Ideas on an East Asian Community
from Comparative Perspectives

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Susumu Yamakage, The University of Tokyo
Summary

In December 2005, an annual summit meeting of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At the same time, an unprecedented summit meeting named East Asia Summit (EAS) was held, too. Despite its name, political leaders attending the meeting came not only from thirteen countries in East Asia, which coincided the participants in APT, but also from India, Australia and New Zealand. While EAS was agreed to play “a significant role” in the creation of an East Asian community, APT was singled out as “the main vehicle.” This simple fact illustrates how diverse the image of an East Asian community is.

Although economic integration such as Free Trade Agreement/Area (FTA) has attracted attention, it is difficult to find what an economic community would be. Besides economic area, the image of an East Asian community becomes much hazier. The question on membership is yet to be settled. It should be emphasized that FTA is not simply economic interdependence or integration, but more importantly institutionalization that political commitment makes possible. On the basis of economic rationale, there is political decision. If FTA necessitates political commitment, even more so does community building. A call for an East Asian community must be more than a want of FTA.

This paper aims at clarifying political factors in the creation of an East Asian community from comparative perspectives. More specifically, it points out similarities and differences from comparative regional systems and comparative international history. Then, it delineates the characteristics of regional integration in East Asia with special reference to ASEAN due to its vital roles in overall regional architecture. Finally, prospects of an East Asian community are discussed.

In East Asia, it seems to remain relevant for prospective community members to mutually commit themselves to peaceful settlement of disputes between them. ASEAN has succeeded in facilitating such mutual commitment through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia. An East Asian version of TAC may be desirable, if not necessary, to facilitate the creation of an East Asian community. Despite differences in political and security outlooks, or rather because of them, every effort should be taken in order to establish the sense of community or “we-feelings” among citizens in East Asia. Civil society should be developed in each state comprising an East Asian community. Transnational relations should be encouraged.

In any event, ASEAN would be the core of an East Asian community. By definition, an East Asian community would be at best as integrated as, presumably less integrated than, ASEAN. In order to establish well-integrated East Asian community, ASEAN should be integrated further and faster. Because ASEAN faces serious obstacles to pursue integration towards a genuine community, advocates of an East Asian community should assist and support ASEAN’s endeavor.
1. Introduction

In December 2005, an annual summit meeting of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At the same time, an unprecedented summit meeting named East Asia Summit (EAS) was held, too. Despite its name, political leaders attending the meeting came not only from thirteen countries in East Asia, which coincided the participants in APT, but also from India, Australia and New Zealand. While EAS was agreed to play “a significant role” in the creation of an East Asian community, APT was singled out as “the main vehicle.” This simple fact illustrates how diverse the image of an East Asian community is.

Already numerous ideas have been proposed on an East Asian community at various places in the region. Truly there is a consensus on the priority; the creation of an economic community should be pursued as soon as possible. This consensus is the only consensus on an East Asian community, however. There is hardly an agreement even on what kind of economic community to be built. Beyond a Free Trade Area (FTA), it is difficult to find what an economic community would be. Besides economic area, the image of an East Asian community becomes much hazier. The question on membership is yet to be settled. In a word, a concrete image of an East Asian community is little more than FTA.

A want of FTA in East Asia is not surprising. In the 1990s, we witnessed a sudden increase in the institutionalization of FTA allover the world. East Asia was an exception. Except for a humble process towards ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) pursued by six small nations in Southeast Asia since the early 1990s, there were none of such attempts. Japan, by far the largest economy in the region and beneficiary of multilateral liberalization of trade, had resolutely rejected regional grouping whatsoever it is. Japan finally discarded its traditional policy at the turn of the century, and it concluded the first FTA with Singapore. Japan began to search for an FTA with ASEAN as a whole. Japan’s move toward the comprehensive economic partnership with ASEAN shook and awoke China. Beijing hastily offered, and concluded indeed, the comprehensive economic cooperation with the organization. Since then, there resulted various proposals, study groups and negotiations between various pairs of nations or regional organizations within East Asia and outside.

It should be emphasized that FTA is not simply economic interdependence or integration, but more importantly institutionalization that political commitment makes possible. On the basis of economic rationale, there is political decision. If FTA necessitates political commitment, even more so does community building. A call for an East Asian community must be more than a want of FTA.

Although discussions on an East Asian community are diverse, there is a distinctive focal point: whether it is relevant or not to compare an East Asian community with the European Union (EU). Implications of the comparison are multifaceted: whether European type of economic integration is applicable to East Asia, whether East Asia should pursue a monetary union, whether East Asia should share democratic political values, whether non-economic integration should be included in community-building in East Asia, etc. Most, if not all, of those questions are related
more to political commitment on the goal and process of an East Asian community than to economic interdependence today.

This paper aims at clarifying political factors in the creation of an East Asian community from comparative perspectives. More specifically, it points out similarities and differences from comparative regional systems and comparative international history. Then, it delineates the characteristics of regional integration in East Asia with special reference to ASEAN due to its vital roles in overall regional architecture. Finally, prospects of an East Asian community will be discussed.

2. Comparative Regional Systems in Global Geo-Economy

2.1 New Regionalism and East Asia Cooperation

The rise of regionalism after the cold war is phenomenal. The opportunity of new groupings encompassing former Eastern and Western Camps, especially in Europe, was certainly an important factor. In addition, many countries chose FTA as survival strategy to create a larger regional market in order to cope with economic globalization. While the completion of the Uruguay Round and the establishment of WTO provided multi-lateral regime of trade liberalization, the surge of regionalism did not cease.

There are two distinctive characteristics in “new” regionalism since the 1990s. Firstly, whether they are called Free Trade Agreement or Economic Partnership Agreement, regional integration and harmonization is much broader than a mere trade liberalization. NAFTA is a typical example. Truly there is a component of FTA in NAFTA, but many other areas of economic activities are under the agreement. A second characteristic is that the geographical size of integration/cooperation is varied. There are a lot of “sub-regional” arrangements crossing national borders to enhance transaction and transportation. On the other hand, “mega-regional” arrangements have been sought for in equally enthusiastic manner.

Due to the fact that an East Asian community may fall into mega-regionalism, the discussion will be concentrated in this type of regionalism. In fact, “mega-regionalism” is not new. There was a traditional preferential arrangement between Europe and African, the Caribbean and the Pacific countries. This was based on the former colonial ties and European integration, and was called the Lome regime named after the Lome Convention in 1975. The regime inherited colonial preferential relations between metropolitan states and subordinates. Recently, it was transformed into more equal arrangement under the Cotonou Convention. In the Western Hemisphere, regional integration has long been attempted in Latin America, and since the late 1980s FTA has attracted the United States. The idea of FTAA, covering both North and South America, is based on equal partnership in essence.

As for East Asia, there used to be a vacuum area of regional institution for integration. Even today, there are none as such. Only APT exists for cooperation, which is still embryotic in
terms of concrete goals of institution. An East Asian community would provide a mega-regional arrangement toward economic integration.

2.2 Three Mega-Regions in Global Geo-Economy

In order to compare three mega-regions so as to characterize an East Asian community, global “geo-economy” will be overviewed here. For this purpose, a world map was designed to provide three types of information in a single map. Namely, the geographical location, economic level and economic size of individual countries are to be grasped at a glance. On a usual map, geographical location is represented by longitude and latitude, and the size of country is obvious. The map of global geo-economy is designed slightly differently. Geographical location is represented only by the longitude of the capital city. Other geographical information is omitted. Instead, other factors in the two-dimensional space are utilized to represent economic conditions of individual economies. The latitude of the map is substituted by economic level; the logarithmic scale of per capita income relations is used in the way that the richer, the upper, and the poorer, the lower. Thus, the literal, geographical North-South position on a usual map is converted into the metaphorical, economic North-South relations on a map of global geo-economy. Finally, the size of the country is shown as the circle proportional to its GDP. The center of the circle corresponds to geographical longitude and economic latitude as specified above. The larger the circle is, the bigger economic size is. Figures 1 and 2 are maps for global geo-economy in 1970 and 2000.

Without explicit names of individual countries, the pattern of global geo-economy can be easily grasped in the two figures. Relative configuration of economies is surprisingly similar between them. Economic growth during three decades push up many economies, but such an impact did not drastically modify an overall configuration. In a word, the three decades up to the year 2000 did not alter the structure of global geo-economy. There are three mega-regions in figures: Americas, Euro-Africa and East Asia. Americas is geographically a zone between 50 and 100 degrees in west longitude, Euro-Africa is a zone between 20 degrees in west and 30 degrees in east longitude, and East Asia is a zone between 90 and 140 degrees in east longitude.

While three mega-regions are discernible in two figures, there are tens of regional institutions in the entire global geo-economy. Some of them have to be selected to illustrate the nature of mega-regions. In terms of regional grouping in the figure, Americas is characterized by NAFTA and LAFTA(1970)/ALADI(2000). FTAA is supposed to encompass both groups. Euro-Africa may be represented by EC (1970)/EU (2000) and ECOWAS (although it was established in 1975). The Lome/Cotonou Regime is too large to represent Euro-Africa because it includes micro-states in the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean, but it should not be overlooked that colonial legacy exists in the region as the Lome/Cotonou Regime illustrates. In East Asia, ASEAN is the only substantial economic region, which covers only part of East Asia.
2.3 East Asia as Compared with Americas and Euro-Africa

Within the structure of global geo-economy, East Asia can be compared with the two other mega-regions. East Asia resembles Americas as the economic giant of high economic level exists in both regions. Needless to say, Japan in East Asia and the United States in Americas. Each giant overwhelms other economies in the respective region. East Asia also resembles Euro-Africa in a wide North-South cleavage. ASEAN alone is a wide spread along the vertical axis of economic North-South, being Singapore on the top and Indochina on the bottom.

Euro-Africa and Americas resemble each other because there are various regional institutions so that if all of those were to be identified in Figure 1 or 2, they would overlap densely, and hard to identify which is which. Compared with those mega-regions, East Asia is very simple in terms of regional architecture. As repeatedly mentioned, there is only ASEAN in East Asia. The creation of an East Asian community would make the mega-region more similar to Euro-Africa or Americas.

East Asian geo-economy illustrates a cluster of economic North rather than Japan’s loneliness. If an East Asian community consists of the member-states of APT, the community would exclude economic North or Australia and New Zealand. The institutionalization of APT-based community would be unique in the sense that only one economic North (no matter how gigantic it is) is included. East Asia may follow a different path from what Americas and Euro-Africa have taken, where economic integration has been led by economic North.

3. Comparative International History of Regional Integration

3.1 Overview

The spread of regionalism today is phenomenal, but not unprecedented. In the 1930s, we have witnessed the contagion of regionalism as disguised imperialism. In response to the Great Depression, major powers built bloc economies in order to secure their market. The United States, Britain, France and so on were hasty in increasing import tariff at home as well as their subordinates respectively, which led the vicious cycle of trade shrink. Such attempts were often called beggar-thy-neighbor policy, and the result was the mutually exclusive enclosure of formal and/or informal empires.

The intensification of economic rivalry in the 1930s provided such an important, but paradoxical, lesson that free trade system cannot be guaranteed by laissez-faire policy, and that international regulation was needed to secure international trade and capital liberalization. After World War II, globalism as opposed to regionalism was the legitimate theme in international affairs. In security arena, the United Nations, especially the Security Council, was supposed to provide collective security system. In economic arena, the Bretton Woods Agreement provided IMF and World Bank in monetary system, and although ITO was aborted, GATT worked as trade system in the post-war era.
Within global system, regionalism was only allowed as the second-best option when global system does not work efficiently enough or as long as complementary to global welfare. Needless to say, such strong resentment against regionalism was based on a bitter experience of exclusive/protectionist regionalism in pre-war days. GATT Article 24 on tariff regions illustrates this point.

In the 1960s, there was another spread of regionalism in the form of economic integration. One reason of this was need for economic development in Latin America and post-colonial Africa. The United Nations declared that the 1960s was to be the Decade of Development. Latin American countries were main targets of the project. In addition, new states became independent in Africa, and economic development was badly needed. Regional economic integration was regarded to be most promising. Free trade associations were established in Latin America and the Caribbean region. In Africa, colonial institutions changed into post-colonial economic unions in former French and British colonies. On the basis of increasing expectations towards regionalism, there was a success of European economic integration. Regional economic integration seemed to make economic development and growth easier and faster through the formation of a larger market. Unlike European experience, however, those projects attempted in the 1960s in such developing regions as Latin America and Africa turned out disappointing at best. Some attempts of trade liberalization were stagnated, and some others were simply collapsed.

If economists and policy-makers learned lessons from European experience only in economic terms, they must have reached wrong conclusions. The key to the success in economic integration in Europe was not in economic rationale, but in political commitment. In the course of pursuing or maintaining economic integration, conflicts of interest almost inevitably take place between participating countries as well as within. Political determination to integration is needed in order to overcome economic conflicts. Such commitment lacked in the leadership in developing countries.

3.2 The Creation of No-War Community by Economic Means

Truly, beginning with economic arena, European integration succeeded in the formation of single market, and in the monetary union. Then further integration was pursued in high political arena. This process of regional integration from economic to political arena was often called neo-functional approach in contrast to functional approach which deals only with economic integration. However, one must not overlook a strong commitment made by European political leaders to the creation of no-war community in Europe after the devastating World War II. In a word, determination to avoid another war led European economic integration.

European integration started with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, which eloquently made the point. After industrial revolution, coal and iron became strategic commodities not only for industrialization but also for military preparedness. Central Europe between France and Germany was abundant in both, and historical rivalry was intensified. After the two major wars in the first half of the twentieth century, the two exhausted nations
decided to let supranational institution control the production and distribution of coal and steel. The collapse of the Nazi regime and the restoration of democracy were crucial in the establishment of regional cooperation. This ambitious project was so successful that the formation of economic community and atomic energy community was agreed while a hasty attempt to establish defense community was aborted.

Needless to say, there were disagreements and conflicts on the goal, instruments and/or process of integration. On the one hand, European integration reached a plateau by the mid 1960s, but on the other, six European countries were integrated into a customs union, and ECSC, EEC and European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) were institutionally unified into the European Communities by that time. A new momentum of integration since the mid 1980s was still in our fresh memory, and it must be unnecessary to describe herein.

Attempts of regional integration for the creation of no-war community are very few, but European experience is not the only one. Another notable case can be found in Southeast Asia. To state differently, ASEAN was formed on the basis of similar desire shared by political leaders in the region.

Not comparable to wars in Europe in scale, but equally threatening to the region, a conflict took place in Southeast Asia in the first half of the 1960s. The direct cause was the decolonization of British Southeast Asia to form Malaysia. The Philippines claimed sovereignty over North Borneo under British rule. Indonesia was opposed to the formation of Malaysia, and took confrontation policy. Forced independence of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965 further complicated the regional conflict. Political change in Indonesia made its foreign policy less militant and more accommodating, which provided momentum towards a creation of a new regional institution for reconciliation. Thailand played an important role of catalyst. Even before Indonesia and Malaysia normalized diplomatic relations, yesterday’s mutual antagonists, i.e., Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, created ASEAN with their intermediary, viz. Thailand in 1967.

Initially ASEAN countries did not acknowledge their common goal was the establishment of no-war community, but kept insisting that the objective of the organization was regional cooperation in economic and social fields. Nonetheless, they concluded the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia in 1976. The essence of the treaty was commitment to peaceful settlement of mutual conflicts as the basis of good neighborhood. TAC soon became the foundation of ASEAN, because there was not any legal basis of ASEAN such as a treaty of the establishment of ASEAN.

ASEAN was very slow in economic integration; there were various differences between member states. Until recently little, if any, progress in regional integration had been observed in Southeast Asia. Profoundly, however, the spirit of peaceful co-existence and good neighborhood had gradually penetrated in Southeast Asian countries. In the 1990s, ASEAN was ready to be engaged in substantial economic integration. Amongst failures of regional integration in developing countries, ASEAN gained the reputation of exceptional case of successful regionalism
in developing area.

3.3 Europe and Southeast Asia Overlapped

The level of unity and integration in Europe is certainly the highest in the world, and incomparable to that in Southeast Asia. If attention is paid to the driving force and the process of integration, there is striking resemblance between those two regions. In order to compare the two regions, the scale of time has to be adjusted. The year zero for Europe is 1945, and that for Southeast Asia is 1965. A schematic comparison of European and Southeast Asian integration is provided in Figure 3. More or less step-wise development of regional integration can be understood easily.

![Figure 3 Development of Regional Institutions: A Comparative Perspective](image)

In the year zero, a war was over in Europe. In Southeast Asia, although the Vietnam War was being escalated in Indochina, regional conflict amongst countries that were to create ASEAN was over. Both regions were left exhausted and vulnerable. National leaders were forced to acknowledge that another conflict should be avoided in order to restore (in Europe) or build (in Southeast Asia) the nation politically as well as economically. The reconciliation had to be realized, and practice of cooperation had to be established. In the year two, five Southeast Asian states set up ASEAN for mutual consultation. On the other hand, concrete measures were sought for in Europe, and in the year seven, six European states set up ECSC for supranational control over strategic commodities.

In the year eleven, ASEAN states agreed on mutual commitment to the creation of no-war region by signing TAC. In the year twelve, with the agreement on preferential trade arrangements,
ASEAN started regional economic integration, but trade liberalization did not take place across the board. In the “same” year in Europe, ESCS was followed by EEC and EAEC. European countries that were oft-called Inner Six began substantial economic integration towards customs union. A few years later, seven other European states started another integrative program as EFTA.

In the European year of twenty-two, the formation of customs union of Inner Six was completed, and the organs of ECSC, EEC and EAEC were integrated into EC. During the third decade, EC enlarged from six to twelve while the process of economic integration was slow. In year twenty-five, ASEAN at last started substantial integration. Six ASEAN states would reduce tariffs to the level of no more than five percent except for sensitive goods so as to establish AFTA. By the year thirty-five, ASEAN enlarged into ten members.

In the end of the third decade, the original AFTA was accomplished, and ASEAN launched a new goal to create ASEAN Security Community, Economic Community and Social and Cultural Community. Those three communities were to be accomplished by the year fifty-five. At the beginning of the forth decade, EC became very active again, and it began further deepening and widening. In the year forty-seven, EC transformed itself into EU.

The year 2005 corresponds to the year sixty for European integration and the year forty for Southeast Asian integration. It does not seem probable that ASEAN in 2025 would catch up the level of integration that EU in 2005 reached. Nonetheless, the progress of Southeast Asian integration until today has been largely based on common need for peaceful international relations, and motivated by the desire of national development so as to overcome vulnerability. Quite similar to European integration, success of ASEAN can be explained mainly by political commitment to good neighborhood. In other words, strategic concerns made possible to overcome various types of disputes and differences in pursuing regional integration.

3.4 Southeast Asia and Europe Contrasted

While resemblance of regionalism between Europe and Southeast Asia should not be overlooked, fundamental difference should not be overlooked either. It is about the concept of community. In European context, regional community means the community of individual citizens of constituent nations. The region-wide decision-making is complex in the sense that supra-national, inter-national and trans-national entities are simultaneously involved in the process. Each citizen has multiple means to engage him (her) self in regional integration. On the other hand, ASEAN Community is very traditional in the sense that the member of community is not citizen but nation. To state differently, Southeast Asian regional community consists of the ten member nations, rather than five hundred million citizens in the region. Good neighborhood is not a question of individual citizens in the region, but a question of foreign policy of ten countries in Southeast Asia.

In Europe, regional community has to be based on democratic governments of member countries. This requirement became obvious when the entry of Greece, Portugal and Spain into
EC was in question. The enlargement of EU after the cold war era illustrates the point again. Democracy is not the value that has to be shared in Southeast Asia. Regional identity alone seems the eligibility for the membership. ASEAN consists of countries of different political regimes. Traditional international norms such as the observance of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs remain important for regional integration in Southeast Asia. It will take some time for Southeast Asian citizens to enjoy democracy throughout the region.

A hard case for ASEAN is the Myanmar problem concerning human rights suppression by the military government. ASEAN has tried in vain to persuade Myanmar to democratize, and the latter’s hard-line policy affected not only intra-ASEAN solidarity but also cooperation with non-members, especially EU and the United States. There are increasing supports of reconsideration of traditional ASEAN norms within the ASEAN region. As for self-transformation of ASEAN, attention should be paid to a new development in progress. The national leaders agreed to formulate the ASEAN Charter by 2007, and the eminent persons’ group was organized to draft the charter. One reason of the call for the charter is the fact that ASEAN does not have legal basis. It depends on foreign ministers’ declaration to establish ASEAN, and on consecutive declarations issued by the heads of states/governments. The charter will constitute a full legal basis of ASEAN from an association to an organization. Another reason is the increasing need for the revision of ASEAN’s modus operandi. The ASEAN Charter may be a step towards a genuine community.

3.5 Implications to an East Asian community

No matter whether or how an East Asian community comes into being, ASEAN would be a nucleus of the community. As to be discussed below, the nature and characteristics of an East Asian community can be conceptualized on the basis of ASEAN because ASEAN has provided a model for regional and mega-regional institutions in East Asia. Moreover, the membership of the community would be decided by ASEAN because non-ASEAN participants in APT or EAS accepted the notion that ASEAN keeps taking initiative in handling such ASEAN-based institutions. More specifically, no matter which institution, either APT or EAS, is to be transformed into EAC, community members would be the signatory of TAC. Non-ASEAN members are required to observe regional order in Southeast Asia.

On the other hand, it is an open question whether an East Asian community may conclude an East Asia version of TAC. As pointed out in Introduction, discussions on the formation of an East Asian community are predominantly focused on economic integration. The fact that two successful integrations have been based on political commitment to peace does not necessarily imply that regional integration without common political commitment is bound to fail.

In any case eight-year old APT is supposed to enhance regional cooperation not only economic but also political and security arena. Development of APT would influence the creation of an East Asian community. In Figure 3, “development” of APT is also presented. As opposed to those two precedents, APT started from an ambiguous point. The year zero for APT is 1997,
which was remembered with an alarming contagion of Asian financial crisis, and in the same year APT began to be institutionalized. While the summit meeting and various ministerial meetings have been held annually, APT-wide regional integration is yet to be agreed upon. In late 2006, APT becomes ten years old, and the national leaders agreed to proclaim the second joint statement of East Asian cooperation after 1999. A more concrete goal of APT may be launched.

4. Uniqueness of Asian Institutions for Economic Integration

4.1 ASEAN as the Institutional Core

Willingly or reluctantly, East Asian leaders accepted the fundamental rule that ASEAN takes leadership in the formation process of an East Asian community, at EAS December 2005. Neither the economic giant nor the most populous, and rapidly growing economy will play a key role. Instead, a group consisting of ten small economies will. The accession to TAC as an entrance ticket to EAS, and presumably an East Asian community too, is one of the typical points of ASEAN leadership.

The creation of an East Asian community was initially proposed by Kim Dae-jung, then Korean President, in 1998 at the summit meeting of APT. In response to the proposal, East Asia Vision Group and East Asia Study Group were set up by APT eminent persons and governmental officials, respectively, for the purpose of drawing a blueprint and a road map towards the community. An East Asian summit meeting, separate from APT, was considered as one of the step to the creation of the community.

As its name indicates, APT is one of the ASEAN-based institutions. In East Asia, and in Asia Pacific as well, ASEAN has provided the foundation of broader institutions. If an East Asian community comes into being, it will be not the first architecture that ASEAN take the crucial role. In fact, ASEAN has been proving its talent in dealing with states outside Southeast Asia for a quarter century. It is true that the mega-regional institution for economic integration does not exist in East Asia, but institutionalization of this mega-region has already taken place mainly associated with ASEAN. Thus, it is not surprising at all that an East Asian community will be created under a strong influence of ASEAN.

In the 1970s, ASEAN successfully took initiative in the establishment of regular dialogues with advanced economies one after another, and finally in 1979 it inaugurated ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences (PMC), a complex of ministerial meetings between ASEAN on the one hand and Japan, the United States, EC, Australia, etc. PMC has been held back to back with the annual meeting of ASEAN’s highest organ, i.e., ASEAN Ministerial Meeting or AMM. Foreign ministers and equivalents gather at the venue of AMM, and the chairman of AMM takes the chairmanship at PMC.

At the end of the 1980s, APEC started. APEC is not ASEAN’s offspring, but it was made like ASEAN. At the formative stage, ASEAN members were skeptical, or even reluctant, to the
idea mainly because of the fear that ASEAN would be substantially dissolved within a larger institution. In order for them to participate, organizers compromised with them on modus operandi so that APEC was built like an exact copy of ASEAN. As APEC consisted of ASEAN Six and other six economies, they agreed to convene the annual ministerial in and out of ASEAN region every other year. In the course of changing nature and membership in APEC, however, ASEAN reduced its influence on the forum.

In the early 1990s or after the end of the cold war, ASEAN became interested in security dialogues with powers outside the region. PMC seemed a promising candidate of such dialogue, but its membership was limited to “like-minded” countries. ASEAN evaluated security dialogue with like-minded powers like the United States and Japan useful, but insufficient. After twists and turns, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was set up in 1994, and the participants were not only ASEAN and its PMC members, but also other Southeast Asian countries, Russia and China. Being a ministerial meeting, ARF has been held back to back with AMM and AMC. As easily imagined, the chairmanship of ARF has been in ASEAN’s hand. ARF has provided participants with primarily dialogue, rather than cooperation, in security arena, and there are not many concrete accomplishments. Yet, ARF is still the only institution that deals with security dialogue, not to mention cooperation, in the Asia Pacific.

The relationship between Europe and Americas has a long history over centuries, and mega-regional institutions have most developed. Finally, APEC created an institutional tie between East Asian and Americas. The missing mega-regional link was that between East Asia and Europe. With Singapore’s initiative ASEAN became enthusiastic to formulate such a link so as to establish ASEM in 1996. The East Asian participants resulted in the seven members of ASEAN at the time plus Japan, China and Korea. Europe consisted of the EU member states. Originally it was understood that ASEM was not defined by regional institutions, but eventually it became regarded as an assembly of APT participants and EU members.

In 1997, APT summit meeting was inaugurated. In response to Japan’s proposal of summit meeting with ASEAN leaders earlier in that year, the latter invited leaders from not only Japan but also China and Korea in December. Naturally, APT Summit became to be held back to back with ASEAN’s annual Summit, and the chairmanship was to be exercised by the chair of ASEAN Summit. In 1999, APT Summit issued the joint statement on East Asia cooperation, the unprecedented of the kind, in which participants agreed on mega-regional cooperation not only in economic but also other arenas. Various ministerial meetings, including economic, finance and foreign ministers, were set up to implement leaders’ commitment. In 2007, APT leaders are to issue the second joint statement of East Asia cooperation.

In 2005, another ASEAN-based institution was created. That is EAS. Like APT, EAS was agreed to convene back to back with the ASEAN Summit. Like APT, it is to be chaired by the chairman of the ASEAN Summit. The eligibility of participation is also the closeness to ASEAN. Besides mega-regional institutions, ASEAN has been seeking for economic integration (FTA) on smaller scale. Prospective partners include Australia and New Zealand, India and the
United States. Whatever the membership of an East Asian community will be, ASEAN will be occupied a pivotal position of connecting Northeast Asia, South Asia and Oceania.

4.2 The ASEAN Way

Because ASEAN has influence on mega-regional institutions in East Asia, in some way or another, it is crucial to understand ASEAN’s modus operandi. In fact, there are few written rules in ASEAN cooperation. As mentioned above, the organization was established without founding treaty. It does not mean that ASEAN has implemented cooperation on ad hoc basis. It acquired a set of common understanding on the principle and rule of cooperation, and it has been operated based on such understanding, which one may want to call the ASEAN Way. Because there is no clear stipulation of the ASEAN Way, of course, it may mean various things concerning fundamental principles, decision rules, custom and practice, and other tacit understandings on the operation of ASEAN.

As far as economic integration is concerned, ASEAN seem to have adopted voluntarism, which makes ASEAN economic integration very unique. ASEAN’s voluntarism is based on the following understandings: consensus is the rule of thumb; common goal is to be shared, but the way of approach may not be the same; agreement should be reached not through negotiation but as a result of consultation; one has to make every effort to realize commitment, but not legally bound; peer pressure is the sole disciplinary instrument.

In 1992 ASEAN agreed on the creation of AFTA, but its free trade agreement was atypical. It was a framework agreement, and did not stipulate the program of trade liberalization. Instead, it set out three criteria: to differentiate high tax commodities, to pick up priority goods on fast track leaving the others on normal track, and to clear the interim and the final tariff levels for either commodity type. As far as liberalization plan went along with those criteria, each country was allowed to reduce tariffs as it wanted. Moreover, it was allowed to list sensitive goods bilaterally. Those arrangements have made AFTA the network of tens of bilateral, and unnecessarily reciprocal, trade liberalization. Although the original goal set out in 1992 was met in 2003, AFTA today is not a customs region in ordinary sense. AFTA will eventually become a customs region where internal tariffs are abolished, probably by the year 2020, but there is not binding agreement. The accomplishment depends on more or less voluntary commitment and implementation by participating governments.

Such an ASEAN way has been very influential in not only ASEAN-based institutions but also those mega-regional institutions ASEAN is involved. For example, APEC agreed on trade liberalization to achieve free trade by 2010 for advanced economies and by 2020 for developing economies in 1994, which is known as the APEC Bogor Declaration. This agreement was nothing but the ASEAN Way. As concrete procedure was not mentioned, APEC spent two years to concretize what was called Concreted Unilateral Action toward free trade. A few years later, the Early Voluntary Sector Liberalization was sought for, but was finally aborted because “voluntary” liberalization was to be “enforced.” Mega-regional institutions that are less ambitious than APEC,
such as ASEM and Forum for East Asia - Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), have adopted the ASEAN Way too. Participating states discuss and consult with one another in such forums, and they agree on various agenda of cooperation, but they hardly agree on critical issues.

Japan became interested in FTA very recently, but it is seriously interested. Being an advanced economy, Japan’s FTA must be in accordance with GATT Article 24. Japan-ASEAN FTA should not be like current AFTA plus Japan. By the same token, if an East Asian community is an East Asia FTA, it must be a customs region in ordinary sense as long as Japan participates. The ASEAN Way is not suitable for a genuine FTA.

4.3 EPA Instead of FTA

Japan’s unprecedented FTA was named Economic Partnership Agreement. Japan-ASEAN FTA is being discussed under the name of Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Incidentally, China-ASEAN FTA is named Comprehensive Economic Cooperation. Attention should be paid to the fact that the term “FTA” is not used in FTA in East Asia. Recently FTA covers not only FTA in a narrow sense but also many trade-related areas such as NAFTA. Therefore, the term “FRA” could have used even though various types of cooperation were included in addition to FTA in those cases. Some other reasons must have existed. APEC seems illustrative in order to understand this point.

Originally, APEC did not pursue trade liberalization of member economies. When trade liberalization was agreed, APEC took the issue of how to help developing economies, which were mainly ASEAN countries, accomplish such a goal. Not only developing economies but also Japan were eager to deal with this issue. In the end, APEC adopted a package of three pillars of cooperation: trade liberalization, trade facilitation, and economic and technical cooperation or ECOTECH. The last pillar included not only usual official assistance toward economic growth and development, which was regarded to make developing economies liberalize trade. In addition, technical assistance toward capacity building was emphasized in order to make them introduce and implement trade facilitation measures more easily and efficiently. Thus APEC became unique in the sense that economic and technical assistance, which is by definition asymmetric, was integrated into trade liberalization, which is symmetric in principle.

APEC provided an antecedent example of cooperation toward free trade in a mega-region consisting of both advanced and developing economies. In order for developing economies to agree trade liberalization more easily, and in order to make trade liberalization more effective, trade facilitation was emphasized. Furthermore, economic and technical assistance is to be provided to help developing economies implement liberalization and facilitation measures. Japan was an advocate of such an idea. It is natural, therefore, that Japan has been emphasizing the idea of Comprehensive Economic Partnership that includes FTA. It seems likely that an East Asian community would become institutionalized by EPA consisting of integrative measures to support trade liberalization, rather than by purely symmetric FTA.

Figure 4 is a rough sketch of the typology of regional or mega-regional economic institutions.
from the viewpoint of historical legacy and equal partnership. The contention on the nature of an East Asian community may be grasped as the difference between an ASEAN type and an APEC type in the figure.

Figure 4 Typology of Regional Economic Institutions

4.4 Some New Trends

Regionalism in East Asia is not limited to the movement towards ASEAN Community and an East Asian community. For example, China has been very eager in forming regional institutions centering itself. China’s strong interest in APT and APT-based East Asian community is integral part of its strategy in neighborhood diplomacy. Equally, if not more, notable case of Chinese initiative is the development of Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Starting with cooperation between former-Soviet Central Asian countries, China is now extending the framework toward countries further west.

Thailand is also eager to take initiative in institution building in East Asia and beyond. There are such new institutions as ACMEC, BIMSTEC and ACD to name a few. ACMEC stands for Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy)-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation, which aims at developing continental Southeast Asia being Thailand as a hub. BIMSTEC stands for Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, or much less imaginative Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation. Connecting APT, SAARC and GCC, Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) is a cluster of various cooperative forums including finance and monetary cooperation.

Thai initiative for regional cooperation is also known as the prime mover rationale, which is similar to the coalition of the willing. Namely, once a certain country proposes a cooperative
program, interested countries and the initiator start the program without waiting for the participation of all members. Those members that became interested can join later. Thus, a large institution can promote various programs with partial involvement of member states. As of early 2006, with the prime mover rationale, ACD developed to constitute nearly thirty member states, twenty of which is taking a role of the prime mover on a certain project, respectively.

Such a rationale derived from lessons of inefficiency of some ASEAN program. ASEAN used to require equal participation of all members in every program of cooperation, which inevitably limited the number of programs implemented and their effectiveness. ASEAN invented “minus X” rationale where some members are allowed not to join a particular program. In recent years, the term “prime mover” has become more widely used, and APT has adopted the prime mover rationale too. On the one hand, it is a pragmatic way for a large institution to carry out various types of cooperation where it is difficult to converge interests of participants. On the other, however, it tends to obstruct the formation of unitary region due to partial withdrawal of some members from region-wide integration.

East Asia used to be characterized by a relatively simple structure, i.e., ASEAN-centered nesting of ASEAN-based institutions. Nowadays, there are more institutions, many of which are overlapping complicatedly, and some of which spread beyond East Asia. Truly not all pursue economic integration, but the future image of an East Asian community has become more vague and opaque. Complicated network of FTA like AFTA may be the reality of an East Asian community if created in near future.

5. Current Issues on the Idea of an East Asian Community

5.1 ASEAN Initiative versus Equal Partnership

Recent development in East Asian “cooperation” mentioned in Introduction added further complication to diverse images of an East Asian community. The creation of an East Asian community has been advocated by Japan, China and Korea. It is not accidental that those countries are the partners of ASEAN in APT. They have attempted to modify ASEAN leadership so that East Asian cooperation is to be enhanced based on a more equal partnership. The Korean leader proposed transformation of APT into an East Asian community through an East Asian Summit. China offered the host of a summit meeting no matter either APT or EAS. Japan suggested co-chairmanship of ASEAN and non-ASEAN members at such a meeting. Those ideas were essentially aimed at reducing ASEAN’s influence.

It seemed that non-ASEAN members were in the same bed, and it turned out that they had dreamed different dreams. Japan advocated that, while an East Asian community may be based on APT, members of a new community should include Australia and New Zealand. India became interested in cooperation and integration with ASEAN, and India’s participation in EAS further complicated the talk of an East Asian community. The open and inclusive membership of EAS
induced Russian desire to join. Japan’s move to open the membership of a new community seemed to have opened Pandora’s Box. Once interested in EAS, China regarded EAS to be no longer suitable for the vehicle towards an East Asian community. China returned to enhance the function of APT in order to realize the community. By the same token, China is trying to obstruct the road from EAS to an East Asian community, and it supports the participation of Russia, which Japan is currently very reluctant. Korean President changed, and the new president is more interested in Northeast Asia than in ASEAN.

As a resultant of various forces, it turned out that ASEAN continues to take leadership in APT, and furthermore that it gained leadership in newly born EAS. Both Japan and China tried to weaken ASEAN’s influence on regional and mega-regional architecture, but they failed to cooperate, and made situations muddled. Literally, ASEAN fished in troubled water. Namely, APT survived, and as APT, EAS is to be driven by ASEAN at least for the time being.

Differences between Japan’s position and China’s seem to have been mounting, but it does not necessarily mean that the two countries are competing to take leadership in East Asian cooperation, not to mention to seek hegemony. Both Japan and China have their own image of an East Asian community, and it is no wonder that each seek for a community based on the image. In any case, in order to make an East Asian community more realizable, ASEAN’s endorsement and initiative is necessary.

5.2 Common Value versus Common Agenda

Despite the confusion on the membership, there seem to exist a wide consensus that one of the most important objectives of an East Asian community is the formation of FTA or FTA-like economic region. As far as ASEAN is concerned, trade liberalization has been sought for not only with Japan, China and Korea, but also with ANZCER, India, and the United States. No matter whether APT or EAS is to be the incubator of an East Asian community, closer partnership in a community will be desirable to ASEAN. For Japan and China, strengthening economic ties with Australia or India is welcome too. In other words, the enhancement of regional economic partnership does not constitute a major issue of disagreement.

It should be pointed out that the membership question concerning which is to become the basis of an East Asian community, either APT or EAS, is not so much of a geographical question. Truly, none of the non-APT participants in EAS are located in East Asia in an ordinary sense of geography. However, regional grouping is much more flexible, and convenience matters. When ASEM was about to established, the membership on the Asian side became an issue. Such countries as Japan argued that Australia and New Zealand to be included as Asian members, but at last they were excluded. When FEALAC was established, those two nations participated as East Asian members.

The membership question on an East Asian community is closely related to the questions on the commonality of the community. At a glance, the larger the size of community is, the lesser the commonality is. ASEAN has limited its membership based primarily on regional identity and
the observance of TAC. However, the difference between APT and EAS as a basis of an East Asian community is more complicated. China has emphasized common agenda of economic partnership, but it preferred to the smaller size. On the other hand, Japan has emphasized more or less democratic value, and it insisted the inclusion of such democratic nations as Australia and New Zealand. Japan is more concerned with common value of the community. In this case, Japan preferred EAS because non-APT participants in EAS are all democratic. At EAS, a phrase to “strengthen global norms and universally recognized values” was agreed, but it does not necessarily mean democracy and human rights. According to traditional understanding, global norms and universally recognized values have meant the fundamental principle expressed in the Charter of the United Nations, which included the sovereign right and the principle of non-interference. Non-democratic governments in East Asia have not accepted the sea change in international norms in the post-cold war era.

Different views on the commonality is further complicated because it is not simply Japan vs. China, but because there is a variety of views within ASEAN. Needless to say, the human rights issue in Myanmar has long been an obstacle for ASEAN to promote cooperation with the United States or EU. Democratized member states in ASEAN are by and large critical to Myanmar’s military government on the issue. Intensified criticism within ASEAN forced Myanmar not to assume ASEAN chairmanship that was originally scheduled in 2007-08. Despite maintaining the principle of non-interference, ASEAN decided to involve itself in the Myanmar question. Certainly, this directly affects the commonality of ASEAN Community. Myanmar is increasingly isolated in ASEAN, but neighboring bigger economies, i.e. China and India, are offering increasing assistance to Myanmar. Such a situation would make more difficult the agreement on common value of an East Asian community.

5.3 Part of Overall Architecture in East Asia

An East Asian community is still on the stage of discussion. Many issues remain unsettled. If the community comes into being, it will neither serve all needs of members, nor satisfy them all. What the community can do will be limited. For example, whether based on either APT or EAS, an East Asian community would be anything but a genuine customs region as long as AFTA retain its characteristics today. On the other hand, there are various institutions at sub-regional, regional and mega-regional level in East Asia. The formation of an East Asian community would increase the complexity of institutions by a small margin.

In East Asia, most of regional and mega-regional ones are ASEAN-based or ASEAN-related. Those institutions can be summarized in terms of the nesting structure of membership. To begin with, ASEAN as the nucleus consists of ten Southeast Asian nations. APT is ASEAN plus Japan, China and Korea (13 participants). EAS is APT plus Australia, New Zealand and India (16). PMC equals EAS plus the United States and Canada and EU as an organization (19). ARF is PMC plus North Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan and PNG (23). ASEM is substantially the assembly
of APT and EU, consisting of 38 (13+25) countries.

There are some institutions unrelated to ASEAN, which add more complexity in East Asian institutions. For example, APEC connects East Asia with Americas although it no longer includes all ASEAN members. FEALAC also connects East Asia (including Oceania) with Latin America. Those institutions “destroy” the ASEAN-centered nesting structure. New institutions such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and ACD have broadened the network of East Asian countries further.

If empowered to pursue extensive objective of integration, an East Asian community might streamline and simplify existing complicated structure of overlapping institutions. It is not probable, however. Among those various institutions in East Asia, an East Asian community may substitute a few functions of existing institutions, but it may primarily complement the existing institutions. In a word, an East Asian community would be located as additional function of the overall architecture in East Asia.

6. Paving a Way towards an East Asian community

6.1 TAC for East Asia

In some areas in the world, peace may be taken for granted and national leaders may pay attention to economic integration. Unfortunately, there are real and potential conflicts that threaten peace in East Asia. No responsible leader would dare to destroy peace, but the escalation of tension may result in armed conflict. As mutual commitment to peaceful settlement of conflict was badly needed in Southeast Asia in the past, it is still so in East Asia as a whole. Mutual trust among leaders or governments is still scarce here. It could be possible that continuous increase in economic transaction and interdependence will reduce tension or mutual mistrust in future, but such causality may turn out only wishful thinking. Political tension may be reduced, and political conflict may be resolved by political wisdom. If authoritarian, national leaders of ASEAN had such wisdom. They signed TAC in 1976, and made the treaty a symbol and foundation of ASEAN. While the treaty does not have punitive clause, no state have waged war for four decades.

It is true that non-ASEAN states, notably Japan, China, Russia and India, have acceded TAC, but the commitment to no-war relationship applies only bilaterally with ASEAN. It does not cover, for instance, Sino-Japanese conflict. If one state in Northeast Asia can make commitment to peaceful conflict resolution with countries in Southeast Asia, why not with other countries in Northeast Asia? The conclusion of a treaty of amity and cooperation in East Asia may serve signatories as the foundation of an East Asian community. At least, it must be a symbolic value. If not legally binding, the accession to the treaty would enhance self-control in refraining the exercise of forces. As occurred in Southeast Asia, mutual distrust will reduce and the Prisoners’ Dilemma could be avoided in East Asia as a whole in a few decades, if not in a few years.
6.2 Wishing for a Genuine Community

As mentioned earlier, currently AFTA is not a customs region, but a network of bilateral arrangements. ASEAN has just started to create an economic community by 2020. Being ASEAN as such, an East Asian community cannot be a free trade “area” in an ordinary sense unless AEC is created much earlier than scheduled. Thus, even economically, an East Asian community would start from the level of non-region, and it would move toward a genuine customs region (presumably only FTA).

Politically, an East Asian community would consist of not only democratic states but also socialist states, even if dictatorial Myanmar is set aside. The co-existence of different political regimes must be mutually respected. ASEAN has accepted this principle. As for East Asian states in general, APEC has provided the cooperative platform on which both democratic and socialist states can work together. In this sense, an East Asian community would inevitably differ from EC/EU at least in foreseeable future.

Nonetheless, an East Asian community should not be a community of some ten nation-states. It should be a community of every citizen belonging to those nation-states. ASEAN is still an association of nation-states. An East Asian community would have to begin with an association of states, but the eventual goal must be a genuine community comprising citizens. This does not mean that the democratization of socialist regimes is to be included in the objective. It means that people’s rights should be considered not only in aggregate terms but also individual terms. The role of civil society must be encouraged.

Even in the arena of mutual security, it is crucial that individual citizens share “we-feeling” across national borders, and that they exclude the resort to arms from foreign policy options between themselves. Mutual commitment of sovereign states is, needless to say, important to maintain amicable relations. The no-war treaty regime such as TAC is invaluable. In addition, such a norm should be based on transnational community of citizens.

Admittedly, the concept of civil society is problematical in East Asia. Even ASEAN hesitated to use that term, and it adopted “caring society” instead. However, there have been some changes in the region. The national leaders agreed to formulate the ASEAN Charter by the end of 2007 so as to transform ASEAN from an association of states into international organization towards the creation of the ASEAN Community. Within a new ASEAN, the role of civil society may be recognized in substantiating and strengthening the ASEAN Community. An East Asian community may as well follow the path ASEAN is taking.

6.3 Assisting and Supporting ASEAN

Participating states in APT and EAS have agreed that ASEAN keep sitting on the driving seat of both institutions. It is agreed partly because ASEAN is experienced in handling difficult issues and compromising internal confrontations, and partly because it is the only options that other participants such as Japan and China can accept. Closer relations with ASEAN would facilitate
the formation of an East Asian community.

In the formation process, ASEAN would not only be the driver, but also the glass ceiling. ASEAN would refuse to create an East Asian community that would override it simply because it would become meaningless. An East Asian community cannot supersede ASEAN. If one wants a community more integrated than ASEAN, one should help ASEAN to integrate itself at least to the level of a community one wants. It is absolutely necessary to have ASEAN pursue a higher level of integration if a higher level of integration is needed in East Asia as a whole.

ASEAN is committed to establish the ASEAN Community by 2020. For advocates of an East Asian community, such a goal may be too humble or too low, or the schedule may be too slow. However, the present goal may be too ambitious for today’s ASEAN. There are various centrifugal factors in the ASEAN region that may hamper further integration. For instance, economic cleavage between old members and new members has been widening. Globalization enforces each member states to cope with extremely competitive environment. International terrorism and other trans-border organized crimes call for capacity building of ASEAN states. Under such situations, assistance to and support of ASEAN, and individual member states as well, is badly needed.

ASEAN was able to survive dangerous international environment, but this admirable record does not mean that ASEAN is powerful. ASEAN is very tactful, but not fully equipped to help itself and member states. More integrated and developed ASEAN would become sounder basis of an East Asian community. Assisting and supporting ASEAN is not ASEAN’s sake alone. In this regard, an East Asian community may not necessarily be based on an equal economic partnership. Like APEC or prospective Japan-ASEAN CEPA, there could be asymmetrical elements such as ECOTECH and ODA as integral part of community building measures.

7. Conclusion

It is legitimate to ask whether an East Asian community is needed in order to strengthen economic ties and/or to create an East Asian free trade area. If FTA is needed in East Asia, negotiation would be possible without referring to a community. It is also legitimate to answer that an East Asian community means an East Asian “economic” community at least for the time being, and that it should not be compared to EC/EU by any means.

Unlike such contentions focusing on economic arena, this paper has attempted to attract attention to political dimension of community building. There is an assumption that even if community is concerned solely with economic integration, political commitment is needed in institutionalizing the integrative program. Furthermore, the paper pointed out that the question of regional security occupied a central theme to pursue community building in such notable cases as EC/EU and ASEAN. As for ASEAN, TAC has played an important role in establishing regional peace. This important resemblance should not be confused with a superficial comparison. There are significant differences between EC/EU and ASEAN, one of which is the notion of community.
The ASEAN Community is regarded as the community of ten nation-states consisting ASEAN, rather than some five hundred million people in Southeast Asia.

In the post-cold war era of globalization and democratization, East Asia still needs careful considerations on mutual security and on co-existence of different political regimes. Hasty pursuit for a genuine community such as EC/EU may not be workable in East Asia. Economic rationality may be neutralized by political and/or security calculations. If economic integration/partnership cannot escape from political or security questions, it may be appropriate to consider the formation of an East Asian community from not simply economic perspective, but also from the viewpoint of overall architecture of East Asia.

In East Asia, it seems to remain relevant for prospective community members to mutually commit themselves to peaceful settlement of disputes between them. In other words, an East Asian version of TAC may be desirable, if not necessary, to facilitate the creation of an East Asian community. Despite differences in political and security outlooks, or rather because of them, every effort should be taken in order to establish the sense of community or “we-feelings” among citizens in East Asia. Civil society should be developed in each state comprising an East Asian community. Transnational relations should be encouraged.

In any event, ASEAN would be the core of an East Asian community. By definition, an East Asian community would be at best as integrated as, presumably less integrated than, ASEAN. In order to establish well-integrated East Asian community, ASEAN should be integrated further and faster. Because ASEAN faces serious obstacles to pursue integration towards a genuine community, advocates of an East Asian community should assist and support ASEAN’s endeavor. An East Asian community may as well be facilitated with similar programs to APEC’s ECOTECH to accelerate trade liberalization. It may not be an exaggerated statement that the formation and establishment of an East Asian community depends on the future of ASEAN.