TRaNS: Trans –Regional and –National Studies of Southeast Asia Vol. 5, No. 1 (January) 2017: 75–97.
 doi:10.1017/trn.2016.24

Enduring Mistrust and Conflict Management in Southeast Asia: An Assessment of ASEAN as a Security Community

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Abstract

The paper explores whether the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has matured from a weak cooperative arrangement in its early days into a functioning security community by 2016. It first introduces a Deutschian and a constructivist understanding of security communities before examining ASEAN's involvement in the security realm since 1967. The paper claims that the regional body is not yet a security community, partly due to residual mistrust among its members, which undermines ASEAN's ability to address a series of ongoing inter-state disputes in Southeast Asia. While it has contributed to conflict avoidance, the Association has so far failed to conduct conflict resolution in spite of the ASEAN Political and Security Community initiative. The paper concludes that the failure to directly address and ultimately resolve sources of conflict in Southeast Asia has undermined the establishment of a security community in the region.

KEYWORDS: Security communities, ASEAN, Southeast Asia, mistrust, conflict management, conflict avoidance and resolution

Introduction

Despite its North Atlantic origins, the notion of 'security community' has been widely discussed in the academic literature on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) since the 1990s. Scholars and think tanks have remained divided, however, over whether the Association has succeeded in maturing into a community of states where the use of force has become unthinkable. The absence of sustained inter-state armed conflict between its member states has generally been credited to ASEAN and its exercise of conflict avoidance. The Association has undoubtedly operated as an instrument to avoid the recurrence of conflict and improve the climate of inter-state relations in Southeast Asia. It has relied on dialogue and consultation, the practice of consensus and self-restraint, the peaceful resolution of disputes, as well as on the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of

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other states to prevent inter-state disputes from escalating into open conflict. Yet, whether its track record over the last 50 years demonstrates that the institution has become an example of a security community has remained a contested issue among ASEAN scholars and watchers.

The paper explores whether ASEAN has transformed itself from a loose co-operative arrangement in its early days into a security community today. It first introduces a Deutschian as well as a constructivist approach to security communities before examining ASEAN's involvement in the security realm from 1967 to the present. The paper makes a contribution to the existing literature on regional institutions and security communities by focusing on the impact of (mis-)trust in ASEAN's ability to conduct conflict management in Southeast Asia. Trust is "a belief that the other side is trustworthy, that is, willing to reciprocate cooperation, and mistrust as a belief that the other side is untrustworthy, or prefers to exploit one's cooperation" (Kydd 2005: 3, see also Larson 1997; Hoffman 2002, Rathbun 2012). Trust is traditionally discussed as a necessary factor for security communities (Adler and Barnett 1998). The paper builds on various sources that have touched on the relationship between trust and the formation of a security community in Southeast Asia (see, for example, Acharya 2014; Roberts 2012; Keating and Wheeler 2013). Conflict management is here associated with the notions of conflict avoidance and conflict resolution. The former refers to the practice of not addressing specific disputes for the sake of the larger grouping and regional stability while the latter refers to an attempt at solving the historical, diplomatic, economic and/or military origins of a particular conflict.

The paper seeks to bring some resolution to the polarising debate on whether ASEAN is a security community by focusing specifically on the nexus between mistrust and conflict management in Southeast Asia. While the regional body has undoubtedly contributed to conflict avoidance, the paper asserts that ASEAN has so far failed to conduct conflict resolution effectively in spite of its ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) initiative. It argues that residual mistrust (Liow 2003) among Southeast Asian states is a key factor in explaining the lack of progress made towards conflict resolution under ASEAN auspices. Other factors that will be examined in this paper include the state sovereignty and non-intervention norms that remain central in ASEAN, as well as its limited institutional capabilities. A level of mistrust is said to prevail among the member states, and this has precluded ASEAN from acting as an acceptable third-party mediator to resolve regional conflicts. The paper does not study the origins of this residual mistrust. Nor does it try to measure it, but it notes that mistrust still lingers at the inter-state level and that it has affected how the members perceive their own regional body. Hence, it is argued that ASEAN has yet to become a security community as understood by either of the conceptual frameworks mentioned above due to the presence of residual mistrust that restricts its ability to address unresolved regional disputes that could still escalate into open conflict in Southeast Asia.

https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The paper consists of three sections: The first covers the notion of security community as it was initially conceptualised by Karl Deutsch and later developed by three influential constructivists, namely, Emanuel Adler, Michael Barnett, and Amitav Acharya. After critically reviewing the literature, the paper explores ASEAN's institutional evolution towards a security community, at least rhetorically. It does so by describing ASEAN's traditional approach to security before examining in greater detail its APSC initiative. The final section assesses whether ASEAN has emerged as a security community by briefly reviewing the scholarship on the subject before focusing specifically on the notion of residual mistrust and ASEAN's conduct of conflict avoidance and resolution.

The Conceptualisation of Security Communities

Deutschian Approach

Karl Deutsch (1961) was primarily concerned with the achievement of peace among states and regions where populations were interdependent or had significant transactions with each other. He was interested in understanding how such inter-state communities were formed and therefore looked closely at the concepts of integration and security community. Deutsch did not invent the concept 'security community' but instead used it in *Political Community at the International Level* (1953) according to the definition provided by Richard W. van Wagenen.[1] Modern wars require large-scale preparations, and so the absence of such preparations between any two territories or groups of actors prevents any immediate outbreak of war between them. For Deutsch, this served "as the test for the existence or non-existence of a security community among the groups concerned" (1953: 2). As such, he (1953: 2–3) claimed: "the attainment of a security community thus can be tested operationally in terms of the absence or presence of significant organised preparations for war or large-scale violence among its members".

Deutsch referred to two types of security communities. A pluralistic one is defined as a "security community with few or no amalgamated institutions" (Deutsch 1953: 17). Examples include Sweden and Norway after 1905 and the United States and Canada after 1815. A 'no war community' is defined as a community in which "the only command expected and backed by relatively effective formal or informal sanctions is the command not to resort to war or large-scale violence in the settlement of disputes" (Deutsch 1953: 17–18). In such a community, the possibility of war is still there, and some preparations are made for this

[1]van Wagenen (1952: 10–11, as cited in Deutsch 1953) asserted that a security community is "considered to be a group which has become integrated, where integration is defined as the attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group with 'reasonable' certainty over a 'long' period of time".

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eventuality, as illustrated by the Concert of Europe between 1815 and 1853. He expected, however, that an undisrupted 'no war' community could develop into a pluralistic one.

Deutsch (1953: 3–10) looked at the following potential integrative processes leading to the formation of a 'no war' and ultimately a pluralistic security community. One means of achieving a security community is via political amalgamation, which he defined as "the merging of several political units or enforcement agencies into one" (Deutsch 1953: 3). A successful political amalgamation need not necessarily lead to a security community, however, as the subjects of a common government might feel insecure and resort to civil war. Second, a security community might be achieved through psychological identification "among the individuals who are members of the various political units that make up the security community" (Deutsch 1953: 6). Deutsch noted that the formation of a sense of community combined with the development of institutions had often been successful. A third way can be through assimilation, as observed, for example, through the political amalgamation of Germany. A fourth may be via "the division of labour between unamalgamated but highly specialised or diversified political units" (Deutsch 1953: 9), as seen in the protectorates in the British Empire. A fifth approach is via increasing mutual responsiveness between political units that co-exist without mutual aid and the absence of a mutual threat perception, as, for example, between the United States and Canada since 1815. A final way consists of pacification, which consists of mutual disarmament and the adoption of a pacifist ideology.

Many scholars have commented on the Deutschian approach to security communities. For instance, Pfaltzgraff (1972) points out that Deutsch created a model that is process driven – looking at how political units achieve and maintain political cohesiveness. Yet, according to Pfaltzgraff, he was unable to identify a sequence by which integration is achieved. As a result, it is difficult to attain an adequate understanding of the sequence in which integration occurs and to know when a political community has come into existence (Pfaltzgraff 1972). The constructivist approach to security communities has attempted to address this issue.

Constructivist Approach

The constructivist approach to security communities differs from the Deutschian one in terms of methodology and other factors (on the distinction between the two approaches, see Chang 2016). According to Deutsch, security communities develop as a result of transactions that are quantifiable. In the constructivist approach, a qualitative and sociological approach is taken, with a focus on institutions, norms, and the inter-subjective process of identity building (Acharya 2014). For example, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett's (1998: 49) approach to security community is, by their own definition, 'social constructivist and path-dependent', implying that security communities have a 'history' and display an evolutionary pattern over time. For them, a community has three characteristics:

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First, community members have shared identities, values, and meanings. Second, members of the community have multiple and immediate relations. Finally, communities include numerous examples of reciprocity based on long-term interests.

Adler and Barnett (1998: 30) are concerned with the concept of the pluralistic security communities, which they define as a "transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change". Such communities can be divided into two types. The first is loosely-coupled security communities, which possess the minimum of definitional properties, and states within them "expect no bellicose activities from other members, and therefore, consistently practice self-restraint" (Adler and Barnett 1998: 30). This differs from tightly-coupled communities, which are 'more demanding' in two ways: they have a 'mutual aid' society, in which collective system arrangements are developed, and they have a system of rules that lies somewhere between a sovereign state and a regional government (Adler and Barnett 1998: 30).

The two constructivists have conceptualised three phases to explain the development of security communities. In Phase I (Nascent), governments do not explicitly try to establish a security community, although they may manage relations with one another (Adler and Barnett 1998). Phase II (Ascendant) is defined by increasingly dense networks, new institutions that display closer military cooperation, and cognitive structures that enhance trust and collective identities. In this stage, Adler and Barnett expect to see a deepening and institutionalisation of inter-state relations. The final stage, Phase III (Mature), is the point at which the members share an identity and so "entertain dependable expectations of peaceful change and a security community now comes into existence" (Adler and Barnett 1998: 55).

It is at this final stage of maturity that Adler and Barnett's distinction between loosely-coupled and tightly-coupled security communities comes into play. In the case of the former, the evidence of such a community can be assessed using the following factors: multilateralism, unfortified borders, changes in military planning, common threat definition, and the language of community (Adler and Barnett 1998). The aforementioned indicators apply to tightly-coupled security communities as well, with the addition of the following indicators applying exclusively to them: cooperative and collective security, a high level of military integration, policy coordination against 'internal threats', free movement of populations, internationalisation of authority, and a 'multiperspectival' polity, where rules are shared at the national, transnational, and supranational level (Adler and Barnett 1998: 56–57).

An expectation of peaceful change requires two mutually reciprocal and reinforcing conditions: mutual trust and collective identity. Defined as 'believing despite uncertainty', the development of trust precedes identity formation, whereby "a minimal measure of mutual trust is needed for a collective identity to develop" (Adler and Barnett 1998: 45–46). Adler and Barnett (1998: 46)

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assert that trust is a 'social phenomenon' that is "dependent on the assessment that another actor will behave in ways that are consistent with normative expectations". For the authors, trust can be built through third-party mechanisms (i.e. participating in international organisations) and through "experiences and encounters" that form "the beliefs that we have about others" (Adler and Barnett 1998: 46). They argue that in a security community, states no longer rely on institutions to maintain trust, but do so "through knowledge and beliefs about the other" (Adler and Barnett 1998: 46).

Amitav Acharya (2014: 16–19) also adopts a constructivist approach and distinguishes security communities from three other types of regional security systems, namely, a security regime, collective defence, and collective security. Acharya notes the following when discussing three factors, institutions, norms, and identity building, which lead to the development of a security community: First, he views institutions as 'agents of socialisation', which he defines as "regular, formal or informal interaction (dialogue, negotiations, institutionalization) among a group of actors to manage mutual problems, realize a common purpose, achieve some collective good, and develop and project a shared identity" (Acharya 2014: 19). With regard to norms, he states that security communities rely on norms of behaviour and that the primary function of norms in security communities is to "prescribe and proscribe behavior" (Acharya 2014: 21). In relation to identity, he comments that it is an inter-subjective notion "central to the kind of 'we feeling' that Deutsch identified as a key feature of security communities" (Acharya 2014: 23). Importantly, Acharya has applied his research to Southeast Asia and developed a framework to measure the effects of ASEAN's norms on regional order.

Critical Analysis

The security community concept can be assessed critically from two different perspectives. From a realist standpoint, the literature on security communities underestimates the problem of anarchy and the importance of the distribution of power when discussing the shared sense of belonging to a community. Realists depict the international system as one based on anarchy, where states focus primarily on their survival (see Waltz 1979; Walt 1987; Mearsheimer 1994/95). In a self-help system, cooperation is limited and temporary as the emphasis is put on the distribution of power. States focus on relative power calculations and are thus only capable of coordinating short-term actions. Realists assert that trust is elusive in an anarchical world and that states establish international organisations predominantly to keep others in check. Significantly, the risk of war can never be discounted. Realists therefore dismiss the idea that the use of force can become unthinkable and that a long-term convergence of interests can be achieved. Instead, states are expected to resort to force to resolve their disputes and address changes in the distribution of power that may threaten their security.

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A second perspective critical of the security community concept is centred on the notion of nationalism, which can be defined in terms of an ideology, ethnicity, statehood, and with reference to popular movements (see Hutchinson and Smith 1994). Nationalism is also associated with culture and perceptions of history. The authority and legitimacy of a government is traditionally linked to its ability to protect and defend the national sovereignty of the state, including small pieces of territory (Murphy 2005). Dijkink (2005: 120) argues that for "the complete nation-state, loss of territory is inevitably something comparable to bodily mutilation". State elites may invoke nationalist sentiments in order to arouse public support and create a sense of domestic accord, but also to defend themselves from perceived threats to their legitimacy. In this context, nationalist sentiments can be used as a diversion, as a legitimising tool, or even as a way to blame others for the failure of national policies. Identities and patriotic nationalism framed in opposition to others can severely undermine the creation of a security community despite repeated attempts at inter-state cooperation.

Both forms of criticism question the notion of collective identities and help us explain why ASEAN has arguably failed to establish a security community due to its inability to address enduring mistrust in Southeast Asia. This brings us to the next section of the paper, which discusses the regional body as a security arrangement.

The Evolution of Asean as a Security Arrangement

ASEAN's Traditional Approach to Security

ASEAN was established with the Bangkok Declaration of August 1967, and its original members came together in the interest of regional cooperation (ASEAN 1967). The issue of security cooperation was not mentioned officially in Bangkok as it was considered too soon to address openly such a difficult matter. Still, regional security was the first preoccupation of the founders of the Association. Then Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik (1975: 162), pointed out: "considerations of national and regional security have (…) figured largely in the minds of the founders of the ASEAN". Likewise, former ASEAN Secretary-General, Rodolfo Severino (2004: 2), asserted that "in substance, security is at the core of ASEAN's existence", and that the reference to regional security in the Bangkok Declaration was "deliberately muted in order to dispel the notion that ASEAN was intended to be some kind of defense pact or military alliance". The Association was given an undeclared political and security role as it was expected to provide a framework for negotiation through which troublesome issues could be approached and avoided.

Military cooperation was rejected at the outset due to several factors. With China and Vietnam in mind, the then Singapore Foreign Minister, S. Rajaratnam (1967), declared during the inaugural meeting: "those who are

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outside the grouping should not regard this as a grouping against anything, against anybody". Besides, the participants did not possess the necessary resources to engage in collective defence. That reluctance also resulted from boundary disputes, predominantly at the bilateral level, which preceded the formation of ASEAN. Apart from political and social differences amongst members, Estrella Solidum notes that there were a number of intra-regional disputes when ASEAN was first formed.

> These [disputes] included the strained relations between Malaysia and Singapore which had resulted from historically difficult relationships; Indonesian-Malaysian conflict due to the former's opposition to the establishment of Malaysia; Thai-Malaysia problems on the common border concerning the 'hot pursuit' by Malaysian troops of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) fleeing into Thai territory, and the Muslim separatists in Southern Thailand; strained relations between Malaysia and the Philippines over conflicting claims on Sabah (North Borneo); and problems of overlapping claims on territories along common borders. (Solidum 2003: 102)

These conflicts, coupled with feelings of 'bitterness' and 'vulnerability' amongst some states (Acharya 2012), contributed to mistrust between the ASEAN members. This residual mistrust and territorial disputes affected most bilateral relations, and the members did not share a common security perspective or threat perception. This inter-state mistrust was also transferred to ASEAN and prevented the formation of a cohesive regional body capable of solving disputes.

The first summit of ASEAN heads of state and government came in the wake of the new political environment that emanated from the ending of the Vietnam War. The Bali Summit of February 1976 led to the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia. The former acknowledged the indivisibility of security within the Association. It affirmed that the "stability of each member state and of the ASEAN region is an essential contribution to international peace and security. Each member state resolves to eliminate threats posed by subversion to its stability, thus strengthening national and ASEAN resilience" (ASEAN 1976a). The TAC sought to establish a norm-based code of conduct for regional inter-state relations. Among other principles, it enunciated the following ones: "Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations"; "Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another"; "Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means"; and "Renunciation of the threat or use of force" (ASEAN 1976b). The adherence to a common set of norms and principles should be viewed as an initial step towards the emergence of a nascent security community.

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In short, ASEAN's traditional approach to security has been defined by a focus on consensus building and conflict avoidance that guarantees the sovereign equality of the members and non-interference in their domestic affairs. The regional body has historically not aimed at solving disputes but rather at promoting a peaceful security environment through the practice of conflict avoidance. This approach to conflict management has long been viewed by the Southeast Asian states as the only option to consolidate their domestic legitimacy and enhance regional stability. Moreover, this traditional approach has been the result of enduring mistrust at the inter-state level that has restricted ASEAN's institutional evolution as a security arrangement.

ASEAN Political and Security Community

Following an earlier Singaporean proposal to establish an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), Indonesia suggested at the 36th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Phnom Penh in June 2003 the establishment of an ASEAN Security Community (ASC), initially by 2020. The Indonesian initiative was a reaction to the threat posed by international terrorism in the wake of 9/11 and the Bali Bombings of 2002, as well as wider geopolitical changes in the Asia-Pacific. It also indicated a re-engagement of Indonesia with ASEAN after having been absorbed with domestic difficulties following the Asian financial crisis of 1997/98 and the subsequent downfall of the Indonesian president, Suharto.

Rizal Sukma, then Executive Director of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), an independent think tank based in Jakarta, played a central role in formulating the initial plan to establish a security community in Southeast Asia. He put forward a security community proposal in a paper presented in June 2003, titled 'The future of ASEAN: Towards a Security Community'. He asserted that "changes in the strategic environment, and its attendant implications for regional security and domestic priorities, make it imperative" for ASEAN to realise that it can "no longer pretend that peace, stability, and prosperity can only be achieved through economic cooperation" (Sukma 2003). In his view, to make the ASC a reality, ASEAN needed to "strengthen its capability to prevent and resolve conflicts and disorder" (Sukma 2003). He found that the principles embedded in ASEAN at the time provided the foundation for an ASC, but that they had to be adjusted to meet the needs of the new political landscape. He highlighted the principles of non-interference and respect for national sovereignty, combined with the renouncement of threats or the use of force, as well as the promotion of conflict prevention and resolution.

The Indonesian foreign ministry (*Deplu*) responded by tabling a security community proposal titled 'Towards an ASEAN Security Community' that was influenced by Sukma's paper and "virtually replicated Deutsch's language" (Roberts 2012: 3). It had two main elements: an emphasis on the non-use of force to settle disputes and collective action to address common problems (Acharya 2014: 226). Yet the Indonesian proposal was met with scepticism

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regionally. Acharya lists several criticisms aired by member states. For example, Malaysia found that the proposal did not articulate adequately what the adoption of an ASC would entail. There was also uncertainty as to the security perceptions that would arise with the advent of the ASC. Moreover, there were issues with the name, as the ASC was criticised for sounding very "academic and western… like an imported idea" and the phrase 'ASEAN Community of Peace' was preferred instead (as cited in Acharya 2014: 228). The Indonesian proposal was eventually watered down to the 2003 Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, or the Bali Concord II. What is significant for the purpose of this paper is that the Indonesian proposal had placed greater emphasis on the prevention and resolution of conflicts than does the adopted ASEAN document (Haacke 2005).

Linkages between ASEAN's notion of a security community and the existing academic literature are nonetheless evident in the Bali Concord II. This declaration symbolised the decision by the ASEAN leaders to establish an ASEAN Community made up of three pillars – the ASC, the AEC, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Whereas the ideas for the AEC and ASCC had been mooted for longer, the ASC was new and drew "the most attention and raised the most questions" (Severino 2004: 2). The ASC portion of the Bali Concord II also made a reference to democracy as a shared political objective. Furthermore, Haacke (2005: 202) remarks that the document at least suggested that members "broadly concur that a range of security issues might in future at different points in time be approached by ASEAN as relevant regional concerns requiring collective attention".

Indonesia was asked to coordinate the development of the Plan of Action for the ASC. In February 2004, Jakarta floated the Draft Plan of Action for an ASEAN Security Community with more than 70 proposals, which included the formation of a regional peacekeeping force to tackle situations of civil conflict and humanitarian crisis. The plan also called for an extradition treaty, a non-aggression treaty, and a human rights commission. It covered the advancement of democracy, a commitment to regular elections, "the untrammelled flow of information", and the creation of open, tolerant, and transparent societies (Shoji 2008). Inherent in the Indonesian proposals was a realisation that the traditional security approach adopted by ASEAN represented a stumbling block for effective security cooperation in Southeast Asia, especially in terms of conflict prevention and resolution.

Nevertheless, the Indonesian draft was subsequently amended, with most of its controversial ideas removed. For example, Singapore and Vietnam rejected the peacekeeping force provision. The ASEAN leaders adopted the ASC Plan of Action (ASC PoA) during the ASEAN Summit in Vientiane in November 2004 (ASEAN 2004a). The resulting ASC PoA consisted of two major parts. The first laid down the objectives, norms, and principles that underline the document while the second included a list of activities divided under six components (political development, shaping and sharing of norms, conflict prevention,

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conflict resolution, post-conflict peace building, and implementing mechanisms). The adopted ASC PoA was a retreat from the earlier Indonesian proposals as it failed to move towards the conduct of conflict prevention and resolution. Weatherbee (2006: 161) argued at the time that the PoA had been "ASEANised, recycling old programmes into new programme boxes". The ASC has since 2009 been referred to as the ASEAN Political and Security Community, and a Blueprint was adopted in 2009 to facilitate its formation through a series of propositions. The APSC was eventually established at the ASEAN Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015 (ASEAN 2015).

Having discussed ASEAN's institutional evolution as a security arrangement, the next section will assess whether the regional body can be defined as a security community. It will do so by first reviewing the academic debate on the matter before focusing specifically on the notion of enduring mistrust at the interstate level and its impact on ASEAN's ability to conduct conflict resolution in Southeast Asia.

Is Asean a Security Community?

A Contested Issue

The question of whether ASEAN constitutes an example of a security community has divided scholars since the 1990s. This is because the concept has entered the ASEAN policy and scholarly circles, most influentially through the writings of Amitav Acharya. He has noted repeatedly that ASEAN's approach to community building is markedly different from the path described by Deutsch. In the latter's formulation, a security community is "the end product, or terminal condition, of a process of integration which is driven by the need to cope with the conflict-causing effects of increased transactions"; it is these increased transactions that "increases the scope for possible conflict among actors, forcing them to devise institutions and practices for peaceful adjustment and change" (Acharya 2014: 254). However, in the case of ASEAN, Acharya (2014: 254–255) argues that "regional cooperation was undertaken in the absence of high levels of functional interdependence or interaction" and that the regional institution had evolved as "a sort of an 'imagined community', despite low initial levels of interactions and transactions, and the existence of substantial political and situational differences among its members". The idea of community is said therefore to have preceded rather than resulted from a process of interdependence. In *Security Communities*, Acharya had already adopted a constructivist approach and noted: "the ASEAN experience somewhat blurs the distinction between nascent, ascendant, and mature security communities" (1998: 219). At the time, Acharya (1998: 219) had concluded that the notion of ASEAN as a security community fitted Adler and Barnett's conceptual framework better than a Deutschian approach.

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Acharya acknowledges in his latest writing on the subject that the Association is still not a Deutschian security community (Acharya 2014). Others have disagreed with his overall assessment, however (for a review, see Peou 2009). Most directly, Nicholas Khoo (2004) rejects Acharya's assertion of ASEAN being a nascent security community for four reasons: (1) the problematic use of norms, (2) the tautological nature of his argument, (3) a nascent ASEAN security community has never existed, and (4) alternative explanations for ASEAN have not been sufficiently explored. Other scholars have concurred that ASEAN is not yet a security community for alternative reasons (Roberts 2012, Collins 2013).

The academic debate over whether ASEAN is a constructivist security community continues, although a consensus has emerged that it is not a security community in the Deutschian sense of the term. While various factors have been discussed so far to explain why this is the case, the final part of this paper argues that residual mistrust among the member states undermines ASEAN's ability to conduct conflict resolution in the region and comprehensively tackle transnational threats. This failure to directly address and ultimately resolve sources of conflict has precluded the establishment of a security community in the region. The discussion draws from the critical analysis discussed above, based on the prevalence of national identities. It helps us to explain why ASEAN has failed to develop a collective identity and ultimately negate the level of mistrust between its members despite having met some of the community criteria put forward in the constructivist literature.

The Weakest Link: Residual Mistrust and Conflict Management

ASEAN has operated as a successful instrument for avoiding the recurrence of conflict, and it has to some extent improved the climate of inter-state relations in Southeast Asia since its establishment in 1967. The then Singapore Foreign Minister, Prof S. Jayakumar (1998), affirmed that ASEAN's primary role was "to manage relationships which have been and could otherwise still, all too easily turn conflictual". The likelihood of its members using force to resolve disputes has decreased significantly since the Association was founded. It has succeeded in avoiding, rather than solving, various inter-state disputes in the region. Since its adoption in 1976, the TAC has constituted a normative foundation, which has persuaded the ASEAN members to behave in a particular fashion acceptable to others. Moreover, the holding of a considerable amount of yearly meetings has institutionalised inter-state relations in Southeast Asia. Hence, ASEAN has been successful in fulfilling some of the requirements associated with a security community.

Furthermore, ASEAN has on paper at least established a dispute settlement mechanism under the TAC. The High Council for establishing techniques of mediation and consultation was introduced in 1976, although it has so far never been used by the member states. The High Council asserts that the "foregoing

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provision of this Chapter shall not apply to a dispute unless all the parties to the dispute agree to their application to that dispute" (ASEAN 1976b). The need to have the consent of all the parties to a dispute was later repeated by the Southeast Asian foreign ministers when they adopted the procedures of the High Council in 2001 and later in the ASEAN Charter adopted in 2007. This particular clause has undeniably questioned the possible implementation of the dispute settlement mechanism and its maintenance after decades of inter-state cooperation is indicative of the prevalence of the state sovereignty and non-intervention norms in ASEAN. Yet it also suggests that the members' understanding of their own national interests and identities precludes them from trusting each other or their regional body as an appropriate third-party mediator to resolve their respective conflicts.

This brings us to ASEAN's shortcomings in managing intra-regional disputes. It is unable to solve sources of conflict and it remains ill-equipped to deal with pressing matters or with controversial issues where clashing differences cannot be avoided. ASEAN's mode of conflict avoidance has been restricted to the shelving of inter-state tensions. Severino (2006: 208) remarks, however, that bilateral disputes have mostly been contained, and he argues that this could be attributed "to the culture of non-resort to force that ASEAN has cultivated, to the personal ties developed between the leaders concerned, and to the value that ASEAN members place on good relations among themselves". That said, regional relations have, as a result of these lingering disputes, continued to be characterised by feelings of suspicion and competition. The members have also maintained national security policies in which other participants are still perceived as potential enemies.

It is not only traditional security issues that have generated distrust and animosity in regional relations, but also a series of non-traditional security questions. Through a qualitative analysis of his interviews with high-level interlocutors (e.g. Deputy Foreign Ministers, ASEAN Secretary-General), Roberts (2012) provides insights on matters that have contributed to regional animosity. These questions include border disputes, problems with movement of goods, transnational crime, terrorism, and labour standards. Furthermore, in his survey, 59.8% of respondents expressed the view that they could not trust other countries in Southeast Asia to be good neighbours. Additionally, it is difficult to build trust when members are perceived to frequently "recourse to self-interested behavior at the expense of the collective interests of the region" (Roberts 2012: 158). As such, it is argued here that it is precisely this enduring mistrust among its members that has prevented ASEAN from effectively addressing conflicts in Southeast Asia. These shortcomings will now be illustrated by examining the management of an inter-state dispute involving two ASEAN members and a multilateral dispute that involves four members and a non-member state (China), as well as by briefly discussing ASEAN's inability to respond to the threat of transnational terrorism.

https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In a 1962 ruling by the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, the cliff-top Preah Vihear temple located along the Thai-Cambodian border was determined to belong to Cambodia (see Kasetsiri, Sothirak, and Chachalpongpun 2013). This decision did not rule on the border around the temple, and by 2011, it had not yet been properly delineated under a 2000 Memorandum of Understanding on the demarcation of the border. The temple was subsequently added to the World Heritage List of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2008. While this was initially supported by Thailand, the details of the management of the site were never agreed on by the parties involved. The temple subsequently became a political battleground for Thailand, fuelled mainly by Thai nationalist opinion, and used as a political tool against the former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The stirring of nationalist sentiment deriving from volatile domestic politics in Thailand but also Cambodia led to an armed clash in 2008 between Thai and Cambodian troops, which left one Thai and three Cambodian soldiers dead. Liow (2015: 314) explains that the escalation on the ground was caused by "domestic political validation as politicians from first Cambodia and then Thailand mobilised their respective claims and stoked the flames of nationalism in the lead up to national elections". Tensions remained between the two countries until serious fighting broke out between soldiers on both sides in 2011. After the initial hostilities had ended, new clashes occurred in the same year at another disputed temple. Altogether, these clashes resulted in 24 dead, dozens injured, and tens of thousands displaced on both sides of the border (Della-Giacoma 2011). The Preah Vihear temple itself took damage from Thai artillery fire.

ASEAN was at first reluctant to get involved in the Preah Vihear dispute and preferred to prevent outside powers from intervening as well. Cambodia had considered bringing the matter to the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2008, but Singapore, the ASEAN chair at the time, asked for the matter to be resolved under the auspices of the Association. This request was granted and regional talks continued on the issue. Thailand became the ASEAN chair in 2009, and little was done on the matter as Bangkok was a party to the dispute. Cambodia again requested for ASEAN intervention in 2010 when Vietnam was chair, but to no effect. When fighting broke out in 2011, Cambodia, frustrated at the earlier failed attempts to resolve the matter, took the issue straight to the UNSC. Thailand responded that the issue should be resolved bilaterally, but it was too late for this by that point as the situation on the ground had deteriorated significantly. As the crisis gained more international attention, several members of the UNSC agreed that the Thai-Cambodian dispute needed to be addressed as a threat to international security (International Crisis Group 2011). The UNSC held an informal meeting with both parties and Indonesia, which was acting as the ASEAN chair in 2011. It also called for a permanent ceasefire and referred the conflict back to ASEAN. The latter might therefore not have addressed the dispute without the prior involvement and assistance of the global body (Roberts and

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Widyaningsih 2015). The foreign ministers of Cambodia and Thailand met informally and called for a ceasefire and negotiations. Both parties also accepted the Indonesian offer to mediate in the border conflict. Yet the shuttle diplomacy conducted by the then Indonesian Foreign Minister, Marty Natalegawa, was held outside the auspices of ASEAN. Moreover, by November 2011, observers had not yet been deployed to the ground (Della-Giacoma 2011). The end to the fighting over the Preah Vihear temple eventually resulted from a change in the government of Thailand rather than from regional meditation efforts.

ASEAN was unable to intervene in the Preah Vihear dispute as Thailand and Cambodia had bypassed the regional dispute settlement mechanism that was included in the TAC and the ASEAN Charter. Thailand preferred to settle the conflict on a bilateral basis, while Cambodia turned to the UN and its associated bodies (UNSC, ICJ, and UNESCO) for assistance. This revealed Phnom Penh's "lack of faith and confidence in ASEAN" (Kasetsiri, Sothirak, and Chachalpongpun 2013: 37). ASEAN lacked neutrality as the disputing countries were member states, and it was only able to become more actively involved once the UN stepped in. Ultimately, Cambodia trusted the UN more as a third-party mediator than its own regional organisation. This can be explained by the world body's involvement in the country through the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia from 1992 until 1993 that had followed the International Conference on Cambodia held in 1991 to end the conflict there. Significantly, ASEAN's limited response to the armed clashes at the inter-state level illustrated the absence of a functioning conflict management mechanism and the enduring mistrust between two of its members. Liow (2015: 314) argues that attempts by the Association to mediate "floundered in the wake of national sovereignty claims, particularly by Thailand". Finally, the Preah Vihear dispute demonstrated that ASEAN's norms and processes were insufficient in this particular case to prevent bilateral differences from escalating into open conflict.

Subsequently, the ICJ issued its judgement in November 2013, in which it ruled that Cambodia had sovereign rights over the whole promontory of Preah Vihear and that Thailand had to withdraw all government personnel from the area. This development indicated that two Southeast Asian states were willing to rely on international arbitration and tribunal jurisdiction under a UN agency to resolve their bilateral dispute. Prior to Cambodia and Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia had submitted their sovereignty claims over the island of Petra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh to the ICJ in November 2007. Ending a 28-year dispute over sovereignty, the court ruled in May 2008 in favour of Singapore, but awarded two smaller outcrops, called the Middle Rocks, to Malaysia. Indonesia and Malaysia had adopted similar steps to resolve their disputes over Sipadam and Ligitan. Hence, individual Southeast Asian states have in recent years agreed to settle their disputes by international arbitration and tribunal jurisdiction under the auspices of the UN rather than with the assistance of their own regional body. While a step in the right direction of conflict resolution, it also demonstrates a

lack of trust in ASEAN as a third-party mediator capable of intervening and resolving inter-state disputes. The Southeast Asian states do not want to discuss their respective sovereignty disputes under the umbrella of their regional body. That is, the latter is not sufficiently trusted by its disputing member states to intervene adequately in their affairs and undertake meditation efforts. This arguably derives from lingering mistrust at the inter-state level that has been transferred to ASEAN and undermines its ability to conduct conflict resolution efforts. In contrast, the UN benefits as a mediating body from its perceived legitimacy and neutrality, as well as from its established institutional structures.

In contrast to the bilateral Preah Vihear dispute that involved a very small portion of land, the South China Sea question is a multilateral dispute over a semi-enclosed sea. It is also a more complex challenge for ASEAN as it involves four of its members (Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam), as well as China as the most powerful claimant with the most extensive claims.

As a means of managing the dispute, the ASEAN members have sought to establish a code of conduct for the South China Sea since the early 1990s. The 1992 ASEAN declaration on the South China Sea constituted a first official attempt at managing conflict in the disputed maritime area. It sought to promulgate an informal code of conduct based on self-restraint, the non-use of force, and the peaceful resolution of disputes (ASEAN 1992). Relying on the norms and principles included in the TAC, the declaration did not deal with the problem of sovereign jurisdiction, as it was instead an attempt to ensure peaceful management of the dispute. It should thus be associated with the notion of conflict avoidance and prevention rather than conflict resolution. Still, China did not formally adhere to it. Yet Beijing eventually shifted its position and endorsed together with the ASEAN states the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in November 2002 (ASEAN 2002a). Nevertheless, little progress has been made towards the implementation of the DOC since 2002 and the negotiation of a Code of Conduct. This is the case despite the establishment in 2004 of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the DOC and the adoption of new Guidelines for the Implementation of the DOC in the South China Sea, signed by China and the ASEAN countries in July 2011 (ASEAN 2004b, 2011).

The level of mistrust between China and the ASEAN members is not an issue for exploring in this paper as the potential establishment of a security community in Southeast Asia does not include China. Yet what is significant for its central argument is how the South China Sea dispute reveals an enduring mistrust between the ASEAN members themselves. Indeed, the Association has often been disunited on how to address the conflict. Members of any institution can have divergent views on any given matter, but this is a problem that has undermined ASEAN as it seeks to tackle the South China Sea issue (Yee 2015: 69). The residual mistrust among its members is here again a factor in explaining why the Southeast Asian claimants have not turned to ASEAN to resolve their

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overlapping claims in the South China Sea. In addition to their disputes with China, some members have conflicting claims among themselves over the Spratly Islands while others are not concerned about such issues of sovereignty and jurisdictional rights. The Southeast Asian claimants involved in the Spratly dispute have so far failed to address the problem of sovereign jurisdiction, and various attempts at conflict management have been affected by persisting mistrust among the ASEAN claimants (see Buszynski and Roberts 2015). Most of them have repeatedly acted without prior consultation with their ASEAN partners, and such unilateral actions have escalated the situation by increasing instability and inter-state competition. The Southeast Asian claimants have consolidated their presence in the South China Sea by building new structures on disputed reefs there, and incidents between them have continued. The lack of diplomatic progress is also explained by significant differences between the members over how to manage disputes. For example, while the Philippines and Vietnam support the adoption of a binding code of conduct that would include crisis management mechanisms, Malaysia has traditionally favoured a watered-down approach focused on confidence-building initiatives.

The enduring level of mistrust among the ASEAN members was illustrated by their failure to release a joint communiqué at the end of the AMM in Phnom Penh in July 2012. The ministerial meeting followed a significant escalation in the South China Sea dispute that had occurred in April 2012 due to a stand-off involving Chinese and Philippine vessels at Scarborough Shoal. Philippine naval authorities had discovered several Chinese fishing vessels anchored at the Shoal, which is disputed by both China and the Philippines. A Philippine navy ship attempted to arrest the Chinese fishermen and accuse them of poaching and illegal fishing. Two Chinese maritime surveillance ships intervened and prevented the arrest from occurring. This incident resulted in severe tensions between Beijing and Manila that lasted for several weeks.

At the 2012 AMM, the Philippines insisted on a reference to its stand-off with China over Scarborough Shoal, but Cambodia, acting as the ASEAN Chair, refused on the grounds that the territorial dispute with China is a bilateral one. Cambodia also rejected Vietnam's call for a statement on respect for economic exclusive zones (EEZs) on similar grounds. The lack of a joint communiqué, a first in the organisation's history, thus derived from the Philippines' and Vietnam's insistence, on the one hand, and Cambodian reluctance, on the other, highlighting the lack of trust and unity among the Southeast Asian nations. After a round of consultative diplomacy undertaken by Indonesia, Cambodia released an ASEAN statement a week after the failed AMM that listed six basic principles in relation to the South China Sea. Among others, it referred to the exercise of self-restraint and the non-use of force, to an early adoption of a code of conduct, and to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in accordance with international law. The statement was a watered-down document that made no reference to the recent incidents in the South China Sea. Moreover,

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no joint communiqué was issued due to a lack of consensus among the member states.

Associated with the question of sovereignty and nationalism, the enduring mistrust between the Southeast Asian states over the South China Sea issue has been caused by excessive and unsustainable fishing practices in the semi-enclosed sea. In particular, illegal fishing has been a regular cause of diplomatic tension between the Southeast Asian states. Fishery incidents in disputed maritime areas have often provoked strong community responses and raised deep nationalistic sentiments. Illegal fishing has, for example, been a rampant problem in Philippine territorial waters, where Chinese and Vietnamese fishermen have been repeatedly caught fishing. Similarly, foreign fishing vessels enter the Vietnamese waters illegally to harvest tons of ocean resources every year. The result is that no bilateral or multilateral fisheries agreement has so far been negotiated in the disputed waters of the South China Sea, making the semi-enclosed sea one of the few East Asian seas where no cooperative agreement has been reached.

Beyond inter-state conflict management, enduring mistrust has also undermined ASEAN's ability to comprehensively combat transnational threats in the region. Various ASEAN states have long faced the threat of militancy and political violence related to the activities of separatist and extremist groups. The risk of violent extremism in Southeast Asia is now reinforced by the rise of the Islamic State and its ability to reach Southeast Asian countries through the return of foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq. Significantly, the ASC is a cooperative project partly linked to the challenge posed by terrorism, and it refers to the ASEAN Convention on counter-terrorism adopted in 2007. In response to this transnational threat, ASEAN first issued a Declaration on Terrorism at the 8th ASEAN Summit held in Phnom Penh in November 2002 that emphasised its commitment to combating terrorism through regional cooperation (ASEAN 2002b). The declaration was limited, however, in that it "did not outline concrete forms of action" and "was merely a declaration of intent" (Chau 2008: 630). Adopted in 2004, the Vientiane Action Program sought to put in place an ASEAN response to terrorism and transnational crime. Yet ASEAN has so far only acted as a regional voice on the issue of terrorism and focused on the adoption of a common rhetorical stand rather than establishing concrete frameworks of cooperation.

ASEAN is ill-equipped to respond to terrorism as it only has limited institutional capacity to enhance inter-state cooperate and lacks implementation mechanisms. Yet, besides its institutional limitations, the lack of a coordinated response against terrorism across Southeast Asia arguably derives from enduring mistrust between the individual members. Intra-ASEAN relations are still influenced by mutual suspicion and animosities. Such an environment limits collaboration and intelligence sharing, which are key elements in the combat against transnational risks, and prevents the extradition of alleged criminals. These difficulties

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undermine efforts to establish a security community that can convincingly address traditional and transnational threats.

In short, this section has discussed how enduring mistrust has prevented ASEAN from conducting conflict resolution in Southeast Asia and restricted its ability to set up stronger mechanisms to tackle transnational threats. Yet the discussion has not sought to measure the level of mistrust and to determine whether it has been in relative decline or whether it has remained as prevalent in contemporary Southeast Asia as it had been in the past. Whether the level of enduring mistrust has declined and, if so, the extent to which it has done so is arguably hard if not impossible to measure, and it would also be relative, depending on the time period one compares it with. More relevant, however, is to discuss why ASEAN's community-building efforts have failed to lessen and ultimately negate levels of mistrust despite meeting various criteria highlighted in the security community literature. Indeed, several characteristics of a security community are present in Southeast Asia, including a reliance on multilateralism, a language of community and cooperative security, and some form of policy coordination against security threats.

As discussed in the empirical discussion, part of the explanation for this failure is linked to ASEAN's institutional shortcomings. The regional body does not have the capacity to resolve sources of conflict and to address controversial issues where clashes of interests are to be expected. Its mode of conflict avoidance rather than resolution has been restricted to the management of interstate tensions. Yet beyond its immediate limitations, ASEAN's ability to assuage mistrust has been undermined by a series of deep-seated domestic and regional circumstances. At the regional level, the prevalence of strategic competition has continued, as highlighted by rising military budgets, especially with regard to the maritime domain. Perhaps most significantly, national identities and patriotic nationalism in various member states are still framed in opposition to neighbouring states and defined by deep feelings of suspicion and historical animosities dating back to independence or colonial days, or even predating the colonial era. The repeated manipulation of popular sentiment is also explained by the fact that domestic politics in Southeast Asia is still often driven by personalities rather than by domestic institutions and bureaucracies. Such domestic factors were at play in the Preah Vihear dispute, where the Cambodian prime minister, Hun Sen, and various Thai politicians manipulated popular sentiment for personal political gain. Historical animosities dressed in nationalistic rhetoric also remain a feature. As for Bangkok, the dispute reflects "a traditional condescension towards Cambodia" while for Phnom Penh, it provides an opportunity to "challenge a perceived Thai reassertion of historical hegemony" (Liow 2015: 314). Likewise, nationalism is an explanatory factor in understanding the behaviour of Southeast Asian claimants in the South China Sea. The dispute has continued to provoke nationalist sentiments domestically, especially in the Philippines and Vietnam, and the sovereignty question

https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

remains a formidable stumbling block towards any lessening of inter-state mistrust. These domestic circumstances go well beyond ASEAN's outreach as an inter-governmental organisation and they make the process of community building in Southeast Asia so much harder to achieve than if they were absent.

Conclusion

The paper has provided an overview of the scholarship on security communities and how this concept has been applied to the study of ASEAN as a regional security arrangement. It has reviewed the empirical evidence to assess whether the Association has indeed become such an inter-state community. Special attention has been given to its traditional approach to security as well as to the conceptualisation and implementation of the APSC initiative. The academic literature remains divided over whether ASEAN is a constructivist security community, although a consensus has emerged that it is not a security community in the Deutschian sense of the term. The paper has argued that residual mistrust among the Southeast Asian states has restricted ASEAN's ability to resolve disputes in Southeast Asia. This lack of trust and its negative impact on conflict resolution represents a significant stumbling block to the formation of a security community in Southeast Asia. The issue of mistrust has been illustrated by ASEAN's inability to address successfully a bilateral dispute involving two of its members and a broader multilateral dispute that includes four member states as well as China. While the level of mistrust with China is not central to this paper, the South China Sea case has further revealed the enduring mistrust between the ASEAN members. This feeling has also been discussed in the context of ASEAN's inability to tackle comprehensively the threat of transnational terrorism. The residual mistrust is likely to endure in Southeast Asia, and it will continue to be a major factor in explaining why the Southeast Asian states decline to turn to ASEAN to settle their differences. It will therefore prevent the Association from moving forward from conflict avoidance to conflict resolution in the years to come.

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