

Evaluating the Role of Regional Expert Network in Regional Security Institution Building:

ASEAN-ISIS and the Establishment of the ARF*

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【ABSTRACT】

This study analyzes the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a multilateral security institution in East Asia, with the focus on the role of expert network in the region. Although ASEAN member countries' concern about the changing security environment of the region was the main impetus for creating new security institution, the process of institution making was not smooth and should not be taken for granted. This study pays attention to the role of ASEAN-ISIS, a regional expert network, in the formation of the ARF. In short, ASEAN-ISIS provided a new idea regarding regional security order and development of the ASEAN norm

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which had become the normative basis of the ARF. However, this study, unlike previous studies which stress the role of norms in the creation of the ARF, argues that the norm making process was not unrelated to the regional power structure and states' strategic calculations. Norms created by ASEAN-ISIS affects the behaviors of ASEAN members and non-region countries. At the same time the regional power structure surely influenced the perception and the understanding of regional security relations of the norm entrepreneur, ASEAN-ISIS. In this context, this study argues that the approach which stresses the importance of ideational factors should be taken with caution. An integrated approach is necessary for the understanding of Asian regional security cooperation.

I . Introduction

In the realist tradition national security is a matter of survival of nation-states and hence is the exclusive realm of nation states. Nation-states are in the center of international security relations and they are stubborn in allowing the involvement of non-state actors in security matters.¹⁾ Despite this dominance of state-centered practices in international security, the role of non-state actors in security relations has increased. Not to mention international organizations and regional security organizations, non-state actors such as NGOs, advocacy networks, expert networks, and epistemic communities have become the important actors in international security relations. Some symbolic events such as the anti-personnel land mine ban show that non-state actors such as global civil society can affect the security policies of states. To a certain extent, this phenomenon challenges the realist perspective on security matters.

This study analyzes the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a multilateral security institution in East Asia, with a focus on the role of expert network in the region. This focus indicates that in the establishment of the ARF more than power politics played a role. Although ASEAN member countries' concern about the changing security environment of the region was the main impetus for creating new security institution, the process of institution making was not smooth and should not be taken

1) John Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institution," *International Security* 19-3 (1994/95), pp. 5-49; Ann Marie Clark, E. J. Freidman and K. Hochstetler, "The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society: A Comparison of NGO Participation in UN World Conference on the Environment, Human Rights and Women," *World Politics* 51-1 (1998), pp. 1-35

for granted. This study pays attention to the role of ASEAN-ISIS, a regional expert network which has a track-II character, in the formation of the ARF. Informed by previous studies that give credit to ASEAN-ISIS in the formation of the ARF, this study shows how ASEAN-ISIS affected the policies of ASEAN countries and eventually contributed to the creation of the ARF. Although we likewise give credit to ASEAN-ISIS, we do not totally accept the claim that ASEAN-ISIS and its role of norm making was the most important factor in the establishment of the ARF.

The second goal of this study is to evaluate the validity of the explanation focusing on the role of think-tank networks as a norm entrepreneur. For this task this study tackles two issues. First of all, we need to know how important the role of ASEAN-ISIS was in making major countries like the United States and China, not to mention of ASEAN countries, join the ARF. The decision of the United States and China to join ARF might have nothing to do with the contribution of ASEAN-ISIS. Power politics might have mattered most. This study, unlike previous studies which stress the role of norms in the creation of the ARF, argues that the norm making process was not unrelated to the regional power structure and states' strategic calculations. Norms created by ASEAN-ISIS affected the behaviors of ASEAN members and non-region countries. And at the same time the regional power structure after the end of the Cold War surely influenced the perception and the understanding of the norm entrepreneur (ASEAN-ISIS) toward regional security relations. Second, this study tackles the issue of the independence of track II organizations. Has ASEAN-ISIS been insulated from the influences of states and power politics among them? Does ASEAN-ISIS in fact reflect the interests of member countries? These two issues are important for evaluating the importance of norm factors over the realist explanation. Finally, I briefly discuss the applicability of ASEAN-ISIS's experience to Northeast Asia. Can regional expert network have an influence in regional security matters in Northeast Asia where power politics are acute and regional identity is weak?

II. Explaining the Creation of the ARF: Theoretical Discussion

1. The Role of Power and Norms in Regional Security Cooperation

The creation of security organization was the result of states' action which aims to address security problems. Likewise, regional security organization such as the ARF is the outcome of states' response to regional security problems. In realist tradition, this

interpretation is natural. States choose desirable options for their security and if the multilateral institutions can guarantee the best outcome states will support the formation of regional security organization. In short, the concern for security motivates states and has them behave in a certain way. According to Michael Leifer, ASEAN states were concerned about the changing strategic situation and saw the ARF as a way to keep the United States in, and China and Japan down.²⁾ The uncertainty caused by the rise of China was the major impetus behind the ARF. Ralf Emmers³⁾ also takes a realist stance, stressing the role of balance of power in the creation of the ARF.⁴⁾

Although power politics prevailed in the process of the ARF's formation, we still need to ask why ASEAN states embraced a multilateral security institution. Unlike bilateral security institutions such as alliance, multilateral regional institution requires the sense of shared interests and the acceptance of collective norms. Realist perspective can explain why ASEAN states support the creation of the ARF but cannot account for why they did it despite different interests and bilateral tensions among ASEAN members.

Constructivists emphasize the role of ideational factors in international relations.⁵⁾ In international relations, norms and principles act as the standards for guiding the behavior of states. The role of norms in building security institution in Southeast Asia has been emphasized by many scholars.⁶⁾ According to them shared norms and principles are important factors in creating a multilateral regional security institution. Norms have regulative and constitutive effects. In other words, states' behaviors and identities are influenced by these norms. Establishing a regional security institution required shared interests and goals since sovereign states tend to pursue monopolistic interests. Constitutive norms and identity define the interest of states. If states within a region share common norms, cooperation comes easily. In the case of ASEAN, ASEAN

2) Michael Leifer, "The ASEAN Regional Forum: Extending ASEAN's Model of Regional Security," Adelphi Paper No. 302 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996).

3) Ralf Emmers, "The Influence of the Balance of Power Factors within the ASEAN Regional Forum," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23-2 (2001).

4) Both Leifer and Emmers' concept of balance of power should be differentiated from conventional interpretation of balance of power. See Ralf Emmers, *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF* (New York, NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 16-17.

5) Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review* 88-2 (1994), pp. 384-396.

6) Amitav Acharya, "Ideas, Identity, and Institutional-Building: From the 'ASEAN Way' to the 'Asia-Pacific Way'?" *Pacific Review* 10-3 (1997), pp. 328-342; Nikolas Busse, "Constructivism and Southeast Asian Security," *The Pacific Review* 12-1 (1999), pp. 39-60; Richard Higgott, "Ideas, Identity and Policy Coordination in the Asia-Pacific," *Pacific Review*, 7-4 (1994), pp. 367-379; Brian L. Job, "Track 2 Diplomacy: Ideational Contribution to the Evolving Asia Security Order," in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

norms such as noninterference and renunciation of the threat or use of force influence the behavior of the member states. And when norm-guided behaviors become the content of the systemic interaction among member states, this can lead to the emergence of collective identity. Some scholars rejected the conventional understanding of Southeast Asian security relation and instead argue security relations in this region should be understood in the context of constructivism. Countries in this region have dropped many realist strategies from their foreign policy agendas such as building alliances against outsiders. Instead, these states have established a regional code of conduct which centers on norms that are mentioned above. Nikolas Busse argues that “adherence to these norms over time has led to the emergence of a collective identity among the members of the Association.”⁷⁾

2. The Role of Experts’ Networks in Regional Security Relations

The role of non-state actors in promoting international security is nothing new. The governance of international security is participated by international institutions, civil society groups and experts’ networks including epistemic communities. “Epistemic community” is defined as a cross-national advocacy group armed with scientific knowledge and convincing scientific data. It is a good example of a non-state actor which can influence the governance of a particular issue (although its role is highly prominent in environment agenda). Although some scholars emphasize the scientific expertise of epistemic communities, the core element of them is shared values. Peter Haas provides a less strict definition of epistemic community while emphasizing the shared belief or faith in the verity and the applicability of particular forms of knowledge or specific truths. For him, an epistemic community is “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.” In discussing the element of epistemic community he especially emphasizes “a shared set of normative and principled beliefs,” shared causal beliefs and shared notions of validity.⁸⁾

ASEAN-ISIS can be characterized as a regional expert network, think-tank network or a track II organization. “Track II” refers to a network of non-official experts who can pool

7) Nikolar Busse, “Constructivism and Southeast Asian Security,” *The Pacific Review* 12-1 (1999), p. 39.

8) Peter Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” in Peter Haas (ed.), *Knowledge, Power and International Policy Coordination* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1992), p. 3.

information and discuss their apprehensions and estimates of dangers before beginning to evolve policy recommendations to their governments on an agreed basis.⁹⁾ Thus the information that Track II provides is an important source in formulating policy responses to issues concerning the region. Track II is distinct from Track I, which is defined as official, government-led multilateral organizations and processes such as ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and multilateral defense cooperation programs. Track II diplomacy entails activities or discussions involving academics and intellectuals, journalists, business elites and others as well as officials “acting in their private capacity. Various official and non-governmental participations in seminars, conferences and organizations is ‘mixed’ or ‘blended’ suggesting that the demarcation between official and unofficial involvement is unclear.”¹⁰⁾

The merit of track II organization is that it can deal with sensitive issues without creating tension among states. To some extent track II organizations play a role of ‘honest broker’, inviting all interested parties to sit down behind closed doors to address a particular problem or proposal. Track II deals with issues that may still be deemed too sensitive for governments to grapple with. Track II also addresses issues that are not yet on governmental security agendas, and thus act as a kind of early warning mechanism. Additionally, they might provide fresh approaches to problems that seem to be at an impasse in deliberations among officials. Track II studies could redefine issues such that policy-makers might see new ways of resolution. ASEAN-ISIS is a perfect example of Track II organization in the sense that ASEAN-ISIS performs all the abovementioned functions. It should be noted that as in epistemic communities, shared belief is an important element of well-working track II organizations. Experts on regional security relations who believe multilateral forum is necessary for stable security order and that the forum should be based on particular norms and principles played an important role in Southeast Asian regional security and in the formation of the ARF.

This study pays attention to the function of norm creation of ASEAN-ISIS. ASEAN-ISIS as a regional expert network not only provides technical expertise and policy guidelines

9) The meaning of Track II in Asia-Pacific might be different from other regions. Desmond Ball et al. argues that the defining characteristics of Track II (in Asia-Pacific), is the existence of some linkage to Track I, either through the participation of officials and/or institutionalized reporting arrangements, such as have been formed between the ARF and Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). Desmond Ball, Anthony Milner and Brendan Taylor, “Track II Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific: Reflections and Future Directions,” *Asian Security* 2-3 (2006), pp. 174-188.

10) Diane Stone and Helen E.S. Nesadurai, “Networks, Second Track Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: The Experience of Southeast Asia Think Tanks,” paper presented to the Inaugural Conference on Bridging Knowledge and Policy, Bonn, Germany, 5-8 December 1999, p. 15.

but it also frames the issues and helps define the policymakers' interests. In some cases, regional expert networks may even set the policymakers' agenda by providing new ideas or norms. More importantly, they also play the role of norm localization. Norm localization is the active construction of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices. The process of norm localization is not natural but rather dependent upon several factors such as the legitimacy and authority of key norm-takers, the strength of prior local norms, the credibility and prestige of local agents, indigenous cultural traits and traditions, and the scope for grafting and pruning presented by foreign norms.¹¹⁾ This study gives special attention to the availability of credible local actors with sufficient discursive influence. "Local norm entrepreneurs are likely to be more credible if they are seen by their target audience as upholders of local values and identity and not simply 'agents' of outside forces or actors and whether they are part of a local epistemic community that could claim a record of success in prior normative debates."¹²⁾ ASEAN-ISIS as a local network of think-tanks has performed the function of norm entrepreneur. The successful launch of the ARF, according to scholars who takes a constructivist perspective, was to some extent attributable to the role of ASEAN-ISIS as a regional norm entrepreneur. ASEAN-ISIS provided a new idea regarding regional security order and developed the ASEAN norm, which would eventually be accepted by not only ASEAN states but also by the United States and China.

III. The Relationship between ASEAN and ASEAN-ISIS

1. The Nature of ASEAN-ISIS

ASEAN-ISIS is a coalition of strategic studies institutions of Southeast Asian countries. The network was formally launched in June 1988 by think tanks of the core ASEAN countries of Indonesia (Center for Strategic and International Studies), Malaysia (Institute of Strategic and International Studies), Singapore (Singapore Institute of International Affairs), and Thailand (Institute of Security and International Studies).¹³⁾ In 1991, the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies in the Philippines became the Philippines member of ASEAN-ISIS. The institute for International Relations (now

11) Amitav Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," *International Organization* 58-2 (2004), pp. 245-248.

12) Acharya (2004), p. 248.

13) Unofficially the ASEAN-ISIS activities were initiated in 1984 after CSIS, Indonesia invited a number of institutions from the ASEAN region to a meeting in Bali.

Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam) of Vietnam became the sixth member of ASEAN-ISIS while in 1997, the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) joined as the seventh member. Now with Brunei Darussalam Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (BDIPSS) of Brunei and Institute of Foreign Affairs of Laos, ASEAN-ISIS has nine member institutions. ASEAN-ISIS is registered with the ASEAN Secretariat as an ASEAN NGO while its Charter mandates that only research institutions based in ASEAN member countries may join ASEAN-ISIS.

The main objectives of ASEAN-ISIS are: 1) to strengthen and increase regional cooperation in the development of research on strategic and international problems and issues in ASEAN countries; 2) to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of strategic and international research by intensified communication between and coordination among members of the Association; and 3) to contribute to ASEAN cooperation by promoting public knowledge and understanding of problems and issues faced by the ASEAN communities. To further these goals, ASEAN-ISIS also maintains an extensive network of institutional linkages with leading think-tanks outside ASEAN in Asia-Pacific countries like Australia, Canada, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and the United States, as well as with countries outside the Asia-Pacific region like India.¹⁴⁾

These institutions are in general relatively autonomous from their respective governments as they have no official links with ministers, political parties or any other government bodies. They are financially independent, and do not receive any instruction from the governments. Of course the situations vary among the countries. In some countries like Vietnam and Cambodia, these institutions are not perfectly independent from their government.¹⁵⁾ ISIS Thailand is an institute officially supervised by Chulalongkorn University. CSIS Indonesia is the largest institution among the ASEAN-ISIS members with more than a hundred staff and about half of whom are full time researchers. ISIS Malaysia established in 1983 is the most prominent think-tank in the country. It is officially an autonomous organization engaged in independent policy research. However, its very close relations with the government are well acknowledged in Southeast Asia. As it is large and well organized, it often takes a leading role in ASEAN-ISIS activities.¹⁶⁾

Many experts on ASEAN and ASEAN-ISIS stress that in each country there are close informal links between the think-tank institution and government. Most of all, core members of these institutions are all prominent scholars and experts who have provided advice to governments. These experts and government officials know each other well

14) Stone and Nesadurai (1999), p. 14.

15) From interview with Singapore ASEAN-ISIS member, January 24, 2007, Bangkok, Thailand.

16) Katsumata (1994), p. 96.

and can have informal friendly dialogue. “Through such channels, inputs are sent to the governments from these institutions. These informal yet close links are very important for an understanding of the ASEAN–ISIS activities in the region.”¹⁷

Member institutes of ASEAN–ISIS have significant influences in the decision-making of their governments. According to Katsumata, this strong influence is attributable to the limited research and policy analysis abilities of the governments in the ASEAN countries. The governments’ research abilities are limited mainly because of the financial and human resource constraints, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In most ASEAN countries, not enough officials are assigned to work on the political and security issues in Southeast Asia. Thus, the roles of strategic studies institutions expand because the government officials are always preoccupied with administrative matters.

In sum, ASEAN–ISIS is a well-organized expert network and also an avenue for research collaboration, exchange, and joint projects between think-tanks of ASEAN countries. Most interaction is of a scholarly character. Collaborative research projects, academic exchange and joint conferences are commonplace. These scholarly interactions provided a solid base and a diversified series of networks that establish familiarity and some loyalty among participants. Most importantly, these interactions establish the foundations for a ‘habit of dialogue’ and ongoing consultations. More importantly, a number of leading Asian think-tanks have played a proactive policy entrepreneurship role at the regional level and have had significant impact in promoting ideas about security and economic cooperation and spreading them. These pre-eminent Southeast Asian think-tanks act collectively as a transnational non-governmental network in regional agenda setting and participate heavily in track II diplomacy process.¹⁸

2. The Relationship between ASEAN–ISIS and ASEAN

ASEAN–ISIS is not a part of ASEAN. ASEAN–ISIS is registered as an NGO to the ASEAN Secretariat. Despite this status, ASEAN–ISIS has a special relationship with ASEAN. Most of all, ASEAN–ISIS has submitted important policy recommendations (e.g., memoranda) to ASEAN officials – for example, the first ASEAN–ISIS memorandum titled “Time for Initiative: Proposals for the Consideration of the Fourth ASEAN Summit” submitted to the Fourth ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 1992. These recommendations played an important role in formulating policy at the ASEAN level on various issues that affected the region. Recent memorandum titled “Rethinking the ASEAN Regional

17) Katsumata (1994), p. 97.

18) Stone and Nesadurai (1999), p. 14.

Forum” clearly shows the way ASEAN-ISIS provides input to ASEAN. “ASEAN-ISIS Memorandum No. 4/2007” argued that the ARF Concept Paper adopted in 1995 that has guided the operations of the Forum for the last 12 years is no longer adequate to meet current concerns and needs. And a new Concept Paper that provides an operating framework for a re-vitalized and effective ARF is necessary. The ASEAN-ISIS submits five recommendations through the memorandum including “expand the ‘geographical footprint’ of the ARF to encompass the Asia-Pacific region that includes North America.”¹⁹⁾

In the early years, ASEAN-ISIS worked through national governments rather than collectively through the ASEAN machinery. Formal communications took the form of ASEAN-ISIS memorandum on various policy issues submitted to ASEAN national governments. This practice changed in 1993. The relationship between ASEAN and ASEAN-ISIS is through the regular meeting between ASEAN-ISIS and ASEAN-SOM (senior officials meeting). In 1993, ASEAN-ISIS was invited to meet senior officials before the ASEAN-SOM in Singapore. Since then ASEAN-ISIS has met with senior officials before the ASEAN-SOM meetings. According to Stone and Nesadurai, ASEAN-ISIS participation at the official level in the ASEAN-SOM meetings represents one of the few routes of bureaucratic access available for non-officials.²⁰⁾ The institutionalized relationship between ASEAN and ASEAN-ISIS could be the major reason of ASEAN-ISIS’s policy influence. ASEAN-ISIS’s success is evident from the adoption of most of its policy recommendations by ASEAN, invitation by the ASEAN Secretariat to undertake policy research and its participation in policy discussions with the foreign policy communities in many countries in the region.²¹⁾

IV. ASEAN-ISIS in the Formation of the ARF

The end of the Cold War brought about the fundamental change of security environment in Asia. As the East-West confrontation ended, the U.S. security policies became unclear. Asian countries which had relied upon the role of the United States in their security began to worry about the future of U.S. security commitment to the Asian region. On the other hand, the rise of China also created further uncertainty in the

19) ASEAN-ISIS, *ASEAN-ISIS Memorandum No. 4/2007. Rethinking the ASEAN Regional Forum*, p. 1.

20) Stone and Nesadurai (1999), p. 18.

21) Carolina Hernandez G. *Track Two Diplomacy, Philippine Foreign Policy, and Regional Politics*. Quezon City: Center for Integrative and Development Studies and University of the Philippines Press, 1994.

Asian security environment. Against this backdrop, the ideas of multilateral forum for regional security were provided by ASEAN-ISIS. Through numerous meetings and discussions, ASEAN-ISIS came up with the new, distinctly Asian thinking in security cooperation. In mid-1991, ASEAN-ISIS met in Jakarta to discuss initiatives for an Asia-Pacific political dialogue. This meeting was for discussing the agendas to be proposed by ASEAN-ISIS to the governments participating in the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting planned for July 1991 and the Fourth ASEAN Summit planned for January 1992. The first ASEAN-ISIS Memorandum titled “*A Time for Initiative: Proposals for the Consideration of the Fourth ASEAN Summit*,” was produced in the 1991 Jakarta ASEAN-ISIS meeting and was submitted to the Fourth ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 1992.²²⁾ In the memorandum, ASEAN-ISIS put forward their proposals for an ASEAN initiative concerning security in the Asia-Pacific region. The proposal urged ASEAN not only to play a central role in any processes and mechanisms that were likely to emerge in the Asia-Pacific region, but also to be a creative initiator as well as active participant.

The core elements of their security agenda were based on ideas which they had been advocating since the 1980s. Katsumata argues that three ideas -- common/cooperative security thinking, multilateral forum, and the extension of ASEAN's diplomatic style -- were reflected in the ASEAN-ISIS proposal.²³⁾ First of all, influenced by European ideas of ‘common security’, ASEAN-ISIS's proposal was based on cooperative security. It was in line with the view that regional security is indivisible and security can be achieved only through cooperative activities. ASEAN-ISIS called for a cooperative approach in dealing with China. ASEAN-ISIS suggestion is not based on realist paradigm such as containment policy but on cooperative security thinking, calling for cooperation with Beijing since engaging China was important and China should be included in any new regional security arrangement. Second, the proposal calls for establishment of a multilateral security dialogue among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. What they proposed was a conference initiated by ASEAN which would include all the countries concerned with regional security. They maintained that not only like-minded countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the United States and South Korea, but also non-like-minded countries, such as China, the Soviet Union, Vietnam and North Korea, should be included in the framework for multilateral dialogue. Third, the ASEAN-ISIS security agenda was based on the idea that multilateral security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region should be initiated on the basis of ASEAN's diplomatic style.

22) Before it was submitted to the ASEAN Summit, it is submitted by each strategic institute to its governments.

23) The following three points are from Katsumata (2004), pp. 101-102.

They called for a gradual, step-by-step approach which emphasized a security dialogue aimed at promoting a sense of mutual trust. Moreover, they maintained that the framework of a security dialogue should be built upon the existing process, i.e., the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC). The Memorandum states that “at the end of each PMC, an ASEAN PMC-initiated conference should be held.”²⁴⁾

The ASEAN response to the proposal by ASEAN-ISIS was cautious but not dismissive since ASEAN foreign ministers agreed to study the idea further. The reason that ASEAN countries who had been averse to multilateral security cooperation in the past, accepted (though cautiously) the proposal of ASEAN-ISIS was ASEAN-ISIS reframed a foreign idea (common security ideas) so as to fit regional norm. In fact, the possibility of applying the European model of common security to Asia was already discussed as early as the late 1980s. For example, in 1986, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in a Vladivostok speech, called for a Pacific Ocean conference along the lines of the Helsinki (CSCE) Conference. The Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans, followed in July 1990 by proposing a Conference on Security Cooperation in Asia (CSCA), “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.”²⁵⁾ Within ASEAN, these proposals initially were greeted with skepticism and ambivalence. While Malaysia appeared to endorse some of the Soviet proposals for regional confidence-building measures, in general the ASEAN response was broadly similar to the position of the Bush administration which had dubbed the Asian version of the CSCE as a “solution in search of a problem.”²⁶⁾ ASEAN members, while rejecting a formal CSCE-type institution, were more receptive to the use of looser and more consultative mechanisms for promoting an exchange of views within the sub-region as well as across the broader Asia-Pacific region on security issues. ASEAN-ISIS’s proposal was the reflection of ASEAN perception toward multilateral regional security institution.

In this sense, the main contribution of ASEAN-ISIS was modifying foreign ideas for local necessities. According to Acharya, European ideas about common security cannot be accepted by ASEAN since they undermine ASEAN’s existing norms and practices.

24) ASEAN-ISIS, *A Time for Initiative*, p. 5.

25) David Dewitt, “Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security,” *The Pacific Review* 7-1 (1994), p. 6.

26) U.S. Department of State, “Asian Security in the 1990s: Integration in Economics, Diversity in Defense” a speech by Richard Solomon, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, at the University of San Diego, 30 October 1990, U.S. Department of State, Dispatch, 5 November 1990.

These norms are avoidance of military security cooperation, Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) framework and the 'ASEAN Way', which is short-hand for organizational minimalism and preference for informal nonlegalistic approaches to cooperation.²⁷⁾

In the process of the establishment of the ARF, ASEAN-ISIS reframed the foreign ideas. The core of the reframing was to modify foreign ideas to fit existing ASEAN principles and processes. In the proposal, the idea of OSCE's intrusive and constraining CBMs backed by an inspection regime was replaced by nonintrusive and nonlegalistic ASEAN-like CBM agenda.²⁸⁾ Acharya argues that the rejection of deterrence and the search for multilateral ways for security resonate with ASEAN's existing principles and norms such as the doctrine of 'regional resilience.'²⁹⁾

At its Singapore summit in January 1992, ASEAN agreed to use established fora to promote external security dialogues on enhancing security in the region as well as intra-ASEAN dialogues on ASEAN security cooperation. ASEAN-ISIS meetings contributed to an official Japanese initiative for a new regional security institution based on the ASEAN model. In 1993, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Taro Nakayama, proposed that an existing ASEAN mechanism, the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences (ASEAN-PMC), be turned into the foundation of a new security organization for the Asia-Pacific. In September 1993, the ARF was established and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers acknowledged the role played by non-governmental bodies in the genesis of the ARF and in particular, commended ASEAN-ISIS for exploring and promoting the ideas that enhanced security cooperation. Katsumata views the success of ASEAN-ISIS as the successful effort of ASEAN to apply the 'ASEAN Way' to wider Asia-Pacific region. He especially recognizes the role of APR (Asia-Pacific Roundtable) in developing the idea of ASEAN-style cooperation.³⁰⁾ In APR conferences, ASEAN countries recognized that multilateral cooperation in a wider region should be considered in accordance with ASEAN's practice. In the third APR conference in 1989, Sukhumbhand Paribatra of ISIS Thailand argued that the basis of future regional order in Southeast Asia, including the Indochina Peninsula, should be ASEAN's approach to cooperation. He emphasized the elements of diplomacy among ASEAN members, including non-intervention, non-aggression, and the pacific settlement of disputes.³¹⁾

27) Acharya (2004), p. 256.

28) *Idid.*, p. 259.

29) *Idid.*, p. 258.

30) APR originated at two informal meetings on regional security issue held in Seoul in 1984 and in Manila in 1985. As a continuation of this process, the APR was launched in 1987 by ISIS Malaysia. It has been organized by ASEAN-ISIS instead of ISIS of Malaysia since 1993.

31) Katsumata (2004), p. 100.

Also regarding the leading role of ASEAN in establishing the ARF, many scholars emphasize the role of ASEAN-ISIS. The leadership role of ASEAN in establishing the ARF was in part possible by the policy input from ASEAN-ISIS. The ASEAN initiative to invite other countries to join it in the ARF is due in large part to the ideas and momentum generated in ASEAN-ISIS. However, ASEAN-ISIS's important role and ASEAN's leading role are possible due to the passive stance of major powers in the region. For that reason, the ASEAN states could set the agenda for security discussion in ways that government were keen to see the development of a regional security architecture that reflected concerns about internal cohesion and nation-building rather than one that focused only on traditional external military security concerns.

V. How Much Credit should ASEAN-ISIS Get?

1. Why Did Major Powers accept the ARF?

The role of ASEAN-ISIS in establishment of the ARF was in fact secondary if we consider the fact that the decision to join the ARF was made by participating states. Realist scholars might argue that the decision to join the ARF was made based on the national interests by states, and that ASEAN-ISIS only played a minor role – if one at all. At this point, I should note that this study does not denounce the role of states and their strategic calculation in the process of establishment of the ARF. Instead this study tries to show why states accepted the idea of a multilateral security institutions and the influence of ASEAN-ISIS in the process of their decision making. In addition to that, we believe that ASEAN-ISIS was instrumental in shaping the nature of the ARF.

As the security environment in Southeast Asia changed at the end of the Cold War, both ASEAN and major powers outside the region had to consider the possible new security arrangements. What is important to note is that the option suggested by ASEAN-ISIS was eventually accepted by ASEAN (and ultimately the United States and China), and for this ASEAN-ISIS deserves credit. But why did the major powers of the United States and China join the ARF? Was their decision precipitated by the role of ASEAN-ISIS? As the Cold War ended, not everyone shared the belief in the necessity of establishing a multilateral institution to address the new regional security environment? China and the United States in particular were skeptical of such an arrangement. Then how do we explain both China's and the United States' acceptance of the ARF and their supportive attitude after its establishment?

In explaining this changing attitude of major states, some scholars strongly endorse the role of norm factors and the role of ASEAN–ISIS in that regard. Acharya emphasizes the role of ASEAN–ISIS in localizing norms. ASEAN–ISIS was a key actor in localizing foreign ideas of cooperative security as proposed by Canada and Australia. For him this reconstructed idea of cooperative security was important in the U.S. decision to join the ARF. He argued that “The United States itself came to accept the ARF, but only after and not before, ASEAN had reconstructed the cooperative security norm.”³²⁾ Although he did not specifically mention the reason why the United States accepted ASEAN’s idea of cooperative security, he seems to think the United States was more comfortable with the loose and noninterference version of cooperative security. China seems to have had the same feeling toward the ARF as ASEAN that is, the ARF would not undertake defense cooperation and would not accord a privileged role to the United States. China has vigorously insisted on the noninterference principles as the defining principle of the ARF. In short, Acharya views the formation of the ARF as the acceptance of the ASEAN norm by strong powers. David Capie also provides norm-oriented explanation. It is true that the existence of regional multilateral institution and the promotion of cooperative security through it served to create a “normative social environment” where the reputational costs and advantages to the United States and China were altered, especially when weighed against the relatively undemanding institutional form of multilateral dialogues and soft institutions.³³⁾ Capie concludes that “to be a legitimate member of the emerging Asia–Pacific community required a commitment to a certain set of Asia–Pacific norms. Track 2 processes and institutions (such as ASEAN–ISIS) helped to make clear to them what the rules of that alternative regional order could be, i.e., non-threatening, inclusive, soft-institutionalism,” that did not impinge on either their national or bilateral core security interests.³⁴⁾ Multilateral institutions such as the ARF either constrain the behaviors of major powers or contribute to change their identity.

This cognitive-centered interpretation, however, could be challenged by a more power-centered perspective. It is to be an exaggeration to say that the U.S. and China supported the ARF because they were persuaded by the ASEAN norm. The ASEAN norm reconstructed by ASEAN–ISIS certainly made it easier for them to accept the regional multilateral institution. Nevertheless their strategic choice was more likely based on their

32) Acharya (2004), p. 267.

33) David Capie “Power, Identity and Multilateralism: The United States and Regional Institutionalization in the Asia–Pacific” (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 2002).

34) Capie. 2002. Cited in Brian L. Job, “Track II Diplomacy: Ideational Contribution to the Evolving Asia Security Order,” in Muthia Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 269–270.

national interests and the changing security environment. Ralph Cossa views the acceptance of the ARF by the United States as the result of U.S.' strategic reorientation after the Cold War.³⁵⁾ Factors relating to power politics were suggested as the motive behind the U.S. acceptance of the ARF. It is hard to deny that the United States and other countries including ASEAN countries viewed the ARF as a useful device for reining in China. Some even argue that the U.S. support for the ARF was due to a number of perceived benefits. The existence of a multilateral institution was perceived as an alternative device to deal with regional security problems without invoking bilateral security ties with allies who might provoke China. ASEAN's move to pursue the creation of the ARF could be also explained by the balance of power consideration. Leifer argues that "the ARF was primarily the product of a post-Cold War concern... about how to cope institutionally with America's apparent strategic retreat from East Asia."³⁶⁾

This is not an "A or B" matter. Both norm and power factors worked in the states' decision to create and join the ARF. Some scholars who privilege the cognitive factors in the formation of the ARF do not deny the importance of the strategic interest of major powers. However, they give more attention to the process of identity change of major powers through the understanding of the benefit of having a multilateral institution. China's engagement in Asian multilateralism including the ARF had induced a certain measure of change in its thinking about its position and role within the region. In contrast to the early 1990s, "Beijing no longer sees multilateralism as a noose around its neck, but as an opportunity to make itself heard and understood by its neighbors on security and economic matters."³⁷⁾ The United States also acknowledges the contribution of multilateralism in advancing U.S. interests and having a long-term potential to engender identity change.³⁸⁾

Having reviewed the process of the ARF formation, this study suggests that instead of viewing the two different factors as being in conflict with each other, it is better to focus on the dialectic between the two. The relationship between power structure and norm formation, legitimization and acceptance should be analyzed. More specifically, the introduction of the ASEAN norm by ASEAN-ISIS was not independent from the

35) Ralph Cossa, "The US Asia-Pacific Security Strategy," in Hung-mao Tien and Tun-jen Cheng (eds.), *The Security Environment in the Asia-Pacific* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000).

36) Michael Leifer, "Regional Solutions to Regional Problems?" in Gerald Segal and David S.G. Goodman (eds.), *Towards Recovery in Pacific Asia* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 116.

37) Amitav Acharya, "Regional Institutions and Asian Security Order: Norms, Power, and Prospects for Peaceful Change," in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 230.

38) Acharya (2003), p. 231.

power structure of the region. The given regional power structure influenced the norm formation and localization process. The norm created by ASEAN–ISIS reflects ASEAN–ISIS’s perception of the best option for ASEAN in the given power structure. Barkin suggests the need for reconciliation between realism and constructivism. He introduces realist constructivism which analyzes the dialectic between ideas and power, particularly on how “power structures affect patterns of normative changes in international relations” and “how a particular set of norms affects power structure.”³⁹⁾ Such an approach should be applied to the understanding of the process of ARF formation. Regional power structure affects patterns of normative dynamics and at the same time a particular set of norms affects the behavior of actors and consequently affect the regional power structure.

2. ASEAN–ISIS and Power Politics among Nation States

This study believes that the regional expert network contributed to the formation of the ARF by providing norms for regional security cooperation. From the realist perspective, ASEAN–ISIS, which is composed of research institutes of ASEAN countries, is inevitably subject to power politics among countries. In other words, although these institutes are not government organs, they are inevitably influenced by the direction of foreign policy of their governments due to the informal ties, personal relationships, and the position of key individuals in their national policy-making communities. Thus there is always a possibility that a country will promote its national agenda through its think-tanks. If this is the case, the suggested contribution of ASEAN–ISIS could be tarnished. In this context, it is necessary to ask whether ASEAN–ISIS behaved as an independent entity based on regional identity. According to the interviews of members of ASEAN–ISIS, it usually deals with regional problems and agenda with the interests of the whole region in mind.⁴⁰⁾ Member institutions of ASEAN–ISIS do not represent the interests of their home governments. In other words, ASEAN–ISIS has its own identity and is not a simple sum of ASEAN members. If so, ASEAN–ISIS should be able to raise issues which might violate the national interests of particular countries for the interests of ASEAN as a whole. According to interviews with members of ASEAN–ISIS, ASEAN–ISIS works independently from members’ governments but within the self-imposed limitations.⁴¹⁾ ASEAN–ISIS avoids sensitive issues and discusses agenda which would not be opposed by any ASEAN country. Skeptics argue that the successes of ASEAN–ISIS simply reflect

39) J. Samuel Barkin, “Realist Constructivism,” *International Studies Review* 5 (2003), p. 337.

40) From an interview with member of ISIS Thailand, January 25, 2007, Bangkok, Thailand.

41) From an interview with member of ISIS Thailand, January 25, 2007, Bangkok, Thailand.

its practice of not making policy recommendations that are unlikely to be adopted by ASEAN. Although this criticism is not totally irrelevant, discussion of sensitive agenda do happen in ASEAN-ISIS. Even if sensitive issues are thrown on the discussion table it would not be much problem since ASEAN-ISIS is a non-governmental forum. The proponents of ASEAN-ISIS argue that ASEAN-ISIS is able to provide the informal setting where debate around sensitive issues can and do occur as its discussions on human rights and non-intervention reveal.

This author believes that ASEAN-ISIS can be independent from power politics among their governments because it only suggests policy recommendations which are free from power politics. Policy suggestions that might embarrass members' governments are removed from policy suggestion lists although they are discussed in ASEAN-ISIS meetings. Ironically, this in some sense shows ASEAN-ISIS is not insulated from power politics at all. It only can be independent from power politics by not doing what it is supposed to do, which is address important and complicate foreign policy issues in the ASEAN region.

3. Regional Expert Network in Northeast Asian Security Relations?

If we accept the important role of ASEAN-ISIS in regional security order in East Asia, can this model be applied to Northeast Asia? Gilbert Rozman indicated that the underdevelopment of regionalism in Northeast Asia is the result of the region's countries' use of regionalism for promoting their national interests. This pattern of behavior has resulted in the lack of regional identity in Northeast Asia.⁴²⁾ In this region of weak regional identity, can regional expert network or think-tank network play a role in regional security matters? In one sense track II expert networks are in great demand in regions like Northeast Asia. Due to many negative factors including historical animosity and great power rivalry, countries in Northeast Asia have difficulty addressing security matters in a multilateral setting. Under the circumstances, non-governmental forum can provide an arena for discussing regional security matters. Regional networks of think-tanks (or research institutions) already exist in Northeast Asia although they do not enjoy the same status as their counterparts in ASEAN. The fundamental limitation of the ASEAN-ISIS model's applicability to Northeast Asia is the absence of multilateral institutions in Northeast Asia itself. Currently, the Six-Party Talks is expected to be developed into a multilateral security dialogue in Northeast Asia. If that happens, the regional security expert network can have a partner which it can consult

42) Gilbert Rozman, *Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism: Bilateral Distrust in the Shadow of Globalization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

with and provide input to. The key to the success of Northeast Asian expert network is 1) its ability to provide ideas, norms, and principles for regional security order; 2) the attitude of governments of Northeast Asian countries; and 3) the independence of this regional network from the influence of their home governments. The attitude of governments of Northeast Asian countries (whether they accept regional think-tank network as a legitimate actor in regional security dialogue or not) and the independence of this network will mainly be dependent upon the strength of the network. ASEAN-ISIS began its activity four years before its formal launch in 1988. It had discussed regional security matters in the Asia-Pacific Roundtable since 1987. With this experience and track-record, ASEAN-ISIS had acquired a status of being a policy arm of ASEAN. Considering the experience of ASEAN and ASEAN-ISIS, regional think-tanks should strengthen their network and accumulate experience discussing regional security matters. The habit of cooperation can provide the base for the emergence of regional identity, which will be necessary for such a network to make policy suggestions based on the interest of the region as a whole rather than of individual states.

VI. Conclusion

The establishment of the ARF in 1993 was a surprising event considering ASEAN's traditional disapproval of and the U.S. and China's reluctance to join multilateral security institutions. Conventional explanation stresses the role of power balancing of ASEAN countries and the United States. These countries saw the ARF as a way of maintaining a balance of power by ensuring continued U.S. engagement in the region. The United States viewed the ARF as a useful means to constrain rising China. This explanation, albeit plausible, is not enough to explain why the ARF reflects ideas and norms originated from the ASEAN model of security cooperation. This study, while acknowledging the importance of strategic motivation of the participating countries, privileges the role of expert networks in the formation of the ARF. In short, ASEAN-ISIS, a regional expert network, provided a new idea regarding regional security order and developed ASEAN norms which would eventually be accepted by not only ASEAN states but also the United States and China.

However, this study also argues that the norm making process was not unrelated to the regional power structure and states' strategic calculations. Norms created by ASEAN-ISIS affect the behaviors of ASEAN members and non-region countries. At the same time the regional power structure after the end of the Cold War surely influenced

the perception and the understanding of regional security relations of the norm entrepreneur, ASEAN-ISIS. Having reviewed the process of ARF formation, this study suggests that the relationship between power structure and norm formation, legitimization and acceptance should be analyzed in order for us to have a correct understanding of the creation of the ARF. More specifically, the introduction of norms by ASEAN-ISIS was not independent from the power structure of the region. The given regional power structure influenced the norm formation and localization process.

In this context, we should accept the importance of ideational factors in the study of Asian regional security cooperation with caution. It is true that ASEAN-ISIS's reconstruction of the norms facilitated the acceptance of the ARF by ASEAN countries along with the United States and China. Also, the creation of a new idea (or norm) is important since it contributed to creating a normative social environment in which a commitment to an Asian norm is necessary for regional powers to be considered a legitimate member of the emerging Asia-Pacific community. However, simply viewing the U.S. and China's decision to join the ARF as the acceptance of an ASEAN norm by two countries is problematic. U.S. and Sino interests in terms of regional power structure were also reflected in the process of norm creation by ASEAN-ISIS.

Can the experience of ASEAN-ISIS be applied to Northeast Asia? Although the discussions of multilateral security institutions are flourishing in Northeast Asia, there has been no meaningful progress so far. In a region with great power rivalry and complex security dilemmas, track-I level initiative for the development of a multilateral security institution is probably hard to expect. However track II-level discussion and cooperation can make meaningful contribution to the process. Establishing a think-tank network in Northeast Asia is an important task since it can develop norms and principles for multilateral security institution building which reflect the situation of the region.

However, the existence of regional multilateral institutions such as ASEAN is an important precondition for an expert network to play a meaningful role in regional security cooperation. Without ASEAN, think-tanks in ASEAN countries would not have had a voice. More importantly, regional expert network should have cooperative experience and eventually develop regional identity in order to contribute to regional security relations. Without a regional identity, a think-tanks network is nothing more than a gathering of representatives of national interests.

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