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Regionalism in the Asia Pacific/East Asia: A Frustrated Regionalism?

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Why have Asia's many projects in regionalism not been able to realize their stated goals, despite the fecundity of, and enthusiasm for, region-building initiatives over the last two decades? In an attempt to answer this question, this article identifies the pursuit of a holistic regionalism embodied in the desire for a regional community as a persistent goal in official discourse, and argues that an apparent state of frustration describes the difficulty of regional institutions and forums in bridging the growing gap between these articulated goals and actual outcomes. The empirical case for the argument here is provided by the founding of the East Asia Summit in 2005, which has disclosed the limits of both exclusive and inclusive models of regionalism in Asia. In exploring causation, the article argues that both structural and agential factors are at the heart of this problem. The tensions thrown up by the competing processes of realist and liberal-institutionalist order-building in Asia have imposed structural constraints on the ability of regional projects to realize their normative aspirations. Equally important in causing this state of frustration are the agents of regionalism — in particular, regional elites — who articulated the goal of a regional “Community” to propel regional projects, and have set the bar above the current capacities of regional institutions.

Key words: regionalism, East Asia Summit, East Asian Regionalism, United States, Asia-Pacific.

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Regionalism has emerged as an influential paradigm in conceptualizing the politics of Asia, reflecting the profound implications of the end of the Cold War on both the structure and interpretation of international politics in an open-ended and evolving region. Indeed, the salience of regionalism in Asia — as an empirical dynamic and as a conceptual device — has been part of a much broader trend, whereby the region has been foregrounded in the analysis of international politics, has emerged as the locus for international economic activity, and for organizing security and resolving conflict.¹

Regionalism in Asia has antecedents: most notably, the ASEAN process has reflected this at a sub-regional level since the 1960s. However, it was only by the turn of the 1990s that new multilateral initiatives on a broader Asian region took root, a process captured by the burgeoning literature on “new regionalism”.² As much of this literature notes, Asia’s region-building process has been driven not only by formal state-led initiatives — referred to as “regionalism” — but also by the more informal “bottom up” process of “regionalization”, brought about by globalization and complex networks of trade and production.³ Over the last two decades, the effervescence of grassroots regionalization has been fostered by, and has given rationales to, the institutions and frameworks of state-led regionalism, and these institutions are the primary focus of this study.

In how they developed, however, these institutions sprouted around different visions of the region. The conception of a broad and inclusive “Asia-Pacific” in the early 1990s gave way to a narrow conception of an exclusive “East Asian” region in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis — a conception that was however revised with the founding of the East Asia Summit (EAS). Thus, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) founded in 1989, the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) set up in 1997 and the EAS, held in 2005, represent three markers in the spectrum of Asia’s recent experience with regionalism.

Remarkably, all three evolved in the space of less than two decades and have come to coexist as simultaneous and alternative conceptions of what the Asian region ought to be. Unsurprisingly, this has been an uneasy coexistence. Since the 1997–98 financial crisis, the momentum has been on the side of an exclusive of “East Asian” regionalism premised on the viability and normative preference for an Asia by and for “Asians”, that is, to the exclusion of the United States and Pacific Asia. Riding on the success of financial and economic arrangements, the APT mechanism has rapidly emerged as an informal yet effective form of economic regionalism in East

Asia, making it — in the eyes of some regional elites⁴ — the best possible vehicle for the realization of a holistic regionalism: one that could address economic *and* security concerns, engender regional identities, and thus hold out the all important teleological promise of an East Asian community. It was to complete this project of regionalism that the APT was envisioned to “evolve” into a more holistic East Asian body with the founding of the EAS in 2005. In how it turned out, however, the East Asia Summit stands out as an oddity. As Dent observes, it is “neither a substitute for the APT nor a distinctly separate mechanism in its own right”.⁵

The curious existence of the EAS serves as the entry point for this study. In disclosing the limits of both exclusive and inclusive regionalism, the creation of this latest regional framework provides the foundation for the argument advanced here that the regional project in Asia is, with reference to its announced goals and idealism, a frustrated endeavour. This article makes the following related arguments.

First, and building on insights from extant scholarship, it will be pointed out that regions are not natural, objective and ontologically given spaces, as often implied in the official discourse on regions — the “East Asia” underpinning the APT process being a case in point. Instead, regions are spatial and temporal constructs contingent on a variety of interests and agendas. The complexity in conceptualizing a region is matched by the challenge in organizing a region — as either an inclusive or an exclusive construct. Added to these are the goals of regionalism, which, in the context of Asia, can be identified as the formal and informal pursuit of a holistic and comprehensive regionalism, often embodied in the concept of a regional community. Noting these complexities, the article will briefly trace the journey of both Asia-Pacific and East Asian regionalism since the founding of APEC in 1989.

Second, it will be argued that the EAS has exposed the limits of pursuing exclusive regionalism, and the numerous factors that played their part in this unraveling will be fleshed out. This includes the excitement over the success of the APT process which ignored its limitations as a form of financial regionalism and led to the unrealistic expectation that it would neatly “evolve” into a more holistic East Asian body such as the EAS with economic and security rationales. Ultimately, the vision to transform the APT was thwarted, as economic and financial regionalism alone could not mitigate the profound anxieties and dilemmas rooted in realist conceptions of security in Asia. Indeed, the difficulties in addressing

security issues and disputes have undercut efforts for deeper financial integration as well.

Apart from inadequately accounting for security politics, East Asian regionalism has been unable to sustain the contradictions arising from its exclusive “Asian” principle. This is reflected in its limited grasp of the existing structures of security in Asia where the United States and its deep bilateral security relationships with Asian states continue to play a profoundly important role, to the point of making any claims for a normative championing of an exclusive “Asian” principle quite untenable. Likewise, the APT’s economic regionalism — moulded under the strains of the Asian financial crisis — are often presented as a regional alternative to the dominance of Western financial institutions and their neoliberal agendas. However, this perception underplays the continued dependence of East Asia’s economic regionalism on actors beyond its defined region, and indeed on the broader international capitalist economy.

Third, if exclusive regionalism has been ineffectual in realizing the goals of regional elites, could a holistic regionalism in Asia spring from an inclusive process? It is here that the article makes the argument that an inclusive regionalism is equally limited and incapable of providing for a holistic regionalism. The cornerstone of the inclusive argument — that the United States is a prerequisite for the fruition of the regional project — will be challenged to establish how the preferences and interests of (an admittedly incomplete) hegemonic power constrain the project of building a regional community.

Fourth, the limits of both inclusive and exclusive models in Asia’s decidedly rich experience of regionalism leads to the proposition of a “frustrated regionalism”. This identifies a state where regional projects in Asia are unable to realize the stated end goals of the regional project that are articulated in state discourse: a holistic conception of regionalism embodied in the persistent calls for “peace, security, prosperity and progress”⁶ and a regional community invested with shared identities and aspirations among people and governments.⁷

This frustrated state, it will be demonstrated, is an outcome of the interplay of both structural and agential factors. It is produced by the competing structures of an “Instrumental” and a “Normative-Contractual”⁸ order building in Asia — expressed in the form of alliance politics and a normatively rich regionalism, respectively — which have pitted *Realpolitik* against the normative aspirations for a comprehensive regional community. The tension between

these attempts at order building have encumbered the conflation of economic and security regionalism, and have weakened regional institutions, if not led to them being hijacked by the agendas of major powers. Crucially, the agents of regionalism, specifically government and policy elites, and their role in shaping the discourse and practice of regionalism, also accounts for this state of frustration. This is primarily on account of their role in articulating goals that espouse holism with the vision of a regional community. Not only has this vision been challenged by the enduring role of the state and nationalism in the international politics of Asia, but also by the conceptual ambiguities over what the putative community is or entails. Moreover, the construct of a “regional community” has been an instrument of a deeply state-led discourse that has sought to make regionalism relevant to the masses and yet circumscribes the realization of a non-elite community constituted of shared identities and interests. Regional communities can surely be imagined by elites, but to be meaningful and sustainable they would also have to be anchored in the domain of popular approval and participation.

Even though this study is a critical examination of regionalism in Asia, it does not reject the normative importance and utility of the regional project. Regional mechanisms can pursue useful goals. The role of the APT in mediating the influence of international finance is a case in point.⁹ So is the success of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in socializing and building norms among state and defence elites.¹⁰ However, there is a growing disjuncture between what the regional project claims to achieve and what it has accomplished so far. An awareness of the limits of regionalism, an eschewal of problematic visions, and a focus on pursuing well-defined functional objects would enable the regional project to develop into a credible process. If the intent really exists to move from elite to popular forms of community — which would thus link the future of regional security and economic cooperation with domestic consensus — then the emphasis ought to be on providing frameworks for heightened regionalization rather than pursue state-led regionalism alone. This perhaps may hold a greater possibility for engendering shared interests and amity, instead of improbable identities and visions.

Asia's Regions and Regionalisms

The multiplicity of conceptions of what an Asian region is and constitutes has to do with the fact that identifying a region is not as commonsensical as it may often seem. As Katzenstein points

out, regions can be defined using any of these three theories: a materialist theory where geographical markers like land and sea set boundaries and also form the basis for conceptualizing power (classical geopolitics); an ideational theory where regions are social constructs created by political, economic and cultural interests; and by behavioural theories which emphasize the shaping of a region by human political and economic practices — the disappearance of the “Greater Caribbean” plantation region with the end of slavery being a classic example.¹¹

As alluded to earlier, Asian regionalism has involved the persistent drawing and redrawing of its putative region along the lines of an “Asia-Pacific” or “East Asian” region. Ideational or critical theories are particularly insightful in understanding the conceptualization of regions in Asia even though — as Katzenstein argues — all three approaches offer insights. This then enables us to identify ideational and behavioural elements in the conception of an “Asia-Pacific” where trade and capitalism offer the basis for imagining coherence and interdependence. One can similarly detect a materialist strain in the conception of an East Asia comprised of geographically contiguous Southeast and Northeast Asian states, and which then excludes the US on account of its essentially non-territorial form of power in the region. Equally, there is an ideational basis to the claim of an East Asia premised on the construct of “Asianess”, articulated in oppositional terms to a reified “Other”. There is more texture added with the conception of an East Asia embodied by the EAS, where racial, political and cultural limits are stretched beyond the exclusive parameters that define the APT process. Concomitant to the drawing up of regions has been the quest for a reified identity, and in the context of Asian regionalism, this has been reflected in the goal of constructing a regional community, thus adding many more layers (and complications) to the process of regionalism.¹²

Besides negotiating with contested ideas of a region, the process of regionalism has to grapple with the dynamics that shape it as an inclusionary or exclusionary project. This dynamic is the balance each multilateral regional initiative has to find between the depth of its commitments and the breadth of membership. Commitments could thus vary from “deep” or “shallow” while membership could be “broad” or “narrow”, and crucially, there appears to be an inverse relationship between the size of a multilateral institution and the depth of its commitments.¹³ This corroborates with the experience in Asia, where inclusive regional projects such as the APEC and the ARF with large memberships have often been accused of diluting

their agendas, de-emphasizing disputes, and compromising on substantive change, while exclusive projects such as the APT have been criticized for not reflecting a more complex reality where “extra-regional” actors have a major stake in the region’s management. The attempt to balance depth and breadth has thus been a key source of tension in regionalism.

Regionalism is not only about the pursuit of functional objects; it is also a normative exercise. At the very least, regional multilateral initiatives are underpinned by the belief in the benefits of inter-state cooperation and a shared perception of a region. These normative aspirations can either be formally stated in the discourse of regional elites or may remain unstated and implicit in the very act of multilateral cooperation. In this study, the goals formally articulated in state and diplomatic discourses on regionalism expressed via summit statements, declarations and reports would be under consideration. These formally articulated goals offer an interesting reference point for assessing the experience of regionalism. One may raise the concern that taking — rather mistaking — diplomatic statements and rhetoric for *real* intent is a problematic (and even unreasonable) exercise. But it may be equally problematic to cast aspersions on states’ expressions of intent as being dubious from the outset. Besides this difficulty in ascertaining the veracity of intent, the more important point is that once articulated, the discourses on goals have a dynamic of their own, impacting regional institutions and the perceptions of agents on the normative and operational scope of the regional project. Goals thus have a direct bearing on how an institution or forum functions, and indeed, as it is argued here, the articulation of problematic goals have quite directly contributed to the perception and condition of frustration in Asian regionalism. While one must factor into consideration the political agendas that are concealed in the neat coherence of these diplomatic discourses, these official statements nonetheless offer the convenience of some basic expressions of consensus and claims against which a regional project can be evaluated and judged.

The nature and scope of these goals in discourses of regionalism can vary quite significantly: from the pursuit of specific functional forms of multilateral cooperation designed to enhance inter-state amity, bolster trade and socialize elites, to goals that lay claim to regional communities, where “thick” or “thin” levels of economic and political integration would be accompanied by the construction of regional identities and belonging. The latter represents the pursuit of a regional community, which, by its very definition,

would aspire to and warrant such a holistic approach to region building. The implicit and explicit pursuit of such a regional community can be identified in the experience of both Asia-Pacific and East Asia regionalism, and this will be elaborated in the final section.

The Experience of Regionalism: From Asia-Pacific to East Asia to a Revised East Asia

The holding of the EAS has been taken as the entry point of this study on “frustrated” regionalism because contained within it are the many stories of Asia’s difficult journey to regionalism.

This journey began with Asia-Pacific regionalism, which developed on the twin planks of economic regionalism in the form of APEC, and security regionalism in the form of the ARF. Both reflected an inclusive vision of the region, with the former recognizing trans-regional economic dependence and the latter reflecting Asia’s dependence for security on a broad plate of actors and stakeholders, in particular the United States, along with Russia, the European Union (EU), and states in South Asia, Central Asia and Pacific Asia. The excitement with inclusive regionalism however dampened considerably in less than a decade. Even though the ARF raised transparency among states and helped socialize elites,¹⁴ it demonstrated little progress in fulfilling its goal of a three-stage movement from confidence-building and preventive diplomacy to conflict resolution. Further, it proved to be ineffective in confronting complex inter-state security issues,¹⁵ and major instances of dispute mitigation and resolution were achieved under the aegis of other frameworks and arrangements: the North Korean issue being dealt by the Six Party Talks, the Taiwan dispute managed under China-US-Taiwan relations, and progress in the South China Sea realized under an ASEAN-China framework.¹⁶

The problems with APEC were perhaps more crippling. Its pursuit of trade liberalization was challenged by an inveterate preference for mercantilism by East Asian states, and was reflected in the failure of “Early Voluntary Sectoral Liberalisation”. Moreover, the process and methods of Asia-Pacific regionalism were broadly shaped by the “ASEAN way” of consensus, thin institutionalization and non-interference. This stylistic preference was partly responsible for the sense of inaction that dogged both the APEC and ARF; it also clashed with the “outcome oriented” approaches of Anglo-American actors.¹⁷

The major setback for APEC, and more broadly for the conception of an Asia-Pacific region, came with the Asian financial crisis in 1997. APEC's alleged ineffectiveness and lack of role in assisting Asian states during the crisis became a turning point in the story of regionalism, providing both the immediate context and urgent rationale for a new "East Asian" regionalism, premised on the integration of Southeast and Northeast Asia and the normative championing of an Asia that excluded "extra-regional" actors and their agendas, in particular the United States.

The belief behind this strand of regionalism predated the crisis. In fact, the first formal expression of an exclusive East Asia is traced to Malaysia's (and more specifically, Mahathir Mohammad's) proposal for an East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) in 1991. America's concerns regarding the implications of this body for the newly founded APEC,¹⁸ and its general mistrust for exclusive multilateralism,¹⁹ coupled with even ASEAN's initial apprehension towards the idea²⁰ consigned the exclusive East Asia concept to the margins.

However, in the next few years, a range of diplomatic, economic and political factors brought momentum to the idea of East Asia, and led to the formation of the APT process in 1997. This included the diplomatic groundwork laid out by the Asia-Europe Meetings (ASEM) and the concomitant engendering of a new consciousness among diplomatic elites;²¹ the catalytic force of the Asian financial crisis during which the perceived heavy handedness of the United States and the International Monetary Fund had produced a deep and powerful "politics of resentment";²² as well as the rationale — concretized in the wake of the crisis — for an East Asian arrangement as a defensive strategy against other regional blocs such as the EU and North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).²³ Importantly, the US did not express its traditional hostility to exclusive multilateralism as it had in the past. Instead, the US approach towards the APT process was more sanguine, based on its realization that regionalism was not a significant threat to US pre-eminence.²⁴

Unlike Asia's past experiences in regionalism, the APT experience has been distinctly productive, especially in addressing the concerns and vulnerabilities thrown up by the crisis of 1997. A raft of important financial initiatives — the New Miyazawa Initiative in 1998, the Chiang Mai Initiative in 2000, the Asian Bond Markets Initiative (ABMI), etc. — emerged from the APT framework.²⁵

The APT's success in formulating practical initiatives and outcomes was accompanied by its growing institutionalization: in 1998 its meetings were regularized, and in 1999 state leaders agreed on a

comprehensive scope for regional cooperation which would include political-security and transnational issues. By 2000, the APT was playing with new and bigger ideas. In particular, the grouping expressed a desire for the transformation of the APT into a broader EAS.²⁶ An East Asian Study Group (EASG) was set up to examine the recommendations of the East Asian Vision Group (EAVG) that was set up in 1998, and offer practical suggestions for East Asian cooperation. It was the EAVG, comprised of intellectuals, that articulated the goal of an East Asian community, with the objectives of promoting “peace”, “prosperity”, “human security”, and — importantly — an identity for East Asia.²⁷ Among the 57 recommendations it made in its report in 2001, two were notable: first, the call for the evolution of the APT annual summits into the EAS, and second, the creation of an East Asian Free Trade Area.²⁸

Meanwhile, the EASG group comprised of senior officials took a more cautious approach, dividing the EAVG’s recommendations into “short term” and “medium term and long term” measures. To the latter, it deferred both the evolution of APT to an EAS and the formation of an EAFTA in its final report to the APT in 2002.²⁹ On receiving this report, APT leaders “agreed ... with the vision for ASEAN+3 summits to evolve in the long term into East Asian summits”.³⁰ Remarkably however, the EASG’s sense of circumspection was not shared by state leaders and policy elites. Instead, at the 2003 Bali Summit — only a year after the EASG had presented its report — regional leaders called for the creation of an East Asian Community,³¹ and at the 2004 Vientiane Summit APT members agreed to hold the first EAS in Kuala Lumpur in 2005.³²

The push for the EAS was fundamentally motivated by the desire to transform the APT into a broader and holistic regional body. It was expected to subsume the APT’s specific projects and overall framework.³³ The blueprints for this transformation however began to change considerably in the year leading up to the summit in Kuala Lumpur. The lofty visions of community took a backseat while the more practical questions of membership became the single most controversial concern. Differences over membership saw Japan, Indonesia and Singapore calling for the inclusion of Australia, New Zealand and India into the summit, while China and Malaysia strongly opposed this on the grounds that the entry of “extra regional” actors would dilute the putative identity and purpose of the APT. The dispute over membership was not new. Similar struggles along similar fault lines had marked the setting up of groups such as the ASEM in the mid-1990s. Political and security agendas behind these

differences were hardly subtle: anxiety over China's rising role and leadership of the APT process became a central motivation for Japan and others to draw in extra-regional actors into the EAS.

Eventually, the inaugural EAS in 2005 included not only the APT members but also a set of three more states — India, Australia and New Zealand. Thus, with the stroke of a summit, the conception of East Asia was suddenly stretched from a strictly geographical conception of Northeast and Southeast Asia to include states from South and Pacific Asia. As it stood, the EAS represented a remarkable qualification, a baffling revision, of the exclusive Asian principle that had been pursued since the Asian financial crisis. Instead of becoming the transformative vehicle for the APT, the EAS had come to articulate an alternative conception of East Asia. In terms of its purpose, it was realized as a dialogue mechanism, a body where political and security matters could be discussed. It emerged as a morph between the APT and the ARF, as an attempt at addressing economic *and* security regionalism, and as yet another attempt at finding balance between inclusive and exclusive regionalisms in Asia.

The Limits of Exclusive Regionalism

The inability of the APT to evolve into a broader East Asian body, and the realization of an ambiguous and competing East Asia Summit in that process, demonstrates that an exclusive “Asian” principle could go only so far in realizing the goals of regional elites. Two related factors appear to explain the limits that were inherent in this process.

The Challenge of Security Regionalism

First, and quite clearly, the APT evolved as a form of economic and financial regionalism. Emerging from the formative backdrop of the financial crisis, the APT was imputed with urgent economic imperatives and justifications. Its steady consolidation over the years was rooted in its purpose of mediating the excesses of global capitalism, and in providing a necessary intermediate regional level of governance between the global and the national.³⁴

In how it developed, the APT process derived its credibility from a range of financial and economic initiatives rather than any provision of substantive security regionalism. This limited character of APT regionalism was bound to come into tension with the holistic

aspirations embodied in the proposal for an East Asian Community. A holistic vision such as a regional community with common identities cannot be constructed on a sustainable basis as long as states are preoccupied with mistrust and instrumental concerns of national interests. To realize such a holistic vision, then, would warrant not only intricate and highly interdependent economic relationships, but also a capacity to mitigate — if not resolve — outstanding regional disputes, and promote mutual confidence in order to ameliorate security dilemmas. Addressing the latter has been a complicated endeavour and regional institutions in Asia have sought to do so by pursuing either an explicit attempt at substantive security regionalism (the ARF in Asia-Pacific regionalism) and/or a more implicit strategy predicated on the belief and assumption of the supposed security benefits of economic and functional cooperation. Employing either an implicit or explicit method has presented challenges for regionalism in addressing questions of security, with implications for the holistic visions espoused.

With its ascent on economic regionalism, the APT has not sought to pursue security regionalism explicitly. In the few and inchoate measures to address security cooperation, the APT has largely chosen to confine its remit to transnational issues — terrorism, maritime piracy, human trafficking, arms smuggling and cyber crime among others.³⁵ While important, these measures mirror similar initiatives by regional bodies like the ARF and more recently by the APEC.³⁶ Transnational security cooperation has its own merits and significance, in particular, it opens up areas for cooperation where economic and security rationales converge. However, they earn the description of being a form of “soft” security as they remain a limited means of tackling the more dramatic and unsettling security concerns that have a role in shaping state policy. A preoccupation with them reflects a “least common denominator” approach which has been consistently employed by regional institutions to engage with (though not substantively address) security concerns in the region.

Instead of addressing security regionalism explicitly, the APT — and East Asian regionalism more broadly — has pursued a more implicit strategy: to derive the security benefits from the interdependencies wrought by regionalism and its institutions. Economic integration is therefore underpinned by the liberal belief in the “virtuous cycle” of economic growth leading to domestic stability and international security. The belief in this virtuous cycle was implicit in the founding of ASEAN³⁷ as well as in the APT for an East Asian region.

Central to such an approach is the notion that the economic and security spheres can be delineated and pursued separately. The pursuit of economic integration is perceived to be the only apparent path to initiating functional cooperation among states and thus setting into process a long-term teleology: of deepening economic integration leading to confidence-building and mutual trust, spurring states into functional cooperation over “soft security” issues, progressing into cooperation over “hard security” issues, and ultimately realizing common identities for a coherent regional community. This conception is deeply rooted in official discourse.³⁸ The valorization of economic cooperation and the belief that it would lead to a more holistic regionalism has been elaborated — and in fairly lofty terms — in the EAVG report in 2001, which calls for East Asia to move from being a “region of nations to a bona fide regional community”, with trade, finance and investment serving as the “catalyst” for this process.³⁹

Abstracting the “economic” from the “security” may seem a necessary starting point for regional cooperation, but it is nevertheless problematic. It ignores a more complex texture: that of the “nexus” between economic and security dimensions of regionalism and of the ability of each to impact on the other.⁴⁰ Interestingly, security goals are implicit in the very intent behind economic cooperation and integration. As Ravenhill points out, even though the founding members of APEC sought to keep it divorced from security agendas, the pursuit of economic interdependence in post-Cold War Asia-Pacific was fundamentally motivated by the goal to establish peaceful interstate relations by raising the costs of conflict.⁴¹

The embedded security benefits of functional economic regionalism may lend credence to the extant practice of pursuing economic regionalism in the expectation of security gains. But the degree and nature of such security gains remain uncertain. While regional mechanisms preoccupied with financial cooperation may have succeeded in moving towards “soft security” issues, there is little evidence to suggest similar progression towards addressing “hard security” subjects, as evident from the track record of the ARF over nearly two decades. Moreover, even regional financial cooperation is not an absolute. As Hamilton Hart points out, domestic economic processes and political interests have limited the prospects for deeper and more comprehensive region-wide financial cooperation.⁴² It is not necessary — far less inevitable — that regional economic cooperation will progressively expand in scope or in depth over the long term.

This pursuit of economic goals, underpinned by the belief in a linear and natural progression towards a community, has come with its complications and costs. First, it has rendered economic regionalism vulnerable to the intractable security politics of the region. This vulnerability has been evident in the exclusion of Taiwan from the APT process despite its economic and entrepreneurial clout in East Asia; in the differences over whether the stronger Hong Kong and Taiwanese currencies should be excluded from the Asian Currency Unit (ACU) at the inclusion of weaker currencies from Laos and Vietnam; and in the deadlock between China and Japan over fixing criteria for weighing currencies, a dispute that halted the progress of the ACU in 2007.⁴³ The latter mirrors the fragile security relationship between China and Japan, which has been an acute strain on East Asian regionalism, and has persisted despite burgeoning trade and economic interdependence.

Similarly, the proposal for the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement, despite its economic possibilities, has raised the security concerns of Southeast Asian states that are wary of being too dependent on China's evolving economy, and by the prospect of a strategic "tight embrace".⁴⁴ In just the same vein, the wrangling over membership in institutions, as it happened over the EAS, is also reflective of the continuing significance of security anxieties in the region, and which the APT process has found difficult to address.

This last point highlights the hazards of regionalism being hijacked by the interests of Major Powers. Regional mechanisms have thus become instruments for states to advance their agendas, and this "competitive institutionalism"⁴⁵ or "institution racing"⁴⁶ is an established reality in Asia's experience: the US backs the APEC, while China — rebuffed by the expansion of the EAS — has gone back to developing the APT as *the* regional institution, while Japan has invested heavily in the EAS and the ARF.

Second, and following from the above, the enduring influence of security politics has ensured that the teleology traced by regional elites — of regional cooperation leading to regional community — would remain complicated and incomplete.

This highlights the conundrum of regionalism in Asia: regional institutions with their accent on functional cooperation provide a means to go beyond the instrumental security politics of the region; yet there is no certainty that regional institutions will open up the space for states to go beyond instrumental concerns and address "hard" security concerns. While regionalism makes

possible the prospect for some form of security regionalism, even if over “soft” subjects where the interests of states converge conveniently, such as counter-terrorism and piracy, it may not be sufficient to address the more troubling questions that inform interstate mistrust in the region. Thus, regionalism may provide new avenues for conducting international politics, but it may not necessarily transform the character of international politics, even though claims to a “community” are implicit with such promise. This may be because states may find themselves unable to lessen their dependence on realist conceptions of security, and equally because regional institutions may be unable to muster the political will to address regional conflicts and disputes. In short, pursuing functional and issue based cooperation has salubrious effects for the prospects of regional peace and stability, but it may not hold out enough for realizing holistic visions of regional community.

The Myopia of Exclusivity: Asia’s Continued Dependence on the US-led Security Structure and Global Capitalism

The second related factor that limits exclusive regionalism springs from its inherent conceptual constraints in fully accounting for the complex structures of security in Asia, and the regions profound dependence on extra-regional actors. This specifically refers to the continued importance of the United States and the hub-and-spoke arrangement of bilateral alliances it underwrites in the region.

What is remarkable about the unraveling of APT exclusive regionalism has been the absence of a direct American role in it. This is quite telling. In the past it was the singular force of US distaste for an exclusive East Asia that led to the demise of Malaysia’s EAEG and Japan’s Asian Monetary Fund (AMF). In those instances, the US took an explicit position and pressurized its allies to block intra-Asian institution building. In the case of the APT, the absence of such a formally stated opposition was significant to its long-term consolidation. Nevertheless, the very nature of US security arrangements in Asia imposed powerful structural constraints on how far Asian states could go in pursuing the exclusive Asian principle to its logical conclusion. Katzenstein notes this as the “systemic vulnerability” in closed regionalism: observing Japan, he argues that its military and economic dependence on the US inhibits it from pursuing an inward-looking Asian regionalism.⁴⁷ This applies, in varying degrees, to the many allies as well as the non-allied partners of the US in Asia, all of whom depend in varying degrees

on US power to bolster their national power or, at the least, prefer the status quo in regional order.

Importantly though, the influence wielded by the US-centred architecture is not only a product of structure, but also of the agency of Asian states and their governments, who appear to prefer a combination of strong bilateralism with weak multilateralism and choose to keep multilateral institutions “weak, procedural and non-binding”.⁴⁸ Thus, as the formation of the EAS shows, both allies like Japan and the Philippines and non-allies like Singapore and Indonesia were instrumental in checking the rise of hegemonic leadership in this exclusively “Asian” multilateral project.

Furthermore, this break within “Asian” ranks occurred at a time when US power had been under much strain. Explicit unilateralism,⁴⁹ the foregrounding of homeland security and morality, and increased detachment from international institutions⁵⁰ have been characteristic of US foreign policy since 9/11. These developments have been detrimental to its unique hegemonic power founded on a tacit and “meaningful consensus on its right to lead”⁵¹ and its rich institutionalization with transparent “voice opportunities”.⁵²

Thus, with questions over the desirability of US hegemony, it seems that the break in exclusive regionalism had less to do with the *appeal* of US power, and more with the unease over the prospect of Chinese hegemonic leadership, coupled with the continuing *viability* of US power and the bilateral alliance structure that it supports. What this indicates is that America’s “incomplete hegemony” in Asia remains intact, and that it will be drawn in by Asian powers to impart predictability to their asymmetric regional power politics.⁵³ Asia’s rich experience with regionalism over the past two decades has made gains in functional cooperation as well as in norm-building, but it has not eaten into the relevance of the US-centred bilateral alliance structure. On the contrary, this structure has only been strengthened. America’s alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and Australia remain robust, while its strategic relations have deepened with Singapore and India.⁵⁴

Of course, one cannot overstate this case. The US-centred bilateral alliances are only one component of a broader security architecture in Asia, and indeed they coexist with numerous other multilateral processes. Moreover, the persistent doubts over the nature of the US commitment to its alliances in the region, and the urgency to constructively engage and enmesh Chinese power have exposed the limits of alliance politics as well, and have provided impetus for

regional multilateralism. Despite this, this structure is the basis for America's "deep engagement" with the region, and its relevance and importance for regional elites is far from modest.

Similarly, in international economic life, the principle of "Asia for Asians" comes into tension with East Asia's continued dependence on international finance and global capitalism. The APT process has had to negotiate with this paradox. While its financial regionalism emerged as a response to the 1997 crisis and to check the unregulated influence of international finance, by no means did it represent a departure from the project of liberalization. As Breslin points out, the APT process must be located in the broader dialectic of globalization and regionalism, where regionalism serves to both facilitate globalization and at the same time restrict its influence.⁵⁵ So while the APT's initiatives may champion economic integration and investment within East Asia, and mitigate financial shocks like those of 1997, it remains a process that is dependent on external flows and actors. This includes Asia's dependence on external demand for manufactured products, as well as its dependence on technology and finance from outside.

The dependence on external economic actors (for export markets, technology and finance) once again brings into focus the role of the US and its powerful economic relations in Asia. US power has been entrenched in the region by the cultivation of a liberal economic order that has sought to open up and integrate with national economies. However, talk of US economic hegemony, and of any easy unilateralism it may imply, would stand untenable in light of not only the general decline of American economic power in Asia but also from the growing interdependence wrought by globalization in production and finance. The US, however, remains a key actor, since, despite its relative and gradual decline, it has been able to extract major successes in pursuing its preferred policy of liberalization.⁵⁶

The Limits of Inclusive Regionalism in Asia

Having discussed the constraints of exclusive regionalism, the logical query to follow would be whether an inclusive model offers a viable pathway for realizing the stated goals of regional projects in Asia. There are two ways of tackling this question: first, to examine the record of existing regional projects that claim to be inclusive, and second, to examine the often invoked argument that the direct participation of the United States is a prerequisite for achieving

any substantive regional cooperation, and for advancing the goals of community-building.

The Record of Asia's Inclusive Models

The promise, problems and discontents that marked the experience of Asia-Pacific projects such as the APEC and ARF have been elaborated earlier — from how they have stalled in accomplishing their goals of trade liberalization and preventive diplomacy, respectively, to the clash between “process” and “outcome” oriented styles between Asian and extra-regional members. Thus, despite the direct participation of the United States and Pacific Asia, existing Asia-Pacific models do not provide a compelling case for inclusive models. Which leaves us with the newest model that seeks to be “inclusive and outward looking”: the East Asia Summit.⁵⁷

Despite being a nascent initiative — that may render an early judgment premature — a close examination of official discourse (summit statements and reports, diplomatic briefs, etc.) shows how the EAS nevertheless stands out for its lack of defined mandate. Even though it has the stated object of serving as a “forum for strategic dialogue”⁵⁸ on — among other things — security issues, we once again see a minimalist conception at work. The EAS appears to be carving out its niche around the securitization of subjects such as climate, energy and environment, as evidenced by the main outcomes of the second and third summits in 2007: the Cebu Declaration on East Asian Energy Security and the Singapore Declaration on Climate Change, Energy and the Environment, respectively.⁵⁹ Around these a range of research and functional initiatives have pullulated: the EAS Environment Ministers Meeting, the EAS Energy Ministers Meeting, Japan’s “Cool Earth 50” proposal, and an EAS conference on Livable Cities, among others.⁶⁰ Marking an overlap with existing institutions, the EAS also addresses transnational security concerns such as Avian Influenza, natural disaster management, among others.⁶¹ In expressing its “concern” over North Korea’s nuclear programme, and in stating “support” for the Six Party Talks, the EAS is repetitive of a concern echoed consistently by the APT over the years.⁶² The inability of the EAS in going any further than its predecessors was manifest with Myanmar’s success in blocking discussion of the anti-junta protests at the November 2007 Summit, even though EAS leaders privately expressed their concerns over the crackdown. Eventually, the Chairman’s statement expressed its “strong support for the UN’s role” and “encourage[d] Myanmar to work closely with the UN towards national reconciliation”.⁶³

While robust functional cooperation is a useful end goal in itself, in the case of the EAS — as with its predecessors — these measures are perceived as a means to the broader end goal of East Asian community-building. Economic, environmental and soft security collaboration have thus been held out as the means to pursue the goals that have been set upon the EAS. There is no clear indication, however, as to how the EAS represents an institutional advancement over its predecessors, how it will serve as a forum or institution more capable to address security regionalism, and, by implication, develop into a regional body less vulnerable to the agendas of Major Powers.

Similarly, the EAS is problematic — if not divisive — in its economic role. It is here that we see the EAS emerge as a competitor to the APT process. The object of creating an East Asia-wide Free Trade Area (FTA) has been an important goal for regional integration, and in official discourse is widely seen as a prerequisite for an East Asian Community. However a split has emerged over whether this East Asian FTA should be driven by the APT or by the EAS, and whether it should be an FTA spanning the ASEAN+3 or the ASEAN+6 states. The proposal for an APT-led FTA has been supported by China, while Japan — using the platform of the Second EAS — proposed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia (CEPEA), which envisages a free-trade area that also includes India, Australia and New Zealand. Besides the additional challenge of negotiating with three more states, a CEPEA presents the problem of bringing together the liberal market-oriented economies of Australia and New Zealand with the “development-statist traditions” of East Asian countries.⁶⁴

A similar confusion has come about with the task of building an East Asian Community. Would this community span 13 or 16 states, and who would give it direction — the APT or the EAS? While the APT summits have persistently reaffirmed the role of the APT process as the “main vehicle for the eventual establishment of an East Asia Community”,⁶⁵ there has been pressure from some states, notably Japan, to involve all EAS members in this conception. The lack of clarity over the exact role of the EAS in the task of community-building is also apparent in its own official discourse: the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 2005 mentions that the EAS “*could* play a significant role in community building”; while the Third EAS Summit stated that the EAS “*would* help build an East Asian Community”.⁶⁶ Moreover, while there is expression of what this community seeks to achieve, there is

virtually no elaboration on what it consists of in leader's led summit statements.

Inclusive Regionalism with the US: Promises and Constraints

As highlighted in this article, the United States remains key to the process of regionalism in Asia. Its exclusion placed severe limits over how far the exclusive APT model could go, and has in turn strengthened the belief in the necessity of an inclusive regionalism that involves the membership of the US. However, the assumption that an inclusive model that involves the US will decidedly lead to a more meaningful regionalism must be questioned rigorously.

A closer look at America's interests and hegemonic preferences discloses the complex nature of US power in Asia. On the one hand, US hegemony, centred on its hub-and-spoke alliances, contributes to regional order by managing Great Power rivalries, mitigating security dilemmas, allaying the security concerns of smaller Asian states and by managing regional conflicts. However, the US remains a status quo power in Asia, one that seeks to preserve the existing patterns of security dilemmas and regional disputes as these elements impart to its presence relevance and rationale. As a "holding operation", US hegemony has been effective in managing regional conflicts, but may not necessarily seek their full and sustainable resolution.⁶⁷ Thus, America's preference for bilateral alliances over any multilateral or regional project is not only an outcome of the unstable security politics of the region, but also because of the advantages it presents for its grand strategy.⁶⁸

Alagappa takes this thread further and challenges the assumption of unproblematic US power in Asia by pointing out the diverse trajectories of Southeast and Northeast Asia. While US military withdrawal has been accompanied by thriving multilateralism and indigenous responses to formulate regional order in the former, regional disputes remain protracted in the latter in the presence of deep American involvement.⁶⁹ Moreover, stability in Asia is not merely a product of American power; there are several other factors that need to be accounted for: successful state formation and modernization, the fostering of normative structures and economic development, among others.⁷⁰

American power presents a confounding dilemma: its hegemonic structure is a less than ideal basis for regional order and yet it remains a viable — and for some, an important — basis for order and stability in the region. Regionalism that includes the United

States may reflect an appreciation of the complex political and economic realities of the region, but it may still not hold out much beyond that. Therefore, the argument that the inclusion of the US would provide the EAS with a “distinct and sustainable future” is not entirely tenable.⁷¹

Frustrated Regionalism?

If both inclusive and exclusive regional projects are limited in their scope and ability to achieve their stated goals, it raises the question of whether the project of regionalism in Asia is a frustrated process. “Frustrated” is of course only one way of phrasing this problem. There are other descriptors that could be used, but which may not be as appropriate in this context: an “inefficient” regionalism, for instance, would imply the existence of an efficient archetype which ought to be emulated — and the European experience is often invoked in this regard — but this is problematic. A “frustrated” regionalism appears to be a more appropriate descriptor because it does not suggest finality to this state, nor does it reject the normative belief in regionalism. It implies a state of unrealized potential and leaves open, at least at a theoretical level, the possibility of a fuller realization.

But this begs the question: What is left unfulfilled that produces this frustration? Expectedly, what has been left unrealized and underachieved in Asia’s experiences with regionalism are the end goals envisioned by regional elites who have directed this process. The idea of an end goal or an “eventual” outcome, well embedded in the discourse of regional elites and officials, has been the search for a holistic model of regionalism in the form of a regional community.⁷² This search for holism, and the intractable limits reached, are recorded in each recent attempt at Asian regionalism: from APEC and the APT’s attempts at turning the linear wheels of economic cooperation towards a community and in stumbling to complete the circle;⁷³ in the ARF’s attempt to move towards preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution, targets which stands effectively stalled; in the EAS’ announced goal of “promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia”⁷⁴ but being unable to explain precisely how; and, indeed, also in the latest proposal for an “Asia-Pacific Community”, which, emerging from the frustration of past attempts, seeks to bring together economic, political and security cooperation under an EU-style formal Community.

Asia's Many Orders

As the limitations of both exclusive and inclusive models have fleshed out, there are structural factors that have caused fissures in Asia's experience of regionalism. While these — in the form of the “systemic constraints” imposed by the US-led hub-and-spoke arrangement, the complex balances and interests of major powers — have been attributed causal force, perhaps they could be subsumed into a more overarching and abstract reality: the evolving and competing types of order in Asia.

Reference to Alagappa's comprehensive typology of order — Instrumental, Normative-Contractual and Solidarist — is instructive here.⁷⁵ In Asia, we see elements of each at work: the instrumental focus on private goals, national identity and self-interested power through power balancing and alliances; the normative-contractual push for achieving collective goals and greater social cohesion through liberal international institutions, international law and economic interdependence; and the pursuit — albeit in a limited sense — of solidarist visions of a cohesive community with shared social and cultural identities. An incomplete US hegemonic order built on deep bilateral alliances, Asia-Pacific and East Asian regionalisms underpinned by their belief in multilateral cooperation, and the aspirations of community-building, reflect these multiple and coexisting possibilities of order in Asia.

In the post-Cold War era, however, there has been a growing tension between the two principal order-building processes in Asia. On the one hand is the Instrumental order manifest in power politics among Asian states, in the structure of bilateral alliances that are supported by, and which give shape to, US hegemony in Asia, and in recurrent security dilemmas. On the other is a Normative-Contractual order-building process driven by state-led regionalism and regional institutions, as an alternative path to achieving regional and international stability. The relationship between the two has been complex: while instrumental politics may have been tempered by normative processes, quite often though, the normative aspirations of regional projects — in both their Asia-Pacific and East Asian strands — have been circumscribed by instrumental politics as well.

The operation of these two types of order has thrown up several challenges, but it also reflects a degree of pragmatism. While these orders compete and constrain either from being fully realized, nonetheless, they provide the region with an overarching system that can accommodate a vast body of interests and agendas. So while

the US foregrounds its bilateral security alliances, China is able to employ the vehicle of regional multilateralism to disarm neighbours and socialize itself into regional politics, while Southeast Asian states seek “omni-enmeshment” and socialization by juggling their alliances along with an avowed belief in the project of regionalism.⁷⁶ What this means in essence is that no single vision of order can stake claim to the region, rendering the realization of any single vision for the region — such as a solidarist regional community — vulnerable if not untenable.

The Improbable Community?

Besides extant security structures, the articulation of “regional community” and “community-building” as end goals by agents of regionalism such as state elites, have led to this state of frustration. In the case of Asia-Pacific regionalism, the articulation of an Asia-Pacific Community can be noted from APEC’s early years: leaders in the 1993 Summit envisioned “a community of Asia-Pacific economies” and expressed their commitment to deepen their “spirit of community based on our shared vision of achieving stability, security and prosperity”.⁷⁷ Over the years, however, this conception of a community of economies began to stretch. By 2000, leaders were encouraging youth exchanges “in order to build a greater sense of community within the Asia-Pacific”,⁷⁸ and at the 2005 EAS leaders welcomed the “contribution of the cultural agenda” in “facilitating deeper understanding among the people and lowering psychological barriers”.⁷⁹ By 2006, the tone was more confident, with the elaboration of a “dynamic and harmonious Asia-Pacific community”.⁸⁰ While APEC has been modest in its espousal of community, the Australian-led initiative for a formal Asia-Pacific Community plans to work more explicitly towards this direction.

The vision of community has been most pronounced in East Asian regionalism, where the call for an East Asian Community has been explicitly articulated as an end goal, as an eventual destination. The setting of goals and targets is, of course, a logical necessity. What then needs to be examined is the nature of the goals set, and the promises they make.

Like the EAS, the “vision” of an East Asian Community has its roots in the APT process. It was with the report of the EAVG that “community” entered the diplomatic discourse. Despite its enthusiastic espousal, there is little clarity on what a putative East Asian Community means or entails. There are, instead, a range of

diffuse and multiple interpretations. Political economy studies of regionalism in Asia refer to an East Asian Community in terms of an essentially economic community based on multilateral and bilateral FTAs interlinking a defined region.⁸¹ However, as official statements indicate, state leaders and regional elites seem to take a broader view of an East Asian Community as one where a region-wide FTA would be an “integral” but not a singular component.⁸² Their conception of a putative community in fact draws much from the EAVG report which expands this usage to the prevention of conflict, human resource development, and the “fostering” of an East Asian identity.⁸³

The other, and perhaps deeper, problem is the degree to which community-building has been an elite-run process. While the agency of state leaders and epistemic communities in shaping agendas, and in constructing frameworks and identities has provided a necessary starting point, the elitist nature of this process has been a matter of concern even in formal community-building projects such as ASEAN.⁸⁴ Like ASEAN, East Asian community-building has been led primarily by Track I forums of state leaders and bureaucracies, and Track II processes such as the Network of East Asian Think-Tanks (NEAT), composed of policy analysts and practitioners, the Network of East Asian Studies composed of academics, and an East Asian Forum which brings together officials and business representatives.

The vision of an East Asian Community has brought this elitist process in tension with the populist underpinnings of such a conception. An acknowledgement of the need to move beyond an elite base is clear in official summit statements, such as the 2005 APT Summit which recognized the need to enhance “people to people exchange aimed at developing a ‘we’ feeling” and which welcomed the proposal for an “annual East Asia Week to promote ... arts and culture, awareness about East Asia cooperation and foster people-to-people bonds”.⁸⁵ While the intention may exist in formal terms, it is quite another matter whether a thriving grassroots process forging cooperative activities, identities and agendas, would eventually be palatable to state elites and their interests. As Collins observes of ASEAN and its new Charter, despite its intent to be “people oriented” and engage civil society groups, the document does not provide space for their involvement in the decision-making process; it seeks to be “people oriented” on its own terms, hoping primarily that civil society groups would serve as a conduit to reach out to grassroots with the message and vision of ASEAN.⁸⁶ Further, grassroots cooperation and activism on subjects such as governance

and human rights may throw up challenges for established ASEAN norms of non-interference and inviolable state sovereignty, which also inform the community-building process at an East Asian level.

Finally, this argument finds itself cornered by an often asked and somewhat polemical question: Is Asia incapable of realizing a regional community in the way Europe has? Instead of pursuing this query — to which responses fall into the binaries of yes and no, and evoke bloated optimism or accusations of cynicism, respectively — it is more germane to question whether Asia needs a community of common identities and shared visions. From a liberal-democratic position, reified yet meaningful cultural and political regional identities cannot emerge without regionalism legitimating itself in popular democratic processes and consciousness; thus, a shift from elite to popular processes that address questions of governance across state borders would be a welcome development. From the vantage point of regional elites, however, the pursuit of a community for “we the people of East Asia”⁸⁷ was perhaps unnecessary in the first place. Was community necessary to spur interstate cooperation? The fact that the political will for multilateral cooperation (such as APT financial cooperation) was in place well before “community” was articulated, suggests otherwise.

Despite the intent to chart its own path to regionalism, the subtle and sometimes explicit employment of the European experience as an archetype has been a problematic aspect of the discourse of regionalism in Asia. Far from being a product of abstract political will and vision-gazing, the coherence of European regionalism has been a pragmatic outcome of specific historical experiences, one where the role of the Second World War and the Cold War were decisive,⁸⁸ as is the current dynamic of globalization in creating rationales for deeper institutionalization. In the same manner, a state and sovereignty-centric regionalism, steered by regional elites, emerged in the Asian context because it served pragmatic ends, and remained viable in pursuing functional tasks. By formulating the goal of a regional community, however, this elite-run process has brought upon itself a range of inconsistencies and gaps it is unable to plug.

A frustrated regionalism is, of course, not an immutable condition. There are ways by which this frustration produced by the gap between goals and outcomes can be overcome. Perhaps the easier solution is to reformulate the goals themselves. Thus, goals as ambitious as creating a regional community could be substituted for well defined and specific forms of regional cooperation.⁸⁹ This is

not to dismiss the normative aspirations for greater social identities and links, but to recognize the limited role of state-led regionalism in neatly constructing them. Meaningful and enduring identities can emerge from the dynamism of grassroots regionalization. Grassroots drivers such as private businesses and “problem oriented coalitions” have created cross border linkages in manufacturing, trade and investments.⁹⁰ These linkages, importantly, link-up the interests of elites and as well as working classes across countries in the region. Indeed, there has already been a measure of success on this count: Tay, for instance, points to a “new Asian culture” emerging not from Confucian beliefs or vertical hierarchies of Asian values, but from the interaction of common people and their responses to globalization and modernity.⁹¹

Of course, regionalism and regionalization are not competitive processes. They are instead more symbiotic in nature, with each seeking to invigorate the other. Rather than pursuing the construction of regional communities, regionalism and its institutions could open up the possibility for deeper integration by providing frameworks to support such grassroots activity, rather than singularly direct it. Ultimately, state-led initiatives constitute only one driver of the many drivers of integration in Asia, but a recognition of this limited role is not reflected in the practice of regionalism, nor in the abstract goals that regional projects set for themselves.

Conclusion

The distilled conclusion of this study is the following: the founding of the EAS in 2005 has established the limits of both an exclusive East Asian regionalism, as well as an inclusive Asia-Pacific regionalism. That neither an exclusive nor an inclusive regionalism can enable the realization of a holistic regionalism and a regional community — articulated as end goals by regional elites — expresses a rather “frustrated” state of regionalism in Asia, despite the fecundity of regional projects and political enthusiasm for sustaining them.

This article has surveyed the various structural constraints on regional projects which preclude the realization of a holistic regionalism aspired by regional elites. Moreover, the limits on regional projects in realizing their stated goals are exacerbated by the nature of the goals set by the agents of regionalism in Asia: state, diplomatic and policy elites who have tied the goals of regional projects to the realization of a regional community which,

furthermore, seeks to be anchored in popular conceptions of identities and shared interests.

Importantly, “frustrated” regionalism does not preclude the possibility of meaningful regionalism. This frustrated nature of regionalism should convey to state and policy elites the need to place deeper emphasis on the pursuit of specific and functional goals — economic cooperation and the socialization of regional elites, for instance, in both of which regional projects have registered success — as end goals in themselves to deepen regional multilateralism. It should also convey the inefficacy of pinning the future of regional projects to holistic goals such as “community”, for meaningful conceptions of togetherness on a regional basis cannot arise from state engineered regionalism alone but would have to be rooted in popular political and social consensus, and this remains complicated in light of the elite-run nature of contemporary Asian regionalism. Tempering abstract goals, focusing on multilateral cooperation and the accomplishment of specific functional projects as end goals in themselves, and providing greater support for non-elite grassroots regionalization may perhaps prevent regional projects from suffering the loss of credibility that expectedly comes with the growing deficit between great expectations and few results.

NOTES

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- ¹ See Peter J. Katzenstein, “A World of Regions: America, Europe and East Asia”, *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 65–82, and *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005); Edward Mansfield and Helen Milner, *The Political Economy of Regionalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, eds., *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- ² The prefix “new” represents an attempt to study emergent experiments in regionalism in non-European parts of the world such as Latin America, Africa and, of course, Asia. Non-institutional forms of regionalism, the role of non-state actors and the impact of globalization and identity are some of the major themes in these studies.
- ³ Andrew Hurrell, “Regionalism in Theoretical perspective”, in *Regionalism in World Politics*, edited by Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 37–73.

- ⁴ I refer to the state and policy elites, as well as epistemic communities within a defined region who shape the agenda for, and practice of, state-led regionalism.
- ⁵ Christopher Dent, *East Asian Regionalism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 169.
- ⁶ Kuala Lumpur Declaration of First EAS, Point 9 <<http://www.aseansec.org/18098.htm>>.
- ⁷ East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) Report. *Towards an East Asian Community*, 2001 <<http://www.aseansec.org/4918.htm>>.
- ⁸ Muthiah Alagappa, ed., "The Study of International Order: An Analytical Framework", in *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 33–69.
- ⁹ Shaun Breslin, "Theorising East Asian regionalism(s): New Regionalism and Asia's future(s)", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Melissa G. Curley and Nicholas Thomas (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 34–35.
- ¹⁰ Alastair Ian Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory", in *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, edited by G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 107–62.
- ¹¹ Peter Katzenstein, *A World of Regions*, 2005, op. cit., pp. 6–13.
- ¹² Thus, the author's use of an "Asian region" and "Asian regionalism" in this study is not based on any significant conceptual improvement these terms may offer. Instead, it is used only to convey a more overarching concept that subsumes both East Asia and the Asia Pacific, which among themselves, and in their varying permutations, have come to include states from South Asia, Central Asia/Eurasia, and even across continents like Europe, North and South America. This, however, excludes regional formations specific to South Asia (notably, South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation) and Central Asia (the Shanghai Cooperation Organization).
- ¹³ Brian L. Job, "Matters of Multilateralism: Implications for Regional Conflict Management", in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, edited by David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 169–70.
- ¹⁴ Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory", in *International Relations Theory*, edited by Ikenberry and Mastanduno, op. cit.
- ¹⁵ Simon W. Sheldon, "Whither Security Regionalism? ASEAN and the ARF in the Face of New Security Challenges", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Competition, Congruence and Transformation*, edited by Amitav Acharya and Evelyn Goh (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 121–25.
- ¹⁶ Rosemary Foot, "Modes of Regional Conflict Management: Comparing Security Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula, China-Taiwan, and the South China Sea", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, op. cit., pp. 93–112.

- ¹⁷ John Ravenhill, *APEC and the Construction of Pacific Rim Regionalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- ¹⁸ Akihiko Tanaka, "The Development of the ASEAN+3 Framework", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., p. 55.
- ¹⁹ Michael Wesley, "The dog that didn't bark: The Bush Administration and East Asian regionalism", in *Bush and Asia: America's Evolving Relations with East Asia*, edited by Mark Beeson (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 68–69.
- ²⁰ Tanaka, "The Development of the ASEAN+3 Framework", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., p. 56.
- ²¹ Julie Gilson, *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar, 2002).
- ²² Richard Higgott, "The Asian Economic Crisis: A Study in the Politics of Resentment", *New Political Economy* 3, no. 3 (November 1998): 333–56.
- ²³ John Ravenhill, "A Three Bloc World? The New East Asian Regionalism", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 2, no. 2 (2002): 167–95.
- ²⁴ Wesley, "The dog that didn't bark: The Bush Administration and East Asian regionalism", in *Bush and Asia*, edited by Mark Beeson, op. cit., pp. 74–77.
- ²⁵ Dent, *East Asian Regionalism*, op. cit., pp. 153–68.
- ²⁶ Tanaka, "The Development of the ASEAN+3 Framework", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., pp. 64–65; Dent, *East Asian Regionalism*, op. cit., p. 153.
- ²⁷ East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) Report, *Towards an East Asian Community*, 2001 <<http://www.aseansec.org/4918.htm>>, pp. 14–17.
- ²⁸ Ibid., pp. 11–13.
- ²⁹ East Asia Study Group (EASG) Report, *Final Report of the East Asia Study Group*, 2002 <<http://www.aseansec.org/4918.htm>>, p. 4.
- ³⁰ See Press Statement by the Chairman of the 6th ASEAN+3 Summit, 2002, Point 22 <<http://www.aseansec.org/13188.htm>>.
- ³¹ Melissa G. Curley and Nicholas Thomas, "Advancing East Asian Regionalism: An Introduction", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., p. 3.
- ³² See "Strengthening ASEAN+3 Cooperation", Chairman's Statement of the 8th ASEAN+3 Summit, Vientiane, 29 November 2004, Point 10 <<http://www.aseansec.org/16847.htm>>.
- ³³ Dent, *East Asian Regionalism*, op. cit., p. 169; Tanaka, "The Development of the ASEAN+3 Framework", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., p. 65.
- ³⁴ Peter J. Katzenstein, "Regionalism in Comparative Perspective", *Cooperation and Conflict* 31, no. 2 (1996): 123–60; Breslin, "Theorising East Asian regionalism(s): New Regionalism and Asia's future(s)", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., pp. 32–35.
- ³⁵ For APT's preoccupation with transnational security concerns, see "ASEAN Plus Three cooperation", Point 5 <<http://www.aseansec.org/16580.htm>>. Also, see Chairman's Statement of the 9th ASEAN+3 Summit 2005, Point 12

<<http://www.aseansec.org/18042.htm>>; and Chairman's Statement from the 11th APT Summit 2007, Point 6 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21096.htm>>.

- 36 On the rejuvenation of APEC around security issues, see Ravenhill, "Mission Creep or Mission Impossible? APEC and Security", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, op. cit., pp. 136–40.
- 37 Shaun Narine, "Economic Security and Regional Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Evaluating the Economics-Security Nexus", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, op. cit., p. 195.
- 38 This belief in an unproblematic and linear progression from regional economic cooperation to security cooperation is current in state discourse and academic literature. Chu Shulong argues that "a realistic approach for the APT is to stress economic operation and economic security first", and that once consensus is reached on "soft security" issues it is "logical and natural" to enter into "hard security" issues. See Chu Shulong, "The ASEAN Plus Three Process and East Asian Security Cooperation", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, op. cit., pp. 163–64.
- 39 East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) Report, *Towards an East Asian Community*, 2001, p. 17 <<http://www.aseansec.org/4918.htm>>.
- 40 Shaun Narine, "Economic Security and Regional Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Evaluating the Economics-Security Nexus", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, op. cit., p. 216.
- 41 Ravenhill, "Mission Creep or Mission Impossible?", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, op. cit., pp. 136–40.
- 42 Natasha Hamilton-Hart, "Financial cooperation and domestic political economy in East Asia", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., pp. 116–36.
- 43 Dent, "East Asian Regionalism", op. cit., p. 165.
- 44 Narine, "Economic Security and Regional Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Evaluating the Economics-Security Nexus", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, p. 195.
- 45 Ibid, op. cit., p. 216.
- 46 Acharya and Goh, eds., "Introduction", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, op. cit., p. 7.
- 47 Katzenstein, *Asian Regionalism*, op. cit., p. 22.
- 48 Wesley, "The dog that didn't bark: The Bush Administration and East Asian regionalism", in *Bush and Asia*, edited by Beeson, op. cit., pp. 72–74.
- 49 Beeson, "American Hegemony and Regionalism: The Rise of East Asia and the End of the Asia-Pacific", *Geopolitics* 11, no. 4 (2006): 541–60.
- 50 Michael Mastanduno, "Hegemonic Order, September 11, and the Consequences of the Bush Revolution", in *Bush and Asia*, edited by Beeson, op. cit. pp. 24–41.
- 51 Ikenberry and Mastanduno, *International Relations Theory*, op. cit, p. 7.
- 52 Michael Mastanduno, "Incomplete Hegemony: The United States and Security Order in Asia", in *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*, edited by M. Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 146–50.

- 53 Ikenberry and Mastanduno, eds., "Introduction to International Relations Theory", in *International Relations Theory*, op. cit., pp. 7–8.
- 54 Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia", *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007/08): 131–38.
- 55 Breslin, "Theorising East Asian Regionalism(s): New Regionalism and Asia's Future(s)", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., pp. 34–35.
- 56 Ravenhill, "US Economic Relations with East Asia: From Hegemony to Complex Interdependence?", in *Bush and Asia*, edited by Beeson, op. cit., pp. 42–63.
- 57 Kuala Lumpur Declaration of the 1st EAS, Point 3 <<http://www.aseansec.org/18098.htm>>.
- 58 Chairman's Statement of the 3rd EAS, Singapore, 2007, Point 12 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21127.htm>>.
- 59 See Chairman's Statement of the 2nd EAS, Cebu, 2007, Points 4, 5 and 6 <<http://www.aseansec.org/19302.htm>>; Chairman's Statement of the 3rd EAS, Singapore, 2007, Points 5 and 6 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21127.htm>>.
- 60 See Chairman's Statement of the 3rd EAS, Singapore, 2007, Points 8 and 9 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21127.htm>>.
- 61 The overlap with the APT is conspicuous; see Chairman's Statements of the 9th APT Summit 2005, Point 12 <<http://www.aseansec.org/18042.htm>>, and Chairman's Statement of the 11th APT Summit 2007, Point 6 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21096.htm>>. For EAS documents mirroring these issues see Chairman's Statement of the 2nd EAS, 2007, Cebu, Points 9 and 10 <<http://www.aseansec.org/19302.htm>>, and Chairman's Statement of the 3rd EAS, Singapore, Points 3–18 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21127.htm>>.
- 62 See APT Summit Chairman and Press Statements for 2002, Point 23 <<http://www.aseansec.org/13188.htm>>; 2004, Point 4 <<http://www.aseansec.org/16847.htm>>; 2005, Point 15 <<http://www.aseansec.org/18042.htm>>; and 2007, Point 7 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21096.htm>>. For references to North Korea and the Six Party Talks in the EAS, see the 1st EAS 2005, Point 3, the 2nd EAS 2007, Points 14, 15 and 16 (has a separate section on the "Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula"), and the 3rd EAS 2007, Point 2. All available at <<http://www.aseansec.org/4918.htm>>.
- 63 See Chairman's Statement of the 3rd EAS 2007, Singapore, Point 3 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21127.htm>>.
- 64 Dent, *East Asian Regionalism*, op. cit., p. 179.
- 65 See APT Summit Chairman's Statements for 2004, Point 11; 2005; and 2007, Point 2. Interestingly, the APT's role in East Asian community-building is referred to as a "key role" rather than "main vehicle" in the 2007 document.
- 66 Authors' italics. See Kuala Lumpur Declaration 2005 <<http://www.aseansec.org/18098.htm>>; Chairman's Press Statement for the 7th ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 26 July 2006 <<http://www.aseansec.org/18579.htm>>; the 3rd EAS Chairman's Statement, Point 21 <<http://www.aseansec.org/21127.htm>>.
- 67 Michael Mastanduno, "Incomplete Hegemony: The United States and Security Order in Asia", in *Asian Security Order*, edited by Alagappa, op. cit., pp. 153–57.

- ⁶⁸ Beeson, "American Hegemony and Regionalism", op. cit., pp. 550–54.
- ⁶⁹ Progress by the minilateral frameworks such as the Six Party Talks would challenge this argument, but in response it should be noted that US initiative in seeking a genuine solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis have been borne from the threat such a development would pose not only to the non-proliferation regime, but also to the status quo of US power on the Korean peninsula and on the US position as *the* nuclear guarantor for both Japan and South Korea.
- ⁷⁰ Muthiah Alagappa, "Managing Asian Security: Competition, Cooperation, and Evolutionary Change", in *Asian Security Order*, edited by Alagappa, op. cit., pp. 594–600.
- ⁷¹ Malcolm Cook, "The United States and the East Asia Summit: Finding the Proper Home", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no 4 (2008): 293–312.
- ⁷² "We agreed for the eventual establishment of the East Asian Community", Chairman's Statement of the 8th APT Summit, Vientiane, 2004, Point 11 <<http://www.aseansec.org/16847.htm>>.
- ⁷³ See for instance, the overarching vision of the APT in the call for the "promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the region" in the Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation, 1999. See Point 2 <<http://www.aseansec.org/5469.htm>>.
- ⁷⁴ See Kuala Lumpur Declaration of the 1st EAS 2005, Point 4 <<http://www.aseansec.org/18098.htm>>.
- ⁷⁵ Muthiah Alagappa, ed., "The Study of International Order: An Analytical Framework", in *Asian Security Order*, op. cit., pp. 33–69.
- ⁷⁶ Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia", *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007/08): 131–38.
- ⁷⁷ APEC Leaders' Economic Vision Statement 1993 <http://www.apec.org/apec/leaders_declarations/1993.html>.
- ⁷⁸ APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration: Delivering to the Community 2000 <http://www.apec.org/apec/leaders_declarations/2000.html>.
- ⁷⁹ 13th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, Economic Declaration 2005 <http://www.apec.org/apec/leaders_declarations/2005.html>.
- ⁸⁰ 14th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, Hanoi Declaration 2006 <http://www.apec.org/apec/leaders_declarations/2006.html#3>.
- ⁸¹ See for instance, Nagesh Kumar, "Towards a Broader Asian Community: Agenda for the East Asian Summit", RIS Discussion Papers 2005 <http://www.ris.org.in/dp100_pap.pdf>.
- ⁸² Joint Communiqué of the 38th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Vientiane, 2005, Point 57 <<http://www.aseansec.org/17592.htm>>.
- ⁸³ East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) Report, *Towards an East Asian Community*, 2001, pp. 10–11 <<http://www.aseansec.org/4918.htm>>.
- ⁸⁴ On the elite nature of ASEAN regionalism and community-building processes see Emmerson, who describes ASEAN as a "consociational democracy". Donald K. Emmerson, "Challenging ASEAN: A 'Topological' View", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 29, no. 3 (2007): 424–46. Chavez emphasizes the need for regional cooperation from below to foster regional identities. She argues

that ASEAN's preoccupation with trade and investment and other forms of economic cooperation has limited cooperation in areas where deeper cultural and historical roots do exist. See Jenina Joy Chavez, "Regionalism beyond an elite project: the challenge of building responsive subregional economic communities", in *Advancing East Asian Regionalism*, edited by Curley and Thomas, op. cit., pp. 158–78.

⁸⁵ See Kuala Lumpur Declaration of APT Summit 2005, Point 6; see Chairman's Statement APT Summit, Kuala Lumpur, 2005, Point 7.

⁸⁶ See Alan Collins, "A People-oriented ASEAN: A Door Ajar or Closed for Civil Society Organizations?", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 4 (2008): 313–31.

⁸⁷ East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) Report, *Towards an East Asian Community*, 2001, p. 1 <<http://www.aseansec.org/4918.htm>>.

⁸⁸ Hans W. Maull, "The European Security Architecture: Conceptual Lessons for Asia Pacific Security Cooperation", in *Reassessing Security Cooperation*, edited by Acharya and Goh, op. cit., pp. 253–74.

⁸⁹ Shin-wha Lee argues for a more "problem-driven" and "issue based" approach to East Asian regionalism. See Shin-wha Lee, "A Problem-Driven Approach to East Asian Regionalism", in *Do Institutions Matter? Regional Institutions and Regionalism in East Asia*, edited by See Seng Tan (Singapore: RSIS Monograph no. 13, 2008), pp. 39–51.

⁹⁰ T.J. Pempel, ed., *Remapping East Asia: the Construction of a Region* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 12–28.

⁹¹ Simon S.C. Tay, "ASEAN Plus 3: Challenges and Cautions about a New Regionalism", in *Asia Pacific Security: Challenges and Opportunities in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Mohamed Jwahr Hassan, Stephen Leong, and Vincent Lim (Kuala Lumpur: ISIS Malaysia, 2002), p. 103.