventures failed to dominate the Indochinese economies, the lingering risk that the development of ASEAN’s relations with Indochina might prove internally divisive was indicated in a warning issued by Malaysia’s Foreign Minister Datuk Ahmed Abdullah Badawi, who called upon ASEAN members to ‘ensure that regional engagement strengthens rather than weakens it [ASEAN], builds upon successes rather than undermines it, and preserves ASEAN cohesion instead of diluting it’.21

But these intra-mural differences were not sufficient to block the progressive normalisation of relations between Vietnam and the existing ASEAN members. The key factor was Vietnam’s willingness to facilitate a settlement of the Cambodia conflict, which helped to reduce ASEAN’s misgivings. Not only did Vietnam announce the withdrawal of its forces from Cambodia, it also made concessions at the negotiating table (e.g. agreeing to disband the regime it had installed in Cambodia and agreeing to UN-supervised elections to elect a new government in Cambodia; this concession was made after the 1989 phase of the Paris conference, which explains why it failed while the 1991 phase produced an agreement). Thus, it is not surprising that a major breakthrough in Vietnam-ASEAN relations came nine days after the signing of the Paris Agreement on Cambodia, when Vo Van Kiet became the first Vietnamese premier to visit an ASEAN capital since 1978. Welcoming him to Singapore, his host, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, announced that a ‘new relationship between ASEAN and Vietnam is emerging against a very different world backdrop’. This relationship, Goh added, would lead to ‘a more relaxed strategic environment in Southeast Asia as Vietnam’s economy and policies become more compatible with the ASEAN countries’.22 Vo’s trip was part of an all-ASEAN tour undertaken between October 1991 and March 1992 as a ‘fence-mending exercise’ intended to create a favourable climate for the fulfilment of Hanoi’s desire to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as a first step towards membership of the grouping.23

That this effort was successful was confirmed by the communiqué issued at the end of the January 1992 ASEAN summit in Singapore. The summit declaration envisaged that ASEAN shall forge a closer relationship based on friendship and cooperation with the Indo-Chinese countries, following the settlement on Cambodia’. As a first step, the Singapore Declaration opened the door to all countries of Southeast Asia to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with Vietnam and Laos being the first signatories, to be followed by Cambodia once its internal political structure was settled through elections held under UN auspices (the membership of Myanmar, a non-Indochinese state, was not highlighted at this meeting).24 At the summit, Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun stressed the need for ASEAN members to ‘support the economic reconstruction of Cambodia as well as of Laos and Vietnam, especially through the expansion of trade and economic ties’.25 Vietnam’s satisfaction with the summit decision was conveyed by the armed forces newspaper Quan Doi Nhan Dan, which called the Singapore summit the ‘most important conference since ASEAN was founded in 1967’ and
praised its new initiatives as ‘important factors contributing to establishing a new security order in the region’. ASEAN-Vietnam relations warmed substantially in the wake of a flurry of high-level visits by ASEAN leaders to Hanoi. On 15 January 1992, Thailand’s Prime Minister Anand Panyaratrachun arrived in Hanoi for the first visit by a Thai head of government since 1976. He was followed in April 1992 by Mahathir Mohamed, who became the first Malaysian prime minister to visit Hanoi since independence in 1957. A joint bilateral commission was set up to promote bilateral ties between Kuala Lumpur and Hanoi. In April 1992, Singapore’s Senior Minister and former Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, also paid a visit to Vietnam for the first time and was invited by Hanoi to become an adviser to its reform programme.

Vietnam was formally admitted into ASEAN at its annual ministerial meeting in Brunei in July 1995. While the existing members welcomed Vietnam’s entry as a significant strengthening of the grouping’s clout vis-à-vis the larger powers, concerns were also voiced over the implications of an expanded ASEAN. Singapore’s foreign minister noted that an expanded ASEAN would face difficulties in achieving consensus on key issues. Vietnamese officials, for their part, contended that their decision to join ASEAN was motivated by three factors: to attract foreign investment, to develop and maintain friendly relations with regional states, and to boost Vietnam’s domestic reform process. Moreover, as one Vietnamese writer put it, ‘[p]olitically, due to ASEAN’s high international prestige, ASEAN membership would enhance Vietnam’s diplomatic standing and integrate Vietnam’s security with the security of the whole of Southeast Asia, thus creating an external environment favourable for economic development’. While Vietnamese officials were careful not to highlight their potential strategic gains from ASEAN membership, Hanoi obviously hoped that it would strengthen its position vis-à-vis China in the South China Sea dispute. In addition, Hanoi could now make common cause with its ASEAN partners in resisting Western criticism of its human rights record, which had already become a key issue in ASEAN’s dealings with the West.

In joining ASEAN, Vietnam acknowledged a shift in its thinking on, and approach to, regional order in Southeast Asia. To the extent that membership required Vietnam to accept and adhere to the obligations and norms of ASEAN, it could theoretically lay the basis for both sides to be bound eventually within a common political and diplomatic culture. There was also a greater convergence of the two sides’ attitude towards the management of Great Power relations. In the words of a Vietnamese scholar, Hanoi’s prior approach to Great Power relations was based on ‘the old conception which advocated that a country should stand with one great power to oppose another one or neighbouring countries’. (This was a reference to Vietnam’s alliance with the Soviet Union to oppose China and the USA.) This approach had conflicted with ASEAN’s professed objective of a ZOPFAN, which called for regional autonomy. Hanoi’s new approach to regional order was cast differently. As
stated by Assistant Foreign Minister Tran Huy Chung, ‘[w]hat is most beneficial to the Southeast Asian countries is to have appropriately balanced relationships with great powers outside the region, with a view to resolving disputes for influence between them over the region’. This desire for an ‘appropriately balanced relationship’ was indicative of Hanoi’s need for a regional balance of power which could offset the perceived threat of Chinese domination. This coincided with ASEAN’s move to seek a more ‘inclusive’ relationship among external powers which would lead to the establishment of the ARF (to be discussed in Chapter 6).


The admission of Myanmar proved to be a far more daunting and controversial task for ASEAN than that of Vietnam and Laos. There was of course a common basis for ASEAN’s approach to both Vietnam and Myanmar: the norm of non-interference. ASEAN had regarded Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia as a blatant violation of this norm. It was used to justify the policy of isolating Hanoi regionally and internationally. However, when Vietnam completed its military withdrawal from Cambodia, ASEAN, after some initial hesitation, saw no reason to oppose Vietnam’s membership in the grouping because of its communist political system. The same logic now formed the basis for ASEAN’s determination to include Myanmar despite the widespread international condemnation of the initiative, which was seen as bestowing legitimacy on a repressive regime. In ASEAN’s view, political repression in Myanmar could not be used to justify the exclusion of Myanmar, since such a move would constitute interference in its internal affairs. (ASEAN’s position was also dictated by several other geostrategic factors, to be discussed later, including the need to limit Chinese influence.)

Myanmar provided the first major test of ASEAN’s non-interference doctrine in the post-Cold War setting. In September 1988, after a wave of nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations, political power in Myanmar was reasserted by an incumbent junta consisting of many of the key supporters of the previous regime headed by General Ne Win. The junta set up the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and, in May 1990, organised the first parliamentary polls in three decades. The elections were won decisively (392 out of 485 seats) by an opposition coalition, the National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi (the daughter of the late Burmese nationalist leader, Aung San), who had been placed under house arrest since July 1989. The SLORC refused to convene the parliament and transfer power. It also carried out large-scale arrests of opposition politicians and activists.

These domestic developments in Myanmar occurred at a time when ASEAN’s own leadership in the Cambodian peace process was being undermined by intra-mural differences and also overshadowed by the role of the Great Powers
and the UN. ASEAN had begun to face questions about its unity and relevance in the post-Cambodia era. While Cambodia was on balance, a cementing factor in the evolving relationship between ASEAN and the West, the situation in Myanmar, and the human rights questions it posed, seemed to be a recipe for potential discord between ASEAN and its ‘dialogue partners’.

The 1988 incumbency coup led to the suspension of Western and Japanese aid to Myanmar, although Japan partially resumed its aid in the following year. The ASEAN countries, however, saw the Burmese situation in very different terms. Western condemnation of the SLORC’s abuse of human rights and violation of the democratic process was viewed by ASEAN as outside interference in the internal affairs of a regional country. This was of course not the first time that ASEAN had declined to use a country’s human rights record and lack of democratic credentials as a basis for deciding whether or not to engage it diplomatically. ASEAN had chosen not to address the genocidal acts of the Pol Pot regime on similar grounds. ASEAN’s response to the Myanmar situation was to put forward the concept of ‘constructive engagement’ previously employed in a different context in the case of South Africa.

Like ASEAN’s earlier policy on Cambodia, ‘constructive engagement’ was a response to Thailand’s security and other interests. In December 1988, three months after the Myanmar junta (SLORC) had reasserted its power, Thailand’s Army Commander, General Chaovalit Yongchaiyut, became the first foreign leader to visit Myanmar since the coup. The visit was followed by a new economic and security relationship between the two countries. Burmese troops were allowed to cross the Thai border to attack Karen and Mon guerrilla positions. At the same time, Thai logging companies, facing a ban within Thailand, were allowed to operate within the Burmese border. Thai fishing companies negotiated major new contracts in Burmese waters in the Andaman Sea. This led some analysts to suggest a possible quid pro quo between the Thai military and the Burmese junta, whereby the latter could carry out lucrative logging operations (through companies with strong links to the Thai military) within Myanmar in exchange for tolerating Burmese troops’ operations against its ethnic rebels inside Thai territory. Indeed, some years later, the short-lived government of General Suchinda Kaprayoon, after reviewing Thai policy towards Myanmar, concluded that it had to continue the old policy of opposing economic sanctions against Myanmar because the ‘two countries [were] close and share[d] many benefits and interests’.

The nature and scope of the policy of ‘constructive engagement’ remained somewhat obscure. It is useful to look at the year 1992 as a point of origin for this policy, as it was during this year that much of the debate between ASEAN and the West over how to deal with Myanmar took place. Moreover, it was in 1992 that an Indonesian foreign ministry official offered the first explicit definition of the policy. He did so in the following terms:

[w]e are telling them [the Myanmar regime] very quietly, in a Southeast Asian way, without any fanfare, without any public statements: ‘Look, you
are in trouble, let us help you. But you have to change, you cannot continue like this.\textsuperscript{36}

The essence of constructive engagement, in the words of the official, was to refrain from taking steps against the Myanmar junta ‘which embarrass and isolate them’.\textsuperscript{37} Moreover, as noted, a key aim of the policy was to reject interference by the outside powers, especially the Western countries, in Myanmar’s internal affairs. Further, constructive engagement was also moulded in the belief that the possibility of regional implications stemming from the crisis in Myanmar was a Southeast Asian issue to be handled by the regional countries themselves. The Western call to isolate Myanmar and punish it with sanctions was therefore a challenge to ASEAN’s doctrine of both non-interference and regional autonomy.

ASEAN’s policy of constructive engagement had its basis also in the concerns of some of its members regarding the growing international criticism of their record in the area of human rights and democracy. The Myanmar crisis unfolded at a time when human rights and democracy were emerging as a major issue in the relationship between the ASEAN members and their Western ‘dialogue partners’, prompted by the shooting by Indonesian security forces of pro-independence demonstrators in the East Timorese capital of Dili in November 1991. In the midst of an outcry in the international media about the shooting, two Western donor countries, the Netherlands and Canada, suspended aid to Indonesia. While Indonesia retaliated by organising a new aid consortium excluding the Netherlands, Jakarta’s international image suffered a major blow. Other ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia and Singapore, were criticised by human rights watchdogs for their internal security detention laws and lack of press freedom. Faced with loss of jobs to foreign competition (especially East Asian), trade unions and human rights groups in the USA were calling for linking trade privileges for countries such as Malaysia to their provision for workers’ rights. Violent military suppression of minority groups in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia also attracted a great deal of publicity for their human rights implications.

In September 1991, a foreign ministers meeting between ASEAN and the EU in Luxembourg saw serious disagreement over the EU’s insistence that human rights and environmental concerns should be part of any new economic cooperation agreement between ASEAN and the EU.\textsuperscript{38} This position was rejected by ASEAN. Soon thereafter, the Vice-President of the EU Commission warned in Kuala Lumpur that failure to respect human rights would have a ‘severe impact’ on the EU’s relations with developing countries, including ASEAN.\textsuperscript{39} Following the Dili incident, the EU refused to negotiate a new cooperation agreement with ASEAN. Even Japan, which had taken a much softer position than Western countries on the ASEAN states’ human rights record, seemed to disagree with ASEAN on the issue of aid-conditionality. At the Asian regional meeting on human rights in Bangkok in April 1993, Japan took the position that human rights should not be sacrificed to economic growth and that foreign aid would be linked to the human rights performance of the regime in power.
This position was at odds with that of the ASEAN members. Against this backdrop, the policy of constructive engagement became a crucial test of will between ASEAN and the Western countries over the place of human rights and democracy in their political, economic and security relationships.

A key argument against constructive engagement, made not only by the Western governments or human rights advocates, but also by several human rights groups within Southeast Asia, was whether it actually involved a serious effort by ASEAN to persuade Myanmar to undertake political liberalisation. At the Manila PMC in July 1992, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans of Australia contrasted constructive engagement with ASEAN’s diplomacy on the Cambodia conflict, lamenting the fact that ASEAN had chosen not to apply the ‘kind of energy that it demonstrated for so long in seeking to resolve the Cambodian problem’ to address the situation in Myanmar. US Under-Secretary of State Robert Zoellick challenged ASEAN to give substance to constructive engagement by ‘tell[ing] the military regime it must release all political prisoners’ and ‘engag[ing] them in good-faith dialogue to restore constitutional government at an early date’. 40

ASEAN’s diplomatic engagement of the Myanmar regime was limited and half-hearted, at least in the public arena. Only after intense international criticism and direct pressure from its dialogue partners did ASEAN send Raul Manglapus, Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, on an ‘unofficial human rights mission’ to Myanmar in December 1991.41 The mission was largely unsuccessful as the SLORC refused to allow Manglapus to meet with the detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Although ASEAN officials claimed subsequently to have applied private pressure on Myanmar, the extent and effect of this could not be confirmed.42

While officials in ASEAN responded to the criticism of constructive engagement by arguing that the policy had delivered results in extracting concessions from the regime, such as the release of some political prisoners,43 independent analysts argued that the policy had actually little to show for itself. As the Thai newspaper Nation asked: ‘A pertinent question is whether Asean’s “constructive engagement” can make a leopard change its spots.’44 Critics argued that the real driving force behind the policy was the economic interests of some ASEAN members, such as Thailand and Singapore, in Myanmar’s newly liberalised economy.45

ASEAN’s pursuit of constructive engagement was further plagued by intramural differences. ‘Constructive engagement’, in the words of an official source in ASEAN, ‘means that each [ASEAN] country can do what it wants, say what it wants as it sees fit, but not to take a collective six-country position’.46 Intra-ASEAN differences were starkly evident when the July 1992 ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Manila debated the issue of whether to invite Myanmar’s foreign minister to attend as a guest. The Philippines, as the host nation, and Indonesia supported extending an invitation. Indonesia argued that such an invitation would give a new seriousness to ‘constructive engagement’ and would be consistent with ASEAN’s vision of ‘One Southeast Asia’, a regional
community encompassing all ten states of Southeast Asia. But Malaysia resisted the move, arguing that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting was not an appropriate venue for engaging the Myanmar junta in a dialogue. Privately, Malaysian officials hinted their position as one of retaliation against Myanmar’s persecution of the Rohingya Muslims, about 150,000 of whom had fled to Bangladesh by March 1992. As a Muslim nation, Malaysia wished to register solidarity with the Rohingyas, whose plight had been the subject of domestic protest.

Growing international pressure and emerging intra-ASEAN differences were major factors behind ASEAN’s decision to delay conferring observer status on Myanmar at the 1993 ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Singapore. (At the same meeting, Vietnam and Laos acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and secured observer status, while Cambodia’s political situation was still too uncertain for it to be considered for observer status.) At this meeting, Thailand’s Foreign Minister, Prasong Soonsari, acknowledged that the changes brought about by constructive engagement had been ‘slow’. Malaysia’s official position on Myanmar reflected a similar sentiment. It urged ASEAN to demand a timetable for political liberalisation in Myanmar so as to ‘stimulate’ change, rather than to allow change to ‘evolve naturally’.

Ironically, however, Malaysia was to emerge as one of the more outspoken advocates of Myanmar’s admission to ASEAN in 1997, not in the least because it was the host of the ministerial meeting intended to mark the realisation of the ‘One Southeast Asia’ concept on the occasion of ASEAN’s thirtieth anniversary. But divisions over Myanmar persisted in intra-ASEAN deliberations leading up to 31 May 1997, when it was decided to grant full membership to Myanmar. As ASEAN discussed the issue of Burmese membership, Singapore and Indonesia came up with justifications for granting membership on the basis of the non-interference doctrine. Singapore’s Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, argued that the internal affairs of a country were not relevant to membership in ASEAN. As he put it, ‘we have always taken the position that the internal situation of a country is that country’s concern’, and that ‘as far as the internal politics within each country, well, we did not begin Asean by examining that and excluding those that had a different system from ours (sic)’. Even more forcefully, Ali Alatas of Indonesia argued that ‘[I]t is impossible for Asean to apply criteria and conditions for Burma’s entry which have never been applicable for other members in the past.’ Comments by a Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesperson on 10 October 1996 reaffirmed the salience of the non-interference doctrine as the primary justification for granting membership to Myanmar:

A fundamental principle of ASEAN calls for respect for independence and sovereignty and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs. Based on this principle, the member countries regard events that have taken place in Myanmar as entirely that country’s internal affair. When and what countries are to be admitted is ASEAN’s internal business. Stemming from this
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fundamental policy and in its capacity as an ASEAN member, Vietnam shares this view.54

In contrast, the Philippines and Thailand were known to have opposed the move, and there might have been some reluctance on the part of Singapore as well.55 On the eve of the 31 May 1997 ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, Philippine Foreign Minister Domingo Siazon admitted that there was no consensus on the timing of Myanmar’s entry. Even more strikingly, Thailand’s Foreign Minister Prachaub Chaiyasan stated that the country’s internal politics ‘are an important factor to consider’.56 It was clear that Thailand and the Philippines were less enthusiastic about Myanmar’s admission than Malaysia and Indonesia. The Philippine government, conscious that its own domestic political system and NGO community wanted it to take a hardline stand on Myanmar, sought to justify its support for ASEAN’s decision by expressing the hope, as Foreign Minister Siazon put it, that the integration of Myanmar would ‘have a positive impact over the long-term on the human rights situation’.57 Another notable development was the opposition to the move to grant membership to Myanmar by the ASEAN-ISIS group of regional think-tanks, which for the first time broke from the governmental position on a major regional political and security issue by publicly opposing the move, even while it criticised similar opposition by Western academics as ‘interference’ in ASEAN’s internal matters. One factor that appeared to have helped ASEAN to overcome intra-mural differences over Myanmar was the US decision to impose sanctions against Myanmar. The US action made it impossible for ASEAN to delay its admission, since that would imply caving in to US pressure and thereby compromise its goal of regional autonomy. It is clear that the US sanctions were meant to discourage ASEAN from granting membership to Myanmar. Nicholas Burns, the US State Department spokesman, had said: ‘[w]e are trying to use our influence to make the point that Myanmar should be given a stiff message that it is not welcome’.58 However, as one ASEAN-ISIS scholar, Kusuma Snitwongse, pointed out, the US sanctions served to ‘weaken the case against Myanmar’s admission’, causing ASEAN to adopt a ‘sort of defiant position vis-à-vis the West’.59

While ASEAN had consistently invoked its non-interference doctrine in justifying its engagement policy, there were other more political and strategic considerations at work behind the decision to grant membership to Myanmar. Among these was a concern with the growing Chinese influence in the country, evident in the economic and military links between the two countries. By accepting Myanmar as a member, ASEAN was trying to prevent that country from sliding into a Chinese sphere of influence.50

A basic irony of ASEAN’s policy of constructive engagement is that it could not be regarded as strict non-interference. At best, it implied a particular kind of interference in support of the regime. It is hard to believe that the decision to admit Myanmar would not strengthen the domestic position of SLORC vis-à-vis the internal pro-democratic opposition. A strict policy of non-interference would have meant taking a neutral position towards Myanmar. The grant of membership gave the regime a greater sense of international legitimacy. Not surprisingly
therefore, ASEAN’s move was perceived internationally as sanctioning repression. The decision to admit Myanmar was criticised by several media and human rights advocacy groups in Thailand, where the *Nation* described it as ‘a triumph of evil over humanity’, adding that ‘[t]here is a Thai saying that one rotten fish can spoil the whole basket of fish’.61 The most trenchant criticism came from Sukhumbhand Paribatra, a Thai parliamentarian, who argued:

> Because image is important, Asean’s ability to maintain and to enhance its status as an influential diplomatic community will be determined not by the number of members but by the perceived quality of membership, which in turn, is likely to be determined by the quality of new members…. Many groups in the West believe Asean to be a ‘club of dictators’: it is an unjust label, but an early admission of Burma will simply give sustenance to this prejudice…. Why should the Asean governments and peoples have to bear the costs of Slorc’s folly and intransigence?62

The proponents of constructive engagement argued that such a policy would improve Myanmar’s economic position and thereby induce peaceful domestic political change. But this remains to be proven. Even the highly pro-market weekly *The Economist* was sceptical of the argument: ‘Constructive engagement may make sense when dealing with a regime—like China’s—that will respond with long-term economic policies to improve the common man’s lot. It makes no sense if it sustains regimes that practise only repression.’63 ASEAN’s claim that the policy had worked in helping political liberalisation was flatly contradicted by Aung San Suu Kyi when she was finally released from house arrest in 1995. As ASEAN ministers promptly credited the constructive engagement policy for her release, Suu Kyi herself remarked:

> The question is for whom has it been constructive? Was it constructive for the forces of democracy? Was it constructive for the Burmese people in general? Was it constructive for a limited business community? Or was it constructive for SLORC?64

The Myanmar episode showed that while ASEAN very much cherished the attributes of a security community, it had no desire to turn itself into a ‘democratic security community’. Kantian propositions concerning the linkage between democracy and peace have little resonance for ASEAN as a regional organisation. Upholding the norms of non-interference and regional autonomy occupies a more central place in ASEAN’s approach to regional order than acquiring a more positive international image and developing a regional effort to promote human rights and democracy. ASEAN in this respect has proved to be more conservative and sovereignty conscious than regional organisations in Europe, Latin America and even Africa, which have, to varying degrees, accepted the need for intervention to promote human rights and democracy.
The admission of Myanmar has had two major major implications for ASEAN’s norms concerning non-interference. The policy of ‘constructive engagement’ was consistent with this norm but the events leading and subsequent to ASEAN’s admission of Myanmar exposed the political and diplomatic, if not economic, costs of sustaining this norm. (The loss of international goodwill for ASEAN was the main damage, although the EU’s refusal to negotiate a new economic treaty with ASEAN was an economic cost.) Moreover, the intra-ASEAN debate surrounding the admission of Myanmar showed that ASEAN’s prior consensus on the inviolability of this norm was eroding, especially as a result of democratisation within some of its member states. The fact that Thailand and the Philippines, the two most open polities in ASEAN today, were also the least enthusiastic supporters of Myanmar’s admission shows how changes in domestic politics can affect regional norms in ASEAN. Indeed, in late 1997 when a new Thai government (headed by Chuan Leekpai, who took office in the wake of the Asian economic crisis) proposed the idea of ‘flexible engagement’ (later called ‘enhanced interaction’), it was aimed partly at pressuring the regime in Yangon to undertake political liberalisation (apart from addressing future economic downturns, as will be discussed in Chapter 5).

Cambodia 1997–1999: limits to non-interference?

In embracing Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, ASEAN refused to consider the domestic political system of a country as a criterion for membership. This policy was consistent with its norm of non-interference as the basis for interstate relations. But in the case of Cambodia, strict adherence to this norm was severely tested, raising serious doubts concerning its continued relevance.

Since the UN-supervised election in 1993, Cambodia had been under the rule of a coalition government between royalist forces led by Prince Ranarridh and the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP—which included members of the Vietnamese-installed communist regime) led by Hun Sen. The power-sharing arrangement was extremely tenuous, with the two factions squabbling frequently over a variety of issues, especially that of how to deal with the still-insurgent Khmer Rouge faction. On 5–6 July 1997, after complaining that Ranarridh was sheltering former Khmer Rouge soldiers, who had surrendered to his faction of the Cambodian army, in order to build his military strength vis-à-vis the CPP (and thereby gain an advantage in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 1998), Hun Sen ousted the prince and seized control of the Phnom Penh government, thereby creating yet another period of chaos and turmoil in Cambodian history. The episode also dealt a blow to Cambodia’s chances of gaining ASEAN membership in 1997 and to ASEAN’s hopes for realising its dream of ‘One Southeast Asia’ at the time of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the organisation.

When the conflict between Hun Sen and Ranarridh escalated in early 1997, several ASEAN leaders travelled to Cambodia to urge restraint and reconciliation between the two. (Among them were Indonesia’s President Suharto and
Thailand’s Prime Minister Chaowalit Yongchaivudh; the latter’s visit in June 1997 was of symbolic importance since it brought both Ranarridh and Hun Sen to a joint news conference that announced the capture of the Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot.) In the event, ASEAN members reacted with equanimity to the internal turmoil in Cambodia. As signs of a major power struggle in Cambodia became evident, Ali Alatas, speaking on the eve of ASEAN’s foreign ministers meeting on 31 May 1997 to consider the admission of new members, stated that the internal turmoil in Cambodia was no barrier to its entry into ASEAN. On 8 July 1997, after the coup, he was equally cautious: ‘[w]hat’s happening now is a struggle between the two premiers, and is entirely Cambodia’s own internal affair. Cambodia is a sovereign state, people can’t just go in whenever they want.’ At the same time, however, Indonesia suggested convening a special ASEAN foreign ministers meeting to discuss the crisis. (This was a critical move; Suharto had been deeply affronted by Hun Sen’s action, including his stated readiness to forgo ASEAN membership, if its leaders interfered in Cambodian affairs.) The meeting, which convened on 10 July, produced the following agreement:

While reaffirming the commitment to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, they [the ASEAN Foreign Ministers] decided that, in the light of unfortunate circumstances which have resulted from the use of force, the wisest course of action is to delay the admission of Cambodia into Asean until a later date.

The meeting also decided to send a delegation headed by Ali Alatas to King Sihanouk and the two co-premiers, Hun Sen and Ranarridh.

In the course of responding to the Cambodian crisis, ASEAN enunciated, or at least restated, an important principle concerning its attitude towards the use of force with significant implications for its doctrine of non-interference. In justifying the postponement of Cambodia’s membership, Singapore’s Foreign Minister, S.Jayakumar, stated that failure to act would ‘imply that Asean was condoning…the recourse to force to change governments’. Any unconstitutional change of government is cause for concern. Where force is used for an unconstitutional purpose, it is behaviour that Asean cannot ignore or condone…. As a principled and constructive organisation, Asean’s reputation will be diminished if it does not register its dismay and displeasure at certain conduct unacceptable to the international community.

Had this been a case of use of force by one state against another, then ASEAN’s action would have been consistent with its norm of non-use of force. But the Hun Sen coup was a case of one domestic faction using force against another. Thus, Jayakumar’s view suggested a possible shift in principle; that is, a domestic power struggle leading to the forcible ouster of an existing government
would violate an ASEAN norm.\(^72\) It should be noted that ASEAN could and did find a basis for its action in denying Cambodia membership because of its members’ status as signatories to the Paris Peace Agreement. In this sense, the coup was not strictly an ‘internal’ matter to Cambodia. Jayakumar had invoked the Paris Agreement in justifying ASEAN’s decision to send a ministerial delegation to Cambodia.\(^73\) Moreover, ASEAN’s response was partly an attempt to cover the embarrassment suffered by Hun Sen’s blatant defiance of earlier conciliation attempts by leaders such as President Suharto. Had Cambodia already been admitted to ASEAN, it is unlikely that ASEAN would have done anything about it. Furthermore, Jayakumar’s position was not strictly an ASEAN one; it had not been formally enunciated in the same manner by ASEAN as a whole (although Jayakumar restated it as an ASEAN norm’ in 1998, as discussed in the last section of this chapter). But it did introduce an important area of ambiguity about the norms of ASEAN concerning non-interference and non-use of force.

Hun Sen himself saw ASEAN’s action in delaying Cambodia’s membership as constituting a blatant interference in Cambodia’s domestic affairs. He asked ASEAN to ‘stay out of our internal business’.\(^74\) Later, he threatened to withdraw Cambodia’s application to join ASEAN with these words: ‘I am afraid of joining ASEAN because of ASEAN interference in internal affairs’.\(^75\) (Hun Sen’s statement was the first time that a Southeast Asian country had turned down, or threatened to turn down, membership of ASEAN in the post-Cold War period; Vietnam and Myanmar had done so during the formative stages of ASEAN.)

The Jayakumar position was far from a blanket endorsement of collective ASEAN action in matters related to the internal politics of its member states. It disapproved of the forcible ouster of an ‘established government.’ It did not disapprove of instances when a government itself would use force against its own people. (Such disapproval, which would address criticism of ASEAN’s anti-human rights orientation, would be a much more serious breach of non-interference.) However, if the principle of opposing an unconstitutional use of force to change established governments were to be regarded as ASEAN policy, then it could, theoretically speaking, apply to coup d’états. For example, if a coup against the regime in Indonesia or in Thailand were to take place, would ASEAN oppose the new government? This remains to be seen.

In essence, ASEAN’s decision to delay Cambodia’s membership reaffirmed ASEAN’s concern with regime security, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, was an important source of its norm of non-interference. What was perhaps new was that, for the first time, this concern with regime security and a principle concerning the use of force in domestic politics had been publicly articulated, in this case by a member country (Singapore), rather than being indicated implicitly.

It is important to note that while the decision to delay Cambodia’s membership and send a mission to resolve the crisis might be seen as a mild form of interference, ASEAN did not join the USA or Japan in taking more serious punitive action against the Hun Sen regime, such as a suspension of aid. ASEAN
insisted that the act of delaying membership and sending a delegation did not constitute a violation of non-interference. Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, insisted that ‘[w]e did not pass judgement on who is right, who is wrong, who is legitimate or who is illegitimate or whether there was a coup d’etat’. He also denied that ASEAN’s reaction constituted interference: ‘We don’t want to interfere but we have the right and the duty, as ASEAN foreign ministers, to discuss what are the implications of this.’

But as Hun Sen was blaming ASEAN for too much interference in the affairs of Cambodia, the doctrine of non-interference came under pressure from an unexpected quarter. It came from those who thought that because of its excessive deference to the non-interference doctrine, ASEAN had not done enough to prevent the Paris accords from unravelling. Chief among these critics was the then Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. In a startling commentary, Ibrahim acknowledged that ‘[o]ur non-involvement in the reconstruction of Cambodia actually contributed to the deterioration and final collapse of national reconciliation’. To prevent similar state collapses in Southeast Asia in the future, he proposed the idea of ‘constructive interventions’ including the following steps: (1) direct assistance to firm up electoral processes; (2) an increased commitment to legal and administrative reforms; (3) the development of human capital; (4) the general strengthening of civil society and the rule of law. According to this view, a framework of constructive intervention by ASEAN and other members of the international community in keeping Cambodia committed to the path of national reconciliation would be in the interests of ASEAN, since it cannot afford to have a ‘failed state’ as a member.

Whether the idea of constructive intervention actually amounted to a break from the doctrine of interference is questionable. The measures proposed by Ibrahim took the form of pro-active and positive assistance to be carried out only with the consent of the recipient state. They did not imply any kind of coercion or pressure which might be construed as an infringement of the latter’s sovereignty. The director of a Malaysian think-tank closely allied to Ibrahim conceded that the concept of constructive intervention

in no way violates ASEAN’s principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of another country. What it advocates is that ASEAN must proactively involve itself in the resolution of problems that occur in its own neighborhood, usually with the consent of the member concerned.

Nonetheless, the idea of constructive intervention was met with a cool response from sovereignty-minded ASEAN policy-makers. Thailand was most supportive of the concept, however. Its foreign minister contended that

[as Asean becomes more open, as growing interdependence means events in one country can send shock waves throughout the region, we need to rethink some of our most basic assumptions, ranging from the meaning of development and cooperation to the implications of non-intervention.]
Later, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, it was Thailand that proposed the idea
of ‘flexible engagement’ and ‘enhanced interaction’, which envisaged a more
‘intrusive’ form of regionalism in ASEAN.82 (This was not specifically oriented
towards Cambodia, but was proposed as a general framework for ASEAN in
the wake of the Asian economic crisis.) Indonesia’s foreign minister was cool
towards the idea, maintaining that while ASEAN needed to be more pro-active,
Ibrahim’s comment was ‘not an Asean policy’.83 Such diverse reactions were a
clear indication that a more intrusive political and security role by ASEAN
would strain the existing consensus on its norms and approaches to regional
order.

It is also noteworthy that Vietnam’s position appeared to differ from those of
the rest of ASEAN’s members on the question of postponing Cambodia’s
membership. Vietnam’s Foreign Ministry suggested in a statement that while it
supported the consensus decision by ASEAN to delay Cambodia’s membership,
it would have preferred to have ASEAN allow Cambodia to join along with
Laos and Myanmar. Moreover, Deputy Foreign Minister Vu Khoan told a
newspaper that Hanoi wanted to see stability in Cambodia, which was interpreted
as implying support for Hun Sen.84 In New York, Prince Ranarridh’s decision to
meet with all ASEAN envoys to the UN, except the Vietnamese, could also be
seen as a sign of how Vietnam’s position was perceived by him.

Finally, the circumstances leading to ASEAN’s decision to delay Cambodia’s
membership revealed one of the major pitfalls of expansion. As an editorial in
the *Jakarta Post* put it:

The current developments in Cambodia could serve as a lesson for ASEAN,
that although the strategic advantages of accomplishing the long-standing
ambition of an ASEAN 10 by the inclusion of Burma, Laos and Cambodia,
are undebatable, swift action is not always the most expedient.85

When ASEAN adopted the doctrine of non-interference as a fundamental basis
of regionalism in Southeast Asia, it was giving expression to the fears and insecurities
of all newly independent states concerning their sovereignty. The doctrine was
meant to protect ASEAN members from external meddling, rather than internal
collapse. This was at a time when ASEAN members were acutely concerned with
their survival in the face of perceived attempts at subversion, from both within
and without the region (particularly by the communist powers, China and
Vietnam). After several decades of state building and the experience of living
within the state system, ASEAN members, at least some of them, have displayed
a greater self-confidence about their sovereign statehood. A more relaxed attitude
towards non-interference may not be necessarily incompatible with the requirements
for regional order, however. And it is clear that should ASEAN adopt a policy of
intervention, it would not take the form of coercive interference in the domestic
politics of a member state, but of pro-active and supportive assistance to prevent
the collapse of an existing regime and to maintain internal stability in the state.
This would be consistent with ASEAN’s traditional pro-regime bias, which, as
seen in Chapter 2, has been a key basis of ASEAN regionalism in general, and the doctrine of non-interference in particular.

Cambodia was finally admitted to ASEAN on 30 April 1999. The Secretary-General of ASEAN described the event as the fulfilment of the ‘vision of our Founding Fathers to unite all nations of Southeast Asia under one ASEAN roof’. This step towards a collective regional identity notwithstanding, the events leading to its admission had been quite controversial. It had raised questions about ASEAN’s ability to handle the burdens of an expanded membership.

The impact of expansion on ASEAN’s norms and identity

While membership expansion offers several benefits to ASEAN, it has also posed a serious test of its norms. Accession by Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation committed them to the regional ‘code of conduct’ on territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes. This commitment could facilitate intra-regional conflict management. For example, Vietnam’s differences with the ASEAN six are now more manageable than when Vietnam was outside the ASEAN framework. ASEAN expansion has also encouraged subregional economic cooperation, such as the ‘growth triangle’ concept, which serves as a confidence-building mechanism in interstate relations. Expansion promotes transnational contacts between societies and peoples, helping to bridge gaps in perceptions of self-interest and promoting a greater sense of regionalism.

Expansion is especially beneficial to smaller states like Cambodia and Laos which, like Brunei and Singapore before them, could now expect to be treated as equal partners with their larger and more powerful neighbours. For Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, ASEAN membership marked the end of their isolation in international politics. ASEAN membership made it increasingly difficult for Washington to rationalise and continue its policy of non-relations with Hanoi. As ASEAN members, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar have been able to take advantage of the coordination and collective bargaining capacity at multilateral institutions and secure greater resources for their reconstruction and development efforts. The new members are also able to engage the major powers of the world through the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences (ASEAN-PMC), which would be difficult for small states like Cambodia or Laos left to their own devices. Similarly, new members can pursue their security interests within the ARF, which includes all the major players affecting regional security and stability in the Asia Pacific region.

On the other hand, the circumstances surrounding Cambodia’s membership process suggest that the doctrine of non-interference could be facing an erosion as a result of membership expansion. (This adds to other challenges to the non-interference doctrine in the wake of the regional economic crisis discussed in Chapter 5.) This development is suggested by the apparently contradictory message in a statement by the Foreign Minister of Singapore, S.Jayakumar, at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in July 1998 at which he outlined the norms of ASEAN:
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- Sovereign equality and decisions by consultations and consensus;
- Non-interference in each other’s internal affairs;
- Avoidance of the use of force to change established governments or an internationally recognised political order;
- Open economies;
- Making ASEAN the cornerstone of our foreign policies.

What is striking about the above list is the possibility of a certain amount of tension between the second and third principles, which was evident in ASEAN’s response to the Cambodia crisis of 1997. How can one maintain a policy of non-interference yet still reject a change of government in a member state brought about by the use of force? In a similar vein, expansion poses additional challenges to ASEAN’s norm of non-use of force in settling disputes. It imposes new security burdens on ASEAN, including territorial disputes arising from unsettled maritime boundaries and overlapping exclusive economic zones. Intra-ASEAN ties now face additional bilateral problems, such as Thai-Vietnamese, Vietnamese-Cambodian and Thai-Burmese disputes over territory and resources. At the same time, whether the new members will abide by ASEAN’s norms of non-use of force and pacific settlement of disputes remains uncertain. For example, the Thai newspaper, Nation, has raised doubts as to whether, as an ASEAN member, Myanmar will live up to ‘regional or international norms of conduct and behaviour’. Citing its occupation of a disputed islet in the Moei River, another Thai paper has wondered if Myanmar would respect ASEAN’s norm of non-use of force. The fact that Vietnam is involved in border disputes with a number of neighbouring states, including Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, increases the burden of intra-mural territorial disputes on ASEAN regionalism. Compounding the problem is the possibility that expansion makes it more difficult for ASEAN to maintain the ASEAN Way. Whether the new members, lacking familiarity in the highly informal and interpersonal way in which ASEAN conducts its business, can be ‘socialised’ into the ASEAN Way is by no means assured.

Expansion also imposes new burdens on ASEAN’s external relations which will further test its norm of regional autonomy while maintaining constructive relations with the major external powers. Relations with the EU have been strained by the latter’s vehement refusal to include Myanmar in its cooperation agreements with ASEAN. Moreover, expansion has drawn ASEAN into Sino-Vietnamese rivalry and further raises the importance of the South China Sea dispute in ASEAN’s security challenges. As one commentary suggests, ASEAN’s ‘diplomatic border’ has now been moved ‘right up to the frontier with China’. Hanoi lost no time in publicising the ‘common fear of Chinese policy in the South China Sea’ that it shares with certain ASEAN members. Vietnamese leaders suggested that ASEAN’s decision to see Vietnam as part of the grouping was due to ‘economic and defence reasons’, and was linked to ASEAN’s fears about China’s aggressive posture on the Spratly Islands dispute. But Hanoi’s bid to develop an anti-Chinese front could well exacerbate existing divisions...
among ASEAN states over perceptions of China, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. Joining ASEAN may well drag Cambodia into a future conflict between China and ASEAN states over issues such as the South China Sea dispute. Given its close ties with China, it may not be in Cambodia’s interest to endorse a hardline stand by an ASEAN member, or by the grouping as a whole, against Chinese policy in the South China Sea.

Membership expansion has major implications for regional identity building. One area affected in policy coordination against internal threats, as noted in Chapter 1, is security cooperation against them which can contribute to the development of security communities. ASEAN’s expansion may enhance regime security in new members. In the past, political dissident groups challenging central authority in Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos have been able to secure sanctuary in neighbouring states. This has been especially true of Cambodia where successive regimes have been undermined by the ability of groups opposing them to secure sanctuary in Thailand and Vietnam. Under the ASEAN framework, neighbours are obliged to refuse access to any rebel group fighting central authority in the new members.

Expansion may also add to regional economic interdependence, another source of collective identity. It may raise the volume of both intra-regional trade and ASEAN’s total trade. The participation of the new members in the AFTA may contribute to ASEAN’s collective competitiveness and expand the appeal of ASEAN’s internal market to foreign investors, and prevent the diversion of investment to other areas such as China and India. For ASEAN, the economic liberalisation programmes of the new members provide new economic opportunities at a time when traditional Western markets are turning protectionist. An expanded ASEAN also helps the competitiveness of the original ASEAN six by providing them with a cheaper source of raw materials and production locations, an important benefit as they graduate out of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). In particular, the original ASEAN six stand to benefit from the GSP privileges of the new members (except Myanmar which does not enjoy GSP privileges as a result of Western sanctions) by using them as export platforms to the rest of the world for textiles, garments and the electronic assembly industry. It also enables them to free their resources for developing more sophisticated industries in keeping with their evolving comparative advantage. The new members are also expected to derive major benefits from expansion (although they will suffer from a loss of customs revenues). It will end their economic isolation (a common feature of all of them, albeit for different reasons). They benefit from investments from the original ASEAN six, especially in their labour-intensive manufacturing sectors as well as in infrastructure. Moreover, the new members can take advantage of ASEAN’s collective bargaining system; membership will mean that their access to world markets can be negotiated multilaterally, rather than individually.

Despite these potential benefits, membership expansion poses some serious challenges to ASEAN’s unity. Of particular importance here are the different levels of economic development between the ASEAN six and the new members.
ASEAN had gone through a membership expansion before, when Brunei joined it following independence from Britain in 1984. But the entry of a small, rich and stable Brunei had been a remarkably uneventful affair, compared with the circumstances involving the admission of poor and unstable Myanmar and Cambodia. The addition of the three Indochinese states and Myanmar creates a real danger of the emergence of a two-tier ASEAN of haves and have-nots.98

Given the concerns of the new members with regime security, their inclusion into ASEAN also introduces a greater diversity of political outlook within the grouping, especially over questions of human rights and democracy. These differences, along with a failure to relate to the ASEAN Way of diplomacy, contribute to possible disillusionment and alienation on the part of the new members and their questioning of the benefits of ASEAN membership. Add their misgivings (especially on the part of Myanmar and Vietnam) about the recent debate in ASEAN about diluting the non-interference doctrine (see the last section of Chapter 5) and there could be a de facto polarisation within ASEAN between the new and the old members. Such a dynamic may already be seen in Vietnam’s convening of a summit of Indochinese countries prior to the ASEAN summit in Manila in November 1999.99

In general, expansion has both enhanced and eroded ASEAN’s progress towards a security community. Several of its key norms, including non-interference, non-use of force and regional autonomy, are facing new tests, and the overall burden on regional problem-solving processes and practices has increased. These burdens have a potential to unravel the community-building process in ASEAN. ASEAN’s sense of collective identity, a crucial aspect of security communities, has been strengthened somewhat, but its extent remains uncertain and its overall impact problematic.

While hailed as a major step in regional identity building, ASEAN’s expansion has turned out to be highly problematic. Early in the expansion process, Ali Alatas of Indonesia had anticipated that expansion might create new problems for ASEAN, but it would also increase ASEAN’s 'ability to deal with these problems now that we are together, not divided nations of seven plus three'.100 But a less sanguine view of ASEAN’s expansion is equally plausible; a view articulated by the Bangkok Post ‘there is also the distinct possibility that the happy 10 will become something of a dysfunctional family unless the more progressive members grasp the formidable challenges that the three newcomers, and Slorc (sic) in particular, present’.101

Notes and references


8 Donald Weatherbee, ASEAN the big Loser in Thai Race for Profit in Indochina’, *Straits Times*, 5 May 1989.


10 Cited in *Straits Times*, 2 June 1989.


17 *Straits Times*, 13 December 1990.

18 *Straits Times*, 23 November 1990.


25 Ibid.


30 Hoang Anh Tuan, ‘Why Hasn’t Vietnam Gained ASEAN Membership?’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 15, no. 3 (December 1993), p. 283.
31 A precedent was set when the ASEAN-led ARF discussed the Spratlys issue on a multilateral basis despite China’s opposition. *Straits Times*, 26 May 1995, p. 4. See also comments by former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, *Straits Times*, 1 April 1995, p. 3.


36 *Straits Times*, 26 August 1992, p. 27.

37 Ibid.


41 *New Straits Times*, 3 December 1991.

42 For example, Singapore claimed that before hosting the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in July 1993, it had invited a delegation of Myanmar cabinet ministers led by SLORC’s First Secretary Lt-Gen. Khin Nyunt as part of ASEAN’s constructive engagement policy. The visit was used to tell SLORC ‘how much the world has changed’ and convey international concerns about Myanmar’s political situation: ‘Singapore has expressed concern to junta leaders’, *Straits Times*, 29 July 1993, p. 20.


46 *Straits Times*, 26 August 1992, p. 27.

47 Ibid.


52 Ibid.


57 Kulachada Chaipipat, ‘ASEAN Agrees to Burma’s Entry’, *Nation*, 1 June 1997 (from BurmanetNews, 2 June 1997).


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61 ‘Shameful for ASEAN to Embrace Burma’, Nation (Editorial), 1 June 1997.
65 This is in marked contrast to the policies of the EU as well as the Organization of American States which now makes democratic governance a criterion for membership in the organisation.
66 In the May 1993 election, the Cambodian People’s Party led by Hun Sen lost to Ranarridh’s FUNCINPEC by a margin of fifty-eight to fifty-one. However, the CPP refused to accept the result, making no secret of its reluctance to hand over the reins of power. It demanded new elections in four provinces, accused UNTAC of bias, and threatened mutiny by its powerful army. Ranariddh refused to serve ‘side by side’ with Hun Sen as Deputy Prime Minister, as initially envisaged under a plan devised by Prince Sihanouk. Although the two finally agreed to form a coalition government with Ranarridh as the First Prime Minister and Hun Sen as the Second Prime Minister, the CPP maintained a strong position within the coalition government. FUNCINPEC ministers complained of an inability to effect their policies due to resistance from the CPP-dominated bureaucracy. As I pointed out in an article in 1994, ‘against this backdrop, the eventual breakdown of the coalition and return of hardline CPP elements to power could not be ruled out’. Amitav Acharya, ‘Cambodia, the UN and the Problems of Peace’, Pacific Review, vol. 7, no. 3 (1994), pp. 297–308.

The stalemate in Cambodia resulted from the fact that no side was able to win the two-thirds majority required to have total authority to shape the terms of the new constitution. Though the overall ‘winner’, FUNCINPEC remained poorly organised and militarily weak. Moreover, without an overall majority in the 120 seat Constituent Assembly, it could not alone dictate Cambodia’s political direction. While it agreed to co-habitate with the CPP in forming a Government of National Unity, the interests of the two uneasy partners vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge were not congruent. FUNCINPEC saw the continued existence of the Khmer Rouge as a useful counter to the predominant military power of the CPP.

Indeed, it was the Khmer Rouge question which led to the eventual collapse of the power-sharing arrangement in Cambodia. As the Khmer Rouge disintegrated as a political force, Hun Sen accused Ranarridh of accepting the surrender of Khmer Rouge soldiers and rehabilitating them within his own security apparatus so that he could build up his own military strength vis-à-vis the CPP in the lead-up to the 1998 parliamentary election. Ranarridh for his part accused Hun Sen of engineering a revolt against his leadership within the FUNCINPEC ranks.

67 Ian Stewart, ‘Conflicting Signals Remain Over Burma’s Admission’, South China Morning Post, 31 May 1997 (Internet).
68 Jakarta Post, 8 July 1997, p. 1.
70 Ibid.
73 Ibid., p. 29.
74 Ibid., p. 29.
77 Jakarta Post, 10 July 1997, p. 1.
79 Ibid.
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82 For details of the Thai initiative, see: Amitav Acharya, ‘Realism, Institutionalism and the Asian Economic Crisis’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 21, no. 1 (April 1999), pp.1–29.


84 *Straits Times* 15 July 1997, p. 19.


86 ‘Statement by the Secretary-General of ASEAN Welcoming the Kingdom of Cambodia as the Tenth Member State of ASEAN’, 30 April 1999 <http://www.aseansec.org/www.aseansec.org/secgen/acca...> (accessed 2 December, 1999). Whether ASEAN’s founders actually envisaged an ASEAN of ten member states is questionable, however. While they did leave (in the text of the founding Bangkok Declaration of 1967) membership in the organisation open to ‘all States in the South-East Asian region subscribing to the…aims, principles and purposes’ of ASEAN, they also wanted ASEAN, they also wanted to ‘open the doors’ of ASEAN to Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and both North and South Vietnam. See: Ranjit Gill, *ASEAN: Coming of Age* (Singapore: Sterling Corporate Services, 1987), p. 15. Ceylon did not take up the offer and, ironically, its subsequent application to join ASEAN was rejected by the latter on the ground that it did not belong to Southeast Asia.


92 ‘Shameful of ASEAN to Embrace Burma’, *Nation* (Editorial), 1 June 1997.


97 For an excellent study of the economic implications of an expanded ASEAN, which is the main source for the discussion in this paragraph, see: *The New ASEANs: Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia and Laos* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1997).

98 This has been a concern in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. See: Barry Wain, Asean’s Split Personality’, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 24 December 1998.

99 Cambodian officials believe that the Indochina leaders meeting was a Vietnamese response to the Thai effort to dilute the non-interference doctrine, signifying growing Thai-Vietnamese rivalry over influence in Indochina (author’s discussion with a former Cambodian minister, Toronto, 15 November 1999).

100 Kulachada Chaipipat, ‘ASEAN Agrees to Burma’s Entry’, *Nation*, 1 June 1997 (from Burmanet News, 2 June 1997).

Security communities emerge when a group of states collectively renounce violence as a means of resolving their differences with an attendant significant muting of disputes among them. ASEAN came to exhibit such characteristics in its diplomatic role during the Cambodia conflict. As discussed in the previous chapter, ASEAN’s collective action over Cambodia had a salutary effect on intra-ASEAN relations. Unity against an external challenge helped to divert attention from intra-mural differences. As early as 1982, S.Dhanabalan, the Foreign Minister of Singapore, was claiming that intra-ASEAN conflicts had ‘either become irrelevant or been muted considerably’.\(^1\) In 1986, Dr Noordin Sopiee, Head of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies of Malaysia, had claimed that the ‘sum total’ of ASEAN’s contribution to regional peace and stability:

has been to bring the ASEAN area to the brink of what Karl Deutsch has called a pluralistic security community. Such a system is one at peace, where no nation continues to accept war or violence as an instrument of policy against another community member and where no actor seriously prepares for war or violence against another. There is no guarantee that such a situation will be sustained in the future. Peace is always a constant struggle. But to come close to being a security community from a starting point so distant within a time span so comparatively short is no mean achievement. Admittedly the ASEAN security community has in part been the result of other factors, not the least of which was the perception of extra-ASEAN threats. But without the existence of ASEAN there would today be no such quasi-security community. And history tells us that common external threats can lead to division as well as unity.\(^2\)

Dr Noordin Sopiee’s characterisation of ASEAN as a quasi-security community was a qualified one. It was also premature in two important respects.\(^3\) First there was doubt as to whether intra-ASEAN conflicts had been resolved or had been merely ‘swept under the carpet’. There were doubts too as to whether the cohesion generated by Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia would translate
into long-term and ‘dependable’ expectations of peaceful conduct in intra-regional relations. Indeed, as the solidarity induced by the Cambodia conflict began to fade, new challenges testing ASEAN’s norms concerning peaceful conduct began to appear.

This chapter discusses the evolution of intra-ASEAN relations in the post-Cold War era. It identifies the security challenges confronting ASEAN, including intra- and extra-mural territorial disputes and the prospects for a regional arms race, and assesses the extent to which ASEAN’s norms concerning dispute settlement (the first part of the matrix in Figure 1.2) and pacific conduct have mattered in addressing these problems. Two other key issues in intra-ASEAN relations are also examined with a view to ascertaining whether ASEAN members have continued to adhere to their established norms and practices. The first of these is economic cooperation, guided by the norms of the ASEAN Way (including ‘soft institutionalism’). The second area is intra-ASEAN defence cooperation, hitherto guided by the norm of bilateralism. Apart from shedding light on norm compliance, these issues are also important to measuring intra-regional interdependence (itself crucial to security community building) and ascertaining identity formation in ASEAN, as they provide indications of whether ASEAN is developing a greater resort to multilateralism. The final section of this chapter will examine the tension between the principle of sovereignty (and its corollary, the non-interference doctrine) and demands by some ASEAN members for a more interventionist approach to regional transnational issues, which emerged especially in the wake of the economic downturn during 1997–1999. The ensuing debate on this issue affects not only ASEAN’s capacity for collective regional problem solving, but also the sanctity of its norms and its potential to develop a collective identity.

Intra-regional conflicts and conflict management

The Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia in 1991 was hailed as settling the last major conflict in the region. There remained a number of sources of interstate and regional tensions in Southeast Asia, however. These sources may be divided into three categories. The first concerns the spillover effect of domestic conflicts, especially ethnic, political and ideological challenges to state structure and regime security. The decline or collapse of the region’s transboundary communist movements, such as the Communist Party of Malay, or the North Kalimantan Communist Party, had reduced the spillover potential of one major type of intra-state conflict, but a number of domestic separatist movements have continued to have cross-border security implications. Such separatism has been sustained in Indonesia (Aceh), Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia. During the 1980s and 1990s, the exodus of refugees from Aceh to Malaysia became a highly sensitive issue in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, while Manila’s suspicion that elements in Malaysia’s state of Sabah were providing support for Moro separatists in Mindanao had led Philippine politicians to take a hard line on completing a formal renunciation of the claim to Sabah. In a
similar vein, suspicions continued in Thailand over Malaysia’s alleged sympathy for Muslim separatists in the south of the country. Myanmar’s membership in ASEAN has compounded ASEAN’s problems concerning the transboundary spillover of internal political conflicts. The pursuit by the Myanmar military of Karen refugees fleeing to Thailand (estimated to be about 100,000 in 1996–1997) led to military tensions between the member countries.4

A second source of intra-ASEAN conflict relates to disputes over territory. These include the Malaysia-Singapore dispute over the Pulau Batu Puteh/Pedra Branca Island in the Singapore Strait,5 the Malaysia-Indonesia dispute over the Sipadan and Litigan Islands in the Sulawesi Sea near the Sabah-Kalimantan border, the Thai-Malaysia dispute regarding their common border, the Malaysia-Brunei dispute over Limbang and the lingering Philippines-Malaysia dispute over Sabah. Additionally, a number of disputes exist in the maritime arena over issues such as boundary demarcation, exclusive economic zones, fishing rights and resource exploitation. Indeed, the majority of maritime boundaries in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand are in dispute (Table 5.1).6 This situation has led to interstate tensions bordering on violence, exemplified by the arrest in April 1988 by the Malaysian Navy of forty-nine Filipino fishermen, and the clash in early 1994 between Thai and Cambodian naval vessels in the Gulf of Thailand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The northern Andaman Sea</th>
<th>Burma and India</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The eastern Gulf of Thailand</td>
<td>Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The southwestern Gulf of Thailand</td>
<td>Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An area north, west and east of Natuna Islands</td>
<td>Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-shore Brunei</td>
<td>Brunei, Malaysia, possibly China, possibly Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gulf of Tonkin</td>
<td>China and Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spratly Islands</td>
<td>Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, China and Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arafura Sea</td>
<td>Indonesia and Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There are several outstanding border issues between Vietnam and some of the other ASEAN member states, notably Malaysia and Indonesia, which may test intra-mural peace. Indonesia and Vietnam are in dispute over the continental shelf of the Natuna Islands in the South China Sea that once led Indonesia to consider the ‘possibility of facing a sea battle in the South China Sea’.7 Thailand and Vietnam contest maritime boundaries in the Gulf of Thailand, although in February 1992, Hanoi publicly stated its desire to reach an agreement on the joint development of disputed areas similar to one it had concluded with Malaysia.8 Little progress has been made in resolving border demarcation disputes
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between Thailand and Laos, an issue that has led to armed clashes between the two countries in the last decade. Only 58 km of the 2500 km land border between Thailand and Burma have been demarcated.

Third, relations between Southeast Asian countries are also tested by lingering animosities which have ethnic, cultural, religious and nationalist roots. The case of Singapore-Malaysia relations provides perhaps the clearest illustration of some of these types of conflicts. The two countries have managed to live with each other since the bitter separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965, but periodic tensions have underscored the fragility of their bilateral relationship. The almost hysterical reaction in Malaysia to the visit by Israel’s President Chaim Herzog to Singapore in 1986 is a case in point. Three years later, Singapore’s offer of limited military facilities to the USA, in an apparent effort to share the ‘burden’ of the US bases in the Philippines, prompted Ahmad Badawi, then Malaysia’s Defence Minister, to remind Malaysians that Singapore continued to perceive Malaysia ‘as a threat to [its] existence’, and in this context, ‘the [Singapore] offer…[might be] directed as a deterrence directed against us’. Another blow to Malaysia-Singapore defence ties was Kuala Lumpur’s decision to suspend its bilateral exercises programme with Singapore’s armed forces after discovering a Singapore spy-ring in late 1989. Relations hit a new low in March 1997 over comments contained in an affidavit by Singapore’s Senior Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, regarding the lack of public safety in Johor Bahru. Lee’s comments, for which he later apologised ‘unreservedly’, drew strong reactions from Malaysian politicians and the public, including calls for a suspension of the water pact which allows Singapore to draw some 1.5 billion litres of water per day from Johor.

The vulnerability of intra-ASEAN bilateral ties to neo-nationalist sentiments (which have been subsumed within more direct causes, such as the treatment of migrant workers) is further exemplified by the crisis in Singapore-Philippine relations in March 1995 over the execution in the city-state of a Filipina maid who had been found guilty of murder. After Singapore had carried out the sentence, despite a plea for clemency from President Ramos, the Philippines retaliated by recalling its ambassador to Singapore (drawing a similar response from Singapore), cancelling a visit by its armed forces chief to Singapore, and postponing a joint naval exercise.

While none of these episodes has produced military conflict, they have disrupted security relations and provoked a great deal of loose talk of military retaliation. One symbolic example was the evacuation by the Philippines Air Force from Singapore during the 1995 crisis of Filipina maids who had chosen to leave. Invocation of the ‘ASEAN spirit’ has been a factor in moderating and diffusing these controversies but it has been effective only at the highest political levels. At the grassroots, concerns about ‘ASEANness’ has mattered little. This disparity attests to the elitist and state-centric nature of ASEAN regionalism, which is yet to be matched by a strong sense of community at the societal level.

Security communities are not marked by the absence of conflict per se, but by the ability of societies and governments to manage them peacefully.
periodic tensions, ASEAN leaders have discounted the prospect of armed confrontation over territorial disputes. As a Malaysian Deputy Foreign Minister, Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan, once claimed, ‘[w]e may have problems but they are not that serious enough to develop into war-like confrontation…we do not at any time ever envisage that we should act tough and use military means to solve our problems with our neighbours’.13 This does not mean, however, that such disputes have not featured military deployments, exemplified in the dispatch of naval units by Indonesia and Malaysia near the disputed islands of Sipadan and Ligitan,14 and the aforementioned military incidents over fishing jurisdiction between Malaysia and the Philippines.

In conflict management, there have been indications that the ASEAN Way, characterised by an avoidance of legal and formal procedures, has been unravelling. This may be adduced from the decision by Singapore and Malaysia in September 1994 to refer their dispute over Pedra Branca to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).15 Their initiative was followed by a corresponding one by Malaysia and Indonesia in early 1997 over their dispute over the Sipadan and Litigan Islands.16 The Malaysia-Indonesia case was significant in that, while Kuala Lumpur had proposed such judicial arbitration three years earlier, Jakarta had wanted to exhaust all diplomatic options before resorting to it. More importantly, Jakarta had indicated that if the dispute was to be subject to any form of third-party mediation, then it should be one ‘which we ourselves have established’, a reference to the High Council provided for under the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.17 This was the first time that an ASEAN member country had publicly advocated resort to that mechanism to settle an intra-mural dispute. The agreement to seek redress through international judicial arbitration is consistent with the ASEAN members’ commitment to the norm concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes, but it represented a departure from an avoidance of formal mechanisms, characteristic of the ASEAN Way, and a detraction from its norm of seeking regional solutions to regional problems.

Another important development concerning the emergence of legal mechanisms for dispute settlement is the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone Treaty. Under the Treaty, disputes regarding its interpretation are to be settled by peaceful means, including negotiation, mediation, enquiry and conciliation. If no settlement can be reached within one month, then the dispute may be referred to the ICJ. Despite the availability of this legal mechanism, ASEAN officials have stressed the importance of political dialogue as a means of dispute settlement. Legal procedures are to be used only as a last resort. Nonetheless, the Treaty marks a turning point in ASEAN’s approach to regional security cooperation, especially its hitherto reluctance to embrace formal and legalistic mechanisms for arms control, including the provision for such mechanisms in its Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (the High Council provision discussed in Chapter 2).

The Asian economic crisis from mid-1997 exacerbated intra-ASEAN tensions. Nowhere was this dynamic better illustrated than in Singapore’s relationship with its two larger Malay neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia. As a country
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relatively less affected by the crisis, Singapore was perceived by these two neighbours as less than sincere in wishing to help them to ride out the crisis. Malaysia’s frustrations in securing financial assistance from Singapore that might have reduced its need for seeking costly and conditional outside help created greater resentment. The deterioration of Singapore-Indonesia relations was even more significant since Singapore’s offer of aid was not sufficient to over-come Indonesian ill-feelings. Despite an offer of over US $5 billion in assistance, Indonesia’s President Habibie openly criticised Singapore as not being ‘a friend in need’.18 (The real reason for Habibie’s anger had to do with Lee Kuan Yew’s earlier criticism of the choice of Habibie as Vice-President by former President Suharto, which Lee implied would be poorly received by the markets and so hinder Indonesia’s recovery.)

The Singapore-Malaysia row, aggravated by a dispute over relocation of their customs and immigration facilities, spilled over to their defence relationship, with Malaysia pulling out of a joint exercise scheduled in September under the Five Power Defence Arrangements. Bilateral military cooperation suffered a further blow in September 1998 when Malaysia rescinded a long-standing agreement that allowed Singaporean military and rescue planes to fly through its air space without prior authorisation.19 Dr Mahathir hinted darkly that Malaysia would like to ‘take back our territory bit by bit’ from Singapore.20 Although Singapore denied any fear of a military conflict with its neighbours, it took care to increase its defence preparedness.21

Against this backdrop, ASEAN has presented the image of a house divided in the wake of the Asian crisis. Although outright war did not break out among the ASEAN members, the crisis cast a shadow over ASEAN’s potential to evolve into a mature security community.

The Spratly Islands dispute

The Spratlys dispute is widely viewed by ASEAN governments as the major ‘flashpoint of conflict’ in post-Cold War Southeast Asia. It also poses a serious test of ASEAN’s unity and to its norms concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Spratly Islands group, consisting of over 230 islets, reefs, shoals and sand banks, is located in the southern part of the South China Sea covering a vast area of about 250,000 square kilometres.22 Their significance is magnified by the presence of natural resources in the area (such as manganese nodules, fish and oil, although the commercially exploitable potential of the last remains to be proven), as well as their strategic location straddling some of the world’s most important sea lanes.

It was Indonesia, and not ASEAN as a group, which took the lead in developing an informal and non-official approach to the conflict in the form of a series of workshops aimed at ‘managing potential conflicts in the South China Sea’. Jakarta, with Canadian support, has sought to project its South China Sea initiative as an example of ASEAN’s role in regional conflict management.23 However, despite its endorsement by ASEAN members, the South China Sea
Workshops cannot be considered a collective ASEAN initiative. Moreover, for tactical political reasons, Indonesia could not develop the Workshops into an exclusively ASEAN forum. China, Taiwan and Vietnam were not invited to the first Workshop, which focused on developing a common ASEAN position on the issue. Indonesia and others soon realised that it might never be possible to unite the views of ASEAN in light of conflicting claims between some of its members. At the second Workshop in 1990 in Bandung in July 1991, the ASEAN six were joined by China, Taiwan, Vietnam and Laos. The Indonesian initiative came to involve the states of the South China Sea region.

The Workshop series has deliberately avoided dealing with sensitive territorial issues. Its proponents have argued that the holding of the Workshop series was in itself an important confidence-building measure, offering the participants a chance to develop a certain level of transparency regarding national positions on the complex dispute. The series has instead concentrated on issues of joint development and functional cooperation, producing agreements on specific projects such as combating marine environmental pollution, which may also have a confidence-building effect. The Workshops have also undertaken, albeit unsuccessfully, the task of developing a code of conduct for states of the South China Sea region, with a view to reducing the risk of military conflict among them. Proposals for CBMs, such as non-expansion of military presences in the disputed areas, and exchanges of visits by military commanders in the disputed areas, have been discussed, but have proven elusive with China opposing any discussion of military issues in this forum. Ideas about joint development of resources have not made much headway either. Obstacles include Beijing’s objection to any negotiations involving Taiwan, the unlikely prospect that any of the claimants which already had a military presence on the islands would agree to a withdrawal, and problems in deciding the principles for fair allocation of rights and profit.

ASEAN’s collective concern with the conflict was expressed in a formal declaration stressing the need for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. The Manila Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in July 1992 produced the ‘ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea’. The Declaration stressed the ‘necessity to resolve all sovereignty and jurisdictional issues pertaining to the South China Sea by peaceful means, without resort to force’, and urged ‘all parties concerned to exercise restraint’. But ASEAN has remained unsure of just how seriously Beijing takes the Declaration, with its officials pointing to the frequent mismatch between China’s declaratory policy and its actual conduct. For example, at the ARF meeting in Brunei in 1995, China’s Foreign Minister surprised his audience by accepting UN conventions (including that on the Law of the Sea) as a basis for resolving the South China Sea conflict. This was a departure from the traditional Chinese policy of claiming the islands on the basis of ‘historic’ rights. At the same meeting, however, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman repeated China’s claim to ‘indisputable sovereignty over the islands and their adjacent waters’, and rejected a role for the ARF in discussions on the issue.
For some time, China had shown restraint in dealing with the claims made by Manila and Kuala Lumpur. During Philippine President Corazon Aquino’s visit to Beijing in April 1988, China reportedly pledged not to attack Filipino troops stationed in the Spratlys. Visiting Singapore in 1990, Chinese Premier Li Peng stated China’s willingness to shelve the sovereignty issue and cooperate with Southeast Asian countries to develop resources jointly. However, Beijing continued to pursue its territorial claims with the adoption in February 1992 of a territorial sea law which claimed the entire Spratlys and provided for the use of force in its support. This initiative was followed by the award of a three-year exploration contract to an American company in the South China Sea in an area just 160 km from the Vietnam coast. Further, China’s occupation of the Mischief Reef (which came to light in early 1995), lying within waters claimed by the Philippines, marked the first encroachment by China into an area claimed by an ASEAN member. Similarly, ‘the first violent incident between China and an ASEAN country’ occurred in March 1995 when a Chinese fishing boat was fired upon by Malaysian naval vessels in waters claimed by Kuala Lumpur. Such skirmishes have continued around the Mischief Reef area involving the Philippine Navy and Chinese fishing boats.

ASEAN has claimed some success in dealing with China on the Spratlys issue. It has managed to place the dispute on the agenda of the ARF, despite a strong initial objection by China, backed by intense lobbying. Moreover, ASEAN has been able to secure an agreement from Beijing to conduct Sino-ASEAN multilateral consultations on security issues, including the South China Sea conflict. This too marked a reversal of Beijing’s earlier stance. Further, ASEAN could point to China’s agreement to seek a solution to the dispute within the framework of the UN Law of the Sea Convention, and assurances concerning freedom of navigation in waters claimed by it. ASEAN’s efforts have brought the dispute into the international limelight suggesting a diplomatic cost for Beijing should it use force.

On the other hand, attempts to negotiate codes of conduct have been painfully slow. A bilateral agreement was concluded between China and Vietnam in October 1993 which committed the two sides to the non-use of force and to refrain from any action which might worsen relations. Another bilateral agreement between China and the Philippines in August 1995 provided for cooperation in safety of navigation, marine research, rescue operations and environmental protection, and for a negotiated settlement of the dispute. Such agreements have not improved matters between Manila and Beijing, however. In August 1997, ASEAN agreed to consider a Chinese draft proposal for a framework for political and economic cooperation, which included ‘norms of conduct’ for their relations and guidelines for the peaceful settlement of disputes. (This draft did not refer to negotiations over sovereignty, however.) A draft code of conduct circulated by Manila at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in July 1999 was deemed to have been too legalistic; it took the form of a formal treaty, while other members preferred it to take the form of guidelines (more consistent with the ASEAN Way).
It is also clear that no ASEAN country sees diplomacy and norm-setting as foolproof means of preventing war in the Spratlys. This is evident from the fact, to be discussed in the next section, that the South China Sea dispute has been a major consideration behind the military modernisation programmes and contingency planning of the ASEAN states. As President Ramos of the Philippines once put it, the dispute has provoked ‘a mini-arms race of sorts’ in the Asia Pacific region. In the case of Malaysia, for example, the place of the Spratlys in national defence planning has been raised from ‘secondary to very much top priority’ following Sino-Vietnamese naval clashes in March 1988.

The biggest risk posed by the Spratlys dispute to ASEAN is a display of disunity within the grouping in dealing with China. Hopes that a perceived threat from China could actually engender greater ASEAN solidarity have been unrealistic. China has continued to push for bilateral negotiations with the claimants and appears to have made headway with respect to Malaysia. At the ARF meeting in Singapore in July 1999, Malaysia appeared to move closer to China’s position of seeking bilateral solutions to the dispute. Intra-ASEAN tensions over the Spratlys, rare in the past, escalated over Manila’s discovery in April and June 1999 of Malaysia’s construction of structures on two reefs claimed by the Philippines. Manila’s increasingly vocal criticism of China’s actions over Mischief Reef has not gone down well in other ASEAN capitals, especially Singapore, while Manila feels betrayed by Malaysia and frustrated by the lack of support from fellow ASEAN members in dealing with repeated Chinese encroachments.

An arms race?

Security communities are marked not only by the absence of war, but also by the absence of significant organised preparations for war. In this context, the military build-up undertaken by ASEAN states since the end of the Cold War acquires salience. As early as 1977, an Australian analyst characterised the military programmes undertaken by several Southeast Asian countries, including the members of ASEAN, as a ‘slow motion arms race’. This trend could be explained with reference to the emerging rivalry between non-communist ASEAN members and the communist Indochinese states. The post-Cold War military acquisitions in Southeast Asia, on the other hand, have been characterised by some as an intra-ASEAN arms race. That race has been driven by what Tim Huxley once described as ‘the widely underestimated competition and latent conflict which undoubtedly exists between various of ASEAN’s members’, although they have also been inspired by the rise of Chinese military power.

In 1992, the Defence Minister of Singapore, Yeo Ning Hong, stated bluntly that despite the end of the Cold War, ‘no country in Southeast Asia...has declared a peace dividend. No one has reduced its defence expenditure.’ The Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Ali Alatas, drew attention to ‘rather disturbing reports of increased arms purchases by several countries in the region’.

Four aspects of the military build-up undertaken by the ASEAN states in
the post-Cold War era are particularly noteworthy. The first is the rise in defence expenditures (see Table 5.2). Data on defence spending shows a general rise in spending in absolute terms, although the increase is less pronounced when spending is measured in constant prices, and a decline in spending is evident when measured as a proportion of GDP. But defence spending is not a reliable indicator of the region’s military build-up because of the impossibility of obtaining accurate data. A more pertinent aspect is the trend in arms procurement, which shows a clear shift towards conventional warfare capabilities in contrast to the counter-insurgent orientation of the past (see Table 5.3). In this respect, the region’s military build-up has focused on developing more capable air and naval forces through the acquisition of advanced fighter planes, maritime patrol aircraft, large surface combatants such as corvettes and frigates, missile-equipped patrol craft, and airborne early warning systems. The combat aircraft acquisitions include US-built F-16s by Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand; British Aerospace Hawks by Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia; Russian-built MiG-29s by Malaysia; US-built F/A-18s also by Malaysia and Russian-built Su-30s by Indonesia. It is also worth noting that several ASEAN states have reconfigured their fighter aircraft for maritime strike operations by equipping them with anti-ship missiles (such as the Exocet). ASEAN navies are being reoriented and expanded beyond their hitherto coastal defence missions. Naval force modernisation in ASEAN ranges from the acquisition by Brunei and the Philippines of missile-equipped large patrol craft, to the acquisition of larger platforms such as corvettes and frigates by Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Indonesia and Singapore are developing the region’s first modern submarine capability.

Third, apart from extending their reach, the armed forces of the ASEAN states have enhanced their strike warfare capabilities by adding to their inventory of advanced precision-guided missiles, including those geared to air combat, aerial ground attack and air defence roles. Finally, several regional armed forces have been redesigning their ground forces for ‘rapid deployment’ missions. For example, Malaysia has developed a Rapid Deployment Force equipped with newly purchased transport aircraft, medium-lift helicopters, amphibious assault ships, light tanks and amphibious infantry combat vehicles. Indonesia maintains a rapidly deployable army division and an armoured brigade, although this has in the past been used primarily for internal security missions in East Timor and Aceh. With the lessening of the communist threat, the Philippines (which has continued to buy counter-insurgency aircraft) has undertaken personnel and equipment adjustments to create ‘a lean, compact, and mobile force’ structure.

It should be noted that a trend toward increased defence spending and arms acquisitions has been evident throughout the Asia Pacific region, including China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Thus, the notion of an arms race, if valid, applies to the whole region, and not just, or primarily, to intra-ASEAN relationships.

The term arms race implies an underlying dynamic of competition or interaction among two or more actors. As Barry Buzan puts it, ‘the term arms race
suggests self-stimulating military rivalry between states, in which their efforts to defend themselves militarily cause them to enhance the threats they pose to each other. The classic conception of the arms race is the so-called ‘action-reaction’ dynamic developed in the 1960s by the then US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara as a general explanation of the US-Soviet nuclear arms race. But the ASEAN states’ military build-up has combined both interactive and non-interactive processes. The interactive nature of the military build-up in Southeast Asia was highlighted in a comment by a senior Thai military official who stated that Thailand’s naval forces ‘should be at least as well-equipped as those of other members of ASEAN in order to have bargaining power’. Similarly, while evaluating the Russian MiG-29 for possible acquisition, Malaysia’s Defence Minister Najib Tun Razak justified the need for such aircraft in the following terms: ‘Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand have the F-16 while we

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Notes: a Current figures are in million US dollars; b Constant figures are in 1994 million US dollars; c Asterisks indicate estimated figures.
Managing intra-regional relations

have none such fighter aircraft. Owning such aircraft will place our air superiority on par with other countries in the region." Such statements imply that arms purchases in the region have been driven not only by considerations of prestige (since sophisticated modern armaments, such as the F-16 aircraft or naval platforms like frigates, are a source of status) but also by mutual suspicions and rivalry.

Nonetheless, non-interactive considerations have also been major factors behind ASEAN’s military build-up. While internal security threats to ASEAN governments have been generally on the decline, they continue to influence weapons purchase decisions. For example, Indonesia’s defence planning is geared more towards dealing with an internal crisis than to the highly unlikely prospect of war with another state. Both Indonesia and the Philippines have been accorded archipelagic status but must rely on their own air and naval forces to suppress threats to central control and national cohesion. Malaysia’s geography dictates a need to secure lines of communication between peninsular Malaysia and Borneo to ensure national security.

The ASEAN states’ defence programmes have also been driven by a quest for greater self-reliance since the removal of US bases from the Philippines. An immediate consequence of the USA’s withdrawal was to deprive its allies such as Thailand and the Philippines of substantial amounts

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<td></td>
<td>‘Scud’</td>
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of US military aid, which in turn has been a major factor behind increased defence spending and arms acquisitions by these states. The military build-up in ASEAN has also reflected a move to replace obsolete equipment. The defence programme of the Philippines must be seen primarily as a bid to overcome acute equipment obsolescence resulting partly, if not entirely, from the country’s almost total dependence on the USA for protection against external threats.

The need for self-reliance aside, perceptions of threat from extra-regional powers, particularly China, and the general sense of a ‘power vacuum’ in the post-Cold War milieu, forms an important basis for the military programmes of the ASEAN states. That basis is not necessarily incompatible with intra-ASEAN peace. A common feeling of uncertainty about the changing regional balance of power is perhaps as an important a basis for the ASEAN states’ defence programmes as interactive threat perceptions and rivalry within the grouping. Moreover, supply-side pressures resulting from competition among arms manufacturers looking for new overseas markets to compensate for declining domestic procurements in Western countries have been a factor behind acquisitions by ASEAN states. The end of the Cold War has led to the greater availability of second-hand equipment from the inventories of major supplier nations which can be sold to regional friends and allies at bargain prices.

Improved economic conditions and purchasing power have also contributed to the military build-up by the ASEAN countries. Finally, although arms purchase decisions are supposed to be based on a calculation of strategic need and economic affordability, in the ASEAN context, the influence of the military over the government apparatus, interservice rivalry and, importantly, corruption also influence the decision-making process, as in the case of Thailand. Corruption and the politicisation of the decision-making process for defence acquisitions have been evident here.

To sum up, arms procurement decisions by ASEAN states have reflected a mixture of motives, including, but going well beyond, interstate competition and rivalry. Interactive factors related to power, prestige and bargaining potential have entered into national strategic calculations and decisions regarding arms purchases. Interactive arms proliferation has been evident in particular subsets of intra-ASEAN relations, such as that between Singapore and Malaysia. But to explain the entire phenomenon of force modernisation as a regional arms race is misleading given the fact that no significant conflict has obtained in other bilateral relationships, such as those between Singapore and Thailand, and the Philippines and Indonesia.

In 1992, the then Chief of Malaysia’s Defence Forces, General Yaacob Mohamad Zain, stated: ‘There is no arms race here and I am sure one will not occur.’ Earlier, Malaysia’s Defence Minister, Najib Tun Razak, had characterised regional arms control issues as ‘non-issues’. President Ramos of the Philippines was even more categorical in stating that the Philippines was ‘not in a catch-up or arms race situation with our neighbors in ASEAN, Asia, and the Pacific’.
Nonetheless, such assertions cannot be taken at their face value. Even if initially divorced from interstate suspicions and rivalries, the military build-up in ASEAN could become a source of future regional instability. Whatever the stated rationale behind the modernisation efforts of the ASEAN states, their actual impact on interstate relations will depend on their perceptions of the future regional political climate. In this context, as former Foreign Minister of Australia, Gareth Evans, has argued, ‘the sort of precautionary worst case thinking which often characterises strategic planning [in the region]...could in turn generate destabilising arms races’.58

There have been some attempts by ASEAN governments to enhance intra-mural military transparency. These include Lee Kuan Yew’s proposal in late 1989 that Singapore and Malaysia could open their military installations for mutual inspection (rejected by Malaysia)59 and Malaysia’s proposals concerning greater transparency in weapon acquisitions through the creation of a regional arms register.60 While some of these have been taken up within the ARF, intra-ASEAN arms regulation has remained a non-issue. The level of transparency in the defence budgets and policies of ASEAN states has continued to be low, although Thailand and Malaysia have started to issue defence white papers.

**Enhancing economic interdependence**

ASEAN’s founders hoped that ASEAN would facilitate intra-regional conflict resolution and create ‘an environment conducive to economic development and the reinforcement of social and political stability’.61 But regional economic integration in the European sense had never been a professed goal of ASEAN. The ASEAN states were wary of the harmful effects of regional integration on national economic development: maintaining trade and investment links with the outside world was seen as more important to developing ASEAN’s economies than measures to promote intra-regional integration. Such measures would discriminate against more efficient non-regional producers and thus undermine the competitiveness of ASEAN economies in world markets.62

A major initiative in economic cooperation had been undertaken in 1977 when preferential trading arrangements were signed which provided for measures to liberalise and increase intra-ASEAN trade. These measures included long-term quantity contracts, liberalisation of non-tariff barriers on a preferential basis, exchange of tariff preferences, preferential terms for financing imports, and preference for ASEAN products in procurement by government bodies.63 Such arrangements had only a marginal impact on raising the level of intra-ASEAN trade as a proportion of total ASEAN trade from 13.5 per cent in 1973 to a peak of 20 per cent in 1983; it subsequently fell to around 16–17 per cent.64

In contrast to intra-mural trade liberalisation, ASEAN was more successful in collective bargaining to seek more favourable economic relations with external
trading partners. Beginning in the early 1970s, collective external bargaining was used to secure better commodity prices, an example being bargaining with Japan over the price of natural rubber. ASEAN’s also used collective bargaining to secure better market access for ASEAN products, which led to an increase in the number of items exported by ASEAN members which qualify for lower duties under the EC’s generalised system of preferences. In addition, ASEAN has tried to maintain a united position at multilateral trade negotiations, both at the Tokyo and the Uruguay Rounds of GATT negotiations.

In considering the impact of economic interdependence on war and peace, Haas has argued that the increasing enmeshment of a group of actors in functionalist ties at the global level is not really important. What matters is if functional ties ‘link them to each other’ intra-regionally rather than to the outside world. If this is true, then ASEAN’s greater commitment to linkages with the global economy in relation to regional economic integration would seem likely to have a smaller impact on prospects for war avoidance.

ASEAN’s interest in intra-regional trade cooperation increased in the early 1990s in response to several developments. The changing orientation of ASEAN economies towards manufacturing provided scope for greater intra-ASEAN division of labour. In addition, the establishment of the North American Free Trade Area and the advent of the EU Single Market raised fears within ASEAN of rising protectionism. This fear was compounded by the stalemate in the Uruguay Round of GATT talks towards the late 1980s, a stalemate blamed by Singapore’s Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, on the two largest economic powers in the world, the USA and the EU, who could ‘hold the entire multilateral trading system to ransom’ over a ‘single issue like agriculture’. ASEAN also feared a declining flow of investment from the West as the collapse of communism led to the opening up of East European economies.

In response to these developments, ASEAN leaders in January 1992 announced plans to form an ASEAN Free Trade Area within fifteen years. In addition, a number of initiatives to promote regional economic cooperation were adopted. These included cooperation in securing greater foreign investment through creating an ASEAN Investment Area, liberalisation of the service sector including tourism, maritime transport, air transport, telecommunications, construction, business and financial services, and cooperation in intellectual property matters encouraged through creating an ASEAN Patent System and an ASEAN Trademark System. The evolution and scope of AFTA and these other measures suggested the influence of the ASEAN Way, including a preference for informality, non-adversarial bargaining, consensus building and non-legalistic procedures for decision making. As Stubbs has argued, AFTA was to be based ‘more on networks of personal contacts and social obligations than on formal institutions and legal commitments’. The negotiations leading to AFTA could be described as one of developing ‘a vaguely worded statement which did not violate any of the participants’ basic interests and, therefore, to which all participants could agree’. This allowed AFTA to be moved forward at a ‘pace with which all governments felt comfortable’. In a similar vein, disputes were to
be settled through informal discussions behind closed doors and without resort

to formal dispute-settlement mechanisms as found in the EU or NAFTA. (There

is an AFTA Council to deal with disputes, and if this does not work, the matter

is to be dealt with at the level of ASEAN economic ministers or at the leaders’

summit meeting level.)69

But AFTA and related initiatives have not produced a noticeable increase in

intra-ASEAN trade. The latter as a proportion of total ASEAN trade had

remained around 16–17 per cent during the 1980s.70 From 1991 to 1995, trade

among the ASEAN six grew at an annual rate of 21.6 per cent, totalling US

$137 billion, or 23 per cent of their total trade. This compares with the ASEAN

six’s trade with the world which grew at a slower annual rate of 15 per cent

over the same period. But if transshipment through Singapore is discounted, the

level of intra-ASEAN trade falls to about 12 per cent.71 Moreover, AFTA remains

plagued by fears among ASEAN members concerning the unequal distribution

gains. These fears have been aggravated by the differing levels of development

among the ASEAN six and the new ASEAN members, even though the latter

have been allowed extensions beyond the 2003 deadline to bring down their

 tariffs to the required 0–5 per cent level.

Even with AFTA, the commitment of ASEAN members to economic

regionalism can be overstated. The degree of market integration between ASEAN

members and other Asia Pacific states far exceeds that among ASEAN countries

themselves. This is a situation which is unlikely to change in the future. ASEAN

states have explored the potential of wider regional fora, such as the Asia-Pacific

Economic Cooperation (APEC), to enhance the prospects for their economic

security, but without much success.

Another form of economic cooperation in Southeast Asia has developed

outside the ASEAN framework. Called variously ‘natural economic territories’

(NETs), ‘subregional economic zones’ or ‘growth triangles’, these forms represent

a so-called ‘market-driven’ approach to regional economic cooperation. The

NETs have brought together geographically contiguous (as opposed to the entire

national territory of AFTA members) areas within two or more states with

natural economic complementarities. In Southeast Asia, at least three such areas

have emerged: the Singapore-Johor-Riau (SIJORI) triangle; the Indonesia-

Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT); and the Brunei, Indonesia,

Malaysia, Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) involving

Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan in Malaysia, North Sulawesi, East Kalimantan,

and West Kalimantan in Indonesia, the Mindanao region of the Philippines,

and Brunei. A somewhat different category of subregional cooperation is the

Greater Mekong Growth Area, involving China’s Yunnan province, Laos,

Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Burma. These NETs join similar concepts

in Northeast Asia, including the Southern China Growth Triangle and the Tumen

River Area Development Programme.

The emergence of these NETs has been noted for their potential to foster

greater regional peace and stability within ASEAN. A former Foreign Minister

of Singapore and a founding father of ASEAN, S.Rajaratnam, has argued that
Just as the European Community has integrated a number of isolated national states into a cohesive economic and security organisation, I believe that the Johor-Riau-Singapore triangle will also act as a catalyst to transform the 25 year old Asean into a strong and purposeful regional body.

One might also note the role played by economic linkages in promoting reconciliation between ASEAN states and Indochina, linkages which were once identified by a former Thai prime minister as part of his ‘battlefields to market-places’ policy. It is particularly noteworthy that while that policy was a failure for Thailand in economic terms (in the sense that Thai companies have not done any better than those from other ASEAN countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore), it was a resounding success in political and security terms. It opened the floodgates to investment and trade between non-communist and communist Southeast Asia.

Several possible implications of the Southeast Asian NETs in enhancing intra-regional peace in Southeast Asia may be noted. Several of them straddle territory that has been or is currently under dispute. The NETs linking places like Borneo and Mindanao, the border territories of Malaysia and Thailand and Indonesia and Malaysia (part of the IMT-GT area) could contribute to a more positive climate for bilateral relations. As Malaysia’s former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, once claimed, ‘instead of talking about border disputes, we are now promoting economic cooperation through growth triangles and other cross-border linkages’.

But progress in implementing these NETs has remained a hostage to interstate security relations. Consider, for example, Indonesia’s refusal in 1994 to attend an important policy meeting on the BIMP-EAGA because of an international non-governmental meeting on East Timor in Manila. The unresolved dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah still undermines the implementation of the BIMP-EAGA concept. Moreover, the NETs in some cases foster greater interstate tensions over the unequal distribution of benefits. Singapore is seen by sections within Malaysia and Indonesia as being the major beneficiary of the NET; opposition parties in Malaysia once alleged that the SIJORI NET could turn Johor into a ‘backyard’ of Singapore and Batam. Indonesia feels concerned that Singapore, which occupies only 3 per cent of the land area within SIJORI, accounts for about half of its population and 90 per cent of its income. The SIJORI NET has faced criticisms within Indonesia for ‘selling off’ the Riau province to Singapore.

The extension of the NET concept to areas lying beyond the territories of the current membership of ASEAN has been a source of intra-ASEAN friction. In 1992, a Thai proposal to create an East Coast Growth Triangle involving the coastal states of Malaysia, Thailand and Indochina across the Gulf of Thailand was rejected by Malaysia against a background of bitter and sometimes violent disputes between Malaysia and Thailand over fishery rights in their eastern maritime border regions. With this in mind, the role of the NETs in fostering an improved climate for intra-ASEAN relations could be overstated. Robert
Scalapino has argued that the NETs and other forms of economic integration in the Asia Pacific would reduce the incentives for states to resort to force in resolving interstate disputes because such action would severely disrupt each state’s economy. As the Asian economic crisis has demonstrated, however, economic interdependence and integration could also serve as a transmission belt for spreading security problems through the region. During the crisis, the tensions in Singapore-Malaysia and Singapore-Indonesia ties demonstrated that economic competition and uneven development (both within and between states) have impeded ASEAN’s progress towards a security community. The crisis showed that any pacific effects of interdependence are less likely to hold if there exist significant economic disparities among states (as between Singapore and its neighbours). It also shows that the political gains of interdependence are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns, especially if the impact of the downturn is felt unevenly within a group of states.

The Asian economic crisis prompted ASEAN to take steps to strengthen economic cooperation. Stung by criticism of its failure to take timely action to deal with the crisis, ASEAN responded with measures such as moving forward the AFTA timetable for the original six members from 2003 to 2002, the holding of the first meeting of ASEAN finance ministers to coordinate financial supervision, and taking steps to strengthen ASEAN’s investment climate including a common commitment of all ASEAN members to 100 per cent foreign equity ownership. These responses not only confirmed ASEAN’s constitutive norm of ‘open economies’, as outlined by Singapore’s foreign minister in July 1998, but also indicated a deepening of multilateralism. Another step was the institution of an ASEAN Surveillance Process involving peer review and frank exchange of views and information on important finance matters. The Process, established at the Special Meeting of the ASEAN Finance Ministers on 4 October 1998, was ‘intended to prevent future crises through the conduct of early warning system and regional economic surveillance exercise’. To this end, it would involve ‘a peer review process and the exchange of views and information among the ASEAN Finance Ministers on macroeconomic and finance matters’. The advent of the process has led to the creation of new institutions, including a forum of ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies and a special working group, an ASEAN Surveillance Coordinating Unit (ASCU) based at the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Surveillance Technical Support Unit (ASTSU) based at the Asian Development Bank in Manila. After two years, all the activities of the ASTSU will be transferred to ASCU in Jakarta. The first ministerial peer review process was conducted on 19 March 1999 in Hanoi.

Another initiative given a boost by the Asian crisis was the so-called ASEAN+3’ framework, bringing ASEAN together with China, Japan and South Korea with the aim of dealing with economic and security issues. This initiative, projecting an East Asian identity similar to Malaysia’s proposal for an East Asian Economic Casucus, partly reflects ASEAN members’ disillusionment with APEC and what they perceived as a limited Western support for them during the economic crisis, especially the US veto of a Japanese proposal for an Asian
Monetary Fund. Moreover, a special meeting of the Finance Ministers Meeting in Manila on 30 April 1999 issued a ‘Common ASEAN position on the reform of the international financial architecture’. It contained a number of demands and principles, some of which indicated, albeit in a mild and indirect way, some degree of dissatisfaction with the IMF’s handling of the crisis and implicated international investors and credit-rating agencies. The statement called for a more flexible approach by the IMF and other international bodies to the economic crisis, including due attention to the social impact of their actions on the people of the affected countries. It also asked for a review of the role of international financial institutions and international regulatory bodies in responding to economic crises, for greater transparency from international credit-rating agencies and private sector investors (as opposed to demands for government transparency alone), and for closer monitoring of short-term capital flows, including a global agreement on the disclosure requirements for such flows and information sharing among national and international regulators. By asserting the right of countries to choose their own exchange rate regime based on their national objectives and priorities, rather than the exchange rate being dictated by international agencies, the ASEAN statement demanded greater participation by the emerging economies in any effort to reform the international financial architecture. The statement also pledged a more pro-active role for ASEAN at international and regional fora in considering proposals for reforming the architecture.81

As seen above, ASEAN’s response to the Asian crisis consisted largely of statements and demands. Much of the regional response to the crisis was action undertaken by individual ASEAN members intended to restore investor confidence. Regional collective action, such as the steps on AFTA or the ASP, was limited, reflecting the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of ASEAN economies. But the response to the crisis did show new challenges to ASEAN’s norms. For example, the creation of the ASP not only involved the creation of new institutions, thereby marking a departure from the ASEAN Way of informalism, it also signalled an erosion of the non-interference doctrine. Although the term Surveillance Process, preferred over the Asian Development Bank’s initial proposal for a more intrusive ASEAN Surveillance Mechanism, indicated limits to any shift in this regard, the challenge to non-interference did become serious as a result of other repercussions of the Asian crisis, as will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

**ASEAN as a ‘defence community’**

As noted in Chapter 2, since ASEAN’s creation in 1967 its members have developed a range of defence ties, albeit on a bilateral basis. These include (1) border region cooperation, (2) intelligence sharing, (3) joint exercises, (4) exchange activities between military education and training institutes, (5) frequent senior-level official visits, (6) provision of combat training facilities and (7) cooperation in the defence industrial sector. While intra-ASEAN bilateral security and defence cooperation in the formative years of ASEAN revolved primarily around border
cooperation and intelligence sharing, cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s has featured joint exercises, training and, to a lesser extent, defence industrial cooperation. Bilateral army exercises, initially resisted because they might allow the ‘territorial familiarisation’ of the host nation by the security forces of the guest country, were instituted towards the late 1980s, especially between Indonesia and Singapore and Malaysia and Singapore.82

In addition, ASEAN countries have been involved in cooperation in the area of training and exchange of facilities. Singapore has maintained army training camps in Thailand and Brunei and, until the withdrawal of US forces there, fighter aircraft units at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. In March 1989 a 10,850 hectare air weapons testing range in Sumatra jointly developed by Indonesia and Singapore became operational. ASEAN members allowed and encouraged participation of students from other ASEAN countries in military education and officer training programmes at their national institutions. ASEAN armed forces have also developed ties in tactical areas, such as commando training by Thai troops in Singapore, special forces training by Malaysian troops in Indonesia, and jungle warfare training in Malaysia by trainees from other ASEAN states, including Singapore.

A more modest form of defence cooperation relates to defence industries. In 1978, General Maradan Panggabean, Indonesia’s Coordinating Minister for Security and General Policies, suggested the establishment of an ASEAN arms factory.83 In the aftermath of Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia, Thailand explored the possibility of an ASEAN ‘war reserve contingency pool’. In 1988, Singapore and Thailand approved a project to co-produce a range of small arms. There has not been any attempt at joint procurement of weapons, however, despite some degree of standardisation in the 1980s. For example, all ASEAN states except Brunei acquired F-5 fighter and C-130 transport aircraft, while three (Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia) acquired A-4 attack aircraft. Later, the F-16 entered service in the air forces of Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand. But this was not due to any conscious policy or design. Opportunities for joint procurement which might have resulted in significant cost savings were ignored. For example, joint procurement was ignored during the purchase of a multimrole fighter aircraft by Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia; in the event, the first three separately acquired the F-16A/B from the USA, while Malaysia purchased the MiG-29 from the Soviet Union and the F-18 from the USA. Barriers to joint procurement have included differences in military spending levels, as well as differing geographic conditions, doctrine and overall military strategy, leading to divergent procurement needs. Similarly, lingering political suspicions affected the prospect for greater cooperation in defence production. For example, the fear that an ASEAN arms manufacturing scheme might lead to a leading role for Singapore, which would in turn give the island republic undue leverage over its neighbours, might have been a constraining factor in intra-ASEAN cooperation in defence production.

The end of ASEAN-Indochina polarization has meant that military cooperation among the ASEAN states (see Table 5.4 and Table 5.5) could no longer
### Table 5.4 ASEAN military cooperation: bilateral military exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries involved</th>
<th>Name of exercise</th>
<th>Year started</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Brunei (Navy)</td>
<td>Helang Laut</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Biennial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Malaysia (Army)</td>
<td>Kekar Malindo</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tatar Malindo</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kripura Malindo</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Malaysia (Air)</td>
<td>Elang Malindo</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Malaysia (Navy)</td>
<td>Malindo Jaya</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Annual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Combined Forces)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Singapore (Army)</td>
<td>Safakar Indopura</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Singapore (Air)</td>
<td>Elang Indopura</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Englek</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Biennial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Thailand (Air)</td>
<td>Elang Thainesia</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Thailand (Navy)</td>
<td>Sea Garuda</td>
<td>1975?</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Philippines</td>
<td>Philindo/Corpatphilindo</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Singapore (Army)</td>
<td>Semangat Bersatu</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Singapore (Navy)</td>
<td>Mlapura</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Annual (suspended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Thailand (Air)</td>
<td>Air Thamal</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Thailand (Navy)</td>
<td>Thalay</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Intermittent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Brunei (Navy)</td>
<td>Hornbill (and others)</td>
<td>1981?</td>
<td>Intermittent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Brunei (Army)</td>
<td>Malbru Setia</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Intermittent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Philippines</td>
<td>Sea Malphi</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Intermittent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Thailand (Air)</td>
<td>Sing-Siam</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Initially intermittent, but biennial since 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Thailand (Navy)</td>
<td>Thai-Sing</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Brunei (Navy)</td>
<td>Pelican</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Brunei (Army)</td>
<td>Termite/Flaming</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrow/Juggernaut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Brunei</td>
<td>Maju Bersama</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Philippines</td>
<td>Anoa-Singa</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Annual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Philippines</td>
<td>Dagat Singa (Sea Tiger)</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managing intra-regional relations

be provocative to Hanoi. ASEAN has yet to embrace defence multilateralism, however. Singapore and Malaysia embarked on a bilateral security dialogue, the Malaysia-Singapore Defence Forum, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding on defence industrial cooperation that was intended to involve co-production as well as joint marketing of defence equipment.\textsuperscript{84} Bilateral defence industrial cooperation was also evident in the case of an agreement between Indonesia’s PT Pindad and Singapore’s Chartered (Firearms) Industries allowing the former to produce Singapore’s 40 mm automatic grenade launcher.\textsuperscript{85} Malaysia and the Philippines set aside their long-standing dispute over Sabah to sign an agreement covering an exchange of defence-related information, logistic support and training.\textsuperscript{86} Singapore and the Philippines launched their first ever army exercise, codenamed ‘Anoa-Singa’, in 1993.\textsuperscript{87} Malaysia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Indonesia to import six Indonesian-built CN-235 transport aircraft in return for Indonesia’s purchase of 20 Malaysian-built SME MD3-160 acrobatic trainer aircraft.\textsuperscript{88}

Table 5.5 ASEAN military cooperation: training, defence industrial and general agreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>In February, Singapore and Indonesia signed an MoU which contained provisions for Singaporean troops to train in Indonesia. Malaysia and Singapore agreed to the use of each other’s training facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Malaysia and the Philippines signed an agreement on defence cooperation which covered information exchanges, training and logistics support. The Indonesian firm PT Pindad arranged to produce Chartered Industries of Singapore’s 40 mm automatic grenade launcher under licence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Singapore and Malaysia held the first Malaysia–Singapore Defence Forum in January, which was intended to provide a framework for the coordination and expansion of bilateral defence ties, including training and defence industrial ties. An MoU covering the latter was signed. Indonesia provided commando training to more than 200 members of Cambodia’s Battalion 911, which has a special forces role. Indonesia and Singapore have established a joint Air Combat Manoeuvring Range (ACMR), and offered access to other ASEAN states. Malaysia had access to a similar facility in Thailand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>During a visit to Thailand of Singapore’s defence minister in July, the two countries stepped up joint training and military exchanges and agreed to explore joint military industrial ventures involving aerospace, small arms and communications equipment. Thailand provided training in rural development to fifty Cambodian troops. Thailand has also given assistance in engineering to Cambodia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Indonesia announced that it would lease Singapore a site for use as a helicopter training facility. In August, Indonesia and the Philippines signed an agreement aimed at enhancing bilateral military cooperation. Singapore has provided pilot training to Brunei.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Indonesia and Malaysia announced that their armed forces would undertake joint disaster relief operations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Nonetheless, the ASEAN norm against multilateral military cooperation enunciated at the Bali summit has clearly survived into the post-Cold War period. In the words of Malaysia’s then Defence Minister, Najib Tun Razak:
Asean doesn’t need a military pact. Asean military forces are familiar with each other on a bilateral basis. To me, that’s good enough. Because when you have a pact, people will ask: Who is it directed at? So it raises a lot of questions. So rather than alarming anyone or sending a wrong signal, it is better for us to continue on the same basis because we have been so successful.89

In a similar vein, while serving as the Chief of the Malaysian Armed Forces, General Hashim Mohammed Ali stressed the advantages of continuing with bilateral cooperation because of the flexibility it affords. In his view, bilateralism allows any Asean partner to decide the type, time and scale of aid it requires and can provide. The question of national independence and sovereignty is unaffected by the decision of others as in the case of an alliance where members can evoke the terms of the treaty and interfere in the affairs of another partner.90

Not surprisingly therefore, steps towards defence multilateralism within ASEAN, even after the settlement of the Cambodia conflict and Vietnam’s entry into the grouping, have been extremely modest. A number of developments in the mid-1990s attest to this.91 For example, in 1995 Singapore and Indonesia offered fellow ASEAN members access to their jointly developed Air Combat Manoeuvring Range (ACMR) in Sumatra. Furthermore, around this time, ASEAN reportedly set up a special working group to discuss defence cooperation. On the other hand, a proposal to create a regional association of national defence industries of ASEAN states failed due to political and financial problems. A Thai invitation to its five ASEAN neighbours (as well as Australia, New Zealand and the USA) to participate in a new multilateral exercise also fell through, although Singapore in 1994 became the first outside country to be allowed the right to observe fully the Cobra Gold bilateral exercise between the USA and Thailand. Similarly, Malaysia’s suggestion to establish an ASEAN peacekeeping force, based on the Nordic Battalion model (which consists of soldiers from Scandinavian countries), received only limited support, partly due to the fears that it would be seen as an attempt by ASEAN to form a military alliance, and that it would not be politic to deploy such a force in intra-ASEAN conflicts.

Defence cooperation between the old and the new members of ASEAN has also proceeded on a bilateral basis. The Indochinese states are gradually being drawn into the web of bilateral defence cooperation with ASEAN, with Vietnam establishing defence links with the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, although an offer by Thailand to establish a ‘hot line’ between Hanoi and Bangkok, and to exchange equipment and hold bilateral naval exercises, was turned down by Hanoi, attesting to lingering mutual suspicions and also pending progress in resolving its overlapping territorial claims in the Gulf of Thailand. The Philippines
has offered training facilities for Vietnamese officers at its military academy and has indicated a desire to cooperate on maintaining and reconditioning defence equipment.

Three reasons explain why ASEAN has never seriously contemplated adopting a collective defence posture. First, the ASEAN states continue to see threat-oriented cooperation as unduly provocative to potential adversaries (Vietnam in the past, China now). Second, such cooperation has been seen as of limited value given the weak self-defence capabilities of individual ASEAN members and their consequent dependence on external security assistance. Third, despite the proliferation of bilateral ties, the degree of standardisation of equipment and interoperability among ASEAN armed forces was, and remains, limited.

To be sure, the development of intra-ASEAN bilateral security ties does not preclude collective action against external or internal threats in time of need. Najib Tun Razak has even claimed that given the degree of interoperability achieved among the ASEAN forces as a result of bilateral exercises, ‘there is nothing to prevent ASEAN from acting collectively if there is the political will to do so…. If there is a need to have an ASEAN military force, it could be done almost overnight.’ Yet, the potential for such collective action remains circumscribed by intra-ASEAN suspicions as well as the lack of a commonly perceived threat to facilitate peacetime planning. Instead, bilateral defence cooperation has been useful mainly as a confidence-building measure. To a limited extent, bilateral defence ties within ASEAN act as a constraining factor on the use of force by one member state against another.

But the prospects for collective defence in ASEAN remain limited. To cite General Hashim Mohammed Ali:

Multilateralism may be possible if there is a collective belief that such an arrangement would bring mutual benefit to all members concerned. In other words there must be a convergence of security interest derived from a common perception of threat facing the individual members and the region as a whole. Presently this is unlikely to happen simply because of differing security interests and needs. To a large extent this has been due to the long established security alignment with extra regional powers, domestic instability or fragility of the regime in power and also the uneven political and economic developments within ASEAN states.

Sovereignty, non-interference and regional problem solving

As the foregoing analyses seek to show, in the areas of dispute settlement, if not in the area of defence cooperation, ASEAN’s norms have come under considerable stress in the post-Cold War era. The norm concerning non-use of force has been severely tested, especially in the case of relations between Singapore and Malaysia. While these ASEAN members avoided outright military
confrontation, their bilateral tensions did disrupt military ties and the two states also appear to have been engaged in a bilateral arms race. There have been other challenges to ASEAN’s norms from both domestic and international developments.

The foremost among these challenges concerns the doctrine of non-interference. Indeed, the tensions between the principle of sovereignty and the call from some ASEAN quarters for revising the doctrine of non-interference turned out to be one of the central challenges to ASEAN regionalism in the latter half of the 1990s. While, as discussed in the previous chapter, the non-interference principle had already come under some stress over the admission of Myanmar and Cambodia into ASEAN, it was the Asian economic crisis, itself described by the Filipino President, Joseph Estrada, as the ‘greatest challenge [to ASEAN] since its founding’, which posed a particularly serious test to the doctrine as an approach to managing intra-regional relations.

The Asian crisis had been widely recognised, even within the grouping itself, as a major blow to ASEAN’s credibility. Malaysia’s Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed, admitted that ASEAN’s response to the economic crisis had ‘created the impression of an ASEAN in disarray, its members at odds with each other’. President Estrada of the Philippines agreed; in his view, ‘doubts have been raised about the ASEAN spirit, about our solidarity, about our credibility’. At issue was not only ASEAN’s economic response to the crisis, but also the bilateral tensions that had surfaced among member states, such as that between Malaysia and Singapore.

The debate over the non-interference doctrine intensified when it was blamed for ASEAN’s incapacity to respond effectively to the crisis, especially in alerting Thailand to its economic woes. While outside commentators were quick to point out this shortcoming, it was the Foreign Minister of the new Thai government, Surin Pitsuan, who emerged as the strongest critic of the doctrine. As he put it, ‘it is time that Asean’s cherished principle of non-intervention is modified to allow it to play a constructive role in preventing or resolving domestic issues with regional implications’. Elaborating, he added: ‘when a matter of domestic concern poses a threat to regional stability, a dose of peer pressure or friendly advice at the right time can be helpful’.

In place of a strict adherence to non-interference as an ASEAN norm, Surin proposed the idea of ‘flexible engagement’. Calling this as a ‘more flexible interpretation of the certain fundamental approaches’ undertaken by ASEAN, Surin argued that ASEAN members needed more ‘openness’ in dealing with one another. This implied that ASEAN members should not refrain from commenting on each other’s domestic policies when they have regional implications. Indeed, Surin’s deputy, Sukhumbhand Paribatra, stated that the flexible engagement approach, towards Myanmar at least, meant speaking frankly about its domestic situation: True friends speak frankly to each other. We don’t talk sweet.

Though mooted in the context of the economic crisis, the concept of ‘flexible engagement’ must be viewed in the broader context of ASEAN’s handling of
intra-regional problems. To some degree, it was intended to address newly emerging transnational issues facing ASEAN, including the problems of human rights, environmental degradation and refugees. These problems require an approach that goes beyond ASEAN’s traditional policy of non-intervention, no matter how useful the latter might have been to ASEAN during its formative years. Flexible engagement could be a necessary reform to the time-honoured ASEAN Way. It could be used as a means of improving regional transparency, provide early warning and develop policy approaches to deal with transnational economic and social problems.

Some of these transnational issues related directly to Thailand’s own predicament. The concept of flexible engagement reflected the new Thai government’s attempt to distance itself from its predecessor’s policy, endorsed by ASEAN as a whole, of ‘Constructive Engagement’ towards Myanmar, which conflicted with the new Chuan Leekpai government’s democratic credentials and which had been costly in terms of disrupted economic ties with the EU. Flexible engagement also reflected Thailand’s need to put pressure on the regime in Myanmar over the influx of refugees, numbering about a million, into Thai territory.

Like the idea of ‘Constructive Intervention’ proposed earlier by the now deposed Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, flexible engagement was also intended to move ASEAN towards a more pro-active role. Indeed, the Foreign Minister of the Philippines, Domingo Siazon, emphasised this aspect when he contrasted ‘flexible engagement’ with ASEAN’s hitherto approach of ‘benign neglect’ of each other.100 This view was contested by other ASEAN members, especially by Malaysia’s Foreign Minister Abdullah Badwai, who argued that non-interference had not in the past prevented governments from speaking candidly about each other’s domestic issues if and when appropriate.101 But it attracted support from Siazon who, as the only ASEAN minister to have openly sided with Surin, likened flexible engagement to the EU’s policy, ‘where you actually address each other’s problems openly and sometimes even confront each other, but in the process, lead to a better synthesis and have a better product’.102 Using a cautious tone, Siazon noted that: ‘when the situation is opportune, more pro-active Asean policy among its members may be felicitous and it may not be sufficient just to have a policy of non-intervention’.103

But Thailand’s other neighbours were far less receptive, some even openly hostile, to the flexible engagement concept.104 Some even suspected, perhaps correctly, that the proposal was as an attempt by Thailand to assume a leadership position in ASEAN (especially in the wake of the leadership vacuum left by the exit of Indonesia’s Suharto), similar to the days of the Cambodia conflict when Thai security concerns were driving ASEAN’s political agenda. The ensuing debate exposed divisions within ASEAN over one of its most basic norms. Malaysia issued one of the bluntest rejections of flexible engagement, with Foreign Minister Badawi insisting that quiet diplomacy consistent with the ASEAN Way was still the best way, ‘befitting a community of friends bonded in cooperation’ and that maintaining this practice was ‘critical to our collective
being’, while the opposite course, ‘criticizing loudly, posturing adversarially and grandstanding’ would ‘bring less results and does more harm than good’.105

Singapore’s Foreign Minister, S. Jayakumar, also defended the non-interference doctrine as practiced within the ASEAN context. Reminding fellow members that ‘Asean countries’ consistent adherence to this principle of non-interference’ had been ‘the key reason why no military conflict ha[d] broken out between any two member countries since the founding of ASEAN’, Jayakumar argued that ‘the surest and quickest way to ruin is for ASEAN countries to begin commenting on how each of us deals with these sensitive issues’ like race, religion, language.106 Brunei, with a concern for regime security which could be undermined by a policy that encouraged other ASEAN members to comment on its political situation, also rejected flexible engagement. Any departure from non-interference was especially alarming to Vietnam and Myanmar, whose governments were most fearful that a policy of flexible engagement would be detrimental to their internal stability and regime survival. This view was shared by Laos as well.

Apart from the issue of regime security, the reluctance of Thailand’s ASEAN partners to endorse any departure from the norm of strict non-interference had to do with a fear that such a move would rekindle bilateral disputes and lead to regionalisation of issues that are best settled bilaterally. Flexible engagement would needlessly transform bilateral issues into an ASEAN issue.107 Moreover, there was also a concern that it could lead to unwarranted interference by external powers in ASEAN affairs, e.g. in the name of a more pro-active policy on human rights and democracy, thereby undermining ASEAN’s other norm concerning regional autonomy.

ASEAN foreign ministers, at their annual meeting in Manila in July 1998, decided to stick to the old principle of non-interference.108 Instead of flexible engagement, the equally vague, but evidently less intervention-oriented, notion of ‘enhanced interaction’ was adopted as a policy framework to deal with transnational issues within the region.109 While non-interference has survived for the time being, the attempts to tinker with it are unlikely to fade away for several reasons.

One is the impact of democratisation (already noted earlier as a factor behind the Thai push for flexible engagement) and the growing salience of human rights and democracy on the ASEAN agenda. Although partly responding to pressures from outside (including the Western countries), this is also the result of the growing realisation of some ASEAN members that meaningful cooperation between ASEAN and the international community would require narrowing the gap between them on the understanding of human rights and democracy. As Surin Pitsuan commented, ‘the issues of democracy and human rights are those we have to increasingly deal with in our engagement with the outside world’.110 One of the effects of democratisation is the unravelling of ASEAN’s earlier efforts to develop a common position of human rights and democracy to counter pressures from the West. This effort had led ASEAN foreign ministers to issue a statement in July 1993 adopting what may be called a ‘relativist’
position on human rights. The statement, issued not long before the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, had called for viewing economic, social, civil and cultural rights as being ‘indivisible’ and of ‘equal importance’, thereby implying a rejection of what they saw as the West’s excessive focus on political rights. It also called for the promotion of human rights to pay ‘due regard for specific cultural, social, economic and political circumstances’ of individual countries, thereby rejecting the notion of universal human rights advocated by the West. The ASEAN statement reflected the belief of some members, especially the Singaporean elite, about the existence of a set of Asian values’ which stressed a communitarian ethic over Western-style individualism. As with human rights, many ASEAN policy-makers and scholars also rejected what they saw as the Western understanding of, and efforts in promoting, democracy in the region. They rejected the suitability of Western-style liberal democracy for the region and warned that Western efforts to promote democracy would undermine the foundations of regional order in Southeast Asia based on the inviolability of state sovereignty and the doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of members.

The ASEAN ‘consensus’ on human rights and democracy, widely perceived to be a justification for authoritarian rule in the region, has since unravelled. As their societies democratised further, Thailand and the Philippines have come closer to a ‘universalistic’ understanding of human rights and democracy, a fact noted with some apprehension by officials in Myanmar in an assessment of ASEAN’s future prospects. It is therefore no coincidence that the two most open societies in ASEAN, Thailand and the Philippines, are also the strongest advocates of a more interventionist ASEAN, while Vietnam and Burma, the two least democratic systems in ASEAN, remain most opposed to rethinking non-interference. Moreover, the advent of a more democratic regime in Indonesia (starting with the interim Habibie government) could strengthen the hand of pro-democracy, and therefore pro-interventionist, forces within ASEAN. Indeed, support from new leaders in the Philippines and Indonesia for the police treatment of Malaysia’s sacked Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, which greatly angered Mahathir, about unwarranted interference in Malaysia’s internal affairs, may be indicative of this trend.

Apart from democratisation, intra-mural tensions caused by environmental disasters are also challenging ASEAN’s norm of non-interference. The environmental challenge to ASEAN was highlighted during the Indonesian forest fires of 1997. That year, fires on the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan, according to some estimates, destroyed between 750,000 to 1.7 million hectares of forest. The transnational fallout of environmental degradation was evident most starkly in the form of a haze that covered much of Indonesia and neighbouring Singapore and Malaysia. The Economy and Environment Programme for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA) put the economic cost of the 1997s haze at US $1.4 billion (although other estimates have put the total cost of the forest fires and the ensuing haze to the Southeast Asian region at US $5–6billion). As the haze worsened, prompting anger from Singapore and Malaysia, President Suharto was forced to issue an unprecedented apology to his affected
neighbours for not having kept his domestic environmental situation under control. While efforts to address forest fires through the ASEAN framework have not been encouraging, the controversy over the issue suggests that ASEAN members now demand better environmental management from fellow member states and face the need to devise common responses that might involve compromising on the doctrine of non-interference.

While the debate on flexible engagement ended with the reaffirmation of the traditional ASEAN Way of quiet and ‘polite’ diplomacy over open debate and mutual criticism, related aspects of the ASEAN Way continue to be questioned. Tommy Koh, the eminent Singaporean diplomat, articulated the need to move beyond the ASEAN Way noting the tendency of East Asian leaders to pursue cooperation by ‘building trust, by a process of consultation, mutual accommodation and consensus’ while displaying a ‘general reluctance to build institutions and to rely on laws and rules’. The economic crisis, Koh contended, showed the need to supplement the ASEAN Way by institutions. Similarly, Domingo Siazon has raised the possibility of an EU-style ASEAN. ASEAN’s new economic monitoring agreement, the ASP, in his view, was already a step ‘towards institutionalising closer co-ordination of national economic policies and performance and fostering rule-based transparency in governance’.

Overall, the environmental and economic crises in ASEAN in the late 1990s showed that the key goals of ASEAN regionalism, including the management of intra-regional disputes, the forging of common understanding of and approaches to regional problems that are central to the development of a security community, may no longer be guided by a consensus on strict adherence to sovereignty and its corollary, the doctrine of non-interference. The pressures to revise ASEAN’s norms such as non-interference can have paradoxical effects. On the one hand, they mark the erosion of the traditional bases of ASEAN’s approach to regional order. But they could also help in revitalising ASEAN and furthering its development as a security-community-building regional institution. Flexible engagement could facilitate the engagement of civil society elements within a broader framework of ASEAN regionalism. A more institutionalised decision-making system could help collective action to deal with future economic challenges. Moreover, in dealing with domestic issues with a clear transnational impact, such as human rights and the environment, which have increasingly crept onto ASEAN’s multilateral agenda, ASEAN does need to go beyond non-interference. A policy of flexible engagement could make resort to multilateral approaches to these issues more effective, while successful tackling of these issues could further contribute to the development of a regional identity.

But there is considerable reluctance among the ASEAN members to undertake the institutional reforms suggested to date, especially those which concern the sovereignty of members. Only a limited step has been undertaken in the form of an ASEAN ‘Troika’ system which could, if mandated by ASEAN governments, provide a quick diplomatic response to rapidly unfolding crisis situations in the region. Pluralistic security communities do not presuppose the total eclipse of state sovereignty. But to achieve a level of maturity, they require a common
understanding of mutual problems and growing resort to multilateral cooperation to deal with them. ASEAN’s decision not to abandon or dilute the norm of non-interference, based essentially on pragmatic concerns, might have, in a paradoxical way, attested to the resilience of its traditional norms. But it also showed that external challenges, transnational problems and domestic political change have combined to create differences among the members with respect to one of its most cardinal and time-honoured principles. The debate over non-interference has raised serious questions about ASEAN’s capacity to adapt to the changing domestic, regional and global circumstances affecting its members and to move, in the foreseeable future at least, towards a deeper approach to regionalism characteristic of mature security communities.

Notes and references

1 ‘A New Call for Unity’, Asiaweek, 22 October 1982.
2 Noordin Sopiee, ASEAN and Regional Security’, in Mohammed Ayoob (ed.), Regional Security in the Third World (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 229. It should be noted that Sopiee’s analysis was entirely atheoretical. There was no discussion of, or even a footnote to, Deutsch’s original work, and no attempt was made to identify the conditions for the establishment of a security community (such as the absence of competitive military build-ups) or to analyse ASEAN’s record in terms of these conditions. But the label security community had been applied to ASEAN as early as 1977, when Richard Mansbach speculated that ASEAN ‘may become a kind of regional “core”, the importance of which is widely recognized in the establishment of a “security community” in which resort to violence becomes unthinkable’. Richard W. Mansbach, ‘Southeast Asia in the Global System’, in Southeast Asia in Transition: Regional and International Politics (Seoul: The Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Kyung Nam University, 1977), p. 17.
3 As this author had argued in 1992, while:

ASEAN has indeed become a security community in the sense that its members do not foresee the prospect for resorting to armed confrontation among themselves to resolve existing bilateral disputes…the fact that a number of disputes have persisted and defied political and diplomatic solutions casts a shadow over ASEAN’s image as a security community…. ASEAN’s future as a regional security community faces two major challenges: firstly, overcoming several lingering intra-ASEAN disputes that are potentially disruptive of regional peace, and secondly, reaching a consensus on how to approach the task of eventual reconciliation with Vietnam and thereby move the subregional (ASEAN) ‘security community’ to a regional (Southeast Asian) entity.


5 Singapore, which operates a British-built lighthouse on the island, claims it on the basis of control exercised since the 1840s, while Malaysia claims the island as belonging to the state of Johor. An understanding between the two countries in December 1981 stipulated that the dispute should be resolved through an exchange of documents. In 1989, Singapore proposed arbitration by the International Court of Justice to settle the dispute, and Malaysia agreed to this proposal. The construction of a helicopter
pad on the lighthouse and action by the Singapore navy in chasing away Malaysian fishermen have increased tensions and the two countries on occasion have put their forces on alert over such incidents. ‘Malaysia’s Row With Singapore’, The Economist Foreign Report, 24 September 1991, p. 6; Straits Times, 17 September 1991.


8 Straits Times, 18 February 1992.


10 Straits Times, 27 November 1986.


13 ‘Deputy Minister Sees No Regional Military Clash’, FBIS-EAS-90–159, 16 August 1990, p.34.


18 Straits Times, 5 August 1998, p. 16.


22 The Spratly Islands dispute involves China, Taiwan and four ASEAN members, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. The claims of the last three differ from the rest in significant ways. First, unlike China, Vietnam and Taiwan, they do not claim the entire Spratlys chain, but only certain islands. Manila has the largest claim on the Spratlys of the three, covering some sixty islets, rocks and atolls collectively called Kalayaan (this does not include Spratly Island itself). Malaysia’s total claim includes three islands and four groups of rocks. Brunei only claims the Louisa Reef, although a 200 mile (320 km) EEZ around the Reef would extend to the southern Spratlys. Unlike the two Chinas and Vietnam, the rest of the ASEAN parties base their claim not so much on historical grounds, but on the international law of the sea, including its provisions regarding the natural prolongation of the continental shelf (although the Philippines’ claim is based on the argument that the islands were ‘discovered’ by a Philippine businessman in 1947).


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1. Territorial disputes between the two sides should not affect the normal development of their relations. Disputes shall be settled in a peaceful and friendly manner through consultations on the basis of equality and mutual respect;

2. Efforts must be undertaken to build confidence and trust between the two parties, to enhance an atmosphere of peace and stability in the region, and to refrain from using force or threat of force to resolve disputes;

3. In the spirit of expanding common ground and narrowing differences, a gradual and progressive process of cooperation shall be adopted with a view to eventually negotiating a settlement of the bilateral dispute;

4. The two sides agree to settle their bilateral disputes in accordance with the recognized principles of international law;

5. Both sides shall keep an open-minded attitude on the constructive initiatives and proposals of regional states to pursue multilateral cooperation in the South China Sea at the appropriate time;

6. The two sides agree to promote cooperation in fields such as protection of the marine environment, safety of navigation, prevention of piracy, marine scientific research, disaster mitigation and control, search and rescue operations, meteorology, and maritime pollution control. They also agree that on some of the above-mentioned issues, multilateral cooperation could eventually be conducted;

7. All parties concerned shall cooperate in the protection and conservation of the marine resources of the South China Sea;

8. Disputes shall be settled by the countries directly concerned without prejudice to the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.


32 The futility of the China-Philippine agreement was amply demonstrated in 1997 when days after the Philippine defence secretary announced further progress in developing an informal code of conduct with China which would ensure no further incursions or provocations by Beijing, a Philippine reconnaissance mission discovered three Chinese frigates near islands occupied by Philippine troops, and a newly built Chinese structure in a neighbouring island. This prompted a diplomatic protest by Manila, which also informed its fellow ASEAN members of the situation and announced a plan to construct more bases in the area.


35 It should be noted that both the Philippines and Malaysia have established a military presence in the Spratlys.
39 This prompted officials and legislators in Manila to speak of a collusion between Kuala Lumpur and Beijing, since the construction was believed by the Philippines to have started after a visit by the Malaysian foreign minister to Beijing in May 1999. ‘Spratly: KL-Beijing Collusion Suspected’, Straits Times, 30 June 1999, p. 16.
40 Ron Huisken, Limitations of Armaments in Southeast Asia: A Proposal, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence no. 16 (Canberra: Australian National University, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1977).
41 See: Tim Huxley, ‘South-East Asia’s Arms Race: Some Notes on Recent Developments’, Arms Control, vol. 11, no. 1 (May 1990), pp. 69–76. In a subsequent evaluation of the military build-up in East Asia written with Sue Willett, Huxley concluded that the situation ‘may not amount to an arms race’ as it was driven by both threat perceptions and other factors such as prestige and strategic uncertainty. Tim Huxley and Susan Willett, Arming East Asia, Adelphi Paper no. 329 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1999), p. 10. This assessment concurred with previous studies by Desmond Ball and this author. See: Desmond J. Ball, Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia/Pacific Region, International Security, vol. 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993–94), pp. 78–112; Amitav Acharya, An Arms Race in Post-Cold War Southeast Asia? Prospects for Control, Pacific Strategic Papers, no. 8 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994).
42 Opening address by Dr Yeo Ning Hong, Minister for Defence, Singapore, at the First Asia-Pacific Defence Conference, Singapore, 26 February 1992, pp. 2–3.
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53 The editorial comments by a Thai newspaper, the Nation, are revealing: ‘There is a whole nexus from the rank of lieutenant colonel up to the generals who have mastered the art of earning private revenues together with the arms procurers, the agents and the suppliers. The end result is that Thailand pays for inferior quality weapons that are grossly overpriced and make little strategic sense.’ ‘Military Spending Practices Criticised’, FBIS-EAS-93–023, 5 February 1993, p. 50.


57 ‘Ramos Dismisses Chances of Invasion by Neighbors’, FBIS-EAS-2–221, p. 36.


59 Malaysia’s response to the Lee Kuan Yew proposal was that the prevailing bilateral relations between the two countries were good enough not to warrant such measures. But the Malaysian defence minister acknowledged that Lee’s offer served to ‘reassure Singapore’s neighbours that its arsenal was not offensive in nature’. ‘Defense Minister Interviewed on Arms Control’, FBIS-EAS-91–151, 6 August 1991, p. 41.

60 ‘Malaysia Push for Regional Defence’, Age, 10 April 1992.


63 Apart from trade liberalisation and collective bargaining, ASEAN’s economic cooperation in the 1970s and 1980s included measures to promote industrial development and energy and food security. ASEAN industrial development cooperation had three main aspects. The first was ASEAN Industrial Projects, launched in 1978. These included an ammonia-urea project in Indonesia, a urea project in Malaysia, a rock salt, soda ash project in Thailand, a copper fabrication plant in the Philippines, and a Hepatitis B vaccine project in Singapore. The second was the ASEAN Industrial Complementation Scheme, whose Basic Agreement was signed in June 1981. The Scheme was aimed at promoting industrial development in the region by permitting the private sector to agree in advance to industrial specialisation, thereby eliminating ‘unnecessary competition among ASEAN countries’. It provided for vertical and horizontal specialisation. But the number of industrial projects suitable for component production was limited, and getting ASEAN members to agree on a scheme has proved to be difficult. Hence the rationale for the third element in ASEAN industrial cooperation, called the ASEAN Industrial Joint Venture Scheme. Launched in 1980, this scheme aimed at encouraging private sector participation in intra-ASEAN industrial cooperation. AIJV schemes required participation by only two private sector partners. In order to promote food and energy security programmes, ASEAN members agreed in 1977 to an ASEAN emergency petroleum-sharing scheme comprising the national oil corporations of the member countries. An ASEAN Food Security Reserve System was established in 1979 ‘to provide mutual support in the time of emergencies as well as an early warning system for such emergencies’. An ASEAN Emergency Rice Reserve of 50,000 tonnes was set up. On these initiatives, see: Chn’g Meng Kng, ‘ASEAN Economic Cooperation: The Current Status’, Southeast Asian Affairs 1985 (Singapore:

64 Much of the total intra-ASEAN trade volume was accounted for by bilateral trade between Singapore and Malaysia and Malaysia and Indonesia. In addition, about 65 per cent of intra-ASEAN trade was fuel trade (mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials). M.Hadi Soesastro, ‘Prospects for Pacific-Asian Regional Trade Structures’, in Robert Scalapino et al. (eds), Regional Dynamics: Security, Political and Economic Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1990), p. 391.


71 The New ASEAN’s: Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia and Laos (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1997).


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83 *New Straits Times*, 6 July 1978.


90 Hashim Mohammed Ali, ‘Regional Defence From the Military Perspective’, *ISIS Focus*, no. 58 (January 1990), pp. 41–12.


92 Interview with *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 18 December 1993, p. 32.


95 Ibid.


97 In the view of *The Economist* magazine, for example, had ASEAN not been so committed to non-interference, Thailand’s neighbours might have provided more timely warning to Bangkok to attend to its domestic troubles before it became a regional contagion. But ‘any persuasion from fellow ASEAN members [to Thailand] to set a new course was so discreet that it was easy to ignore’. ‘The Limits of Politeness’, *The Economist*, 28 February 1998, p. 43.


102 Ibid.
108 ‘Asean Unity Comes First’, Straits Times (Editorial), 5 August 1998, p. 34.
111 Joint Communiqué of the Twenty-Sixth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Singapore, 23–24 July 1993, p. 7.
Security communities are basically inward-looking constructs. The concept of security community describes the absence or the peaceful management of conflict among a group of states. It does not tell us how such a community may relate to external pressures, such as shifts in balances of power or changes affecting the norm of sovereignty, at the global level. States within a security community rule out war against each other, but they may not do so with respect to states outside of the grouping. As noted in Chapter 2, security communities may develop collective security and collective defence provisions. These provisions may be construed as important indicators of the identity-building process in security communities, but those in a nascent stage need not have such features. Similarly, the norms through which members of a security community relate to each other may not be the same as those which govern their relationships with non-members. For example, if we regard the EU as a security community, it does not mean that the EU has abandoned war as an instrument vis-à-vis non-EU members. Similarly, while ASEAN members had come to view the use of force against each other as a remote possibility by the 1980s, they had not developed such expectations vis-à-vis other countries in Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam.

As with any social group sharing common interests, security communities have common expectations concerning outside actors and the norms governing their collective conduct towards such actors. Because external events and external relations can have important implications for states belonging to a security community, the latter must ensure that such events do not create or exacerbate the potential for conflict in their intra-mural relations. For example, common perceptions of external threats will induce greater unity and cohesion within a security community. The behaviour of the major world powers can have a significant bearing on the fate of security communities and affect relationships among its members. It is not easy to isolate intra-mural relationships within a security community from the relationships between it and outside actors and events. A regional security community, in order to ensure that it remains free of violent intra-mural conflict, must also manage its relations with extra-regional actors, including the major powers, with a view to preventing any conflict-causing or destabilising effect of the latter on the community.
The fortunes of regional organisations throughout the world have risen and fallen depending on how they have related to extra-regional actors. The norms and policies of regional organisations towards extra-regional actors have varied, but most regional organisations have sought either to exclude extra-regional actors or to minimise their role in the security politics of the region. Regional organisations throughout the Third World, including the Organization of African States and the Arab League, have adopted such approaches, at least as declaratory policy, in the Cold War period, influenced by fears, real or imagined, of ‘neo-colonialism’ and superpower intervention. They have also advocated ‘regional solutions to regional problems’. In many instances, regional organisations have developed a collective front against extra-regional powers, not just to deter any potential military threats, but also to bargain over issues with an important bearing on regional order.

Since security communities have already succeeded in ensuring, or nearly ensuring, conflict avoidance and pacific settlement of intra-mural disputes, they are likely to be seen as a credible model for launching similar processes beyond their walls. In other words, the very norms that have underpinned relations within security communities could be extended to govern relations between the community and outside actors, with the hope that the latter may be socialised into a relationship that develops the qualities of a wider security community. Moreover, successful security communities are likely to have a significant demonstration effect. The EU has provided encouragement for regional cooperation in many other parts of the world, even if its model of ‘regional integration’ has proved hard to replicate elsewhere. The CSCE/OSCE concept has proved attractive for confidence-building measures within other regional organisations or in bilateral relationships. (One notable example is China’s border agreements with Russia and four Central Asian republics as well as India, which incorporates many elements of the OSCE model.)

It is hardly surprising that towards the late 1980s and early 1990s ASEAN’s model of security cooperation came to be seen as the basis for constructing a wider security community in the Asia Pacific region. The initial impetus for a regional security forum for the Asia Pacific did not come from ASEAN. It was the outside powers, especially Russia, Australia and Canada, which had come up with proposals for Asia Pacific security cooperation based partly on the CSCE/OSCE idea. ASEAN, however, while rejecting ‘imported’ models of multilateralism, presented itself as the anchor for a new security arrangement to be based, as far as possible, on its model and in which it could play a leadership role.

As with the expansion in its membership, ASEAN’s involvement in Asia Pacific institution building raises two important issues for the theory of security communities. The first is whether ASEAN’s own norms and ‘way of life’ are applicable to a wider Asia Pacific grouping. Underlying ASEAN’s initiative was an assumption that its norms, such as the non-use of force, consultations and consensus, and the ASEAN Way of socialisation, could be adapted and employed as the building block of a regional security community in the wider Asia Pacific
region. Yet, ASEAN had itself claimed that these norms had a ‘cultural’ basis. They had been developed and consolidated through its institutional politics. Almost by definition, socio-cultural norms and identities built around them are not easily adapted and applied outside the political and cultural setting of a given social group. So by promoting the ARF, ASEAN was putting its norms to a considerable test; success would confirm ASEAN’s success in making those norms operational, while failure at the Asia Pacific level could have a potential spillover effect damaging its credibility and perhaps ASEAN itself.

The second issue relates to the ‘burdens’ assumed by ASEAN’s decision to apply its norms at the Asia Pacific level. Such burdens, as explained earlier, can cause difficulties for security communities and may lead to their unravelling. The Asia Pacific region includes all the leading powers of the international system. A leadership role in managing regional order would involve a major new responsibility for ASEAN and the issue of its capacity to play such a role.

Rethinking autonomy as a regional norm

Neither of these considerations deterred ASEAN from an anchor role in Asia Pacific multilateralism. An interest in this role was as much a product of ASEAN’s growing self-confidence in the wake of the Cambodia settlement as of the changing strategic circumstances of the Asia Pacific region. These circumstances included the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of Soviet naval expansion into the Pacific, the thaw in Sino-Soviet (Russian) rivalry, the emergence of China as a potential major economic and military power, and the removal of the US bases from the Philippines. The end of the Cold War confronted ASEAN with new challenges as well as opportunities for trying to reshape regional order.

The end of the US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rivalries had contributed to a substantial reduction in regional tensions and the prospect for competitive external intervention in Southeast Asia. However, ASEAN members became concerned about a ‘power vacuum’ in the region, which might lead to new kinds of conflicts and rivalry involving external powers. These concerns stemmed from the reduction of Soviet and US forces in the region. In January 1990, Moscow had announced its intention to remove all but a small segment of its naval and air units stationed in Cam Ranh Bay. While this initiative eased ASEAN’s concerns about the security of sea lanes, it also meant the removal of a useful counterweight to China, especially for those ASEAN members traditionally suspicious of China. The Soviet withdrawal also had the effect of reducing the utility of the Philippine bases for the USA, at a time when it was already losing interest in renegotiating the terms of tenure dictated by a nationalist Philippine Senate. Coming in the wake of the reduction of Soviet forces along the Sino-Soviet border, and a build-up of Chinese naval power, the Soviet departure from Cam Ranh appeared to enhance Beijing’s ability to dominate the regional maritime environment.
ASEAN members were most worried about trends in US force reductions. In 1992, under a new strategic plan for the region, called the East Asia Security Initiative (EASI), the USA had announced a 12 per cent cut in its forces in Asia, from 135,000 troops to approximately 120,000 by the end of that year. But the rejection by the Philippine Senate of a new bases treaty with the USA also implied additional cuts in the US military presence. Theoretically, the USA could compensate for the loss of Philippine bases by increased access to other facilities in the region (such as in Singapore), and could carry out all conceivable contingency missions in the region with the help of its remaining Pacific forces (plus reinforcements from Alaska and continental USA). But some Pentagon officials expressed fears that cutbacks necessitated by the loss of Philippine bases ‘would eliminate real combat capability’ and ‘may initiate destabilising actions by regional powers’.

Moreover, these developments raised fears in some ASEAN member states regarding a possible scramble among ‘regional powers’ seeking to step into the ‘vacuum’. Among the regional powers, China, Japan and, to a lesser extent, India were generally identified as the three leading contenders for influence, presumably because of their capability to project power into the Southeast Asian region. While perceptions of the next regional hegemon differed within ASEAN, with Indonesia and Malaysia more fearful of China, while Singapore showed a greater anxiety about Japanese remilitarisation, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore warned that the reduction of the US presence would give rise to a contest for regional leadership among China, India and Japan. Furthermore, ASEAN members feared threats from any serious escalation of the US-Japan trade dispute, which could threaten the US-Japan security relationship. The state of Sino-US relations was also seen within ASEAN as a key factor in Southeast Asian security. The growing friction between the USA and China over human rights and Washington’s threat of economic sanctions against China would make the latter ‘angry and resentful’ and could ‘have serious long-term consequences for Asia-Pacific peace and stability’.

These concerns of ASEAN members confirm that states facing a common security challenge, in this case strategic uncertainty rather than the emergence of a commonly perceived threat, could encourage a new multilateralism, including a security community. Another important trigger for the latter, also evident in the case of ASEAN’s attitude towards the ARF, was interdependence, in both the economic and security arenas, between Southeast Asia and the wider Asia Pacific region. The economic links between Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia have been matched by a growing security interdependence, as evident in the growing salience of problems such as the territorial disputes in the South China Sea or the potential for regional hegemony by China and Japan, both of which transcend subregional dimensions. As a consequence, bilateral and subregional approaches were deemed inadequate for ensuring regional stability. A region-wide framework was more necessary than ever (Table 6.1).
ASEAN and Asia Pacific security

Such material conditions as the changing balance of power or economic interdependence do not in themselves explain ASEAN’s decision to get involved in Asia Pacific multilateral security debates. Ideas, emanating from outside the region, too had an important influence. These included the related principles of ‘Common Security’ and ‘Cooperative Security’, as described in Table 6.1. Proponents of these ideas saw multilateralism as a more desirable long-term alternative to balance of power arrangements and deterrence-based security strategies. The crucial role played by the CSCE in easing the Cold War in Europe provided an initial impetus for proposals for similar arrangements in the Asia Pacific based on corresponding ideas about common security. Indeed, the initial proposals for Asia Pacific multilateralism envisaged a process roughly akin to the CSCE. For example, the genesis of the ARF may be traced to Mikhail Gorbachev’s Vladivostock speech in 1986, in which he had called for a ‘Pacific

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposer</th>
<th>Type of multilateralism</th>
<th>Scope</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union/Australia</td>
<td>‘Common Security’; CSCE model</td>
<td>Comprehensive; focus on CSBMs and nuclear arms control</td>
<td>New; Asia-Pacific wide</td>
<td>Broad-brush; government-led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>‘Cooperative Security’</td>
<td>Comprehensive; with a strong focus on non-military threats</td>
<td>New; Northeast Asia only</td>
<td>Evolutionary; two-track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN/Japan</td>
<td>‘Security Dialogue’</td>
<td>Comprehensive but with minimal focus on EHD issues</td>
<td>Existing; limited to enhanced PMC &amp; members and special invitees</td>
<td>Intergovernmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>‘Flexible Multilateralism’</td>
<td>Conventional threats; focus on some interstate conflicts</td>
<td>No new standing institution envisaged; maintain existing alliances</td>
<td>Case-by-case approach; intergovernmental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Notes:
1 Australia subsequently distanced itself from the Russian-proposed OSCE-style institution and called for both regional bilateral and multilateral arrangements for an ‘Asian Security System’.
2 Includes economic underdevelopment, trade disputes, overpopulation, irregular migration and refugee movements, environmental degradation, political oppression, human rights abuses, terrorism and the illicit trade in drugs.
3 Environment, human rights and democracy.
4 Enhanced PMC refers to the six ASEAN members (before 1995) plus Japan, Canada, the USA, Australia, South Korea, the EC, New Zealand, Russia, China, Vietnam, Laos and Papua New Guinea.
Constructing a security community in SE Asia

Ocean conference along the Helsinki [CSCE] conference'. In 1990, the Australian External Minister Gareth Evans had envisaged ‘a future Asian security architecture involving a wholly new institutional process that might be capable of evolving, in Asia just as in Europe, as a framework for addressing and resolving security problems’. Another idea about multilateralism in Asia Pacific security was the Canadian notion of ‘Cooperative Security’, outlined in a proposal by External Affairs Minister Joe Clark in July 1990. In contrast to the still-born Soviet and Australian proposals, the Canadian government managed to sponsor a two-track and subregional dialogue process under the auspices of the North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue (NPCSD) involving China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Russia, the USA and Canada. This initiative furthered the development of the idea of cooperative security as an approach to regional order.

The initial response of ASEAN policy-makers to such proposals was marked by a certain amount of ambivalence. To be sure, at their first post-Cold War summit held in Singapore in January 1992, ASEAN members authorised the grouping to deal with security issues and organise regional security dialogues both within Southeast Asia and at the Asia Pacific levels. But they were not ready immediately to endorse a CSCE-type forum for the Asia Pacific. Although ASEAN itself was a subregional model of cooperative security, it was the call for a more structured and formalistic security forum like the CSCE that generated misgivings. Many ASEAN government leaders and academic specialists believed in the early 1990s that the idea of cooperative security and the CSCE model would not work in Asia. They argued that the conditions which had facilitated the CSCE, i.e. a rigid bipolarity and a well-defined alliance framework, had been absent in Asia. The existence of numerous territorial disputes, a culturally rooted aversion to formal confidence-building and transparency measures among Asian policy-makers, and the proven worth of the bilateral alliances of the USA meant that regional order in the Asia Pacific region was more elusive, and less amenable to multilateral approaches. ASEAN leaders argued that the Asia Pacific was too complex and diverse a region for CSCE-type arrangements. Moreover, they were fearful that if ideas originating from outside the region were to define the regional security framework, it would compromise ASEAN’s norm of ‘regional solution to regional problems’. As Lee Kuan Yew argued, such an outcome could lead ASEAN to ‘lose its identity’. 

Ironically enough, the very same concern would eventually lead ASEAN to view multilateralism in a more favourable light. In order to defend its norm of regional autonomy, ASEAN had to seize the initiative from outside countries in seeking to shape regional security. Added to this concern was a sense that playing a major role in launching a regional security framework could be an important way of underscoring the continued and broader relevance of ASEAN’s norms. While a formal CSCE-type institution was seen by the ASEAN members to be impractical in the Asia Pacific region, it was easier for them to accept proposals for looser and more consultative mechanisms for promoting an exchange of views on security issues within the region. After all, this approach would correspond to the ASEAN Way. Moreover, a multilateral security framework could be a useful ‘insurance policy’ for ASEAN should the US regional military
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presence decline to a level where it could no longer provide a credible security guarantee within a balance of power framework.

At the same time, ASEAN members, influenced by research and debates organised by their think-tanks and provoked by similar ideas suggested by Foreign Minister Tavo Nakayama, came up with a model of an ‘indigenous’ forum which could form the basis for security discussions. This existing ASEAN mechanism was the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences (ASEAN-PMC). The ASEAN-PMC was a series of annual meetings between ASEAN foreign ministers and their counterparts from countries that had the status of ‘dialogue partner’. These meetings had been initiated gradually since the mid-1970s. The original members of the PMC included the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the EU and Japan. (South Korea was added to the list of official dialogue partners later, followed by China and India.) While the focus of the ASEAN-PMC had been primarily economic, political issues (such as the Cambodian conflict) did form part of its agenda in the 1980s. By using the PMC as the initial vehicle for multilateral security discussions, ASEAN could satisfy two of its important norms: the need for an indigenous approach and the ASEAN Way of dialogue, which was already the hallmark of the PMC. In such a forum, the ASEAN members would have a controlling influence over the agenda of discussions. ASEAN would thus occupy a central place in the development of any future regional security institutions.20

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in July 1992 and the ASEAN-PMC meetings in Manila were a crucial turning point in ASEAN’s decision to play a direct and important role in Asia Pacific security multilateralism under an expanded PMC framework. During these meetings, security issues were discussed extensively; in a significant move, China was invited to participate in some of these discussions as a ‘guest’ of ASEAN.21 The following year, in May 1993 in Singapore (which played a crucial role as the chair of the ASEAN Standing Committee), the ASEAN-PMC members held a ‘Special Senior Official’s Meeting’ (SOM) to discuss regional security issues. Its recommendations to invite China, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Russia and Vietnam to meet ASEAN and its dialogue partners within the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum’ in Bangkok in the following year were approved by the ASEAN foreign ministers at their meeting in Singapore in July 1993.

Helping to secure the acceptance of the idea of cooperative security were existing and emerging second-track processes of multilateral dialogue in the Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific regions. In 1993 the most prominent ASEAN-wide body, the ASEAN Institutes of International and Strategic Studies (ASEAN-ISIS), released a report suggesting a number of confidence-building measures.22 Moreover, in June 1993 in Kuala Lumpur, about a year before the launching of the ARF, a group of think-tanks in the Asia Pacific region established the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)23 with the objective, as one of its founding members put it, of creating a ‘more regularized, focused and inclusive’ non-governmental process on Pacific security issues.24

While ASEAN’s decision to support the development of a multilateral
security forum in the Asia Pacific region conformed to its norms of regional autonomy and the ASEAN Way, it also represented an important reinterpretation of its norm concerning regional autonomy as expressed through the ZOPFAN framework. While maintaining its official adherence to ZOPFAN, ASEAN members faced increasing questions about its continued relevance. These included whether ZOPFAN was still a practical and desirable notion. Apart from the fact that ZOPFAN had never been, and was unlikely to be, accepted by outside powers, continued adherence to the ZOPFAN ideal also begged the question whether Southeast Asia as a region could somehow be insulated from the interests and interactions of major external powers.

Intra-ASEAN differences over ZOPFAN, evident in the early stages of ASEAN, found their way into post-Cold War deliberations over its relevance. In contrast to the attitudes of Singapore and Thailand, Indonesia was clearly reluctant to abandon ZOPFAN as a framework for regional security. Foreign Minister Ali Alatas viewed ZOPFAN as ‘an evolutionary process’, representing ‘the regional, multilateral framework within which it is hoped to promote national and regional resilience and to seek the disentanglement of the region from the contending strategic designs of the great Powers’. But a closer reading of the positions of Malaysia and Indonesia would suggest that neither viewed the implementation of ZOPFAN in its original form as a feasible response to the challenge of post-Cold War regional order. Malaysia appeared to move away from ZOPFAN by promoting the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation signed at the Bali summit in 1976 as being the more appropriate instrument for ASEAN’s dealings with the Indochinese states and external powers. Similarly, Indonesia accepted the need for adjustments to the ZOPFAN concept in light of a changing regional strategic environment. As Ali Alatas conceded, Southeast Asian countries ‘can’t keep the four powers [the USA, Japan, China and the Soviet Union] out of the region’. The implication was that regional security would be best ensured not through excluding the Great Powers as envisaged in ZOPFAN, but through ‘equilibrium among them and between them and Southeast Asia’. This revision formed a major conceptual rationale for ASEAN’s participation in the ARE ASEAN members continued to work on a Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty (eventually signed on 15 December 1995) as a limited step towards the realisation of the ZOPFAN concept, but in general, ASEAN came to accept the principle of ‘inclusiveness’ underlying the idea of cooperative security as an important new norm. This meant accepting a dilution of its existing norm of regional autonomy.

The ARF and the ASEAN Way

The first working session of the ARF convened in Bangkok on 25 July 1994 with eighteen founding members, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, the USA, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the EU, Russia, China, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam
and Laos. (Myanmar, Cambodia and India subsequently joined the group, increasing its membership at the end of 1997 to twenty-one, while North Korea was admitted in 2000). The ARF became the first truly ‘multilateral’ security forum covering the wider Asia Pacific region. It is the only ‘regional’ security framework in the world today in which all the major players of the international system (including the USA, Russia, Japan, China and the EU) are represented.

Through the ARF, ASEAN sought to create a regional order based not only on its own norms, but also on the relatively new norm of inclusiveness, which is central to the idea of cooperative security. Inclusiveness demands that the ARF not be a dialogue only among the like-minded; it must engage all principal regional actors with different and perhaps conflicting perspectives on regional security issues. Thus, as Gareth Evans, Australia’s Foreign Minister at the time of the ARF’s creation, pointed out, the purpose of the ARF was to build ‘security with others rather than against them’. Underlying this vision was a belief that the balance of power approach to regional order needed at least to be supplemented by a cooperative security approach. Malaysia’s Foreign Minister, Abdullah Badawi, denounced the ‘deterrence’ approach as outmoded. The concept of an ARF, he contended, ‘requires the development of friendship rather than the identification of enemies. The nature of security problems in the Asia-Pacific are such that they do not lend themselves amenable for management through the old method of deterrence by countervailing force.’ (As will be discussed later in this chapter, the irony was that the ARF was seen by at least some within ASEAN as a device for engaging the USA in the region so as to maintain a stable regional balance of power.)

Yet, the norm of inclusiveness evident in the ARF was subject to some limits. It did not include Taiwan (which is also a Spratly claimant) and until 2000 North Korea, the main Northeast Asian security concern for the ARF members. Although Taiwan had been allowed into a multilateral intergovernmental economic regime such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, China drew a firm distinction between security multilateralism and economic regionalism in opposing Taiwanese membership of the ARF. Beijing also scuttled Taiwan’s full-scale participation in the CSCAP, arguing that the CSCAP is not as ‘non-governmental’ as it claims to be, since it allows participation by government officials in a non-official capacity. In 1994, the USA expressed opposition to the early inclusion of North Korea into the ARF framework.

The imprint of the norms of ASEAN was amply evident in the initial development of the ARF. Professor Desmond Ball argues that the cooperative security measures undertaken by the ARF conformed to the ‘Asian Way’:

their design and development has been in accord with the ‘Asian way’—i.e., they have involved evolutionary developments from extant regional structures rather than the importation of Western modalities or the creation of new structures; decisions are made by ‘consensus after careful and extensive
consultations’ rather than by voting; and the implementation of particular measures eschews legalisms and is left to voluntary compliance.\textsuperscript{38}

From the outset, the ASEAN members sought to ‘dominate and set the pace’ of ARF, and occupy ‘the driver’s seat’ while recognising ‘the concerns and interests of outside powers’\textsuperscript{39}. ASEAN’s diplomatic centrality was evident not just in the name ASEAN’ (as opposed to Asian’) Regional Forum, it was also reflected in the fact that ARF annual sessions were to be held in ASEAN countries (although this was different for the ARF’s ‘Inter-Sessional Support Groups’—essentially working committees dealing with specific issue areas—which were chaired by an ASEAN member along with one non-ASEAN state and could be held outside of an ASEAN member country).

Moreover, several aspects of the ASEAN Way found their way into the making of the ARE. The first was an aversion to rigid institutionalism. Commenting on the nature of institution building in the ARF, Singapore’s foreign minister acknowledged, when announcing the creation of the ARF in July 1993, that the ARF did not have ‘a master plan or a rigid road map’ nor did it ‘want to force the pace’. Under ASEAN’s direction, backed by China, the ARF opted for a minimal institutional structure consisting primarily of its annual foreign ministers conclave, as well as the Senior Officials Meeting (ARF-SOM) that precedes it by a few months. In between these meetings, the only other intergovernmental meetings are those of the intersessional groups which were instituted following a decision at the 1995 ARF meeting. There is no ARF Secretariat; however, proposals to this effect have been made, especially in the wake of the Asian economic crisis. Matters pertaining to the ARF are handled by the annually rotating Chair of the ASEAN Standing Committee. The ASEAN Secretariat itself did not develop a bureaucratic apparatus for dealing with security issues, despite the decision of the Singapore summit to expand and upgrade the Secretariat and initiate intra-mural and extra-mural security deliberations.

Further evidence of the impact of the ASEAN Way on the ARF process is the cautious and incremental approach to security cooperation. This was evident from a document entitled ‘The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper’ circulated by ASEAN at the second ARF meeting held in Brunei on 1 August 1995. The paper, which has served as a blueprint for the ARF (although it was not formally adopted by the ARF in its entirety), envisaged three categories of security cooperation: confidence building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution (later changed to ‘elaboration of approaches to conflicts’ as a concession to China which had warned against rapid institutionalisation of the ARF)\textsuperscript{40}. While this three-fold categorisation was itself incremental (with CBMs to be followed by preventive diplomacy initiatives which would then be followed by approaches to conflicts), each of these categories contained measures with a two-stage implementation schedule. The first category included measures that could be carried out in the short term (Annex A), while the second category (Annex B) contained measures that required a longer-term consideration and
approach. The short-term measures envisaged by the concept paper consisted of dialogues on security perceptions, including voluntary statements of defence policy positions, and publication of defence white papers or equivalent documents. Measures in the long-term implementation category ranged from simple transparency measures (including information and communication CBMs) to somewhat more ambitious CBMs including prior notification of military deployments with region-wide significance. The concept paper also sought to make use of existing global CBMs such as the UN Register on Conventional Arms by calling for the exploration of a regional version. The concept paper adopted a broad view of CBMs aimed at dealing with both military and non-military issues. Indicative were its proposals concerning information exchanges and training on drug trafficking and the development of a mechanism to mobilise relief assistance in the event of natural disasters. The paper paid particular attention to maritime issues, with ideas such as the establishment of a zone of cooperation in the South China Sea, the development of maritime databases, and the development of cooperative approaches to sea lines of communications, beginning with information exchanges and training in areas such as search and rescue and piracy. A relatively novel and interesting proposal contained in the paper was the call to arms manufacturers and suppliers to reveal the destination of their arms exports. The paper was strong on transparency measures: its proposals in this regard included coordination of existing security studies activities and the establishment of a regional security studies centre.

The concept paper advanced two other important measures: (1) the development of a set of basic principles to ensure a common understanding and approach to interstate relations in the region; and (2) the adoption of comprehensive approaches to security. Any draft of basic principles was to incorporate those found in ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. In this sense, the ARF was to draw upon, and extend, those very norms that had already committed the ASEAN members to self-inhibiting and peaceful conduct in interstate relations and which had facilitated its evolution towards a regional security community. The first meeting of the ARF held in Bangkok in July 1994 had already agreed to ‘endorse the purposes and principles’ of the Treaty ‘as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence building, preventative diplomacy and political and security cooperation’. The notion of comprehensive security was already well established in the security discourse in the Asia Pacific region, with countries such as Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia having developed security doctrines based on this notion.

The concept paper’s attempt to draw a distinction between CBMs, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution is arbitrary. There can be considerable overlap between CBMs and measures that fall under the other two categories. The main example is that norms (such as non-interference and non-use of force) that are considered to be declaratory CBMs may also be those that can be used as the basis of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution.

Another aspect of the ASEAN process that has played an important role in
the development of the ARF’s security agenda is that of Track-Two channels.The CSCAP has established four working groups dealing with CBMs (chaired by the USA and Singapore), maritime security (chaired by Indonesia and Australia), North Pacific security cooperation (chaired by Canada and Japan) and cooperative and comprehensive security (chaired by New Zealand and Malaysia). The CBM working group has developed proposals for measures to promote greater transparency in military doctrine, capabilities and intentions through military-to-military contacts, exchange programmes, intelligence exchange, prior notification of exercises, inviting military observers to exercises and greater openness regarding defence planning, procurement and defence budgets, including through the publication of defence white papers or policy papers. Several of its recommendations have found their way onto the list of CBMs approved by the ARF, attesting to its usefulness as a research and discussion forum. The CBM group has also developed ideas concerning preventive diplomacy. The working group on maritime security prepared a set of guidelines for maritime security cooperation for consideration by the ARF in 1997. The North Pacific group secured the participation of North Korea.

A brief review of the progress of the ARF’s security agenda during the first four years of its existence reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of ASEAN-style multilateralism. Of the three categories of measures envisaged by the concept paper, the CBM agenda has made most progress, but even these have been criticised for lacking in substance. The meeting of the ARF held in Brunei on 1 August 1995 approved a number of CBMs, including exchanging annual defence postures on a voluntary basis, increasing dialogues on security issues on a bilateral, subregional and regional basis, maintaining senior-level contacts and exchanges among military institutions, and encouraging participation of the ARF members in the UN Conventional Arms Register. The establishment of an intersessional support group (ISG) on CBMs, which was agreed at the Brunei meeting, provided an additional forum for the ARF member countries to develop and exchange ideas about confidence building. At subsequent ARF meetings, the CBM agenda was further advanced with agreement to expand the scope of defence policy papers submitted voluntarily by ARF members to include their defence contacts and exchange programmes. Another key area of agreement was to open up the ARF-SOM to defence representatives and encourage their greater participation in intersessional activities. Contact CBMs were augmented by agreement to develop exchanges and meetings among national defence colleges. The first meeting of the heads of National Defence Colleges was held in October 1997. At a meeting of the ISG on CBMs held in Brunei in November 1997, a US proposal for compiling a list of CBM publications written in ARF countries and a list of CBM experts in those countries was approved. On the other hand, important CBM proposals, such as the idea of a regional arms register, made little headway. Moreover, the ARF has been unable to move much beyond simple transparency measures and information exchanges to more
ambitious ‘constraining measures’. As noted earlier, some ARF members had voiced objections that such ‘Western’ measures were unsuited to the Asian milieu.

At the fourth ARF meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on 26–27 July 1997, the ARF members decided that the CBM agenda had progressed sufficiently (an assumption questioned by critics) to warrant serious consideration of the next stage in the ARF’s evolution, namely preventive diplomacy (PD), especially if there was an overlap between CBMs and PD.\textsuperscript{46} But the ARF’s PD agenda has been stymied by both definitional issues and the problem of operationalising it. The ARF members seem to agree on the definition of PD offered by the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his report \textit{An Agenda for Peace}. Here, PD is defined as ‘action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur’. But a particular conceptual problem is whether PD would involve the use of force.\textsuperscript{47} The inclusion of ‘preventive deployment’ as an element of PD by the UN has generated suspicion on the part of China in particular.

Proposals concerning PD which have been discussed in Track-Two channels include the enhancement of the role of the ARF chair or a designated special representative to undertake good offices and mediation roles and the creation of a regional risk reduction centre.\textsuperscript{48} Yet, some ARF members, especially China, are concerned that the ARF’s role in PD may be too intrusive and thus violate the principle of non-interference.\textsuperscript{49} (This reflects China’s concern regarding the possible use of PD in a crisis in the Taiwan Straits; this concern has been telescoped in the wake of the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999.) China also sees third-party mediation on the ground as ineffective and complicating. China insists that confidence building should remain the primary function of the ARF, even though some of the measures envisaged under the PD section actually belong in the CBM category.

While the implementation of CBMs and PD measures may contribute to conflict prevention, conflict resolution involves finding ways to resolve existing disputes among the ARF members that threaten regional order. But the issue of conflict resolution has been one of the most contentious areas on the security agenda of the ARF. China is particularly sensitive in this regard, a factor which forced the ARF to change the wording of the concept paper from ‘conflict resolution’ in the original ASEAN-developed draft to the vague and almost comical expression of ‘elaboration of approaches to conflicts’. China is adamant that the ARF cannot have a managerial role in dispute settlement. China initially opposed the inclusion of the South China Sea dispute on the ARF’s agenda, arguing that the ARF was not a suitable forum for handling contentious issues.\textsuperscript{50} While it has somewhat relented on this issue, China continues to advocate bilateral approaches to dispute settlement among the ARF members. For example, while conceding ASEAN’s demand for an ASEAN-China dialogue on security issues covering, among other things, the territorial dispute in the South China Sea, at the ARF meeting in Brunei in 1995, China was also quick to add that the ARF itself was ‘not an appropriate place’ to resolve the dispute and that ‘the most effective way to handle this dispute is through bilateral negotiations’.\textsuperscript{51}
The position of the ASEAN countries on a role for the ARF in conflict resolution is more ambiguous.

While ASEAN has collectively sought a multilateral approach to the South China Sea conflict (which would enhance bargaining clout vis-à-vis China), bilateralism is more consistent with ASEAN’s habit of not handling contentious issues within the formal ASEAN framework (or the practice of ‘sweeping intramural conflicts under the carpet’, as discussed in Chapter 2). The history of ASEAN shows that bilateralism has been the preferred mode of conflict management and conflict resolution among the ASEAN members. Territorial disputes between Malaysia and Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, and Malaysia and the Philippines have all been handled through bilateral channels such as the Thai-Malaysia and Indonesia-Malaysia border committees.

Reviewing the ARF’s cooperative security agenda for the first four years of its existence reveals both the utility and dangers of the ASEAN Way. On the one hand, the ASEAN Way of informality, incrementalism and emphasis on nonbinding agreements and voluntary compliance has been useful in adopting an initial set of CBMs. On the other hand, as Desmond Ball has argued, the measures adopted so far ‘do not impinge on core national interests—i.e. territorial claims and other sovereignty issues, defence capabilities and operations, or internal political processes (which might be affected by more transparent policymaking)’.53

The central role of ASEAN in the ARF and the latter’s conformity to the ASEAN Way have proven to be controversial. The Asian economic crisis has contributed to calls for ASEAN to dilute its hold over the ARF, and for the ARF to adopt a more formal approach to security cooperation than that envisaged under the ASEAN Way. The cautious and slow-motion ASEAN Way has frustrated some Western members, notably Australia, Canada and the USA, who would like the ARF to develop quickly and adopt concrete measures. Critics have doubted whether the ASEAN Way, developed when the threat of communist expansion served as a cementing factor for its otherwise divided membership, and which relies heavily on interpersonal and informal ties within the ASEAN grouping, could be successfully duplicated within a wider regional setting. Despite the growing economic and security linkages between Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, the security concerns of the two subregions remain largely distinctive. Critics doubt whether the lessons of ASEAN’s performance in managing interstate conflict in a subregional context will be relevant to the management of security issues afflicting the wider Asia Pacific region. The question is especially moot with respect to Northeast Asia where the relevance of the ARF has been questioned. Here, the management of the North Korean proliferation crisis has taken the form of a series of bilateral exchanges between the USA and North Korea, North Korea and South Korea, China and North Korea, Japan and South Korea and, at least initially, Japan and North Korea. The US initiative on subregional talks on security issues in the Korean Peninsula involving China, North and South Korea, Japan and the USA attests to Washington’s apparent belief that the ARF may not be the appropriate forum.
for managing security in Northeast Asia. At the conception of the ARF idea in Singapore, South Korea’s foreign minister suggested that ‘given the specific security situation [in the Korean Peninsula], the Northeast Asian region could consider a long-term cooperation, which will promote, among others confidence-building, arms control and dispute settlement’. Since then, Seoul and Tokyo have promoted the idea of a Northeast Asian Security Dialogue, which would devote itself to security issues that are more specific to the subregion.

The burdens and benefits of multilateralism

Whether the ARF, modelled in part after the ASEAN Way, will be an effective instrument of regional order in the Asia Pacific region has attracted much debate and scepticism. Critics, such as The Economist, see it as a ‘talk-shop’. A Bangkok Post analysis of the first ARF meeting in Bangkok was suggestively titled ‘a casual approach to deadly serious security issues’. Sukhumbhnad Paribatra (a Thai scholar and then Deputy Foreign Minister under the Chuan Leekpai government in the wake of the Asian economic crisis) noted that ASEAN is unlikely to have sufficient corporate power to dictate the course of events even in its own geographical domain, let alone in the Asia-Pacific region at large. Diplomacy and moral suasion will remain the only effective weapons in its armoury.

In a particularly trenchant critique, Michael Leifer has described the ARF to be a ‘highly imperfect diplomatic instrument for coping with the new and uncertain security context’. In his view, the prerequisite for a successful ARF may well be the prior existence of a stable balance of power. The central issue in the case of the ARF is whether, in addition to diplomatic encouragement for a culture of cooperation driven partly by economic interdependence, the region shows the markings of a stable, supporting balance or distribution of power that would allow the multilateral venture to proceed in circumstances of some predictability. The ARF’s structural problem is that its validity seems to depend on the prior existence of a stable balance, but it is not really in a position to create it.

While espousing the norms of multilateralism and cooperative security, the ASEAN countries do see a stable balance among the major powers of the Asia Pacific region as a key ingredient of regional order. As Ali Alatas put it, regional security requires an ‘equilibrium among them [the major powers] and between them and Southeast Asia’. On the other hand, their recognition of the need for a balance among the major powers of the Asia Pacific region is a qualified one. A careful reading of the ASEAN states’ position would suggest that a distinction is made between balance of power as an outcome and balance of power as an approach. For the ASEAN states, the balance of power as an actual situation or
state of affairs is certainly desirable. But this does not mean that such an outcome should be or can only be achieved through a balance of power ‘policy’ involving a ‘competitive manipulation of power relationships’ and the use of mechanisms such as deterrence, alliances and military build-ups. ASEAN fears that one of the principal traditional mechanisms of achieving a balance of power, its alliances with outside powers, is of doubtful value. There is also a significant danger that these traditional mechanisms would themselves trigger a security dilemma, including an arms race. On the other hand, a multilateral forum like the ARF may be able to help create a ‘situation of equilibrium’ among the major powers through the creation of norms and habits of cooperation.

The case for a multilateral forum like the ARF is rooted in ASEAN’s misgivings about the potential unreliability of major power security guarantees that are integral to a balance of power mechanism. The ASEAN states do recognise the continuing political and strategic value of US alliances in the post-Cold War era, including their impact in restraining the future security posture of Japan and their role in providing the necessary legal and political basis for a continued strong US military presence in the region. But these alliances had lost some of their credibility, especially in dealing with contingencies in Southeast Asia. The US refusal to accept Manila’s claim that the scope of their mutual defence treaty covers its positions in the Spratly Islands further attests to the uncertain nature of their alliance relationship.68 ASEAN clearly doubts whether the USA will really come to its rescue in the event of an outbreak of military confrontation with China in the South China Sea. In sum, a US-led balance of power approach may not be adequate or even relevant to the task of preventing and managing small-scale regional conflicts, such as the resurgence of instability in Cambodia, border clashes in Southeast Asia, or armed conflict over the South China Sea islands.

Moreover, the ASEAN states share the view that a highly adversarial Sino-US relationship with a containment strategy will threaten regional stability. Lee Kuan Yew, perhaps the most outspoken critic of a containment strategy, argues that a strong and belligerent US response to Chinese power will stroke nationalist and hardline sentiments in China, with the consequence that ‘the medium and small countries of the region have to live with the results of an aroused and xenophobic China’.69

ASEAN’s support for the ARF is also based on its distrust of a possible Asian concert system, a framework in which the major powers themselves develop a mechanism to regulate their own interactions.70 The relevant model here is the European concert system, which, involving all the major powers of the day, assumed the primary responsibility for managing Europe’s security problems. Concert diplomacy had four main features: (1) reliance on multilateral consultations among the Great Powers (conference diplomacy) to manage crisis situations; (2) an agreement that there could be no territorial change without Great Power approval; (3) a commitment to protect all ‘essential’ members of the states system; and (4) a recognition that all the Great Powers must have equal status and that none should be humiliated. By providing a mechanism for
coordinating the maintenance of a balance of power among the Great Powers, the concert made it possible for their joint management of interstate conflicts.

From the perspective of ASEAN, a concert system involving China, Japan, the USA and Russia would legitimise Great Power domination at the expense of the interests of lesser powers. In other words, a concert would effectively marginalise ASEAN in the management of regional order. It is hardly surprising that ASEAN is opposed to such an idea, seeking instead a more equal relationship among the regional countries.\(^7\)

Overall, however, ASEAN’s interest in multilateralism through the ARF has not been pursued at the expense of balance of power mechanisms. That ASEAN, as a whole has welcomed the US-Japanese security treaty as a key element of regional order attests to its continued faith in balancing mechanisms. Moreover, just as multilateral security dialogues have proliferated, the ASEAN countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and now the Philippines, have strengthened their defence capabilities and their security ties with the external powers.\(^7\) The bilateral security agreement signed between Indonesia and Australia on 18 December 1995 (revoked in 1999 by Indonesia in apparent retaliation against Australian policy towards East Timor) could also be viewed in a similar light. While the agreement was mainly a CBM between Jakarta and Canberra and its strategic value was limited by the fact that it only provided for consultations in the event of a crisis, it reversed Jakarta’s long-standing opposition to security pacts of any kind with outside powers.\(^7\) While the Australian government strongly denied that the treaty was directed against any ‘third party’, the strategic orientation of the Indonesia-Australia agreement, before the East Timor crisis in 1999, was evident in their subsequent decision to cooperate in defending Indonesia’s oil-rich Natuna Islands, an area that lies inside jurisdictions claimed in the past by Beijing.

No ASEAN country sees the ARF as a substitute for balance of power mechanisms in the short term. But because the ASEAN states cannot individually or collectively aspire to defence self-reliance, a policy of military balancing would amount to increased dependence on external security guarantees. To prevent this, a balance of power approach has to be supplemented by multilateral security dialogues and cooperation. To this end, multilateral diplomacy may be used to enhance the prospects for a more predictable and constructive relationship among the major powers.

From the standpoint of the ASEAN states, the ARF was initially as much about engaging the USA as engaging China. It remains a useful framework to keep the USA engaged in the region’s security affairs while discouraging it from resorting to a policy of pre-emptive containment of China. The continued engagement of the USA in the region’s security affairs is expected also to preclude the emergence of an independent Japanese security role, a development which ASEAN sees as highly destabilising. Moreover, acting collectively through a multilateral forum, ASEAN may shape the development of a set of ideas and principles that might persuade the region’s major powers to view diplomacy and ‘rules of acceptable conduct’, rather than arms races and alliances, as the
principal means of deterring aggressive behaviour while preserving regional equilibrium and preventing a concert of powers. Additionally, the norms developed by the ARF may constrain the use of force in intra-regional conflicts. The ARF increases the costs of use of force to settle interstate disputes. Gareth Evans has argued that the ARF has already helped to diffuse the South China Sea problem in 1995. The ARF members, China included, will violate the multilateral norms of the ARF at considerable risk of political isolation. China may spurn US initiatives to define a set of ‘rules of acceptable behaviour’, but it will find it far more difficult to do likewise if these rules are operationalised through the ARF. As Michael Green, a US scholar, puts it, the ARF helps regional actors to ‘demand standards of behaviour from China in ways that would simply not be as effective on a bilateral basis’.

Sceptics of the ARF argue that in dealing with Chinese power at least, ASEAN ‘will have to decide whether to place their trust primarily in the ARF, or whether to place it in a US-led balance of power’. But ASEAN countries evidently do not see the need to choose between the two, but rather seek to use multilateralism to moderate and maintain a stable balance of power.

To this end, ASEAN may be encouraged by the shifting attitude of the USA and China towards the ARF. When ideas about multilateralism began to circulate in the late 1980s, they were greeted with open hostility from the Bush administration whose officials quickly dubbed multilateralism as a ‘solution in search of a problem’. Even more importantly, Washington viewed a new multilateral security institution in the Asia Pacific region as a threat to its existing alliance system which had proved its worth during the Cold War period. It was contended that ‘[w]hile the United States would adjust the form of its security role in the region [in the post-Cold War era], it intends to retain the substance of its role and the bilateral defence relationships which give it structure’.

But the US policy towards multilateralism soon became noticeably positive. The shift was helped by a realisation that regional countries viewed multilateralism not as a substitute for US military supremacy and its bilateral alliances, but as a necessary complement to the latter. The new US attitude was first signalled during the later stages of the Bush administration, when Secretary of State James Baker expressed support for flexible and ad hoc multilateral efforts to deal with specific security issues. The Clinton administration was more explicit in its support of multilateralism, identified as one of the ten major goals of the new US policy in Asia. Current US policy on multilateralism envisages a concentric circle of security institutions, which includes (1) its existing bilateral alliances, (2) the newly developed security consultations within the ASEAN-PMC and the ARF, and, where appropriate, (3) multilateral action by the most concerned and relevant actors to resolve specific security problems such as in the Korean Peninsula. Within such a multilayered approach, the various elements are seen to be complimentary, rather than mutually exclusive. As a US official put it, ‘*these arrangements can function like overlapping plates of armor...covering the full body of our common security concerns*’.

The reaffirmation and strengthening of the US-Japan (and US-Australia)
security relationship in the later part of 1990s provides clear evidence of US thinking on multilateralism. The US-Japan Joint Declaration on Security, signed in April 1997, signalled an important reorientation of their defence relations towards regional conflicts. The details of the reorientation, outlined in the US-Japan Defence Cooperation Guidelines of September 1997, caused considerable misgiving in China, which viewed them as being essentially directed against itself (including its use in support of Taiwan in a future China-Taiwan conflict). The ensuing controversy suggests that the ARF framework may be overshadowed and rendered irrelevant by the balance of power geopolitics of the major powers. But the very fact that China has chosen to voice its misgivings about US strategic policy within the ARF and associated Track-Two fora is in itself significant. In fact, the opportunity provided by these for voicing China’s own security concerns regarding US security policy might have been a major factor behind its more positive attitude towards multilateralism.

Like the USA, China initially opposed multilateralism in Asia Pacific security relations. It was fearful that the ARF could be manipulated by larger powers like the USA to apply pressure on China to compromise on its territorial claims and constrain its legitimate geopolitical role. Moreover, China was suspicious that the ARF might develop into a tool in the hands of the Western powers for interfering in the domestic affairs of the Asian member states. Furthermore, the possibility that the ARF could develop into an anti-Chinese bandwagon of its smaller neighbours was, and remains, unsettling to many Chinese strategists who see engagement in multilateral security cooperation as a novel enterprise with no precedent in Chinese history. One study of Chinese attitudes towards multilateralism concluded:

The Chinese expect that bilateral relations and the balance of power among the major powers will continue to be the primary factors affecting stability in the Asia-Pacific, not a multilateral security structure. The majority of Chinese specialists portray multilateralism as largely irrelevant—or potentially damaging—to efforts aimed at solving or managing most of the key disputes in the Asia-Pacific region.

But after being a reluctant player in multilateral security dialogues in the Asia Pacific region, China too came to take a more supportive role in the ARF. Chen Jian, the Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister, stated that China would support ARF ‘as a new approach to regional security, an approach different from Cold War mentality, an approach which seeks to strengthen peace through dialogue and cooperation’. China supports the ASEAN Way of seeking cautious and incremental progress in the ARF’s security agenda, in contrast to the fast-track approach favoured by the ARF’s Western members. In China’s view, the primary aim of the ARF should be ‘to explore political dialogue and pursue confidence-building’. While it has opposed a role for it in conflict resolution, China does accept that the ARF ‘can only move in a progressive way and make incremental progress’ which includes preparing ‘the groundwork for future cooperation’.
China has come to acknowledge the usefulness of the ARF as the only multilateral venue available to it where it can discuss and share its security concerns and approach with Asia Pacific countries. China is unlikely to embrace multilateralism when it conflicts with its interests and role as a rising power. Nonetheless, Chinese opposition to multilateralism has been tempered by a fear of regional isolation, although this could be reversed in view of the diminished credibility of the ASEAN-led multilateral process in the wake of the Asian economic crisis in 1997.

**Conclusion**

The two questions posed at the outset of this chapter were the extent to which the development of Asia Pacific multilateralism upheld the norms of ASEAN and the impact of the burdens imposed on ASEAN by its ‘driver’s’ role in the ARF. ASEAN’s role in promoting the ARF reflected its growing self-confidence about the relevance of its norms of regional cooperation. The ARF embraced ASEAN’s norms, the Treaty of Amity and the ASEAN Way of institution building. While compromising on ZOPFAN, one aspect of its norm of regional autonomy, ASEAN was able to salvage it by assuming a central role in the development of the ARF.

The ASEAN Way is not easily duplicated in the wider Asia Pacific milieu. But ASEAN members believe that it can constrain the use of force and promote a habit of war avoidance. The critics of the ARF may be too quick to pronounce judgement on the fledgling institution. The usefulness of the ARF will be partly determined by structural conditions which constrain the traditional balancing options by the Great Powers, limit their ability to ensure stability and predictability, and thereby create an opportunity for lesser actors to seek a role in the management of international order. Through the ARF, ASEAN may be able to exercise a degree of influence over Great Power geopolitics. In the final analysis, therefore, the ARF may be a useful tool of regional order in more ways than as a mere ‘adjunct’ to balance of power mechanisms. In the short term, the ARF 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, the ARF may even enable states to transcend the balance of power approach. The latter possibility, if remote, does exist and cannot be ignored in any serious consideration of prospects for regional security in the Asia Pacific region.

But the advent of the ARF represents a significant broadening of ASEAN’s hitherto inward-looking and subregional political and security agenda. The failure of the ARF would certainly be a major blow to ASEAN’s own credibility and image. Moreover, there is a definite risk that managing the ARF could exacerbate intra-ASEAN differences over political and security issues. This point is especially important in view of the related risk of ASEAN’s management of the South China Sea dispute, which will severely test the ASEAN members’ ability to put up a collective position *vis-à-vis* China. One potential casualty could be ASEAN’s
hard-earned common response to outside powers. As Singapore’s foreign minister put it:

During the Cold War and immediately thereafter, ASEAN was by and large able to develop a common response to the major powers. In the new and uncertain geo-political environment that we are venturing into, can we be sure that the ASEAN members will not be pulled in different directions by different powers? 

‘The significance of our efforts’, wrote Adam Malik in 1975 in a perceptive commentary on the future of regionalism in Southeast Asia, lies in ‘working for peace in Southeast Asia that is not only founded on the stability of a balance but is sourced in a sense of shared aspirations and common destiny’. The statement neatly reflects ASEAN’s dilemmas and options in anchoring a new multilateral security framework for the Asia Pacific region. ASEAN’s faith in the balance of power approach has been shaken over the past decades by the declining credibility of external security guarantees and a realisation of the dangers and uncertainties inherent in the system. At the same time, the ideal of cooperative security and collective identity building to be attained through a multilateral framework remains a distant, if not altogether elusive, goal. As a result, ASEAN countries have been obliged to reconcile their enthusiastic promotion of the ARF with a quiet adherence to the mechanisms of a balance of power system. This contradiction is not likely to disappear for some time; it may well remain an enduring feature of the strategic landscape of the Asia Pacific region.

Notes and references

1 For an excellent discussion of continuity and change in the security environment of Southeast Asia in the early 1990s, see: Muthiah Alagappa, ‘The Dynamics of International Security in Southeast Asia: Change and Continuity’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 45, no. 1 (May 1991).
3 It is interesting that the Russian Ambassador to Hanoi indicated Moscow’s desire to continue using Cam Ranh Bay under a new agreement. Although he confirmed the presence of 1000 Russian servicemen at Cam Ranh, Vietnamese sources put the figure around 400 servicemen and family members. *Straits Times*, 28 August 1992, p. 4.
4 In addition to the 11 per cent cuts from an original strength of 135,000 personnel (including 25,000 on board ships) envisaged under EASI-I, 8100 personnel were withdrawn from the Philippines. A further reduction of about 10 per cent was planned for the second phase of EASI (1993–1995). Susumu Awanohara, ‘America’s Easi Options’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 September 1992, p. 23.
6 William T. Pendley, ‘US Security Strategy in East Asia for the 1990s’, *Strategic Review*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Summer 1992), pp. 12–13. Mr Pendley served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs under the Bush administration.
The former Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Mochtar Kusuma-Atmadja, refers to these countries as 'the emerging powers in Asia with hegemonistic ambitions'. See his 'Some Thoughts on ASEAN Security Co-operation', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 12, no. 3 (December 1990), p. 168.

Malaysia's former armed forces chief, General Hashim Mohammed Ali, noted in March 1992 that while India was constrained by domestic problems and Japan by constitutional limitations, China continued to increase its defence spending and had threatened use of force to support its territorial claims in the South China Sea. *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 29 March 1992. Indonesia's armed forces commander, General Try Sutrisno, also expressed similar concerns about China: *Straits Times*, 6 October 1992.

*Straits Times*, 10 February 1990.


Cited in ibid.

Although the initial articulation of this concept seemed to mirror a number of key aspects of 'common security’, Canadian scholars subsequently argued it to be a distinct notion. Among the similarities between the two notions is their common rejection of deterrence-based security systems and a related emphasis on collective problem-solving mechanisms over balance of power approaches. In addition, both approaches defined ‘security’ broadly and comprehensively to incorporate both military and non-military issues. Canadian statements on 'Cooperative Security' have consistently included issues ranging from arms proliferation, peacekeeping to illegal immigration, drug trafficking, environmental degradation, refugees and population growth. But a more distinctive aspect of 'Cooperative Security' was its recognition of the need for a more gradualist approach to institution building, in contrast to the broad-brush approach of ‘Common Security’. While allowing for the creation of new multilateral institutions, the Canadian protagonists of cooperative security stressed the need to retain the existing bilateral alliances involving the USA as a useful complement to the former. David B. Dewitt, ‘Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security’, *Pacific Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1994), pp. 1–15; Stewart Henderson, ‘Zone of Uncertainty: Canada and the Security Architecture of Asia-Pacific’, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Winter 1992/93).

The NPCSD was organised on two tracks, a governmental track involving discussions among policy planning staff (Track-I), and a non-governmental track involving both academic and official (with the participating officials acting in their private capacity, although this distinction was quickly blurred) experts. The North Pacific scope of the NPCSD was based on the premise that the Asia Pacific region was 'simply too vast and diverse to fit into any one conceptual mould'. But while a subregional framework for multilateralism seemed more practical than the macro-regional framework envisaged by the Australian and Soviet proposals, it also excluded ASEAN and Australia, the other key players in the regional security debate. The Canadian initiative did, however, have one useful effect on ASEAN. The NPCSD, being probably the first multilateral security consultation (even if semi-official) within the region with explicit government backing, might have added a sense of urgency to ASEAN’s own ideas about regional security consultations. Certainly, it impressed on ASEAN the need to respond to the growing number of proposals from 'outsiders' which, if pursued, would deeply affect security management in ASEAN's own geostrategic environment. The other contribution of the NPCSD was in developing
the so-called ‘Track-II’ channel which turned out to be the more developed segment of the two-track approach. The series of NPCSD workshops held during the period 1991–1993 generated considerable policy-relevant debate and increasingly sophisticated ideas about the objectives and instruments of multilateralism. Amitav Acharya, David Dewitt and Paul Evans, ‘Overview: The Agenda for Cooperative Security in the North Pacific’, in David Dewitt and Paul Evans (eds), The Agenda for Cooperative Security in the North Pacific (Toronto: York University Centre for International and Strategic Studies, 1992), Appendix II. 


Whether the idea of using the ASEAN-PMC as a vehicle for regional security dialogue was an ASEAN idea is a matter of some debate. The controversy stems from the fact that the first official-level proposal for using the PMC for security discussions was made by the Foreign Minister of Japan, Taro Nakayama. Speaking at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in July 1991, Nakayama stated that the ASEAN-PMC could be used for ‘a process of political discussions designed to improve the sense of security among us’. Cited in Michael Vatikiotis, ‘The New Player’, Far Eastern Economic Review, 1 August 1991, p. 11. There is some controversy about who was first to conceive the idea of using the ASEAN-PMC as a vehicle for regional security dialogues. While the Japanese Foreign Minister was the first senior government leader to propose the idea formally, this should not detract from the role of ASEAN-ISIS in developing and debating the idea initially. It is fair to say that the idea originated in non-governmental discussions in which members of ASEAN-ISIS played an important role. Indeed, the proposal for security dialogue (including the idea of using the ASEAN-PMC for security consultations) contained in the ASEAN-ISIS report ‘A Time for Initiative’ was discussed at an ASEAN-ISIS meeting in Jakarta during 2–4 June 1991, well before the Nakayama proposal was made at the ASEAN-PMC on 22 July 1991. See: Pauline Kerr, ‘The Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific’, Pacific Review, vol. 7, no. 4 (1994), p. 402. Moreover, the ideas proposed by ASEAN-ISIS were further discussed at a conference organised by the Foreign Ministries of the Philippines and Thailand in Manila during 5–7 June 1991, entitled ‘ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Region: Prospects for Security Cooperation in the 1990s’.

ASEAN-ISIS sources generally attribute the Nakayama initiative to a senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official, Yukio Satoh, who participated in the Manila meeting in June 1991. According to Lam Peng Er, a Singaporean expert on Japanese foreign policy, ‘[Apparently, Satoh informed his ministry about the discussions and it was refined and repackage as “Nakayama’s Initiatives”.” Moreover, Lam argues that ‘proposals from Tokyo about the ARF should be more accurately known as “Satoh’s Initiatives”’. Lam Peng Er, ‘Japan and Conflict Management in Pacific Asia’, Paper presented to the Conference on ‘Japan and Regionalism: The Bases of Trust and Leadership’, organised by the Faculty of Asian and International Studies, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, 8–9 January 1998, p. 12.


Earlier, in a landmark June 1991 report entitled A Time for Initiative’, which articulated ideas already mooted and discussed in ASEAN-ISIS circles for some months, ASEAN-ISIS proposed that the annual meetings of ASEAN foreign
ministers with their dialogue partners should be followed by a ‘Conference on Stability and Peace in the Asia Pacific’. The meeting, to be held at ‘a suitable retreat…for the constructive discussion of Asia Pacific stability and peace’ would comprise such states as China, Russia, North Korea and Vietnam on a regular basis, while other governments could be invited from time to time depending on the nature of the issues on the conference agenda. See: A Time for Initiative’, ISEAN-ISIS Monitor, no. 1 (July 1991), pp. 2–3. See also: Lau Teik Soon, ‘Towards a Regional Security Conference: Role of the Non-Government Organizations’, Working Papers no. 1 (Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, 1991). ASEAN Institutes for Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS), Confidence Building Measures in Southeast Asia, Memorandum no. 5 (December 1993).

23 The founding members of CSCAP included: all the five think-tank members of ASEAN-ISIS plus the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Australia; the University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, Canada; the Japan Institute for International Affairs, Japan; the Seoul Forum for International Affairs, South Korea; and Pacific Forum/CSIS, USA. Subsequently, government-affiliated think-tanks from North Korea and Vietnam became members. China became a member in 1996 after winning concessions from the CSCAP members regarding Taiwan’s participation (under the compromise formula, Taiwan would not be a formal member of CSCAP, but Taiwanese representatives, who must be approved by China, could participate in CSCAP meetings as individuals at the invitation of CSCAP co-chairs). Another condition imposed by China is that Taiwan Strait security issues must not be discussed within CSCAP China had opposed Taiwanese membership in CSCAP by drawing a spurious distinction between CSCAP, which it claimed was not a strictly non-governmental group, and non-governmental Pacific economic groupings such as the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), of which Taiwan was a full member. Finally, India was accepted as an associate member. Despite the problem with Taiwanese membership, CSCAP can claim to be more inclusive than the ARE


ASEAN and Asia Pacific security

30 Straits Times, 31 December 1990.
35 Straits Times, 4 August 1994, p. 2.
40 The ASEAN Concept Paper, Annex A and B, pp. 8–11.
41 ‘Chairman’s Statement: The First Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 25 July 1994, Bangkok’, p. 2.
43 But the CSCAP, as noted under note 23, was stymied by a long delay in admitting China into its fold over the contentious issue of Taiwanese participation. Although the issue was finally resolved in December 1996 when China joined CSCAP, the limits placed on Taiwanese participation are akin to those which Beijing has successfully imposed on intergovernmental fora such as APEC. This outcome, accepted for pragmatic reasons, blurs the distinction between CSCAP and intergovernmental fora (although it is still an improvement on the ARF which Taiwan has no hope of joining). It undermines CSCAP’s claim to be a less restrictive and more open and informal process in which new ideas and approaches can be debated and tested without being overly constrained by state sovereignty concerns.
44 For a detailed review of the evolution of CBMs in the Asia Pacific region with particular reference to the ARF, see: Amitav Acharya, The ASEAN Regional Forum: Confidence-Building (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1997). This was circulated as an official Canadian document at the Beijing ARF ISG meeting on CBMs in March 1997.
For a comprehensive review of the problems in developing the ARF’s role in preventive diplomacy, see: Desmond Ball and Amitav Acharya (eds), *The Next Stage: Preventive Diplomacy and Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1999).

For example, prior to the inaugural ARF meeting in Bangkok, Chinese diplomats in Southeast Asian capitals had called on the foreign ministries in their host countries to press them to reject any ambitious security agenda for the ARF, including discussion of the South China Sea dispute. David Hague, *ASEAN: China flexes its muscles*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July 1994.


There are now a number of Track-II dialogues on Northeast Asian security issues, including: the Hakkaido Conference on North Pacific Issues, the North Pacific Group of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific; the Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue; and the UN Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific’s Symposium on Northeast Asia. See: Paul M. Evans, ‘Reinventing East Asia: Multilateral Cooperation and Regional Order.’ *Harvard International Review* (Spring 1996), p. 19.


Ibid., pp. 57–58.


This distinction is not conceptually new in the theoretical literature on international relations, although it is often ignored in policy-oriented discourse. Most scholars of balance of power distinguish between balance of power as ‘a mere factual description of the distribution of political power in the international scene’ and balance of power as ‘a theoretical principle acting as a guide to foreign policy-making…so that the preponderance of any one state may be avoided’. Ernst B. Haas, ‘The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept or Propaganda’, in Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr (ed.),

Champions of balance of power rarely bother to define their crucial terms. All too often they fail to distinguish between balance of power as a situation of equilibrium and as a system of states engaged in competitive manipulation of power relationships among themselves. This means that we cannot be certain whether we are being asked to welcome a result or to accept the claim that a certain mechanism is reliably conducive to that result. It sometimes appears that this vagueness is designed to encourage the fallacy that might be described as a ‘solution by labelling’: the assumption that a scheme designated as a balance of power system necessarily produces and maintains a balance of power.


68 The traditional US position has been that the scope of the US-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty commits the USA to the defence of the ‘metropolitan territory’ of the Philippines and does not include the Philippine positions in the Spratlys. But in a letter to the Philippine Foreign Minister in January 1979, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance stated that an attack on the Philippine armed forces ‘would not have to occur within the metropolitan territory of the Philippines or island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific in order to come within the definition of Pacific area in Article V of the US-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty. Larry A. Niksch, *The South China Sea Dispute*, CRS Report for the Congress 95–934 F (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 29 August 1995), p. 6.


72 In 1989, Singapore announced an offer to provide military facilities to the USA. The USA and Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November 1990 which provided for the deployment of US aircraft (on a rotational basis) and military personnel in Singapore. This was followed by an agreement on 3–5 January 1992 to relocate a major naval logistics facility responsible for port calls and resupply for US navy ships and coordinating warship deployments in the Pacific region from Subic Bay to Singapore. Michael Vatikiotis, ‘Permanent Presence’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 January 1992, p. 22. Somewhat more quietly, Malaysia and the USA have been cooperating on military matters within the framework of agreement on Bilateral Training and Education Cooperation signed in January 1984 (the agreement had been kept secret at Malaysia’s request). During the 1980s, the frequency of joint exercises between the two countries, involving naval, air and ground forces, had reportedly reached an average of one exercise per month. *Straits Times*, 17 April 1992. These figures could be

73 Cameron Stewart, ‘Alliance Secures Coastline Defences’, *Australian*, 15 December 1995, p. 5. Alan Dupont argued that the Australia-Indonesia security treaty was ‘predicated on the notion of shared security interests rather than defence against common threats’. Under the terms of the treaty, the two countries were (1) to hold regular ministerial consultations on matters affecting the common security of the two countries and develop cooperative measures for mutual benefit; (2) to ‘consult each other in the case of adverse challenges to either party or to their common security interests, and if appropriate, consider measures which might be taken by them individually or jointly’; and (3) to promote cooperative activities in the security field. Alan DuPont, ‘The Australia-Indonesia Security Agreement’, *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 68, no. 2 (1996), pp. 49–50. It would appear that the treaty was of greater significance to Australia than to Indonesia. As an Australian commentator observed, it was Australia’s first Asian security treaty for twenty-five years (the previous one had been the Five Power Defence Arrangements); its first ‘reciprocal security treaty’ with an Asian country; and its first security treaty with a country with which it had in the past been involved in direct physical combat (during the Konfrontasi). In terms of its strategic importance, the treaty was said to be next to the Australia-US alliance under the ANZUS Treaty. Greg Sheridan, the Foreign Editor of the *Australian Newspaper*, cited in Dupont, ibid., p. 52.


75 International Institute for Strategic Studies, ‘East Asia After the Taiwan Crisis’, *Strategic Comments*, vol. 2, no. 3, 12 April 1996, p. 2.


77 *Straits Times*, 7 August 1991.
80 Statement by the US Secretary of State Warren Christopher at the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, Singapore, 26 July 1993, p. 3.
84 Chen Jian, ‘Challenges and Responses in East Asia’, Speech by HE Chen Jian, Assistant Foreign Minister of China, at First CSCAP General Meeting, Singapore, 4 June 1997, p. 11.
85 Ibid., p. 9.
86 The EAEC (originally termed the East Asian Economic Grouping) was first proposed by Malaysia in response to the breakdown of GATT Uruguay Round talks in December 1990. The Malaysian proposal envisaged a grouping consisting exclusively of East Asian countries (thereby excluding the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which were members of APEC) that could develop a common approach to the crisis in GATT and respond to the advent of the European Single Market and the North American Free Trade Agreement. But the proposal received little support from other Asian countries, particularly Japan, which was seen by Malaysia as the *de facto* leader of EAEC, despite Malaysia’s strong denial of US charges that the EAEC was meant to be a ‘trade bloc’. The EAEC idea remained moribund. The ASEAN countries agreed that the EAEC should become a caucus within APEC, but the role of this caucus is not clearly defined. It is noteworthy that the first meeting of EU and East Asian leaders (the so-called Asia-Europe meeting, or ASEM) in 1996 brought together all the East Asian countries that are to be included in the EAEC, prompting Malaysian officials to claim this event as the realisation of the EAEC idea.
87 Keynote address by S. Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore, at the ASEAN Roundtable 1997, Singapore, 4–5 August 1997, pp. 10–11. After the Asian economic crisis, ASEAN has seriously pursued the ASEAN+3 framework which is seen, at least by Malaysia, as the fulfilment of its EAEC concept.
Conclusion

ASEAN as a pluralistic security community: ascendant or decadent?

As stated in the introduction, the concept of security community not only describes a condition of stable intra-mural peace and collective identity achieved by a given group of states, it also suggests a framework for analysing the process and dynamics of peaceful change leading to such a condition. This book has used it as a conceptual framework to examine and assess ASEAN’s evolution and role in regional security and its prospects for the future. In doing so, this study has looked not only at the institutional role of ASEAN, which would be emphasised in a conventional institutionalist or neo-liberal framework, but also at the broader process of community building and identity formation that ASEAN has consciously engineered.

Security communities are social constructs, and analysing their construction requires us to look not only at the material forces, but also at a variety of intersubjective factors, especially the role and effects of the norms of the social grouping. The framework of this study focuses heavily on the interplay of norms, socialisation and identity formation in ASEAN’s approach to regional order and assesses how this interplay has shaped ASEAN’s progress and potential to be a regional security community. Regional socialisation assumes particular importance because the existence and the continued survival of ASEAN would have been highly improbable on the basis of the traditional indicators of regionalism. The sheer diversity among the ASEAN members in terms of size, populations, cultural and linguistic differences, and political systems predisposes Southeast Asia against a viable form of regionalism. In this context, ASEAN could only thrive by developing a practical approach to socialisation, normative development and a conscious process of identity building.

Focusing on interactions and socialisation in explaining ASEAN’s role is also important because ASEAN lacked the necessary background conditions and some of the triggering mechanisms which could explain the emergence of successful models of regional integration and community building in Europe and the North Atlantic. ASEAN’s approach to regional cooperation has differed not only from the conventional process of alliance building, in the sense of being inspired exclusively by a common external threat; it also differed from integrationist models exemplified by the EU, which remains the most important example of a regional security community. In the North Atlantic area, a shared
political culture of liberal democracy and an emerging trends towards close economic interdependence helped the founding of a security community. ASEAN lacked such background conditions at the time of its inception, and it also continues to lack them today. Unlike Europe, the members of ASEAN did not share a liberal democratic political culture, although the common goal of regime survival against a common internal threat (i.e. communism) was an important triggering factor behind ASEAN. ASEAN’s 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.

The relatively low priority attached by ASEAN to regional integration in its traditional sense also suggests an approach to community building that is 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 opportunities for possible conflict among actors, forcing them to devise 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 rather than resulted from political, strategic and functional interactions and interdependence.

Central to this process was a set of norms, among which non-interference, non-use of force, regional autonomy, the avoidance of collective defence and the practice of the ‘ASEAN Way’ were the most salient. Thirty years after the formation of ASEAN, Abdullah Badawi, the Malaysian Foreign Minister, called ‘the institution of norms of acceptable conduct and behaviour among its members’ as one of ‘ASEAN’s great achievements’. Despite the element of exaggeration, the statement has merit. While some of these norms were adapted from universal legal-rational principles, others had their sources in what ASEAN’s founders claimed to be the unique socio-cultural practices of the region. Together they led to the emergence of what its members claimed to a ‘cultural-specific’ and sociological approach to conflict management and decision making, called the ‘ASEAN Way’. This turned out to be a key symbol of ASEAN, helping the grouping to overcome intra-mural tensions especially during the crucial early years of ASEAN, when the grouping was most vulnerable to such problems. Subsequently, the ASEAN Way was useful in attracting new members and persuading ASEAN’s external dialogue partners to see things from an ASEAN perspective, as well as in muting substantive areas of disagreement.
The effects of ASEAN’s norms

What has been the record of ASEAN in adhering to these norms? To investigate this question, this book examined a number of issues that ASEAN has had to deal with in the course of its evolution as a regional organisation. The aim of the discussion was to assess the extent to which ASEAN’s norms shaped the individual and collective behaviour of the ASEAN members with respect to specific problems and issue areas. A related key aim was to assess the regulatory and constitutive effects of norms. To help with the assessment of the effects of ASEAN’s norms, Chapter 1 devised a framework with three sets of questions: (1) questions about dispute settlement; (2) questions about collective action; and (3) questions about collective identity. Of these, it must be noted here that the constitutive effects of ASEAN’s norms are best assessed in terms of the questions posed under the third section of Figure 1.2, while the assessment of the regulatory effects of ASEAN’s norms has been made in terms of questions in the first two sections. The questions in the second section perhaps straddle both the regulatory and constitutive effects of norms. In other words, as one moves from the first to the last section, the focus of assessment moves from the regulatory to the constitutive effects of norms.

Accordingly, Chapter 3 examined ASEAN’s response to Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia; Chapter 4 analysed the process of membership expansion; and Chapter 5 examined ASEAN’s role in managing various aspects of intra-mural relations. Finally, Chapter 6 studied ASEAN’s role in the making of the ARF, a multilateral security forum for the wider Asia Pacific region. The main findings of the study can be summarised under two categories. The regulatory effects are discussed first, in relations to the specific chapters. The constitutive effects are discussed subsequently.

Cambodia conflict

Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia provided the most serious test of ASEAN’s role in building regional order. It challenged the norms of non-interference and nonuse of force, and dealt a blow to ASEAN’s earlier hopes to develop a regional collective identity by securing Hanoi’s incorporation into its regionalist framework. But while this served as the justification behind its effort to mobilise international opinion against Vietnam and isolate it, the norm of seeking a ‘regional solution to regional problems’ meant that ASEAN also had to search for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. ASEAN’s management of the Cambodia conflict seriously tested aspects of the ASEAN Way, especially consensus seeking and avoidance of multilateral military cooperation. ASEAN faced considerable pressure to develop some form of collective military response, and thereby turn itself into a de facto alliance. But this was eschewed because of a desire to minimise provocations to Hanoi which might thereby provide further stimulus to the latter’s alliance with the Soviet Union. While the principle of bilateralism in defence relations among the ASEAN members survived, somewhat more
compromised were the ASEAN Way of consultations and consensus and the norm of regional autonomy. Differing perceptions of Vietnam within ASEAN, especially between the hardline camp of Thailand and Singapore and the moderate group of Indonesia and Malaysia (which saw Vietnam as less of a security threat than China), strained intra-mural solidarity, with the latter group supporting a *modus vivendi* with Hanoi that would check Chinese influence in the region.

At the same time, ASEAN as a group needed the help of China (as well as Western countries) in order to raise the cost for Hanoi of Vietnam’s occupation of Cambodia. Although this brought strategic benefits to ASEAN as China promised in return not to support insurgencies in ASEAN, it also brought about the renewal of Great Power rivalry in Southeast Asia, the end of which had been wishfully anticipated in the wake of the US withdrawal from Vietnam. Moreover, ASEAN’s deliberate and largely successful strategy of internationalising the crisis, while significantly raising the grouping’s profile and securing it international acclaim, ultimately led to the Great Powers’ assumption of a leading role in bringing the peace process to an end. While ASEAN was able to suggest the terms of a peaceful settlement, it had little actual influence over the parties to the conflict so as to be able to realise them without significant external support. As such, it had to turn to the Great Powers, including the Soviet Union, China and the USA, to move the peace process forward, thereby acknowledging limits to its norm of regional solutions to regional problems. The endgame in the Third Indochina War saw ASEAN’s role somewhat diminished and usurped by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. At the same time, Thailand’s ‘battlefields to marketplaces’ strategy in the late 1980s, even before the Cambodian settlement could be reached, indicated at least a temporary breakdown of its consultative style. In the final analysis, ASEAN’s response to the Cambodia conflict shows that the strategic interests of its members in ending domestic insurgencies and maintaining regime survival, as well as their concerns about threats to national security posed by Vietnam’s occupation of Cambodia, were important enough to justify limits to any desire for regional autonomy. While ASEAN would have liked to have exercised greater control over regional affairs, this did not preclude enlisting the help of outside powers when it was beneficial.

**ASEAN’s expansion**

Expansion of membership is a major step towards collective identity, yet it has increased the burdens on ASEAN regionalism and continues to pose a severe test to the organisation’s norms. ASEAN hoped that expansion would enhance regional autonomy by increasing its bargaining clout *vis-à-vis* external powers, limit the scope for unwelcome Chinese influence in the peripheral states of Myanmar and Cambodia, expand regional economic interdependence, and limit the scope for regional disorder (including a spillover of domestic conflicts into neighbouring states) by promoting adherence to the doctrine of non-interference.
and the mechanisms of bilateral security cooperation. The decision to expand membership also reflected ASEAN’s increasing self-confidence as an anchor of regional security. But against these putative gains one must consider the potential costs of an expanded membership. These include questions about the commitment of the new members to the norms of ASEAN, and dilution of the ASEAN way. Expansion has also imposed severe new economic and political burdens on ASEAN. Given the different levels of development between the new and the old members, it creates the possibility of a two-tiered ASEAN made up of haves and have-nots. It has also saddled ASEAN with the responsibility for managing Myanmar’s transition to an internationally acceptable form of governance, limiting the scope for internal disorder in Cambodia, and ensuring peaceful outcomes to the territorial and political disputes involving the new members.

The expansion of ASEAN has been a divisive process in the context of intra-mural relations. Earlier controversy over Thai Indochinese policy, and the more open divisions over Myanmar’s membership, attested to the fact that despite sharing the broad vision of ‘One Southeast Asia’, ASEAN members held different ideas about the timing and mode of its realisation. More importantly, membership expansion provided a severe test of the norms that had underpinned the grouping’s evolution. The principle of non-interference came under attack in Cambodia, where ASEAN was compelled to take a position in an essentially domestic conflict, and in response to the idea of ‘constructive intervention’ proposed by the former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. To be sure, ASEAN as a group continued to resist any move that would create the basis of intervention against the will of a regime in power, but the very idea of constructive intervention put ASEAN’s solidarity to further test.

**Managing post-Cold War intra-regional relations**

This chapter examined the directions ASEAN has taken since the end of the Cold War in ensuring intra-mural peace and regional order. The chapter covered five main areas affecting regional order: disputes and dispute settlement within ASEAN; ASEAN’s handling of the South China Sea dispute involving China; the prospects for an arms race in the region; economic cooperation; and defence cooperation.

In the area of dispute settlement, the ASEAN Way of avoiding formal and legalistic approaches remains entrenched, although members are now less convinced of its utility and relevance, especially in the wake of the Asian economic crisis. At the same time, challenges to intra-mural peace have magnified. The end of the Cold War in Asia was marked by an aggravation of conflicts in the maritime sphere, with the Spratlys dispute in particular becoming more militarised and contentious. While the major intra-ASEAN conflicts of the 1960s, such as the Sabah dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines, no longer threaten intra-mural peace, a number of territorial disputes remain. Ethnic rivalry (between Malaysia and Singapore), economic competition and the status of labour (between
Singapore and Thailand and Singapore and the Philippines) are some of the factors which continue to undermine the development of a true ASEAN security community. The Spratlys conflict, though not strictly an intra-ASEAN problem, increasingly tests intra-ASEAN unity. While intra-ASEAN conflicts do not have the potential to destroy the general climate of peace within ASEAN, some of them have proved impossible to resolve within the ASEAN framework. As a result, ASEAN’s approach to conflict management has shifted towards a greater willingness to resort to formal international judicial arbitration, as in the case of the Malaysia-Singapore and Malaysia-Indonesia disputes.

But the Sabah (an intra-ASEAN conflict), Cambodia (an intra-Southeast-Asian conflict involving ASEAN and then non-ASEAN Indochina) and Spratlys (a conflict between ASEAN and non-ASEAN parties) situations also reflected an evolutionary circle of conflict against which ASEAN’s capacity for ensuring regional order has been tested. The ever-widening sources of conflict also mean that ASEAN cannot rest on the laurels of its record of intra-ASEAN conflict avoidance, but has to adopt broader and more inclusive frameworks of conflict management, which is fraught with difficulties and risks. Thus, while few would envisage an outbreak of military confrontation among the ASEAN six until 1995, ensuring peace and order in the entire Southeast Asian region and beyond, which ASEAN has sought to do by expanding its membership and sponsoring the ARF, is far more problematic, with success far from assured.

It is noteworthy that existing disputes among ASEAN members have not led to outright war, although some—such as fishing disputes between Malaysia and the Philippines, or Thailand and Cambodia, for example—have produced minor skirmishes. But evidence of a continued security dilemma is indicated from the military build-up in the region. To be sure, while territorial disputes and political rivalries between some ASEAN states (especially Singapore and Malaysia and Malaysia and Thailand) undoubtedly form part of the rationale behind the move towards force modernisation, such rivalries are not evident in other bilateral relationships. In this context, a host of non-interactive factors are also important in explaining the arms build-up in the region. These include a shared need for greater self-reliance in the wake of superpower retrenchment from the region, as well as perceived threats from competition among extra-regional actors, such as China, Japan and India. Nonetheless, the current military modernisation programmes could become a threat to ASEAN’s prospects for becoming a security community, even if the ASEAN leaders deny the existence of a regional arms race.

As noted, the emergence and consolidation of ASEAN took place with fairly low levels of intra-regional transactions and interdependence. Even today, ASEAN’s trade with non-ASEAN members is significantly higher than intra-ASEAN trade. Moreover, the most important forces of economic integration in the region today have not resulted from conscious regional schemes pursued by ASEAN, but are rather a function of the national economic liberalisation programmes of the members and the increasing pace of economic globalisation. This is especially true of the NETs, whose proliferation in Southeast Asia today
is largely dictated by the global mobility of capital. ASEAN’s own free trade area, AFTA, is a serious try at economic regionalism, but in general, interdependence forged through AFTA will almost certainly remain secondary to integration and linkages fostered by the forces of transnational production in an increasingly global economy.

Regional economic interdependence in ASEAN has been consistent with its norms of the ASEAN Way, including soft institutionalism, consultations and consensus and the avoidance of highly legalistic procedures and mechanisms. In terms of its effects, apart from increasing the costs of conflict, it is also an important measure of the practice of multilateralism and the prospect for collective identity. But the expansion of intra-regional trade and the rise of transnational economic activity in the region have not been entirely unmixed blessings. In particular, they have exacerbated tensions over the uneven spread of economic gains, a prospect aggravated by the regional economic crisis since 1997. They have also increased the need for stronger, more formal institutions to monitor compliance with the rules of new economic arrangements like AFTA.

Finally, the chapter looked at the state of defence cooperation in ASEAN. As noted in Chapter 1, security communities are to be distinguished from defence communities. The former do not require the latter to be viable, even though they do not preclude them and may even become stronger through them. Defence cooperation may compliment ASEAN’s efforts to safeguard regional order by expanding intra-mural transparency and instilling a greater degree of confidence among the members in facing mutually perceived external threats. But given that the avoidance of military pacts, including a multilateral ASEAN military organisation, was a major norm of ASEAN regionalism, it is not surprising that a defence community in ASEAN can only be conceived as a web of cross-cutting bilateral defence relations involving most, if not all, of its members. Such a ‘spider’s web’ has already emerged in ASEAN, but it has several important short-comings. Such ties are not uniformly developed in all possible sets of bilateral relationships. Furthermore, lack of interest in weapons standardisation and cost-saving joint purchase of weapons, differences in defence doctrines, absence of interoperability (despite the range of bilateral exercises) among regional armed forces, and differing degrees of defence self-reliance within the region, all reflect, at least partly, lingering military suspicions among the members, and virtually preclude the emergence of a defence community in Southeast Asia.

**ASEAN and the ARF**

ASEAN’s decision to occupy what it called the ‘driver’s seat’ role in the ARF was based on its conviction that the ASEAN model of security regionalism would prove useful for building multilateralism in the Asia Pacific region. To that extent, the ARF itself provided a test of ASEAN’s norms. Yet, the very fact that the ARF’s membership included all the major powers of the international system meant that regional order in Southeast Asia would now be based on an ‘inclusive’ approach, i.e. one that kept the Great Powers engaged. This meant a
shift from the norm of regional autonomy expressed through ZOPFAN, which had sought to exclude the Great Powers from involvement in the management of regional order. The ARF introduced a new norm into the ASEAN process—that of ‘cooperative security’—emphasising inclusiveness and dialogue among both like-minded and non-like-minded states.

**Questions about regional identity**

As might be expected, the ARF’s early evolution has been characterised by two broad features which derive from the ASEAN Way: incrementalism and soft institutionalism. Incrementalism, implying a step-by-step approach to security collaboration, is envisaged in three proposed stages of security cooperation: confidence building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution (later changed to ‘elaboration of approaches to conflicts’ as a concession to China which had warned against rapid institutionalisation of the ARF). The preference for soft institutionalism implies that the ARF would develop as a dialogue forum, rather than being given a role in conflict resolution. It also meant avoiding any elaborate collective bureaucratic apparatus or interventionist capacity for preventive diplomacy. The ARF has chosen to rely on a number of soft mechanisms to promote security cooperation, including a number of confidence-building measures. In other words, under ASEAN’s guidance, which is not always echoed by the ARF’s Western members, the development of security cooperation within the ARF has been, and is likely to remain, cautious, slow motion, non-legalistic and consensual, minimising formal and direct measures. It also emphasises the importance of ‘the process’ over ‘the product’, and promotes a security approach in which the principles of consultation and consensus assume priority over confrontation and competitive bargaining.

But the ASEAN Way faces considerable obstacles in guiding the ARF into an effective regional security forum. The norms of ASEAN were developed in the subregional context of Southeast Asia; they are not going to be easily transplanted into a larger and more complex security theatre like the Asia Pacific. The ASEAN Way has proven a source of contention within the ARF as well. It is too slow for the liking of the Western members of the ARF. ASEAN’s leadership of the ARF has been called into serious question by the Asian economic crisis. Partly due to divergences in objectives and approach between ASEAN and the Western parties in developing Asia Pacific multilateralism, the ASEAN states are now exploring new institutional frameworks to supplement, if not supplant, the ARF (as well as APEC), especially with the move to realise an East Asian ASEAN+3 framework. Moreover, while the ARF’s members have embraced the new norm of ‘cooperative security’ as the basis of a new regional order, they also stress the need for a ‘new balance of power’ in the region that can deter and contain powerful regional actors. Overcoming the inherent tension between a balance of power approach and the evolving norm of cooperative security with its emphasis on inclusiveness would seem the foremost challenge facing security multilateralism in the Asia Pacific region in the coming decades.
Yet, for all its limitations, there are no viable alternatives to the ARF in the region’s current security climate. Critics of the ARF do not provide any concrete ideas about an alternative security architecture for the region, except for vague prescriptions about the need for a balance of power system. The various possible ways of ensuring such an approach remain ill-defined and are marked by several uncertainties. Against this backdrop, multilateralism as embodied in the ARF remains an essential element of the post-Cold War security order in the Asia Pacific region. ASEAN countries reject the dichotomy between a balance of power approach underlying the USA’s bilateral alliances and the norms of security multilateralism as embodied in the ARF. Instead, the two are seen as complementary. The security afforded by the US military presence, which is strongly supported by ASEAN through provision of facilities, coupled with ASEAN’s own increased defence capabilities, remains ASEAN’s fallback option if multilateralism fails. In the meantime, however, ASEAN will continue to make a genuine effort to develop the ARF as a valuable multilateral security institution.

Most of the findings of the chapters as discussed above relate to the regulatory effects of ASEAN’s norms, defined in terms of the degree of their compliance by ASEAN members individually and collectively in different issue areas. The foregoing analysis suggests that ASEAN’s norms have had important regulatory impact, although they have not been unexceptional. But security communities, as discussed in Chapter 1, require the development of a common identity. Has the practice of norms helped the development of regional identity in Southeast Asia? What is not clear from the above discussion is the so-called constitutive effects of norms. By nature, these are difficult to measure. But the questions posed in Figure 1.2 do provide a helpful basis for judging constitutive effects.

Chapter 2 shows that the norms of ASEAN played a crucial role in the development of a regional identity. While the social and cultural diversity among ASEAN’s members made it difficult to speak of a common cultural identity, socialisation processes developed around the ASEAN Way did contribute to the development of a degree of what Deutsch would call the ‘we feeling’ in ASEAN. A fairly consistent pattern of adherence (notwithstanding occasional exceptions) to and practice of norms such as non-interference itself became part of the ASEAN identity. As Michael Leifer would point out, ASEAN’s consultative process, including the frequent meetings and other forms of multilateral interaction, gradually led to the development of ‘an institutional culture’ which helped ASEAN ‘to avoid and control conflicts’.3 It also fostered a common feeling of regional belonging and led to claims about institutional exceptionalism underpinning constructs such as the ASEAN Way.

As noted in Figure 1.2, in discussing identity, the important questions include: (1) resort to multilateral approaches to problems compared with the past, including new issues which have been brought under the purview of multilateral cooperation; (2) the emergence of formal or informal collective defence (including policy coordination against internal threats), collective security and cooperative security arrangements; (3) emergence of new ways of expressing social identity,
such as redefining the region; and (4) the extent of recognition by countries outside the group of its new social identity.

Insights from several chapters help us to address these questions. As noted in Chapter 2, developing a regional collective identity was an important objective of ASEAN’s founders. ASEAN’s role in the Cambodia conflict as discussed in Chapter 3, and its involvement in the development of multilateral security cooperation in Asia Pacific (Chapter 6), show a conscious attempt by the ASEAN members to differentiate ASEAN from a variety of competing actors and processes. During its formative years and during the Cambodia conflict, ASEAN juxtaposed itself against the ideological orientation, economic policies and security practices of the Indochinese segment of Southeast Asia. It claimed for itself an exclusive role in the promotion of regionalism in Southeast Asia. Similarly, ASEAN’s economic regionalism was carefully distinguished from the EC model. In the post-Cold War era, ASEAN has sought to define its approach to conflict management in direct opposition to the security institutions and practices in Europe. Such exceptionalism has become a key aspect of ASEAN security discourse, and has facilitated community building.

Moreover, Chapter 4 discussed ASEAN’s efforts to articulate the boundaries of Southeast Asia as a region, as evident from the pursuit of its ‘One Southeast Asia’ concept. Chapter 5 analysed ASEAN’s efforts to expand the scope for multilateralism and cover new issue areas previously excluded. The creation of AFTA, the institution of financial cooperation, and the emerging, if limited, policy coordination over environmental issues are indicative of this trend. Yet certain caveats to this finding are in order. As Chapter 4 showed, the constitutive potential of the ‘One Southeast Asia’ concept could be more superficial than the official proclamations on this subject would have us believe. This chapter also suggested that the constitutive effects of ASEAN’s norms in pushing its members to look beyond a strict adherence to sovereignty and non-interference have been limited. The discussion of intra-regional relations in Chapter 5 also suggests that the ASEAN governments continue to emphasise the salience of state sovereignty in participating in cooperative regional ventures. As the debate about ‘flexible engagement’ showed, there is a great deal of reluctance and apprehension about compromising on this norm. Against this backdrop, while the realisation of ASEAN-10 might have created a sense of collective identity, this did not amount to a full-fledged ‘constitutive’ change moving the ASEAN members decisively away from their identity as sovereignty-bound actors.

**Prospects for ASEAN: a ‘sunset’ organisation?**

ASEAN’s potential to become a regional security community was widely acknowledged by scholars and policy-makers from both within and outside the region in the last stage of the Cold War and in the early post-Cold War period. Kusuma Snitwongse, a Thai scholar, claimed that while ASEAN might not have realised its goal of security self-reliance, ‘its most notable achievement has been community building’. In 1992, Sheldon Simon argued that ‘ASEAN may
be a security community in the sense that no member would consider the use of force against another to settle disputes. Michael Leifer shied away from the term security community, choosing instead to label ASEAN as a ‘diplomatic community’. Nonetheless, he could ‘claim quite categorically that ASEAN has become an institutionalized vehicle for intramural conflict avoidance and management. ...ASEAN has been able to prevent disputes from escalating and getting out of hand through containing and managing contentious issues.’ While lacking in a sense of collective identity, such a characterisation of ASEAN could, at least in the early 1990s period, fit the description of what Adler and Barnett might call a ‘nascent security community’.

In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, Kishore Mahbubani, a Singaporean diplomat, has argued: ‘We take it for granted. But the absence of war [among the ASEAN members] is a major achievement.’ Another long-time observer of ASEAN, Jusuf Wanandi, from Indonesia, even speculated: ‘Since no more wars are expected to break out among its members, Asean may no longer be taken seriously by its members in the future.’ The absence of war among the ASEAN members since 1967 is certainly important. (It is interesting to note that not only has ASEAN itself been free from an intra-mural war, but no ASEAN country has fought an outright war with a non-ASEAN state since its inception in 1967.) To be sure, ASEAN’s record must be kept in perspective. For much of its history, it has been a relatively compact grouping, comprising a handful of states ruled by ideologically like-minded regimes facing the danger of communism. Moreover, one could argue that since the end of Sukarno’s Konfrontasi, there had been no serious regional issue dividing the ASEAN members which could have conceivably led to war. But ASEAN did contribute to this situation by fostering a climate of socialisation and trust that might have suppressed Sukarnolike militant nationalist sentiments among the member states towards each other and led them to realise the benefits of cooperation over confrontation. Such instances of peaceful conflict management, even among a relatively small number of states, are rare in the developing world. Indeed, few other regional associations outside of the Euro-Atlantic context can claim this distinction.

But based on the findings of this study, ASEAN’s security-community-building project faces a number of daunting challenges. While it had developed some of the attributes of a nascent security community by the early 1990s, as discussed in Chapter 1, such communities can decline as a result of both internal burdens and external challenges. To a large extent, the problems facing ASEAN in the late 1990s could be explained in terms of the burden imposed by membership expansion (Chapter 4) and the emergence of new sources of intra-regional conflict (Chapter 5). ASEAN also overestimated its capacity to assume the role of ‘driver’ in the development of the ARE. These burdens now challenge the sanctity of ASEAN’s norms and the credibility of the ASEAN Way, including the doctrines of non-use of force and non-intervention. The idea of constructive intervention and flexible engagement, if pursued seriously, would constitute an especially significant challenge. Moreover, the ASEAN Way, especially the habit of consensus building, is already being seriously tested by the organisation’s expansion. ASEAN, which
is already more institutionalised than the proponents of the ASEAN Way would have us believe, is abandoning some of its informality in favour of legalistic and formal measures. The ARF, as ASEAN’s brain-child, is also developing concrete institutional mechanisms to deal with conflict. ASEAN’s preference for non-legalistic procedures seems no longer valid in view of recent referral of territorial disputes to international legal arbitration. ASEAN is in many respects losing its uniqueness and becoming a ‘regular’ or ‘normal’ institution. This may in part be due to the fact that its agenda has become too complex to be handled through informal channels. In the past, ASEAN put too much emphasis on ‘ritual’ and style; now it has to deal with substantive issues, such as AFTA. While in the past the ASEAN Way meant avoiding grand designs or precise road maps, or setting formal agendas to keep things *ad hoc* and flexible, now ideas such as AFTA and Vision 2020 attest to a more formal and regularised agenda.

Overall, the security burdens on ASEAN come from both internal and external sources. The internal burdens come from membership expansion and the emergence of new sources of conflict. The expansion of ASEAN means it has to assume new responsibilities of managing underdevelopment, ensuring equity, coping with internal unrest in new states, and managing disputes with both ASEAN and non-ASEAN members. As the discussion in Chapter 5 concerning the South China Sea dispute finds, ASEAN’s ability to handle what is essentially an extra-mural conflict may not only fail (although it might have a moderating effect on the conflict), but the dispute may severely test intra-ASEAN solidarity, including its ability to offer a common position *vis-à-vis* external powers. Its ‘leadership’ role in the ARF constitutes the main external burden facing ASEAN today. It is a major new challenge for ASEAN and failure in this role would severely undermine the organisation’s credibility and unity. Thus, by widening its security horizons, ASEAN might have taken up more burdens than it can realistically handle.

Moreover, ASEAN’s capacity to manage its external burdens is being undermined by several developments. The generally positive attitude of the major powers towards ASEAN is changing. For some (especially for some Chinese strategic thinkers), ASEAN could be seen as a potential rival, one of the poles in an increasingly multipolar regional state system. Economically, ASEAN may be viewed as a competitor. The economic downturn that swept the region in 1997 also contains sources of tension between the Western countries and ASEAN members, especially if growing exports from the ASEAN economies, helped by their weaker currencies, raise protectionist sentiments in the USA. Moreover, serious economic problems at home, accompanied by ethnic and political turmoil as authoritarian regimes lose their ‘performance legitimacy’, will undermine ASEAN’s capacity to devote attention and resources to regional cooperation, including its ability to help the new members and assume a leading role within larger regional multilateral institutions such as APEC and the ARF. Similarly, ASEAN’s support for regimes like that in Myanmar alienates public and eventually official opinion in the West. So the previous attitude of cooperation and goodwill from outside powers may be diluted, if not completely lost. This
could mean a less benign external environment for ASEAN, which could in turn affect its capacity to handle regional, including intra-mural, conflicts.

The Asian economic crisis highlighted many of the challenges facing the norms of ASEAN and raised questions as to whether they can survive into the future. The downfall of the Suharto regime, resulting directly from its failed response to the crisis, deprived ASEAN of a long-time champion who had played the key role in the development of ASEAN and the ASEAN Way. The subsequent turmoil in Indonesia indicated a leadership vacuum in ASEAN, and contributed to the perception of an ASEAN without a clear sense of direction. Thai attempts to fill the void with ideas such as ‘flexible engagement’ led to a direct challenge to one of ASEAN’s most cardinal norms. Indeed, the doctrine of non-interference came under particular stress, while the ASEAN Way was criticised for being responsible for ASEAN’s weak response to the crisis. Intramural ties and the norm of non-use of force have also been tested in some bilateral relations, especially between Malaysia and Singapore. While such problems did not lead to military conflict, there are lingering concerns about competitive arms acquisitions and interactive contingency planning involving these ASEAN members.

The controversy surrounding the Thai call for ‘flexible engagement’, combined with the earlier debate in ASEAN about ‘constructive intervention’, and ASEAN’s inability to offer a timely and collective response to the crisis over East Timor’s separation from Indonesia in 1999, highlights the problem ASEAN faces. At the time of its founding, the key norms of ASEAN, including the doctrine of non-interference, were derived from the UN Charter and were compatible with the norms of other international institutions. Today, however, the international community has increasingly accepted a less stringent view of sovereignty even as ASEAN resists any such shift. This disjunction between ASEAN’s regional practice and the changing norms of sovereignty at the global level is a serious challenge to the organisation’s credibility and international standing. It relates to the possibility, discussed in Chapter 1, of how changes to existing global norms could lead to the unravelling of a potential regional security community like ASEAN.

In addition, while common liberal democratic values and interdependence need not be a prerequisite for their emergence, security communities could derive greater strength and vitality from these attributes. ASEAN has moved towards greater intra-regional interdependence and integration, thereby providing an additional set of disincentives to the use of force within the region. But ASEAN has no comparable aspirations to become a ‘democratic security community’. Unlike the EU, membership in ASEAN does not require a liberal democratic polity. Non-democratic regimes, such as those in Myanmar and Vietnam, have been welcomed into the ASEAN fold. Some ASEAN members have even championed the virtues of ‘soft-authoritarianism’ as a necessary framework for political stability and economic prosperity. ASEAN also refuses to develop a collective role in the promotion of human rights in the region, on the ground that such a role would conflict with its principle of non-interference.
Thus ASEAN countered an international campaign for sanctions against the military regime in Myanmar with its own calls for ‘constructive engagement’. The political fallout of the Asian economic crisis suggests that an ASEAN security community may not be able to develop on the basis of an ‘authoritarian consensus’, which itself is unravelling due to the more pro-democratic postures of Thailand and the Philippines. Moreover, the idea of regional cooperation and community building, including mutual responsiveness and socialisation, remains narrowly confined to the intergovernmental level in ASEAN. This kind of regionalism does not necessarily translate into cooperation or development of ‘we feeling’ at the societal level, as Deutsch clearly envisaged. It is important to note that in recent years, a network of indigenous non-governmental organisations has promoted a different kind of regionalism aimed at opposing human rights abuses by some of the ASEAN governments. This network has been somewhat strengthened by the economic downturn leading to the collapse of Suharto, growing challenges to authoritarianism in other parts of the region, such as Malaysia, as well as the advent of proposals such as flexible engagement which encourages transboundary criticism of domestic repression. The emergence of a regional civil society in Southeast Asia opposing the official ASEAN regionalism on issues of human rights, environment and democracy attests, at the very least, to the dissatisfaction with, and incompleteness of, the community-building enterprise led by the ASEAN elites.

This leads to the prospects for a collective identity within ASEAN. As a result of membership expansion, the debate over the non-interference doctrine, and the divisions over human rights/democracy, ASEAN seems headed for several different sorts of intra-mural polarisation and factionalism. At least three kinds of polarisation, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, are possible. The first is a liberal-conservative division based on the degree of commitment to human rights and democracy, with Thailand and the Philippines in the former camp, and Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore in the other. The second is a classic ‘North-South’ divide, or the prospect of a two-tier regional system of ASEAN haves and ASEAN have-nots, based on uneven levels of present and future development, a polarisation between the old and the new members, which many believe has already happened. Last but not least, ASEAN is facing a divide between a pro-interventionist camp who favour constructive intervention/flexible engagement, such as Thailand and the Philippines, and a pro-sovereignty camp of the rest of ASEAN members who would keep the grouping firmly wedded to strict non-interference, quiet diplomacy and constructive engagement. While any enlarged multilateral group can expect to have different coalitions pursuing separate agendas within its ambit, these emerging divisions within ASEAN are especially problematic in view of its traditional commitment to consensus-based agenda setting and decision making. The emergence of divergent factional interests and identities could alter the very character of ASEAN.

Such prospects do detract from ASEAN’s claim to be a security community in the Deutschian sense. Moreover, ASEAN has never reached the stage of unfortified common borders and is yet to develop a high degree of economic
interdependence which is characteristic of security communities. Perhaps if we use the more differentiated and graduated approach to security communities, ASEAN fits the concept of a ‘nascent’ security community, although its progress towards the ascendant or mature level looked more promising in the early 1990s than in the later part of the decade. As Chapter 1 suggests, constructing security communities among states is not a linear process. A nascent security community may decay into anarchy if it fails to cope with the burdens brought about by increased or new forms of interactions.

As noted in Chapter 5, efforts to revise ASEAN’s norms such as non-interference can have paradoxical effects on ASEAN’s future as a security community. While eroding the traditional bases of ASEAN regionalism, they also have the potential to reform and rejuvenate ASEAN. Many ASEAN governments fear that any departure from non-interference could ruin the regional grouping, but it may be crucial to its ability to deal with transnational issues and to minimise costly battles with its Western dialogue partners over human rights and democracy, which have already entered ASEAN’s multilateral agenda. Similarly, greater institutionalisation of ASEAN’s decision-making process and approach to regional cooperation, already evident to a limited degree in initiatives such as the ASEAN ‘Troika’ system, could facilitate more meaningful collective action to deal with future economic and political disasters. Without such adjustment, ASEAN’s claim to be a security community of sorts may be in danger of unravelling as it struggles to cope with new intra-regional disputes, an expanded membership and increased responsibilities that come with engagement in Great Power relations in the wider Asia Pacific region.

In short, after three decades of progress in promoting peaceful intra-regional relations, ASEAN—one of the most successful regional organisations in the developing world—now is in serious need to reinvent itself. The nature and extent of this transformation, in areas discussed in this book, will be crucial to determining whether it will be an ascendant or redundant instrument of regional peace and stability.

Notes and references

2 Keynote address by Haji Abdullah bin Haji Abdullah Badawi, Foreign Minister of Malaysia, at the 2nd ASEAN Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 20–23 July 1997.
4 She adds: ‘[ASEAN] members have come to a tacit agreement not to coerce one another and to limit the scope of bargaining. Other components of community building...have emerged in the sense of shared common interests and values, even if still limited, and of belonging together; these have been placed alongside a strong sense of nationalism in the ethos of the national leadership of member countries and advanced through the process of dialogue and consultations.’ Kusuma Snitwongse, ‘Meeting the Challenges of Changing Southeast Asia’, in Robert Scalapino, Seijabura Sato and Sung-Joo Han (eds), *Regional Dynamics: Security, Political

6 Michael Leifer, ‘ASEAN as a Model of a Security Community?’, in Hadi Soesastro (ed.), *ASEAN in a Changed Regional and International Political Economy* Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1995), p. 132. While Leifer agreed that ASEAN was a security community, he was more concerned with finding out ‘what kind of security community’ ASEAN had become. He distinguished a security community, one which is able to prevent intra-mural conflicts from escalating into armed confrontation, from a ‘political community’ (‘a grouping of states which are committed ultimately to overcoming the sovereign divisions between them’, in the manner of the EU) on the one hand and a ‘defence community’ (a fully integrated military alliance in the manner of NATO) on the other. See: ibid., pp. 129–132.


8 Asean’s Two Wake-up Calls’, *Straits Times*, 22 July 1997, p. 2.


10 A partial exception may be the Thai-Lao border skirmishes in the late 1980s. Thailand came very close to being engulfed in the Third Indochina War which threatened to spill over into Thai territory as a result of Vietnamese offensives against the Cambodian rebels and Thailand’s provision of sanctuary and support to the latter. But the fact that it did not have to resort to war to protect itself is partially, if not entirely, attributable to multilateral diplomatic alternatives pursued through the ASEAN framework. While it must be borne in mind that Vietnam faced substantial constraints in taking the war into Thai territory and had no incentive for doing so, ASEAN’s success in raising the diplomatic and military costs of the Third Indochina War to Hanoi was also an important contributing factor in limiting the spread of the conflict.


13 In a previous paper (A Regional Security Community in Southeast Asia?’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (September 1995), pp. 175–200), I chose to characterise ASEAN as a ‘security regime’ rather than a ‘security community’. But this assessment was based on the classic Deutschian notion, rather than the more differentiated interpretation provided by Adler and Barnett. The concept of security regime as developed in my earlier paper shares many features of the ‘nascent’ phase of pluralistic security communities as understood by Adler and Barnett.
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