Institutions and the great power bargain in East Asia: ASEAN's limited 'brokerage' role

Evelyn Goh[*1]

Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham Hill, Egham, TW20 0EX, UK
*E-mail: evelyn.goh@politics.ox.ac.uk

Abstract

This article argues that in the post-Cold War strategic transition in East Asia, ASEAN has helped to create a minimalist normative bargain among the great powers in the region. The regional norms propagated through the 'ASEAN way', emphasizing sovereignty, non-intervention, consensus, inclusion, and informality were extremely important in the initial stages of bringing the great powers – especially China and the United States – to the table in the immediate post-Cold War period. During this time, ASEAN helped to institutionalize power relations legitimizing the role of the great powers as well as the 'voice' of smaller states in regional security management. But the process of

institutionalizing great power relations contains further steps, and what ASEAN has achieved is well short of the kind of sustained cooperation on the part of the great powers that is so necessary to the creation of a new stable regional society of states. Moreover, ASEAN has provided the great powers with a minimalist normative position from which to resist the more difficult processes of negotiating common understanding on key strategic norms. At the same time, ASEAN's model of 'comfortable' regionalism allows the great powers to treat regional institutions as instruments of so-called 'soft' balancing, more than as sites for negotiating and institutionalizing regional 'rules of the game' that would contribute to a sustainable modus vivendi among the great powers. As such, ASEAN's role is limited in, and limiting of, the great power bargain that must underpin the negotiation of the new regional order. This is a task that the regional great powers (the United States, China, and Japan) must themselves undertake.

1 Introduction

During the 1990s, ASEAN played a critical role as the foundation for the expansion of regional security dialog frameworks to include the major powers, particularly China and the United States, but also Japan, India, and Russia. In this wave of new regional institutionalization, the 'ASEAN way' – which emphasizes informality, consensus, non-intervention in internal affairs, and moving at a pace that is comfortable for all members – was projected as a means of multilateral engagement that was acceptable to all participating states in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Plus mechanisms. ASEAN's occupation of the 'driver's seat' in key regional institutions is a mark of the institution's dexterity in exploiting its benign role as intermediary among the great powers, and an important means of ensuring the Association's continued relevance in the post-Cold War context. ASEAN's model of 'brokering' great power relations turns on the institution providing unique fora for great power dialog and confidence-building, and for acting as demonstration precincts from which great powers can demonstrate their commitment, benign intentions, and restraint to the region. ASEAN's comparative advantage is that it is universally acceptable as the 'driver' of regionalism in a situation in which the great powers are suspicious of each other.

ASEAN's relative success in leading the creation of expanded regional institutions during the 1990s has led policy-makers and analysts to claim a 'brokerage' role for the Association; it is not only a middleman bringing together contending great powers, but also a facilitator of deal-making among them. Some scholars of the constructivist persuasion tend toward ambitious claims not only about the Association's special role in norms propagation, localization, and entrenchment in the region (see especially Acharya, 2001, 2004), but also about how it has thereby captured and helped stabilize an expanding 'region' by the force of its norms (Busse, 1999; Acharya, 2005; Eaton and Stubbs, 2006). These claims to a sort of 'normative power ASEAN' – as a counterpart to the popular idea of 'normative power Europe' (Manners, 2002) – are intuitively attractive; yet, it is worth asking: what are the types of norms and what are the contents of the normative claims that ASEAN has managed to win widespread acceptance about among the great powers? How, in turn, have these normative agreements affected the nature and limits of the process of institutionalizing great powers in East Asia?

In the analysis that follows, I begin by outlining my conceptual framework, which approaches the question of institutionalizing great powers from an English School perspective of re-negotiating regional order after the end of the Cold War. Regional institutions are critical not only to great power dialog but mainly to the process of constructing a great power bargain that must underpin the new order. The next sections then assess the empirical record of ASEAN's strategies for institutionalizing the great powers using its expanded multilateral institutions. Briefly, my argument is that while ASEAN has successfully brought the great powers into sustained dialog, it has only helped to create a minimalist bargain among the great powers. This falls well short of the kind of sustained cooperation and normative agreement needed for a new regional order. Moreover, ASEAN has provided the great powers with a minimalist normative position from which to resist the more difficult processes of negotiating common understandings on key strategic norms, and from which to treat regional institutions as instruments for mutual balancing, instead of negotiating and institutionalizing regional 'rules of the game' that would contribute to a sustainable modus vivendi. The final section considers the ways forward and advances recommendations for institutional development that would facilitate the negotiation of the regional great power bargain.

2 Re-negotiating post-Cold War regional order

The two decades since the end of the Cold War have been marked by uncertainties about triumphant unipolarity, the rapid rise of new great powers, and unprecedented globalized interdependence. The imperative at both the global and regional levels is to create a new, stable international order. At the heart of this process is the question of unequal power. Within international society, the privileged position of great powers is based not just on the logic of material superiority; it is sustained by a bargain by which great powers are conceded special rights in return for performing special duties or providing common goods. The specifics of these special rights and duties must be negotiated, since 'the legitimacy of the institution of the great powers depends upon how far their special privileges are made acceptable to others' (Dunne, 1998, p. 147). At the heart of re-negotiating post-Cold War order then, is the traditional dilemma of how to tame on the one hand, and to legitimize on the other, unequal power. For powerful states, there is a constant need for what Wight (1991, p. 99) called 'the justification of power': the drive to turn brute ability for coercion into legitimate authority, because force alone is a costly and ultimately unreliable instrument of power. For smaller states, the preoccupation is with how to bind powerful states, to ensure limits to the potential use of great power so as to maximize gains in terms of public goods but minimize costs in terms of disruptions to the rules and institutions that regulate international life. The binding or taming of great powers is most often achieved using two mechanisms: balance of power among the great powers, and international institutions that provide stable structures of sustained peaceful international cooperation.

However, from the point of view of this English School or 'international society' approach, while the ascent of China and other great powers represent a significant redistribution of global power, the issue is not simply or even primarily the need to counter-veil rising power with similar opposing capabilities. Rather, the main challenge is how to harness great powers to some collective authority, or to embed them within stable structures of interstate cooperation – not just to prevent war between them, but more to protect the orderly functioning of international life along agreed rules and norms (Hurrell, 2007, pp. 31–32). With this understanding, institutions take on a much more important

role in the management of unequal power in the international system. Even from a stark rational-choice perspective, international institutions are important both as instruments of domination by great powers and means for smaller states to constrain hegemony. Rational-choice approaches suggest that for the powerful state, institutions lower transaction costs, especially in instances of standardization; and help to deflect potential challenges from weaker states by ceding some degree of decision-making and thus lower policing and enforcement costs (Martin, 1993). Leading states require cooperative mechanisms with other states to provide public goods, such as free trade or security. Normatively, the costs of hegemony can also be reduced if the hegemon supplements and sustains its material dominance by constructing a social framework, which legitimizes its power and leadership. Cooperative institutions are a key form of such frameworks through which a hegemonic power agrees to bind itself to specified voluntary strategic restraints in dealing with their weaker partners, in return for the latter's long-term, institutionalized cooperation (Ikenberry, 2001). Weaker states in turn gain limits on the action of the leading state and access to political process in which they can press their interests.

International institutions help to legitimize and tame unequal power in two ways: (i) they institutionalize or perpetuate in a sustained manner the structural domination of great powers; and (ii) they bind all states, but especially the stronger states, using rules and other normative expectations of conduct. The term 'architecture' often captures mainly the first, structural element (seen, for instance, in the focus on the issue of membership), but more attention needs to be placed on the normative element, because that is what does much of the heavy lifting in terms of ensuring bounded power.

Building upon this focus on the normative elements of international institutions, the framework adopted here regards the process of institutionalizing great powers as the drawing of great powers into institutionalized arenas within which they can re-negotiate what I term the 'great power bargain', and codify and formalize the terms of this bargain within a multilateral institutional context. This great power bargain consists of two levels: (i) the commitments and assurances that great powers extend to smaller states, in exchange for the latter's adherence and deference to institutionalized great power leadership and dominance; and

(ii) the mutual assurances and agreement on terms that allow negotiated power sharing between the great powers themselves.

During the Cold War, the East Asian great power bargain consisted of two sets of bargains between the United States, Japan, and China: the United States extended its security umbrella over Japan in exchange for Japan's disarmament, pacification and guaranteed alignment with the 'free world'; while China and the United States put aside their ideological differences from 1972 in return for a tacit coalition to contain Soviet influence in the region. Great power interventions and leadership in the region was in turn legitimized by the Cold War conflict. The most understudied strategic impact of the end of the Cold War and the rise of China is that they necessitate the re-negotiation of the parties to, and nature of, this great power bargain. It is against this context of transition in global and regional order that ASEAN's activism in building wider regional institutions takes place. In assessing the role of ASEAN in institutionalizing great powers, therefore, we must focus on how the Association has brokered the re-negotiation of the constraints, duties, and rights of the great powers in East Asia.

3 Institutionalizing great powers in East Asia: ASEAN's record

ASEAN's prominent role in leading the process of institutionalizing great powers in East Asia after the Cold War is encapsulated in the creation and development of the ARF and the ASEAN '+' mechanisms and institutions.

3.1 A minimalist bargain

In spite of its debatable progress after 16 years, the ARF remains the only regional institution which has a clear security remit and which encompasses all the major powers with a stake in the region's security.[2] Given the multiple proposals for new regional security arrangements to supplement the core San Francisco system of US alliances from the late 1980s onwards, ASEAN played a critical role in shaping the new security forum so that it would be acceptable to its own members, and more importantly, to the three regional great powers, the United States, China,

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2   On the ARF's stalled progress, see Yuzawa (2006).

and Japan. First, the ARF was inclusive of all the great powers yet precluded domination by any one of them, because of the innovation of being led by the small states of ASEAN that had a 'counter-realpolitik' agenda (Johnston, 2003, p. 123). Second, the loose dialog format and the 'ASEAN style' of non-intrusive, informal, voluntary-compliance processes assuaged concerns in China, Japan, and ASEAN about the potentially legalistic negotiations over sensitive issues like arms control and territorial disputes implied by the proposals for an Asian OSCE.[3] Third, the ARF's main focus on confidence-building measures addressed the Asian states' objections to any discussion of 'internal affairs' such as human rights, democratization, and environmental security. Finally, the United States and Japan were reassured that the ARF would not challenge the centrality of their bilateral alliance.

Thus, the oft-repeated explanation that ASEAN leadership and the 'ASEAN Way' presented attractive, non-threatening incentives for great power participation in the ARF, is correct. However, what is less often emphasized is that the ASEAN style of multilateral institutionalism brought the great powers to the table because they were reassured that membership in the ARF would be a relatively non-demanding, low-cost, and low-stakes undertaking.[4] ARF members endorsed ASEAN's own Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) as a 'code of conduct', adopting the norms including mutual sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in domestic affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, and the renunciation of the use of force.[5] But in spite of their rhetorical ascriptions to TAC, the informal character of the ARF assured the United States and China especially that they would not have to bound by formal agreements, consensual decision-making procedures meant that they could prevent discussion or action on issues against their interest,

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3   OSCE-style regional institutions were vigorously proposed by Australia and Canada – see Dewitt (1994); Kerr et al. (1995).

4   For a more detailed explanation of this consideration in the US decision, for example, see Goh (2004).

5   These are unexceptional principles, as they are drawn from the UN Charter, although there have been concerns that they may be used to limit the treaty obligations of American allies in the region. Japan and Australia were worried that their scope for supporting potential US military intervention in the region may be circumscribed by the TAC's insistence on non-intervention and non-use of force. Tokyo overcame the problem by reasoning that UN Charter obligations – which allow for military action under UN resolutions – would come before TAC obligations (see Busse, 1999).

and the lack of any enforcement mechanism essentially left them a free hand to pursue unilateral policies when necessary. This assessment seemed to be borne out during the first 2 years of the ARF's existence: Beijing did not feel itself constrained by ARF norms when it developed structures on the disputed Mischief Reef and engaged in naval skirmishes with the Philippines in the South China Sea; and neither China nor the United States adhered to the non-coercive spirit of TAC during the 1996 Taiwan Straits crisis. ASEAN thus offered a rather minimalist normative bargain in order mainly to bring the great powers to the table; that these great powers did not necessarily wish to strike a new substantive bargain among themselves was a problem that could be left for later.

Yet it would be wrong to denigrate ASEAN's focus on bringing together all the relevant great powers in the ARF. This was no mean feat considering the initial opposition or reservations in Washington, Beijing, and Tokyo about an inclusive regional security dialog. With the putative great power bargain in mind, the importance of such an inclusive forum was two-fold: first, it helped to legitimize the security interests and role of each of these great powers in East Asia; and second, it also institutio-nalized the small states' and middle powers' claims to a legitimate 'voice' in the management of regional security affairs.

3.2 Legitimizing great power roles

With the end of the Cold War, both the United States and regional states could no longer assume the overarching global security imperative for Washington's military alliances and forward deployments in East Asia. Because of the consequent disjuncture between its non-indigenous char-acter and overwhelmingly superior forces, the United States, more than any other great power, needed new justifications for its security role. But in East Asia, this proved to be less of a problem than many balance of power theorists expected, since many Southeast Asian states proved to be more concerned about potential United States withdrawal than anything else. In the immediate post-Cold War years, the George H. W. Bush administration retracted its initial objection to the proposals for a multi-lateral security institution because it was useful as part of a strategy to signal that the United States remained committed to its central security role in the Asia-Pacific in spite of its planned military reductions. When the Clinton administration began to update its regional alliances,

participating in the ARF provided a way to supplement its East Asian alliances and forward military presence (Clinton, 1993; Goh, 2004).

For ASEAN, the choice of a wide 'Asia-Pacific' membership – rather than a more geographically limited 'East Asia' one, for instance – centered on the need to 'keep the U.S. in'. Faced with the acute uncertainty of continued United States security commitments, ASEAN states' reaction was to reinforce their security binding of the United States using a variety of means, including bilateral security partnerships to replace the Philippines bases, but also multilateral institutions. This desire to hedge against strategic uncertainty by extending and bolstering one great power's overwhelming military preponderance created problems for these post-colonial states which were supposed to place a premium on autonomy. Ironically therefore, it was ASEAN rather than Washington that had to make up the legitimacy deficit surrounding the continuing US strategic dominance in the region. The ARF crucially helped to lend legitimacy to ASEAN's desire for an integral US role in regional security. As Singapore Prime Minister Goh (2001) put it: through the ARF, ASEAN had 'changed the political context of U.S. engagement' because these countries had 'exercised their sovereign prerogative to invite the U.S. to join them in discussing the affairs of Southeast Asia'. As a result, 'no one can argue that the US presence in Southeast Asia is illegitimate or an intrusion into the region.'

Post-Cold War reassessments of the basis for the US military presence in East Asia inevitably carried questions about Japan's role in regional security. Continued regional suspicions and sensitivities about Japanese power were evident with Japan's greatly increased economic profile by the end of the 1980s, and ASEAN's consistent aim has been to try to integrate Japan into regional multilateral institutions where it can play a more substantial role but without disrupting either the United States–Japan alliance or Chinese and Korean sensitivities. Japanese membership in the ARF would provide an additional regional constraint on the potential 'normalization' of Japanese military power, but it was widely expected that in the security issues dealt with in the ARF, Japan would continue to defer to US interests (Tow, 2001, p. 79). Certainly, Tokyo had been remarkably active in the creation of the new regional institution. However, its original emphasis, akin to ASEAN's, was to develop a multilateral forum that would first and foremost help insure a continued US presence in the region. The ARF would also support the United

States–Japan alliance by providing a forum to discuss Asian fears about Japanese security strategy and to allow Japan to reassure its neighbors about its expanded burden-sharing within the alliance (Soeya, 1994; Midford, 2000). This emphasis on 'reassurance' indicated Japan's interest also in using the multilateral institution as a vehicle to legitimize Washington's security guarantee under different circumstances, and to offer justifications for Tokyo's growing role in the regional order within the constraints of the US alliance.

In contrast, a particular effort was not required to justify China's entitlement as a rising regional great power to a special role in East Asian security. What China needed was legitimacy and social status in international society – as a reforming but still socialist state, and while still recovering from international sanctions after the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. Against this background, ASEAN's second major rationale for creating the ARF was to provide a multilateral normative setting to 'socialize' China into being a status quo power. Unappealing as this was to Beijing, it joined to avoid isolation (Swaine and Tellis, 2000). Other authors have convincingly demonstrated that Chinese leaders and officials changed their minds significantly about their foreign policy approach from 1995 to 1996, upon realizing that international threat perceptions were serious enough potentially to harm and hamper the pursuit of Chinese national interests (Foot, 1998; Johnston, 2008). The upshot of this was that Beijing began to appreciate the value of the ARF and other multilateral institutions for legitimizing its rising power. The ARF especially became a premier demonstration precinct for China to showcase its new sociability and to reassure its neighbors about its benign intentions and commitment to a 'peaceful rise' and regional stability (Zheng, 2005; Deng, 2006). Beijing's willingness to subscribe to and be restrained by the principles and norms of the ASEAN institutions – especially sovereignty, non-interference, the non-use of force, and security cooperation – has been held up as the success story of liberal institutionalists and constructivists (Acharya, 2001; Johnston, 2008).

Insofar as a large measure of the logic of ASEAN-style multilateral institutions relies on the constructivist conviction that institutional membership would, over the medium term, create expectations and obligations on the part of the great powers, and over time, socialize them into embracing peaceful norms, China's voluntary self-restraint and pursuit of mutual benefits signaled a good start to what was potentially

the most dangerous part of the new great power bargain. Hence, China's compliance with the ARF norm of issuing defense white papers, its hosting of ARF working groups and meetings, its use of the ARF to introduce its 'new security concept' stressing peaceful coexistence and cooperative security, its initiative for a China–ASEAN free trade area, and its participation in the multilateral negotiations of the South China Sea territorial disputes with ASEAN leading to the 2002 Declaration of Conduct all suggested that China was responding to being socially and morally bound to some degree to peaceful modes of interaction (Shambaugh, 2004/5; Goh, 2007). As China's power has grown over the last two decades, Beijing's willingness to stake at least a part of its regional legitimacy as a great power on its relationship with ASEAN has increased the pressure on Washington to pay more attention itself to legitimizing its perceived central role in regional security. Thus, the Obama administration was persuaded to sign up to ASEAN's TAC in 2010, for instance, in order to be included in the East Asia Summit (EAS) alongside China, Japan, and Russia among others.

3.3 Claiming small power 'voice'

East Asia and the Asia-Pacific have stood out since the end of the Cold War for the degree of middle power and small state activism in regional politics. That ASEAN went on after establishing the ARF in 1994 to develop further its bilateral 'ASEAN+' dialogs with each great power, and then to create additional ASEAN-centered regional institutions, namely the ASEAN + 3, the EAS and now the ASEAN + 8 process, is remarkable. ASEAN's role in brokering these multilateral institutions stemmed from the Association's pre-existing structures for multilateral dialog, both intra- and extra-murally. For instance, before the formation of the ARF, ASEAN's annual Post-Ministerial Conferences already engaged some of the regional great powers as dialog partners or observers; and before the first ASEAN + 3 summit in 1997, ASEAN foreign ministers had already begun meeting with their Northeast Asian counterparts at the sidelines of the ARF. But ASEAN's brokerage role also arises from what Eaton and Stubbs (2006) called its 'competence power' – its ability cohesively and normatively to shape and frame regional perceptions and approaches to security cooperation in ways beneficial to itself. Thus, ASEAN has critically claimed a 'voice' for smaller

states in discussing and managing regional security affairs. By extending the ASEAN model to East Asia and the Asia-Pacific, ASEAN has institutionalized and legitimized the interests of smaller states in restraining and normatively taming the excesses of great power. This is manifested in the logistics, functions, and norms of the resulting institutions, which meet in Southeast Asia in conjunction with ASEAN's own summit, have their agendas set by the ASEAN Chair, and – in the case of the EAS – have their criteria of membership determined by accession to TAC, formally recognition as an ASEAN 'dialog partner', established record of substantive cooperation with ASEAN, and unanimous acceptance by ASEAN. As the ASEAN Secretary-General pointed out, 'the train of regionalism has left the station': substantial regional institutions are already in place in East Asia, and these are ASEAN-led and difficult to 're-programme'; therefore, regionalist developments from hereon must adapt to or be grafted onto, these ASEAN institutions already in place (Emmerson, 2010, p. 8).

Yet, we need to guard against the assumption of an unproblematic projection of the ASEAN model in an expanding enmeshment of external powers and players within wider institutions running along the Association's established principles and style. ASEAN's ability to leverage on its role as a catalyst and facilitator of instruments for regional security dialog to project its international influence depends upon its internal coherence and unity. ASEAN's loss of direction since 1990 has been as much a result of its expansion to include Myanmar and the Indochinese states, and the devastating Asian financial crisis, as the impacts of global structural changes. Hence, the external projection of the ASEAN model has been accompanied in the last decade by a process of internal re-generation of its intra-mural unity and coherence, by re-negotiating a new basis for collective identity. Begun in 2003, the process of building an ASEAN Community with economic, security, and socio-cultural pillars encapsulates this re-thinking. However, the negotiation of an ASEAN Charter, agreed in 2007, to provide formal rules and norms for the enterprise, reflected the internal tensions prevalent among member states that want to develop more liberal norms of democratization, human rights and the rule of law, and others which prevailed in the defense of ASEAN's traditional privileging of sovereignty and non-interference (Nesadurai, 2009).

Scholars of ASEAN have uniformly emphasized the history of continual disagreements among its members about core issues such as regional autonomy and the relative salience of intra-mural versus extra-regional matters. Indeed, ASEAN's very existence is testimony to an evolving commitment to mediate between these clashing beliefs and priorities. So, while there is agreement that ASEAN can no longer afford simply to concentrate on the Southeast Asian region, but must attend more broadly to East Asian and Asia-Pacific security issues, the unfinished and urgent task of internal consolidation will act as an important constraint to ASEAN's ability to play its brokerage role vis-à-vis the great powers and regional order in East Asia. This can be seen clearly in the way in which ASEAN members differ on their preferences regarding the relative importance of these new regional institutions, and which Asian-Pacific powers ought to be included in them. The dispute over membership of the EAS was typical: some ASEAN members, such as Malaysia (along with China), wished to limit the EAS strictly to East Asian states, while Japan, Singapore, and Indonesia eventually prevailed in their insistence on including India, Australia, and New Zealand. This disagreement has continued in ASEAN reactions to the latest rival models of an 'East Asian Community' proposed by the Japanese and an 'Asia-Pacific Community' proposed by the Australians – centered again on the disagreement about the inclusion of the United States.

There are pervasive concerns about the negative impact of ASEAN's internal coherence on its relevance in the world. Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, for instance, remarked at the 2009 ASEAN summit that 'Both Japan and Australia proposed bigger communities, which is a test for us … ASEAN must be firmly integrated when we enter a bigger community' (quoted in Acharya, 2009a). Certainly, ASEAN's activism in leading regional institutions reflected a means to ensure the Association's continued relevance after the Cold War and the resolution of the Indochina conflicts. For ASEAN, the imperative of 'relevance' arises from the fear of being sidelined in regional affairs on the basis of capacity. Yet, in thinking about ASEAN's potential brokerage of a new great power bargain, its members states' focus on relevance implies that they would logically want some continuation of tensions among the great powers, to the extent that they would find it difficult to conduct independent dialog, create a concert, to the exclusion of smaller states, and entities like ASEAN. More basically, ASEAN's ability to broker a

great power bargain is critically hampered by one core, unresolved normative tension: ASEAN's carefully constructed self-insulation from the vagaries and dangers of external power politics. A legacy of its Cold War origins, this professed insulation from the external powers in pursuit of autonomy in 'Southeast Asia' was based on unacknowledged US hegemonic support in economic and strategic terms (Beeson, 2003; Ba, 2009). The removal of the Cold War overlay, the rising power of China and the deepening economic interdependence between Northeast and Southeast Asia have all forced ASEAN to face up to the need for more explicit management of the hitherto 'externalized' great power politics. The post-Cold War challenge then became how to continue to shelter under the benign US security guarantee while re-engaging with regional great powers, particularly China and Japan (Ba, 2009). ASEAN has worked assiduously to mediate the predictable disagreements, but has not quite managed to facilitate a smooth transition toward a more sustainable extra-mural institutionalization of regional power relations. Further, one might argue that the fact that ASEAN has been able to lead regional institutions in spite of its own internal incoherence is a further good indicator of limited great power interest in negotiating substantive new norms.

3.4 Limitations of ASEAN's brokerage

ASEAN institutionalism after the Cold War has been relatively successful at facilitating the great power bargain with smaller states, be it updating the US security guarantee, socializing China, or continuing to constrain Japan. But ASEAN's potential brokerage of the bargain among the great powers themselves is more restricted, because of the Association's limited ability to transform the nature of the triangular relations among the United States, China, and Japan. For ASEAN, a fundamental tension exists between the two levels of the great power bargain, since its attempted brokerage relies basically on reinforcing US dominance and its perceived benign security guarantee in East Asia. The regional security order rests on a clear persistence of the San Francisco system of alliances that undergirds and facilitates US force projection in the region, well into the post-Cold War period. This is a crucial indicator of the maintenance of US strategic dominance in East Asia, even with the resurgence of China, the potential normalization of Japan, the rise of

India and the activism of ASEAN. I have argued elsewhere that the East Asian security order is hierarchical, but not pyramid-shaped: it is an extremely top-heavy hierarchy because the United States remains extremely dominant as a public goods provider and security guarantor (Goh, 2008). Washington still plays the crucial role in managing key regional crises on the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Straits; the vital freedom of navigation and maritime security deterrence functions in the region are still primarily guaranteed by the US naval presence; and its superior forces have lead in large-scale regional disaster relief operations such as those following the 2004 and 2011 tsunamis.

On the one hand, this reflects the tendency of international institutions (broadly defined) to be 'sticky'; this is not surprising, since they are supposed to 'lock in' relative power distributions, and thus are inherently conservative. Unlike in instances of radical change, such as revolutions or war, which allow the creation of new institutions to consolidate new distributions of power, institutional evolution in periods of peaceful transition is especially awkward: the post-Cold War debates about the reform of the Security Council in the United Nations is a case in point. The East Asian security order is just as sticky as the global one. On the other hand, the structures that constitute US dominance in the region remain sturdy also because its main supporters assiduously reinforce and revitalize them. The post-World War II US 'imperium' crucially relied on 'supporter states' like Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia (Katzenstein, 2005), and the foregoing discussion has already highlighted the imperative of maintaining the US security commitment in both ASEAN and Japan's post-Cold War strategies. Driven by uncertainty again about potential US distraction in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, ASEAN and Japan both renewed their efforts at contributing to the counter-terrorism agenda and upgrading their security and economic ties with Washington (Hughes, 2004; Khong, 2004; Goh, 2007). Thus ASEAN has been consciously complicit in extending US security dominance in East Asia, because its members largely view Washington as a benign external guarantor. The trouble with this reliance on Washington though is that it prolongs the regional fragmentation that Washington's hub-and-spokes system and the notion of the United States as the 'ringholder' have long encouraged.

Kupchan (1998, p. 63) was correct in his observation that 'American might and diplomacy prevent conflict [in East Asia], but they do so by

keeping apart the parties that must ultimately learn to live comfortably alongside each other if regional stability is to endure'. While China and Japan must bear responsibility for not having pursued the kind of reconciliation via integration that Germany and France have achieved,[6] the post-Cold War multilateral institutions led by ASEAN present two further impediments. First, the minimalist nature of ASEAN's normative bargain within these institutions has made it difficult not only to construct a more ambitious reconciliation and integration between the estranged regional great powers, but has actually offered the latter a platform from which they can actively resist the politically charged processes of negotiating common understanding on key strategic issues. This is most notable in the case of China's use of ASEAN's regional institutional processes. While the 'ASEAN way' was critical in socializing China, it has also institutionalized the means by which China can stall and forestall the development of other norms that would entail more sustained restraint, transparency, and scrutiny from Beijing. One of the major reasons for the resilience of the 'ASEAN Way' in East Asian institutionalism is that ASEAN has found a major normative ally in Beijing (Ba, 2003, Stubbs, 2008). China has lent its considerable weight to some ASEAN countries' concerns about the potentially intrusive and demanding norms which could be developed within the new regional institutions, and has successfully hampered progress toward preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution in the ARF, against the efforts of the United States, Australia, and Canada.[7] At the same time, Beijing entrenched further ASEAN's non-intervention principle from the start by ruling out altogether any discussion of Taiwan and other domestic Chinese security affairs, such as Tibet and Xinjiang, within these institutions. More generally, the conflict avoidance aspect of ASEAN's norms has meant that

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6   There is, of course, the argument that the multilateral nature of the US alliance system and American encouragement of regional integration in Western Europe provided a critical framework for successful reconciliation between France and Germany that never existed in East Asia, where the US maintained bilateral alliances and isolated communist China after 1949 (Kupchan, 1998; Hemmer and Katzenstein, 2002). Yet, to extend Acharya's (2009b) argument, it would be overly deterministic to rob regional states of autonomy and responsibility in making certain key choices in rejecting an Asian-style NATO.

7   China proposed in 2008 that ARF members discuss moving toward preventive diplomacy, but some analysts remain sceptical about what might have been a politically opportunistic move by Beijing to seize the diplomatic initiative in the face of Washington's neglect of the ARF (Bisley, 2009).

many of the key 'hard' cases of regional security conflicts are not dealt with through the ARF. Because the great powers concerned do not want to and are not obliged to use the ARF as the channels of first resort in managing, preventing, or resolving their conflicts, they continue to instead rely on bilateral and other avenues – the Six Part Talks mechanism for dealing with the North Korean nuclear problem is another case in point.

China has also appeared to value regional multilateral security institutions more for their 'possible contribution to the weakening of U.S. ties with its Asian allies' (Foot, 1998, p. 435), for instance by introducing its New Security Concept to challenge the legitimacy of US alliances. In its interactions with ASEAN, China has ascribed to the 'ASEAN Way', but with clear limits. The best example is in the negotiations over territorial disputes in the South China Sea, where ASEAN's style generated the non-binding 2002 Declaration, which has subsequently allowed China to continue to pursue bilateral actions such as the controversial joint survey agreement with the Philippines in 2004, and more recently, to object to ASEAN negotiating multilaterally on the Code of Conduct (Valencia, 2008; Richardson, 2010).

Second, the minimalist ASEAN bargain exacerbates the tendency of the regional great powers to revert to the balancing mindset and behavior endemic in the region. On the one hand, there is a sophisticated Southeast Asian strategy of 'omni-enmeshing' all the major powers in regional institutions has helped to promote a 'complex balance of influence', in which 'major power competition and balancing are channelled to take place within the constraints of norms and institutions' (Goh, 2007/8, pp. 139, 143). ASEAN has nurtured new institutional sites for weakening the traditional military aspect of balancing by deliberately creating 'overlap' between balance of power and security community mechanisms (see Adler and Greve, 2009). These ASEAN-led institutions contain a strong element of institutionalized mutual constraint of great powers, which not only agree to be bound by the same norms limiting their exercise of power, but also help to ensure that the others comply by their ability to monitor and deter each other. Such 'co-binding' (Ikenberry and Deudney, 1999) combines balance of power and liberal institutionalist thinking about how great power constraints can be developed, and is regulated by ASEAN's norms of non-confrontation, TAC, and cooperative security.

On the other hand, ASEAN's complex strategy may not be ultimately effective in brokering the transition toward a great power bargain about norms-based power-sharing. The limits of the middle-ground, combination approach of complex balancing is that it could end up channeling great power balancing behavior into a stagnant pool of non-military but still deeply political and ultimately non-productive blocking maneuvres. We can detect these dynamics most clearly in the development of East Asian institutions after the 1997 financial crisis, when ASEAN once again demonstrated its unique ability to institutionalize regional power relations using its 'ASEAN+' mechanisms. In establishing the ASEAN + 3 framework for regional economic and financial cooperation in 1997, ASEAN created the first exclusive East Asian institution in which China and Japan would have to share leadership. In the climate of anger and disillusionment with the perceived disregard of the United States and international financial institutions during the crisis, ASEAN + 3 legitimized the pursuit of exclusionary institutions and expressed a consensus on 'East Asia' as a regional community.[8] However, this consensus broke down over the next 5 years, muddied by the renewed uncertainties about US security commitments after the terrorist attacks of September 2001 and by deteriorating Sino–Japanese relations under the Koizumi administration. Subsequently, power competition and balancing by Japan and China within and across regional institutions intensified in a round of 'institution-racing' (Goh and Acharya, 2007, p. 7). There are three good examples of this development. First was the disagreement about membership of the proposed East Asian Summit in 2005, which was supposed to elevate the ASEAN + 3 process to high-level dialog about political and security issues. Beijing had pushed for intensifying and broadening the scope of cooperation within the exclusive ASEAN + 3 community, but Tokyo – along with Jakarta and Singapore – successfully lobbied for the inclusion of Australia, India, and New Zealand, in an unsubtle move to stave off potential Chinese domination within the EAS. China consequently dropped its interest in the EAS and steadfastly insisted on the primary role of ASEAN + 3 as the main framework for regional cooperation (Chu, 2007; Li, 2009). This leaves two East Asian groupings with overlapping mandates for regional cooperation in finance, energy, education, disease, and natural disaster management

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8   For accounts and assessments of ASEAN + 3, see Stubbs (2002), Tanaka (2006).

(Ravenhill, 2009). Whether the expanded EAS can successfully address political and security issues as promised for the November 2011 meeting remains to be seen.

The second example is the competing initiatives for regional economic integration advanced by Japan and China. After Beijing surprisingly proposed a China–ASEAN FTA in 2000, Tokyo had followed up with a suggestion for a Japan–ASEAN FTA in 2002.[9] In 2004, Beijing had put its weight behind the idea of creating an East Asian FTA and committed funds to the ASEAN secretariat for advancing the APT framework for creating an East Asian Community. In 2007–08, Japan made two proposals intended to drive a wedge into the APT framework favored by China: it proposed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in East Asia as an FTA to be pursued within the EAS; and launched a Japan–ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement involving free trade, investment, cooperation for technology transfer, human resource management, and other economic areas, presented as a full package of long-term, legally-binding developmental benefits (as opposed to the partial packages that China offered). Tokyo also funded an Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, to undertake policy research for regional economic integration, inaugurated in Jakarta in 2008 (Terada, 2010). Thirdly, China and Japan have been competing for symbolic leadership in the evolving ASEAN + 3 regional mechanisms for financial cooperation. Notably, the two great powers have concentrated on a contest of 'which country pays more' in contributing to the Chiang Mai Initiative bilateral and multilateral currency swap arrangements between 2008 and 2010. Thus far, they have entered into *de facto* joint leadership positions on the basis of equally large contributions, but have not begun to flesh out how this translates into actual shared leadership in East Asia.

As Hughes (2009, p. 855) points out, Japan has been using regional institutions to counter China's rising influence, by deflecting Beijing's bids for dominance and 'deliberately 'over-supplying' regionalism so as to diffuse China's ability to concentrate its power in any one forum'. China, for its part, has engaged in institutional self-binding, but

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9 Terada (2006, p. 10) reports that Tokyo was less interested in the economic potential of such a move than in catching up with China. For more details of Sino–Japanese competition over these FTAs and over the EAS/EAC, see also You (2006).

exclusively vis-à-vis its smaller ASEAN neighbors, while remaining opaque on how these agreements impact on its potential restraint vis-à-vis Japan. Some scholars (e.g. Terada, 2006) argue that Sino–Japanese competition has nevertheless spurred the drive toward East Asian integration, but they tend to mean by this the political commitment to deepening economic cooperation in the region. Yet this remains distinct from trying to construct a regional security community with Sino–Japanese conciliation at its heart. For a start, even in terms of economic regionalism, there is a need to re-orientate the institutional focus more toward Northeast Asia, which accounts for the overwhelming portion of regional economic activity. The '+3' participants in ASEAN + 3 meeting have periodically discussed this, to the consternation of some ASEAN members. In a rare public recognition of one crucial 'missing link' in the regional proliferation of trade agreements, Singapore ex-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong requested in 2003 that China and Japan work toward a bilateral FTA, which would act as an important foundation for a wider regional FTA (cited in Terada, 2006, p. 10). In 2009, China, Japan, and South Korea agreed jointly to study the possibility of a trilateral FTA and a trilateral investment agreement. This is a step forward in Northeast Asian cooperation; as You (2006, pp. 25–26) observes, 'some prior [Northeast Asian] community-building is crucial for the entire [East Asian Community] building effort to succeed; to this ASEAN can contribute little'.

4 Approaching the great power bargain

What else then, is required for the process of negotiating the new regional great power bargain? In many ways, this bargain will turn on the unresolved tension about Japan's identity – this should not come as a surprise if we recognize that the current transition in East Asian order is unfinished business from the Second World War, if not before.[10] Within the regional discourse, there is a loud strand urging Japan to 'make up its mind' about whether it belongs to Asia or to 'the West': does Tokyo just want to be Washington's 'deputy sheriff' in East Asia, or will it take a more independent stance not only on security issues but also on

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10 For two useful but different approaches to the question of Japanese identity and regional security, see Kang (2007) and Suzuki (2009).

normative questions like 'Asian values', democracy and human rights, and economic liberalization? But this line of thinking is unsubtle and unnecessarily dichotomous; all the East Asian states wrestle with choices and adaptations in the gray areas between 'east' and 'west', and 'hedge' assiduously to avoid making exclusive strategic choices (Goh, 2006). Rather, the key question is about clarifying Japan's role in regional security, and in particular, the triangular United States–Japan–China relationship.

It is worth reiterating that the post-World War II great power bargain saw the US stepping into the breach between Japan and China as an 'outside arbiter play[ing] a policing role'– by making Japanese defense dependent on itself, the US extended a 'dual reassurance', simultaneously guaranteeing China and Japan their security against each other, obviating the need for them to engage in direct security competition (Christensen, 1999, p. 50; White, 2009). As this bargain disintegrated in the face of China's rise and Japan's more active regional and global military role within the alliance after the Cold War, ASEAN has attempted to hold the ring using its brand of regional institutionalization. Yet, these processes have not helped to address the pressing issue of the revitalization of the United States–Japan alliance from 1995 and Japan's growing military remit, and its potential involvement in a United States–China conflict over Taiwan or its impingement on Chinese security interests and behavior in East Asia.

The ASEAN-led institutionalization and regionalism drive has generated increasingly ambitious aspirations for the creation of an 'East Asian Community' (ASEAN, 2002). The emphasis so far has been on regional economic integration, but the enterprise is logically headed also for some form of peaceful coexistence in the political and strategic realms. As such, it would be delusionary to imagine that progress can be made without addressing the broader bargain that the three great powers have to negotiate as a post-war peace settlement of sorts. As Clark (2001) has argued, the Cold War interrupted the post-World War II settlements at the global and regional levels, and after 1989, international society was confronted with the necessity of settling both the World War II and Cold War peace. Obviously, numerous obstacles stand in the way of such an endeavor. Between China and Japan alone lie daunting conflicts over history, territory, trade and production, development paradigms, energy, and military security. Yet, a great power bargain is not about settling

laundry lists of conflicting interests; it is about reaching overarching agreement on mutual rights and duties, on ways to facilitate as well as constraint each others' power in a reciprocal manner. The agreements may take the form of formal treaties like the United States–Japan alliance, informal understandings such as the Carter administration's acquiescence to China's invasion of Vietnam in 1979, or 'unspoken rules' of conduct akin to those between the United States and USSR during the Cold War (Keal, 1983).

In terms of scope, some guidance may be provided by Clark's (2001, p. 61) study of the distributive peace (essentially the 'division of spoils') on the one hand, and the regulative peace (the normative instruments by which the peace settlement is 'justified, defended, and possibly modified') on the other. I would suggest that the United States, Japan, and China need to find ways to sustain a dialog and negotiation about the following. In distributive terms, they need to reach common understandings about (i) their inclusion and legitimate roles in regional security; (ii) their respective legitimate spheres of influence (alliances and other security partnerships; conflicting territorial claims); (iii) legitimate arms (nuclear and conventional arms control; theater missile defense; naval acquisitions); and (iv) their respective responsibilities in public goods provision (especially maritime security and acting as the lender of last resort). In regulative terms, the great powers need to agree (i) modes of conflict management and resolution (such as the various incipient mechanisms in the United States–China military-to-military exchanges, including the Maritime Safety Agreement); (ii) modes of security cooperation (particularly mutual transparency and military exchanges with each other, outside of wider multilateral arrangements); and (iii) the management of normative disagreements (such as over democracy and human rights, different interpretations of economic liberalization).

This is obviously a maximalist vision of what is required, yet there is growing high-level recognition of the lacuna in the type of great power-to-great power negotiation so necessary to forging a bargain. A number of tri- and quadri-lateral meetings have been mooted and are taking place among the great powers, notably the United States–Japan–Australia trilateral security dialog and the China–Japan–South Korea trilateral summits. While these are undoubtedly important, they are very recent and have yet to produce significant progress, and in any case, the crucial United States–China–Japan triangle remains unaddressed.

In addition, various other proposals mooted for a new regional security institution following the unsatisfactory East Asian Summit membership compromise have once again returned the debate to which great powers to include and how. The most prominent call was that of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, for an 'Asia-Pacific Community'; his initial, controversial proposal would have had an Asia-Pacific 'G8', a concert of great and medium powers: United States, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, and India (Kelley, 2008). At the same time, Japanese Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama, proposed moving forward with a more functionalist, economically oriented East Asian Community. Leaving aside the troublesome issue of US membership, the Hatoyama administration drew on the Western European example to suggest that Japan and China collaborate to create the EAC, focusing first on finance, energy and the environment. The Japan–China focus was reinforced by Hatoyama's suggestion that the two countries begin by developing jointly developing gas fields in the disputed East China Sea (Emmers and Ravenhill, 2010). However, the Australian and Japanese initiatives have faded somewhat with changes in government. In July 2010, ASEAN once again stepped in to broker a new round of inclusive regionalism in the form of the 'ASEAN + 8' framework that would bring the United States and Russia into the EAS. Whether these developments move forward the negotiations necessary for the great power bargain, or lead the region round the same mulberry bush once again, remains to be seen.

5 Conclusion and the way forward

East Asia has seen some remarkable innovations and achievements in institution-building since the end of the Cold War. The ARF and ASEAN + 3 have been especially critical in broadening great power representation and dialog, and in legitimizing and socializing them. Yet, whether these regional institutions have successfully managed the transition to a new post-Cold War order and a viable great power bargain is indeterminate. This chapter has argued that ASEAN has forged a minimalist regional bargain that has helped to legitimize the United States, Chinese, and ASEAN roles in regional security; brought the relevant great powers to the table; helped to lock in the US security commitment; 'socialised' China into adopting some self-restraining norms;

helped Japan to 're-normalise' partially its security role especially in the economic realm; and kicked off exclusive East Asian cooperation under joint China–Japan leadership. Yet, there are serious limits to ASEAN's ability to broker the actual great power bargain necessary for long-term regional stability.

In thinking about the future of regional security institutions, one's position does depend upon which end of the spectrum one is nearer: (i) the realist end, which recognizes that unequal power – unpalatable as it may be – is a fact of life that is ignored at one's own peril and must be managed for an optimum cost/benefit trade-off; or (ii) the idealist end, which regards unequal power as suboptimal or immoral, and emphasizes the imperative of change in terms of reducing the gap between the powerful and powerless and increasing the ranks of the powerful. Either way, the endless search for 'inclusivity' (both in terms of members and issues) is misplaced and misleading. In the East Asia, as in the world, there are two key levels of unequal power – the special position of great powers above 'the rest', but also the power differential between the United States as hegemon and secondary or rising powers like China and Japan. Justifying and sustaining this hierarchy of unequal power requires a complex set of shared understandings and bargains about differentiated rights, responsibilities, spheres, functions, conflict management, and social preservation. And it is precisely the latter that we have paid too little attention to in this region.

Hence, it is time to make room to hammer out the great power bargain in East Asia, without which the 'regional architecture' can have no substantive normative underpinning. The current regional institutional crisis has many causes, but the main problem is the lack of attention to the great power negotiation and *modus vivendi* necessary to overarch and undergird the functionalist cooperation that proliferates but is not effective enough in itself, or by spillover, to a generate a broader regional order. The great powers in this region urgently need legitimizing, not just vis-à-vis smaller states, but more importantly vis-à-vis each other. Whether or how smaller states are involved in this process is less important than whether or how the great powers engage in this dialog and negotiation. Smaller states in the region are understandably reluctant to contemplate exclusive great power dialog for the fear of great power collusion to their disadvantage – yet, in a region in which great powers are fundamentally suspicious of each other, this fear probably does not

need to be quite so acute. Therefore, even without going down the path of a concert of power, ASEAN must, in the revamped larger setting of the ASEAN + 8, explicitly facilitate trilateral dialog, confidence-building and negotiation among the United States, Japan, and China. Without this fundamental provision, ASEAN will not be able to make any further contribution to institutionalizing great power relations.

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