

Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism

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Amitav Acharya

Characteristics of Asian Institutions

1. Asia regional institutions are characterized by multiple roles (multipurposity), parallel paths (intergovernmental, market-driven, social) and overlapping spaces (in terms of geography and function). There are different constituencies for different institutions. Hence inter-institutional rivalry and bargaining are important in understanding the game of institution building. (Table on Evolution of Asian Regionalism). Encourage better division of labour among various regional institutions, rather than let them duplicate each others' tasks
2. Asian institutions are driven by material incentive, functional need and social purpose. All three are important. (Table on Material and Ideational Influences on Asian Regionalism)
3. Regions are fluid and political concepts. Sensitivity to regional definitions is important to the success of new regionalist ideas and mechanisms. (Table on Naming a Region)
4. Developing and working through local knowledge communities is critical to success of regionalist ideas and proposals. (Table on Evolution of the Pacific Community Idea)
5. Framing of new institutions and mechanisms as evolutionary outgrowth of extant institutions is more likely to be productive than radical departures or revolutionary ideas.
6. Asian regional institutions are path dependent, shaped by the impact of prior choices. Crisis leads to incrementalism but not to radical disjunctures. (Table on Normative Diffusion and Institutional Emulation in Asian regionalism). A good way to break path dependency would be to encourage Northeast Asian cooperation to address subregional issues, since the ASEAN process is not relevant there
7. External sponsorship or assistance is not a sufficient condition for regional integration. (Table on Naming a Region)

8. Asian institutions have served a primarily normative socializing function. They are yet to move to problem-solving mode and unlikely to get there soon. (Tables on Norms of Asian Regional Institutions and Socialization of Vietnam, China and India)
9. New institutions will continue to emerge with new tasks, old institutions will persist but will be accommodated within new ones.
10. The EU serves as an inspiration, not a model. In Asia, its better to encourage thinking about pooling of sovereignty, rather than dilution of sovereignty. There is and will not be a political community of Asian nations. But a security community, where is not envisaged as a means for problem solving, is possible. Asia is at best a consociation.