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**Building an Asia-Pacific Peace Community
From a Human Security Perspective**

Keynote Address

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**Building an Asia-Pacific Peace Community
From a Human Security Perspective¹**

Sorpong Peou²

The year 2015 marks an unprecedented milestone in the history of East Asia. Since the fall of Cambodia, Lao and Vietnam into the hands of communist revolutionaries in 1975, quickly followed by the Khmer Rouge reign of terror, the region has witnessed at least three miracles, the first of which has been widely known: the East-Asian economic miracle. The second miracle remains less well known: the disappearance of mass atrocities (Bellamy 2014). The third miracle continues to unfold, as former foes have made efforts to become friends who seek to build regional institutions and communities. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for instance, declared 2015 to be the first year of its regional economic, cultural and political-security communities.

Unfortunately such miracles do not always last, nor do they happen as often as we wish to see. More often than not, new miseries lurk behind miracles. In East Asia, new challenges have now emerged: the threat of China's rise perceived by other states in the region, the growing rivalry between or among great powers (China, Russia, Japan and the United States), territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, military buildups (especially nuclear and naval modernization), as well as recent stock market crashes and arguably currency wars – all threaten to erase the memory of the past miracles.

This paper contends that East Asia desperately needs a fourth miracle: the success of regional peace community building wider than ASEAN. The idea of regional security community for or in Asia is around for some time. Beginning in the early 1990s or soon after the Cold War, only a handful of scholars, most notably Amitav Acharya (1991, 1998, 2001), made the case for an ASEAN security community. More and more scholars, including network institutionalists (Caballero-Anthony 2014), have since followed in the footsteps of this normatively optimistic tradition. Although ASEAN efforts have made some progress, they are unlikely to bear much more fruit. This paper contends that regional security community is, in fact, regional peace community and makes a case for

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² I would like to thank the participants who raised helpful questions and made comments on the presentation. Those participants included:

an Asia-Pacific peace community based on the concept of human security.³ Although much has been written about human security in East Asia (Howe 2014, 2013; Peou 2009), no serious effort has been made to make human security the key conceptual foundation of regional peace community. This paper aims to do just that.

This paper advances the following proposition and makes one prediction: people-centered democracies are stable and stable democracies make durable regional peace communities; an Asia-Pacific peace community remains a distant possibility. The proposition and prediction are based on a sense of ‘realist optimism’ that regime type and power matter. Power is purpose-driven. Part one of the paper reviews some theoretical arguments for and against the institutionalists’ optimism. Political realists are least optimistic about the future of regional peace and security. Institutionalists still put their faith on the ruling elites’ political will to promote cooperation and resolve conflict through socialization and collective-identity/institution building. But there are limits to how fast and how far state leaders can socialize and build regional communities unless they share similar interests and until they regard themselves as democratic. Authoritarian and democratic leaders may agree to build a regional community because of their shared interest in enhancing their political legacy at home through effective economic performance. Unfortunately commercial states do not have a lasting history of peaceful coexistence and are unlikely to share a lasting collective identity – the basis for community building and maintenance. Building on democratic liberalism, this paper makes the case that states are likely to succeed in building and maintaining a regional peace community when they are democratically people-centered and led by powerful democracies whose purpose is to help provide public goods for the community.

The second part of this paper challenges the proposition that peace is possible or regional security is achievable when states are prosperous and when their economies become interdependent or integrated. Evidence shows that states have taken steps toward enhancing their cooperation through institution and community building; however, the ‘peace-through-prosperity’ proposition tends to ignore the dark side of wealth. States do not get wealthy at the same speed or achieve prosperity at the same level. Some states get wealthier than others and wealth gaps make it difficult for them to build a strong sense of community. Wealthier states tend to spend more on modernizing their defence systems, thus becoming more powerful, may then engage in territorial disputes, such as those in the East and South China Seas, thus more threatening to their territorial rivals. The degree of mutual threat and rivalry between states is unlikely to decrease when they seek to maintain prosperity, especially when natural resources are limited or dwindle. A prosperous China has become more militarily powerful, more assertive, more territorially contentious, and thus more threatening to other states in the East and South China Seas, thus making it difficult for other states to build a community. In spite of their formal agreement on the need to create a regional community, the ASEAN states still do not share the same level of interest in taking collective action against China. Because of its prosperity, China has used its wealth to limit other states’ ability to gang up on it.

³ The Asia Pacific as a region is not defined in terms of geographical proximity, although I treat Europe and North America as regions and regional security communities. To me, a regional security community is first and foremost made up of states sharing common interests and a collective identity defined in democratic terms. As such, I do not regard The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as a regional security community, despite the member states’ shared interest in economic development.

The third part of this paper contends that prosperous states will be unable to build a regional peace community until they become democratic and are committed to the protection of their people. Evidence shows that authoritarian states in the region have a poor history of maintaining security alliances. Undemocratic states like China and North Korea are weak allies and have proved unable to attract more states to their side. Democratic and undemocratic states also remain hostile to each other. Democratic states also have their own dark side in that they tend to perceive authoritarian states with oppressive regimes as threatening - not only to their people but also to other states - and thus democracies often threaten undemocratic states and use force to change the latter's regimes; however, democracies have a history of cooperation among themselves. Within Southeast Asia where undemocratic states outnumber democracies, efforts at turning ASEAN into a peace community remain a serious challenge. Still governed by the Communist Party, China has been regarded as oppressive of its people and also as more threatening to regional or national security than the more powerful, but democratic, United States. A democratic China would have a more positive impact on the building of a regional peace community. The United States is more likely to accept a democratic China as a regional hegemon, and a democratic China may be able to provide regional leadership to other states. Evidence suggests that a regional peace community can be built and maintained if great powers are democratic and provide joint leadership and that an Asia-Pacific community remains a strong, if long-term, possibility.

I. Theoretical Arguments: Regional-Human Security Nexus

Since the end of the Cold War, the academic literature on security has become a growth industry. Unfortunately those who have written on the subject continue to disagree with each other. A major part of the disagreement lies in the persistence of political realism. But political realism becomes quite vulnerable to criticism from democratic liberalism, especially when the latter is expanded to incorporate the concept of human security.

The idea of regional security community poses a theoretical challenge to traditional security studies long dominated by political realism, because proponents of regionalism think they have found middle ground between the realist and idealist worlds and they tend to subscribe to social constructivism (Adler and Barnett 1998a). There are two basic types of regional security community: amalgamated and pluralistic. Amalgamated security communities are highly centralized to the extent that states agree to pool in their sovereignty in favor of supra-nationalism, whereas states in pluralistic communities still hold on their sovereignty but no longer find each other militarily threatening. In general, security communities are generally regarded as those with member states establishing "dependable expectations of peaceful change." In a nutshell, security community members cease preparing for war against each other and co-exist peacefully, effectively constrained by collective norms and identities (Adler and Barnett 1998b). For some, what is called a security community is in fact a "non-war" community (Wæver 1998). As will be discussed, a non-war community is, in fact, a 'peace community,' primarily because the theoretical framework adopted in this paper is more line with Immanuel Kant's notion of "perpetual peace" among republican states, although the realist and liberal notions that material power and interest also matter. Other scholars use the term "warm peace" to describe the European community (Miller 2005).

Political realists think their theories can subsume the constructivist concept of regional security community. First, if they exist, security communities are too few in numbers and thus cannot be generalized to subdue realism whose proponents have sought to explain war and peace among states for at least two thousand years. Realism also helps explain why regional 'security communities' are more like security or political alliances than security communities, and they still rest on material power. For instance, the European Union (EU) as a regional organization depends on the co-leadership of France and Germany (Gilpin 2000) and many of the EU members are also members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led by the United States. For realists, such a regional security community in the Asia Pacific is unlikely. The rise of China, the rivalry between China and the United States and overlapping territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, however, have given rise to neo-classical and offensive realism (Kaplan 2014; Mearsheimer 2006, 2001a & b; Friedberg 2011, 1996) stressing that fast-growing powers are bent on becoming revisionist or bound to seek hegemonic-power status. Fast-rising powers such as China are under the pressure of international anarchy to maximize power, to become more like Godzilla than Bambi, if and when possible, to ensure their national security. Defensive realists warn that the strongest state in the international system tends to threaten lesser states and to force them to balance against it (Waltz 2000). While power relations in the Asia Pacific are still in flux, it would be unwise to ignore what realists say about some of the realities of power in international politics. However, realist analyses focus almost exclusively on military alliances rather than peace communities. This explains one of political realism's shortcomings.

Other theoretical perspectives have been advanced to challenge political realism, but none has been completely subversive. Different institutionalist versions have been advanced but still fall short of producing explanatory power. Neo-liberal institutionalism has come under criticism despite the fact that it has something new to say about security and despite efforts made by states in the Asia Pacific to establish regional institutions and security regimes. Regional institutions have not grown strong enough to have a significant effect on state behavior independent of power distribution and to replace the military role played by the United States. The rise of China and its territorial claims disputed by other states such as Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines still make it difficult for neo-liberal institutionalists to make the case regional institutions have grown strong enough to the point where war-prone state behavior has been effectively mitigated. Normative institutionalists, better known as social constructivists, are better at making the case that regional security politics is what states make of it, because they tend to see some progress in terms of regional efforts to build a regional community through the process of policy engagement or cognitive development. Acharya (1991, 2001), for instance, is famous for advancing the thesis that the political elites in the ASEAN region have chosen to build a security community. His analysis appears to be empirically validated when the ASEAN members officially formed their community in 2015.

Although scholars in the institutionalist camp have given us a reality check in cautioning that the process of peace community building is not linear, they still make the case that the process moves from Hobbesian to Lockean and finally to Kantian logic, on which states are no longer expected to wage war against each other and even behave self-sacrificially (Wendt 1999). These scholars stress the importance of ideas, norms, values, national identity, and domestic culture. Katzenstein and Okawara (1993) and Berger

(1998), to name a few, have devoted considerable attention to the domestic structure of Japan and the role of norms and ideas that help explain why states in the Asia Pacific do not behave like those in pre-World War II Europe. Acharya (2001) and Johnstons (2003) observe other positive developments. Acharya has made the case that there has been no arms race in the region. Johnston tested for the effect of socialization on state behavior, using the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as his focus of analysis. Member states have developed “habits of cooperation” through persuasive arguments that institutions matter or through “social backpatting.” China offers an example of how states’ interests changed through participation in the ARF framework. Prior to joining the ARF, China had not been aware of what its interests and highly skeptical of multilateral mechanisms. Because ideas matter, even small states can also play a leadership role. Network institutionalists especially think ASEAN has played a central role in the Asia Pacific by playing a leadership role, “despite its lack of material power” (Caballero-Anthony 2014).

The critical question is not whether ASEAN has played a leadership role in establishing institutional networks, but whether its ‘leadership’ role is independent of other variables. In spite of her defence of ASEAN centrality, for instance, Caballero-Anthony (2014: 581) still concedes that “ASEAN clearly needs to work harder to build its own institutional capacity. This ultimately requires a combination of political will and considerable investment.” This raises the question of what it takes for ASEAN to meet such requirements. Meanwhile other institutionalists have now acknowledged the emergence of new challenges to the ASEAN efforts at regional community building. Acharya (2013: 11), for instance, makes the case that the ASEAN states “will not put guns before butter,” but he identifies new security challenges. Defense spending in Southeast Asia has increased dramatically, with Singapore being “the highest spender with the most capable armed forces” (Ibid: 10). He attributes the growth of defence spending to a number of factors, such as intra-ASEAN disputes and tensions, domestic insurgencies and “concern for the security and safety of sea lanes from disruption by piracy and terrorism, as well as “extra-regional security challenges such as uncertainty over the [China’s] strategic intensions or fear of retrenchment of the US military presence in the region” (Ibid: 10). Nontraditional sources of insecurity, such as insurgencies, piracy and terrorism, have led some Southeast Asian states to spend more on defense.

One of the challenges that institutionalists share lies in their insistence that ideas, norms, socialization and networking alone matter significantly (some advance their perspectives based on the claim of “ideas all the way down” (Wendt 1999), without specifying the extent to which they matter. They also claim that ruling elites can learn to cooperate effectively based on political will alone (Where there is a will there is a way!). But political will itself needs to be explained. Why do state leaders sometimes have the political will to do something and do not have it some other times? Collective identity can be built through the process of elite socialization and political elites can enhance their political will for cooperation, but they can also stop socializing and their relations may break down unless they share similar interests – both material and ideational.

ASEAN elites have shown that their cooperation depends on their shared interests. Obviously they built their regional institution during the Cold War, and one factor that brought the founding members together was the threat of communism from within and without (Chang 2014). The end of the Cold War brought together the ASEAN members and four other states in Southeast Asia, including their former enemies (Laos,

Vietnam and Cambodia), when the latter plus Myanmar joined the regional group. The ASEAN expansion was not simply the byproduct of elite socialization. The end of the Cold War left Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam without a reliable patron, namely the Soviet Union, and forced these states to find new friends in the region. The crisis and collapse of communism also left them with no choice but to integrate themselves into the regional and global economy. Joining ASEAN was perhaps the best choice available to these states whose leaders moved toward capitalism since the mid-1980s. In short, this type of political will was thus a byproduct of global structural changes and ideological shifts that made it possible for the new members of ASEAN to shift their foreign policies.

Commercial liberalism further helps explain why states that trade with each other are more likely to foster peaceful relations because of their shared interest in wealth making. Commercial liberals include Richard Rosecrance (1986, 1999) and Carl Kaysen (1998). Growing economic costs, contact, and communication are said to pacify trading states. States are interested in economic welfare rather than in warfare and that states that trade with each other and become economically interdependent or integrated do not attack each other. When states prosper, their citizens are also assumed to enjoy socio-economic security benefits. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), for instance, is more or less in line with commercial liberalism because of its emphasis on the capitalist idea of “a single market and production base” that is “more dynamic and competitive.” The ASEAN leaders share one interest: economic development based on capitalism.

However, the commercial liberal approach raises questions that do not seriously undermine political realism, which contends that prosperity and economic interdependence do not prevent war (Waltz 2000; Mearsheimer 2001a). When states become economically developed and prosperous, they become more protective of their wealth and often more aggressive as they seek to sustain or accumulate wealth. With their wealth and the need to protect and accumulate it, they build up their military capabilities by adopting either defensive and offensive strategies or both. This may lead to what is known as “security quandary” or “security dilemma,” driven by arms racing (LeMière 2014). This insight is not a big surprise to political realists critical of commercial liberalism, which came under fire before and after World War II (Ripsman & Blanchard 1996/97). Commercial states have no history of maintaining lasting peaceful relations. They seem unable to maintain mutual trust for an indefinite period of time. Even liberal scholars such as John Ravenhill remind us that “[t]he relationship between the growth of interdependence and a reduction in militarized conflict between states is at best a probabilistic one: no proponent of the liberal approach would be sufficiently naïve to assert that growing interdependence will assure peace” (Ravenhill 2009: 207).

Some who have studied ASEAN affairs also question the “capitalist peace” proposition. Chienwu Hsueh (2015), for instance, argues that the capitalist peace trajectory remains “a conditional one.” Peaceful cooperation among states continues as long as they continue to perform well on the economic front. But they tend to provoke territorial disputes when they are unable to maintain good economic performance. The question is whether poor economic performance is the cause of territorial disputes and military buildups and whether something else can mitigate or pacify war-prone state behavior. Institutionalists would make a counterpoint: the ASEAN states succeeded in enhancing their cooperation not because their economies performed well but also because they wanted their economies to perform better. So there is all the more reason for them to

cooperate better when their economies perform poorly. In fact, the ASEAN states have pushed for further regional integration in the form of community building after the 1997 and 2008 financial crises. China stepped up to the plate by adopting measures to help sustain economic growth (Chang 2014: 386). But this does not rule out the fact that states in the region have modernized their armed forces, to be discussed later. The dark side of wealth or prosperity is that rich states tend to build strong armed forces for various reasons, including affordability, wealth protection and accumulation, and preparation for bad times, especially when cooperation no longer works to their advantage. Wealth also tends to create inequality within states and between them. As a result, states do their best to ensure prosperity and prepare for the worst when cooperation no longer sustains economic growth and when their access to dwindling resources is denied.

In short, the persistence of political realism reveals serious shortcomings found in other theoretical perspectives. Neoliberal, network and normative institutionalist perspectives as well as commercial liberalism can explain some positive security developments in the Asia Pacific, but their explanatory power remains limited. The rise of China, its rivalry with the United States, the unresolved and escalating territorial disputes over the East and South China Seas, ongoing military buildups and nontraditional sources of security threat in the region reveal the limits of cooperation and raise questions about the extent to which regional efforts at security community building have been successful. Political realism thrives on institutionalist shortcomings.

The greatest challenge to social constructivism and political realism comes from democratic liberalism, which also has its shortcomings. Although democracy is not prominent in Wendt's way of thinking, his argument (Wendt 1998: 418) that "500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons" is self-revealing. Both the United States and Britain are democratic states, whereas North Korea remains one of the worst dictatorships the world has ever known. This point is in line with Immanuel Kant's thinking about perpetual peace among republican states that also protect their citizens' individual rights-based freedom without losing state sovereignty in favor of world government because of different languages and cultures (Bradshaw 2015). For Kantian thinkers or democratic liberals, democracies have almost never gone to war against each other, although they tend to distrust dictatorships, seeing them as a source of threat to national security, and are thus more likely to go to war against the latter (Doyle 1996, 1997; Russett 1996). According to Russett, "Democracies are not necessarily peaceful...in their relations with other kinds of political systems (Ibid: 68). Doyle also writes: "Liberal states are as aggressive and war prone as any other form of government or society in their relations with nonliberal states (Doyle 1996: 21). This represents the dark side of democracies - something realists are quick use as a way to explain the recent Russian-Western fall-out. John Mearsheimer (2014), for instance, blames the West, especially the United States, for the crises in Ukraine that led to their confrontation with Russia, because of the West's naïve liberal agenda. Democracies, however, are able to trust each other and thus can cooperate with each other because of their shared norms and institutions. Most importantly democracies tend to experience political stability - a major reason why their leaders do not justify the need to intervene in each other's affairs or to go to war against each other. Russett (1996: 89) contends that, "Perhaps the inherent stability that characterizes many democratic political systems accounts for their low rate of conflict with other democracies."

Although democracies have a low rate of conflict with each other, it remains unclear how and why they become stable and able to build regional peace communities. Insights from political realism help, to some extent, caution against the democratic-peace optimism. Political realists think that democracies maintain their military alliances because of external threats posed by undemocratic states and that we could never be sure democracies would never go war if the threat of authoritarian states were to end (Walt: 1999). Promoting democracy can also be dangerous because it may lead to domestic instability (Friedberg 2011).⁴ These realist arguments appear to have a lot of merit on the surface, but can be easily countered in different ways. First, democratic liberals do not say the threat of undemocratic states is never a factor in bringing democracies into forming common alliances. Second, the realist argument - that we can never be sure about the fact that democracies will never fight each other when they no longer face the threat of authoritarian states - is challenging, but there is reason to believe that peace among democracies will continue and that their peace communities will remain. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and the integration of Russia and China into the global economy, for instance, did not result in the disintegration of NATO the way some leading realists, such as John Mearsheimer (1998), predicted. Liberal factors, such as economic interdependence or integration and democracy in Europe, seem to have cemented a European identity that made the EU possible (Ripsman 2005).

Third, the critical question is whether democracies are more stable than dictatorships. History shows that democratic regimes often descend into dictatorship. The best example was the descent of European democracies into fascism and communism before World War II. This seems to confirm what the United States second President, John Adams, once famously asserted, that “democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” Some dictatorships (such as Saudi Arabia and North Korea) have lasted longer than some democracies, although they are not equally stable. Rich Saudi Arabia has been far more stable than poor North Korea because of the former’s wealth, a source of political legitimacy. Some scholars, however, contend that “democratic regimes are not significantly more unstable than authoritarian regime” (Mundt Undated). Other studies, however, confirm that democracies can be stable as long as their institutions are highly developed; fair and open competition is the norm; political polarization and factionalism can be prevented, and executive authority can be substantially constrained (Goldstone and Ulfelder 2004). While insightful, this confirmation cannot ignore the fact that developing democratic institutions and nurturing them to maturity are expensive. Poor democracies are usually unstable when their economies break down and almost always subject to government corruption and subversion from unelected officials. Modernization scholars may be right when saying that economically developed democracies are likely to endure (See Wucherpfenning and Deutsch 2009, for a review of this literature).

⁴ A democratizing China may stir up nationalism or patriotism or make the country more antagonistic and aggressive (Friedberg 2011: 249-50). The United States must thus prepare itself for the worst until China becomes a liberal democracy (Ibid: 251, 252). In his words, “if we permit an illiberal China to displace us as the preponderant player in this most vital region, we will face grave dangers to our interests and our values throughout the world” (Ibid: 8). Evidence from Europe further suggests that “nationalist passions, territorial disputes, and arms races [over there] were fast dwindling into historical memory” (Ibid: xiii). Until China becomes democratic, the United States should maintain and enhance the strategy that combines engagement and containment or “congagement” adopted since the mid-1990s.

Democratic development also needs not come at the expense of economic growth and can enhance economic performance,⁵ if democratic state institutions remain efficient.

If stable democracies enjoy a relatively low rate of conflict among themselves, it is largely because they can manage their conflicts peacefully. Research shows that well-established democracies have a history of disputes over fisheries, maritime boundaries and resources of the sea, but are able to remove territory as a contentious issue among them. Disputes between democracies have also become less severe and shorter over time. Well-established democracies tend to be conservative powers satisfied with the territorial status quo (Mitchell and Prins 1999; Kacowicz 1995). Democracies also have a history of few territorial disputes with each other and rarely do they have territorial disputes with their neighbors, because territorial disputes are very difficult to win or resolve and democratic leaders fear electoral punishment (Gibler and Miller 2013).

While we can make the case that democracies are generally stable and can develop dependable expectations of peaceful change among themselves, we still need to overcome at least one major weakness found in democratic liberalism, which tends to focus on peace among democracies, but says little, if anything, about how exactly democracies become stable or build and maintain regional peace communities. Part of the problem is that its proponents tend to neglect or ignore civil liberties and other human rights issues in their analyses. Russett, for instance, bases his work on low democratic standards. In his words, “we will...not use civil liberties per se as a defining quality [of democracy], and we shall also ignore the matter of free-market economic liberties” (Russett 1996: 73). Elsewhere, however, Russett (1998: 373) makes the case that stable democracies are those that guarantee minority rights against majority tyranny, have means of peaceful conflict resolution, and are not economically impoverished. He also agrees that democracies with an income level of \$6,000 (1985 dollars) or higher “can be expected to live forever” (Russett 1998: 376). We can thus extend his thinking to make the case that a regional peace community is what stable democratic states make of it.

It should be stressed that even the liberal type of democratic governance is not only about regular holdings of free and fair elections (otherwise this type of democracy should be characterized as electoral rather than liberal), but also about maintaining effective institutional checks and balances, as well as defending civil liberties. Democratically elected governments are civilian, not subject to the prerogatives of their armed forces (military and police). Armed forces in democracies do not intervene in political affairs, and civil-military relations are characterized by civilian supremacy (Serra 2010). People are free from physical abuse by agents of the state, especially members of the armed forces. They enjoy political rights and civil liberties, such as freedoms of expression, assembly and demonstration. Such freedoms limit state power and thus empower people to speak what they consider ‘truth’ against power. In line with Kant’s argument that only republican states are legitimate, the concept of democracy generally rests on the notion of legitimacy based on individual rights and freedom.

Liberal democracy is also about economic freedom and does not challenge the idea of human development. Poor democracies may not be able to enhance legitimacy,

⁵ According to one sophisticated study, “while a country’s level of democracy in a single year has no measurable impact on its growth rate in the subsequent year, its democratic experience over the course of the twentieth century is positively associated with growth in subsequent years. Long-term democracy leads to stronger economic performance” (Gerring *et al*, 2005: 324).

but the EU's experience shows that its member states have sought not only to maintain democracy but also to sustain economic development, which helps reinforce faith in democracy, cooperation and trust building (Ripsman 2005; Miller 2005). Democratic states have a history of preventing mass starvation (although they may be unable to defeat day-to-day hunger or poverty) and help contribute to the expansion of basic human capabilities (Drèze and Sen 1989). Recent studies further show that greater democracy makes people less vulnerable to premature mortality. As James McGuire (2010: 11), for instance, argues "long-term democratic experience changes citizen expectations so as to promote the provision of basic services to the people most vulnerable to premature mortality." Over time democratically elected civilian governments are expected to meet their citizens' needs by providing basic social services and expanding them.

Building on democratic liberalism, this paper advances the argument that democratic states that protect and empower their own people are most likely to be successful candidates for regional community building because people-centered democracies are likely to remain stable because social discontent is manageable. When Karl Deutch coined the term security community, he made clear it rests on "unifying habits and institutions" (Deutch 1978: 194), but the idea of "unifying" is associated with the process of integration at the state and human levels, and democracies can learn to unify their habits and institutions. In other words, democracies build peace communities when people are integrated into the regional framework. Liberal democracy has, in fact, been the political foundation of regional peace community building and it should come as no surprise to us that only a handful of regional peace communities exist in the world today: most notably, the European Union and North America (made up of Canada, the United States and perhaps Mexico). One striking feature of these communities is that their members are democratic and powerful democracies play a central role in keeping their community together (Peou 2002, 1998). More recent works further validate this theoretical proposition. Hsueh, for instance, makes the following assertion: "Many argue that one of the important reasons for the European Union (EU) to evolve is due to the fact that most of the EU countries are democracies..." (Hsueh 2015: 32).

Most interesting about the EU is that its members have also committed to the protection of their peoples from early on. Soon after the Second World War, the new democracies of Europe took human rights very seriously. Asplund (2014: 192) points out that they "wanted a strong and independent human rights body in order to stave off domestic, undemocratic forces, mitigating potential threats to their newly won democratic orders." Overtime, EU democracies have also become less and less dominated by their armed forces. Evidence also shows that they have reduced defense spending, and many of them have even shifted from compulsory military service to all-volunteer forces because they have had difficulty recruiting and retaining military personnel. Democracy, among other things, helps explain this difficulty. As Tibor Szvircsev Tresch and Christian Leuprecht (2010: 7), for instance, put it, "While the electorates tend to support their armed forces and the idea of peace and stability operations in principle, they are often ambivalent about the financial and human cost of actual missions." The armed forces do not enjoy as much recognition as they once did. When people are free from political oppression and socio-economic deprivation, states are likely to enjoy stability and stable states make durable peace communities. Wealthy states can be stable when they can better meet the socioeconomic needs of their people, but there are limits to what wealthy

states can do when, as noted, they spend more on defense and become increasingly competitive on the military front. This remains incompatible with human security.

Human security has been defined in two distinct ways: narrow and broad. The narrow approach emphasizes freedom from fear (from direct and physical violence). The broad approach gives priority to freedom from want (from indirect or non-physical or structural violence). The UNDP approach places emphasis on human development and has become influential in Asia, especially in economically developed states like Japan (UNDP 1994; Peou 2014; Howe 2013). The UNDP and Japanese models are somewhat similar because they give top priority to human development propelled by high economic growth experienced by states in East Asia. Emphasis on economic growth, however, raises some questions about whether this is the best way to empower people, build and consolidate a regional sense of community. The development-based approach may have been influenced by commercial liberalism, which regained credibility toward the end of the Cold War. However, as noted, commercial liberalism has difficulty explaining why trading states have a history of going to war against each other. The protection-based approach appears to provide a stronger or more solid foundation for security community building than does the development-based approach. People are protected when their governments effectively ensure their personal freedom from fear and democratic governance remains the best available political system for ensuring such freedom. Democratic regimes that enjoy political legitimacy are stable but only they protect and empower their own people to reach their potential through human development. In short, stable states are democratic and have been characterized as “full-blown” or “established” or “pluralistic” (Miller 2005), but this paper argues that stable democracies are people-centered because system or regime stability rests heavily on political legitimacy.

People-centered democracies are stable and make durable peace communities, but they do not operate in a power vacuum. Democracies are not equal in terms of power defined in terms of capability. Some democracies are more powerful than others and we cannot simply wish power away from our analytical framework. With good purposes such as peace community building, power can do more good than harm. Regional leadership provided by powerful democracies is crucial in the process of regional peace community building and maintenance. The French-German economic alliance, for instance, has made it possible for the West Europeans to achieve unification and strengthen their union (Gilpin 2003). According to Gilpin (2011: 18), “The major political players, namely Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, are central in even such a highly integrated international institute as the European Union.” What is also striking about the European and North American communities is that they have the United States as the largest democracy playing a leadership role (Layne 2003), but their shared democratic norms and values are what ultimately make their peace communities stable. Democratic liberals and social constructivists also do not deny that power matters (Adler and Barnett 1998: 52; Russett 1998: 366). Democratic leaders provide collective goods for community members and can also keep recalcitrant members in line. While the leadership role of powerful democracies may be questionable, evidence remains clear: the existing peace communities are not without powerful democracies in their midst and powerful democracies tend to be satisfied with the territorial status quo. Benjamin Miller (2005) also points out that liberal democracy and liberalization under US hegemony helped states in Europe integrate themselves into a “warm peace” community. However,

the theoretical framework advanced in this paper does not support any argument that democratic leadership or hegemony is unnecessary when realist factors no longer exist as Norrin Ripsman (2005) seems to suggest. Democracy and democratic leadership remain crucial throughout the process of regional peace community building and maintenance – a model advanced elsewhere (Peou 2002, 1998) and reinforced in this paper.

II. Peace Community Building Based on Prosperity?

The Asia Pacific offers an excellent example of why the arguments advanced by various institutionalists and commercial liberals have limitations. The idea of security community building remains vibrant, but high expectations have been only partly met.

The best example is the ASEAN Political-Security Community. Progress on the economic front in East Asia has made it possible for state leaders to share an interest in regional institution or even community building, but it remains to be seen whether their shared interest will eventually transform them into a regional community based on a collective identity. East-Asian experience shows that capitalist development remains an insufficient condition for security community building, as some states have become wealthier than others and, as a result, they may not share the same level of interest in integrating themselves into a community. Cambodian support of an economic community, for instance, still rests on several conditions, one of which is that Phnom Penh would like to see the wide gaps between rich and poor ASEAN members narrowed. In November 2002, Prime Minister Hun Sen reaffirmed his support for ASEAN's commitment to the 'Initiative for ASEAN Integration', which aims to close the development gap between the older and newer members of ASEAN. In fact, GDP per capita (2009) shows that Cambodia (\$692) remained the second poorest country in Southeast Asia, poorer than Laos (\$910), Vietnam (\$1,119), the Philippines (\$1,749), Indonesia (\$2,363), Thailand (\$3,950), Malaysia (\$6,822), Brunei (\$26,486), and Singapore (\$36,631) (Furuoka, Lim, Mahmud, and Hanim Pazim, 2012, p.70). During a speech at the ASEAN Summit in April 2012, Hun Sen emphasized the need for ASEAN to further narrow development gaps among the member states. His words are quite telling: "Although the development gap among ASEAN members has been noticeably narrowed, it is still huge....Indeed, narrowing such development gaps is not only a precondition for ensuring ASEAN competitiveness and reducing poverty of our people but also for helping ASEAN achieve real regional integration" (Hun 2012, 3).

Moreover, trade balances between Cambodia and other ASEAN states tend to be negative and thus poses a challenge to regional integration. Cambodia mainly exports raw materials and imports manufactured and high-tech products and, as a result, will continue to experience negative terms of trade, namely, selling cheap products in order to buy expensive ones. Most Cambodian products have been exported to the West, especially the European Union and the United States. But Cambodia continues to import more ASEAN products than it exports. In 2013, for instance, Cambodia's exports to ASEAN countries were worth \$482 million, but its imports amounted to \$3.68 billion. While the overall trade volume was up by 12% - to \$4.16 billion in 2013 from \$3.71 billion in 2012, Cambodia's trade deficit remained substantial (Xinhua 2014). Trade deficit remains a concern for the Cambodians. As one Cambodian scholar, Chhean Vannarith, puts it,

“Cambodia does not have many goods for exporting to other ASEAN countries while imports keep increasing. Hence, its trade deficit is anticipated to significantly enlarge in terms of trade in the ASEAN region” (Cited in Economics Today 2012).

As long as Cambodia is still left behind other ASEAN members in socio-economic terms, the prospects for success in the process of regional community building still look far from complete. Because of poor socio-economic conditions at home, many Cambodians have sought work in other ASEAN countries, but their working conditions in the host countries are far from ideal because of their low labor skills. Cambodian workers in Malaysia and Thailand, for instance, have been subject to abuse and violence. The Cambodian Government demands that the other ASEAN states hosting Cambodian workers improve their poor working conditions. The ASEAN community project still excludes the free movement of workers and offers no effective measures for migrant worker rights (Furuoka, Lim, Mahmud, and Hanim Pazim 2012). These shortcomings make it difficult for ASEAN members to develop a stronger sense of community.

The East Asian economic miracle has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, thus increasing their freedom from want, but people in this region remain insecure. Proponents of development-based human security such as Surin Pitsuwan and Mely Caballero-Anthony (2014) contend that the concept remains compelling, but “progress on moving it beyond discourse to action has been less than impressive.” The ASEAN still has a long way to go. Violent conflicts still exist. More can be said about community security, as many social and ethnic communities remain displaced by armed conflicts. The search for economic security remains elusive. Migrant workers remain vulnerable. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes and cyclones, remain a source of threat to people. In their remarks: “after 20 years, there has to be more than an awareness of human security in the region. What is needed now is for states to be imbued with the political will to act decisively on addressing human insecurities and to work with others actor in promoting protection and empowerment of people and communities...”

As an ongoing source of threat to people, transnational organized crime in the region has also risen alongside uneven economic growth and development and has not made states effectively cooperative in their commitment to combating nontraditional threats. Piracy, for instance, is rooted in socio-economic conditions and the lack of law enforcement at the regional level. Countermeasures directed at piracy have proved ineffective if poor socioeconomic conditions persist. Mark Valencia (2006: 88) contends that pirates do not have the same objectives as terrorists, who operate on the basis of “generally political and religious ideology...For pirates, the motivating factor is economics.” Weak regional responses to terrorism further reveal that regional organizations remain unable to agree on the degree of terrorist threat to their security. According to Tan (2003: 131), “the failure of ASEAN, and of its associated multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, in dealing with a range of recent economic and security issues does not bode well for regional cooperation in the war against terrorism.” No effective coordination among ASEAN and ARF members to combat terrorism has been established (Simon 2007: 127). Neither ASEAN nor the ARF has provided leadership in developing an anti-terrorism strategy (McFarlane 2007: 222). One challenge is that the threat of terrorism is more local than transnational (Fealy & Thayer 2008) and terrorism remains a security threat in the midst of economic growth.

Economic success also does not automatically make states cooperative on the politico-security front. Economically successful states are likely to spend more on national defence, thus reinforcing traditional security concerns, for various reasons, such as enhancing their national security in general and furthering economic development or sustaining prosperity. As John Chipman (director general of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies) puts it, “While the west reduces its spending on defense, Asia is becoming increasingly militarized as a result of rapid economic growth and strategic uncertainty” (Cited in Norton-Taylor 2012). Robert Kaplan (2014) further observes that development in East Asia is not about building high rises and new shopping malls but also about making warships and missiles. Kireeva (2014: 35) also makes this observation: “Modernization of the naval forces in Asia-Pacific countries began in the 1980s in parallel with an increase in defense spending” and successful economic development has led them “to build up their military potential in parallel with economic growth and modernization of their armed forces.” With economic growth states enjoy prosperity and spend more of their wealth modernizing their armed forces. With continued economic growth, Indonesia tripled its defence spending between 2001 (\$1.9 billion) and 2012 (\$7 billion). If Singapore is the largest defence spender in Southeast Asia (with an annual defense budget close to \$10 billion), it makes sense to recognize that this city state is also the most economically developed or the wealthiest among the ASEAN members. With more economic growth, states in the region have not only spent more on national defense but also sought to revitalize their defence industries. Evidently other states in Southeast Asia have increased their defense budgets and sought to build and expand their defense industries, viewing this strategy as part of their overall goal to further industrialization and economic development. Although its defense industries are not primarily viewed as part of its economic development strategy, Singapore has built “up the largest arms industry in Southeast Asia” (Bitzinger 2013: 383) and began “to commercialize and also globalize its defence business” in the mid-1990s (Ibid: 382).

Economic growth and military buildup have not made it easier for states to resolve their territorial disputes either. Territorial disputes between Cambodia and its neighbors, especially Thailand, have made the social constructivist claim of shared expectations for peaceful change less convincing. Violent clashes between Cambodian activists and Vietnamese security personnel in 2015, for instance, left ten Cambodians and 7 Vietnamese injured. Thailand and Cambodia have engaged in a series of military confrontations and armed clashes since 2008 (Peou 2015; Pou 2013; Chachavalpongput 2012) Overlapping territorial disputes in the South China Sea have escalated in recent years, although they are between China and other ASEAN states, particularly Vietnam and the Philippines. But poor economic performance alone does not appear to be the main driving force. China’s territorial assertiveness has increased overtime.

China’s use of force to secure its territorial claims can be traced back to at least in 1975 when it seized the Paracel Islands from South Vietnam; in 1988 when it destroyed a Vietnamese naval detachment and captured atolls and reefs in the Spratley Islands; in 1994 when it occupied Mischief Reef claimed by the Philippines. During the second half of the 2000s, tensions rose again. China again became more assertive. In January 2005, Chinese ships fired on two Vietnamese fishing boats, killing 9 people. One boat with 8 people onboard was detained on Hainan Island. Beijing accused them of being pirates and opening fire first. It was not until after the late 2000s that territorial disputes grew more

intense. It began with Chinese ships reportedly harassing a US ocean surveillance ship. In March 2009, people aboard the Chinese ships waved their national flags and demanded that the US ship leave the area. The year 2011 saw at least armed clashes between Chinese ships and those of other claimant states. A dispute flared up again late in 2012 when Vietnam accused a Chinese fishing boat of cutting a seismic capable attached to a Vietnamese vessel exploring for oil and gas in the Gulf of Tonkin. Considering the Sea as the main offshore site for natural gas production, Beijing defends the position that only it has the right to develop energy resources in the South China Sea (Perlez 2012).

Tensions between China and the Philippines have now grown worse. In June 2011, Manila referred to the South China Sea as the “West Philippine Sea” and the Reed Bank as “Recto Bank.” The year 2012 saw things turned for the worse, as their dispute over the Scarborough Shoal grew intense. Manila accused China of illegally laying 75 concrete blocks on the chain of reefs and rocks along the Shoal. In July, a frigate of the Chinese navy ran aground in an area within the Philippines’ EEZ. In January 2013, Manila took further action against China by filing a complaint with the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea – an independent judicial body established to settle maritime disputes based. Beijing objected to the move made by Manila, making it clear that the international body has no jurisdiction over maritime areas and that any of its attempts to get involved in maritime disputes would jeopardize the principle of state sovereignty. For the Philippines, China disregards rules established in international law allowing states to enjoy their 322 nautical-km Exclusive Economic Zones.

The subsequent years saw Beijing’s growing territorial assertiveness and Chinese vessels extend their maritime reach. With its first-ever aircraft carrier now in service, China has sent patrols through contested maritime territories. There is a similar pattern in China’s assertive activity in the East China Sea. Territorial disputes over Senkaku (called Diaoyu by the Chinese) between China and Japan have also grown intense in recent years. In July 2013, for instance, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated the following: “Senkaku is undoubtedly Japan's inherent territory. Clearly, there is no territorial problem here. We will not make any compromise, not even a step, on this matter” (Cited in Yamaguchi 2013). Also interesting to note is the new attempt by Beijing to broaden its territorial claims. In May 2013, the Communist Party newspaper, *The People’s Daily*, published an article by two Chinese scholars making the case that the Ryukyu chain of islands, which includes Okinawa, does not belong to Japan. According to them, Japan annexed the Ryukyu kingdom in 1879 and this amounted to an invasion. Ryukyu’s sovereignty status thus remains open to question (McCurry 2013).

China’s territorial assertiveness has resulted from two factors that reinforce each other: military modernization and economic growth. Its military buildup continues unabated, at an alarming rate. There is a correlation between economic growth and increased defence spending. Between 1996 and 2006, it spent an annual average rate of 11.8 percent on defense, while the economic growth rate was about 10 percent. Between 2007 and 2012, the annual average rate was even higher, jumping from \$45 billion to \$106.4 billion. China’s official defense budget figures over the last 12 years show that they have jumped from \$14.6 billion in 2000, to \$17 billion in 2001, \$20 billion in 2002, \$22 billion in 2003, \$29.9 billion in 2005, \$35 billion in 2006, \$57.22 billion in 2008, \$45 billion in 2007, \$77.9 billion in 2010, \$91.5 billion in 2011 and \$106.4 billion in 2012. In other words, defense spending jumped from only \$14.6 billion to \$106.4 billion

in a matter of 12 years. According to some estimates, China's military budget in 2015 will surpass that of all 12 Asian-Pacific neighbors (Richburg 2012).⁶

Without wealth accumulated over the past 30 years, China could not have increased defense spending and modernized its defense system to the extent that it has been able to do. According to Friedberg (2011), "evidence of China's expanding capabilities and ambitions has continued to accumulate". China has also become more politically ambitious. Since the global financial crisis that erupted in 2008-9, China's leaders have become more assertive than ever before. They have become more willing to resist external pressure for change, more open about their country's rapidly evolving military capabilities, "blunter in warning its neighbors against opposing its wishes, more willing to use its growing economic clout in an attempt to exert diplomatic leverage, and more open in questioning the likely longevity of America's leading role in Asia and the world" (Ibid: xvi). As "wealth and power at its command have grown, Beijing has begun to exert increasing influence, both in Asia and around the world" (Ibid: xv).

With its growing military might, China has shown no sign of trying to hide its ambition to become the preeminent power in Asia. On 3 September 2015, Beijing staged one of the most impressive shows of force in front of world leaders, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. More than 12,000 troops, some 500 pieces of military hardware and 200 military aircrafts were involved in the parade, clearly sending the message that China was ready to fend off anything its leaders would consider armed aggression. Rick Fisher, an expert in Chinese military technology, had this to say: "If successfully co-ordinated, the PLA [People's Liberation Army] is reaching a point where it could overwhelm U.S. and Japanese warship defences" (Cited in Vanderklippe 2015: A3). The military parade also came at a time when the Chinese economy showed signs of slowdown and after the Chinese stock markets had crashed, and the country was likely to experience social and political instability. Economic problems and poor economic performance may thus prevent state elites from socializing for peace and may encourage them flex their military muscles, especially when they feel threatened by other powerful states, democratic or otherwise.

While it makes it possible for states to modernize their armed forces, economic growth also makes their armed forces more threatening amid a growing demand for limited natural resources and competition over dwindling resources. This helps explain the escalation of territorial disputes in the South China Sea, known for being resource-rich. In February 2011, for instance, a Chinese frigate fired three shots at Philippine fishing boats after having instructed the latter to leave. In May, three Chinese maritime patrol vessels and a Vietnamese oil and gas survey ship engaged in an armed clash in an area just 120 km off the south-central coast of Vietnam and 600 km south of China's Hainan Island. In June, another clash occurred within Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone, when three Chinese fishery patrol vessels confronted a Norwegian-flagged seismic conducting ship hired by Vietnam Oil & Gas Corporation. Competition for control over

⁶ Estimates about China's defence spending vary, but none suggests that China has not spent more on defense over the past few decades. According to one study, "percentage increases in China's defence budget have been in double-digits for almost all of the last 35 years; in 2012 Japan's defence budget rose for the first time in more than a decade and, in the same year, the defense budgets of many Southeast Asian countries also grew, including those of Vietnam and Indonesia – by 25% and 32% respectively." (LeMière 2014: 140).

natural resources in the East and South China Seas are likely to grow intense as states in the region have procured submarines, warships and anti-ship missiles as they continue to defend their maritime claims and adopt the strategy of ‘anti-access/area denial’ (A2/AD). Southeast Asian states have purchased A2/AD weapons “to deny China’s freedom of movement in the South China Sea” and China “has pursued an A2/AD strategy to deter and potentially defeat the far superior naval capabilities of the US” (LeMière 2014: 145, 147). It is predicted that over the few decades the Chinese A2/AD strategy “will enable China to block the US ability to project power” in East Asia (Kireeva 2014: 40).

In the midst of economic growth and military modernization, many states in the Asia Pacific, including most ASEAN states, remain insecure and continue to “welcome the United States as an external balancer to China’s rise” (Chang 2014: 390). This has intensified the rivalry between China and the United States, which has now sought to rebalance China. Beijing has in turn criticized the United States and its regional allies for their attempt to preserve American dominance over the region (Kireeva 2014: 37). What this suggests is that the idea of ASEAN being a security community is still problematic because of its dependence on great powers for its development and security. The growing evidence of Chinese territorial aggression has put a wedge in intra-ASEAN relations. Although it is a member of regional organizations such as the ARF and APEC and preaches the message of its peaceful rise, China has sought to dominate ASEAN states, rapidly built its defense system, and become more aggressive in the South China Sea. China has made efforts to keep territorial disputes with the ASEAN states from becoming internationalized. Growing Chinese influence in Cambodia in particular has posed a challenge to ASEAN solidarity. Chinese influence has resulted from its growing investment in, trade with and aid to Cambodia. The purpose of Chinese investment and aid is not simply to help Cambodia develop and better integrate into the ASEAN community but also to use the country as a basis for expanding its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia. This threatens the ASEAN idea of community whose members have not become powerful enough to withstand Chinese aggression in the region.

On East Asia, scholars predict a coming cold war between China and the United States, because “China’s recent procurement of [defense] systems...fall within offensive power projection” (Ikegami 2009: 6). Tieh-shang Lee (2011) provides a statistical analysis of China’s rising military power and predicts the probability of war between China and the United States occurring around the years 2063-2079, when the former will have been in the process of catching up with the latter and starting to dominate the Asia-Pacific militarily, assuming that China’s dissatisfaction with the *status quo* persists. Data shows that between 1990 and 2005 China’s military power still lagged behind that of the United States and that China’s level of dissatisfaction was not extremely high, thus explaining China’s peaceful behavior. Potential war between them remains, however. Although it remains unclear whether a security dilemma now exists, military buildups, especially by states engaging in overlapping maritime claims, it is clear that prosperity has not put an end to prospects for interstate war. In fact, the rivalry between China and the United States is likely to grow more intense as the former’s economy may have since 2015 replaced the latter’s as the largest in the world in terms of size.

In short, economic growth has both encouraged and limited prospects for regional peace community building. It is hard to imagine that wealthy and poor states can always share similar interests. Although the ASEAN states have agreed to take steps toward

implementing their regional community agenda, the gaps between rich and poor members remain an ongoing challenge to their collective vision. The Cambodian case sheds light on this challenge. Economic growth has left certain sections of the population marginalized and globalization has given rise to transnational organized crime in the region. Because of their growing wealth, states have also spent more on defence. China is the clearest example of this worrisome trend. Territorial disputes have escalated because of Chinese assertiveness, which has also resulted from its military modernization driven by its economic prosperity. Economic development has also contributed to social-economic inequalities and injustices – arguably a major source of terrorism, piracy and insurgencies. All this goes to show that economic growth and development have made states and their peoples in the region more prosperous. However, they are still left insecure because of the growing threats – both traditional and nontraditional. Thus, the most critical question is: Why has economic growth/development in East Asia not produced the positive effects as predicted by commercial liberals and proponents of development-based human security? The answer may lie elsewhere.

III. Why Human-Centered Democracy Matters!

This section advances the argument that democracy matters significantly in terms of making a positive impact on collective efforts at regional alliance and community building through the security or freedom of individuals. This does not suggest that democracy is a panacea for every source of regional and human insecurity. Evidence from the Asia-Pacific, and elsewhere, proves that security alliances among liberal democracies tend to last longer than security alliances among undemocratic states. Security alliances between democratic and undemocratic states are unlikely to be transformed into security communities and democracies have a strong record of peaceful co-existence and the potential to build regional security communities.

History does not show that authoritarian states or their leaders have a proven record in building a regional security community. Undemocratic states can construct military alliances, but they appear to have a hard time solidifying them. Military alliances between undemocratic states (i.e., the Soviet Union/Russia, China and other Southeast Asian states like Cambodia and Vietnam) weakened before the Cold War ended and then collapsed. China and the Soviet Union went to war against each other in the late 1960s. China went to war against Vietnam in 1979 despite the fact that they were once socialist allies. The Communists in Cambodia and Vietnam fought together against American imperialism and established communist regimes in 1975, but then went to war against each other in the late 1970s. The poor record of alliance formation and maintenance among undemocratic states has not prevented them from trying to establish more alliances. Some realists have recently taken note of the resurgence of geopolitics, more specifically the emerging attempts by China, Iran and Russia to create alliances challenging the US-led Western alliances (Mead 2014), but it remains to be seen whether their ‘alliance’ will become strong or will last. China has done little to help ameliorate the grim security situation on the Korean Peninsula, but this explains China’s limited influence over Pyongyang - the only ally China has and cannot afford to lose it.

Democratic and undemocratic states also have a long history of mutual distrust and war against each other. There are still serious challenges to efforts at building a

regional security community in Southeast Asia, as the ten states are a mixture of democratic and authoritarian regimes. Although ASEAN's conscious efforts to build a people-oriented political community represent a positive step, the regional group is still made up of weak or immature democracies (such as Indonesia, the Philippines and until recently Thailand), illiberal democracies (Malaysia and Singapore), and electoral democracies (Cambodia) and undemocratic states (Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) (Peou 2015). The mixture of political regimes in ASEAN has made it difficult for the member states to reach consensus on liberal norms and build a common democratic identity. Efforts to draft the ASEAN Charter, for instance, were compromised by "a clear division between the more democratic members of ASEAN...the authoritarian members..." (Asplund 2014: 193). Matthew Davies (2014: 107) writes that "the [ASEAN Human Rights] Declaration neither articulates a shared regional identity relating to respect for human rights, nor can it be understood as marking an early point toward the creation of this identity." He then points out that "the current diversity of regional opinions on human rights and democracies is perceived as legitimate and will endure." When the Declaration was drafted, the principle of state sovereignty and the statist norm of non-interference were left untouched, and the democratic role of civil society actors throughout the entire process and establishing the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission of Human Rights (AICHR) was kept at bay by the authoritarian regimes. Efforts by civil society actors bore little fruit, despite their success in getting the democratic governments to include the protective functions within the Human Rights Charter and the AICHR mandate (Asplund 2014). Within ASEAN, there is also a 'political alliance' among four undemocratic states - Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam - whose heads of state continue to hold their separate annual summit.

Moreover, democracy in East Asia is not quite liberal in terms of respect for individual rights and liberties, although some democracies are more liberal than others. Asian democracy has been characterized in various ways, including Asian-style democracy. The armed forces remain powerful in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. The ASEAN democracies are far from consolidated or stable, because their civilian governments are not completely independent from their armed forces, which remain powerful and can undermine civilian rule by various means, which includes controlling the executive and legislative bodies of government and the conventional media (Dressel and Bunte 2014; Majid 2010). In the case of Thailand, the military has dominated politics since 1932. During the 1960s and 1970s (except a short period from 1973 to 1976), "the military ruled with dictatorial power" (Bunbongkarn 1999: 162). As noted, there have been two recent military coups (2006 and 2014) and may have had negative effects on regional community building. After the military coup in May 2014 that ousted the civilian government in Thailand, approximately 250,000 Cambodian migrant workers crossed the border back to Cambodia. Since the turn of the century, military officers in the Philippines have remained politically active, limiting democratic leaders' ability to enforce democratic rules and protect human rights. Seeking to maintain her political dominance and her allies (Abinales 2010), President Arroyo proved either unwilling or unable to take control of the military. According to Human Rights Watch, "Human rights activists remain concerned that Arroyo remains beholden to the military officers who put her in power, and that they are preventing her from disciplining those in the military who may be implicated in rights violations (Human Rights Watch 2007: 9)."

A renewed campaign against communists has kept the Philippines' restive armed forces influential. Although elected leaders in Indonesia seem willing to comply with democratic rules and human rights norms, "they are either powerless or unwilling to fully reign in the military and the paramilitary groups that help elites stay in power" (Freedman 2007: 214). Some scholars argue that "in the cases of Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines [...] the military has remained a significant feature of the state apparatus, either dominating or sustaining order within society" (Ganesan and Kim 2013: 15). Military dominance in, or influence over, Asian security politics further helps explain why even weak democratic regimes are widely known for their widespread corruption, partly because their armed forces remain powerful and perpetuate the need for high military spending on the grounds that they need to counter armed insurgencies and external threats. Military rulers tend to push for more defence spending and support ambitious defence industrialization programs as a way to strengthen their hold on power.

In Northeast Asia today, the possibility of war between undemocratic and democratic states remains strong: between communist North Korea and democratic South Korea, communist China and democratic Taiwan (Wang 2002),⁷ communist China and democratic Japan, as well as China and the United States (the world's second largest democracy). Undemocratic states, such as China and North Korea, enjoy only limited forms of political legitimacy (based on the authoritarian ideology of political stability and economic prosperity) and thus have had to resort to nationalism as a way to enhance their legitimacy. Authoritarian leaders operate on the basis of hierarchy, secrecy and repression and "are likely to perceive the outside world as hostile and threatening and are likely to encourage their citizens to hold similar views" (McCormick 2000: 325). China's anti-Japanese nationalism and its Sino-centric chauvinism remain powerful hindrances to genuine China-Japan reconciliation. China's new authoritarian nationalism "has a vengeful, militaristic edge" (Friedman 2000: 112). The absence of democracy in *China* has contributed to *its* misunderstandings of Tokyo, made "Chinese patriots" blind to their past hegemonic ambitions, thus perpetuating Japan's security dilemma (Ibid: 118, 119). China's non-democratic nationalism has also been unattractive to Taiwan: it "may not swiftly abate," "will intensify pressures to isolate Taiwan internationally," and "will use military force and economic destabilization to shake the support of the people of Taiwan from their government" (Ibid: 123). McCormick (2000: 325) cautions that "Authoritarianism does not make conflict between China and the United States inevitable, but it does significantly increase its likelihood." If the two powers have not waged war with each other, it is because China is now no match for the United States, although Chinese military expenditures continue to close the gap.

Aaron Friedberg (2011:1) further contends that what has kept China and the United States "locked in a quiet but increasingly intense struggle for power and influence" is not simply "the result of easily erased misperceptions or readily correctible policy errors." Their rivalry "is driven instead by forces that are deeply rooted in the shifting structure of the international system" and in their "very different domestic political regimes". The two powers have different political systems. As a democracy, the

⁷ As Yuan-kang Wang (2002: 304) puts it, "In the short run, Taiwan's consolidation of democratic institutions is likely to be accompanied by confrontational rhetoric and action across the Strait. China may even be prompted to launch a preventive strike in order to stop Taiwan's 'creeping independence'. Cross-Strait security would likely remain volatile even after Taiwan has become a mature democracy."

United States has sought a regime change in China, but the latter has sought to preserve its authoritarian system by pushing back and seeking to displace the former as the preponderant power in East Asia. This has created a major source of mistrust between them. Political compromise is unlikely, as each thinks history is on its side.

Although engagement in East Asia by the great powers has grown in recent years, the pattern of relations among them becomes clear. China, India, Japan and the United States remain competitive, but the latter three share one source of threat in common: undemocratic China. The growth of economic and military Chinese power alone hardly explains the other three powers' fear of China, especially when balance-of-power factors are taken into account. The United States, for instance, is militarily stronger than China, despite the latter's rapid military buildup, but the United States has not been seen as a threat to regional stability and security to the extent that China is. India and the United States were not strategic allies during the Cold War, but their security relations have been positive, reinforced by the rise of China. There is a growing consensus in India that China poses an increasing threat to its interests. The Indians think that China is the only one among the major powers that does not accept their country as a rising power. The two Asian states seem to be locked in a classic security dilemma. India thus seeks to deter China by building closer security ties with the United States (Pant 2011).

Evidence from the Asia-Pacific, however, shows peaceful relations among democracies in the form of bilateral military alliances: between Japan and the United States, South Korea and the United States, Thailand and the United States, the Philippines and the United States; as well as Australia and the United States. These bilateral security alliances were formed during the Cold War and remain more or less strong today.⁸ As the case of the Philippines and the United States also shows, democracies do not have a perfect record of maintaining alliances, but they are still capable of restoring them and maintaining peaceful relations (Cook 2014: 39). The recently enhanced security relationship or partnership between India and the United States further underscores the enduring feature of peaceful or non-war relations between democracies.

Even when they do not form bilateral alliances among themselves, democracies can mitigate war-prone behavior toward each other. As democracies, India and the United States never went to war against each other during the Cold War. Edward Friedman cites examples of how democratic states in Pacific Asia have achieved genuine reconciliation, based on trust, transparency, and cooperation. As democracies, South Korea and Japan, for instance, have done this, although they have not yet formed a bilateral security alliance: "A democratic South Korea, which suffered longer and far more from Japan's imperial militarism than China did, has reconciled with Japan and agreed to put the past behind and built together a better future." (Friedman 2000: 113). Friedman was quite aware of the continuing difficulties between Korea and Japan, but "Seoul and Tokyo could still devise democratic ways of resolving issues in textbook disputes as authoritarian China cannot." (Ibid: 113). A democratic China would be able to promote

⁸ The United States has stationed eight of its 14 strategic submarines in the Asia-Pacific and its security allies continue host American troops: 55,039 in Japan, 28,500 in South Korea, 1,110 in Australia, 1,154 in the Philippines, 366 in Thailand, and 311 in Singapore. These numbers clearly suggest that the United States has been far more successful than China in terms of building and maintaining security alliances, almost all of which are made up of democratic states. Singapore is the only illiberal democracy among these allies, but also the most economically liberalized or globalized among the ASEAN states.

debate that could enable Chinese patriots to pay “attention to millennia of Chinese wars of incorporation and expansion” (Ibid: 109) and could help them understand others better, because of “the complexities of openness and transparency” (Ibid: 113).

Political realists like Arron Friedberg, Kenneth Pyle and Robert Kaplan regard power transition between democracies as less prone to war than that between undemocratic powers (Pyle 1997: 46, 51). For Friedberg, the United States must prepare itself for the worst until China becomes a democracy, for only then can the former learn to live with the latter as the preponderant power in East Asia and call home its legions (Friedberg 2011: 251, 252). His analysis incorporates liberal democratic insights. In his words: “if we permit an illiberal China to displace us as the preponderant player in this most vital region, we will face grave dangers to our interests and our values throughout the world” (Ibid: 8). He thinks that only democracies can coexist peacefully. European experience further suggests that “nationalist passions, territorial disputes, and arms races [over there] were fast dwindling into historical memory” (Ibid: xiii). Evidence shows that power transition between big democracies, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, is less prone to war than power transition between democracies and dictatorships or between authoritarian states. According to Kaplan, “China today becomes less and less autocratic and less and less centralized” (p.163) and the United States should “be prepared to allow, in some measure, for a Chinese rising navy to assume its rightful position” (Kaplan 2014: 182) when it becomes democratic, just as Britain was prepared to let the United States become the next hegemon over the Caribbean.

The realist question about the fact that democracies in the Asia Pacific have not transformed their bilateral security alliances into multilateral military alliances like NATO or a security community like the EU is difficult to challenge. Still, Asian democracies can learn from democracies in the West. Even arch-realists like Robert Kaplan (2014) recognize that the EU is possible because states have been democratic. His book on the South China Sea is not “all about warships, oil tankers” but also about “modernizing autocrats” (Ibid: 189). He also recognizes that the ASEAN “is not at the level of integration of the European Union (EU), which is united by a common form of government –democracy- giving it a philosophical, and hence, reason d’être” (Ibid: 74). The rapid rise of China and its growing threat perceived by democratic states in the Asia Pacific may one day propel them to form a multilateral security alliance, just as what Western democracies did when they formed NATO in response to the Soviet threat in the late 1940s. In 2012, for instance, Japan proposed creating a multilateral security alliance made up of major democracies (Australia, India, Japan and the United States) in the form of an “Asian security diamond”. According to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who formulated the strategic concept, “The ongoing disputes in the East China Sea and the South China Sea mean that Japan’s top foreign policy priority must be to expand the country’s strategic horizons. Japan is a mature maritime democracy and choice of close partners should reflect that fact.” In his words: “I envisage a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan, and the US State of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons starting from the Indian Ocean Region to the Western Pacific. I am prepared to invest the greatest possible extent, Japan’s capabilities in the security diamond.” The prime minister has now reached out to other European democracies such as France and Britain, which are said to “have significant strategic, political and economic stakes in the Indian Ocean Region and also the Western Pacific” (Kapila 2014).

Evidence further shows that democratization in East Asia has enhanced human security. Alex Bellamy (2014) argues that the decline of mass atrocities in East Asia is the other “Asian miracle” and three major structural changes explain it: “reduction in the selection of mass atrocities as a weapon of war, increase in incomes, and progress towards *democratization* combined with the emergence of new ideas about sovereignty and their accommodation with existing principle of non-interference” (Italics added). A study by James McGuire (2010) examines four Asian states: Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia and also shows a positive relationship between democratization and decline in infant mortality rates. In Taiwan and South Korea, “adversarial politics and political liberalization contributed to the design and implementation of health policies” (Ibid: 182). Improvements in basic health care service quality in Thailand occurred during the process of democratization from the late 1973 to 1976 and from 1992 to 2005, but health care policies in Indonesia under the authoritarian leadership of President Suharto were less successful at reducing infant mortality rates. Quantitative and qualitative data show economic growth resulted in more health care services, but democratization allows civil society actors to demand higher health service quality.

The point being made here does not ignore the fact that democratic power and leadership matter. There is a qualitative difference between leadership provided by democracies like France and Germany within the EU and the United States in North America and leadership provided by undemocratic powers like Russia and China. China still does not have a reliable ally in the region. North Korea remains the only ally it has, but Chinese influence over the dictatorial government in Pyongyang remains limited. Communist Vietnam began to forsake China in the mid-1970s and has recently moved toward the United States. Myanmar has now become less keen on maintaining a tight relationship with China. The Cambodian regime is probably Beijing’s most reliable partner in Southeast Asia, but Cambodia is unlikely to become a Chinese security ally or client (despite the growing influence of China in the country), for various reasons, including the fact that this Southeast Asian state is an ASEAN member and continues to depend on the international donor community for technical and economic assistance.

Until it becomes a democracy that at least embraces basic elements of human security, China will not be able to play an effective leadership role in the Asia Pacific and share the responsibility for building a security community. Until now, the United States has been the premier promoter of democracy in East Asia, but its leadership has not been as effective as France and Germany have been in Western Europe, largely because authoritarian states in East Asia still outnumber democracies in East Asia and some authoritarian states such as China and Russia are powerful. The US reputation as ‘democracy promoter’ has been damaged by its recent military interventions in various parts of the world, particularly Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. The United States’ Pivot to Asia strategy has not made small states like Cambodia more democratic because of the latter’s positive relations with other undemocratic states, particularly China and Vietnam. In fact, Cambodian democracy remains weak, if electorally more competitive. Japanese democracy has become most liberal in East Asia, but Tokyo has proved either unwilling or unable to provide the region with strong leadership on the democratic and human rights front. Being a power that brutally colonized other Asian states (Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian states), Japan has been reluctant to promote democracy and human rights in the region. The rivalry between Japan and China has made it even more difficult for

Tokyo to promote these liberal values. Japan has good reason to fear that active democracy promotion would only push undemocratic states closer to China.

Until China becomes democratic, prospects for peace-community building in Southeast Asia or the Asia Pacific remain grim. As long as China remains undemocratic, its leadership is unlikely to work effectively toward settling maritime disputes over the East and South China Seas. The authoritarian leadership in Beijing is most likely to remain aggressively revisionist, because the territorial claims are one the most critical factors that would allow it to justify high concentration of power in its hands, to build stronger armed forces by increasing defense spending and levels of taxation, to suppress domestic discontent, as well as to whip up nationalist sentiment. A democratic China, however, would put more pressure on its leaders to settle territorial disputes because its leaders would feel less threatened from other democracies, such as the United States,⁹ and would subsequently be more willing to behave less aggressively or even to accept the fact that waging war that they would not easily win could be costly to them in electoral terms. Insights from territorial peace literature further show that “democratic leaders seldom have disagreements over homeland territories, which are disputes that are difficult to win, difficult to resolve, and last longer than disputes of other types” (Gibler and Miller 2012: 259). A democratic China would less likely wage war over territorial disputes in the East or South China Sea, especially if the United States were to defend other state claimants. The United States is also most unlikely to initiate a war against China because the latter is not too weak to be militarily defeated in a short time. A democratic China at territorial peace with other democracies is more likely to allow them to spend less on defence, lower taxation levels and enhance human security.

How exactly democratic state elites in the Asia Pacific would build and maintain a peace community remains to be seen, and more research is necessary. Historical evidence, however, provides only some important clues. First, democracies do not create peace communities overnight. Their dependable expectations of peaceful change develop over time, as the result of various factors including their shared perception of threat from undemocratic states. The EU, for instance, was not born overnight and grew mature in a few years. The European community began with the idea to unify European countries after World War II and was not established until 1951 when the Cold War or the threat of communist states had become evident. But these realist factors alone would not have made it possible for the European states to build a regional community. Democratic states, especially powerful ones such as France and Germany, managed to achieve reconciliation and build regional institutions (Ripsman 2005).

Second, the North-American experience of community building specifically shows that democracies cannot build and enhance mutual trust until they agree to leave their long borders undefended or demilitarized (Shore 1998). Only when democratic states find constructive ways to demilitarize their national borders can they learn to find each other less threatening and more trustworthy. Defence spending can then be reduced to levels where states feel secure by threatening each other. Demilitarization on the Korean Peninsula is possible, however, when North Korea becomes democratic and finds

⁹ It is interesting to note that China’s territorial claims in the East and South China Sea became increasingly assertive after the Obama Administration adopted in 2011 the strategy of “Pivot to Asia” seen by the Chinese as an attempt by the United States to reassert its influence in the region.

ways with South Korea to achieve their reunification. Taiwan may also find it easier to become part of China if and when the latter becomes democratic (Peou 2010).

Third, leaders of powerful democracies in the Asia Pacific may also need to take the lead and articulate a sense of common purpose centered on the idea of community based on mutual trust. A democratic China and other major democracies (namely Australia, Indonesia, Japan and the United States) would be able to establish at least a concert of powers providing collective goods. Reducing defence spending when powerful democracies share responsibility for regional leadership, when less powerful democracies enjoy benefits from regional stability as a collective good, and when all member states have adopted the human security agenda. The EU is an excellent example of how democracies are far from perfect in terms of dealing with crises, as the case of Greece has shown, but the EU leaders have proven to remain steadfast in terms of keeping the community together by trying to prevent Greece from leaving the Union. In spite of the economic and financial crises in some EU members, the Union remains intact.

Fourth, regional peace communities grow mature when their members embrace human security, although one possible challenge to the idea is there is insufficient evidence suggesting democracies really adopt and implement the concept. The protection-based approach to human security, for instance, was championed by leaders in democracies like Canada and Norway, but this security agenda has now fallen into oblivion in these two states. Human security is not on the official agenda of the current American and Canadian governments. Democracies also continue to spend more on national defence than on human security activities. Obviously the United States is the best example of this. In East Asia, only a handful of democracies, namely Japan and Thailand, officially endorsed the human security agenda and they have been less keen on the idea of human protection and have given priority to human development.

A number of counterarguments can be made. First, democracies may not adopt the concept of human security, but their systems of governance are based on the liberal values such as individual freedom – freedom from fear and want – and liberal norms such as peaceful settlement of disputes. They stay committed to democracy and human rights promotion, as well as the UN idea of responsibility to protect, as inscribed in the 2005 World Summit Document and unanimously reaffirmed by the Security Council in 2006 (Bellamy 2008). Thus, democracies are more likely than autocracies to embrace human security. Second, democratic states are unlikely to dramatically cut their spending on national defence as long as they continue to face undemocratic states' threats to their security or survival. Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines, for instance, are unlikely to reduce defence spending or their security dependence on the United States until China becomes a people-centered democracy and stops threatening them. South Korea is also unlikely to reduce defence spending at least until North Korea becomes a democracy. In short, democracies are unlikely to officially or fully adopt and implement human security until other undemocratic states are effectively transformed into democracies.

The realist argument that democratization is war-prone is widely cited but never empirically validated.¹⁰ Democratization in China may give rise to nationalism, which

¹⁰ Democratization, especially at the stage of democratic consolidation, does not make states more prone to war as some realists suggest. Democratization in Eastern Europe did not lead to conflict among states either, and the political process made it possible for them to become integrated into the EU. Eastern European states that have joined the EU met at least one criterion: becoming a democracy. If there is a

would make it difficult for Chinese leaders to resolve territorial disputes peacefully with other disputing states (Manicom 2013). But the process may also make it less prone to war. Barrett McCormick (2000: 305), for instance, predicts that democratization “would lead to better relations between the United States and China,” because “it would facilitate better relations between” them (Ibid: 317). Evidence also shows that democratization in Japan, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia has not made them more prone to war than when they were authoritarian. After all Japanese militarism was the main source of Japanese aggression from the 1930s and to the mid-1940s, and yet a democratizing Japan became known for its pacifism and even a global model for economic development in the 1970s and 1980s. Cambodia and Vietnam waged war against each other in the late 1970s when their political regimes were undemocratic and highly repressive, but the democratic process that began in Cambodia in the early 1990s helped end its international isolation and allowed the country to join international organizations, most notably ASEAN. While cautioning against democratization, Miller (2005: 255-56) observes that “the domestic liberalization of formerly Western European states, especially in West Germany, in the post-World War II era was critical for the evolution of the warm peace...”

This does not suggest that democratization is trouble-free, but evidence shows that democratization is generally conducive to regional peace community building when the process is incremental, well managed, and especially when powerful democracies support the process. This also means that powerful democracies must not seek to break the back of dictators in order to turn their authoritarian regimes into democratic ones. Democratic state leaders must learn to become more patient than ever before - and more careful about using force to defeat dictators. Stephen Kinzer (2014) makes a good observation when he draws to our attention the serious problem of using force to destroy undemocratic governments: “America’s campaign to promote democracy, often waged with military force, has had the opposite of its desired effects. The real way to promote democracy is to give people stability, safety and decent lives.” Meanwhile, democracies in the Asia Pacific must do what they can to build a peace community capable of effectively containing the rising threat of undemocratic states such as China.

The long-term challenge to Asia-Pacific peace community building lies in successful democratic consolidation to the extent that people are satisfied with government performance. As noted, many democracies in East Asia are either electoral or illiberal, usually subject to the control of the unelected elites such as those of the armed forces. Even in more liberal democracies like Taiwan, people have become discontent (because the political and economic elites have manipulated the systems to their own benefit) and want a democratic system that would benefit people (Schafferer 2015).

A regional peace community in the Asia Pacific would still be different from the EU and North America, however. Unlike European and North American democracies that are in geographical proximity and share land borders, Asian democracies like Japan,

negative aspect of democratization in Eastern European states is the fact that they have moved away from undemocratic Russia. Georgia and Ukraine are recent examples. There is a positive relationship between the decline of interstate war or armed conflict and the post-Cold War wave of democratization. In fact, the literature on human security identifies intra-state, not interstate, armed conflict as a major source of insecurity. The low number of interstate conflicts in the post-Cold War world may have partly resulted from the unipolar structure dominated by the United States, but this structure has weakened by the resurgence of geopolitics driven by undemocratic powers like China and Russia.

South Korea and Taiwan are separated by vast water bodies. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are also thousands of miles away from other democracies in Southeast Asia, mainly the Philippines and Indonesia. While water bodies help keep states from threatening or invading each other, they may also help prevent democracies from developing a greater sense of community than if they were geographically close to each other as democracies in the EU and North America. Democracies in the Asia Pacific are likely to become less like the highly centralized or amalgamated EU peace community and more like the North American peace community that remains pluralistic. While none of the democracies in the Asia Pacific is now prepared to give up its state sovereignty to the extent that the EU members have, the Asian democracies are most likely to become even more pluralistic than the North-American peace community. Separated by sea waters, they may never be as close to each other as the United States and Canada.

Conclusion

This paper has made the case that the Asia Pacific may one day be able to establish a regional peace community. Part of this optimism rests with the reality that efforts to build a regional security community in ASEAN have become more evident in recent years, but this political project is unlikely to reach maturity for various reasons. The idea of ASEAN community building is still on the right track when the ASEAN Secretariat stated in 2009 that the people and members of ASEAN “will live in peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment.” The question is whether this common vision will come to pass soon and how many ASEAN states are truly democratic. The most critical challenge to realizing this ultimate goal is rooted in neither peace through military power nor any lack of economic development. As shown in this paper, economic development and prosperity are a major factor contributing to the process of military modernization in East Asia and the escalation of territorial disputes. The great challenge to regional security community building lies in repeated efforts by authoritarian states to suppress dissent and weak democracies unable to protect political rights, civil liberties and other human rights. ASEAN is still made up of members that are weak democracies and strong authoritarian states. Indonesia remains a young democracy and is unlikely to provide effective leadership any time soon, because other ASEAN members are undemocratic and unprepared to accept its leadership. China remains undemocratic and thus poses a challenge to the ASEAN political-security community project. ASEAN is unlikely to become a peace community because of its dependence on the United States as guarantor of regional stability. In fact, ASEAN will have a better chance of transforming itself into a peace community when its authoritarian member states and China become democratic. But if and when this happens, ASEAN may become less relevant because a democratic China and other powerful democracies, namely Japan and the United States, will ultimately be the ones to help transform the Asia Pacific into a peace community.

The greatest challenge to community building in the Asia Pacific lies in states’ insufficient will to protect and empower their people because of the worries about state security in the midst of threats - both traditional and nontraditional. By seeking to ensure more security for themselves or their regimes, states or their leaders leave their people less secure, thus enjoying less political legitimacy, and end up being less stable and more

insecure. Democratic states that secure their people help avoid this insecurity dilemma – a condition under which states that pay more attention to their security pay less attention to the security of their own people, but this asymmetrical attention (more state-centric than human-centered) prevents them from successfully building security communities aimed at alleviating the classic security dilemma (which develops when states that seek to enhance their security end up being threatened by other states that also seek to secure themselves). Democracy now appears to have “run into trouble,” despite the fact that it “was the most successful political idea of the 20th century,” as *The Economist* (2014) puts it. Keeping “the world safe for democracy,” as advocated by Woodrow Wilson, still remains an important task for international policymakers and peacebuilders, but making democracy safe for people is even far more important. For only when people are more secure can their states become more stable, and only stable states can make regional security communities endure. Only the type of democracy that protects and promotes individual freedom appears to be able to enable the process, but this system of governance persists when power-holders are institutionally constrained, when the armed forces are subject to only civilian leadership, and when people enjoy freedom from fear and want. We should thus stop insisting that ideas and identity matter, but should instead ask how much they matter and which ideas matter more. Material factors also matter. Prosperity and human development are what help make democracies stable.

My theoretical proposition - that people-centered democracies are stable and that stable democracies make durable peace communities - needs to be further developed before it can be fully operationalized. The critical question about regional-human security nexus is one of a methodological and empirical nature. What method of analysis should we adopt to test the proposition? What type of empirical evidence should be used to ‘measure’ and validate the relationship between the two variables (peace communities as the dependent variable and people-centered democracies as the independent variable)?

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