

Will ASEAN Continue to be
the Cornerstone of
Malaysian Foreign Policy:
The "Community-building"
Priority



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**Institute of Strategic and
International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia**

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The Tun Hussein Onn Chair in International Studies Lecture
2015



**Institute of Strategic and
International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia**

Published by
Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia
1 Pesiaran Sultan Salahuddin
PO Box 12424
50778 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
www.isis.org.my

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ISBN: 978-967-947-314-8

Printed by

AKITIARA CORPORATION SDN. BHD. (390199-U)
1&3, Jalan TPP 1/3,
Taman Industri Puchong,
Batu 12, 47100 Puchong,
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Preface

This publication is based on the second public lecture which I presented on 3 December 2015 as Tun Hussein Onn Chair in International Studies at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia. Again I wish to express gratitude to the Noah Foundation and ISIS Malaysia. In particular I would like to thank Datin Paduka Dr Faridah Abdullah, Chair of the Noah Foundation, and Mr Mohammed Rhiza Dato' Ghazi, representative of the late Tun Hussein Onn's family. Mr Mohammed Rhiza's introductory comments before the lecture added greatly to the occasion. I am most grateful to Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa, Chairman and Chief Executive of ISIS Malaysia, and former ISIS Chairman Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, and would like also to say how much I have appreciated the opportunity to work in this lively institution with so many stimulating and generous staff.

Anthony Milner



Will ASEAN Continue to be the Cornerstone of Malaysian Foreign Policy? The “Community-building” Priorityⁱ

Anthony Milner

As was the case in my first lecture, this is the analysis of an outsider who is reading about Malaysian foreign policy, and talking to people involved in this Malaysian endeavour – and trying to identify some key aspirations and concepts which might help us understand what Malaysia has been trying to achieve. In this essay I focus on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the issue of what future ASEAN is likely to have in Malaysia’s foreign relations. To this end, I examine what ASEAN means to Malaysia, seeking to identify some specific Malaysian approaches to regionalism. What I draw attention to most of all is the priority which Malaysia has given, and gives, to community-building – a priority which, in my view, has received too little analytical attention.

The Malaysian foreign relations leadership – the political and bureaucratic leadership – will be looking back on 2015, their latest year of ASEAN chairmanship, with some exhaustion as well as some justifiable pride.ⁱⁱ It was a turning point for ASEAN with the establishing of the three-pillar ASEAN Community. Consider the many hundreds of inter-governmental and other ASEAN-related meetings that occurred – just arranging such meetings is an enormous task, of course; then there is the drafting – with all the necessary consultation – of agreements, declarations and conventions. For instance, there is the convention to give greater protection to victims of human trafficking, and the various initiatives (including the ASEAN Messaging Centre) related to counter-terrorism, and much more. There were plenty of challenges over the year. In Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere there

was the haze – which was discussed recently at a seminar at the Centre for ASEAN Regionalism at the University of Malayaⁱⁱⁱ – and then there was the continuing contest in the South China Sea, and the humanitarian crisis concerning the Rohingyas. In each of these cases we saw fault lines in ASEAN – divisions between ASEAN countries, divisions that needed careful handling. The fact that only some countries sought to join the United States-led, and ambitious, Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is potentially at least another possible danger to ASEAN unity.

The great declared tasks of Malaysia's ASEAN year, it is clear, were the promotion of a "People-Centred ASEAN" and the scheduled formal establishment of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community: the Economic Community, the Political-Security Community, and the Socio-Cultural Community. These enormous tasks have been formidable. With respect to a People's ASEAN, entering 2015, Malaysian commentators warned that surveys had shown there was little public interest in ASEAN.^{iv} ASEAN, it was noted, occupied an especially small "mind share" among young people.^v Opinion essays^{vi} from commentators based in various organisations, including ISIS Malaysia, suggested ways in which to create a greater awareness and to move towards a "People-Centred ASEAN" – ideas such as promoting ASEAN food culture and ASEAN sports, flying the ASEAN flag, and instituting preferential postage rates within the ASEAN region. It has also been argued that all major international airports should make sure there is a dedicated ASEAN immigration line. There should, in addition, be an ASEAN Business Travel Card, on the model of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) card, which would facilitate easy negotiation of immigration processes between ASEAN countries.

In some quarters, of course, there was frustration that more had not been done to further the “People-Centred ASEAN”. Government leaders and senior officials, however, have been frank about the fact that this is necessarily a long-term project. They point to initiatives with civil society organisations, youth organisations, private sector groups, and so forth – but they also admit that the task is a large-scale one.^{vii}

As to advancing the different pillars of ASEAN, there has been the consuming business of implementing blueprints. Foreign Affairs Minister Anifah Aman reported that 90 percent of the blueprints have been completed, but suggested also that the success of the ASEAN Community will require “greater and deeper involvement of all sectors of society” throughout the region.^{viii} As the Prime Minister admitted in November 2015, the “hard work of fully uniting and integrating” ASEAN under the three pillars now has to be “redoubled”.^{ix} The new so-called Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ASEAN 2025 declares the intention to implement a new series of blueprints – referred to collectively as “ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together” – and does so while reiterating support for the creation of a “truly rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN”.^x

There is, therefore, much to be pleased about in Malaysia’s ASEAN year – but also a sharpening awareness of how much there is to do.

The future

At the conclusion of Malaysia’s busy – almost frenetic – ASEAN year, however, perhaps it makes sense to pause a moment: to take stock, and to ask if ASEAN will continue to be of central importance to Malaysian foreign policy. The Malaysian leadership has certainly affirmed that importance. In 2014, preparing to take over the running of ASEAN, the Malaysian Prime Minister

explicitly referred to ASEAN as the “cornerstone of our foreign policy and the lynchpin of our strategic interests”.^{xi} The ASEAN priority, therefore, is the current policy setting – but will it hold that position in the future?

It cannot be denied that this region and the broader international scene are undergoing transformative change – change that could conceivably challenge the promotion of an ASEAN-based regional order. The Chinese government, which not long ago had been focused primarily on domestic economic development, is now displaying a taste for regional and international leadership.^{xii} Speech after official Chinese speech invokes the “One Belt, One Road” and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) initiatives; we hear from China about an “Asians’ Asia” and the “Chinese Dream” – and the benefits that “Dream” can bring to what is called “the Chinese neighbourhood”. With respect to regional security architecture, one recent speech from Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin highlighted such Chinese-led institutions as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Xiangshan Forum, and only then – almost as an afterthought – mentioned support for “ASEAN-led multilateral security dialogues and cooperation mechanisms”.^{xiii} The wording is subtle but one senses a certain soft-peddling of ASEAN leadership. In another recent comment, Fu Ying – Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of China – warned that ASEAN “needs to win support for its centrality by being able to accommodate the wider interests of the region”.^{xiv}

This new, confident Chinese tone is noted in a November 2015 speech in London by the Sultan of Perak, Royal Fellow of ISIS Malaysia. His Royal Highness observed that China is at present introducing a “world-changing grand design”, represented above all in the New Silk Road. He suggested too that ASEAN would be unlikely to allow differences over the South China Sea disputes to get in the way of collaboration on Silk Road projects.^{xv}

The United States in its way also offers a regional plan that competes with ASEAN's initiatives. At the Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore in 2015, United States Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter stressed his country's "Asia-Pacific" vision. He stressed the "Asia-Pacific" and not merely the "East Asian" or "Asian" region, and he made a point of referring to America's longstanding "strategy to promote an Asia-Pacific security architecture".^{xvi} The United States President, of course, continues to participate in the ASEAN-led East Asia Summit (EAS), but Carter's words suggest the possibility of a different aspiration – an ambition to promote a wider architecture in which ASEAN countries could well become relatively junior partners.

Looking beyond the United States and China, Japan and increasingly India, are also major players in the developing regional dynamics – adding to a complexity that in different ways places stronger and stronger demands on ASEAN's regional leadership. The question does indeed arise as to whether we are seeing new developments that make ASEAN – with a combined GDP larger than that of India, but still only a quarter than that of China – less and less significant. And if so, will Malaysia be likely to search for new international strategies to protect and advance its national interests?

Analytical perspectives

Answering such questions, in my view, demands a long view – and also raises issues about analytical perspectives and methodology. One current trend in International Relations (IR) writing would seem to be of immediate use in an assessment of the likely future role of ASEAN in Malaysian foreign policy. The growing interest in identifying non-Western approaches to IR – an interest which draws attention to the weakness of the IR discipline's possessing a largely Western heritage^{xvii} – foregrounds the need to explore specific Malaysian approaches to foreign relations, including regionalism.

With respect to regionalism, Amitav Acharya has made the further suggestion that there may be advantages in analysts working inductively. Rather than “having a set of general theoretical propositions and hypotheses (which tend to derive from European experience)”, he asks whether it might make better sense to “analyse each region on its own merit and then cumulatively generalise what is common and what is different”.^{xviii} A problem here is that for some analysts, it might be said, states are states and they always behave as states wherever they are located or however they are constituted, driven invariably by the quest for power. Many holding this realist approach – as it is called – express a deep scepticism regarding the usefulness of regional institutions such as ASEAN, and a view that regional order can only really be maintained through military means, especially through the balance of power.^{xix} When such analysts do pay attention to regionalism – and Michael Leifer was one distinguished example – their concern appears to be primarily with the success or otherwise of what Leifer called “functionalist endeavours”.^{xx} The region does not seem to be treated on its own merit. In particular, these analysts tend to give little attention to sociological and historical context. Regional institutions are treated somewhat in engineering terms, as exercises in functional design. In the words of one elegant essay on Asian and Asia-Pacific regional institutions, the engineering approach is not to focus “on what we’ve got” but rather “look at what we need”.^{xxi}

It was in this spirit that a former Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, proposed an “Asia Pacific Community” in 2008. His objectives were in some ways admirable. But rather than examining closely what the region had already developed and why, and the various purposes current institutions served – including identity purposes – he proposed a new institution. He claimed the need for this institution in practical, functional terms, saying it would be designed to deal with the “challenges that lie beyond the reach of any single nation-state” – including

climate change, financial turbulence, energy, food security and terrorism. The Asia Pacific Community, according to Rudd, would “engage in the full spectrum of dialogue, cooperation and action”.^{xxii} The practical challenges which Rudd listed do indeed need to be confronted – and the proposal was made with the obvious expectation that the success or otherwise of the Asia Pacific Community would be tested in terms of its capacity to deal with these challenges. It would be judged, therefore, in functionalist terms. Furthermore, the way the Asia Pacific Community was advocated was also almost entirely in such a functionalist register – and this was one reason that it failed to gain support in the Asian region.

We again see this functionalist, practical, task-oriented, results-focused approach to regionalism^{xxiii} in commentaries aiming to improve rather than contest ASEAN – and such an approach will certainly be part of Malaysia’s future attitude towards ASEAN. Those thinking about the practical effectiveness of regional institutions, not surprisingly, tend to be critical of ASEAN’s seeming failures in solving the haze crisis, or in coping effectively with the 1997-1999 Asian economic crisis.^{xxiv} Countering such criticism, however, others have stressed that from a practical perspective it ought to be admitted that Southeast Asia was in turmoil in the 1960s, when ASEAN was created – and the region’s current order and prosperity owe much to this institution. ASEAN, these supporters argue, has had the ability to reduce tension among member states.^{xxv}

From a functionalist point of view ASEAN tends to be defined in terms of what it lacks, particularly when contrasted with European regionalism. Thus, “unlike the European Union (EU)” it is said to be an organisation “with no supranational authority”,^{xxvi} also in contrast to the EU, the participating countries are said not to have been “driven by the urge to restrain sovereignty and nationalism”.^{xxvii} In ASEAN, institutionalised cooperation

has proceeded much more slowly than it has in the EU,^{xxviii} which is “based on French-inspired legal and institutional integration models”^{xxix} A sharp indication of the contrast in institutionalisation between the two organisations is that in 2012 the budget of the European Commission was 280 times larger than that of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.^{xxx}

Looking for positive features that might help characterise ASEAN regionalism, stress tends to be placed on the significance of “informal integration”, including the impact of “production networks, sub-regional economic zones ... and ethnic business networks”.^{xxxi} An alternative view – argued by Lee Poh Ping – is that the formal agreements of ASEAN are vital. ASEAN is “bound together by a web of treaties and documents such as the ASEAN Concord I, ASEAN Concord II, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea and so on”.^{xxxii} Some analysts – members of the increasingly influential Constructivist school of IR – have concentrated on the particular style of interaction within ASEAN, the so-called “ASEAN Way”. This has been a productive approach to the examination of ASEAN. In an attempt to appreciate ASEAN in its own terms, however, it perhaps does not tell us enough about what regionalism may mean to Southeast Asians.

The Constructivist turn has certainly been attentive to the identity of specific regions – stressing, of course, that regions are not physical givens but products of human imagination. The principal focus of their analysis, however, has tended to be on norms and their role in inter-state relations. Constructivist analysts – including Amitav Acharya and the Malaysian scholar Asrul Daniel Ahmed^{xxxiii} – have been especially sensitive to the part norms have played in reducing tension, noting the way the inculcation of norms has socialised the participant states of ASEAN, leading them to alter their behaviour.^{xxxiv} The identification of ASEAN norms, to be sure, does also assist the task of defining ASEAN

regionalism – highlighting, in particular, the ASEAN Way. Apart from insisting on the centrality of ASEAN in the foreign policy of each member state, these norms include a stress on consultation and consensus, a preference for informality and institutional minimalism, the peaceful solving of disputes, and the insistence on non-interference – in state-to-state interaction – in each other’s internal affairs.^{xxxv}

Although this Constructive manner of analysing ASEAN regionalism is helpful in an attempt to stock-take regarding ASEAN – especially in the attention it gives to ideational factors and the actual agency of Southeast Asians in creating their own region^{xxxvi} – it has in one sense not gone far enough. In its own way it still tends to be a functionalist analysis – and an outsider analysis – focused on specific practical impacts of norm-making.^{xxxvii} Even Acharya gives priority to such a practical dimension, insisting (in his major text on “ASEAN and the problem of regional order”) that his main concern is to “analyse systematically the role of ASEAN’s norms in the management of regional order”^{xxxviii} In a more recent essay he complains that in “the past, ASEAN put too much emphasis on ‘ritual’ and style”. Now, he says, ASEAN must “deal with substantive issues, such as AFTA [ASEAN Free Trade Area]”.^{xxxix}

These are important observations, but they do not focus sufficiently on how Southeast Asians themselves view their particular regionalist endeavours – a research objective which, it so happens, the Singapore commentator Kishore Mahbubani has urged recently.^{xl} It is in pursuing this particular objective that sociological and historical context may be valuable. In particular, one needs to ask whether long-term local thinking about “region” and “community” might continue to be influential; and in my view we should also consider more carefully twentieth century Japanese influence on Malaysian and other Southeast Asian thinking. Pursuing these questions may benefit the type of

inductive investigation which Acharya proposes, and also has the potential to contribute to the study of non-Western IR thinking. In attempting a stock-taking exercise on ASEAN, seeking to decide whether it will continue to be the cornerstone of Malaysian policy, it certainly makes sense to interrogate Southeast Asian perceptions – to determine whether there are specifically Southeast Asian, especially Malaysian, approaches to ASEAN regionalism.

Community-building

In this regard, one area which has received surprisingly little theoretical attention is community-building itself. It is ironic perhaps that it is a phrase often encountered in ASEAN statements, and yet seems to have been analytically-neglected. In a good deal of the commentary on ASEAN there would, in fact, appear to be an element of category confusion – again flowing from functionalist preoccupations – and this may have damaged our ability to appreciate the driving importance of community-building. ASEAN activities, initiatives, declarations and other processes are judged primarily in functionalist terms – in a “rationalist, and ‘problem-solving’” register (to quote Frederik Soderbaum, in the recent *Routledge Handbook on Asian Regionalism*).^{xlii} However, although ASEAN actions are judged in this way – assessed as functionalist endeavours – it seems to me that their intended purposes may sometimes not, in fact, be of an immediate, practical, problem-solving type.

In many cases, it is true, ASEAN endeavours have been practical. In the 1970s, as Leifer noted, committees were set up to oversee projects in food production, civilian transport and many other areas.^{xliii} Over the 2015 Malaysia-leadership year we certainly saw plenty of practical action. The Defence Minister was dealing with terrorism, cyber security, and other aspects of military-to-military cooperation;^{xliiii} the Secretary General of the Home Ministry was

working with his ASEAN colleagues on issues relating to drug trafficking, piracy, timber smuggling, and other elements in transnational crime.^{xliv} The Malaysian Auditor-General, it was reported, was seeking to promote consistent audit standards in the region,^{xlv} and the Transport Minister in late 2015 announced a new ASEAN Declaration relating to road safety.^{xlvi} The International Trade and Industry Minister, it is widely acknowledged, was exceptional in his range of functionalist endeavours. Last August the Malaysian Foreign Affairs Minister said that the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) had 229 “action lines”, the Political/Security Community had 147 “action lines” and the Socio-Cultural Community 339 “action lines”.^{xlvii}

This is a formidable range of activity by any standards, but as one reads one report after another – the activities rolling on and on; the Foreign Ministers’ meetings, the Defence Ministers’ meetings, the Economic Ministers’ meetings, the Transport Ministers’ meetings, and then all the many Senior Officials’ meetings, the Civil Service Retreat, the Capital Markets Forum, the ASEAN Higher Education Forum, the ASEAN Youth Human Rights Workshop, and so forth; by certain calculations this seemingly unending series of events achieved the extraordinary total of 1,300 in 2015^{xlviii} – there does seem to be a purpose that reaches beyond functionalist endeavours. The integrating purpose which the government leaders themselves proclaim – and which I think we should listen to – appears to be that of community-building. For all the criticism that the ASEAN venture has not penetrated deeply enough into the wider community, not only is the community-building objective constantly reiterated, but also these hundreds of meetings and projects themselves incorporate many thousands of people across the ASEAN region, including leaders of influence in numerous spheres. ASEAN, through these processes, it can be argued, is being built on talk.

There is nothing hidden about this community-building purpose. The Malaysian leadership has highlighted time and again the building of the regional community. The problem is that political analysts have not thought enough about what they are being told. My own case is relevant here. I had assume, I admit, that in choosing the objective of a “People-Centred ASEAN” for 2015, the Malaysian government was probably rather skilfully directing the attention of political commentators away from the obvious main task for the year – that is the carrying out of the practical reforms necessary to establishing the three pillar Communities of the scheduled ASEAN Community. At the end of Malaysia’s ASEAN year, however, my view has changed. I think I am beginning to comprehend the presence of a specific Malaysian, non-Western IR perspective – and one likely to be of continuing relevance to future Malaysian foreign policy.

When the Malaysian leadership explains in theme-setting speeches that what matters is the creation of a “People-Centred ASEAN” in which “our citizens feel that they are not just part of ASEAN – but that they are ASEAN”;^{xlix} when they speak of the promotion of the ideal of “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”ⁱ (or of “Our Motto, Our Community, Our Vision”);ⁱⁱ when they insist “we are more than just a regional body; we are a family”ⁱⁱⁱ and stress the task of achieving “a united, inclusive, resilient community”, with “enduring solidarity and unity among the people and ASEAN member states”;^{liii} when the Prime Minister says it is “all about us being ASEAN, recognising that something special binds us, feeling that ASEAN is coursing through our veins”^{liv} – when these statements are presented consistently as the overriding purpose of Malaysia’s regionalist endeavours, I think this must be seen as a sincere indication of policy objectives. Assuming this to be the case, it can be argued that we analysts really have to think about the terms in which we assess different governmental initiatives.

For instance, there is a tradition of regional institution analysis that denigrates rhetoric – that dismisses what is called the “talk-shop” aspects of ASEAN regionalism. Some quite distinguished academics are practitioners of this muscular dismissal of ASEAN as a body which talks rather than acts.^{lv} We have even seen that Acharya, in considering what should be ASEAN’s priorities, contrasts ritual and style with what he sees as more important substantive issues. It may be here that we find some category confusion. If one sought to assess a regionalist endeavour primarily in terms of its community-building effectiveness, the criteria for judging that endeavour’s success would be different from those usually cited. The lengthy processes of deliberation, incorporating consensus-finding decision-making, become harder to criticise as mere talk-shop stuff if we review these criteria. In particular, if such processes are judged in terms of their capacity to help build community feeling across ASEAN, if they are believed to promote a sense of ASEAN “we-ness”, this may be more important than whether they bring about some desired, solid practical reform – for instance, in the reduction of non-tariff barriers, or the initiation of a new measure to handle trans-regional crimes. Ritual and style, it might be argued, are important aspects of such processes – and from a community-building perspective we should therefore be wary of dismissing them lightly.^{lvi}

A defining preoccupation?

A question worth asking is whether community-building could be considered a defining preoccupation of ASEAN. Although its importance has certainly been noted by a number of analysts, they have tended to write in the context of developments in the last decade or so.^{lvii} In fact ASEAN community-building seems to have far deeper roots. I have been quoting recent government declarations, but community-building is a very well-established theme in Malaysian foreign policy thinking. Back in 1979 future

Prime Minister Mahathir wrote that a “sense of community is the primary requisite”. This approach, he said, was “foreign to Westerners”, who are “intent on setting up organisations”, “deciding modalities” and “delineating responsibilities”.^{lviii} Much earlier, Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman – when he thought about the creating of a regional body or institution in Southeast Asia – spoke about “the linking between nations of nations within our ethnological and geographical group”.^{lix} His successor, Tun Razak, expressed his vision of “Southeast Asia as a cohesive and coherent unit” and – after the collapse of the anti-Communist regimes in Indo-China – said the “moment has come for that community of Southeast Asia, which has been our dream”^{lx}

The stress on organic community-building is present, it is fair to say, throughout ASEAN’s institutional history. The 1967 Bangkok Declaration – the founding document of ASEAN – spoke of the component ASEAN countries “bind[ing] themselves together in friendship and cooperation”.^{lxi} The 1971 Kuala Lumpur Declaration of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) stated that Southeast Asian countries “should make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship”.^{lxii} The Declaration of ASEAN Concord of 1976 stressed that member states should “vigorously develop an awareness of regional identity and exert all efforts to create a strong ASEAN community”^{lxiii} – a statement that was reaffirmed the next year at the 1977 Kuala Lumpur Summit.^{lxiv} In 1997, the Kuala Lumpur Vision 2020 referred to the ASEAN nations helping one another to “foster a strong sense of community” and envisaged the creation by 2020 of an ASEAN community, which would be “bound by a common regional identity”.^{lxv} The ASEAN-ISIS Concept Paper, which led to the creation of an ASEAN People’s Assembly in 2000, highlighted the objective of promoting a greater awareness of an ASEAN community.^{lxvi} Then, in 2003, ASEAN’s Bali Concord II^{lxvii} declared that the ASEAN Community

would comprise three pillars: political and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural cooperation. In 2007, the decision was made to bring the ASEAN Community into effect by 2015 not 2020. It was not surprising, therefore, that the community-building theme continued strongly into 2015. Looking ahead, however, Malaysian Foreign Affairs Minister Anifah Aman admitted that 2015 would not be the end of “our regional integration process but the beginning of a new era for ASEAN”.^{lxviii}

Looking at major Malaysian statements concerning regionalism, a further question is whether community-building might not just be a long-term Southeast Asian priority, but a particularly Malaysian concern. A few years ago, a team led by Lee Poh Ping suggested that in comparing Malaysian and Indonesian approaches, Malaysia tended to prefer a regionalism that is based on “some concept of community”. Indonesia, the team observed, sees an East Asia grouping as “basically functional in nature”.^{lxix} To argue that the Malaysian preoccupation is exceptional would require detailed comparative work. At this point it may be sufficient to note that community-building has been a persistent and prominent theme in Malaysian thinking about ASEAN – and an appreciation of Malaysian understanding of regionalism is, after all, a critical task if we are to determine what role ASEAN is likely to play in future Malaysian foreign policy.

Thinking further about what Malaysians have been saying, there are at least five observations that I would make about their approach to community-building. They are all observations that could be significant in a stock-taking with respect to ASEAN.

Organic community-building

The first observation has already been anticipated: that is, that the regional community is viewed very much in organic terms. This is a rather singular way of understanding a regional

endeavour – radically different, for instance, from the thinking behind Kevin Rudd’s idea of an Asia Pacific Community. The two approaches are just “ships passing in the night”. The Rudd approach – even more than Indonesian thinking – is an instrumentalist, functionalist approach focused on practical outcomes. The Malaysian approach stresses the organic bonds of community. In understanding this contrast in perspectives, the prominent Malaysian scholar Rahman Embong pointed out in an essay on ASEAN a few years ago that it is helpful to consider a distinction made by the German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies. It is the distinction between *gemeinschaft*, a community based on the sharing of historical values and identity, and *gesellschaft*, an association formed on a contractual basis and not submerging the interests of individuals in the community interest.^{lxx}

Rahman Embong was writing in a book of essays on ASEAN – most of which are concerned to examine “transnational community formation”.^{lxxi} It is a study which asks how cross-border communities, trade diplomacy, initiatives in the private sector and the arts, and a stronger focus on religious identity can influence regional integration – or “ASEAN community consciousness”.^{lxxii} All of the authors in this volume are Malaysians, and it seems to me that their community-building focus – although encouraged by the official ASEAN decision of 2003 to establish an ASEAN Community – is an indication of the longstanding nature of this Malaysian preoccupation.^{lxxiii}

Turning to statements from political leaders, this *gemeinschaft* understanding of community – this more organic understanding – is present when the Malaysian Prime Minister speaks of ASEAN “coursing through our veins”, or of ASEAN being “more than a regional body – we are a family”. It was there when Prime Minister Mahathir spoke of “we Asians”,^{lxxiv} or when the Tunku referred to our “ethnological and geographical group”. It was thought through by the creative pioneer statesman, Ghazali

Shafie, a giant in the formulation of Malaysian foreign policy. He several times referred to the Malay tendency to “gather together”, village-like (*kampong*-like) – to “*berkampong*”, as he put it – as a deep-seated Malay preference, what might be called a reference point in the Malay cultural heritage.^{lxxv} This communitarian, organic, *gemeinschaft* view of regional community was also present when Ghazali Shafie argued that the bamboo plant gives guidance to humanity. A bamboo standing alone, he recalled, can be easily broken by a gust of wind; but when growing in a protective cluster it is safe.^{lxxvi}

I will not pursue the point here, but in the writings of the pre-colonial Malay world, the world of the sultanates, we see this organic understanding of community in the attention given to building state-to-state relationships – royal court-to-royal court relationships – involving aspirations of deep friendship; we see it in the royal letter-writing of the time and in the Malay *hikayat* texts; it is present in the use of such strong terms for bonding as *berkasih-kasih* (mutual, continuing affection, or love) and *muafakat* (common understanding).^{lxxvii} It is present too in the use of kinship terminology when one ruler addressed another, whether they were related by blood ties or not (even a European governor or ruler might be called “father” or “brother”).^{lxxviii} There appears to have been little or no distinction between internal and external community-building. It was pursued not only in relations between polities but also took place within the cosmopolitan port-polities of pre-modern times^{lxxix} – just as community-building has been a dominant preoccupation of the multi-ethnic, post-British Malaya/Malaysian state.

Community-Security

The second observation I want to make about the Malaysian understanding of region building is that it is perceived to have strong and immediate security implications. The connection

between community-building and the achieving of security is evident in Ghazali Shafie's emphasis on the way the clump of bamboo can survive while the single plant is always vulnerable. To get at how deeply-held this community-security nexus is in Malay thinking, we need to attend carefully to the words used by policy makers and analysts. In this regard it may be more than a coincidence that the Malaysian Defence Minister, Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, has been prominent among Malaysian leaders in referring to the spirit of ASEAN solidarity and the need to build ASEAN into a single entity, a "community of shared destinies". He insists that the saying "united we stand, divided we fall" symbolises the close relationship between ASEAN countries, and that the destinies of all 10 are "intertwined".^{lxxx} On another occasion, Hishammuddin spoke of raising "ASEAN solidarity to a higher level."^{lxxxi} At a glance one might assume that the Defence Minister has been reaching beyond his administrative portfolio, drifting into the territory of ASEAN's Socio-Cultural Community – but I think that is wrong. He has in fact been invoking a fundamental assumption in Malaysian foreign policy thinking about the dynamic nexus between community-building and security. In his way, the Defence Minister has been reminding us that community-building, and indeed the whole socio-cultural project of ASEAN – and the 2015 theme of a "People-Centred ASEAN" – has been no mere public-pleasing afterthought. It is absolutely fundamental.

The assumed nexus between community-building and security is certainly present in prime-ministerial speeches. It was present in Prime Minister Najib's speech in November 2015, when he compared the chaotic Southeast Asia of the 1960s and 1970s with the order and prosperity today. This magnificent transformation, said the Prime Minister, was "because of ASEAN".^{lxxxii} This claim, one senses, was thought to require no further elaboration. In 2005, Abdullah Badawi declared that if ASEAN was to "become a truly strong cohesion" then "it must involve people at all

levels”.^{lxxxiii} Two decades ago, Prime Minister Mahathir insisted that “our ultimate defence” is “our willingness to stay together”.^{lxxxiv} Tun Razak, on his part, argued that “we cannot survive for long as independent but isolated peoples. We must act together and prove we belong to a family of Southeast Asian nations”.^{lxxxv}

Looking through some of the writings of the analysts outside government – analysts who have often helped to develop effective government policy – one finds Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee of ISIS Malaysia reflecting on how “an ASEAN sense of community contributes to the security of the ASEAN community”.^{lxxxvi} He saw things in family terms, noting too that the tensions of the 1960s and 1970s occurred before there developed an ASEAN sense of community – a sense of community that prevented a situation in which any member state could feel “psychologically isolated”.^{lxxxvii} No ASEAN nation, Noordin said, could be “truly secure unless it is cradled in an ASEAN environment of warm and cooperative peace”.^{lxxxviii} Here, without doubt, is an organic, *gemeinschaft* view of community.

Some Malaysian analyses, I should say, have reflected on exactly how the sense of community promotes security. Noordin argued that it does so “in a myriad of ways”. He said that “members of the same family are more open to give and take” – not so fast in “flying off the handle” with each other. Without ASEAN “there would not today be the level and intimacy of bilateral intelligence and military cooperation”; there would be “more problems arising out of the delineation of territorial seas”. The “ASEAN process”, he argued, had “created a sturdy structure of trust”^{lxxxix} The “ASEAN spirit” is “as solid as it is physically hard to see. It has built up a substantial structure of mutual understanding, predictability, confidence, trust and goodwill between the member states”.^{xc} The particular issue of trust has been focused on by Noordin’s successor at ISIS Malaysia, Mohamed Jawhar Hassan,

who has expressed the view that “strong regional processes require some level of regional identity and consciousness”.^{xcⁱ} In his assessment, ASEAN’s “comprehensive model of community-building” has “created a sound foundation for trust-building”. The “sense of community” is fostered by “habits of regular dialogue”, “functional cooperation”, “development assistance” and “mutual assistance in times of humanitarian crisis” – and, in turn, this “sense of community” is the basis for enhancing “mutual trust”.^{xcⁱⁱ}

The Chair of the CIMB ASEAN Research Institute (CARI), Tan Sri Dr Munir Majid, has used the example of the English-speaking nations – the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand – to argue for the security benefits of community-building. These countries, he points out, have not lost their individual national sovereignty and yet their “close relationship” means they are unlikely to go to war. They form a “security community” which “holds true and fast”.^{xcⁱⁱⁱ} Elsewhere, in focusing on the creation of a “credible ASEAN community”, Munir has argued that the “progress of communities” is “largely determined by functional integration in the economic field”. In this respect, “a community cannot survive for long ... if there are unsustainable disparities within it (Singapore GDP per capita is over 50 times that of Cambodia)”.^{xc^{iv}} The priority in this observation is important to note. It is not the economic or development objective. As in his reference to the Anglosphere, it is community-building: functional integration is not merely valued for its own sake.^{xc^v}

This type of detailed examination of the way an organic community can assist security deserves careful attention in itself as part of a study of Malaysian foreign policy thinking. But my impression is that whatever is said in detailed explanation, we have here in this community-security nexus a deep-seated, taken-for-granted assumption of great potency. It is perhaps an example of what Amitav Acharya has termed a “cognitive prior” – an

“existing normative framework” or “set of ideas, belief systems, and norms”. Acharya sees certain cognitive priors in Southeast Asia as having played a role in the way Western ideas about security have been adopted and adapted in the region;^{xcvi} and he notes too that cognitive priors in any society are unlikely to be static. They themselves are products of history.

In the case of community-security and perhaps other cognitive priors, an issue is how deeply one needs to explore in order to determine how such norms became embedded. Acharya concentrates on influential developments taking place in the decade following the Pacific War – in particular the drafting of the UN Charter and the Asia-Africa Conference of 1955;^{xcvii} but also, in certain cases, he notes the likely influence of longer-established cultural forms. In the development of the ASEAN Way of consensus-making, for instance, he takes note of the “particular style of decision-making within Javanese village society”.^{xcviii} In the case of the Malaysian community-security preoccupation, I have noted how writings from pre-colonial Malay courts suggest a persistent determination to build lasting bonds of emotion (*berkasih-kasih*) and understanding (*muafakat*) with other rulers – and these included more powerful and potentially dangerous rulers, such as the Ottoman Sultan or the Dutch.^{xcix} Confronting the rising power of the English in Southeast Asia in the early 1800s, a ruler of Kedah wrote to the Governor-General of Bengal, referring to the “stake of friendship” that his father had forged with the English, and insisting that Kedah and the British island of Penang should be seen to “exist as one entity”.^c

Care must be taken to avoid an essentialist interpretation of modern-day foreign-relations preferences – insisting on a direct trajectory extending back to a pre-colonial “other”. Nevertheless, some features of pre-modern thinking may at least have been reference points in the constituting of cognitive priors. In the Malaysian case, both the organic understanding of community,

and the implicit link between community and security, seem to be influential cognitive priors – informed to some extent by inter-polity behaviour in an earlier era.

National sovereignty

A third aspect of regional community-building, which ought to be taken account of in a stock-taking on ASEAN, concerns the concept of national sovereignty. Here I know my observations will attract criticism because they run strongly against the grain of current assessments of ASEAN. It seems to me that the importance of national sovereignty in Malaysian and some other Southeast Asian thinking about foreign relations has been overstated. One analyst after another has referred, in Michael Leifer's words, to national sovereignty being "at the very heart of the origins and the international life of ASEAN";^{ci} or to quote Frank Frost, Southeast Asian leaders have been "seeking to strengthen their national sovereignty, not to share it".^{cii} In the recent Routledge Press *Handbook of Asian Regionalism*, Sean Narine emphasises that "from its creation" ASEAN has been "dedicated to protecting the sovereignty of its member states"^{ciii} On its part, Nicholas Tarling's very useful history of Southeast Asian regionalism ends by pointing out that the nation-state – which emerged from the world of European imperialism – has been "the institution of 'central concern' in the region."^{civ}

There can be no doubt that the nation-state has been important, and that it owes much to the impact of European (and American) colonial rule in Southeast Asia. It seems also to have been the case that the Southeast Asian national regimes emerging from colonial domination in the 1940s and 1950s often spoke in the prevailing international, political language of that time. To do so facilitated communication with the departing – but still influential – colonial powers; it also helped gain international credibility for these new states in their founding years. The

concept of national sovereignty was prominent in that political language, and it was all the more useful as a concept at a time when these post-colonial regimes were engaged in negotiations to consolidate the territorial definition and rights of their states.

Accepting this, however, it may be important to recall that there is nothing indigenous about the concept of national sovereignty in Southeast Asia. There was, for instance, no close equivalent to sovereignty in pre-colonial Malay writings.^{cv} It is an imported concept, and as such we should perhaps be wary of overestimating its continuing capacity to place limits on the development of the ASEAN community. This is not the place to go deeply into this question, but when one reads ASEAN leaders referring to the blood of ASEAN “flowing through our veins”, or the promotion of an ASEAN family feeling – when we see aspirations towards an organic, *gemeinschaft* community^{cv} – I think more about Japanese influence on Southeast Asia, not European colonial state-making processes. I think of the narrative of Japanese regional thinking – of the theoreticians who over a long period promoted the concepts of an “East Asian Common Culture”, “Asian solidarity”, an “Asian race”, “Greater Asianism”, “East Asian Federation”, “All Asian Association”, “Pan-Asian Conferences”, and so forth – which influenced political and social thinking in India and Southeast Asia, and has received too little scholarly attention.^{cvi} This narrative goes back to the nineteenth century, long before Japan took over the administration of virtually the whole of Southeast Asia in the 1940s – uniting the region in a political sense; it goes back, for instance, to Japanese “Asianist” support for Aguinaldo’s struggle against the United States in the Philippines in 1898,^{cvi} and to the growing influence of a Japanese “pan-Asian vision ... of world order” following Japan’s startling military victory over Russia in 1905.^{cix}

Many of the early Southeast Asian leaders who came together to plan regional cooperation in the first decades after the Pacific War were quite familiar with Japanese thinking^{cx} – Malaysia’s Tun Razak and Ghazali Shafie, for instance, spent a period as propaganda officers under the Japanese^{cxii} – and although Japan itself was discredited in the war, the emerging regionalist aspirations in Southeast Asia do seem to have reflected Japanese regionalist thinking. If the creation of nation-states in Southeast Asia owed much to colonial rule, as Tarling and others insist,^{cxiii} the question might be asked whether the project of regional community-building is to a certain extent a Japanese achievement. That said, there would appear also to have been other local influences at work.

Looking back much further, to the early history of the Malay world and other parts of Southeast Asia, as I explained in my first Tun Hussein Onn Lecture,^{cxiii} also helps to create a different historical narrative for ASEAN, countering the highlighting of sovereignty concerns.^{cxiv} In the pre-colonial period, the tradition of foreign relations thinking in this region was not imprisoned in nation-state categories, with an insistence on state-to-state equality and clear territorial boundaries. It is in some ways a more relaxed tradition that modern Southeast Asia inherits – accepting hierarchy, comfortable to some extent with what we might today call overlapping-sovereignty, and not specifically preoccupied with defending territorial boundaries. We need to consider carefully that more relaxed approach to foreign relations in respect not only to Malaysia’s ASEAN region-building. Appreciating this particular foreign relations style may also throw light on Malaysia’s carefully-modulated handling of South China Sea issues, or its relatively laid-back response to what most societies would see as extraordinarily large-scale immigration.^{cxv} It may help as well to explain Malaysia’s seeming sovereignty tolerance in operating joint development zones with neighbouring states.^{cxvi} It seems to me, therefore, that we do not need today to give such a profound

prominence to a sovereign nation-state narrative – a narrative that insists, as such a narrative is likely to do, that ASEAN can never develop beyond nation-state interests, that it will always be limited in its development by sovereignty anxieties and can never become a powerful regional entity.

In putting this argument for a less pronounced analytical stress on sovereignty concerns in Southeast Asian contexts, I do want to make an important qualification, an important distinction. Although sovereignty is an imported concept in Malaysian and Southeast Asian political thinking, the idea of non-interference in one's domestic affairs is a very well established notion – one, as Robin Ramcharan has noted, that is “pervasive in ASEAN documents”.^{cxvii} It may be significant that although the term “sovereignty” does not appear in the founding document of ASEAN – the ASEAN Declaration of 1967 – there is reference to “external interference” as being a danger to “national identities”.^{cxviii} Non-interference has certainly been invoked by modern Malaysian policy makers – for instance, by former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Dr Ismail in 1968,^{cxix} and former Deputy Prime Minister Musa Hitam in 1985.^{cxx} I also have the impression that several analysts from Malaysia, unlike most foreign analysts, do tend to put greater stress on the non-interference principle in their writing rather than the principle of national sovereignty.^{cxxi}

With respect to the origins of non-interference, Acharya observes it was a “well-established principle of the modern Westphalian state system”, which predated ASEAN. He notes its importance in the United Nations Charter and the Bandung Conference of 1955.^{cxxii} It goes back much further than that in the Malay world, however, and possesses a significance quite independent of the Westphalian context. Time and again we find in old writings – Malay *hikayat* – the warning that customs differ from one society to another, and that local custom (*adat*) must be respected. Even when one ruler gains authority over another, he is warned not

to interfere with the local *adat* of the new vassal.^{cxxiii} Also, in the correspondence relating to the sultanate of Kedah's relations with the ruler of Siam during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is clear that the Kedah ruler does not complain about sending tribute to Siam. He does not resist having to operate in a hierarchy, but he certainly does complain when he considers that the Bangkok ruler is attempting to interfere with local custom.^{cxxiv}

Recognising this non-interference tradition, it is not at all surprising to find that the Malaysian leaders' speeches today on ASEAN express the need to respect the political and social diversity of the region. But respect for diversity, and a clear determination to move incrementally in ASEAN in bringing change (moving in a way that always seeks consensus, and takes pains not to offend local perspectives and interests) – such a commitment to a sensitive, community-building approach is by no means the same thing as a dogged defence of national sovereignty. It presents nowhere the same obstacle to region-building – to the creation of a true regional community, with enhanced regional institutions and a greater sense of regional “we-ness” – that the national sovereignty narrative presents.

Making this distinction between sovereignty defence on the one hand and the insistence on non-interference on the other – seeing the non-interference norm as the key cognitive prior (to use Acharya's expression discussed above) – would seem to me to offer stronger grounds for optimism regarding the prospects for ASEAN as a regional community.

Target region

The fourth aspect of community-building which I would identify – in this stock-taking regarding ASEAN – concerns the implication of a *gemeinschaft*, organic understanding of community-building for how Malaysia, in its future international endeavours, is likely to

define its regions of primary and secondary concern. The organic approach seems to me to demand that after ASEAN, Malaysia's regional priority must continue to be East Asia and not some wider Asia-Pacific or Indo-Pacific entity. It was Malaysia under Prime Minister Mahathir that proposed an "East Asian Economic Grouping" in 1990;^{cxxv} and Mahathir expressed opposition to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and also to the involvement of Australia in East Asian regional processes. Europeans "call themselves European", commented Mahathir, why should we not be "East Asians"? We "are told that we must call ourselves Pacific people".^{cxxvi} This was a difficult period in Malaysian-Australian relations, but it must be said that Mahathir's views were to a large extent consistent with those of various other Malaysian commentators. Even Tunku Abdul Rahman had stressed "our ethnological and geographical group" as a basis for region-building. With his organic view of community-building, Ghazali Shafie saw APEC as lacking the "togetherness" of an "East Asian" organisation: he asked how "can APEC be a genuine 'togetherness' when different members have different visions and paradigms ...?"^{cxxvii} Noordin Sopiee feared that the rise of APEC would frustrate the task of community-building in ASEAN – could "undermine ASEAN cohesion".^{cxxviii}

Looking back in time, Malaysia has resisted a series of Asia-Pacific endeavours – for instance, the Asia Pacific Council of the 1960s and earlier, the United States-led Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO);^{cxxix} after APEC there was Australian Prime Minister Rudd's widely-unpopular proposal for an Asia Pacific Community. What the Malaysians have consistently privileged is "Southeast Asian", "East Asian", and "Asian" identity. In doing so, they inherit a tradition of thinking which goes back a century or more, as I have said, to the promotion of an Asian ideal and consciousness, influenced in part by Japanese thinking.

The building of Asian and Southeast Asian regionalism, therefore, has momentum – momentum as a community-building process. The resistance to the “Asia-Pacific”, it should be stressed, seems only to be a resistance to the Asia-Pacific as an ideal – as an appropriate cluster of peoples for priority community-building. There appears to be no definite hostility to the individual member countries of the so-called Asia-Pacific. It is pertinent to note here that it was at the second ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1977 that dialogue relations between ASEAN and the United States and the European Economic Community were formalised;^{cxxx} in 2005, apart from strengthening the institutional support for the biennial Asia-Europe Meetings (ASEM) (initiated in 1996).^{cxxxi} Malaysia was also the host for the first EAS, which included India, Australia and New Zealand – and would later welcome the United States and Russia. In 2006 Malaysian Defence Minister Najib coined the phrase “ADMM-Plus” for the Defence Ministers’ meeting that would bring together ASEAN Defence Ministers with Defence Ministers from other EAS countries;^{cxxxii} in 2015 the Malaysian-led “Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Tenth Anniversary of the EAS” included details of measures designed to strengthen the role and operations of the Summit. In all these ways Malaysia has been reaching out beyond Southeast Asia and East Asia – but community-building is something different.

In thinking about current regional architecture, the distinction in approach to Asia on the one hand, and the Asia-Pacific on the other, is certainly apparent when we compare the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) process to that of the EAS. The APT is presented as a further stage in region-building, in organic community-building. Glancing through the material on the ASEAN Website^{cxxxiii} is instructive. The official documentation of the APT refers frequently to “building an East Asian community” – for instance in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 2005, and the Chairman’s Statement for the 16th APT Summit of 2013. Prime Minister Najib talked of the APT in precisely this way at the end of 2015.^{cxxxiv}

By contrast the documentation from the EAS – with its far wider membership – portrays this other process (for instance in the 2015 Declaration) as a “forum for dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest”^{cxxxv}

The EAS is potentially an enormously important institution, bringing together all the major players in this part of the world, while giving a voice to the smaller countries; but this ASEAN-led institution – at least at this stage – is not a community-building endeavour. This certainly appears to be the Malaysian view.

Mousedeer diplomacy

The fifth and final point I want to make in this ASEAN stock-taking is that ASEAN community-building is a strategy for a “small country” – but a “small country” that seeks a wide international presence. The community-building priority – Southeast Asian, then East Asian – is not a retreat from the wider world. It does not imply a denial of the wider world. It is a way of dealing with that world, and I suspect it is a strategy that will be useful for a long time to come. The perception of Malaysia as a small country seems to be a departure point in Malaysian thinking about foreign affairs. Prime Ministers Tunku Abdul Rahman and Mahathir both called Malaysia a small country,^{cxxxvi} so has Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi.^{cxxxvii} In recent times, when Prime Minister Najib called Malaysia a small country, he added that it is also “deft and nimble”.^{cxxxviii} I am struck by the easy use of the word “small” partly because I recall a particular Australian leader who felt that Australia was demeaned by being referred to merely as a “middle power”.^{cxxxix}

Malaysian leaders it would appear have no such lofty ambitions – and yet the idea of “small” and “nimble” is obviously intended to have positive connotations. It is associated in Malaysian prime-ministerial speeches with the observation

that Malaysia is a major trading nation – a country with a trade far larger than its GDP might suggest (ranked among the top 25 trading nations in the world), and a trading country which needs to reach out in all directions to the international community.^{cxli} This reaching out, this openness to the world, is displayed not only in commerce but also in Malaysia’s high profile in United Nations work (the frequency of its terms on the Security Council and participation in peacekeeping),^{cxli} or even long ago in the particular way Malaysia, in contrast to Indonesia, viewed the ASEAN strategic initiative – the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN, which was signed in Kuala Lumpur in 1971).^{cxlii} It was Malaysia, one should recall, that was the first ASEAN country to engage the Communist regimes of Indo-China and the first to recognise Communist China. The Malaysian campaign for an “East Asian Economic Grouping” in the early 1990s was an initiative focused on China, Japan and South Korea;^{cxliii} and I have already mentioned Malaysia’s role in developing ASEAN dialogue relations with the West, and in initiating the EAS.^{cxliiv}

The “small” and “nimble” label, it might also be suggested, conjures up an earlier indigenous image in Malaysian thinking: that of the mousedeer. Prime Minister Hussein Onn once portrayed Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries as mousedeer, caught in the struggle between major powers – the struggle between large elephants.^{cxliv} The wily mousedeer, as many Malaysians know, is the small creature in Malay literature and legend that – conscious of his small size – uses his wits in employing all types of strategies to deal with larger animals.^{cxlvi} One option for a small state, of course, is to attempt to balance power – to work against the major states in its region. A great deal of IR analysis, as I have said, sees states as being involved in an inevitable struggle for power and balancing of power – and there is clearly an element of this in Malaysian foreign policy

today, particularly in the way it deals with China, the United States and other major powers.

In my first Tun Hussein Onn Lecture, however, I noted that Malaysia also gives the impression of being influenced by a concept of “moral balance” (a possible definition of *wasatiyyah*) – by a desire to avoid alliances with major powers, to achieve equi-distance in its major-power relations and some form of neutrality. I took seriously the statement by one Malaysian leader after another that Malaysia wants to be “friends with everyone”. Far from being a facile claim, I thought that this desire to build friendships on every side reveals a moral preference – a preference which gives the impression of being just as instinctual as the will to power or the urge to balance power.^{cxlvii}

In today’s lecture I am seeking to draw attention to another tendency in Malaysian foreign policy thinking – another apparently instinctual, taken-for-granted cognitive prior. This is the tendency to “embrace” – to respond not only to neighbouring states but also to major powers or rising powers through the building of relationships, the fostering of friendship. It is a “mousedeer” strategy which – at least from my outsider’s perspective – would seem to have the capacity to promote both security and prosperity. It takes the form of community-building in the immediate neighbourhood – aspiring to be part of a bamboo cluster, not to stand alone – and then community-building in the larger neighbourhood (in this case, East Asia, the APT states). The modern Malaysian leadership may envisage the possibility of the process eventually moving much further afield, as far as the United States and Europe; but that would be a very long-term plan. It is an incremental process, then, starting with the creation of an ASEAN community, an ASEAN cluster – and, furthermore, it is a process implemented not only in the case of modern Malaysia but also, in a sense, in the way pre-colonial Malay polities operated long ago.

The old Malay texts – the *hikayat* – show the rulers of the small cosmopolitan kingdoms on the Peninsula and the different islands of the Malay Archipelago reaching out to one another – and after that to Majapahit and other states on Java; then to Siam, China and India, and after that to the rising powers, the Dutch and British. Engaging with one another, these Archipelago rulers created close personal relations (*berkasih-kasih*) – a sense of community, it could be said – through a rich diplomatic language and diplomatic ritual. Language and ritual were indeed “substantive” matters. Then these royal courts looked further afield, as I have suggested with reference to the Ottomans and the British – seeking once more to build relationships of enduring and powerful affection (again, *berkasih-kasih*); seeking, it would seem, to embrace rather than to resist.

Such a pre-colonial experience of statecraft offered – like deeply-rooted assumptions about the safety inherent in village “togetherness” – a reference point for the developing of a particular, modern Malaysian approach to foreign relations. The leaders of the new nation gained much from the political thinking and political language of the outgoing colonial regime, as well as from post-war deliberations in the United Nations, Bandung Conference, and so forth – and I have stressed the influence of Japan over many decades. But they would also have been familiar with this local and relatively ancient heritage of ideas regarding inter-polity relations.

Concluding comments

Examining the issue of whether ASEAN is likely to remain pivotal in Malaysia’s foreign relations has involved trying to understand exactly what ASEAN has meant to the Malaysian leadership. There are indications of a distinctive foreign policy approach or framework in operation – a sharp emphasis on community, a particular view of region-building and relationship-building more

generally; a preference for embracing rather than resisting, even when facing possible danger; an assumption about the implicit security advantage in community; a preference for organic community-building and not merely a sovereignty-protecting, narrowly functionalist approach to regionalism. There would appear to be a particular view also of the role community-building can play in a wider international strategy.

This particular stress on community-building, it might be argued, was one ingredient in a characteristically Malaysian – non-Western – approach to foreign relations. Appreciating the importance of this distinctive perspective, it might also be suggested, can also help us to understand ASEAN regionalism on its own merit. Alongside the lack of institutionalisation, the importance of informal networks, the web of treaties and documents and the ASEAN Way, this preoccupation with community-building appears to be a distinctive feature of ASEAN.

Whether or not this ASEAN-based community-building strategy – underpinned by deeply-held cognitive priors – will be of ultimate benefit to Malaysia may be open to debate. In my more Western-influenced understanding of IR, it does seem to have advantages for a self-defined, small country with wide and in some ways dangerous horizons. It may, in fact, prove to be a strategy that is at least as successful as the US-alliance strategy to which my own country has adhered over the last 60 years. But in the context of my stock-taking regarding the future role of ASEAN in Malaysian foreign policy – and my attempt to achieve a long view, looking back and looking forward – what I want to emphasise here is that community-building, region-building, certainly appears to be a pronounced priority in Malaysian approaches to IR. Partly because it is a priority with deep roots in the Malay past, it is likely to retain its influence at least in the near and medium future.

Community-building is an approach that Malaysia followed, more or less, in the dangerous years of the Cold War, when the struggle between the major powers was a continuing threat to the Southeast Asian region. In the years ahead, faced by other forms of major power rivalry in this part of the world, I would expect Malaysia to continue to treat ASEAN as the cornerstone of its foreign policy: to continue the building of an organic regional community first in the Southeast Asian context, and then increasingly in the East Asian region. This is what the Malaysian leadership says it will do – and it is a strategy for a small country that probably deserves a little more attention in scholarly writing, particularly now when there is a developing interest in the study of non-Western approaches to IR.

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ⁱ I am grateful to Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob and Astanah Banu Shri Abdul Aziz of the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for advice regarding a number of aspects of this lecture. Apart from advice from my ISIS Malaysia colleagues, I would also like to thank Azirah Hashim and Lee Poh Ping at the University of Malaya.

ⁱⁱ See the praise by the distinguished commentator – Kavi Chongkittavorn – of Malaysia’s handling of its chair role in 2015: <http://www.nst.com.my/news/2015/11/113244/asean-job-well-done-malaysia?m=1>. I know that key Australian officials, for instance, were warm in their praise for Malaysia’s constructive leadership.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://carum.info/activities/aei-jpas-carum-roundtable-on-transboundary-haze-pollution/>.

^{iv} See especially Eric C. Thompson and Chulanee Thianthai, *Attitudes and Awareness Towards ASEAN: Findings of a Ten Nation Survey*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2008.

^v Steven Wong, “‘Aseanness’ still a long way off”, *New Straits Times*, 26 August 2014.

^{vi} See, for instance, from ISIS Malaysia: Rastam Mohd Isa, “Measures to ensure a people-centred ASEAN”, *New Straits Times*, 28 July 2015; and Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, “Communicating with the ASEAN Community”, *New Straits Times*, 12 November 2014. Also note the regular, thoughtful commentaries from Tan Sri Dr Munir Majid, Chairman of CARI in *The Star* newspaper.

^{vii} See, for instance, the interview with Foreign Affairs Minister Anifah Aman: “Asean is growing stronger”, *New Straits Times*, 15 November 2015. See also Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob, “Malaysia’s chairmanship of Asean”, *New Straits Times*, 2 October 2014. The author was the director-general of the ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat (AMNS) in the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

^{viii} “ASEAN on right track to establish bloc by year end: Anifah”, *Daily Express*, 19 November 2015.

^{ix} “A new phase in region’s vision”, *New Straits Times*, 23 November 2015.

^x <http://www.asean.org/storage/2015/12/KL-Declaration-on-ASEAN-2025-Forging-Ahead-Together.pdf>.

^{xi} Prime Minister Najib, Keynote Address, National Colloquium on Malaysia’s Chairmanship of ASEAN 2015, 8 April 2014: <https://www.kln.gov.my/archive/content.php?t=4&articleId=3848364>.

^{xii} Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa, commenting on the 2015 Boao Forum, has noted that the message from Chinese ministers, officials and scholars was that “China is now prepared to shoulder its responsibilities in promoting and maintaining global peace and pursuing common development, based on a new type of international relations”, *New Straits Times*, 14 April 2015.

- ^{xiii} Speech by HE Mr Liu Zhenmin, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, at the dinner sponsored by the Ministry of National Defense, China, 19 October 2015: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1306891.shtml. See also, Anthony Milner, "A More Confident China and Its Claim to Regional Leadership", *Asian Politics and Policy* 8, no. 2 (2016): 342-343.
- ^{xiv} Fu Ying, "Can East Asia carry on the momentum of regional cooperation?", *The Straits Times*, 16 November 2015.
- ^{xv} "The New Silk Road: History in the re-making", Royal Address by His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, Sultan of the State of Perak, Malaysia, at the World Chinese Economic Summit, Savoy Hotel, London, 8 November 2015. See also "New Silk Road will remake history", *New Straits Times*, 12 November 2015.
- ^{xvi} <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/604750/carter-asia-pacific-will-continue-to-rise-with-strong-security-architecture>.
- ^{xvii} Acharya and Buzan 2010; Acharya 2014b; Tickner and Waever 2009.
- ^{xviii} Acharya 2014a: 82.
- ^{xix} In the Southeast Asia context, see in particular, Leifer 1999. See the discussion in Eaton and Stubbs 2006: 129; also, Mearsheimer 2001.
- ^{xx} Chin and Suryadinata 2005: 78.
- ^{xxi} Gyngell 2015: 418.
- ^{xxii} Kevin Rudd, "It's time to build an Asia Pacific Community", address to the Asia Society AustralAsia Centre, Sydney, 4 June 2008; see Lee and Milner 2014.
- ^{xxiii} For a helpful recent overview of approaches to regionalism, see Soderbaum 2012.
- ^{xxiv} See, for instance, the eloquent critique in Cotton 2006. The criticisms, however, are confronted in very numerous analyses. See, for instance, Narine 2015: 173-174.
- ^{xxv} See, for instance, Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 2006: 200-201; also Kishore Mahbubani, cited in Acharya 2009: 294; Beeson and Stubbs 2012: 425.
- ^{xxvi} Eliassen and Arnesen 2007: 213.
- ^{xxvii} Wunderlich 2007: 160.
- ^{xxviii} Eliassen and Arnesen 2007: 214.
- ^{xxix} *Ibid*, 207.
- ^{xxx} ADB Institute 2015: 187.
- ^{xxxi} Eliassen and Arnesen 2007: 213-214.
- ^{xxxii} Lee 2008: 105. According to B.A. Hamzah, "Asean not only survives on diplomacy, it thrives on diplomacy" (1989: 1).
- ^{xxxiii} Asrul 2015: 9, 64.
- ^{xxxiv} Acharya 2009: 9, 214, 292; see also Johnston 1999: 324 on the role of the ASEAN Regional Forum in making "realpolitik clashes of power and interest ... less legitimate";

also Acharya and Johnston 2007: 268; Jetschke 2012: 333, 335; Haacke 2005: 219; Eaton and Stubbs 2006: 140.

^{xxxv} Musa Hitam, cited in Acharya 2009: 85; S. Jayakumar, cited in Acharya 2009: 140; Noordin Sopiee 1995: 180-193.

^{xxxvi} Acharya 2014a: 79.

^{xxxvii} For instance, see Acharya's stress on the "regulatory impact" of norms (2009: 292). See also the tests he applies to ASEAN. He praises its "instrumental role" in bringing peace to Cambodia (287), and notes approvingly comments suggesting that ASEAN deserves credit for the "absence of war" in Southeast Asia (294). He worries about ASEAN's capacity to deal with "financial volatility, environmental degradation or terrorism" (297). He writes optimistically of the potential for "multilateralism" as a "necessary instrument for ensuring that the rise of China is peaceful" (289).

^{xxxviii} *Ibid.*, 9.

^{xxxix} *Ibid.*, 295. He calls for the developing of "better indicators of the 'effectiveness' of regional institutions, including both qualitative and quantitative indicators of the regional public goods that are provided by formal and informal regionalisms. These indicators would cover a range of practical areas as well as trade and security (Acharya 2015: 27).

^{xl} I recently saw a widely-circulated note from the Singapore commentator Kishore Mahbubani, complaining that writing on ASEAN tends to give too little attention to what Southeast Asians themselves say about ASEAN, 12 August 2015, email letter to Amitav Acharya, and many others. In fact, Acharya has taken seriously the views of Southeast Asians: see, for example, Acharya 2009 and 2009a. It is true that the otherwise impressive *Routledge Handbook of Asian Regionalism* (Beeson and Stubbs 2012) includes relatively few authors from the Asian region. There has also been useful work done comparing constructivist and neo-realist approaches to ASEAN regionalism – see, for example, Eaton and Stubbs 2006 – and rigorous analysis of this type might also be employed fruitfully in examining a range of Asian approaches.

^{xli} Soderbaum 2012: 14. In the same volume, Jetschke's essay (2012) on ASEAN is explicit in examining the strength or otherwise of both economic and security cooperation in ASEAN. Dosch and Mols 1994: 214 draw up a "balance-sheet of ASEAN's achievements".

^{xlii} Chin and Suryadinata 2005: 78-96.

^{xliii} See, for instance, "Asean must work together to tackle threats", *New Straits Times*, 16 March 2015.

^{xliiv} "Asean renewing drive against transnational crime", *New Straits Times*, 29 September 2015.

^{xliiv} "Focus on transparency", *New Straits Times*, 9 February 2015.

^{xlii} "ASEAN aims to lower road fatalities by 50pc", *New Straits Times*, 7 November 2015.

^{xlvii} "Significant progress in blueprints", *New Straits Times*, 2 August 2015.

^{xlviii} The number, of course, depends on how meetings are classified. I am grateful to Astanah Abdul Aziz, Deputy Director-General, AMNS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, for advice in calculating the number of meetings. The *New Straits Times* is a helpful source for reports on all these 2015 ASEAN developments.

^{xlix} Opening Address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia at the 48th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 4 August 2015: <http://www.asean.org/opening-address-by-yab-dato-sri-mohd-najib-tun-abdul-razak-prime-minister-of-malaysia-at-the-48th-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting-kuala-lumpur-malaysia/>. For the added significance of using "people-centred" rather than merely "people-oriented", see Nesadurai 2012: 173.

^l Opening Address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia at the 48th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 4 August 2015: <http://www.asean.org/opening-address-by-yab-dato-sri-mohd-najib-tun-abdul-razak-prime-minister-of-malaysia-at-the-48th-asean-foreign-ministers-meeting-kuala-lumpur-malaysia/>.

^{li} Ibid; "PM: We will bring ASEAN closer to the people", *New Straits Times*, 14 November 2014.

^{lii} "PM: We will bring ASEAN closer to the people", *New Straits Times*, 14 November 2014.

^{liii} "Anifah says significant strides made in implementing ASEAN Community blueprints", 1 August 2015: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/anifah-says-significant-strides-made-in-implementing-asean-community-bluepr>.

^{liv} "We are now one big family", *The Star*, 23 November 2015. The Prime Minister also insisted that "only the more direct involvement of the peoples of ASEAN will truly advance regional integration"; speech by Prime Minister Najib at the National Colloquium on Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN 2015, 8 April 2014: <https://www.kln.gov.my/archive/content.php?t=4&articleId=3848364>.

^{lv} Among many, see Takeshi Terada 2011; Tay 2001.

^{lvi} On the role of talk in ASEAN region-building, see Milner 2002; Ba 2009: 37-40.

^{lvii} Acharya 2012: 255 suggests that crises occurring in the new millennium "contributed to the impetus toward regional 'community-building'". Mely Caballero-Anthony (2006: 54) has commented that community-building became a "resonant theme" especially after the 1997 financial crisis. The Japanese scholar, Mie Oba, observed in 2014 that over the previous few years ASEAN has repeatedly stated that "the creation of the ASEAN community is the organisation's highest priority" (69). On the other hand, Solidum 1982: 139 stresses longevity of the community-building emphasis in ASEAN; see also Solidum 1974: 82.

^{lviii} Camroux 1994: 425; Camroux 1994a: 33.

^{lix} Tarling 2006: 101. He also envisaged the development of a wider “Asian unity” and thought that the leadership for this “may well be provided by Japan” (Abdul Rahman 1965: 670).

^{lx} Tarling 2006: 175-176: When I look at the map of the world, I see Southeast Asia as a cohesive and coherent unit, among whose peoples run the strands of many common cultures and civilizations, exploited and divided for too long by external forces, as richly endowed by nature as by their traditions and histories, united by the common need for peace and development. Surely the moment has come for that Community of Southeast Asia, which has been our dream, to be realised? Speech by Prime Minister Abdul Razak to the Opening Session of the 8th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 13 May 1975: <http://documents.tips/documents/1975-jilid-1-ucapan-ucapan-tun-haji-abdul-razak-bin-hussein.html>.

^{lxi} Siddique and Kumar 2003: 521.

^{lxii} <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Transnational/zone.pdf>.

^{lxiii} Acharya 2009: 86; see also Oba 2014: 67.

^{lxiv} Tarling 2006: 194.

^{lxv} Siddique and Kumar 2003: 530-533. These official ASEAN documents are to be found also on the ASEAN website: www.asean.org.

^{lxvi} Cabarello-Anthony 2006: 64.

^{lxvii} http://www.asean.org/?static_post=declaration-of-asean-concord-ii-bali-concord-ii.

^{lxviii} “Significant progress in implementation of ASEAN community blueprints – Anifah Aman”, *Sunday Star*, 2 August 2015.

^{lxix} Kim, Lee and Mohammad Raduan 2011: 393.

^{lxx} Abdul Rahman Embong 2008: 120-121.

^{lxxi} Lee Poh Ping 2008: 33; Hund 2003: 383 suggests that “only Malaysia and China appear to be promoting more exclusive forms of East Asian regionalism”. Foot 1996: 27 comments that Malaysian commentators “do not put as much emphasis as China has tended to on the state as the sole focus of activity and authority”. They have paid “increasing attention to the benefits of regional cooperation” Lee and Milner 2014 suggest the tendency to adopt a communitarian, organic approach is more widespread in the region.

^{lxxii} Lee Poh Ping 2008: 32.

^{lxxiii} The other authors are Norani Othman, Ragayah Haji Mat Zin, Tham Siew Yean and Sumit Mandal. For another work on community involving some of these authors – in this case the wider “East Asian” community – see Lee, Tham and Yu 2006.

^{lxxiv} See, for instance, Mahathir's speech: "The Future of Asia", 6th Nikkei Shimbun International Conference on The Future of Asia, 9 June 2000, on the ASEAN official website.

^{lxxv} Ghazali 2000: 257; see my discussion of this in Milner 2015: 14.

^{lxxvi} Milner 2015: 31.

^{lxxvii} *Ibid*, 30 discusses these terms.

^{lxxviii} Andaya 1993: 27, 118, 180, 249; Borschberg 2015: 450.

^{lxxix} For their cosmopolitan character, see van Leur 1955: 132-133.

^{lxxx} "ASEAN must work together to tackle threats", *New Straits Times*, 16 March 2015.

^{lxxxi} "Asean nations should cooperate against IS threat", *New Straits Times*, 21 February 2015.

^{lxxxii} "A new phase in region's vision", *New Straits Times*, 23 November 2015.

^{lxxxiii} Saravanamuttu 2010: 251.

^{lxxxiv} Also, see his comment in this speech that "alone, none of the South East Asian countries will be able to protect itself", Prime Minister Mahathir's speech at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, 24 July 1997: <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-political-security-community/item/keynote-address-by-the-honourable-dato-seri-dr-mahathir-mohamed-the-prime-minister-of-malaysia>.

^{lxxxv} Quoted in Prime Minister Najib's speech to the National Colloquium on Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN 2015:

http://www.pmo.gov.my/home.php?menu=speech&page=1908&news_id=700&speech_cat=2. See also, Tunku Abdul Rahman: "It has long been my view that the countries of Southeast Asia must get together and work together to ensure their security, stability and prosperity . . ." (quoted in Singh 1992: 32-33). The Tunku believed that "togetherness" – "getting together, working together, and planning together" – was "the only way . . . to tackle our problems" (cited in Ba 2009: 71). Deputy Prime Minister Tun Dr Ismail also wrote of developing a "strong sense of regional consciousness and solidarity", arguing that this was necessary to "regional solidarity and enduring stability" (quoted in Tarling 2006: 152). On Ismail, see also Acharya 2009: 90, note 42.

^{lxxxvi} Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 2006: 205 (orig. pub. 1986).

^{lxxxvii} *Ibid*, 252 (orig. pub. 1999).

^{lxxxviii} Noordin Sopiee 2003: 476 (orig. pub. 1998). Noordin commented too that "the most important purpose of ASEAN and a single Southeast Asian community, of what the members call 'the ASEAN family', is not business and economics. ASEAN's foremost rationale is political and strategic"; Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 2006: 245 (orig. pub. 1997). Steven Wong notes regarding regional community-building that "this communitarian philosophy is, to a large degree, driven by the fact that if members do not hang (or group)

together, inadequacies, shortfalls and all, then they will literally hang separately” (“A responsive East Asian Community”, *New Straits Times*, 2 December 2014). In an essay concerned with charting the progress of ASEAN community-building – important to “regional security and policy” – he judges that “the notion of Aseanness as a facet of identity, let alone a thriving, interacting and interdependent community is still a long way off in the future” (“‘Aseanness’ still a long way off”, *New Straits Times*, 26 August 2014).

^{lxxxix} Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 2006: 205-206 (orig. pub. 1986).

^{xc} Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 2006: 252-253 (orig. pub. 1999).

^{xcⁱ} Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 1998: 31.

^{xcⁱⁱ} Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 2015: 315-316.

^{xcⁱⁱⁱ} Munir Majid, “Let’s get real about Asean community”, *The Star*, 19 April 2014.

^{xc^{iv}} “ASEAN economic ministers must deliver”, *The Star*, 24 August 2015. Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman also assumed that economic welfare was fundamental to security – he observed that while the “economic situation” in the country is positive “the country’s security is sound” (Abdul Rahman 1978: 120) – and insisted that his first attempts to build Southeast Asian regionalism had the economic objective of creating a “common market for the small countries of South-East Asia” (Abdul Rahman 1984: 289).

^{xc^v} See also Shaharil Talib 1998: 131-132 on the task of creating “a peoples’ Southeast Asia”. Dzulkifli Abdul Razak stresses the role of education in achieving ASEAN’s goal of “One Community”, and notes the security dimension of that objective (“Keeping ‘One ASEAN’ through education”, *New Straits Times*, 27 November 2015).

^{xc^{vi}} Acharya 2009a: 21; see also Milner 2010.

^{xc^{vii}} Acharya 2009: 54; Haacke 2005: 31 concludes that “the early origins of ASEAN’s diplomatic and security culture” are located in the relatively recent historical experience of the “drawn-out struggle for independent statehood and sovereign equality in international society”.

^{xc^{viii}} Acharya 2009: 82.

^{xc^{ix}} Milner 2015: 29-30; Kassim Ahmad 1968: 489.

^c The “stake of friendship” is Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Shah, 23 December 1810, in Ahmat Adam 2009: 41/47. The phrase “exist as one entity” (*jadi suatu ujud*) is 42/48. A similar sentiment – Kedah, Perlis and Penang are to “become one community” (*jadi satu negeri*) – is expressed in a royal letter from Kedah of 1800 (Bonney 1971: 188, 175).

^{ci} Chin and Suryadinata 2005: 139.

^{cⁱⁱ} Cited in Bisley 2012: 362.

^{cⁱⁱⁱ} Narine 2012: 155; see also Narine 2008: 213.

^{c^{iv}} Tarling 2006: 215; see also Wunderlich 2007: 163; Katzenstein 2005: 140; Jetschke 2012: 327, 329.

^{cv} Today the Malay term used for “sovereignty” is *kedaulatan* but this word does not appear in the pre-modern Malay writings examined in this essay. The word *daulat* is used, but is usually translated as “good fortune” or “divine power”. For the way *kedaulatan* and “sovereignty” were employed in the post-Pacific War period in Malaya, see Ariffin 1993: chapters 2, 6 and *passim*.

^{cvi} See too the strong language regarding economic cooperation: Mahathir, for instance, remarked that “much more” could be done with “regard to optimizing joint development zones, trans-border investments, technology sharing, tourism, even labor flows” (Dhillon 2009: 220). Solidum 1974: 83 notes a lack of concern about national sovereignty at the time Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia were planning the Maphilindo grouping (in the early 1960s).

^{cvi} Saaler 2007; see also Milner and Johnson 1997, and Ingleson 1997. As I understand it, China was not a leader in this modern (nineteenth/twentieth century) promotion of “Asia” consciousness. From a deep historical point of view, however, the extensive operations of the tribute system, focused on the Chinese ruler, must have fostered some form of impression of a regional community involving many Asian polities and peoples.

^{cvi} Saaler 2007: 9.

^{cix} Aydin 2007: 83. In the post-war decades, Japan gave support to Asia-Pacific regionalism, but over the last fifteen to twenty years, favour has been shown again to a more exclusive East Asian regionalism (Terada 2007).

^{cx} Burma’s Ne Win and Indonesia’s Sukarno are two prominent examples.

^{cx} Nik Annuar 2012: 51-52; Tilman 1984: 30-31 suggests Malay experience under Japanese rule was quite positive by other Southeast Asian standards. The ideology of the Afro-Asian Movement – expressed in particular at the Bandung Conference in 1955 – owed much to pre-Pacific War Japanese inspiration (Kimche 1973). See also Paridah Abd Samad 1998: 17-18.

^{cxii} Tarling 2006: 215; Gelber 2001.

^{cxiii} Milner 2015.

^{cxiv} In my first Tun Hussein Onn Lecture, I should have quoted Kumaraseri’s comment that the “early Malaysian polities generally showed more acumen in dealing with foreign powers than most other Afro-Asian and Latin American countries” (1992: 52).

^{cxv} For an indication of the longstanding issues regarding Muslim immigration, see Nair 1997: 191.

^{cxvi} I am thinking of so-called growth triangles and also the Malaysia-Thailand “Joint Development Zone”; see Milner 2015: note lxvi. See also Camroux 1994a: 9 regarding growth triangles as a “recognition of the inappropriateness of sovereignty . . .”

- ^{cxvii} Ramcharan 2000: 64. He does not, however, deal with “non-interference” independently of “sovereignty”.
- ^{cxviii} Document in Siddique and Kumar 2003: 520.
- ^{cxix} Saravanamuttu 2010: 92; Tarling 2006: 150.
- ^{cxx} Acharya 2009: 85.
- ^{cxxi} For instance, Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, in discussing ASEAN “basic features”, stresses “non-interference” rather than sovereignty (1998: 61). See also his highlighting of “non-interference” in ASEAN’s “norms and principles” (2015: 315). In his study of Malaysian foreign policy in the Mahathir era, Dhillon refers to “non-intervention in domestic affairs” as the “cardinal ASEAN principle” (2009: 216).
- ^{cxixii} Acharya 2009: 70.
- ^{cxixiii} Even when one ruler gains authority over another, the first is warned against interfering in the second’s polity. In the *Hikayat Deli*, a victorious ruler gives a specific assurance that the “customs and ceremonial” (*adat istiadat*) of subject polities will not be altered. One raja is assured that being “under the orders (*perintah*)” of the superior ruler does not mean that the “customs and ceremonial” of his community will be altered (Milner 1982: 75, 77). When the Melaka ruler installs his son on the throne of an inferior *kerajaan* – according to the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* – the ruler warns him not to “alter the traditions (*adat*) that exist there” (Kassim Ahmad 1968: 411, 376).
- ^{cxixiv} See, for instance, Bonney 1971: 176; Ahmat Adam 2009: 34.
- ^{cxixv} Leong 2006: 1.
- ^{cxixvi} Speech at the Plenary of the 46th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 24 September 1991: <http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan/?m=p&p=mahathir&id=1548>.
- ^{cxixvii} Ghazali Shafie 2000: 224-225.
- ^{cxixviii} Mohamed Jawhar Hassan 2006: 237 (orig. pub. 1990). Also see Mohammad Raduan 1996: 20.
- ^{cxixix} Chin 1983: 47; and Chandra Muzaffar and Rafidah Aziz, quoted in Camroux 1994a: 35, 52.
- ^{cxixx} Weatherbee 2005: 100-101.
- ^{cxixxi} Saravanamuttu 2010: 251.
- ^{cxixxii} Chiang 2014: 4.
- ^{cxixxiii} <http://www.asean.org/>.
- ^{cxixxiv} Mahathir spoke in 1994 of “an East Asian community in which . . . the giants of our region – China, Japan, Indonesia – shall have their rightful place” (Dhillon 2009: 221). For an overview of the development of the “East Asian Community” project, see Leong 2006.
- ^{cxixxv} <http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/November/10th-EAS-Outcome/KL%20Declaration%20on%2010th%20Anniversary%20of%20the%20EAS.pdf>. I

disagree with Camroux's view (in an otherwise excellent survey) that the 2005 EAS had the ambition of creating "One Community" (2007: 24). I also do not think that "an inclusive conceptualization of Asia is more rooted historically than the concentration on East Asia" (2007: 26). See Milner 2014.

^{cxv} Abdul Rahman 1984: 289; Mahathir 2001: 146.

^{cxvii} Speech at the Launch of the GLC Transformation Programme, 29 July 2005:

<http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan/?m=p&p=paklah&id=2973>.

^{cxviii} Keynote Address, National Colloquium on Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN 2015 (document kindly given to me by Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob of the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 7 September 2015). See also the Prime Minister's comments quoted on 26 April 2014: <http://www.malaysia-today.net/najib-who-are-we-to-pressure-obama/>.

^{cxix} "Australia more than a middle power, Downer says", 26 November 2003:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2003-11-26/australia-more-than-a-middle-power-downer-says/1515188>.

^{cxl} Keynote Address by Prime Minister Najib at the 28th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, 2 June 2014. See also, Keynote Address, National Colloquium on Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN 2015 (document kindly given to me by Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob of the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 7 September 2015).

^{cxli} Milner 2015: 7-8.

^{cxlii} Malaysian policy unlike that of Indonesia sought to reach out to the major powers from outside the region, urging them to "guarantee" Southeast Asia's "neutralisation" (Ghazali Shafie, quoted in Singh 1992: 35); see also Tarling 2006: 159.

^{cxliii} Saravanamuttu 2010: 190-192.

^{cxliiv} Milner 2015: 4-5.

^{cxliv} Acharya 2009: 64.

^{cxlvi} Braginsky 2004: 340-341; Proudfoot 1984.

^{cxlvii} Milner 2015: 32-40.



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Milner studied at Monash University, the University of Malaya, and Cornell University. He has been a member of a range of government committees and councils, and is a frequent commentator in the media. He is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

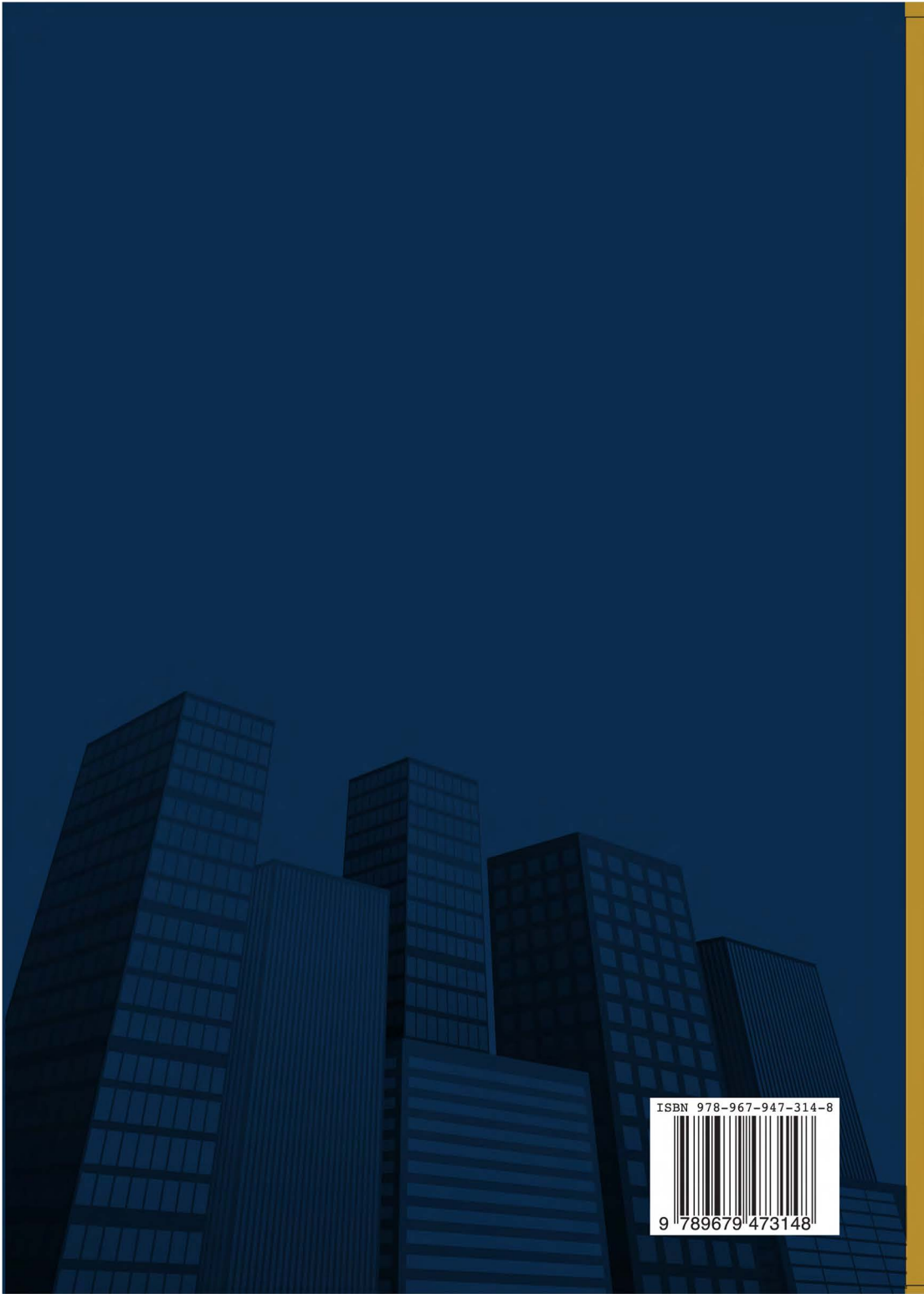


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ISBN 978-967-947-314-8



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