



Book Review

International Relations in Southeast Asia: The struggle for autonomy, 3rd Edition. By Donald E. Weatherbee, 2014. 378 pp. Price: \$144 (Paperback) and \$57 (eBook)

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International Relations in Southeast Asia: the struggle for autonomy, by Donald E. Weatherbee, is an intriguing book, offering an original approach to the study of IR in the region, and propounding key insights regarding the qualities of regional integration, which result in a compelling argument. The book is recommended reading for diverse audiences, ranging from students of international relations, diplomats within the Southeast Asia region as well as from outside the region, policy makers, and civil servants working across

regional international boundaries as part of the integration processes of ASEAN. Following an introductory assessment in support of importance of this book, this review will provide a brief summation of the content of the text before turning to a discussion of the main argument and the manner in which the author substantiates it. This is then followed by a discussion of potential critiques of the text, before concluding by mentioning why the book is of significance to Cambodian policymakers and the broader public.

The book provides important insights which improve understanding of how ASEAN identity is to be understood and how Southeast Asia is situated in the global political system. The writing is clear and to the point, with the text formatted in a way to make key ideas accessible to students. The author possesses an erudite understanding of the region. For those seeking an introductory study to the topic, the book's combination of historical, institutional, and political details will prove extremely worthwhile. For experts on the topic, the book can aid in providing a jumping off point for more in-depth dives into the large variety of topics addressed in the thematically organized chapters. Whereas the scope of the book makes it useful for experts, the presentation style makes it accessible to the general public. An important contribution of the text stems from its thematic approach, which moves away from linear historicism as well as institutional taxonomy of the ASEAN system.

The structured content of the book reflects the explicit, although at times only implicit, claim that there is a significant gap between the idea or rhetoric of Southeast Asian regional cooperation and the reality of a disjointed unity affirmed by states that are most fundamentally concerned with their

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national interests, starting with independence from external interference. A great strength of the effort to flesh out this claim stems from the inclusion of internal and external perspectives for regional states as well as the international association (ASEAN). Moreover, the text provides discussion and analysis of international relations dynamics with regard to traditional security, non-traditional security, and human security issues. Weatherbee's account rejects liberal and constructivist understandings of international relations, by offering a plethora of examples of how states, as the primary actors in IR, are fundamentally motivated by national interest concerns. According to the analysis, the preoccupation with sovereignty (or non-interference) which ultimately accounts for both the achievements of cooperation manifest in ASEAN institutionalism and for the limits on further integration.

Brief Summary of the Book

The book is composed of 11 Chapters, with the first chapter 'Introduction' addressing the geographic and historical identity formation of Southeast Asia. Chapter 2 covers a list of key actors in the region, including each ASEAN member state in addition to non-state actors. The benefit of the chapter is that introduces a historically grounded account of each state's main interests or concerns vis-à-vis other regional member states, as well as the competition between major powers. This is only done briefly, as the details are fleshed out in the thematic chapters which compose the rest of the book. The main weakness of the chapter is that, while addressing key international financial organizations, the role of the ADB is only cursorily discussed, despite the major role it plays in fostering functional economic integration, which is made apparent in the rest of the book. Chapter 3 looks at ASEAN through the lens of security concerns centered on the threat of communist advancement during the Cold War. It provides a historical underpinning for the argument that the regional association was primarily a response to exogenous factors rather than endogenously driven by either the spillover from functional cooperation or from a sense of shared identity.

Chapter 4 addresses the institutional evolution

of ASEAN as well as a myriad of extra-regional assemblages and sub-regional groupings. Despite the assertions of fundamental limitations resulting from the 'ASEAN Way' of decision-making and functionalist driven integration, the information presented makes clear that ASEAN has evolved a more solid institutional basis and provided a consultative framework which has engendered a myriad of groupings focused on improving economic ties between states. The chapter also covers ASEAN's external relations and multiple relevant sub-regional groups. In terms of the former, the author addresses relations with dialogue partners, ASEAN Plus Three (China, Republic of Korea, and Japan), the East Asia Summit, and ASEAN and Europe. ASEAN's success with dialogue partners is accounted for in terms of the expanding number of participant states, the manner in which group dialogues are supplemented by bilateral dialogues between the association and each partner, and the way that multilateral engagement with dialogue partners reinforces policy aims sought by ASEAN members states in their bilateral diplomacy.

Chapter 5 looks at conflict resolution in ASEAN as a means to evaluate the overall integration entailed in the regional security community. The author's strongest case for evidently insurmountable limits on regional integration, and thus on ASEAN centrality, occurs in the area of the 'high politics of security issues related to intra-regional disputes and conflicting territorial claims. The chapter covers the legal framework for the institutionalization of duties, such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and the TAC High Council. ASEAN capacity for cooperative or collective security is addressed in through the examples of the 'mode of conflict resolution' evident in the ASEAN engagement with the 1997 Cambodian political crisis. The analysis then turns to ongoing tensions involved in intra-ASEAN disputes and territorial disputes.

The first type ranges from border disputes between Thailand and Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia, to border and resource disputes between Singapore and Malaysia. The second type involves conflicting territorial claims to North Borneo Sabah (Malaysia-Philippines), claims to the Ligitan and Sipidan Islands (Malaysia-Indonesia),

the islet of Pedra Branca (Malaysia-Singapore), and the Ambalat Block area of the Sulawesi Sea (Malaysia-Indonesia). ASEAN is understood to have buffered national interest competition in these areas, but not actually resolved it. The author argues that the cooperative security attained through the ASEAN Way is practically indistinct from bilateral diplomacy between states seeking a non-violent resolution to conflict. Any socialization to the new norms of consultation and consensus in terms of a shared identity is ultimately ineffectual when weighed against national interests. At the same time, Weatherbee admits: "There is no question but that the Southeast Asian states' interest in maintaining the cooperative framework of ASEAN has resulted in a regional security environment in which the possibility of armed conflict between member states has been substantially reduced."

What distinguishes the third edition from the earlier version of the book, is the dedication of an entire chapter (Chapter 6) to the issue of the South China Sea dispute. The dispute offers a convincing case study to support Weatherbee's overall claims regarding the limitations of unity and cooperation in the ASEAN framework. Notably, the discussion offers a prescient interpretation of current discussions on security issues in ASEAN fora. The case demonstrates how rising tensions between major powers related to seemingly irreconcilable fundamental national interests generates a potentially insurmountable wedge between the regional association's member states. The argument is developed by looking at the impasse related to advancing from the DOC (Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea) to an actual COC (Code of Conduct). The chapter is supplemented by two appendixes, new to the book's Third Edition, presenting texts of the DOC and draft COC.

Issues of collective responses to transnational crime are addressed in Chapter 7, specifically, security threats from non-state actors such as terrorism, crime (including narcotics and piracy), and human trafficking. For the most part, state responses to the first two problems have been robust, with such an intensive acknowledgement at the state level that little regional coordination was

required. To the extent that multinational responses have occurred, it was usually the involvement of an outside government (such as the US or Australia) that enabled transnational coherency. Concerning human trafficking, the chapter briefly but adeptly links the UN framework to both regional and subregional initiatives, including the UN protocol, the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons project (originally centered on Mekong states), the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking, and the Bali Process with its broader Asia-Pacific scope. What is notable about this chapter, aside from the treatment of such issues which are often overlooked by other IR scholarship focusing on traditional security concerns, is the degree of coordination which has occurred between ASEAN states (albeit on the basis of leadership afforded by external actors).

Chapter 8 discusses economic integration in ASEAN under the ambit of the avowed aims of the economic community. The chapter provides a background discussion of the early initiatives at trade liberalization in the region, and links this to the formation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area. The argument centers on the formative impetus of external trade, in contrast to intra-regional trade. Afterwards, the author turns to a discussion of the 1997 financial crisis and the regional response in order to show the limitations of ASEAN coordination while. However, at the same time, the example supports the author's conclusion that East Asian economic integration has been a substantial and enduring outcome of the response to the crisis. The main claim of the chapter is that the functionalist integration of such economic groupings is all too likely to suffer from key weaknesses, such as a vision of leaders which is not buttressed by requisite economic forces, or, ritualized rhetoric which is not corroborated with real political will. The challenges to ASEAN centrality are three-fold: imbalance in trade and investment levels among states in the region; competition with China's superior manufacturing capacity and investment attractiveness; and, economic regionalism beyond the scope of southeast Asia, rendering trade liberalization among ASEAN states somewhat superfluous.

Chapter 9 addresses human security in terms of sustainable development issues and human rights. Weatherbee links the two by arguing that development ultimately depends on popular participation and by noting the conundrum faced by donors who understand the manner in which corruption undermines the aims of development aid. Key human security issues addressed include refugees, migrant labor, humanitarian relief, and pandemic disease. The ASEAN human rights regime is also discussed. In support of the book's thesis the author stresses the promotional nature of the regime and its failure to accept or institutionalize protection measures for human rights. The limited character of the regional rights mechanisms is reflected in the slow development of the regime, the multiple restrictions on rights in the name of national law and nationally determined public order, and the divergence between the original ASEAN five members and the CMLV states. It seems, for Weatherbee, the regional rights regime is a result of adherence to the principle of non-interference as well as an indicator of the manner in which those same principal limits further regional integration.

Chapter 10 completes the catalog of thematic chapters with a discussion of environmental issues in the region. The chapter usefully situates the regional situation within the global or UN framework for environmental protection policy, such as the 'Rio Declaration on Environment and Development' and the functional role of the UN Environmental Program. It then turns to regional developments, including the application of specific programs at the regional level such as the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation program, and the historical evolution of ASEAN institutional mechanisms on environmental issues. These mechanisms, beginning in 1977, were the AME (ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment), the ASOEN (ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment), and the ASEP (ASEAN Sub-regional Environment Program) which was followed by two five-year Strategic Action Plans for the Environment. Environmental issues are addressed under ASEAN in the framework of the socio-cultural community. The chapter addresses efforts in the areas of deforestation, air pollution or haze, ocean pollution, rivers and dams. It

highlights issues surrounding the damming of the Mekong River by giving greater attention to that topic. The chapter concludes that, ultimately: "... ASEAN has not been able to make operational environmental programs that have instrumentally led to meaningful progress toward meeting environmental challenges of development. This is because in this functional area of intergovernmental cooperation, as in the other areas of ASEAN activity, ASEAN is not institutionally capable of implementing its strategies or action plans." (Page 276). This statement ties in directly with the argument of the book.

The Argument of the Book

Weatherbee aims to challenge the predominant understanding of Southeast Asia as equivalent to ASEAN. In order to do this, he critically interrogates the notion of ASEAN centrality by providing an institutional and historical account of political processes, including competition and tensions, in the bilateral and multilateral relations of the region's member states. It is argued that an assertion of ASEAN centrality invokes two hypotheses: first, that ASEAN functions as the centrifugal force upholding a global network centered on the region; second, that as part of the political dynamics of their own competition, the major powers have enabled a degree of regional independence.

The author is of the position that the primary dimension of change within the region from the time of the 1967 founding of ASEAN to the present, is an adjustment of external factors, specifically major power relations. That is not to say that important impacts cannot be traced back to ASEAN. For example, for individual regional states, the threat of force by other states in the region has radically declined since the founding of the IO. At the same time, Weatherbee is doubtful that a 'durable' security community has been established, in that doing so requires a quasi-binding acceptance of the norms of non-use of force along with overriding shared interests.

The author contends that prior to the introduction of great power intervention, Southeast Asia existed predominantly as a geographic region which was itself beset with divisions resulting from various axes of difference,

including the separation of continental and maritime states, ethnic diversity, and religious diversity. Moreover, states differed in how they dealt with common challenges of post-colonial independence such as, consolidation of rule, diplomatic engagement with former colonial rulers, and bilateral relations with one another. The historical antagonisms existed prior to the formation of ASEAN, and tensions continued throughout the Cold War period. Regarding economic integration, notwithstanding the impressive achievements toward establishing a shared market without tariff barriers to trade, Weatherbee highlights the continuing regional divide stemming from the development gap between those who moved to export-led growth earlier and those that more recently adopted market economic policies.

It is understood that both the political interests of regional states and their diversity, reflect variations in the uptake of democracy and engagement with growing civil society. One of the strengths of the text, making it useful for students and scholars of ASEAN, is the emphasis on the impact of political diversity on the international relations in the region. Such diversity is a proverbial 'elephant in the room' within the framework of the IO because of the paramount importance of non-interference. Weatherbee contends: "The most significant distinguishing political factor for contemporary international relations is the degree to which governments are representative of and accountable to their citizens." (Page 15) The assessment of this factor is understood to silently and informally influence intra-regional relations as well as relations with major powers, which prioritize support for or opposition to such accountability in their foreign policies.

The book addresses regionalism in southeast Asia in terms of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Weatherbee seeks to look at the varieties of supra-regional and sub-regional associations that are centered on ASEAN unity. This enables him to flesh out in institutional detail the manner in which southeast Asian 'regional resilience' manifests. in terms of both pooling the interests of states in relation to extra-regional middle and major powers as well as advancing

individual state aims through harmonization of interests among the association's member states. One main claim of the text is that, even in the area of economic integration where the most extensive connectivity has occurred, the grouping is all too likely to suffer from one or more of three weaknesses: irrelevance due to more encompassing East and South Asian trade blocs; a vision of leaders which is not buttressed by requisite economic forces; or rhetoric which is not corroborated with real political will.

He notes that the intention of forming the IO was to fortify rather than replace bilateral diplomacy, and thus the insufficiencies of the IO are better understood as an 'aspirational regionalism' than as a 'failed regionalism'. This characterization reflects the disjuncture in member states' national interests. The aspiration for a regional identity is grounded in the 'declaratory regionalism' manifesting the will of political elites of the different regional states. Taken together with the assignation of identity by actors outside the region, the result is a gap between the idea of regionalism and actual institutions and structures.

Realist explanations focus on state behavior as motivated by security concerns which trump other potential national interests, with cooperation accounted for in terms of relative gains. Liberal explanations are functionalist, as they argue that trust building which enables cooperation grows out of economic and social transnational links. Liberal regime theory argues that states alter their expectations on the basis of the discipline imposed by a regime's rules. Finally, constructivism holds that a shared identity is a reflection of shared norms, and that identity precedes interests. Each understands ASEAN centrality in different terms. Realism views ASEAN as the conjunction of member states' interests; liberalism sees ASEAN's achievements as a merging of behavioral expectations, and ASEAN's failures as an insufficiency support by political leadership made possible by the cooperation engendered by economic interdependence. Finally, constructivism takes the lack of institutional and practical unity to be superficial when compared to more primary, shared understanding of a regional identity.

ASEAN centrality, it is argued, depends on two factors: the willingness of states to translate regional level consensus into actualized operational policy at the national level; and, the persisting perception of states that there is diplomatic value-added from membership in a southeast Asia-level association, even after linking into more encompassing organizational frameworks. Weatherbee attributes the endurance of ASEAN to efforts at the top-level of state decision making to focus on non-contentious areas of policy such that the sovereignty of individual states remains unaffected by integration.

The book also links the early period of ASEAN achievement to the leadership role played by Indonesia, and the exogenous stimulus of involvement of major power states which provided ASEAN members with a common concern. Whereas liberals see ASEAN as result of cooperation effectively providing for further potential toward integration, realists understand the association as effectively contributing to the balance of power in the state system. Neither fully comprehend the top-down fabrication of organization as a policy output—as a product of states pursuing their national interests in foreign policy. Nevertheless, both perspectives concur on the stabilizing role that has been provided by the association at the regional level. Against the view that functional cooperation was limited by pressing political concerns, it is argued that prior political cooperation was necessary for non-political integration, which runs counter to the predictions of liberal-functionalist theory.

It is contended that the post-Cold War expansion of ASEAN, from five to ten, including continental Southeast Asian states, has been challenged to bridge ideological, security, and economic divisions. Despite that, the book's historical account of the organization's evolution provides grounds to apply the concepts of resilience and centrality to ASEAN. While ASEAN has not provided for institutionalized activities of functional integration, it has provided for political relations which have enabled functional (primarily economic) ties to substantially advance. Nevertheless, it is argued, the ambitious program of functional cooperation set out in the founding 'Bangkok Declaration' of 1967 establishing ASEAN

remains unfulfilled. On the basis of a perceived prerequisite of political cooperation, Weatherbee asserts that further functional cooperation is dependent on sufficient political will of leadership, which is lacking because national interests have taken priority over regional aims.

The author accounts for the development of the association in terms of the major summits and policy changes which happened both prior to and following the sea change in the international security conditions with the end of the Cold War. According to the account, this began with the 1976 Bali Summit, the first ASEAN summit, and the 1977 Kuala Lumpur sequel. In 1976, a secretariat was established, although it limited to an administrative role and was not allotted any executive function. An economic plan for furthering national interests through integrative trade liberalization was also devised at that time, and in 1977 economic ministers were accorded equal standing to foreign ministers. Furthermore, at the 1992 Singapore summit, ASEAN summits were themselves further institutionalized as informal summits were ended, responsibilities for economic cooperation were transferred to senior economic officials, and it was decided that ministerial level officials (foreign ministers, economic ministers, and finance ministers) would take the lead in regional affairs. As a result, consultation was extended to almost all areas of national policymaking. Additionally, the secretariat was strengthened through the establishment of a Secretary-General with an expanded advisory and logistical mandate.

The author contends that the 1997 financial crisis laid bare the lack of coordination and cooperative support among ASEAN states. Nevertheless, this account is undermined by the advances in regional cooperation that followed the 2003 Bali Summit. With the 'Bali Concord II' agreement, the three communities of ASEAN were established. Weatherbee argues against the interpretation of substantive advances in integration for each community: the security community essentially did not advance institutionalization beyond the already established Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and, it is argued, depends on commitments to democracy and human rights which are not forthcoming by member

states; economic community integration is understood to primarily be a response to the growing competition of China and India; and, the social-cultural community does not involve non-technical concerns of 'high' politics. At the same time, Weatherbee concedes that the community model formally provides a coherent conception of an end goal of regional integration, and expressly ties leadership to that vision. This is reflected in the institutional developments found in the ASEAN Charter, with the formalization of roles for Community Councils, Sectoral Ministerial Bodies, and the Committee of Permanent Representatives. However, due to the persistence of consensus-based decision making, such alterations are viewed as primarily cosmetic.

Weatherbee analyzes Southeast Asia as a regional order that is part of a larger global system. He holds regional political dynamics are not rendered unique as a result of the ASEAN grouping. States are taken to be the primary actors, with priority for states placed on sovereignty which is articulated in terms of the principle of non-interference. However, he concedes a limited understanding of state aims in terms of the traditional focus on balance of power misses the multiple types of national interest at stake in the region. He posits: "In Southeast Asia there is no central supranational authority...it is the state's choice of policy tools as related to the vitality of its interests that will determine the levels of conflict, competition, and cooperation in its relations with other states." (p. 298).

The context is one in which the threat of the use of force remains latent, states have shown no disposition to raise conflicts or disputes to the regional level of decision-making, and competition is increasing over access to the energy and resources considered vital to states' core interests. It is argued that without effectively institutionalizing norms in the form of law, the requisite enforcement needed to regulate interest-based competition is absent. In such conditions, ASEAN remains important to states for two reasons: it is a policy output which enables states to more efficiently pursue other policy aims; it has provided an institutional format for regional states to collectively engage with extra-regional actors, such as major powers.

The author concludes: "There is every reason to expect that the future ASEAN community will institutionally, procedurally, and normatively be very much like the existing ASEAN; an association of sovereign states that have sacrificed no sovereignty for the collective good. If this is the case, it would seem unlikely that it will add measurably new capabilities to the member states as they interact with each other and, especially in the struggle for autonomy, with extra regional states with far greater capabilities." (p. 304)

Critical Commentary

Some weaknesses of the text come to light. Due to the thematic scope of chapters and their component subsections, not to mention addressing issues in relation to the ten ASEAN states as well as external players, the book is limited to serving as an introduction to different issues involved in the politics of Southeast Asia. The book is undoubtedly useful as a stand-alone introduction to the international relations of the region, and functions as something of a guide to IR issues in practice through the application to specific cases. Nevertheless, its introductory scope leaves the reader wanting for a more in-depth analysis as well as increasingly coherent links between the different topics. At times the book reads more like a think tank or IO report than research and presentation in support of a guiding thesis. The extensive scope of issues addressed under specific thematic chapters renders particular discussions all too brief and frequently the links back to the main argument of the text need to be made clearer.

Furthermore, despite the evident importance of using history to provide an empirical ground for the argument, the author fails to fully comprehend the evolving character of ASEAN. Despite recognizing the security climate supported by international association, as well as the extensive economic integration and corresponding benefits to the level of development of regional states, Weatherbee dismisses the achievements of ASEAN cooperation all too easily. Greater emphasis could be placed on the changes to the cost-benefit analysis of states' national interest calculations, as set out by liberal theories of interdependence, and to the manner in which the norm of non-use force and consensus have become part of member

states' values, as set out by constructivist theories of international politics.

For example, firstly, he addresses 'regime theory' only very briefly at the beginning of the book and fails to return to it in his concluding discussion. As such, he overlooks the possibility that new frontiers of expectations can be developed for states through participation in international organizations, and that these expectations directly inform the calculations of costs and benefits involved in determining states' national interests. Moreover, a theoretical position that holds behavior to be interest-based rather than normatively informed, simply begs the question of how interests were inculcated to begin with. Interests cannot simply be divorced from values, and values must be internalized by actors.

Secondly, his understanding of constructivism limits that theory to the claim that shared identity precedes and causes the formation of regional identity. Thus, he is incapable of understanding norms and interests in a reflexive relationship, where new norms can be internalized on the basis of increased trust and shared experience in different modes of cooperation. It is indeed a very limited view of constructivism which holds that theory to the view that regional identity trump's national identity. Even a regional association with supranational modes of governance (such as the EU) would not meet that criterion. All international organizations present a common position (thereby exhibiting the characteristics of agency) only via the coalescence of multiple points of view through fixed procedures of deliberation. A consensual decision-making procedure makes this process difficult but not impossible.

Consequently, Weatherbee's insistence on the limitations to increased integration from the ASEAN way never engages with the point of view that the principle of non-interference has been essential to the association's formation and endurance over time. Third, the emphasis on the primary determinacy of state-level agency motivated by the pursuit of national interests is, to some degree, at odds with the argument that exogenous factors and institutions provide the impetus for associational cooperation (whether they be a common concern with a communistic threat, the desire to resist the

imposition of major power assertiveness, or technical support and expert persuasion for economic integration).

Moreover, at other points, the principle of non-interference (i.e., the desire to maintain the sanctity state autonomy) is no longer the causal factor explaining intra-regional tolerance of aberrant states. Consider: "This does not mean that the existence of ASEAN is not an important element in international relations in Southeast Asia. With differing degrees of commitment and enthusiasm, the organizational preservation of ASEAN has become part of the regional states' national interests. For them to see ASEAN as an end in itself helps explain the lengths to which member states will go to accommodate or ignore egregiously cruel member-state behavior; the contemporary case being Myanmar." (p. 302).

As a result, it is not surprising that, despite the contradiction with the primary thesis of the book, the author concedes: "Even though ASEAN regionalism and sub regionalism have not fulfilled the promises and expectations of academic enthusiasts and theoreticians, they have involved and habituated governments to patterns of discussion, consultation, and cooperation in a wide variety of low politics functional transactions. Up to now, the significance of these transactions has not really been economic, but like the other manifestations of Southeast Asian regionalism, they are a political contribution to the incremental building of confidence and trust necessary for a peaceful and stable regional international environment." (p. 124)

Utility for Cambodian Readers and 'ASEAN' Advocates

Despite the abovementioned shortcomings, this book should be considered mandatory reading for Cambodian students and diplomats. The book is interesting and the prose is not overly complex. It will certainly add to readers' understanding of the history of the region, of key aspects of both ASEAN internal dynamics as well as external relations, and of the myriad of consultative forms addressing different issues entailed in the regional association. Those involved in the study of IR will find the book to be a useful application of IR

theories which provides more abstract concepts with a concretization in the details of historically documented political issues. The book should be considered valuable for policymakers to better understand the concerns and views of regional states, providing leaders with an understanding of the dimensions of partnership and competition across the region.

Additionally, both diplomats and scholars can insights regarding the strengths and weaknesses of ASEAN centrality based on an assessment of actual practical achievements across topics, instead of relying on potentially vague and perhaps overly optimistic rhetoric of press releases and summit statements. Overall, the book serves as a caution to both academics and practitioners to temper their expectations regarding the impacts and advantages of ASEAN centrality. It provides a valuable historical account of the region, and its expansive scope makes it relevant to readers inclined toward learning about history, politics, macroeconomics, institutions, and even public policy.

The book raises challenging issues for leaders of ASEAN member states and scholars advocating for increased integration, pertaining to question of how much ASEAN centrality can advance without the eventual establishment of a supranational authority. In terms of the three pillars or communities of ASEAN, by all accounts socio-cultural and security integration lag far behind economic ties. Moreover, even in the 'economic community', non-tariff barriers to trade will increasingly demand a level of public policy coordination which restricts states' domestic politics.

The outcome of further efforts to arrive at a consensus-based common policy for traditional and non-traditional security threats will undoubtedly enable a more precise assessment of the potential for eventually achieving supranational authority at the regional level. Without such extensive integration, it is unlikely that ASEAN centrality will persist as a practical reality, rather than merely a rhetorical one, in the face of increased major power competition and the myriad of negative impacts stemming from climate change and natural resource depletion. Supporters of ASEAN centrality

would do well to prioritize meeting this challenge by way of building on significant past accomplishments in the process of institutional development. Nevertheless, innovative approaches, intensified diplomacy, and strategic refocusing of foreign policies will ultimately be necessary for success.

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Declaration of competing interest

No conflicts of interest to declare.