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Asia ... whose Asia? A 'return to the future' of a Sino-Indic Asian Community

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Asia ... whose Asia? A 'return to the future' of a Sino-Indic Asian Community

David Camroux

Abstract This article is an attempt to provide a corrective to a marked Sinocentrism in contemporary debates on regional integration in Asia. In order to do so, firstly, as a heuristic device, a crucial distinction is made between 'regionalization', as involving multifaceted integrative socio-economic processes, and 'regionalism', defined as a form of identity construction akin to nationalism. Secondly, a degree of historical depth is proposed to better explain recent developments. Finally, throughout the article, an interdisciplinary approach is taken involving employing realist, historical/sociological institutionalist and constructivist perspectives in the area of international relations. The first two East Asian summits are contextualized in relation to various conceptualizations of an Asian Community over the last century or so. Particular attention is given to the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung as a watershed in this evolution. Varying conceptions of East Asia as part of a larger, transpacific regional entity (APEC) and in, and of, itself (East Asian Economic Group/ASEAN +3) are examined. In situating the first two East Asian summits five developments of significance are examined. These are: a continuing Japanese role in setting the regional agenda; the ambivalence of China's positioning vis-à-vis neighbouring countries; the re-entry of Central Asia in the Asian regional equation; India's 'return to Asia'; and efforts to maintain ASEAN's centrality in regional construction. These factors, it is argued, are militating towards a return to the Sino-Indic Asia of Bandung. It is thus suggested that notions of an Asian Community involving only Northeast and Southeast Asia are now rejoined by a concept of a Greater Asia. While the historical roots of this conception partly explain its salience, it nevertheless competes with other complementary – and antagonistic – definitions of an Asian Community of more recent lineage.

Keywords Regionalism; regionalization; Asian Community; ASEAN; China; India; Japan.

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Regionalization and regionalism in Asia

... What is the Pacific? It is necessary to define our terms by specifying *whose* Pacific – and when. (Dirlik 1998: 15)

Substituting 'Asia' for 'the Pacific' in the above quotation from Arif Dirlik's seminal edited volume on a previously fashionable geographical construction provides some indication of the thrust of this article. The study of regional integration in Asia has developed apace since the 1990s linked to the rise of what has been described as the new regionalism (Gamble and Payne 1996; Söderbaum and Shaw 2004). This increasingly sophisticated interdisciplinary literature involves an examination of the inter-linkages between the economic, political and security dimensions (Beeson 2007; Katzenstein and Shiraiishi 2006; Pempel 2005; Shambaugh 2005).

While it is not the purpose of this article to provide a detailed critique of this contemporary literature, two fundamental points need to be underlined. Firstly, the terms 'regionalism' and 'regionalization' are often used interchangeably, particularly by economists (Baldwin 2006), in describing the construction of regional entities in Asia. This involves a laudable attempt to bring the state back in, so to speak, by defining regionalism as a 'top down State led process' (Kim 2004: 40; Pempel 2005: 6). Yet while the state/non-state distinction needs to be acknowledged and incorporated in analytical grids, it is suggested that it should be removed as the defining element in differentiating 'regionalism' and 'regionalization'. Rather, the state/non-state duality is valid for both phenomena.

In order to provide a more nuanced appreciation of Asian regional integration an analytical distinction is made between 'regionalism' and 'regionalization'. 'Regionalism' is defined as the development of identity construction across national boundaries. 'Regionalism' is conceptualized in relation to 'regionalization' – at the meso level (Gamble and Payne 1996) of international relations – what 'nationalism' is in relation to 'nation building' at the micro level. 'Regionalism' is thus defined as being essentially ideational, implying degrees of identity and the construction thereof.¹ This approach extends He's (2004) examination of the development of an Asian ideal. As with nationalism and stato-national constructions, there are interactions between process and ideational/identity developments with, in practice, each feeding off the other. As Acharya (2004) has demonstrated, identity constructions and norm creation cannot be isolated from underlying processes of regionalization in Asia, processes that involve convergences between market-driven actions and government policies. In this regard state actors are not the only custodians and vectors of ideas of regional identity. On the contrary, as the following analysis attempts to demonstrate, the idea of an Asian Community has been the handiwork also of public intellectuals and epistemic communities over the last century or so.

Relying on this new reformulation of 'regionalization' and 'regionalism' this article has two major objectives. Firstly, it is an attempt to answer Hemmer and Katzenstein's (2002) appeal for an eclectic approach, both within and across disciplines in the study of region. Secondly, it attempts to demonstrate that a longer term historical perspective² calls into question an East Asian, and particularly Sinocentric, concept of both regionalization and, above all, of regionalism, and would hint at the renewed relevance of concepts of a Greater Asia.

Pre-war pan-Asianism³

As a number of authors have indicated, the notion of Asia dates from a Greek conception of a world that is described today as the Near or Middle East (Korhonen 1997; Milner and Johnson 1997). In the millennia of exchange between peoples in what are today geographically labelled as China, India and Southeast Asia with other peoples in the Middle East and then with Europe, senses of difference developed, but not to the extent, it would appear, of engendering a sense of difference as one unique Asian people. That pre-colonial history remains relevant, at least rhetorically, in contemporary discourses on an Asian Community in that they place a great deal of stress on trade and cultural and religious interchange as laying the ground for the distinct concepts of Asia today.⁴

Nevertheless, we really have to wait until the era of European imperialism to have a sense of an essentialized Europe being juxtaposed with an idealized Asia. In the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intellectuals in China, Japan and India began to present a vision of Europe (and the West) as an entity. In China, as Rebecca Karl (2002) has argued, nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century was impacted on by the language and consciousness of Western colonial exploitation and nationalist resistance movements in South Africa and the Philippines. The Filipino writer José Rizal's martyrdom inspired the first successful – and then betrayed – independence movement in Asia.⁵ The impact of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 should also not be underestimated. The defeat of a European power by an Asian country demonstrated that the strength of Asian civilizations lay not only in the past, as the Orientalist perception would have it, but in a capacity to embrace modernity. The link between pan-Asian pride in glorious pasts and modern economic success continues to be an essential trope in Asian Community narratives a century later. Sun Yat Sen, in his famous speech in Kobe in November 1924, saw the victory of an Asiatic nation as demonstrating that '(Asian) blood was thicker than water' (Sun 1941 [1924]: 143). For him, Asian peoples needed to unite around the principles of benevolence and virtue to free the oppressed. That vision was to be shattered when the Japanese answered his concluding rhetorical question – 'whether Japan will be the hawk of Western civilization or the rule of might' (Sun 1941 [1924]: 151) – with their invasion of China. Asian blood

there was to be, but spilt not in an expression of solidarity but in fratricidal conflict.

Pan-Asian ideas have an equally long lineage in India. The popular Hindu revivalist Swami Vivekananda encouraged his countrymen to learn from the Meiji Restoration. By the mid-1930s, however, China had replaced Japan as a source of inspiration (Gupta 1964: 30). While Mahatma Gandhi did not inscribe the struggle for Indian independence as part of a broader anti-colonial struggle for all of Asia, he did see it as a civilizational contest. On the eve of independence Gandhi advocated the concept of an Asian federation, praising 'Asia's special message of spiritual enlightenment' (quoted in Jaffrelot 2003: 37). During the inter-war period Rabindranath Tagore argued that all Asian countries shared the same characteristics of 'spiritual strength', 'simplicity' and a 'recognition of social obligation'. For Tagore, Asia was a spiritual counter-Europe (Fischer-Tiné 2007). The writings of Tagore found a sympathetic audience in China and Japan (Hay 1970), laying the ground for a vision of the Sino-Indic Asia prominent in Bandung and that has re-emerged in the contemporary debates surrounding the East Asian summits. During the first congress of the League against Imperialism held in Brussels in 1927 the first Sino-Indian expressions of Asian solidarity can be found in the meeting between Nehru and representatives from the Chinese Kuomintang (Samarani 2005). During the same inter-war period Jawaharlal Nehru felt that, by stressing the notion of harmony with Nature, one shared by China, India had provided East Asia with a solid civilizational base that was in contrast to the materialism of the West.

For other Indian intellectuals such as R. C. Majumdar, Asia was in a sense a Greater India (Fischer-Tiné 2007), a concept that is apparent today in Indian approaches to the five nations of the Greater Mekong Region (Singh 2007). Others, such as Benoy Kumar Sarkar in his influential *Futurism of Young Asia*, saw the anti-colonial struggle as providing a common experience and making Asia the home of a new modernity. These differing conceptions came together when in March 1947, on the eve of independence, Nehru organized a conference on Asian relations, bringing together 250 delegates from twenty-five countries, in effect proclaiming India as the leader of Asia's ineluctable common march towards unity and independence.⁶

Turning to Japan, while Fukuzama Yukichi, the celebrated Westernizer of the Meiji Restoration, felt that in order to develop Japan needed to 'escape from Asia and join Europe' (*Datsu-A Nyû-Ô*) others, like the art historian Okakura Kakuzô, celebrated Japan's cultural bonds with the Asian continent in his assertion that 'Asia is One' (Ching 2001: 280). The point is that, either embraced or rejected, the idea of a modern Asia was already taking form. Yet, as Tessa Morris-Suzuki (1998) points out, the concept of 'Asia' was elastic and designed to fit the needs and purposes of the user. She further indicates that at the time of Bandung, the social critic Takeuchi Yyoshimi described 'Asia' as not something that possessed a cultural essence or innate spirit but as a 'means' or 'method' – '*hôho toshite no Ajia*'. In other

words, rephrased into the terminology proposed above, we have allusions to both regionalism and regionalization. The brutal experience, for many at least, of Japanese-inspired Pan-Asianism's geopolitical transfiguration into the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere led the whole of the concept into disrepute. Yet at the time a significant number of non-Japanese willingly shared in this imperially led experiment in regional integration (Duara 2003; Young 1999).

In the post-war period Japanese leaders were to disavow the rhetoric of Pan-Asianism. At Bandung the low-level delegation headed by Tatsunosuke Takashi, a technocratic minister of state, barely participated in the debates, let alone articulating a vision of Asian solidarity (Mackie 2005: 95). Nevertheless, for the leaderships of burgeoning Asian countries the same basic economic imperatives remain, which, as will be argued later in the contemporary discourse of the Chinese leadership, can lead to similar ideological clothing. In Beijing today, as in Tokyo in the 1930s and 1940s, the rhetoric of anti-Western fraternity, as much as appeals to Asian co-prosperity, would appear to be a relevant tool in soft power practice in promoting access to markets and raw materials.

The Asian-African Conference in Bandung

Much will depend on whether Peking considers itself as more Asian than communist, or vice versa . . . (*Times of India*, 28 December 1954, quoted in Mackie 2005: 62)

When one looks at the Bandung Conference and, fifty years later, to the first two East Asian Community summits in Kuala Lumpur and in Cebu (in December 2005 and January 2007, respectively), it is a realist conception of international relations that comes to the fore. The concern of the Asian parties in Bandung in 1955, and particularly those of Nehru, was to socialize China as a responsible actor in the international community and thus, although this was not stated, to remove it as a threat to the perceived national interests of neighbouring Asian countries. Other Asian leaders at the time were preoccupied by two interrelated issues, namely the PRC's support for communist insurgencies in their countries and the allegiance of their minorities of Chinese origin. These two questions were to be resolved in the following years. Nevertheless, fifty years on the same perennial questions of autonomy, tribute and suzerainty persist. At the summit held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005, the same realpolitik concerns would seem to have been at play. The same basic question remains: 'What are we to do with China?' Underlying this question is that posited at the beginning of this article, namely 'to whom does Asia belong'?

The first conference between African and Asian leaders was held in the euphoria of the post-independence period in Asia and, and as an instrumental

lobby effort for decolonization in Africa (Kahin 1956). Given developments in Asian regional integration over the ensuing fifty years, what is particularly striking at Bandung is the almost total absence of questions pertaining to economic relations. This can be explained, in part, by the then underdeveloped status of the participating countries as well as by the concern then with economic self-sufficiency as a necessary adjunct to political independence. Asianness in Bandung was one conceptualized not only in relation to the West but also in relation to the other continent participating, albeit in a token way, Africa.⁷ The Asia of Bandung was essentially a political construct involving the newly independent nation-states spanning an arc from the Middle East to Indonesia.

The underlying importance of Bandung is that it was the culmination of a process of defining Asia within the struggle against colonialism. In the post-colonial period echoes of that struggle would linger in much of the discourse against neo-colonialism (Ingleson 1997) such as that of Mahathir Mohamed (1999), prime minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003. Bandung's greatest legacy, however, was in defining the norms of non-interference, non-alignment and consensus decision making that form the central elements of what came to be called the ASEAN way.⁸

Asia-Pacific versus East Asia: competing regional concepts

In the decades following Bandung, and particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, two competing visions of Asia emerged: that of an Asia (limited to East Asia) for, and of, itself and that of an Asia as one of the concentric circles of a larger entity, the Asia-Pacific. In institutional terms this can be seen as the contest between APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, and EAEG, the East Asian Economic Group (Higgott and Stubbs 1995). The idea of a Pacific community dates from the period after the First World War, in, for example, the work of the Institute of Pacific Relations (Woods 1993), but serious institutional proposals emerged only in the late 1960s/early 1970s amongst academics and business people in Japan and Australia (Ravenhill 2001). From a realist perspective, this Canberra–Tokyo axis in the Pacific community debate is not fortuitous: the two countries represent the two anchors of the US Alliance system in the Asia-Pacific, have mutually beneficial and balanced trade and investment relations and both suffer, for rather different reasons, from suspicions of their place as legitimate Asian actors. In the formulating of the Pacific community idea both found a comfortable home, so to speak, at least in terms of a new geo-identity. More importantly, through its massive FDI and development assistance in Asia, the off-shoring of a great deal of Japanese production to the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) and then to other Asian countries after the Plaza Agreement, Japan was able to develop the elements of its soft power in Asia (Katzenstein 1997).

From the perspective of this article, what is particularly important in the evolution of Asia-Pacific regionalism is the role of, at least ostensibly,

non-state actors (Woods 1993). The precursors to APEC, notably the Pacific Trade and Development Conference (PAFTAD), the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) generally had tripartite memberships involving business people, academics and public servants 'present in an unofficial capacity'. The creation of APEC in 1989 seemed a significant development, in so far as political leaders became involved and a degree of institutionalization initiated. Nevertheless, the ministerial meetings that began the process and the annual summits that began in 1993 involve the leaders of the now twenty-one-member economies (Ravenhill 2001). The use of the term 'economies' rather than 'countries' is not insignificant: APEC is the only body in which the 'three Chinas' (the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong) are all present, a situation facilitated by the fiction of it as an economic forum. Moreover, the original agenda of trade liberalization and economic development is one that achieves a broad minimal consensus. A realist perspective on geo-economic relations would seem to underlie the enthusiasm of the smaller countries, such as South Korea, Singapore and Australia, which have been the most supportive of the APEC project. Given the perception that the real tensions in trade relations are those between the United States and Japan and the United States and China, being in a forum in which all the three major players are present is seen as a way of making sure that their national interests are taken into account. According to Terada (1998), for Japanese governments in the 1970s and 1980s promotion of an Asia-Pacific concept of region was a second-best choice to that of an East Asian group, but one that was seen as a way of avoiding potential criticism that Japan was trying to revive the Greater Asian Co-prosperity Sphere of the Second World War.

The competing vision of an East Asian Economic Group (EAEG), first mooted by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir in the early 1990s, also had a realist underpinning. For him, in order to achieve a balance of power in its favour in a bloc against bloc situation, East Asia needed to consolidate and strengthen its own regional market and, perhaps, institutions. Moreover, such a process of regionalization needed to be accompanied by the development of an East Asian consciousness, to use the expression of the late Noordin Sopiee (1995). Asian values and their purported superiority became inextricably bound up with the promotion of a process of regional integration. Mahathir's proposal was strongly opposed by the US administration, which ensured that it would not receive the backing of the Japanese government.⁹ In institutional terms the EAEG proposal was watered down to become the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), an informal meeting within the APEC framework. Nevertheless, at least at this juncture, Mahathir's proposal has trumped APEC, returning in a new guise as ASEAN +3.

When one turns to the question of regionalism, success has been more complete. The language of an East Asian consciousness was taken up by other Asian political leaders such as, Lee Kuan Yew and his successor Goh Ghok Tong (2004) in Singapore, Fidel Ramos in the Philippines, and Thaksin

Shinawatra in Thailand. Moreover, alongside the state vectors of East Asian regionalism a plethora of institutions such as the ASEAN-Institute of International and Strategic Studies (ISISs) and of public intellectuals often linked to the former (e.g. Mahbubani 2002) propagated the ideal of an Asian identity.

Finally the 1990s saw the breaking down of barriers in the area of popular culture. Forms of popular entertainment such as cinema, rock music, variety shows and television sit-coms have crossed frontiers and enjoy great popularity in neighbouring countries (Ching 2001). An unheralded and unquantifiable strengthening of an East Asian sense of oneness (i.e. an East Asian regionalism) is in train through the vectors of popular culture. Cultural transmutations, most recently with the enormous success of Korean popular music, cinema and sit-coms in both China and Japan, and to some extent in Southeast Asia, are a much underrated element in the development of an Asian identity (Iwabuchi *et al.* 2004). Such pan-Asian cosmopolitanism – articulated in part through diasporic communities (Callahan 2006: Ch. 6) – combined with other material transformations has led to the development of a kind of pan-Asian middle-class lifestyle that Khoo (1999) and Shiraishi (2006) see as an essential element in the forcefulness of Asian regionalism. This being said the Chinese role in facilitating Asian cultural regionalism remains a problematical work in progress.

Since 9/11 the Bush administration's attempts to 'politicize' APEC by using it as another forum to prosecute the self-proclaimed war on terrorism have led to a degree of disenchantment amongst its Asian members. Coupled with this is the overwhelming tendency of the Bush administration to function at the micro level (i.e. bilaterally) when possible or the macro level (multilaterally) when necessary, with the meso level (i.e. regional processes, such as APEC) being less of an attractive option. In this regard, despite the rhetoric of open regionalism, APEC has been unable to hinder the proliferation of asymmetric bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in the region. While these are often presented as a 'latticework' on which an open trading region is to be constructed, the considerable evidence amassed by Christopher Dent (2006) would suggest that they have been antithetical to this objective. At the Hanoi APEC summit of November 2006 proposals for an Asia-Pacific Free Trade sphere – the objective set at the first summit at Bogor in 1994 at the highest point of Asia-Pacific mobilizing rhetoric – were relegated to yet another study group and hopes for trade liberalization placed in a re-launching of the Doha Round. Caught between the Charybdis of multilateralism and the Scylla of bilateralism, it can be seriously asked whether APEC has lost its usefulness as a regional entity (Aggarwal and Kwei 2006).

Asia as 'ASEAN +3'

The Asian economic crisis of 1997–98 had an impact on the long-term developments in Asian regionalization. At a fundamental level it at least

temporarily destroyed one of the tenets of Asian values rhetoric, namely that Asia's economic success is due to a number of specifically Asian cultural traits. Secondly, the crisis and its aftermath saw the departure or the muting of the voices of a number of veteran political leaders such as Suharto, Lee Kwan Yew and, later, Mahathir. Thirdly, by not devaluing the yuan, the Chinese leadership demonstrated a degree of Asian solidarity. Fourthly, the crisis revealed the weakness of the so-called ASEAN way based on consensus and non-interference in the affairs of other member states. There was no pan-ASEAN response to the crisis and the political elites of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia all chose different paths to put their economies in order. ASEAN's internal coherence has also been sorely tested by its own enlargement to include Vietnam, in 1995, then of Burma/Myanmar and Laos in 1997 and finally of Cambodia in 1998. The inability of the peer pressure of other member countries to bring about even modest political change in Burma is but one manifestation of internal weakness. While describing ASEAN as a kind of 'regional delusion' (Martin Jones and Smith 2006) would be an exaggeration, these authors indicate that the shallowness of its institutionalization and its lack of capabilities limit its role as a regional actor.

In this context, political and business elites in Southeast Asia have shown a concern to promote two complementary agendas. On the one hand, to concentrate on developing ASEAN as a Free Trade Area pursuant to the Asian Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) agreement of 1992; on the other, as exemplified in declarations by the present Malaysian prime minister and the present Indonesian vice-president, to try to maintain ASEAN as the core around which a putative East Asian Community can be built (Badawi 2004, 2005; Kalla 2006). Behind both objectives lies a concern to deal with the rise of China as a major economic and political actor. ASEAN leaders are seeking to tie China into more predictable economic relations through the signing of a Free Trade Agreement. In quite a realist strategy they are also seeking to balance Chinese influence and power through the signing of a similar agreement with Japan and through developed links with South Korea. In a sense, what is sought is a reformulation of Mahathir's proposal for an East Asian Economic Group, but with ASEAN as its core (Hund 2003; Terada 2003).

Seen within a broader historical sweep, the essential question within Southeast Asia is the management of a relationship with China, and in the last century or so Japan, within the context of broader relations of trade, cultural contacts and political links extending to a larger world including India, Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe and, across the Pacific, the Americas. Put more prosaically, does being a crossroads constitute being central? The ASEAN +3 concept is particularly useful in this regard. The signing of an ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement demonstrates a capacity to negotiate in a unified way. Furthermore, this agreement itself has become a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Japanese administration. Nevertheless, ASEAN's limited internal solidarity has been demonstrated by bilateral FTAs signed, or being negotiated, between Korea, Singapore, Thailand

and the United States and Australia, between Thailand and Australia and between the Philippines and Japan (Desker 2004). Moreover, since its post-Cold War enlargement to include authoritarian states, ASEAN's cohesiveness around a semi-democratic model of governance has been dissipated.

Within the regionalization processes at play there are tendencies working if not for the marginalization of Southeast Asian countries at least for greater dependence on the '+3' of Northeast Asia. These changing balances are reflected in new conceptualizations within the domain of Asian regionalism. At its annual summit in November 2001, ASEAN +3 leaders accepted the proposal of then Korean President Kim Dae Jung for an East Asian Vision Group (2001) comprising eminent individuals from the participating countries. A successor group involving officials from the same countries, the East Asia Study Group (2002), was also established to scrutinize the report of the former and, in practice, to tone down some of its proposals. The desirability, even inevitability, of an East Asian Community was strongly vaunted in both reports, although its membership was left unspecified.

Contesting Chinese centrality

We need to integrate China into the regional economy in an orderly, win-win manner. (Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, 25 May 2005)¹⁰

Japanese involvement in determining the parameters of an Asian Community continues unabated with, for example, the proposals made by the Japan Forum on International Relations (2003) and the Council on (an) East Asian Community set up a year later.¹¹ The latter, in its first report adopted in August 2005, stressed two elements confirmed by the praxis of the Koizumi government. The first, related to regionalization processes, concerned the 'principles of openness, transparency and inclusion' in defining the limits of an Asian Community. The second, at the level of regionalism, proposed that

a soft regional identity should be promoted in East Asia based on the recognition that the common characteristic of various cultures in East Asia is its hybrid composition of local, traditional and modern cultures with the increasing common influence of a common urban culture in East Asia. (Council on East Asian Community 2005: 7)

The problem for Japanese leaders – as it is for those in Australia (Richardson 2005) – is how to reconcile their participation in what the conventional jargon describes as two concentric circles of regional construction in the Asia-Pacific, namely the intra-East Asian and the extra-East Asian, across the Pacific.¹² This involves assuring themselves of the existing and cost-effective

protection of the United States while advancing their economic and political interests with their neighbours. As Peter Katzenstein (2005) has demonstrated, Asian (and European) regionalization exists within a larger international regime in which the United States, as the only remaining hyper-power, plays the major structuring role in what he characterizes as an American imperium. Other authors see this imperium functioning both through US hard and soft power mechanisms (Robison 2006) and also through transnational regulatory governance (Jayasuriya 2006).¹³

It would seem that for the Japanese leadership the most efficacious way to reconcile these seemingly contradictory demands is to ensure the enlargement of a putative Asian Community not only to include Australia and New Zealand but also, more importantly, India. Indeed 'playing the India card' in relation to China fits rather conveniently into previous recommendations of the US policy community and the Bush administration as part of the 'con-*engagement*'¹⁴ of China (Richardson 2002). Moreover, Japanese trade and investment in India has developed considerably: in his first visit to India as prime minister, Shinzo Abe announced \$100 billion of Japanese investment in infrastructure projects (*International Herald Tribune* 21 August 2007). Yet Japan's investment in India has not been merely financial but also intellectual. A form of influence building and agenda setting in Southeast Asia¹⁵ by such quasi-state bodies as the Japan Institute of International Affairs has been extended to India. For example, within India the Delhi-based think tank most involved in propagating the concept of an Asian Community, the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), has had its activities generously supported by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

At the state level there is competition between the political leaderships of China and Japan to enrol – or in the Japanese case to continue to enrol – the ASEAN countries as adjuncts to their own internal development. Despite at least a thirty-year advantage in terms of economic and political engagement in Southeast Asia, it is the Japanese political and business elite that finds itself on the defensive at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One explanation for this is that millennial political and economic relations between China and Southeast Asia have reasserted themselves, at least rhetorically, to the detriment of Japan–Southeast Asia relations. The latter are not only less historically profound but continue to be poisoned, in China and South Korea at least, by continued reference for domestic political reasons, to Japanese behaviour during the Second World War. Certainly the need to somehow neuter Japan is part of contemporary regional practice. Japanese attempts at a more assertive security role in Southeast Asia – for example in sending its Coast Guard to help patrol the Malacca Straits – have been ill received, while the Chinese proposal by Wen Jiabao (2006) for security cooperation with ASEAN has been welcomed more favourably.

While Japanese proposals for a much broader Asian Community were most forcefully articulated by Koizumi (2002) himself, they also sprang essentially from METI, the same ministry (as MITI) that previously argued

for a purely East Asian regional construct. In Japan's 'new deal for Asia', to use the term of METI's Vice Minister Toshiaki Kitamura (2006), both a positive Japanese role in Southeast Asia and ASEAN centrality would appear to be dependent on containing China within a larger regional entity in which Indian membership is crucial. Kitamura's proposal for an Asian OECD financed by Japan, while at one level an effort in partnership and transparency, can also be seen as an effort to further socialize China and to maintain Japanese control of the regional agenda.

It is to this 'peaceful rise of China', to use the expression of the Chinese leadership, a rise engendering greater interdependence with other Asian countries (Ash 2005; Shambaugh 2005), that we shall now turn. The doctrine of China's peaceful rise (*heping jueqi*) developed from a new security concept elaborated in a number of Chinese think tanks in the mid-1990s, many of which were already involved in cooperative activities with similar security-oriented think tanks in Asia and elsewhere. Emphasis is placed in the doctrine on the soft power means of promoting China's national interests – and its own internal development – in particular through multilateral and regional cooperation (Zhang and Tang 2005). Since its enunciation the term 'peaceful rise' has been modified in a way to embrace all of Asia (Suettinger 2005). Chinese willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with neighbouring partners has undoubtedly both quickened since the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and reflects, at the regional level, the normalization of Chinese behaviour as an international actor, symbolized at the multilateral level by Chinese entry into the WTO in 2001. Chinese views of the East Asian summit (Huang 2005; Pang 2005) echo completely the realist perspectives of their Asian partners with, however, a discordant objective, namely that a united Asia would both balance and socialize the United States!¹⁶

One of the underrated vectors of Chinese engagement in regional construction has been the Boao Forum on Asia, vaunted as the Asian Davos. In the space of four years the forum has established itself as a significant meeting place for political and business leaders from an Asia encompassing also the Indian sub-continent, Central Asia and Australasia. For example at the April 2004 conference, newly appointed Chinese President Hu Jianto (2004) gave a five-point defence of China's contribution to 'Asian rejuvenation' and its commitment to the building of an Asian Community. Other Asian leaders such as Goh Chok Tong (2004) paid their appropriate rhetorical tribute while a year later Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi (2005) elaborated on a seven-point roadmap for the establishing of an East Asian Community. For Prime Minister John Howard (2005) Boao was yet another forum to argue for Australia's right to be part of an East Asian Community by dint of its degree of economic integration with East Asia.

Yet despite the Boao forum's ostensible role in Chinese agenda setting, two major diplomatic events for the Chinese leadership in autumn 2006 demonstrated some of the complexities, and potential limitations, in Chinese capacity to take on a leadership role within a larger Asian entity. Despite

a renewal of the commitment to establish a China–ASEAN FTA by 2011, the third China-ASEAN Business and Investment summit was completely overshadowed three days later in Beijing by the grandiose China–Africa Cooperation summit, involving the presence of over forty heads of state. These two meetings highlighted China’s role as global player for whom regional solidarities in Asia are quite secondary to bilateral and multilateral *modus operandi*. This contrasts with India’s albeit weakening institutionalist approach where, say, in the case of cooperation with the five countries of the Greater Mekong Region, regional cooperation is perceived as a means of encouraging norms-based multilateralism (Singh 2007).

While both these summits were essentially about trade and investment and, above all, Chinese access to raw materials and energy sources, the language of the China–Africa summit in, for example, the opening speech by Hu Jintao (2006) harked back to the non-aligned, anti-colonial rhetoric of Bandung, albeit with a new twist. Chinese political leaders presented their country as a model for modern development, a fraternal exemplar, so to speak, as well as a trading partner within a community of interests dating from 1955. His speech referred to the same civilizational arguments, claims of common destiny and goals found in Bandung and in much of the rhetoric of Asian regionalism. While it may be premature to talk in terms of a Beijing consensus (Ramo 2004) in ideological competition with a Washington consensus, the elements of such an ideological model can be gleaned in recent years. Yet the elaboration of a Chinese universal message remains work in progress.

These two meetings underlined the problem faced by China’s leaders and public intellectuals in articulating a particularly Asian vision. This springs from the lack of a common shared experience with other neighbouring countries in attaining independence and, above all, economic development. As far as the neighbouring Asian countries are concerned, a Chinese universal message is absent or, in the references to ties of kith and kin,¹⁷ is extrapolated as referring to the past. Other than a concern with mutual enrichment, there would appear to be no sense of an Asian ‘ideal’ projected into the future. At this juncture the Chinese political leadership would appear to be unwilling and/or unable to articulate a vision of a future Asian Community. How can this be explained? A realist view would underline the unwillingness of other Asian elites to accept Chinese leadership. More importantly, a concern with Asia is subsidiary to the Chinese leadership’s concern with its international objectives (Foot 2005). However, a fuller explanation would require looking at internal dynamics within Chinese society itself to tease out the links between foreign (and regional) relations and domestic considerations (Bhalla 2005). For some writers, such as Wang Gungwu (2004), Chinese cultural exceptionalism and the reinvention of values linked to China’s peaceful rise prevents it from acting as an exemplar within the region. For other writers (Jian 2006), using the language of Jürgen Habermas, constitutional patriotism will need to replace primitive nationalism through a process of

democratization within China and the strengthening of its civil society in order for China to share values, norms and procedures in developing an East Asian identity.

It needs to be stressed that Asia, even East Asia, remains a space of rhetorical dispute in China. For Nicola Spakowski (2007) three competing visions of the past – and its salience for a future Asian Community – can be discerned amongst contemporary Chinese historians, namely Asia as a Greater China, a space of Sino-Japanese antagonism, and now reconciliation, and a site for experimenting with alternative modernities. Moreover, it could be asked whether the present Confucian rehabilitation/revival in China does not militate against an inclusive Asian Community ideal through its culturalist underpinnings. On the contrary, Indian references to a previous Hindu–Buddhist golden age in Southeast Asia would appear more inclusive.

Neighbours at the club's doorstep¹⁸

A third development, one which it is perhaps too early to measure in terms of its impact on Asian regional integration, needs to be addressed, namely Central Asia's burgeoning importance to all other Asian countries and in particular to China. The Shanghai Five grouping founded in April 1996, later transformed in June 2001 into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,¹⁹ may well be considered as one of the most important initiatives of post-Maoist regimes in restructuring the global order. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the competition for energy resources and raw materials has accelerated Central Asia's importance in relation to China's international positioning. Indeed, within the Beijing policy community the Shanghai Cooperation Organization – as both a Chinese initiative and one in which Beijing controls the agenda (and the secretariat) – is of far greater importance than other organizations in which it is merely a participant. Yet cultivating relations with Central Asia has complicated the Chinese regionalization agenda. Seen from a realist perspective, as in Southeast Asia such a role is contested both by political leaderships in Russia and India and by a reluctance amongst elites in Central Asia to return to a vassal state status of the past.

To turn to the fourth point, namely India's return to Asia, during the Cold War period successive Indian governments rejected the export-oriented developmental model of East Asia, choosing rather a model of import substitution. Moreover, border tensions with China, an alliance with the Soviet Union and estrangement from all Southeast Asian countries, except Vietnam, meant that, for Delhi, the idea of the Greater Asia of Bandung was abandoned. For one contemporary observer (Gupta 1964: 48) the Sino-Indian war of 1959 was the death knell of this particular form of pan-Asianism. A balance of payments crisis in 1991 persuaded Manmohan Singh, the then Indian finance minister and present prime minister, to liberalize the economy under IMF guidance. East Asia was to be seen both as

a source of investment and as providing a model for rapid economic development. India's 'look east' policy, like that of Mahathir in the 1980s, sought to bring together both process and ideology. Successive Indian governments embarked on serious diplomatic initiatives which saw India admitted as a dialogue partner with ASEAN and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Linked to its own internal economic transformation, India was able to attract investment not only from Japan and Korea but also from Malaysia and Singapore, both of which possess significant minority populations of Indian origin. The culmination of these initiatives – changing economic models and trade flows – was that by 2003 Indian politicians and members of the Delhi policy community were reclaiming India's 'historic birthright' as a member of the Asian Community (Kumar 2004). While there was an appeal to an underlying cultural affinity rhetoric in this pleading, it was above all the positive economic advantages of Indian membership that were stressed (Asher and Sen 2005; Singh 2006a). Moreover, taking into account the concerns of Southeast Asian countries in relation to China, Indian officials have not hesitated to insist upon a convergence on security issues (Devare 2006).

Other actors in Asia provided logistical and ideological support for India's 'return to Asia'. As mentioned above, Japanese quasi-governmental organizations provided significant help. Korean involvement is more difficult to measure even though Korea has become a major investor in India. India has also benefited from the support of Thailand and Singapore. It was, after all, then Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra who in 2001 initiated yet another informal sub-regional economic grouping, BIMSTEC, involving the Bay of Bengal countries.²⁰ The Singaporean government, by organizing the first conferences of overseas Indians, through its own FDI in India, and through the support provided by Singaporean think tanks, enhanced India's Asian credentials (Kumar 2004; Lee 2005). Such new-found support reflects modifications in the regionalization processes where India is now factored in and, at the level of regionalism, an attempt to balance Chinese influence.

The Kuala Lumpur and Cebu summits: keeping ASEAN in the 'driver's seat'?²¹

'One Vision, One Identity, One Community': the banners adorning the streets of Kuala Lumpur revealed the grandiose ambitions of the Malaysian hosts for the first East Asia summit. They also revealed a great many of the ambiguities alluded to above ... for was the intergovernmental meeting announced that of the ten ASEAN governments? Or that extended into ASEAN +3 (with China, Japan and Korea)? Or the inaugural meeting held on 14 December 2005 of an East Asia summit, an ASEAN + 3 ... +1, +2 with the invitation to India, Australia and New Zealand? According to the official coffee table book of the summit, 'geographical considerations

had been overtaken by geopolitical ones' (Fauziah 2006: 26). Behind the tedious international relations mathematics lie three questions of importance: Southeast Asia's cohesiveness and centrality in the construction of an East Asian Community, coping with an increasingly economically powerful and diplomatically assertive China, and the 'return' of India to Asia. With the two latter questions having been discussed already, in this section the problem of ASEAN centrality will be addressed.

The first two days of the ASEAN summit saw the Association having finally recovered from the economic crisis of 1997 to return to its own internal consolidation. By expressing demands for tangible political reforms in Burma/Myanmar the Association broke with its sacrosanct principle of non-interference. Moreover, the appointment of an Eminent Persons Group to draft an ASEAN Charter demonstrated that the Association had finally come to grips with establishing rules for club membership.²² Perhaps the greatest success for Badawi was to ensure ASEAN's centrality in the process of regional construction. To use the shorthand language of the summit, ASEAN would remain in the 'driver's seat', and future annual East Asian summits would be held in ASEAN countries 'back to back' with the Association's annual meetings. Given Sino-Japanese rivalry, and the unwillingness of the governments of either country to accept the leadership of the other, by default ASEAN remains the least unacceptable alternative as regional coordinator. In the diplomatic formula decided upon in the summit, a compromise was reached with the East Asian Community being defined in terms of ASEAN +3, with the three new partners seen as sharing common interests. However, at the same time, in the jargon of 'inclusiveness' and 'openness' the Asian Community could extend to embrace them as well as Russia. Nevertheless, concerns over China remained and have engendered competing strategies. The first summit demonstrated divisions within ASEAN as a regional organization, with Singaporean, Thai and Indonesian support for enlargement from the ASEAN +3 formula being at odds with the more closed membership proposed by Malaysia, Cambodia and Vietnam. These cleavages, reiterated in think tanks and other meetings since then (Matsubara 2006; *Nikkei Weekly*, 29 May 2006), reflect not only geopolitical considerations but also internal political factors, with some domestic groups in ASEAN countries being more favourable to a broader Asia including the three new democratic invitees. Moreover, different Asian actors have rather different expectations for an Asian Community. For example, documents emanating from major pro-governmental think tanks in Korea and Singapore advocate a putative East Asian Community essentially as being an exercise in confidence building concerned primarily with security questions (Kwon and Hong 2005; See and Emmers 2005).

Developments in the year following the Kuala Lumpur summit, and in the second summit just over a year later, would seem to underline the tensions already present there. The Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank

held in Hyderabad in early May 2006 was revealing in this regard. For the first time a multilateral body was called upon by some participants, including the Chinese representative Jin Renqing, to encourage Asian regional integration through developing local bond markets, for example, and to 'help Asia find its voice' (*International Herald Tribune*, 2 May 2006). Manmohan Singh, in particular, sought Asian Development Bank (ADB) aid in creating a Pan-Asian FTA (Singh 2006b). In developing an Asian Currency Unit, based on a basket of hard and soft East Asian currencies the ADB is building on the monetary regionalization that involves swap agreements and cooperation between Asian central banks (Dieter and Higgott 2003). The negotiation of an India–ASEAN FTA, like that between China and ASEAN due to come into force in 2011 and the Japan–ASEAN FTA being negotiated, would seem to be an element in a larger pan-Asian FTA, but it is juxtaposed with the bilateral FTAs signed with individual ASEAN countries. While the Chinese are pushing for an ASEAN–China FTA, the Japanese, through the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, are favourable to cooperation among the thirteen participants in Kuala Lumpur (*Japan Times*, 8 May 2006). In practice this involves concentrating on bilateral agreements and downplaying ASEAN as an interlocutor.²³

By the time of the second summit in Cebu there had been two contingent developments. The first, it would appear, was an acceptance by the Chinese leadership of the virtual enlargement of an Asian Community to include India (as well as Australia and New Zealand). Therefore, in order to limit its impact, concomitant action would be required to complete the negotiations for an East Asian inner circle (i.e. ASEAN +3), in which China would be the main player. The second was to relegate this meso- (i.e. regional) level compact as subordinate to a number of bilateral initiatives, for example in securing energy supplies in Africa or Australia and, as mentioned above, in reinforcing relations in Central Asia. At the same time, at the multilateral level, the Chinese leadership – albeit with a great deal of reluctance – demonstrated a willingness to readjust the value of the yuan and to reinvest significant reserves overseas and thus to contribute to a readjustment of global trade balances.

The second East Asian summit held in the Filipino island of Cebu was postponed from the original December 2006 dates to mid-January 2007, ostensibly because of the weather, but also – or because of – concerns with terrorist threats. Like its predecessor, this summit represented a balancing act on differing regional conceptions, with both ASEAN +3 and the summit itself being described in the chairmen's statements as 'an essential component of the emerging regional architecture' and 'complimentary with each other' ([www.asean.org/ASEAN +3 htm](http://www.asean.org/ASEAN+3.htm); [EA Summit.htm](#)). In giving priority to energy security, political leaders seem to have found a central, uncontroversial theme around which to build a consensus. Above all, it is a subject embracing bilateral, multilateral and regional levels. In its very low-key banality, Cebu confirmed that the Sino-Indic conceptualization of

an Asian Community of Bandung had re-established itself as a salient, if not uncontested, imagining of a twenty-first-century Asia. A 'return to the future', so to speak.

Conclusions

Writing about the time of Bandung on another region – or was it a country? – of significance, Edmundo O'Gorman wrote 'America, as such, literally does not exist, even though a mass of land exists which, in due course, will be endowed with that meaning' (O'Gorman 1959: 73). A similar comment could be made concerning Asia, with the proviso that the endowment of meaning is an ongoing process. Within these processes the disparities in capacity amongst both state and non-state actors have become apparent (Hamilton-Hart 2003). In this focus on two emblematic events – the Bandung meeting of 1955 and the first two, much lower profile East Asian summits a half-century later – an attempt has been made to demonstrate that when looking at phenomena of regionalism an inclusive conceptualization of Asia is more rooted historically than the concentration on East Asia proffered by most studies. Furthermore, when factors other than purely economic ones are clearly given their place in the equation, then a Greater Asia embracing India as a central element in both regionalization and regionalism becomes more salient.

The preceding analysis of developments towards an Asian Community would suggest that the three initial postulates are, perhaps, helpful in understanding phenomena of Asian regional integration. By giving a much broader historically grounded 'brush stroke' to our perspectives on Asian integration it is possible to factor in normative and culturalist perspectives of Asia as embracing in an overarching way, in the words of a number of actors, 'the great civilizations of China and India'. Secondly, by bringing into play inter- and intradisciplinary insights it is possible to tease out the various competing, contradictory and complementary discourses on an Asian Community. Finally, by providing a distinction between 'regionalization' and 'regionalism' as a heuristic device it is possible, on the one hand, to explain a certain number of tensions and contradictions in phenomena of Asian regional integration, and, on the other, to provide a framework for reintegrating a more nuanced analysis of the role of the state in future research.

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Notes

- 1 Björn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum's (2002) proposal for a concept of 'regionness' as a kind of yardstick of regional construction is an attempt also to deal with this problem.
- 2 Few studies offer such an historical perspective. The exceptions are provided by Arrighi *et al.* (2003), He (2004) and Stubbs (2005) which, while not studies of regional integration per se, do provide a series of historical reference points.
- 3 In this and related sections space has not permitted an examination of the Korean role in Asian regional integration. For a rather rich recent edited volume devoted to the subject see Armstrong *et al.* (2006).
- 4 For example, one protagonist/scholar of India's entry in an Asian Economic Community has claimed that 'in the light of the historical context . . . it can be argued that the 200-year colonial period was but an interregnum and that traditional links can be revived in the current context' (Shanker 2004: 15).
- 5 Rizal returned a century later as an emblematic figure for proponents of an Asian Renaissance such as Anwar Ibrahim (1996).
- 6 The above relies on Deshingkar (1999) and Jaffrelot (2003).
- 7 Bandung is seen, correctly, as leading to the creation of the non-aligned movement including important African as well as other non-Asian countries. However, the participation in the conference itself was overwhelmingly Asian.
- 8 I owe this point to Richard Stubbs.
- 9 While the Ministry of International Trade and Industry was generally supportive of the proposal, the Foreign Ministry was largely opposed, despite its in-house China lobby.
- 10 Quoted in the *Nikkei Net Interactive* (www.nikkei.co.jp), 29 May 2005.
- 11 These build on the work of the Japanese Committee on Outlook for a New Asia (1994) which contributed to promoting Mahathir's EAEG. It is also worth mentioning the annual 'Future of Asia' conferences organized since 1995 by the Nikkei media group. Summaries of the 2007 conference were published in the *Nikkei Weekly* (16 July 2007).
- 12 This theme was taken up at the first Northeast Asia Trilateral Forum held in Seoul in February 2006 in which Nakasone stressed the need for Northeast Asian Cooperation to be within the East Asian Community (*Nikkei Weekly*, 20 February 2006). Other Japanese voices, however, have called overtly for Sino-Japanese leadership (Kohara 2005).
- 13 The Trilateral Security Dialogue involving the foreign ministers of the United States, Japan and Australia inaugurated in 2001, and which held its first ministerial meeting in Sydney in March 2006, is a further, if minor, institutional expression of the way the Japanese leadership balances the conflicting demands of its East Asian and Asia-Pacific regional memberships and its attempt to contain China.
- 14 This barbarism implies a two-fold approach of 'containment' and 'engagement'.
- 15 An example of this is the Asia Leadership Programme financed by the Japan Foundation and the International House of Japan since 1996. For examples of the results of some of its meetings see Bolasco *et al.* (2006).
- 16 My reference to these two Chinese authors close to the Chinese Foreign Ministry relies on the synthesis provided by Michal Meidan in *China Analysis 2* (December 2005): 15–16.

- 17 The presence of large communities of Chinese origin in much of Southeast Asia has always been problematical. While overseas Chinese business networks have been essential in Asian de facto economic regionalization, their role in contributing to national identities is a source of controversy. This impacts on their place in civil society in contributing to a pan-Asian identity.
- 18 For the Indonesian commentator Hadi Soesastro (2006) it is the multiplication in the number of clubs that is the root of the lack of integrational progress.
- 19 The original five – China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan – were joined in 2001 by Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan is the only one of China's neighbours not to be a member.
- 20 Bangladesh, India, Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka and Thailand.
- 21 For an overview of the issues at the summit see Lee *et al.* (2006), and for the summit itself see Malik (2006).
- 22 Initial proposals, namely those compiled by a former ASEAN Secretary General, suggested that the Charter would be liberal in tone (Severino 2005). Nevertheless, ASEAN NGOs objected that the Charter was being drafted without any civil society consultation (*Independent Press Service*, 2 November 2006). The difficulties of the ASEAN foreign ministers in August 2007 to reach agreement on a joint Human Rights body demonstrated yet again the challenges facing ASEAN institutionalization.
- 23 Continuing disagreements over membership of a putative Asian Community remained apparent at the 12th international conference on the 'Future of Asia' held in Tokyo in late May 2006 (*Nikkei Weekly*, 29 May 2006).

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