

## Liberal Institutionalism Theory Approach in Asean's Security Cooperation through Regionalism

### *Teori Liberal Institutionalisme dan Pendekatannya dalam Kerjasama Keselamatan Serantau Asean melalui Regionalisme*

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#### ABSTRACT

*The concepts and functions of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are different from those of other regional and international institutions, organizations, and bodies. This paper aims to analyze the concept of regionalism practiced by using the liberal institutionalism theory approach, which has successfully driven ASEAN to remain strong as an organization based on mutual relations in every aspect of politics, economy, culture, and society. This analyzes the connection between ASEAN regionalism and the liberal institutionalism theory approach, which has driven ASEAN through security cooperation until this day. ASEAN continues to operate as a regional organization that has grown from its regional cooperation through regionalism. This study discusses the various approaches on liberal institutionalism applied in interpreting ASEAN regionalism, especially in the context of economic, political, and social security cooperation. The link between globalization, the theory of liberal institutionalism, and the process of regionalism have been given significant attention, as many factors are interconnected between the subjects in the context of this study. Most of the data acquired for this study have been extracted from books, journal articles, reports by the ASEAN Secretariat, as well as library sources, in line with the need for suitable methodologies to conduct this research.*

*Keywords: ASEAN; regionalism; liberal institutionalism; globalization; security*

#### ABSTRAK

*Kesatuan Negara-negara Asia Tenggara (ASEAN) berbeza dengan institusi, organisasi, dan badan serantau dan antarabangsa yang lain dari segi konsep dan fungsi. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konsep regionalisme dengan menggunakan pendekatan teori Liberal Institutionalism yang berjaya mendorong ASEAN untuk terus kukuh sebagai organisasi yang berdasarkan hubungan yang saksama dalam setiap aspek politik, ekonomi, budaya, dan masyarakat. Objektif utama penyelidikan ini adalah untuk menganalisis kaitan antara konsep regionalisme ASEAN dan pendekatan teori liberal institutionalisme yang mendorong kejayaan ASEAN melalui kerjasama keselamatan sehingga hari ini. ASEAN terus berfungsi sebagai organisasi serantau yang telah berkembang dari sudut kerjasama serantau melalui regionalisme. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini membincangkan pelbagai pendekatan teori liberal institutionalisme yang digunakan dalam menafsirkan regionalisme ASEAN, terutama dalam konteks kerjasama keselamatan ekonomi, politik, dan sosial. Hubungan antara globalisasi, teori liberal institutionalisme, dan proses regionalisme diberi penumpuan yang signifikan kerana banyak faktor saling berkaitan antara subjek dalam konteks kajian ini. Sebilangan besar data yang digunakan untuk kajian ini diambil dari buku, artikel jurnal, laporan oleh Sekretariat ASEAN, dan pelbagai jenis sumber perpustakaan sesuai dengan keperluan metodologi yang dilakukan sepanjang kajian ini.*

*Keywords: ASEAN; regionalisme; liberal institutionalisme; globalisasi; keselamatan*

#### INTRODUCTION

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore. Today, the ten ASEAN members promote intergovernmental cooperation and facilitate economic, political,

security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration between its members, as well as other countries. The decline of the Cold War and the concomitant loss of ASEAN's major political focus such as its opposition to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia raised speculations in many quarters that ASEAN might not survive in the post-Cold War world (Narine, 1998). However, the end of the Cold War did bring several changes within ASEAN, and this regional organization engaged itself in

developing many other institutions in the region while preserving the idea of ASEAN regionalism and centrality. The post-Cold War accompanied by the effects of globalization contributed to the shift of security patterns from a military threat to a non-military threat. The process of globalization has opened up national border spaces towards regionalism by liberalizing movement services, goods, and people (Rafidah, Nor Azizan, and Zarina 2019).

To understand regionalism, it is essential to look at two types of regionalism, which are old regionalism and new regionalism. New regionalism, which began in the mid-1980s, refers to a phenomenon that is still in the process of making, and although old regionalism was said to have started in the 1950s and somehow faded away in the 1970s, some scholars stated that old regionalism happened as early as the 1930s. However, it is important to point out that old regionalism must be understood within a particular historical context, dominated by the bipolar Cold War structure, while the current wave of regionalism needs to be related to the current transformation of the world (Hettne and Soderbaum 1998). The new regionalism approach is closer to the identity of ASEAN cooperation, as it was formed to work as a team against any security threat after the Cold War.

The formation of ASEAN was the result of globalization, especially in the political, economic, and social perspectives. Global security threats pushed countries in the ASEAN region to form an association to work in cooperation so that global threats could be addressed efficiently (Singh 2007). In economics, social, and cultural life, the globalization factor has been a driving force for ASEAN countries to form ASEAN Regionalism to balance and preserve the region's security. In facing transnational threats such as smuggling, piracy, and terrorism, the significance of the regional association has also increased. As such, the globalization challenge has led to the need for a study of key ASEAN motivations in the face of greater regionalism challenges in the region. The key

challenges, especially security, are the issues that are increasingly being discussed. (Roberts 2012), in his book on ASEAN Regionalism, expressed the crucial importance of integration among member states in the face of other world economic forces. The important issues discussed include the geopolitical aspects of member states, as well as the more comprehensive social cooperation.

Moreover, globalization for ASEAN is a process that generates flows and connections, not simply across nation-states and national territorial boundaries, but between global regions, continents, as well as civilizations. This invites a definition of globalization as: "a historical process that engenders a significant shift in the spatial reach of networks and systems of social relations to transcontinental or interregional patterns of human organization, activity, and the exercise of power" (McGrew 2003; Pitsuwan 2011). The concept of ASEAN regionalism has led to many positive changes. At the same time, these changes in the current globalization and power shifts have somehow opened the region up to new conflict and security issues (Acharya 2012).

Before the formation of ASEAN, several attempts were made to establish an organization at the regional level. Figure 1 shows the timeline for the establishment of ASEAN, which was an indirect continuation of several previous organizations. In this context, the establishment of ASEAN began with the cooperation of SEATO (1954). While there have been some criticisms of the formation of SEATO as a non-establishment of regionalism and more of a military one, the establishment of SEATO opened the way for several regional co-operatives in Southeast Asia such as ASA (1961) and MAPHILINDO (1963). Although several attempts to establish regional cooperation have failed due to conflict and disagreement of several Southeast Asia countries, it led to the idea of greater regional cooperation in the context of the peace region that exists to this day, which is the establishment of ASEAN 1967.

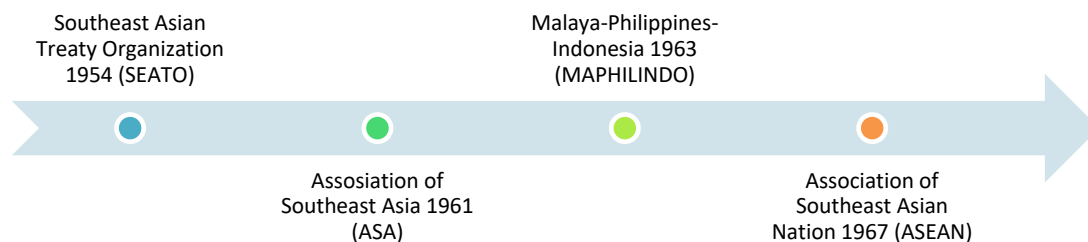


FIGURE 1. ASEAN Timeline

Source: Fieldwork (Narine 2002; Acharya 2012).

Notes: The process of establishing regional organizations in Southeast Asia

Intrinsically, the purpose of this study is to analyze ASEAN regionalism in terms of ASEAN security cooperation by using the liberal institutionalism approach. The liberal theory rests on a “bottom-up” view of politics, in which the demands of individuals and societal groups are treated analytically before politics. Political action is embedded in domestic and transnational civil society and is understood as an aggregation of bounded rational individuals with differentiated tastes, social commitments, and resource endowments. Socially differentiated individuals define their material and ideational interests independent of politics and then advance those interests through political exchange and collective action (Moravcsik 1997). The prevailing security conflicts in Southeast Asia can be mitigated through ASEAN regionalism because the nature of regionalism is in the form of cooperation and collective action involving several countries that have political, economic, and sociocultural interests. These conflicts include internal or external conflicts between ASEAN countries.

The concept of regionalism comes from liberal institutionalism (LI) perspectives, in which states are directly involved with the constitution to achieve peace, cooperation, and development (Moravcsik 1997). Regionalism itself comes from the word ‘region’, which refers to a group of countries that have a geographical or sovereign territory close to and dependent on one another (Hurrell 1995). As an example, one form of regionalism in Southeast Asia is through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which is an example of a connection through realism (Garofano 2002). Unlike liberals, realists are very skeptical of the nature of a country. For realists, conflict is definite and inevitable, as well as an unbelievable belief in the peace and stability of the system (wide-war system). Realism focuses on power and autonomy in international relations. This group also believes that conflict of interest does not exist between countries and is not so important that the self-help and self-healing concept is a priority in international relations. While the military field is one of the most widely used fields of power and autonomy (Morgenthau 2005), LI focuses more on working together, which later became the identity of ASEAN, especially with the introduction of the Community Agenda.

This paper focuses on ASEAN in its process of developing regionalism in the context of security cooperation with the approach of the liberal institutionalism theory. As a regional organization

among Southeast Asia countries, ASEAN is an interesting case study because its establishment focuses on regionalism and security cooperation in the context of political, economic, and sociocultural approaches in responding to the changing of its environment.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand whether the liberal institutionalism theory approach influences ASEAN regionalism in terms of ASEAN security cooperation and how it has done so. The literature review approach was used to understand if the theory has influenced ASEAN regionalism in terms of ASEAN security cooperation, as well as to identify the aspects that influence it. In this regard, journal articles, reports, and research analyses were reviewed, and this later provided empirical evidence related to ASEAN, regionalism, and the connections toward liberal institutionalism theory, which clarified the proper approach of liberal institutionalism in the context of ASEAN regionalism. Apart from that, the data were also extracted from books and annual reports from ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Master Plan, and ASEAN Blueprint, and a few other sources of information were gathered chronologically to give a clear picture of ASEAN, regionalism, and the ASEAN perspectives, especially toward the implementation of ASEAN regionalism. Source materials, official documents, and various statistics were also collected to justify the proper fact in solving the puzzling question of ASEAN regionalism.

## ASEAN REGIONALISM

Ever since the end of the Cold War, security concerns have preoccupied national governments globally, including Southeast Asia. This happens when political and economic shocks are so unexpected and severe that existing social and political arrangements appear threatened. Globalization, economic integration, and regionalism are no longer just limited to the industrialized countries but underdeveloped or developing countries have also benefited from them. In the late 1980s, regional cooperation like ASEAN was accelerated as programs of economic liberalization, which was before it was spread throughout the developing world. A sharp increase in capital for ASEAN and many other developing countries in the early 1990s



reinforced positive views of globalization (Kahler 2004). Economic security or economic instruments have long been part of the toolkit of statecraft, which is a means to influence other states and their policies (Hirschman 1980; Baldwin 1985).

The existence of regionalism in ASEAN arises from the sense of agreement in terms of place, position, or geography (Figure 2) through the prospects of mutual benefits and cooperation, especially from the points of perceptions of togetherness to internal and external security threats. However, the concept of regionalism is more appropriate to be expressed in the form of a sovereign institution, which allows cooperation beyond political aspects/power. In the context of

regionalism, there is no natural cooperation, but instead, cooperation through the rules administered by policymakers in achieving regional interests from an economic, political, and sociocultural point of view (Leifer 1975; Yukawa 2018). ASEAN regionalism was formed from the prospect of mutual advantages in the form of cooperation and to deal with security threats. Hence, regional cooperation is the best initiative that is perceived to be appropriate in maintaining the sovereignty of each member country. However, at the same time, cooperation from all member countries on all points would not be possible without addressing the security issues of all members (Menon, Todd, and Arujunan 2018).

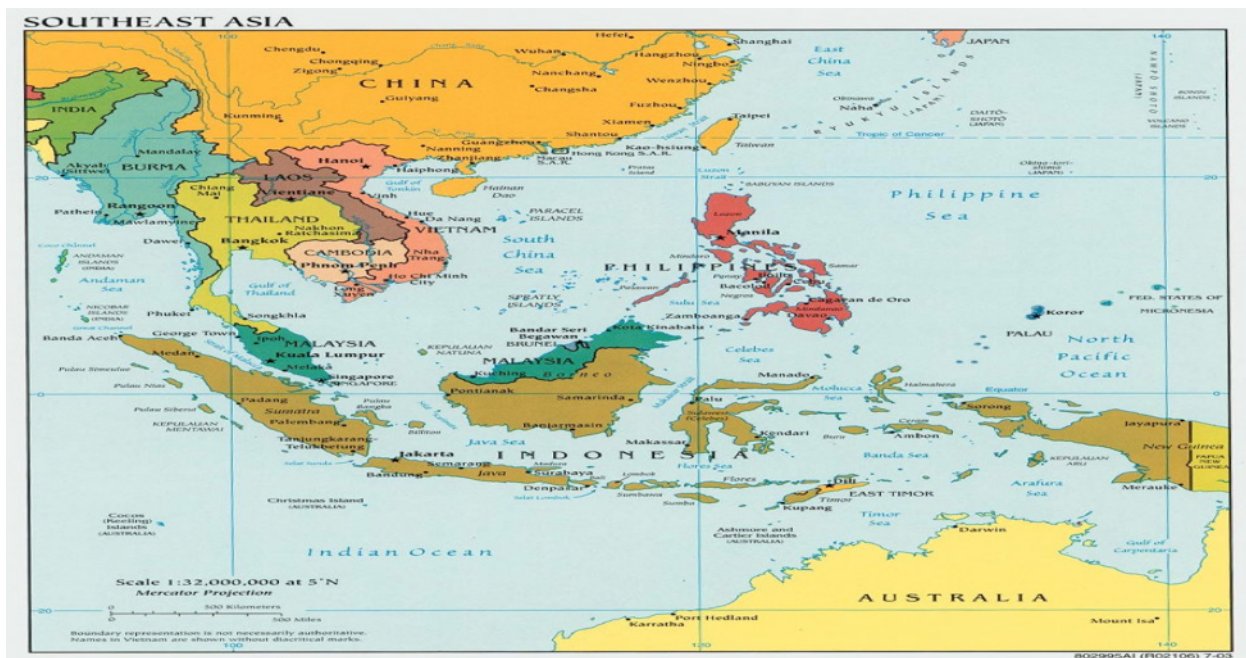


FIGURE 2. Southeast Asian Nations  
 Source: <https://aseanup.com/free-maps-asean-countries/>

Scholars like (Milner 2003; Tamaki 2006; Acharya 1999) have discussed ASEAN regionalism through security and international relations. They criticized ASEAN itself to seek improvement in ASEAN countries. Among all the regional cooperation in the world, ASEAN is one of the future prosperous integrated regions. There are several reasons to support this statement, mainly that ASEAN is a representative regionalism. It has been called “a success story second only to the EU”, as well as “the most successful regionalism among developing countries” (Yukawa 2018). This can be seen through the policy undertaken by ASEAN through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), which is used as a major source of reference for conflicts or issues that could threaten ASEAN security.

ASEAN scholars hold two interpretations regarding the establishment of ASEAN as a regional organization. The first interpretation is that ASEAN is based on the geographical position of a regional community among Southeast Asian nations. According to this argument, ASEAN encompasses the norms, values, and practices that have been socialized to ASEAN countries to adopt regional identity. The second interpretation is that ASEAN is the instrument of its members, which means that the ASEAN organization was formed and designed to pursue the interests of its members. From the second perspective, it appears that any form of community cooperation in Southeast Asia is considered to be difficult or is simply an illusion (Acharya 2001, 2009; Narine 2002).

ASEAN also represents the best example of modern regional cooperation, which works in any way when it comes to politics, economy, and social security. After decades of establishment, ASEAN has emerged as the fulcrum of geopolitical stability in Asia and is perhaps the most successful regional organization involving developing countries in the world. In the context of security cooperation through regionalism, ASEAN is among the models that can be identified as a successful one. The rapid development of ASEAN and its economic relations with China have opened up opportunities to improve regional relation norms, including the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), investment, management services, cooperation in the form of the workforce, political dimensions, as well as other interests that could bring benefits to ASEAN-China (Fawcett 2016; Swee-Hock 2007).

Besides the competition from a major power, ASEAN has limitations to reaching an agreement on key issues and resolving them within the member states, which is reflected through Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. However, ASEAN has made additional progress toward different security objectives, as demonstrated in the Bali Concord. The Bali Concord is an impressive achievement, given the level of conflict that exists among the ASEAN countries less than a decade earlier. Even though ASEAN did not succeed as an economic regime during the Cold War (Arnfinn 1982; Narine 2002), it began to step in as a unit of regional priority in balancing regional security after the Cold War ended. The implementation of the ASEAN Community Agenda Blueprint has accounted for the growth in intra-ASEAN trade over the years, and it has also called for the transformation of ASEAN into a single market and production base (Hanizah and Hanafi 2018).

According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), regionalism is not merely aimed at balancing the security and prosperity of a region, but also an approach to cooperation with a higher chance of success compared to a standalone-state approach. This collaboration does not necessarily have to be supra-national, but rather a variant of a sovereign state organization that encompasses ten Southeast Asian countries (Leifer 1975). The number of regional arrangements grew significantly in the mid-1980s, and regional organizations have become more diverse and dynamic after the end of the Cold War (New Regionalism). After the Cold War ended, ASEAN received many security threats. Thus,

regional cooperation was formed to avoid internal or external security threats. Apart from that, the differences in opinions could be settled peacefully so that decisions can be formed collectively without any conflicts. ASEAN may face uncertainties and challenges, but through regionalism, it always has guidelines to implement its economic, social, and cultural cooperation. Challenges in the shape of security and rapid globalization will always threaten the position of ASEAN as a regional organization, but close cooperation among its members will ensure the stability of the association, especially from the viewpoint of safety and security (Acharya 2012; Leifer 1975).

However, any discussion on regional dimensions or global security needs to be first examined from a regional dimension point of view. This is because there are different regional dimensions to global security issues or problems. Hence, any security issues do not necessarily have to be considered a global problem that requires a global solution (Fawcett 2016). This situation emerged after World War I and World War II. As an example, security could be understood through global or universal institutions such as the League of Nations or the United Nations, where they would provide the best security assurance. However, it is important to understand that the regional security use of regionalism is the better approach. This approach creates certain issues that need to be addressed in a certain way but has gained widespread acceptance in the post-Cold War era due to the influence of the competitiveness of the powers of the major nations. At that time, global security had been declining because of the competition in pursuing power by stronger countries. Regional powers and actors also have more autonomy in their affairs. Through regional cooperation, however, especially after the Cold War era, most specific problems and solutions within the regions were identified and balanced. It also minimized the chances of the occurrence of new conflicts (Fawcett 2016; Hurrell 1995).

Political and ideological foundations supporting and strengthening ties between countries in Southeast Asia began to experience significant changes at the end of the Cold War. Through these political and ideological changes, security became the most dominant factor in pushing ASEAN toward producing and implementing the organization's development policy. After the Cold War, many ASEAN actions and policies in the late '90s were implemented through intra- and extra-

regional security, economic, and political aspects/perspectives. More recently, however, ASEAN's regionalism agenda is manifested through joint implementation of policy, especially in offsetting regional security threats (Richard, Evan, and Vicente 2017).

The increased importance of interregional relations is also a characteristic of the current wave of regionalism and security. While dealing with a World Order phenomenon, the behavior of one region bears an impact on the behavior of others. The most obvious example is the European regionalism (European Union), which had provoked and promoted regionalism in other parts of the world, including Southeast Asia (ASEAN) (Hettne and Soderbaum 1998). ASEAN regionalism is more extroverted than introverted, and this reflects the deeper interdependence in today's global political economy. From this skeptical perspective, ASEAN regionalism can also be identified as one way of coping with global transformation, as an increasing number of members have realized that they lacked the capability and means to manage such a task, especially the security threats at the international level. If globalization focuses on global activities, regionalism focuses on regional activities and the region into a separate analysis unit (Fawcett 2016; Pugh and Sidhu 2003).

#### LIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM THEORY APPROACH TOWARD ASEAN

The emergence of liberal institutionalism (LI) as an alternative to realism in international relations theory has led to the debate among scholars since the 1970s, particularly on the legitimacy of liberal institutions as a real alternative to realism. According to the LI approach, emphasis should be placed on global governance and international organizations as a way of explaining the relationship between countries at the international level. Institutionalism and realism differ in several aspects, one of which concerns how they approach social sciences. States in a realist world must be motivated primarily by relative gains when considering cooperation. However, in some cases, this proposition may be false when the threat of aggressive war is low, for instance, when defensive technologies are prevalent.

Institutionalism, on the contrary, seeks to state in advance the conditions under which its propositions apply to. When state elites do not foresee self-interested benefits from the cooperation, we do not

expect it to occur, nor the institution that facilitates the cooperation to develop (R.O. Keohane and Martin 1995). If states can benefit from the cooperation, each government is therefore expected to attempt to construct such institutions. In the context of ASEAN, the LI theory approach is more accurate compared to the realism theory. This is because the institutions or organizations can provide information, reduce transaction costs, make commitments more credible, establish focal points for coordination, and in general, facilitate the operation of reciprocity (R.O. Keohane and Martin 1995). As seen in the context of the organization, ASEAN focuses more on global governance by establishing relations with the world's major economies and discussion mediums on any issues that arise among ASEAN countries, as well as ASEAN with other countries.

Institutionalism emphasizes the importance of the role played by the international system, as well as the ability of international organizations to seek cooperation among the members. It also rejects the opinions and assumptions that international politics is a power struggle, in which military security issues are the priority (Devitt 2011). The approach used through LI is more about peace and cooperation in the implementation of any policies, decisions, and reactions to issues arising. Accordingly, this theory is best known in the context of addressing the security conflicts that exist in Southeast Asia. The institutionalist theory is based on 'the assumption that international politics can be divided into two realms, which are security and political economy, and that liberal institutionalism mainly applies to the latter' (R.O. Keohane and Martin 1995). Based on the traditional or non-traditional security issues within the region, the theory is safely observed and collectively managed in the context of the ASEAN organization. LI is an alternative theory when it comes to interpreting international relations, whereby some scholars have regarded it as a correction to the conventional international relations theory, which states that powerful powers dominate world politics, and international institutions are not important (Johnson and Heiss 2018).

To fully understand the concept of LI, it is important to understand that it was first introduced parallel with historical events and that it competes with the views of theoretical scholars. Therefore, before defining LI, it must be explained how this theoretical approach has been developed in response to both the world of concept and the real world. To do so, we need to track the major criticism



of LI, which has spread from realists, Marxists, constructivists, non-liberal governments, feminists, and developing countries to the general public, especially in ASEAN organizations. Meanwhile, in the 1990s, Southeast Asia generated more theoretical interest as the realist orthodoxy was confronted with a twofold challenge: liberal institutionalism and institutional constructivism. Both reject realist analysis on several grounds. In the post-Cold War, one argument goes the danger of wars has markedly declined. Confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, and other institutionalist strategies have now entered the security agenda (Ruland 2000)RB.

LI denies other international relation theories that are based on the definition of regionalism. In this regard, this concept cannot be fully understood without first understanding its conceptual foundations from the points of view of realism, classical liberalism, and Marxism (Johnson and Heiss 2018; R. Keohane and Nye 1977). Realism eventually developed a particular set of assumptions, which include: (1) nation-states are the primary actors; (2) states interact in an anarchic system lacking any higher authority or enforcement; (3) states are rational actors, and these select actions and are expected to achieve their goals; (4) for survival and thriving, states must accumulate power; and (5) the accumulation of power is a zero-sum game for one state and necessitates losses for another (Johnson and Heiss 2018). The debate leading to the premise used by realist scholars, and the possibility of reshaping the behavior of actors through organizational rules and norms, continues to be the main deliberations in classifying regional security conflicts (Rashila and Azizan 2012).

LI flourished after the end of the Second World War, particularly with the emergence of international institutions. It involves the actor becoming a member of an established organization. The actors first join the organization, which in turn brings them closer to the relationship. This stage involves the interaction of actors within an organization. Through the organization, the members engage in interactions (actors and non-actors) that consist of various economic and social activities. This collaboration then leads to 'interdependence', where potential conflicts and crises are minimized because each member has mutual interests. Actors/members within the organization eventually begin to see themselves and other members as 'WE', rather than 'YOU' & 'I' (individuals). In this context, though problems or crises may still exist, the differences

in opinions and views do not lead to conflicts that may affect the relationship among the members of the organization, as all issues are resolved through discussions, forums, and dialogues. This, therefore, creates a close relationship among the members of the organization.

By the 20th Century, following the growth of global security threats, especially through inevitable warfare, realist supporters sought to bring these institutions to align with their paradigm. Figures such as (Morgenthau 2005), in his writing titled: 'Politics Among Nations', explained the marginalized international institutions as epiphenomenal, whereby, if the institution merely reflects the balance of power among nations, it is still beneficial for the theory to ignore the institution and look to the countries (actors) specifically. After World War II ended, the United States began to see its capabilities in forming international cooperation to fulfill its role and importance as a nation that monopolizes power. In this regard, countries like the USA began to build a network of international institutions to help them shape and provide economic stability, especially in terms of public goods with other countries. For them, the encounter with liberal values is unnecessary because peace can be achieved by a hegemonic power that will strengthen itself to enforce international cooperation.

There was an assertion from (Mearsheimer 1995) that institutionalism employs a 'neat dividing line' to separate political economy from security issues in the context of institutional cooperation. This assertion refers to the view of 'Cooperation Under Anarchy' by Kenneth Oye. A major argument of Cooperation Under Anarchy is that institutionalist theory can be applied to both security and political economy issues (Oye 1986). This statement was then explained by (Axelrod and Keohane 1985) that military-security issues display more of the characteristic associated with anarchy than a political-economic one. For instance, a political-economic relationship is typically more institutionalized than a military-security one.

According to LI, organizational or institutional governance is a set of functions that can and should be implemented across national borders with a combination of actors and non-actors who specialize in specific tasks based on their respective expertise. Thus, the organization will produce resilience among member states as an entity in developing power and expertise (Slaughter 2004). LI should be highly significant to security issues

because its argument revolves around the role of institutions/organizations in providing information. According to Richard Stubbs, there are three key elements of the performance of regional institutions that are evaluated including effectiveness, which refers to the ability of a regional organization to produce the desired results and therefore, move towards state goals. The second factor is legitimacy which examines an organization's right to expect conformity with philosophically derived ethical standards such as democracy and consultation, respect for human rights, and fairness. The third factor is efficiency, which refers to the ratio between output and the resources used or in other words, the extent to which a regional organization can produce as much as possible at the least expense (Stubbs 2019).

The organization can thus produce resilience among its member states as an entity in developing

power and expertise (Slaughter 2004). LI should be highly significant to security issues because its argument revolves around the role of institutions/organizations in providing information. In the context of ASEAN, member states give full consent to ASEAN in planning any programs among the member states, especially on issues related to security. This is in line with the approach of LI, which does not touch on violence toward any security issues, and instead, forms a safer solution for the region.(Lindberg 1963) and (Haas 1964) debated about LI's relationship with regional integration and viewed that, through the theory of LI, actors develop regional relations by strategically forming organizations for cooperation in economic matters. This way, they also form cooperation in other areas, including politics, society, culture, and economy, which is currently happening in the context of ASEAN.

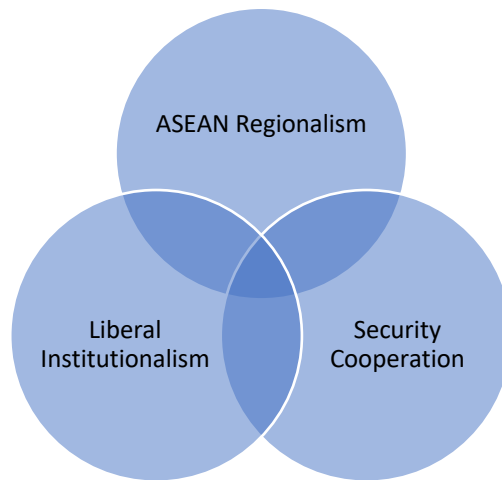


FIGURE 3. Connection between ASEAN Regionalism, Security Cooperation, and Liberal Institutionalism

Based on Figure 3, there is an interrelated relationship between the three main points of this study, namely ASEAN Regionalism, security cooperation, and liberal institutionalism. These three aspects show interdependence in terms of function and implementation of policies under ASEAN institutions. The approach of LI theory through ASEAN regionalism can be seen in a few aspects. As an organization that functions through cooperation, the implementation of the ASEAN Community, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and ASEAN Plus are among few of the dominating efforts in realizing regional security cooperation. This kind of implementation suits the definition of institutions, which refers to a set of rules that stipulate how states should cooperate and compete

with each other. They prescribe acceptable forms of state behavior, as well as unacceptable behaviors. These rules are negotiated by states, and according to many prominent theorists, they entail the mutual acceptance of higher norms, which are 'standard of behavior' defined as rights and obligations through international agreement (Mearsheimer 1995). These sets of international agreements are later embodied in organizations/institutions with their personnel and budgets.

In terms of security, member states take a neutral stance in any form of violent threat. ASEAN depends on the commitment of its members and vice versa. Conflicts can also be avoided with the existence of the ASEAN Charter that each member needs to adhere to. Any conflicts, security threats, and problems that



arise are resolved through collective negotiations. The conflict must be settled jointly with minimum risk of violence or dispute that could lead to further conflict. The ARF, ZOPFAN, ASEAN Plus, and other initiatives contained in the ASEAN Charter accord a clear picture of the cooperation of its members. For LI scholars, regional economic hub sharing has become a big prospect for ASEAN, whereby states or actors in institutions can share economic resources and are open to greater opportunities for cooperation in other areas (Kant 2010; R. Keohane and Nye 1977).

Security cooperation among ASEAN countries is formed through many organizations, including the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). ZOPFAN is one of the security cooperation taken seriously by ASEAN in stabilizing regional security. Several factors contribute to the formation of ZOPFAN, including Southeast Asia's strategic position in the conflict and tension between the East-West powers. ZOPFAN is one of the outcomes of regionalism that will maintain peace and security stability among the members by avoiding major interferences (Haacke 2005).

Besides that, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF-1994), Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM-1996), ASEAN Plus Three (APT-2003), East Asia Summit (EAS-2005), ASEAN Defense Minister's Meeting (ADMM-2006), and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus 2010) were formed to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the member states and to sustain peace and stability within the region. In all these forums, ASEAN plays a pivotal role, especially through the approach of LI, or at least theoretically shaping secure regional cooperation, specifically in the process of shaping three communities, including ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), and ASEAN Sociocultural Community (ASCC). At the end of the Cold War era, security issues were no longer just focusing on military dimensions, but a more comprehensive dimension. As stated by (R.O. Keohane 1989), 'institutions change as a result of human action, and the changes in expectations and processes that result can exert profound effects on state behavior'. For example, the issues are merely about internal security through nation-building, food systems, and food security, health, finance, and trade (Barry

Buzan, Waever, and Wilde. 1998). After the Cold War, cooperation through ASEAN regionalism was most likely the best way to avoid any conflicts and simplify the process of forming security cooperation among the member states (Collins 2007). Security through regionalism creates a new concern of governments in each member state. Extensive sectors such as economic, political, and social have long been part of the toolkit of statecraft, which is a means to influence other states and their policies in the region.

In addition, ARF has continued to progress as an important multilateral platform for a dialogue on political security and cooperation. It has also taken confidence-building measures (CBM) and preventive diplomacy in the implementation of the ARF Vision Statement and Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement. After the 26<sup>th</sup> ARF meeting in Bangkok in August 2019, ASEAN's Ministers tasked the ARF Senior Officials to develop a new Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement for consideration and adoption by the 27<sup>th</sup> ARF in Vietnam in 2020. ARF has played a constructive role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust, as well as in promoting transparency in the region. The number of ARF activities focused on preventive diplomacy has continued to increase, while confidence-building measures continued to be strengthened (Secretariat 2019).

Meanwhile, the sixth principle in the ASEAN Charter: 'effective cooperation among themselves, illustrates the advantages seen in the collaborative efforts among the member states and throughout the region to fulfill the socioeconomic needs at home. The strong emphasis placed on diplomacy over military strength, a core tenant of liberalism, has served to make ASEAN an intermediary among many of the larger actors in the region, giving the group considerably more clout. Within ASEAN, the pursuit of economic gains has remained the core principle for the members. Through cooperative efforts such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Community, ARF, AFTA, and ASEAN Plus Three/Six, the organization has made contentious efforts to expand economic integration throughout the region, and with it, enhance stability and prosperity for all. This type of effective cooperation leads to solutions, especially in resolving security threats stemming intra-ASEAN or ASEAN with another major power.

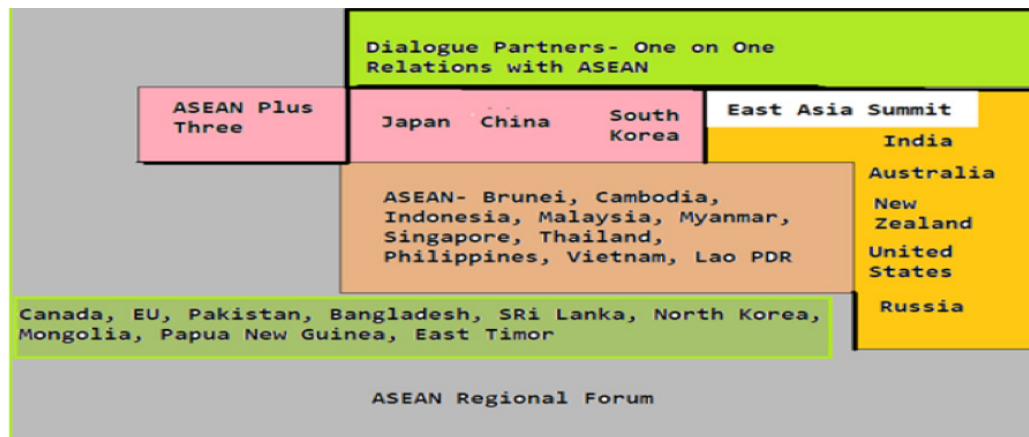


FIGURE 4. ASEAN and Its Immediate and Extended Family  
 Source: East Asia Research Program (Kundu 2017)

Figure 4 shows how ASEAN works with its immediate and extended family under the ARF. Each member state in ASEAN has ethnic and cultural diversity. Hence, the ARF serves as a space for discussion and dialogue to increase the confidence of member states in addressing regional security issues. This is in line with the approach of LI, which emphasizes the importance of cooperation within institutions and between states. ARF has also been successful in promoting peace and stability within the region through enhanced cooperation in areas of disaster relief, counterterrorism and transnational crime, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as the security of and in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Besides that, the ARF has been successful in making and enhancing its relevance and effectiveness in addressing the increasingly complex challenges amidst the continuously evolving regional landscape. However, it must function at a pace comfortable to all and based on consensus, while also recognizing the importance of continuing to make the ARF relevant in addressing the shared challenges in the area under the ARF's geographical footprint.

The concept of regionalism discussed by (Acharya 2012) emphasizes that the localization process among and within ASEAN countries is crucial in establishing a stronger ASEAN Community and security cooperation through ASEAN norms. Emphasized localization aspects include social cooperation and community based on ASEAN values and identities. Efforts to change the identity and value of localization will result in difficulties to implement and continue with ASEAN regionalization and cooperation and instead increase security threats to the existing collaboration (Richard,

Evan, and Vicente 2017). Besides, over the last thirty years, Southeast Asia has experienced considerable regionalization, integration, and deepening of political, social, and economic ties, especially among ASEAN member states. The acceleration of globalization and multilateralism after the end of the Cold War also signaled the need to further augment the integration of economic and security activities across the national border that could ease many restrictions ranging from reduction of tariffs barriers, free trade, and good movements and the deepening of economic bilateral ties (Hashim and July 2021).

The addition of ASEAN's efforts to regional security is its commitment to transform itself as a security community. This is a vision that was adopted through the Bali Concord in 2003. Bali Concord II charts out the guidelines of the ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC), which has three key characteristics: the first is to establish a "rules-based community of shared values and norms"; the second is to work toward a "cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security"; and the third is to create a "dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world" (Kundu 2017). Aside from that, preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures are the two important pillars of ASEAN's idea of comprehensive security, as articulated in the APSC Blueprint. There are some measures taken toward APSC, namely ASEAN Security Dialogue, ASEAN Defense Minister's Dialogue, ARF, ADMM, and ADMM Plus.

However, a few scholars such as (Milner 2003) have criticized the existence, functions, and process of regionalism, especially under the approach of

LI, particularly regarding ASEAN's reaction toward China's actions. The importance and function of regionalism as an indicator and medium for ASEAN's progress toward China cannot be denied (Milner 2003; Kapur 2003; Acharya 2009, 2012). In 2017, China began to exercise its power and influence to master the total water zones without thinking of its impact on developing countries and the Third World countries in ASEAN. The Chinese's actions are seen as a major threat, especially from the viewpoint of economic security to the ASEAN countries that use the South China Sea to carry out most of their economic activities. Hence, AFTA has remained as a policy that safeguards the socioeconomic interests of the ASEAN region. China's actions have caused trade activities to go unnoticed and may lead to the collapse of economies in ASEAN countries (Swee-Hock 2007). On the one hand, while the ASEAN countries have all demonstrated a growing desire to develop closer ties with the neighboring giant via bilateral diplomacy and multilateral forums since the 1990s, none of them have shown a clear sign of jumping on China's bandwagon in the strict sense of the term. This is because the weaker states' efforts to forge closer economic cooperation and diplomatic engagement with China are chiefly driven by a pragmatic calculation to reap as much commercial and diplomatic payoffs as possible from the Gulliver; by themselves, they do not signify that the smaller actors have come to accept a subordinate role to Beijing (Kuik 2016). In addition, China's actions on the South China Sea have resulted in multiple reactions by ASEAN. For ASEAN, it is a new challenge to identify solutions through engagement and dialogue with China, especially with the adaptation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). During the ASEAN Summit held in Bandar Seri Begawan on 24 and 25 April 2013, ASEAN stated its stance on the issue of the South China Sea dispute which needs to be addressed through consultation and reconciliation. ASEAN's position is in line with the principles of international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Rahman 2018).

Besides China, ASEAN is also exposed to more security threats from many other powers at play in the region such as North Korea and the USA. (Acharya 2013) referred to this as a multipolar regional international system, whereby China, Japan, India, Australia, and the USA each have a role to play. At the same time, ASEAN regionalism opens up opportunities for greater economic, political, and social cooperation for its member states. In terms

of the multipolar regional international system, it is difficult for ASEAN's member states to work individually. ASEAN regionalism is just one way to engage with all the great powers individually and collectively on different issues, while the liberal institutionalism approach shapes the types of cooperation that need to be fulfilled by ASEAN. The means of handling the security issues facing Southeast Asia can be divided into four sub-groups, namely interstate trust, peaceful change, regime stability, and conflict resolution. However, as far as ASEAN is concerned, its achievements are more visible when building interstate trust and peaceful change rather than in actual conflict resolution and regime stability. ASEAN's Blueprint 2025, ASEAN's Community, and a few other implementations could be the answer to achieving the four sub-groups in handling security issues globally.

If each state can benefit from cooperation, each government is thus expected to attempt to construct such institutions. In this case, ASEAN as an institution through regionalism is seen as a medium to the validity of this process. As stated by Keohane and Martin, through the approach of LI, institutions or organizations can provide information (ARF and ADMM), reduce transaction costs (ZOPFAN and AFTA), make commitments more credible (Community Agenda-AEC, APSC, and ASCC), establish focal points for coordination, and in general, facilitate the operation of reciprocity. As an example, the ASCC Blueprint 2025 presents five characteristics to be reached before 2025. They are indicators used to measure the progress of the ASEAN Community in meeting the economic needs of member states. These five aspects are: ASEAN Community 'engages and benefits the people', 'inclusive', 'sustainable', 'resilient', and 'dynamic'. Blueprint 2025 is one of the serious efforts taken by member countries to face greater challenges, especially from the perspective of economic security. The guidelines contained in the Blueprint will ensure the stability of ASEAN regionalism as a solid unity and remain relevant until the year 2025 and the following years.

## CONCLUSION

ASEAN is a regional collaborative organization that has worked to bring improvements in the field of economics, politics, and cultural cohesion. However, globalization has affected ASEAN's regional cooperation and security structures in many



ways. It needs to be ready for any kinds of security threats, and it also needs to revisit its main objectives in line with the roadmap carved by the Liberalist. However, ASEAN must travel some distance to establish an effective regional conflict-management regime, as all the dimensions of security regionalism are not equally relevant to all the regions. In some cases, there is regionalization of conflict but no regionalization of conflict management. In other cases, institutions can deal with conflicts within their regions, but not outside. Regionalism, security, and the liberal institutionalism approach are multifaceted phenomena that are related to each other, especially in the context of ASEAN. A basic distinction can be made between the classic and neo-functional thesis of regional integration as a peace promoter (ASEAN model) and the more recent perspective associated with the new regionalism of the regionalization of conflict as reason-building.

So how is ASEAN related to regionalism or how should security cooperation be placed in the framework of LI? From the context of ASEAN, we have found a clear direction toward the approach of LI theory. LI can be the right approach for the complex and problematic situation regarding security cooperation that has emerged from the complicated process of regionalism. It can also be the concrete answer, as long as the actors in ASEAN can keep the balance among the factual conditions of each member state, which can be in the form of what we call 'ASEAN Integration'. The approach of LI, marked by the end of the Cold War, is an interesting case study, as ASEAN has combined political, economic, and social approaches in order to respond to the changing environment. ASEAN has been through a lot of conflicts and security threats in the process of forming and bringing stability to the Southeast Asian region. However, with the approach of LI values, ASEAN seems like it should be able to survive as a strong organization in the days to come with a clear vision of becoming an integrated region, as well as high potential in economic, political, and sociocultural development.

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