Think Tanks and the Promotion of Non-Traditional Security in Asia

An Examination of Ideational Influence on Asian Security Governance

Erin Zimmerman

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Abstract

Non-traditional security issues in Asia have highlighted the interconnected and multi-scalar nature of security in the 21st Century; they have also driven an increasing demand for new and assertive forms of regional security governance. Regional institutions, such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the ASEAN Regional Forum, have struggled to effectively address non-traditional security issues, and governing authority for these issues has started to shift from state controlled forums to think tank organised and run dialogues. These dialogues have provided innovative forms of ‘political space,’ where security actors can address non-traditional security threats that are too politically sensitive for existing governance structures.

Two kinds of think tank governing spaces have emerged. The first category consists of governmentally affiliated think tanks like Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific and ASEAN - Institutes of Strategic and International Studies. These networks provide political space on behalf of established formal governing institutions and adhere to the dominant diplomatic norms of the ASEAN-Way. The second category operates independently of regional organisations and often emerges in the absence of formal governing alternatives. This category operates outside of state control and simultaneously contributes innovative and challenging ideas to existing governing processes, while at the same time undermining their legitimacy as authoritative providers of governance. Both categories offer important location for the identification, articulation, and dissemination of non-traditional security policy in the region. However, the existence of think tanks spaces that operate as informal governing structures raise important questions regarding the evolving role of think tanks as governing actors and the effectiveness of existing modes of security governance in Asia.
Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and, where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University’s digital research repository, the Library catalogue and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Erin Zimmerman

October 2013
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADMM</td>
<td>ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus</td>
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<td>AI</td>
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<td>Australian Institute of International Affairs</td>
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<td>APA</td>
<td>ASEAN People’s Assembly</td>
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<td>APEC</td>
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<td>Asia Pacific Community</td>
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<td>Asia-Pacific Roundtable (Organised by ASEAN-ISIS)</td>
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<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regional Forum</td>
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<td>ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Support Group</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>ASC</td>
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<td>ASPC</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum Security Policy Conference</td>
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<td>BDIPSS</td>
<td>Brunei Darussalam Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies</td>
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<td>BIPSS</td>
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<td>CICP</td>
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<td>CISS</td>
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<td>CRSO</td>
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<td>EAI</td>
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<td>East Asia Summit</td>
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<td>EEPs</td>
<td>Experts and Eminent Persons</td>
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<td>EPG</td>
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<td>IDSS</td>
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<td>Institute of Foreign Affairs (Laos)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>IISS</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISEAS</td>
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<td>ISG</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISM</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCIE</td>
<td>Japan Center for International Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>KNET</td>
<td>Knowledge Network (generic label)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MASI</td>
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<td>NADI</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBR</td>
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<td>NEAT</td>
<td>Network of East Asian Think-tanks</td>
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<td>NTU</td>
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<td>PAFTAD</td>
<td>Pacific Asia Free Trade and Development Conference</td>
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<td>PBEC</td>
<td>Pacific Basin Economic Council</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Preventative Diplomacy</td>
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<td>PMC</td>
<td>Post Ministerial Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>RtoP</td>
<td>Responsibility to Protect</td>
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<td>Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia</td>
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<td>VAP</td>
<td>Vientiane Action Programme</td>
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<td>ZOPFAN</td>
<td>Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction and Order of Exposition

“Since the end of the Cold War, non-traditional security issues have become increasingly prominent in the policy and research agendas of governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), scholars and international organisations.”

Introduction and Main Argument

At the end of the Cold War, Asia faced a strategic security situation characterised by previously suppressed, unrecognised, or emerging sources of insecurity. Despite the lingering salience of military, balance of power, and deterrence concerns, states in the region increasingly found their attention drawn to trans-boundary sources of insecurity stemming from economic, political, social or environmental factors. Soon labelled non-traditional security (NTS) issues, their growing relevance has been underlined by the instability resulting from the Asian financial collapse of 1997-98, the outbreak of SARS and Avian influenza, illegal migration, terrorism, and the political consequences of accelerating environmental degradation. For the majority of Asian states, “non-military threats to regime survival are more likely to materialize than traditional military threats.”

Most of these issues are incompatible with traditional concepts of security and challenge the appropriateness and utility of state and military-centric security paradigms. Consequently, states have been forced to re-evaluate their approaches to regional security governance. NTS issues defy traditional state-based security structures by manifesting across state borders. Further complicating their governance, NTS issues often appear with little warning (e.g., natural disasters, pandemic diseases, terrorism) or

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so subtly (e.g., illegal migration, financial instability, environmental degradation) that their security implications are initially overlooked.

Research on non-traditional security issues has burgeoned since the end of the Cold War and has consistently reinforced the causal link between NTS issues and state instability. A multitude of actors have assumed active roles in identifying NTS threats and providing policy advice. In particular, Asian think tanks have emerged as dominate voices calling for the acknowledgement of NTS threats to security and effective security governance. Despite persuasive research, existing modes of regional governance, if present at all, are weak and have failed to effectively adapt to changing demands for security governance. The region has historically shied away from developing strong security institutions, and this is evident in the inability of current institutions to deal with the complicated and trans-boundary nature of most NTS threats.

Regional institutions are a reflection of the norms defining Asian governance and diplomacy, and incorporating the NTS agenda into institutions is more complex than ‘securitising’ issues and adding them to the list of problems under the scope of traditional security paradigms. The NTS agenda necessitates a re-definition of security, including who is being secured, against what, and how security is to be achieved. Foremost, it widens the concept of security beyond military threats to include instability stemming from economic, political, environmental or social sources. It also highlights the trans-boundary and complex origins of emerging security problems, and acknowledges that domestic circumstances in one state can negatively impact neighbouring states or the region as a whole. NTS issues have profound consequences for state stability; however, they often defy management at the state level. Because of this, state-centric security governance has failed to adequately accommodate NTS issues; and existing security mechanisms based on this type of governance are increasingly viewed as out-dated and ineffective. Thus, NTS issues undermine existing security mechanisms, challenge the validity of state-centric models of security

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5 Tan, Boutin, and Nanyang Technological University. Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia.

governance, and problematise the acceptability of the state as the sole provider and object of security.\(^7\)

Re-evaluating security in this way threatens entrenched and long held norms of Asian diplomacy.\(^8\) Since the formation of ASEAN, regional institutions have favoured informal processes characterised by weak institutionalisation, preferences for dialogue, consensus-based forms of decision-making, and conflict avoidance rather than resolution.\(^9\) The NTS agenda, however, demands a direct engagement with the politically awkward and sensitive security issues threatening the region – much to the discomfort of regional institutions. It also calls for collective and cooperative security governance backed by strong regional forms of governance, an approach that is divergent from the traditional norms of Asian regionalism that emphasise the centrality of the state.\(^10\) Asia as a region is suspicious of any form of collective or cooperative security arrangement and has taken pains to avoid the institutionalisation of any regional security structure. Furthermore, traditional norms of diplomacy favour non-confrontational and slow approaches when dealing with security issues. These drawn-out methods of diplomacy have quickly been outpaced by the rapidly developing security environment in Asia and are demanding types of governance that may precipitate some level of political confrontation and a break with consensus-based decisions.

The conflict between traditional security norms and institutions with the growing demands for more flexible forms of NTS governance results in a paradox for Asian governing actors. Moreover, this conflict is intertwined with the deeply contested transition from traditional to non-traditional understandings of security.\(^11\) State and non-state actors alike are struggling to reconcile existing governing structures with the practical security realities of the region. States have attempted to reinforce the status quo, while non-state actors (in particular, think tanks) have emerged as advocates of new forms of security governance. It makes sense that think tanks have championed the NTS agenda. First, many Asian governments have lacked the capacity and expertise to respond to NTS issues and have utilised think tank knowledge to meet their policy needs.

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\(^8\) Ibid.


analysis needs. Second, traditional ASEAN norms discourage the inclusion of NTS issues in mainstream processes. It is not unusual for regional institutions to intentionally divert divisive security issues to think tanks for analysis and discussion. In 1994, the first Chairman’s Statement from the ASEAN Regional Forum articulated what was already common practice in the region. It stated that “[g]iven the delicate nature of many of the subjects being considered by the ARF, there is merit in moving, [sic] the ARF process along two tracks.” In this context, the second track (Track II) refers specifically to the networks of think tanks and policy research institutes in Asia that were believed to contribute “greatly to confidence-building measures in the region.” There is a long history of Track II involvement in regional diplomacy and, as a consequence, think tank organised dialogues and networks have been the primary locations for the discussion and debate of sensitive NTS issues in Asia.

The paradox keeping formal processes from engaging with and governing NTS issues has seemingly opened up governing opportunities to non-state actors. Any analysis of security that focuses solely on states misses half of the governing picture. In the absence of state leadership, it is apparent that think tanks have been active in managing and shaping the political processes around the NTS agenda. This raises important questions concerning the exact function that think tanks perform in Asian security governance. Think tanks have been active in articulating non-traditional security threats, setting agendas for their management, and devising political solutions. Can we think of this process as a new form of security governance? After all, Hameiri and Jones articulate important aspects of governance as “defining the nature and sources of security problems”, as well as “devising plans and policies to ameliorate them”, and think tanks have done both regarding NTS issues.

Using the authority granted to Track II processes, think tanks have championed a comprehensive political agenda based upon NTS issues to regional decision makers. And they appear to have met with a notable degree of success. The agendas of both formal and informal governing processes are beginning to reflect a shift toward NTS issues and a commensurate acknowledgement of the complex political and governing changes necessary to address them. Think tanks have been very active in this process.

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14 Ibid.
and there is evidence that the promotion of NTS ideas is, at least in part, contributing to institutional modifications and changes in regional security governance. In light of their apparent success in cultivating new understandings of security, the function of think tanks in security governance deserves a closer look. Foremost, think tanks hold relatively little political authority and work on the periphery of the political process. How is it that they have seemingly exercised such a high degree of ideational influence?

Second, the political environment in Asia is inhospitable to both informal political actors, such as think tanks, and to structural or ideational change. This is particularly true of actors promoting ideas that so strongly conflict with current norms and can be interpreted as challenging state sovereignty. Yet, somehow think tanks have managed to successfully introduce and promote such an agenda. And their success in re-defining security and pushing for new forms of governance implies that the role of think tanks concerning governance is deeper than is suggested in previous literature. Thus, it may be more appropriate to conceptualise think tanks as active political actors than as passive producers of policy advice.

This thesis explores how think tanks and their networks have approached the promotion of the NTS agenda, particularly in light of their overt lack of political power. As a consequence, Asian think tanks appear to have attained political and institutional influence via their expertise as ideational actors. Despite their informal and non-governmental positions, they have come to wield political influence through their promotion of ideas. Previous research has noted that think tanks are adept at moving ideas across political space and acting as the “intermediary or interlocutor between knowledge and power, science and the state.”16 They have also been labelled as ‘policy entrepreneurs’ who through their “advocacy of certain preferred policy positions … have played a key part in policy thinking in national and international affairs.”17 However, how exactly they have mobilised in the role of policy entrepreneurs, or even governance entrepreneurs, is unclear in the contexts of NTS issues.18

17 Diane Stone and Helen E. S. Nesadurai, “Networks, Second Track Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: The Experience of Southeast Asian Think Tanks” (Paper presented at the Inaugural Conference on Bridging Knowledge and Policy, organised by the Global Development Network, Bonn, Germany, 5-8 December 1999), 2.
Think tanks appear to have adapted specific strategies to augment and expand their ideational influence. Foremost, they have formed a series of trans-regional networks. In Asia, the first such networks appeared alongside regional governing organisations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), with the intent of providing timely and relevant policy analysis to regional governing structures. Over time, these networks and others, which have subsequently developed, have been subsumed into governing processes and may provide important mechanisms for introducing and disseminating policy analysis.

Secondly, think tanks have gone out of their way to create region-spanning and non-governmental political spaces (networks and dialogues). The apparent objective of these spaces is to facilitate the exchange of ideas. Additionally, they are neutral venues where state and non-state actors can meet and communicate ideas, and where new and innovative ideas can be introduced to the policy process. Regional policy makers have shown a growing preference for such types of space, potentially because they serve these additional purposes, as well as offer sources of new and novel policy solutions.

Think tanks control the discourse that occurs in these ‘discursive spaces’ and they have used this authority to influence ideational processes. Discourse, as it is described by discursive institutionalism, is the “interactive process of conveying ideas” and encompasses not only what is said but other variables, such as the speaker and the context of ideational exchange.\(^{19}\) That is to say that, within discursive spaces, think tanks have a higher level of control over how ideas are perceived, understood, and reacted to. Think tanks have employed their influence in these processes to privilege NTS ideas over other interpretations and directions for security governance. In doing so, think tanks have been able to use non-traditional security ideas to promote new forms of security governance in Asia.

Constructivism excels in accounting for the influence of ideas and beliefs on political processes; however, it struggles to acknowledge the influence of institutions on ideas. This is especially true when focusing on the influence of non-state actors using ideas to instigate institutional change. Think tank ideational transmission and promotion is still constrained by the institutions in which they are embedded, or with which they interact. This thesis contributes to constructivist literature by bringing constructivism into a dialogue with institutionalism, and seeks to balance out the influence of ideas on institutions in a real-world context. Discursive institutionalism has been selected

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as the interpretative lens for this analysis because the theory gives equal weight to the ideational and material circumstances that surround institutional change.\textsuperscript{20} It also adequately accounts for the influence of non-state actors by acknowledging their ability to engage in discourse and propel certain sets of ideas into political processes. Discursive institutionalism provides the means to further explore Stone’s observation that ideational policy entrepreneurs may be independently effective in disseminating ideas, the political dynamics of networks entail that negotiation, compromise and persuasion are unavoidable and these actors are dependent upon decision-makers and other power holders to see ideas selected for transfer and institutionalised in policy.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, to fully understand think tank impact on governance, this thesis couples constructivism’s emphasis on the social construction of institutions and the power of ideas with an acknowledgement of the constraining and enabling power of institutions. It then applies this dual perspective to four case studies to analyse how ideas have been used to influence and guide institutional transformations.

Four think tank organisations dominate Track II processes in Asia: the ASEAN-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (AI), the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and the Asia Security Initiative (ASI). These four networks constitute the majority of all informal diplomatic processes occurring in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific, and many of them are closely linked with regional governing structures. In their own ways, each appears to have played an integral part in the introduction and promotion of the NTS agenda into Asian security discussions. As such, they are the logical starting point for an investigation of think tank approaches and strategies as agents of institutional change.

The first two case studies (AI and CSCAP) have already been studied extensively; however, there is value in re-evaluating their activities through the lens of discursive institutionalism. Doing so will tease out the specifics of how each network is sensitive to their unique political contexts and uses discourse to translate discrete sets of ideas into institutional change. The first two case studies also provide a ‘benchmark’ against which to compare the last two networks (SLD and ASI), which have emerged more recently and under vastly different political environments. There is much to be learned by evaluating the similarities amongst the networks as well as their differences and


explaining the advantages and disadvantages of these on each network’s promotion of the non-traditional security agenda. Each network will be examined in turn, with an eye towards how it engages in the interactive process of conveying ideas (discourse) at state and regional levels. Special attention will be paid to how each network has created unique discursive spaces within political processes and how it has used these spaces to progress NTS interpretations of security. When looked at together, the four networks will provide a more nuanced analysis of think tank activity than could be achieved with only one or two individual cases.

Think tanks have functioned as architects and guides for institutional change. They have provided justification for the establishment of new institutions or the alteration of old ones. Further, they have vigorously contributed policy templates and recommendations to act as road maps, focal points, and frameworks to guide institutional change.\(^{22}\) In this sense, they have become governing actors in that they are “authorities who exercise power across borders for the purpose of affecting policy.”\(^{23}\) What is more, they have used their ideational authority as leverage to gain institutional access into existing or emerging governing structures or institutions – arguably assuring themselves greater access to political opportunities. Their integration into governing processes and their dual personae as formal/informal, state/non-state actors is an important aspect in understanding how think tanks have pursued institutional change. This thesis will focus on how think tank networks have successfully integrated themselves into existing formal security processes, and examine the benefits and consequences of their assimilation. It will also query how think tanks have successfully embedded the NTS agenda into both old and new forms of governance. This includes how they have approached the inherent paradox between NTS issues and traditional governing norms.

The shift from traditional to NTS security calls for profound structural changes in the architecture of Asian security. Think tanks have convincingly argued that regional institutions must change in order to address NTS issues; however, regional institutions have been unable to respond quickly enough to meet growing demands for governance. As a consequence, governing authority is gradually moving from ineffective regional mechanisms into other, more flexible, political spaces. Unsurprisingly, the governmental connections of think tanks in Asia, the expertise found in think tank forums, and their fertile discursive spaces, have made them attractive repositories for governing authority.


And, as regional institutions continue to struggle with the growing demands for security governance, think tank networks appear to be assuming and exercising increasingly potent levels of governing authority.

The paradox that has prevented regional governing structures from addressing NTS issues has pushed responsibility for NTS governance into the hands of non-state actors. The ramifications of this paradox are central to explaining how governmentally affiliated networks increasingly exercise authority on behalf of regional organisations. In certain instances, officials have used think tank networks as transitional locations for security governance until formal processes can ‘catch up’ with governing demands. In these circumstances, think tanks potentially wield significant influence as the providers and controllers of this governing space.

The inconsistencies between demands for security governance and dominant governing structures have also contributed to the rise in governing authority for non-governmental think tank networks. These networks most often exercise authority in the absence of state alternatives for governance, and they have acquired and gained power where formal processes are absent or have shown little signs of progress. In these cases they have become the de facto governing options for certain types of security. Non-governmental processes have gained legitimacy and started to host formal dialogues, set security agendas, and serve as locations for formal political announcements. The growing influence and acceptability of Track II governing actors challenges the validity of the state/non-state and formal/informal distinctions typical of contemporary political analysis.

The ultimate implications of these changes are unknown but it is clear that a new security architecture is emerging in Asia and that it is being driven, in large part, by non-traditional security ideas. As this thesis will show, think tanks are seemingly influential players in this new landscape and, through their judicious endorsement of certain ideas, have helped determine the future structure of regional security governance.

Order of Exposition

This thesis explores how think tanks have become governance entrepreneurs by occupying the governing gaps between formal processes and demands for NTS governance. This thesis follows three main themes, which aim to explain think tank influence in security governing processes. First, it explores if and how think tanks are significant political actors in Asia. Second, it scrutinises how they have used discourse and the creation of discursive space to promote the non-traditional security agenda. Third, it seeks to link think tank ideational influence to institutional change and the restructuring of security governance in
Asia. Important aspects of institutional change include the embedding of think tanks into regional governing processes and the growing trend of think tanks assuming governing authority for certain non-traditional security issues.

These three themes are laid out in the first few chapters and form the overarching narratives running throughout this thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 contain the literature review, theoretical foundations and methodology. The chapter 2 serves a number of important purposes. First, it situates this analysis in the broader international relations literature by articulating the power of ideas as a catalyst for institutional change. It traces the ‘turn towards ideas’ in the last few decades as institutionalists and constructivists alike have endeavoured to explain sources of institutional creation and/or reform. It then outlines the evolving body of scholarship devoted to the debate between ideational versus material interests as the drivers of such transformations. This section concludes by identifying the circular relationship between agents and structures through the interactive process of conveying ideas and selecting a theoretical framework which reconciles the ideational/material, institutionalist/constructivist debates.

Second, Chapter 2 situates think tanks within the debate between traditional and non-traditional forms of security. A brief segment catalogues the major difference between traditional and non-traditional understandings of security and charts the growing acceptance of the NTS agenda as an organising political paradigm. It focuses on how think tanks have been important actors in the endorsement of the NTS agenda. The chapter concludes by laying the groundwork for the three themes described above. It identifies think tanks as political actors by providing an overview of their historical and cultural evolution in Asia. This grounds think tanks in contemporary political systems and details how, due to divergent political environments, they inhabit positions different to those of think tanks in Western countries. This distinction is important because their unique functions are integral to their ability to operate as political actors. It identifies the political environment necessary for think tanks to engage in discourse and to create discursive spaces as a means of accessing political power. This political environment has also created, in some cases, a political atmosphere where think tanks have assumed governing authority.

Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical framework of Discursive Institutionalism. This chapter provides the tools to critically analyse the origins of the three main arguments. To date, Discursive Institutionalism is the most persuasive theory seeking reconciliation between ideational and materialist explanations of institutional change. Significantly, this chapter sketches out the basis of the second theme by articulating the interactive
processes of conveying ideas (known as discourse), and of theme three by linking ideas to institutional change. It combines the useful aspects of the ‘new institutionalisms’, constructivism, and discourse theory into one coherent framework. In doing so, it clarifies how agents (in this case, think tank networks) can act as instigators of both endogenous and exogenous institutional change through the use of discourse.

Chapter 3 then outlines the methodology selected for analysis. This thesis uses discursive institutionalism to examine think tank networks’ promotion of the NTS agenda over time. The methodology of process tracing was selected as the best tool for following think tank ideas through political processes and analysing the intervening steps between cause and consequence. However, process tracing acknowledges that ideas require agents to be politically effective. A combination of problem framing/agenda setting, networking and institutionalisation are identified as the primary tools used by think tanks to move ideas through political processes. The chapter concludes by explaining how these tools are employed and their value for engaging in discourse.

Chapters 4-7 are devoted to comparative case studies. The case studies are composed of two different types of think tank networks in Asia: those that are governmentally affiliated, and those that are not. Each type of network has its own advantages and disadvantages in exercising ideational influence and creating political space. Governmentally affiliated networks appeared first in the region and the first two case studies fall into this category: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Institutes for Strategic and International Studies (AI) affiliated with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) affiliated with the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Non-affiliated networks appeared later and constitute the second type of network found in Asia. Networks of this type compose the last two case studies: the Institute for International and Strategic Studies (IISS), a London-based think tank that established the region’s premiere security meeting, the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD), and the Asia Security Initiative (ASI), a think tank network established by the MacArthur Foundation.

The fourth chapter starts the case studies with the oldest and most well-documented think tank network in Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Institutes for Strategic and International Studies (AI). AI is the benchmark against which all other cases will be presented. Arguably the architect of the first Track II process in the region, this chapter introduces how AI has negotiated political space alongside ASEAN and used strategic uncertainty to promote institutional change. AI has encouraged
the evolution of ASEAN as an institution and AI’s proposals have contributed to the establishments of other Track I and Track II processes, such as the ARF and CSCAP.

Chapter 5 analyses the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), the second governmentally affiliated network. CSCAP is larger than AI and expands the parameters of analysis to include a more diverse network of think tanks from the entire Asia-Pacific region. CSCAP has used its more institutionalised structure and larger membership to provide a unified regional platform for the promotion of NTS ideas. However, network coherence and solid idea promotion have only marginally overcome institutional limitations on the part of CSCAP’s targeted audience, the ARF.

The sixth chapter introduces the first non-governmental think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The IISS has promoted the NTS agenda by establishing the first security dialogue for Asian defence ministers in 2002, called the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD). Since then, the Shangri-La Dialogue has developed into one of the most important annual security meetings in the region. The IISS has capitalised on the non-governmental nature of the SLD to offer greater innovative capacity and political flexibility than other networks. The success of the SLD highlights the importance of political space for idea transmission and how the provision of non-governmental providers of this space can increase the effectiveness of discourse. The SLD represents a turning point in security dialogues in terms of governmental affiliation, organisational structure, and constructed political spaces.

Chapter 7 contains the fourth and final case study, the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative. Established in 2009, the Asia Security Initiative provides an interesting counterpoint to the other three networks. The case studies covered in Chapters 4-6 focus on think tank networks engaging with, or acting as, formal governing processes. In comparison, the ASI has avoided formal governing processes in favour of strengthening the discourse between and amongst think tanks. As a result, it has created an epistemic community devoted to the promotion and research of the non-traditional security agenda. The ASI has invested in think tanks and their networks with the specific goal of creating an interactive series of linkages to help think tanks influence policy at domestic and international levels. Though significantly more difficult to trace, the ASI’s engagement in the promotion of NTS ideas has been profound and adds an additional layer of complexity to the ideational landscape of security in Asia.

These chapters highlight how each think tank network embodies the three main arguments in different political contexts. It describes the political nature of each network, identifies its use of discourse and creation of discursive space, and links its
ideational influence to institutional change. It also pinpoints in each case study where networks have begun to assume governing power over security issues in specific political contexts. Cumulatively, the four cases serve as an overview of the evolution of think tank networks, discursive space, and the promotion of non-traditional security in Asia. Each case builds upon the previous one by adding an additional layer of depth and clarity to the study of think tanks as ideational actors and the influence of their cumulative ideas on regional institutions and security governance.

The thesis concludes with chapter 8, which reiterates the three overarching narratives and looks again at the role of think tanks as political actors, the importance of discourse and discursive space in their success, and the link between think tank promotion of ideas and institutional change. Through discussing these themes, it outlines its contribution to the existing literature on think tanks, discursive institutionalism, and security studies. It critically evaluates the evolution of Asian think tank networks, their role as idea actors, and their ultimate influence on institutional change, and attempts answers to the following questions: How have think tanks used their ability as ideational actors to change understandings of security in Asia? What historical and political circumstances led to this? What does this say about the influence of think tanks and think tanks networks? And, finally, what does this mean for the future of security governance in Asia? As the subsequent chapters will reveal, this thesis answers the first three questions and provides insights into the ultimate question of where think tanks fit into Asian security governance in the 21st Century.
Chapter 2

Think Tanks, Non-Traditional Security, and the Power of Ideas

“The forces of globalization have fostered and markedly accelerated the growth of independent think tanks, due to their unique ability to strengthen the research-policy bridge and thus increase the quality and effectiveness of the policy making process.”

Introduction

This thesis is situated in the broader literature concerning modes of institutional change, security governance and non-state actors. It engages critically with the main theoretical arguments outlined in Constructivism, the ‘new’ Institutionalisms – especially the emerging theory of Constructivist/Discursive Institutionalism. The importance of ideas is a dominant theme throughout this thesis and this chapter charts the development of the literature on ideas – with specific focus on their applicability to think tanks and non-traditional security issues. First, this chapter offers a theoretical perspective explaining how marginalised political actors, such as think tanks, wield institutional influence through their use of ideas. After introducing the theoretical underpinnings, I provide a brief overview of literature concerning think tanks and how they fit into the larger international relations and constructivist literature. This chapter covers the unique political background of Asian think tanks and explains how this has allowed them to become important political actors. It then traces their engagement with the non-traditional security agenda and highlights how they have used discourse and the creation of discursive space to promote this agenda across the region.

The power of think tanks and their networks is contingent on their ability to move ideas through political space and have them accepted by political actors. This section pays particular attention to the debates surrounding the ‘new institutionalisms’ of Rational

Choice Institutionalism, Historical Institutionalism and Social Institutionalism. It also incorporates important elements of Constructivism to explain and evaluate think tank power in specific historic-political contexts. This opens up a dialogue between Constructivism and Institutionalism, which ultimately reveals how current political institutions in Asia are derived from specific sets of ideas. Moreover, it highlights that, if institutions are derived from ideas, they can also be altered through ideational change.

The second section traces the development of the non-traditional security agenda in Asia. Think tanks have been the vocal proponents of the NTS agenda in Asia and have successfully redesignated certain trans-boundary and non-military threats as security issues. This section links the ideational conflict between the traditional and non-traditional understanding of security to normative change in Asia and the consequent pressures on regional institutions for change.

As NTS ideas become normalised, they undermine the traditional ideas supporting existing governing institutions and diplomatic norms. This section clarifies the content of the NTS agenda so that the promotion of these ideas can be easily traced. The primary proponents of the NTS agenda in Asia have been think tanks, who have wielded authority as political actors through their strategic use of ideas. Through the promotion of NTS ideas, they are pushing for new or ‘altered’ forms of governance that adhere to emerging ideational norms.

Section three introduces think tanks as political actors. It situates them in the historic-political context of their respective regions and introduces the political roles they have assumed in the security policy-making processes. Concerning the connection between think tanks and institutional transformation, Ladi notes that think tanks have been at the “forefront of providing policy ideas and evidence for sustaining policy change. They often act as mediators … between governments and international organizations in order to promote institutional and policy change.”  

This section argues that think tanks connect ideas to political power through their use of networks and, most importantly, their creation of political space.

The final section clarifies how think tanks construct political spaces in the form of Track II dialogues and networks. Think tank control over these spaces has allowed them to actively influence ideational processes to promote non-traditional understandings of security. The growth of Track II dialogues coincides with the emergence of the NTS

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agenda and increasing regionalism in Asia. This section underlines how think tanks have created and utilised this political space to become the primary actors pushing non-traditional security ideas onto political agendas. These spaces are significant as places where think tanks can introduce, workshop and endorse new ideas to regional decision makers. In certain circumstances, these spaces have also become de facto locations for security governance, especially when there are no viable governmental alternatives. This section contributes to institutionalist and constructivist literature by expanding the application of these concepts to regional and informal political spaces in the context of non-traditional security policy-making. The importance of informal political space is both underappreciated and under-conceptualised in the study of policy formation, especially at the regional level, where the power of ideas on identity and interests is only starting to be understood.

**Think Tanks as Ideational Actors**

Foremost, this thesis argues that think tanks use ideas to induce and guide institutional change. It draws upon the current literature emphasising the importance of ideas to determine interests and inform institutions’ responses. Studies concerning the influence of ideas on politics have enjoyed a revival in recent years with a renewed interest in how, and in what ways, ideas matter. In part, the shift towards ideas has been pushed by the need to account for the emergence of non-state actors in policy-making. To date, there are numerous theoretical frameworks seeking to explain the impact of ideas on policy and, ultimately, on institutional change. The majority of these approaches conceptualise ideas as being in competition with material interests. However, newer theories have rejected this dichotomy and proposed a mutually reinforcing relationship, where ideas constitute interests and interests inform ideas. These theories argue that accounting for the importance of ideational factors is a prerequisite for understanding both institutional stability and institutional change.

The compromise between ideas and interests continues to evolve, as theorists from the ‘new institutionalist’ schools (Social Institutionalism (relying on cultural norms), Historical Institutionalism (relying on path dependency), and Rational

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Choice Institutionalism (relying on fixed preferences)) struggle to explain the origins and manner of structural transformations. While all three theories make valuable contributions in explaining continuity, they have proven unable to account for gradual or acute institutional change. Hay argues that this is because all three approaches take institutional equilibria as a given. They perceive institutions as unchanging and agents as operating with complete information and under strictly fixed sets of interests.\(^6\) Thus, once created, institutions are largely immutable and act as constraining forces on political actors, who are seen as acting outside of the institutions themselves with little means of agency.\(^7\) As the following examples show, this is not the case and the new institutionalisms have been criticised as constraining agents to the point of structuralism.\(^8\) Political theorists have sought to remedy these limitations by accepting ideas as causal variables in institutional change. This permits any actor capable of moving ideas through political space to alter institutions.

One of the most notable early contributions to the ideational turn was Goldstein and Keohane’s book *Ideas and Foreign Policy*. Goldstein and Keohane do not claim that ideas determine interests, but they do acknowledge that “ideas as well as interests have causal weight in explanations of human action.”\(^9\) Their approach, drawn from Rational Choice Institutionalism (RI), identifies three ways ideas are linked to political causality: ideas can act as roadmaps for policy, they can serve as focal points for policy coordination, and they can guide policy by becoming institutionalised.\(^10\) In other words, ideas matter in changing policies and institutions because they provide clarification in times of uncertainty. This belief is not only present in certain strands on institutionalism but also appears in several constructivist approaches introduced later. Other scholars have built upon Goldstein and Keohane’s work and made active attempts to explore the interaction between ideas and institutions. Interestingly, each subsequent work endows ideas with a more central role in policy change.

The relationship between agency (ideas) and structure (preferences) is further explored by Greif. He draws from previous forms of institutionalism and attempts to reconcile approaches emphasising agency with those emphasising structure. Greif’s ultimate goal is to highlight “the importance of studying institutions as equilibrium

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\(^6\) Colin Hay, “Constructivist Institutionalism... Or, Why Ideas into Interests Don’t Go” (Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, 2006).
\(^7\) Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse.”
\(^10\) Ibid., 13-24.
phenomena in which they constitute the structure that influences behavior, while the behavioral responses of agents to this structure reproduce the institution.”\textsuperscript{11} This approach emphasises the reciprocal nature of the agent/structure relationship and embeds institutions in their historical and cultural histories. Thus, Greif allows that ideas (introduced as agents) can change preferences (manifesting in structures), at the same time acknowledging that how these changes are manifested is dependent on the historical and political environments of the agents/structures.

Greif’s contribution is doubly valuable because he focuses on what he calls self-reinforcing or endogenous institutions typical of those found in Asia. These types of institutions, both structural and normative, are self-constituting – meaning they are not reinforced by any external factors but, instead, are held together by the agreed upon actions of agents (norms). This type of interaction typifies dominant forms of diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific which are norm dependent. In these environments,

\begin{quote}
[b]ehavior is self-enforcing in that each individual, taking the structure as a given, finds it best to follow institutionalized behavior that, in turn, reproduces the institution in the sense that the implied behavior confirms the associated beliefs and regenerates the associated norms.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Altering the ideas (norms) held by an agent results in the change to that agent’s behaviour. Institutions are interrelated with the behaviour of agents and behavioural (normative) changes become the foundation for internally originating institutional change.

Blyth also looks at the influence of prevailing ideas (norms) and uses the presence of certain norms to explain how institutions have reacted in times of uncertainty, particularly when their interests were undefined or not clearly understood. Using a method informed by historical and rational institutionalism, he traces how the depression of the 1930s and the oil shocks of the 1970s influenced changes in economic policies of the United States and Sweden.\textsuperscript{13} He effectively links changes in the prevailing ideas about the content of ‘good’ economic policy to economic policy changes occurring in both countries. Policy responses to these crises were very different, despite the fact that each country faced similar external shocks and had a similar form of government. Blyth’s explanation for these disparate responses argues that actors do not have fixed interests and, especially in times of crisis, may not have a clear understanding of what their interests actually are.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{13} Mark Blyth, \textit{Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century} (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
actors – in the absence of clear interests – relied on the available and accepted ideas in their respective policy communities to define the nature of the crisis and determine the most appropriate response. Thus, it was ideas, as opposed to interests, that determined institutional responses to the crisis.

Blyth explains that institutional evolution provides numerous opportunities for ideas to influence political change. Because preferences are no longer considered fixed and are instead mutable in the face of persuasive ideas, ideation actors, such as think tanks, can wield significant influence. By emphasising the importance of ideas and ‘unfixing’ the preferences of political actors, Blyth allows ideas to become causal variables in defining and, therefore, changing preferences.

Up to this point, I have discussed scholars who have interrogated the role of ideas in institutional change from an institutionalist point of view. This view acknowledges ideas as important factors in institutional change, but only so far as they can work within structures. The next set of works introduced takes a constructivist view on ideational change and argues that, instead of institutions constraining ideas, ideas define and control institutions.

One of the first statements relating to the potential for think tanks to use ideas to influence regional security dialogues appeared in a special issue of the Pacific Review in
1994. In his introduction to the issue, Higgott pointed out that “ideas are more important in the explanation of international phenomena than is often assumed.”\(^\text{15}\) He emphasised the need to “consider the degree to which new understandings of Asia-Pacific identity in a couple of specific policy domains [economics and security] might be in train and the importance of ideas, and by extension the role of the articulators and interpreters of these ideas, in this process.”\(^\text{16}\) This issue, as well as a follow-up issue, were the start of a swell of literature devoted to the study of ideational actors and their influence on the economic and security policy processes in the Asia-Pacific. Literature being produced (at least in this volume) clearly recognised that “such formal, semi-formal and non-governmental regional contacts have become more important over recent years and represent increasingly important vehicles for regional communication.”\(^\text{17}\)

Acharya continues with this approach and examines the power of ideas on institutions by using norms (ideas) as the primary explanatory values for interrogating difficult questions in international relations.\(^\text{18}\) He pursues normative explanations for: why has a regional multilateral security organisation not yet developed in Asia, and why are the region’s current institutions so weak and resistant to reform?\(^\text{19}\) Acharya rejects the previous international relations explanations of regional development (which are largely based on Realist arguments of US hegemony) and, instead, uses the idea-based lens of norms in a constructivist analysis to identify regional sources of change (in the form of intra-regional relations and existing Asian norms). Like Blyth and Greif, Acharya focuses on internal sources of change. From a specifically Asian context, he develops the concept of ‘constitutive localisation’, where he places the power of norm adoption, adaptation and alteration in the hands of the local actors. He concluded that it is the melding of new normative ideas with local practices and beliefs through the use of “discourse, framing, grafting, and cultural selection”, which results in ideational (and, in this context, normative) change.\(^\text{20}\) Thus, whoever can adapt and provide ideas can instigate and guide institutional change. Once the constitutive localisation of a norm has occurred, it is then reflected in regional institutions. These institutions then go on to become the teachers of norms, as well as sites for further norm innovation and contestation.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., emphasis added: 368.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 367.
\(^{19}\) Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order. Whose Ideas Matter?: 15.
Ba builds upon and supports Acharya’s assertions that ideas play a pivotal role in the construction of Asian security institutions. In her analysis of East and Southeast Asia, Ba looks at norms as the main explanatory variable for institutional development. She argues that it was not material considerations that drove the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but rather ideational ones. ASEAN nations have few material interests in common: however, because they have collectively interpreted vulnerability as weak national integration and regional division, they have sought to achieve some level of national integration and regional unity as a means to achieve security. Ba posits that the link between diversity and division is purely ideational, but has nonetheless allowed Southeast Asia to overcome territorial disputes, regional rivalries and major power interventions to form a regional association. She highlights how the interactions between different ideas, in combination with changing material situations and perceived changes in power, have led to a re-evaluation of old ideas and the opportunity for change in Asia.

Whereas institutionalism struggled to account for the power of ideas, constructivism grapples with addressing institutional constraints. There is a need for both theoretical approaches to engage in a conversation based on their common understandings of international relations. There are important similarities in the institutionalist and constructivist schools of thought. Noticeable areas of overlap exist concerning understanding of the role of ideas in clarifying interests, identifying problems and solutions, influencing structural changes over time and in the face of uncertainty, and adapting ideas to different regional contexts. Certain aspects of both theories also acknowledge the complex interactions between ideas and institutions, and recognise that these interactions are managed and influenced by agents. In some writings, distinctions between institutional and constructivist approaches appear to be largely matters of emphasis. These similarities have laid the foundations for a ‘new’ approach to examining institutional change, which combines aspects of both institutionalism and constructivism. Variously labelled Discursive Institutionalism (to reflect its institutionalist roots) or Constructivist Institutionalism (to emphasise its constructivist origins), this new approach is based on a compromise where neither ideas nor structures have dominant control but are, instead, mutually constitutive.

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21 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
22 Ibid.
23 Hay, “Constructivist Institutionalism... Or, Why Ideas into Interests Don’t Go.”
Discursive or Constructivist Institutionalism (DI) successfully accommodates the ideational influence of ideas on institutions, while acknowledging the limitations institutions place on ideas. Discursive Institutionalism differs from the previous new institutionalisms in that it puts ideas at the centre of institutional change. It also elevates the reciprocal relationship between agents and structures to a position of central theoretical importance. DI is ideal for the study of think tanks because it places emphasis on discourse (the interactive process of conveying ideas) and think tanks are exceptional discursive actors. The crux of ideational power rests upon the comparatively under-researched question of how ideas are moved across political space and translated into political action. In this thesis, I argue that think tanks are important and underappreciated agents of ideas in Asia. Asian governments are limited in how they engage in discourse and exchange ideas. Think tanks are not and, because they can freely move ideas across political space, they have obtained political power far beyond their comparatively peripheral political position. Think tanks are, by their very nature, ‘idea brokers’ and have used their expertise in this area to promote ideas aimed at altering traditional understandings of security. Where they may only have limited ideational authority that can be translated into political power via discourse. Understanding how ideas can be turned into power is integral in explaining think tank promotion of the non-traditional security agenda.

Non-Traditional Security in Asia

Recognising that ideas can define and guide preferences in times of political uncertainty is important in explaining think tank success in institutionalising the NTS agenda. Mark Blyth provides an agent-centred form of constructivism as a useful set of tools for interpreting the role of think tanks in promoting the non-traditional security agenda. He argues that, during times of uncertainty, the normal structural and materialist constraints guiding policy can be challenged by ‘inter-elites’ wielding ‘crisis-defining’ ideas. He presents “the notion of inter-elite persuasion as a distinct and important mechanism of social construction”, one which focuses on the power of specific elite agents to guide institutional change. The concept of ‘elite and inter-elite persuasion’ is an interesting one and, though Blyth applies this framework to international political economy, it is equally adaptable to questions of security policy. Think tanks are in positions of

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26 Ibid., 761.
political authority due to their perceived expertise; concerning non-traditional security issues, they are the policy elite. From this vantage point, they have actively persuaded regional actors of the validity of NTS ideas – both as means to define ideas, as well as to guide policy solutions.

Blyth, like Stone, highlights that inter-elites use persuasion to do more than introduce ideas to provide road maps, as was argued by Goldstein and Keohane. They use ideas to narrate ‘causal stories’ that “provide agents with an interpretive framework within which they can define, diagnose, and explain a crisis as an event which necessitates a particular set of actions.” 27 Rightly so, he contends that ideas presented as causal stories are more than mere maps, but active arguments promoting particular courses of action based upon problem identification combined with problem solutions. The non-traditional security agenda introduced in this chapter and promoted by think tank networks in Asia is composed of these causal stories. It is more than an agenda based on problem identification, but clearly links the ‘problems’ of the NTS agenda with the ‘solutions’ and presents them as a comprehensive political whole. 28

The end of the Cold War led many states in the region to re-evaluate their interests and priorities, and they often turned to prevailing ideas for guidance in defining what their preferences were. Furthermore, countries that had long depended on state-centric and military-focused security outlooks faced new transnational and non-governmental threats for which they were unprepared. This has forced them to redefine what security means in their specific regional context and paved the way for the emergence of the non-traditional security agenda.

Non-traditional security issues (specific security threats, such as pandemic diseases, terrorism, or environmental degradation) have led to the development of the non-traditional security ideas (new frameworks for defining sources of insecurity and outlining appropriate responses). Collectively, non-traditional security ideas compose a specific agenda that cumulatively provides a new template for security identification and management in Asia. Non-traditional security issues were initially dealt with outside of the ‘security’ realm. Gradually, as they have been accepted as legitimate sources of insecurity, particular sets of ideas redefining security have begun to emerge.

Despite their ‘sudden’ emergence, non-traditional security issues are not new problems – just newly labelled security problems. In 1991, Thomas Homer-Dixon published a widely circulated paper arguing that environmental degradation was a security issue

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27 Ibid., 762.
28 Ibid.
that, in some cases, could be the proximate cause for acute conflict. Two years earlier, Norman Myers had linked environmentally induced insecurity in one country as a potential threat to the stability and strategic interests of neighbouring countries, thus making environmental security a trans-boundary issue. This was just the start of a dramatic increase in research reframing many different political, economic, social or environmental issues as ‘security’.

Contemporary trends and events in the environmental, food, energy, health, development and other sectors that have traditionally fallen outside the purview of ‘security’ have propelled these issue areas up the policy strata of many states, international organisations and civil society agendas. These shifts have led to the language and conceptual underpinnings of ‘security’ being applied in novel ways and in new areas as tools for understanding and addressing contemporary challenges.

Regional events, such as the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-98, the SARS and swine flu pandemics, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, have served to further support the growing importance of NTS issues as ‘new’ sources of insecurity. The concept of non-traditional security is now widely accepted and reliably appears on regional security agendas and in scholarly publications. This is in no small part due to the efforts of think tank research. Their interest in NTS issues and their growing political salience have generated a growing number of research centres devoted to its study. The Head of one such research centre, the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, Mely Caballero-Anthony identifies several common characteristics of NTS issues:

They are mainly non-military in nature, transnational in scope – neither domestic nor purely interstate, come with very short notice, and are transmitted rapidly due to globalization and the communication revolution. As such, national solutions are rendered inadequate and would require comprehensive (political, economic and social) responses, as well as humanitarian use of military force.

The turn of the millennium saw a proliferation of literature focusing specifically on NTS issues in Asia, a region considered to be particularly susceptible to these types

of threats. Released in 2001, Dupont’s book, *East Asia Imperilled*, focused on the growing prevalence of NTS issues in East Asia. It identified a frightening breadth of potential security complications arising from environmental degradation, energy security, food security, water scarcity, unregulated migration, transnational crime, and pandemic diseases. In the same year, the Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies in Singapore released an edited volume focusing on similar sources of insecurity in Southeast Asia. This volume contains critical works addressing the security implications of globalisation, and environmental change and degradation. It also deliberates on the impact of NTS issues on regional governing structures. Looking north, in 2004, Elizabeth Economy published the results of an analysis of environmental degradation in China and the resulting civil unrest, unregulated population movements and effect on GDP. She convincingly argues that the negative consequences of degradation could threaten Chinese stability due to political unrest. Research on NTS issues in Asia has burgeoned in the last 15 years and continues to draw political attention.

The emergence of the NTS agenda solicited a strong and immediate response. The ‘securitisation’ of non-military issues is hotly contested and has garnered criticism from traditionalists, who equate ‘security’ with military strategy and the use of force. Stephen Walt presents a strong statement against expanding the security agenda; he argues that, in doing so, one

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\text{[r]uns the risk of expanding “Security Studies” excessively; by this logic, issues such as pollution, disease, child abuse, or economic recessions could all be viewed as threats to “security.” Defining the field in this way would destroy its intellectual coherence and make it more difficult to devise solutions to any of these important problems.}
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This criticism has been refuted by many, most articulately by Alan Dupont, who counters that traditional realist conceptions focus too much on power and force, while ignoring the potential of security threats to cross state borders or the destabilising influence that certain NTS issues can have on both internal and regional stability; furthermore, realists ignore the growing influence of non-state actors. The solution, as proposed by Dupont, encourages the extension of security to include both non-military and the influence of non-state actors on (in)stability without undermining

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35 Tan, Boutin, and Nanyang Technological University. Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, *Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia*.
the importance of traditional security threats. These two approaches to security, traditional and non-traditional, have come to characterise the divisions in opinions over what security governance should include, and the power regional governing institutions should possess. Traditionalists use their interpretations of security to justify the current existing security regime, while non-traditional security proponents use it to undermine the existing order and endorse institutional change. Despite the best efforts of traditionalists, it appears that the elite and inter-elite persuasion of think tanks and other proponents of the NTS agenda is having the desired effect, and the regional paradigm is shifting more towards non-traditional understandings of security.

Scholars of strategic studies have clearly noted shifts in how security is framed in mainstream discourse; however, they have paid less attention to the fundamental structural shifts implicit in a completed transition from traditional to non-traditional security paradigms. The connection between think tanks, their promotion of nontraditional security ideas, and corresponding changes in governances, has been overlooked. Redefining security is meaningless, as long as regional institutions are incapable of responding to newly designated sources of insecurity. Acharya notes that this has been the case, and national responses to NTS issues in Asia have proven ‘inadequate.’ He opines that the transnational nature of NTS issues, the cumulative effects of globalisation, and the oft-sudden appearance of NTS threats make region-wide or international responses imperative for effective management. From his perspective (and mine), the non-traditional security agenda does more than designate selected issues as security; it ipso facto possesses profound structural and conceptual implications for security governance. Hameiri and Jones build upon this premise and assert that NTS issues test the sovereignty of states by problematising the idea that politics, especially security politics, are conducted along state borders. They contend that the shift from traditional to non-traditional understandings of security is constitutive of more than changing discursive labels; instead, this shift is symptomatic of a “deep-seated historical transformation in the scale of the state’s institutions and activities.” Evans agrees and observes that “[e]ven the softest prescriptions for dealing with nontraditional security


39 Acharya, Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order; 242-43.


41 Ibid.
raise new issues that the state must address in protecting citizens." Non-traditional security issues are transforming the state by shifting or ‘rescaling’ the level at which security is governed; however, “[r]ather than expressing the state’s demise, these reflect the development of new, disaggregated forms of sovereign statehood.” STATEHOOD IS NOW BEING ACTED OUT IN NEW AND UNFORSEEN WAYS, SUCH AS THROUGH THE “EMERGENCE OF NEW FORMS OF NETWORKED AND MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE,” AND “PRIVATE AND PUBLIC REGULATORY ACTORS TO WHOM AUTHORITY IS INCREASINGLY DELEGATED.” Following this line of argument, the state maintains its authority even as it is ‘rescaled’ or ‘disaggregated,’ meaning the state (or, more specifically, certain aspects of the state) become components of regional governing structures. REGIONAL THINK TANKS ARE INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN THESE PROCESSES, EITHER AS RESCALED COMPONENTS OF THE STATE OR AS POLITICALLY ACTIVE NON-STATE ACTORS SEEKING TO USE THE PROCESSES OF STATE TRANSFORMATION TO PRODUCE OR REPRODUCE “PARTICULAR POWER RELATIONS THAT ARE FAVOURABLE TO THEM.”

The promoting of the non-traditional security agenda contains an inherent call for a fundamental shift in the way that security is governed. Moreover, as states and governance are transformed, opportunities arise for non-state actors to enter into or influence new forms of governance.

Think tanks have been vocal proponents of the NTS agenda and have enthusiastically provided ideas on the shape, strength, and nature of new or reconfigured governing structure. Think tanks engage in governance through their provision of expertise and facilitating idea exchanges between state and non-state actors. Stone points out that “[t]hink tank policy analysis often represents sets of solutions waiting for their ‘window of opportunity’” and that such opportunities are amply provided as Asia reconfigures its

44 Ibid.
perception of security. Ideas in the NTS agenda are often framed in problem/solution pairs. When think tanks identify a new security issue, often the issue is framed in a way to privilege a desired political response (solution). For instance, trans-boundary crime is identified as a security issue with the best ‘solution’ to this problem being stronger regional institutions. Situated at the helm of problem/solution pairings, think tanks are in a persuasive position to determine both the new causes of insecurity, as well as the policies best perceived to resolve them.

The ideas composing the non-traditional security agenda can be placed in five separate categories: redefining security to include NTS threats, acknowledging the trans-boundary nature of new sources of insecurity, abandoning the ASEAN-way, promoting collective and cooperative understandings of security, and strengthening regional institutions and increasing inter-state cooperation. Table 1 codifies the major ideas in the NTS agenda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Ideas (Frames)</th>
<th>Solution Ideas (Frames)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redefinition of security to include all problems which threaten state stability regardless of their previous designation as economic, environmental, social or political issues</td>
<td>Abandonment of the ASEAN-Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening of regional security architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement of the trans-boundary nature of NTS problems and the requirement of trans-boundary solutions</td>
<td>Promotion of cooperative and collective understandings of security (increased inter-state cooperation and regionalisation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. - Non-Traditional Security Agenda.

The acceptance of the causal stories promoted by think tanks is not uncontested, and there are a variety of factors which have complicated the broadening of traditional security to include non-traditional components. The severity and importance of NTS issues is widely acknowledged, but the agenda as a whole threatens strongly held regional norms. The conflict between these two sets of norms has resulted in an ideational conflict between promoters of the NTS agenda and proponents of the existing security order. In order to understand the immense changes occurring in Asia, it is

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49 “Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks?,” 274.
necessary to understand existing norms of interaction and how think tanks fit into these norms. Asian norms of interaction and diplomacy (known collectively as the ASEAN-way) are a nuanced and complex set of social and institutional rules that define accepted parameters of diplomacy in Asian regional relationships. These norms have developed in response to the unique ideas underlying the founding of ASEAN. Richard Stubbs and Mark Beeson provide a concise summary of the origins of the ASEAN-way of diplomacy.

[O]ut of the immense diversity in terms of geography, social composition, history, politics and economics that characterizes Asian countries and societies, comes the commitment to sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the affairs of other countries and an informal, non-confrontational approach to negotiations. Prompted in particular by the anti-colonialism and anti-Cold War sentiments that characterized much of the region after the Second World War, this approach was gradually grafted on to existing views about the conduct of regional and international affairs.\(^{50}\)

This approach to diplomacy also applies to the regional processes associated with ASEAN, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Plus meetings.\(^{51}\) The ASEAN-way explains why states in the region have historically been resistant towards stronger institutionalisation or binding multilateral agreements.\(^{52}\)

The fundamental tenants of the ASEAN-way (processes over structures, consensus-based decision-making, non-use of force or threat of force, non-interference in internal matters, weak institutions and decentralised power structures) directly conflict with the ideas of the NTS agenda.\(^{53}\) Thus, for the NTS agenda to gain acceptance, think tanks are challenging and changing the basic paradigms or ‘norms’ of regional diplomacy. For instance, acknowledging the trans-boundary nature of NTS issues poses threats to state sovereignty and violates the norm of non-interference. If the threat originates from within a single state and spreads, affected states can cast that infringement as a security breach and justify criticising domestic policies and interfering with local affairs. Acknowledgement of trans-boundary issues also results in calls for more centralised and binding regional institutions – a move in direct opposition to historical preferences for weak institutions and decentralisation. Thus, the shift from traditional to NTS security forms part “of broader struggles over how political rule is institutionally and spatially


\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

organised” and jeopardises the legitimacy of both Asian norms of governing and existing governing institutions.

The salient feature of the politics of NTS is the attempt to rescale security’s spaces, discourses, and management from the national level to a range of new spatial, political, and/or institutional arenas, in alignment with the interests, strategies, and ideologies of key actors, thereby further transforming state apparatuses. The governance arrangements that emerge in practice reflect the conflicts between these actors and those resisting their rescaling efforts.

Think tanks are at the centre of this debate and are key actors arguing against existing structures and norms. The fact that policy makers have accepted the necessity of rethinking their security agendas and focusing on finding new ways to manage these issues has had “profound implications for regional security cooperation in the region.” Hameiri and Lee argue that the evolution of NTS has also involved the development of new multilayered governance arrangements, which bring in a range of new actors and governance instruments that problematise the distinction between domestic and international, public and private.

The transition from tradition/non-traditional, sovereign/collective and weak/strong institutions poses salient challenges for existing forms of regional governance. The development and emergence of new governing structures has provided a multitude of opportunities for Asian think tanks to engage in the policy process and influence institutions by providing policy ideas.

Most profoundly, the successful promotion of the NTS paradigm would necessitate sweeping institutional changes. In other words, the NTS agenda in Asia is less about specific NTS issues and more about promoting a fundamental shift in security governance from the state to the region as the primary focus of security. Establishing this new form of governance would require the creation of a structure and processes which enable a set of public and private actors to coordinate their interdependent needs and interests through the making and implementation of binding policy decisions in the absence of a central political authority.

This would call for a region-wide shift in concepts of security from individually based to comprehensive and cooperative. And regional think tanks have worked hard to

54 Hameiri and Jones, “Non-Traditional Security and New Modes of Security Governance in Southeast Asia,” 4-5.
57 Hameiri and Jones, “Non-Traditional Security and New Modes of Security Governance in Southeast Asia,” 3.
place themselves as the ‘policy elites’ capable of guiding any changes resulting from the acceptance and implementation of the NTS agenda. Shifts away from the state have provided political opportunities for think tanks to develop innovative governance solutions on a regional scale. Furthermore, as the recognised experts in non-traditional security, they have the formidable advantage of exploiting these opportunities from positions of political authority.

Think tanks have been persuasive enough to achieve a steady, albeit slow, response as regional institutions attempt to alter governing structures in response to NTS issues. There is evidence that shifts in security (and governance) ideas have already started to occur. Many of these subtle transitions have been from the traditional to the non-traditional approaches prescribed for effective security governance.

Security analysts noticed very quickly that NTS issues would require changes in security governance. In describing security restructuring after the Cold War, Ball stated in 1994 that “[i]t soon became apparent that the most fundamental building block for regional security cooperation and confidence building is the institutionalization of regional security dialogues.”  

Similar to the rescaling argument put forward by Hameiri and Jones, Krahmann observed in 2003 that the broadening of security agendas, coupled with the lack of a unifying threat, had moved centres of security governance toward different centres at regional and subregional levels, which increasingly involve non-state and private actors.

Regional scholar and Track I and Track II participant Caballero-Anthony notes that policymakers in the region have started acknowledging NTS issues as threats to society, as well as sovereignty and territorial integrity. On a discursive level, most regional institutions have responded to NTS issues by adding non-military threats to their agendas and calling for greater regional cooperation. Shifts in security discourse are clear cut and seen across Asia; states have accepted the NTS label, which has started to appear reliably on the agendas of local and regional dialogues. There is also a ubiquitous consensus that NTS threats are typically trans-boundary in nature, a belief supported by NTS issues like the 2004 Tsunami, the outbreak of avian influenza, and other NTS threats.

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61 Krahmann, “Conceptualizing Security Governance.”
63 Acharya, Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order.
States have also taken an active role in managing, or attempting to manage, NTS problems. Pressure to cooperate on security matters, especially NTS issues, has increased, and cooperation through defence processes, such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting or the ARF Defense Officials’ Dialogue, are actually moving at a faster rate than other diplomatic processes.\textsuperscript{64} ASEAN had organised a number of meetings aimed at addressing NTS threats with some of these meetings targeted at strengthening security institutions or cultivating a sense of collective (or at least cooperative) security. Even more exceptionally, as part of an evolving security paradigm including NTS issues, new institutional configurations (ASEAN + 3 and the East Asia Summit) have been established, demonstrating a visible and quantifiable shift in existing security architectures.\textsuperscript{65}

Despite these efforts, the lack of concrete outcomes has raised questions about the effectiveness and, thus, legitimacy of existing regional security structures. For instance, ASEAN has attempted for decades to resolve the problems of the Southeast Asian haze. The haze, which is caused by forest fires in Indonesia, was first addressed by ASEAN as early as the 1990s. ASEAN has convened numerous meetings, developed collective action plans and instituted a non-binding Regional Action Plan; nevertheless, the haze problem remains unresolved and continues to trouble countries in the region two decades later.\textsuperscript{66} Such ongoing shortfalls in leadership, bolstered by lacklustre responses to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 and the failure to broker an agreement on maritime security in the Malacca Straits, have called into question the legitimacy and effectiveness of regional governing institutions, such as ASEAN and other regional organisations, like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).\textsuperscript{67}

In this way, the contested nature of security governance is feeding into questions of legitimacy regarding the entire structure (or underlying norms) of regional governance in Asia.

Cognisant of these growing doubts, many regional institutions have started adopting some of the ideas found in the NTS paradigm in an attempt to better manage NTS problems. Many regional political actors have started to support programmatic


\textsuperscript{65} Caballero-Anthony, “Non-Traditional Security in Asia.”

\textsuperscript{66} “Indonesia’s Neighbours Face Worst Haze in Years,” \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 22 October 2010.

ideas concerning the strengthening of regional security institutions and the need for domestic accountability in diplomacy. Members of ASEAN and the ARF have both proposed measures strengthening their institutional structures, and ASEAN became a legal entity in 2007 with the signing of the ASEAN-Charter. The Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) has made its reputation by creating a political space where sensitive security issues, previously off limits at regional meetings, can now be addressed in a forthright and frank manner. Another new forum, the East Asia Summit, actively promotes the idea of collective security. All of these adaptive measures are indicators of the growing acceptance of the key programmatic NTS ideas. Interestingly, even though think tanks in Asia were initially established to avoid power sharing, they are now one of the most outspoken voices in promoting the ideas of the non-traditional security agenda – an agenda contingent on rescaling security away from the state.

**Think Tanks as Political Actors**

McGann and Sabatini note that “ideas are powerful” but important ideas can be lost in the deluge of information confronting policy makers.\(^{68}\) Think tanks act as important information filters for governments and institutions faced with too much information, too little time, and increasingly complex policy problems. Furthermore, the “proliferation, physical expansion, and networking of public policy research institutes,” has placed think tanks in a good position to be important forces in global public policy thorough their brokerage of ideas.\(^ {69}\) Think tanks, especially in Asia, are in a uniquely powerful position to promote specific ideational agendas. Their position alongside governmental processes and as part of informal diplomatic forums is a product of their socio-political history in Asia. Asian think tanks are a relatively recent addition to the think tank community, with most appearing in the last 30 years. It is no coincidence that the development of think tanks in Asia coincided with dramatic changes in the ideas defining security. First originating in the United States and the United Kingdom in the early 20th Century, there are currently between 6,000 and 7,000 think tanks worldwide,\(^ {70}\) with the

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\(^{69}\) Ibid.

majority of countries having at least one.\textsuperscript{71} Asia is currently home to 1,194 think tanks, representing 18\% of the global total.\textsuperscript{72}

Think tank emergence often accompanies periods of political uncertainty. McGann identified individual periods of think tank development in the US as coinciding with major domestic or international events (i.e., World War I, World War II, the War on Poverty, and the War of Ideas).\textsuperscript{73} This trend holds true globally with an explosion of think tanks occurring after the end of the Cold War, particularly in countries undergoing rapid political change.

The basic goal of think tanks worldwide is to influence government policy via dialogue, policy analysis/exchange, and education. The key to think tank success is not only in providing analysis but in communicating, or ‘brokering’, it to those in power.

Toward this end, think tanks collect, synthesize and create a range of information products, often directed toward a political or bureaucratic audience, but sometimes also for the benefit of the media, interest groups, business, international civil society and the general public of a nation.\textsuperscript{74}

However, as Medvetz succinctly states

think tanks must carry out a delicate balancing act that involves signaling their cognitive autonomy to a general audience while at the same time signaling their heteronomy – or willingness to subordinate their production to the demands of clients – to a more restricted audience.\textsuperscript{75}

Think tanks hold conferences, formal and informal meetings, and one-on-one discussions with politicians and decision makers on a wide variety of topics; “think tanks can also directly impact specific foreign policy decisions or the general strategic discourse in a given national context through (regularized) interactions with policy


\textsuperscript{72} McGann, “2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Report and Policy Advice.” The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Directory has received criticisms stemming from accusation of selection bias and flawed methodology. Most of these criticisms are focused on the global ranking aspect of the Directory. Due to these concerns, rankings will not be used; however, the Directory is still the most comprehensive source for estimates regarding think tank numbers on a region-to-region basis and information from the Directory will be used in this context.


\textsuperscript{74} Diane Stone and Andrew Denham, \textit{Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas} (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2004). p. 3.

\textsuperscript{75} Thomas Medvetz, \textit{Think Tanks in America} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 18.
makers or commissioned policy advice.” High level and influential think tanks sometimes hold training or briefing sessions for government officials or their staff.

Less overtly, many think tanks also facilitate networking amongst elites (the inter-elite persuasion mentioned earlier) and create networks of their own, where policy ideas and knowledge transfers can take place. They also attempt to connect knowledge to power by inviting the relevant academics to meeting with policy officials. These networks, and the political spaces they provide, have yet to be fully accounted for in think tank literature. This thesis contributes to think tank literature by exploring the importance of these spaces in the policy-making process. The political spaces constructed by think tanks, which exist in the grey area between formal and informal politics, are important locations where think tanks can control the introduction and movement of ideas into the political process. The creation of these spaces is especially important when looking at think tanks in Asia. Because these spaces are neither governmental nor non-governmental, they maintain a level of autonomy and political openness unavailable in formal processes.

Despite their ubiquitous presence, Parmar emphasises that think tanks differ in their purpose, structure and influence in response to their respective cultures, systems of government and socio-political history. The term ‘think tank’ has been applied far and wide to such diverse organisations as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), government research bureaus, NGOs (such as Oxfam and Transparency International), and units attached to political parties. This variation has led think tank expert Diane Stone to conclude that the think tank “brand name has been so widely used that its meaning is becoming opaque.” Stone’s following definition serves to demonstrate just how many different organisations potentially fall under the rubric of think tank.

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76 Patrick Köllner, “Think Tanks: Their Development, Global Diversity and Roles in International Affairs,” *GIGA Focus*, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, no. 6 (2011).
78 Stone, “Learning Lessons, Policy Transfer, and the International Diffusion of Ideas.”
79 Melissa Conley-Tyler, National Executive Director, Australian Institute of International Affairs, interview by Author [phone], 9 March 2012.
81 Stone, “Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks?,” p. 262.
Think tanks vary considerably in size, structure, policy ambit and significance ... ‘Think tank’ is a slippery term. It has been applied haphazardly to any organization undertaking policy-related, technical or scientific research and analysis. Such organizations may operate within government ... or be independent non-profit organization or be attached to a profit-making corporate entity. 82

The expansion of think tanks globally has further complicated the search for a clear definition. While the Anglo-American label has persisted, the definition of a ‘think tank’ is now largely relative to a variety of regional and political situations. 83 As such, the ‘traditional’ definition is often not appropriate for many institutes in the developing world, including Asia, where think tanks may have much closer and more involved ties to the state. 84 This description intentionally excludes any requirements for autonomy or absolute independence, as Medvetz argues that it is a “false presupposition” and “an arbitrary and misleading definitional assumption” to expect think tanks to maintain independence from bureaucracies, academia, and the media as it removes them from the reality of their environment. 85 Instead, this thesis concurs with Medvetz’s proposal of a more embedded approach to overcoming definitional limitations, that of examining think tanks and their networks in their historical, organisational and political contexts. From a historical perspective it is possible to tease out think tank networks by “determining how members have marked themselves off from more established institutions” and have consequently created the unique political and discursive spaces that have proven so valuable in Asia and around the world. 86

Cognisant of these contested meanings, this thesis avoids producing a definitive definition of an Asian think tank. Instead, it provides a descriptive framework outlining how think tanks operate in Asia. In the context of this analysis, the term ‘think tank’ is used to describe a variety of organisations that are reasonably diverse and engage in policy analysis and development in the region. Through networking activities think tanks can and have created “new venues for participation beyond the closed shops of the ‘club model’ of international cooperation.” 87 These spaces are outside of, but connected to, formal political processes and have been integral to think tank promotion of the non-traditional security.

82 “Think Tank Traditions,” p. 2.
83 “Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks?.”
86 Ibid., 16.
Historically, think tanks in Southeast Asia provide policy analysis as part of the governing structure.\textsuperscript{88} Stone notes that think tanks operating in political systems with high degrees of state control have a more supplicating relationship with decision makers and act subtly to push ideas and analysis upwards into decision-making circles.\textsuperscript{89}

Furthermore,

\begin{quote}
[m]ost members of think tanks in Asian societies see their organizations as (necessarily) politically dependent. To a large extent, their perceptions of state and society are influenced by the broader cultural and historical context, whereby think tanks play an active role in providing the government with policy suggestions but do not (or should not) challenge the prevailing ideological values. In contrast to think tanks in Western societies, those in, say, Malaysia and Japan are less able to resist the intervention of the state’s administrative power.\textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

For the most part, Asian think tanks share the same goals as their western counterparts; “developing country think tanks seek to set agendas, define problems and establish the language of policy through policy entrepreneurship,”\textsuperscript{91} as well as “contribute to governance by supplying information, expertise, and by encouraging exchange between officials and other private actors.”\textsuperscript{92} At present, think tanks are established parts of the political landscape in most Asian countries. One interesting characteristic of Asian think tanks is that a large majority maintain some form of government affiliation. These connections range from relatively superficial to deeply institutionalised. A second important trait is that they have emerged in two primary areas: security and economics.\textsuperscript{93} Both areas are of key importance to regional policy elites.

Interestingly, what started out as a few think tanks under government control has quickly developed into an intricate regional network of think tanks adapted to the unique political characteristics of the region. This increase was driven by expanded political opportunities resulting from “greater democratization in formerly closed societies, trade liberalization, and the expansion of both market based economies and globalization.”\textsuperscript{94} Other facilitating factors include more complex and pressing policy problems, expanding governmental bureaucracies, and a loss of faith in governing and

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
  \bibitem{98} Rüland, “The Contribution of Track Two Dialogue Towards Crisis Prevention.”
  \bibitem{99} Stone, “Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks?”
  \bibitem{101} Nesadurai and Stone, “Southeast Asian Think Tanks; Stone and Nesadurai, “Networks, Second Track Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: The Experience of Southeast Asian Think Tanks.”
  \bibitem{102} “Networks, Second Track Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: The Experience of Southeast Asian Think Tanks,” 3.
  \bibitem{103} Rüland, “The Contribution of Track Two Dialogue Towards Crisis Prevention.”
\end{thebibliography}
elected officials. Taking a rather more cynical stance, Rüland points out that think tanks were also seen by states as “a conservative and minimalist way of power sharing to preserve the economic miracle and, by coincidence, their legitimacy through the professionalization of government operations.” Think tanks have gradually gained ideational authority because bureaucratic division and the non-traditional nature of many emerging security problems left many governments neither equipped nor prepared to provide adequate policy responses. All of these factors have opened up previously closed avenues for think tanks to provide ideas clarifying state interests, acting as road maps for policy action, and serving as focal points for collective action.

More importantly, according to Nesadurai and Stone, Asian think tanks are beginning to exert some influence through their involvement in “global policy networks” in partnership with governments and international organisations, and actively engage in the policy processes at national, regional and international levels. It is not uncommon for them to contain former or current members of government and/or to have members that serve on governmental committees and panels. In some instances, they are incorporated into the governing structure with the expectation that they will support government initiatives. These think tanks often walk a fine line between offering helpful suggestions to existing policy and unacceptable criticism of the government. In these contexts, they do not directly create, legislate or propose policy: instead, their influence lies in their ability to conduct research, inform policy discussions, promote agendas, frame issues, and institutionalise dialogues. In other words, they get their power by providing ideas. Despite the lack of quantitative measures, “[i]t is clear from previous studies that many think tanks help provide the conceptual language, the ruling paradigms, the empirical examples, that then become the accepted assumptions for those making policy.”

The role of NTS promotion has fallen upon think tanks primarily because of their access to more open discursive spaces. As addressed earlier by Ba, ASEAN norms of

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95 McGann, “2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Report and Policy Advice.”
97 Ibid.
98 Goldstein and Keohane, Ideas and Foreign Policy.
101 Ibid.
103 Stone, “Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks?,” p. 276.
diplomacy are based on non-confrontation and avoidance of conflict and sensitive issues. As such, formal spaces have been ill-equipped, unwilling and unable to address most NTS problems. As noted by Beeson and Stubbs, “[o]ne particularly intriguing manifestation of this approach [the ASEAN-way] has been the emergence of the Track II process.”

Thus, in addition to promoting NTS ideas directly to their domestic governments, many think tanks in Asia have developed regional networks that have organised ‘informal’ or Track II meetings for the purpose of discussing sensitive and controversial security issues.

**Track II Diplomacy – Creating Political Space**

The key role that think tanks have played in the establishment of regional governing structures is through their contribution of ideas. To expand their ideational reach to the regional level, think tanks have created an intricate and overlapping series of networks. Lennon notes that “[a]s security challenges have globalized in the wake of the Cold War, the ideas industry has been globalizing with it in the form of transnational security policy networks.” These networks run alongside formal regional processes, and provide policy analysis and informal political space of the discussion of sensitive security issues. Because the majority of NTS ideas are considered too sensitive to address in formal processes, Track II forums have become the epicentre for promotion and evolution of the NTS agenda. I argue that Track II processes form the backbone of NTS promotion by providing forums where causal stories can be introduced to guide the policy process.

According to Capie and Evans, Track II diplomacy (also known as Second Track) refers to diplomacy occurring outside of formal diplomatic channels and typically involves academics, think tank professionals, journalists, military officials, civilians, and governmental officials acting in their ‘unofficial’ capacities. The two most prominent think tank networks in Asia were established with the express intent that the bulk of their policy contribution would be through such dialogues. With only a few exceptions, Track II processes are affiliated with formal regional institutions. While not essential,

in the semi-democratic political systems of Southeast Asia, the leading think tanks that participate in regional dialogues tend to have close connections to their governments although differences exist among these organisations.

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107 Stone and Nesadurai, “Networks, Second Track Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation: The Experience of Southeast Asian Think Tanks,” p. 3.
Ba observes that the logic underlying Track II dialogues is that “individuals without the baggage of their official roles and responsibilities will be more likely to talk freely about sensitive topics.” These meetings are overwhelmingly organised by think tanks and are informal, non-governmental and non-official – though the distinction between official and unofficial is problematic. Pauline Kerr wrote in her analysis of Asia-Pacific Security dialogues that “membership of forums and organizations is usually described as being ‘mixed’ or ‘blended’”, because governmental attendees are present in their ‘private’ capacities and many attending academics may also hold additional positions in government, industry or as regular governmental consultants.

Scholars and participants alike acknowledge that the ‘unofficial’ participation of government officials is a ‘polite fiction’ and not a substantiative distinction; however, this fiction is encouraged for its politically desirable outcomes. Foremost, the unofficial nature of these spaces allows for officials and experts to evaluate and address complex and sensitive security problems in relative obscurity. All involved parties benefit from free exchanges of ideas and access to other avenues of both research and political influence. Additionally, such informal forums offer advantages in terms of building personal relationships, acclimatising officials to the concept of regional cooperation, and providing a forum for policy development.

Aguilar astutely notes think tank use of Track II processes to promote causal stories to political authority.

The Track 2 process can produce innovative new ideas and solutions that are difficult to achieve through the bureaucracy. Track 2 can thus serve as a useful source of advice to governments by providing studies on issues that officials neither have the time nor the resources to address in order to develop a substantial base of expertise.

As ideational agents, Job observes that think tanks “have served as agents of change and norm entrepreneurs working to alter perceptions of interest, redefinition of identities, and acceptance of key principles of open regionalism and cooperative security.”

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108 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 178.
111 Ibid.
112 Alan Christopher Jessen Aguilar, “Track 2 Diplomacy and the ASEAN Peace: The Role of Experts in the Development Towards a Security Community – A Case Study on ASEAN-ISIS” (University of Oslo, 2008), 45.
Ladi’s study of the influence of think tanks on policy change emphasises that Asian think tanks are more likely to be well placed and have the necessary resources to encourage enduring change. Because they have access to policy makers during critical junctures (times of instability or uncertainty) when policy shifts are more likely to occur, Ladi argues that think tanks are more capable of influencing institutional change. Rapid changes in the Asian security environment have provided just the critical junctures necessary for think tank ideas to be sought and accepted by political actors.

Two decades ago, Kerr noted that non-official and Track II security actors were starting to exercise influence on security policy in Asia. She linked the emergence of these actors as part of a response to increased military capability, coupled with uncertainty resulting from the end of Cold War tensions. Krahmann agrees and notes “the growing role of non-state actors has, to some degree, been the result of governmental policies designed to deal with transnational security issues and to decrease the public burden for the provision of security.” Some scholars have gone so far as to attribute specific security issues as the cause of Track II development in Asia. According to Ball et al., the main driver behind the growing number of Track two dialogues has ostensibly been the emergence of the aforementioned ‘new’ threats to security designated as non-traditional security.

Think tanks have filled an important role in promoting the acceptance of cooperative security ideas, as noted independently by Ball, Evans, and Kerr in 1994, Cheeseman, Stone and Nesadurai in 1999, and Nachiappan et al., in 2010. Ba notes that, as far back as 1991, the main Track II actor in the region, the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (AI), recommended a more structured framework to manage security issues. Several Track II or informal

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114 Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change.”
115 Ibid.
120 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 174.
ASEAN-sanctioned dialogues were held that year to consider the viability of a more formal regional security dialogue. The four meetings (i.e., the Manila and Bangkok Seminars and two South China Sea Workshops) were security focused; more importantly, they were trial runs to see if a regional dialogue would work in practice. As such, these meetings were successful and were “cited by the 1992 Singapore Declaration as a basis and precedent on which the PMC [Post-Ministerial Conference] could develop an extended political-security dialogue.” Ultimately, AI recommendations formed the basis for establishing the ASEAN Regional Forum with the input of non-governmental organisations (specifically AI) acknowledged by ASEAN. This development is often cited as an example of the influence of Track II process on the institutionalisation of security in Asia. Like Ba and Kerr, Ball points out that Track II processes have contributed valuable ideas to the development of regional security governance. They have provided proposals for confidence and security building measures (CSBM), stimulated the development of security dialogues, and subsequently pushed for greater security institutionalisation. Job concurs and observes that Track II processes have contributed ideas and expertise to the development of regional security architectures. He writes that:

Over the last several decades, a community of intellectuals, academics, and officials, operating trans-nationally through think tanks, universities, and private and public foundations, has been central to the establishment of economic and security structures in the Asia Pacific.

Lennon provides three interesting case studies gauging the influence of Track II security networks, including think tanks networks, on non-proliferation policy in the United States. Particularly relevant to this thesis is his case study on the US branch of CSCAP, a network also examined in this thesis. Though Lennon focuses solely on non-proliferation (a traditional security issue) and policy outcomes in the United States, his framework is insightful when evaluating security network influence in Asia, particularly to those dealing with cooperative security issues such as non-traditional security.

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121 Ibid., 177.
123 “A New Era in Confidence Building.”
Lennon examines three distinct policy networks, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, the Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue, and the Program on New Approaches to Russian Security. He measures each network’s potential influence by the interrogating four factors: 1) the contacts and perceptions facilitated by the network; 2) the ways the network has sought to interact with governmental participants; 3) the network’s ability to set agendas; 4) and the policy options developed by the network. His in-depth case studies reveal that security policy networks are valuable not for their ability to immediately alter policy, but for their capacity to change the perceptions upon which policies are based. He also points to network contribution in building knowledge capacity through linking individuals and institutions with ideas, expertise and information. Lennon concludes that the efforts of the three networks helped develop a three dimensional view of policy issues which aided in cooperation.

Existing literature has begun to investigate the potential long-term political impact resulting from think tanks forums’ promotion of specific ideational agendas, though none have focused specifically on policy aimed at non-traditional security issues. With a few exceptions, such as Stone, Lennon, and Ball, current scholarship lacks a full interrogation as to the broader ways that think tanks promotion of ideas can have a long term impact on institutional and security governing structures in Asia. This thesis will fill this gap by unravelling this puzzle by, first, acknowledging that think tanks are active contributors to the ideational agenda and that their concentrated efforts can have enduring influence on regional security governance.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has covered a great deal of theoretical and historical ground. Foremost, it has outlined how ideas can be powerful political tools of institutional change. As scholars have turned more towards ideas, they have opened up analytical space for the evaluation of non-governmental and extra-structural actors to influence institutions. From this evolution, Discursive Institutionalism has emerged as a theoretical tool to examine how the interactive process of transmitting ideas (discourse) can explain how both governmental and non-governmental actors can change institutions through ideas. The value of this theory will be demonstrated in the following chapters, where it will be shown that, in the hands of think tanks, NTS ideas are being used to change regional governing structures and promote new forms of regional governance.

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126 Ibid., 20.
It has become clear that the shifting nature of security in Asia necessitates fundamental changes in how the region manages security. Collectively, these changes have been identified as the non-traditional security agenda, which comprises the following ideas: redefinition of security to encompass problems which threaten state stability, including non-military sources of insecurity; acknowledgement of the trans-boundary nature of NTS problems; promotion of cooperative and collective understandings of security; abandonment of the ASEAN-way; and, ultimately, strengthening regional security structures. A brief overview of the development of the NTS agenda situates think tanks in the centre of an ideational debate between traditional versus non-traditional understandings of security. These ideas present profound (but arguably essential) challenges for existing forms of security governance.

Ultimately, think tanks have become political actors in Asia through their provision of informal political space. The existence of this space and its ramifications on regional security governance have yet to be fully explored. Informal spaces have filled up existing political voids and placed think tanks in a situation where they can take advantage of political uncertainty to re-define security and promote the acceptance of the non-traditional security agenda. These venues have become an important discursive space, where NTS ideas can be discussed, workshopped, and adapted to local conditions. As a consequence, think tank organised Track II forums have become the de facto centres for NTS analysis and governance. Significantly, think tank control of these processes has allowed them to privilege specific ideas over others, and endowed them with the authority to define security in Asia and delineate appropriate political responses.
Chapter 3

A New Focus of Analysis: Discursive Institutionalism and Institutional Change

“DI puts the agency back into institutional change by explaining the dynamics of change in structures through constructive discourse about ideas.”

Introduction

Whereas the previous section positioned think tanks in the broader landscape of Asia and non-traditional security studies, this chapter will detail how the political actions of think tanks can be understood using a combination of constructivist and institutionalist approaches. Constructivist theories emphasise the social construction of institutions but often fail to acknowledge the transformative power of ideas and how ideas, once accepted, have the ability to influence institutional change. The power of discursive institutionalism, and why it is persuasive for this analysis, is its ability to explain both internal and external sources of change. It operates from the middle ground between constructivism and institutionalism, and is better able to explain institutional transformation by reconciling the dual and competing influence of structures versus agents and ideas. Discursive institutionalism addresses the existing voids in ideational literature concerning think tanks and the influence of their ideational agendas on regional governing regimes. It also fills in the gaps around how non-state actors interact with state structures and convey ideas, and the power of ‘idea brokers’ on regional security institutions.

The ‘discourse’ aspect of DI acknowledges the influence of both ideas and actors on institutions by allowing them to engage in the ‘interactive process of conveying ideas.’ It also accedes that these actors and ideas are present in, and shaped by, existing institutional structures. Discursive institutionalism’s key contribution to this analysis is how it can explain ideational change occurring from both internal and external

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sources of ideas. This is important because think tanks are able, dependent upon circumstance, to occupy both of these roles in relation to institutions. DI is well-suited to studying ideational actors, such as think tanks, because it can acknowledge their position within (or outside) of existing governing structures, as well as fully account for the expertise think tanks possess in conveying ideas. DI links ideas and institutions through discursive actors (think tanks) and clarifies how, by operating in the ‘middle’ of formal and informal process, they can wield political influence. DI further explains how institutions act as simultaneously constraining and enabling structures. This is done by recognising the ability of “agents to think, speak, and act outside their institutions even as they are inside them, to deliberate about institutional rules even as they use then, and to persuade one another to change those institutions or to maintain them.”

What this thesis does is take the power of discourse as conceptualised by DI (that is, as a mechanism of institutional change) and apply it to the discursive spaces created by think tanks. Discursive spaces have been at the centre of the non-traditional security agenda and a primary means of its mobilisation. Analysing political spaces that are as indeterminate and opaque as those created by think tanks raises significant methodological questions; direct links between think tank inputs, the development of specific policies, and institutional change are difficult to discern and quantify. This is not to imply that think tanks do not influence the NTS agenda, they certainly do, only that this influence is indirect and ‘behind the scenes.’

Asian think tanks have acted as ‘idea brokers’ and ‘policy entrepreneurs’ by facilitating the spread of ideas between the public and private, and the national and international sectors. What is more, they have used their legitimacy as policy experts to endorse new forms of security governance. In this capacity, they have assumed the role of governance entrepreneurs and, furthermore, have created political space from which to promote the non-traditional security agenda. Evidence of their success can be found in the increased prevalence and salience of the NTS agenda in pre-existing political forums, as well as the creation of new forums focused and built, at least in part, on addressing NTS ideas.

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Any framework employed to study Asian think tank promotion of NTS ideas must encompass both how ideas are mobilised across political space and their subsequent influence on, and relationships with, resulting institutions. Thus, the structure of this analysis shares a dual focus between the value of ideas and the underlying processes and interactions used by think tanks to transform them into political change. Accordingly, this chapter is organised in two parts. The first part introduces the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism (DI), which is derived from the ‘new institutionalisms’ briefly introduced in Chapter 2. The role of ideas in institutional change will be examined and the terminology of discourse clarified. DI is based upon the mutually constitutive relationship between ideas and institutions. It will be used to link think tank production of ideas and their creation of discursive space to the alteration of governing norms and transformations in governing institutions.

Additionally, this section introduces and provides a brief overview of the theories regarding framing, networking and agenda setting. In the context of think tank constructed discursive space, these three mechanisms are employed to mobilised ideas between state/non-state and formal/informal political actors. The second part of this chapter presents the methodology used to gather and codify data. This section describes and justifies the use of political process tracing as a methodology. Likewise, the rationale behind the case study selection is explained and the sources of primary and secondary evidence are identified.

Discursive Institutionalism

This thesis pursues an essentially constructivist understanding of think tank influence based on the premise that “ideas shape or constitute the situation or context of action” and that they “also shape or constitute agents themselves, especially their interests, preferences, and identities.” Ideas initiate expert discourses that, in turn, form influential parts of policy networks, epistemic communities and dialogues. These expert discourses become embedded in structures and institutions by informing the policies and assumptions upon which institutions are built. Think tanks use their expertise

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6 The concept of discursive space is closely related to Schmidt’s “discursive sphere” but expands the concept to be more malleable and have a variety of discursive ‘levels’. “Discursive Institutionalism: Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings.”
8 Ibid.
9 Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”
in constructing, maintaining, and developing expert discourses to advantage their ideational agendas and guide institutional change.

Institutionalists have turned towards ideas seeking variables to explain structural change from both internal and external sources. The most fully reasoned theory emerging from this stream of research is that of discursive (constructivist) institutionalism, which combines the three previous ‘new’ institutionalisms with constructivism and postmodernist approaches to discourse. DI fills a gap in constructivism and the other new institutionalisms (rational choice institutionalism (RI), historical institutionalism (HI), and social institutionalism (SI)), which have struggled to explain institutional change. Because think tanks often operate at the ‘invisible’ discursive level of policy-making, static and state-centric constructivist theories lack the ability to account for the influence of think tanks on policy or the development of think tanks as policy actors.

Part of this inability stems from the unofficial nature of think tank spaces, which are politically significant but operate outside of institutionalism’s analytical frameworks. DI, on the other hand, accounts for think tank influence on the political process by identifying them as ‘discursive actors’, therefore recognising their power as political actors and acknowledging their ability to use discourse to transform ideas into institutional change.

Discursive institutionalism reconceptualises the dualistic distinctions between ideational actors and material structures found in other theories. In this context, institutions are understood to “shape the choices, behaviours and even the interests and identities of agents,” thus leaving political actors only limited forms of agency. Constellations of agents and institutions operate under broader “political, economic and social environments” that constitute prevailing political structures. Whereas the other ‘new’ institutionalisms subordinate agency (action) to structure (rules), DI re-evaluates this relationship and “simultaneously treats institutions as a given (as the context within which agents think, speak, and act) and as contingent (as the results of agents’ thoughts, words, and actions).” Bell further articulates the reciprocal relationship between

12 Gofas and Hay, “The Role of Ideas in Political Analysis.”
14 Ibid., 898.
political structure and agents, arguing that “[i]nstitutions and structures matter because of the ways they reflect, refract, restrain, and enable human behaviour, while in turn, it is the behaviour of agents that reproduces or transforms institutions and structures over time.” DI’s view of political relationships is more representative of the interactions between think tanks and governments found in Asia.

However, discursive institutionalism is not without its opponents. Bell, for example, acknowledges the importance of emphasising ideas in institutional change, but posits that discursive institutionalism takes the power of ideas too far – almost to the level of postmodernism. Upon closer reading, it appears that Bell’s discomfort with DI is based upon a simplified perception of the theory and his criticism overemphasises the importance of ideas while overlooking the efforts of discursive institutionalists to situate ideas into their institutional contexts. Consequently, his claims that proponents of discursive institutionalism remove ideas and agents entirely from the context of institutions, and that they miss the significance of institutional dynamics on change, are misplaced.

Schmidt clearly notes that “[t]he ‘institutionalism’ in discursive institutionalism suggests that this approach is not only about the communication of ideas … but also about the institutional context in which and through which ideas are communicated via discourse.” Furthermore, “[d]iscursive institutionalism … shares with the other neo-institutionalisms a core focus on the importance of institutions.” The differences between DI and the other neo-institutionalisms lie in how institutions are perceived, and the sources and agents of change. DI clearly articulates that agents operate within institutions that shape the opportunities available to them; at the same time, agents are able to alter institutions through the use of discourse. DI does not separate agents from institutions as is argued by Bell, but they are instead rearticulated as being mutually constitutive. In essence, agents operate within institutions at the same time that agent behaviour either reinforces or alters institutional structures. It is at this point of discourse (interaction) between agents and institution, where ideas are transferred and institutional change starts.

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17 “Do We Really Need a New ‘Constructivist Institutionalism’ to Explain Institutional Change?”
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse.”
Through the lens of discursive institutionalism, think tanks use discourse to move ideas across political space. Discourse, simply put, is the *interactive* process of conveying ideas in specific policy and institutional contexts between agents and structures.\(^{22}\) In addition to looking at what was said, discourse also classifies as analytically important such intervening factors as agency (who said what to whom) and context (how, when, where, and why it was said). This is significant, as it accommodates the agency of think tanks based on their status as idea entrepreneurs. It also accounts for the importance of political spaces created by think tanks in the form of Track II dialogues. In these spaces, they have constructed specific political contexts sympathetic to the ideas and agendas they wish to promote.

DI recognises three levels of ideas – policies, programs, and philosophies. The relative level of an idea determines its potential policy influence and the difficulty faced in getting the idea accepted and implemented. At the first level of ideas are ‘policies’, which constitute specific policy suggestions regarding concrete political situations. This is the most common type of ideas promoted by think tanks and refers to specific ideas that are causal in nature and provide guidelines for political action and the attainment of political goals.\(^{23}\)

The second level, ‘programmatic (program) ideas’, includes the general ideational programs that underlie ideas at the policy level.\(^{24}\) For example, the individual ideas composing the non-traditional security agenda (e.g., redefining non-military issues as security, cooperative/collective understandings of security, etc.) are programmatic ideas and serve to define problems that are to be resolved by the more focused policy ideas. The NTS agenda is composed of these types of ideas and it is at this level where think tanks have focused their efforts and achieved the most success. The bulk of constructivist literature overlooks the importance of programmatic ideas, despite the fact that they are broader than individual policies and, once accepted, “over time and through multiple discourses and venues, [ideas] become an organising logic or coordinative paradigm.”\(^{25}\) A shift in ideational foundation is more enduring and influential than the change of any one specific policy. These ideas inform the construction of policies by clarifying goals, creating focal points for coordination, and establishing institutions by altering pre-existing rules and norms.\(^{26}\)

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22 Ibid.
24 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy.”
26 Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*. 
The programmatic NTS ideas identified in the previous chapter form the NTS agenda. As a whole, this agenda could be considered part of the broadest and most far reaching level of ideas, those of public philosophies. Public philosophies form the final tier in the hierarchy of ideas, they are fundamental to our understandings of security, and generally go unacknowledged and unchallenged, except in times of crisis.27 It is at this level, that the contestation between traditional and non-traditional understandings of security takes place. John Campbell identifies this level of ideas as cognitive paradigms and states that these paradigms determine cause and effect relationships and “limit the range of alternatives policy makers are likely to perceive as useful.”28 This is exactly what think tanks have done with their causal stories and problem/solution sets concerning NTS issues. They have identified problems and articulated solutions under the framework of the NTS agenda. Public philosophies are the ‘worldviews’ that exists at a more fundamental level than either policy or programmatic ideas. These undergirding ideas consist of assumptions about values, attitudes and other “collectively shared standards of appropriate behaviour that validate social identities.”29 While the lowest level of ideas (policies) is easier to influence, it is at the paradigmatic level where the most fundamental and enduring change occurs.

Coordinative and Communicative Discourse

Ideas are mobilised through the use of discourse – of which there are two types. Coordinative discourse refers to the ‘coordinative’ process of policy construction between elite groups or individuals involved in the elaboration, development and elucidation of policy.30 Discussions at the political levels of ASEAN, the ARF and the Shangri-La Dialogue – where policy makers are articulating policy – would all fall under the coordinative discourse heading. Individuals involved in this process include elected officials, civil servants, non-governmental organisations, experts, transnational advocacy groups, and epistemic communities.31 Coordinative discourse occurs between think tanks and policy elites at the start of the policy development process. For example, think tanks often hold meetings and focus groups to inform political elites of forthcoming issues while simultaneously determining what types of policy

27 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy.”
28 Ibid., 22.
30 Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change.”
analysis political elites are seeking.\textsuperscript{32} This relates back to Blyth’s observation about the influence of inter-elite persuasion and articulates how think tanks use the NTS agenda to guide institutional change (and governance) in times of political uncertainty.\textsuperscript{33} This approach explores new avenues and actors of ideational influence and expands the boundaries of current constructivist international relations theory.

The second type of discourse encompasses the ‘communicative’ process between groups or individuals who are presenting, deliberating or legitimising political ideas to the public.\textsuperscript{34} This type of discourse is used to inform groups about the value of policy ideas. As think tanks have expanded upward into regional forums, they have used communicative discourse to legitimise ideas to policy makers at the regional level. Communicative discourse also involves communication between members of the public and from the public to policy makers. It includes “members of opposition parties, the media, pundits, community leaders, social activists, public intellectuals, experts, think-tanks, organised interests, and social movements.”\textsuperscript{35} These additional political actors are able to interpret, influence, and modify the ideas presented to them and communicate these changes back to the sender in a circular ideational exchange. Ladi observes that, “[i]n order to be established and sustained, public policy shifts need a discourse with coordinative and communicative functions, and most of the time think tanks are well placed and well-resourced to offer it.”\textsuperscript{36} Think tanks frequently participate in both types of discourse as policy entrepreneurs and providers of discursive space. They coordinate policy discourse through elite and inter-elite persuasion and then communicate these ideas to other policy actors, as well as to the public at large. In both capacities, think tanks’ control of discourse allows them to promote certain ideational agendas over others.

**Successful Discourse**

It is discourse, and its quality, that determines the success or failure of an idea.

According to Vivien Schmidt:

> Discourse is not just ideas or “text” (what is said) but also context (where, when, how, and why it was said). The term refers not only to structures (what is said, or where and how) but also to agency (who said what to whom).\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{32} Alan Dupont, Director of the Centre for International and Strategic Studies, interview by Author, Sydney, 19 April 2011.

\textsuperscript{33} Blyth, “Powering, Puzzling, or Persuading? The Mechanisms of Building Institutional Orders.”

\textsuperscript{34} Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse.”

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 310.

\textsuperscript{36} Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change,” 205.

\textsuperscript{37} Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse,” 305.
Discourse is more than just words, it is ideational and interactive. Think tanks have been able to influence political institutions because of their ability to engage in successful discourse. Articulating an idea, even a good idea, is not enough to ensure success. Successful discourse depends on a variety of factors, such as relevance, effectiveness, consistency, coherence, and adequacy. It is worth quoting Smith at length on the requirements for successful discourse:

Schmidt identifies a number of functions that discourses must perform in order to become successful in particular political contexts. For discourses to become dominant they must not only perform a cognitive function (by delineating the logic and necessity of a particular policy programme) and a normative function (by demarcating the desirability and appropriateness of a policy programme) but also a coordinative function (by providing a common framework through which elites can agree upon a course of action) and a communicative one (by enabling elites to persuade the general public of a policy programme’s necessity and legitimacy).

As Alice Ba argued in her study of ASEAN regionalism, ideas have no inherent power or meaning and only gain such things when they are mobilised by agents (i.e., agents mobilise ideas by engaging in discourse). Thus, while ideas are important, their influence on institutions is contingent upon other aspects, such as the context and speaker. These aspects determine if ideas are successfully promoted to those with political power. As Schmidt points out:

There is nothing inevitable about discourse. Often, it may be little more than an accompaniment to policy change, as a reflection of the interests of key policy actors and an expression of institutional path dependencies. Just as often, however, it can exert a causal influence on policy change serving to overcome entrenched interests and institutional obstacles to change by altering perceptions of interest and showing the way to new institutional paths.

Discourse, when used effectively and in the right circumstances, has power. And actors’ ability to engage in discourse provides an explanation for how relatively weak actors (such as think tanks) have succeeded in challenging enduring programmatic and paradigmatic ideas in Asia. The political environment inhabited by Asian think tanks enhances their capacity to promote ideas and institutional change. Their close relationships with government and their socio-political history in the region give them

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41 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
an advantage in understanding the best practices to promote policy combined with the institutional access to do so.

**Strategies**

Surprisingly, discursive institutionalism has only recently been applied to the study of think tanks. Studies using DI have remained firmly in the theoretical realm and have been steadfastly state-centric in their analysis of ideas on institutional change concerning education, economics, security and informal diplomacy. While these studies have greatly contributed to the recognition of the value of ideas in policy-making, they have overlooked the political processes required to translate ideas into institutions. Scholars, such as Campbell, have lamented that the study of ideas lacks a clear identification of the mechanisms by which ideas influence policy-making. Even Schmidt, who is largely responsible for codifying the concept of DI, admits that this aspect of the theory is, at best, under-theorised and, at worst, entirely absent in the majority of studies using the DI framework. “After all, if the structure changes – as the hypothesis of institutional development argues – there must be some political process through which specific political actors have modified the structure.” This thesis aims to address this omission and operationalise the DI framework by analysing the political mechanisms used to move ideas across political space.

This thesis brings politics back to the DI framework by unpacking the specific political strategies used by think tanks to transmit ideas. It makes a significant contribution to DI literature by focusing not only on the processes of discourse but also on the importance of discursive space. To enhance their discursive ability, think tanks have created unique discursive spaces where they can control the discursive process. These spaces are most often located alongside formal governing processes but are free from the strict political limitations imposed on governmental venues. Under the control of think tanks, these spaces provide the opportunity for state and non-state actors alike to discuss delicate security matters in a more flexible environment. Especially in politically fragmented regions, such as Asia, political space unencumbered by the constraints of

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43 The two exceptions to this are Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change.” and Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”
45 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy.”
diplomatic norms is difficult to come by and is highly sought after. These spaces take many forms and include the concrete examples of think tank organised dialogues, meetings, conferences and networks characterising the Track II processes discussed earlier. They are also found in the more ephemeral and mostly unstructured policy and epistemic communities populated by think tanks across the region. Think tanks have used discursive spaces existing on the margins of formal politics as platforms from which to frame NTS issues as security problems (problem framing), place them on formal and informal security agendas (agenda setting), and link them to other political actors and decision makers (networking). These are all essential components of think tanks governance entrepreneurship; Avant et al. write that “[g]overnance of a problem cannot begin until someone defines a problem as an issue and succeeds in placing it on a consequential agenda.”

Thus, think tank networks in Asia are initiating the processes of non-traditional security governance. Often, these strategies are used concurrently as think tank networks utilise all available political opportunities. Through these strategies they have succeeded at using NTS ideas as templates for institutional change (institutionalisation).

**Problem Framing/Agenda Setting**

Think tank discursive spaces offer a location for the introduction of ideas. Within these spaces, framing determines the format in which ideas are delivered, and agenda setting is the mechanism of delivery. Frames are essential for successful discourse, and employing a persuasive frame can convince audiences of the relevance, coherence and appropriateness of a given course of policy action. Think tanks are more agile and flexible in responding to emerging policy challenges than governmental bureaucracies; because of this, they are often at the forefront of problem identification (framing), agenda setting and policy development. This gives them the opportunity to supply the conceptual language and paradigms for emerging security problems facing Asia. Framing is a form of policy entrepreneurship, and the ability to frame political problems and set agendas comes with significant political power, as these factors control how issues are identified and articulated. Framing in particular is used to provoke desired policy responses based on the representation of an issue. In their advocacy of the NTS agenda, Asian think tanks “…‘frame’ issues to make them comprehensive to target audiences, to attract attention and encourage action, and to ‘fit’ with favourable institutional venues.”

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Framing is the process of creating a ‘perception’ of something that also guides potential policy responses. In essence, frames are the important elements crafting the ‘causal stories’ or problem/solution sets identified by Blyth, Diane Stone, and Deborah Stone as significant in guiding policy formation. According to Entman:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (emphasis in the original).

Frames are discursively constructed, and control of this aspect of “[d]iscourse helps create an opening to policy change by altering actors’ perceptions of the policy problems, policy legacies and ‘fit’, influencing their preferences, and, thereby, enhancing their political institutional capacity to change.” Furthermore,

Discursive frames can help convince political actors and the general public that existing policy legacies are flawed … discursive frames help actors make a case for policy change, and this activity generally involves a public discussion of the meaning and performance of existing policy legacies.

Frames are often deliberately constructed and can be an effective tool in the manipulation of opinion. Frames are about politics, and think tanks have effectively deployed them to push NTS understandings of security. When intentionally constructed as part of a policy agenda, “frames help political actors convince other groups and individuals to form a coalition around a concrete proposal or vision for change.” In this way, think tanks have mobilised awareness of NTS issues, connected political actors through Track II dialogues, and presented the NTS agenda as the best course of action to achieve regional stability.

Frames are especially influential after the majority of a political audience has accepted them. Once a frame has gained a certain level of acceptance, policy actors must engage with the ideas it contains. In this way, frames guide discourse in establishing the bounds

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51 Schmidt and Radaelli, “Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues,” 188.


of an argument; political actors must then operate within these boundaries in order to engage in the discursive process.55

Think tanks use frames, which constitute particular constructions of meanings, to “help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action.”56 By framing information in a certain context, think tanks are able to privilege the desired understanding of an issue.57 Campbell illustrates the power of framing by pointing out that the “concept of economic globalization has been used as a frame to justify shifts towards conservative, neoliberal policies during the 1980s and 1990s.”58 The success of this frame has had global implication for public policy in nations all over the world and led to new forms of local, national and regional governance. Just as frames influence perception and understanding of emerging politics, re-framing has become an undeniable part of policy change.59

The concept of ‘non-traditional security’ is a re-frame of previous understandings of security. It is an intentional move to include non-military and trans-boundary sources of insecurity into mainstream security discourse. As non-traditional security frames have gained political traction, they have cast a harsh light on the limitations of existing regional institutions. Think tanks have employed these frames to justify and instigate changes in Asian security governance. Think tank skill in framing and re-framing is a crucial aspect in promoting NTS ideas and initiating policy and institutional change.

One very important aspect of problem framing is agenda setting. According to Kingdon, agenda setting is the first step of the political process. An agenda is a composition of issues that are of a focused and dominant interest to people in policy-making circles.60 Agendas are fluid, change over time, and vary from one part of the political structure to the other. By defining and articulating a problem, think tanks are able to push certain topics onto political agendas. The second step of the political process is the “specification of alternatives from which a choice is to be made.”61

56 Ibid., p. 614.
58 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy,” 27.
59 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 2-3.
Think tanks aim to get issues on political agendas with the knowledge that, once this has been accomplished, the political process surrounding this item will be guided by the previously mentioned problem frames. According to Diane Stone, framing and agenda setting go hand in hand.

The role of [policy entrepreneurs] rests on a delicate phroenetnic blend of ‘softening-up actors in the political and policy stream through use of personal contacts, networking, media strategies and the creation of powerful policy narratives that simplify technical issues into manageable items of public policy. It is the management of expert discourse rather than research that empowers think tanks in agenda setting.62

Agenda setting and problem framing serve to articulate and define the issues outlined in the policy road maps of the NTS agenda. This includes introducing a topic for debate, redefining a previous topic, drawing attention to new concerns, or articulating new approaches to old policy problems.63 By taking an active role in identifying, defining and promoting the NTS agenda, think tanks have been able to determine what programmatic ideas receive political attention and to guide how policy makers perceive these ideas. Once this has occurred, the next step in altering security governance is embedding these ideas into existing or developing governing structures through institutionalisation. Getting ideas accepted and implemented by political decision makers is difficult in its own right, and this process is further complicated by the size and diversity of the Asian political landscape. Think tanks have responded to increasing regional complexity by developing and institutionalising regional and international networks.64 Think tank networks have become important locations for NTS discourse and as venues for coordinative discourse amongst think tanks and between think tanks and political actors.

Networks

Asian think tanks have forged links between actors at all levels of governance; in doing so, they have multiplied the avenues of access available for political influence.65 These networks form an integral part of formal and informal scales of governance emerging from the contested spaces of Asia. Networks in this context perform both communicative and coordinative discursive functions. According to McGann and the University of Pennsylvania’s Think Tanks and Civil Societies program, think tanks have used globalisation (or, in this case, regionalisation) to their advantage:

62 Stone, “Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks?,” 274.
65 Keck and Sikkink, Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics.
Think tanks act as a sort of advocacy network and use these discursive spaces as platforms in which to “bring in new ideas, norms, and discourses into policy debates, and serve as sources of information and testimony.” In addition to providing policy analysis, think tank networks also “must be understood as political spaces, in which differently situated actors negotiate – formally or informally – the social, cultural, and political meaning of their joint enterprise.” The political spaces provided by networks are immensely useful and serve as locations where think tanks can control aspects of discourse (who says what to whom, how, and in what context) that would usually be beyond their influence. These spaces have become partially institutionalised in the form of Track II dialogues and provide communicative and coordinative functions essential to the promotion of the NTS agenda.

In terms of communicating ideas, these networks allow think tanks to adopt ideas from other locations and then adapt them to local needs. They create “overlapping personal and communications infrastructure for fast and effective transfer of new ideas and policy approaches.” And they often serve as a mechanism through which the government communicates policy moves to the general public. In terms of coordinative discourse, the role of think tank networks is more subtle. The informal nature of networks allows for the creation of discursive space, where challenging political issues can be addressed external to the strict hierarchies and formalities of formal governing processes. The ‘collegial ambience’ provided by these networks extends to the governmental representatives participating in their informal capacities. The environment offered by these network spaces creates a venue for formal and informal negotiations amongst a diverse set of political actors concerning mutual and divergent political goals. Analysing discursive space is essential to understanding think tank promotion of ideas in general and the NTS agenda in particular. The sensitive nature of the NTS agenda has restricted it from discussion in formal spaces; consequently, its main access to political influence is in the informal diplomatic spaces produced by think tank networks.

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67 Keck and Sikkink, Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics: 3.
68 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 633.
71 Keck and Sikkink, Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics.
Think tanks use different types of networks and networking to move ideas across political space. Stone has distinguished three main types of networks utilised by think tanks: those made up solely of research centres and policy institutes, the act of networking itself, and the conceptual category of policy networks.\(^2\) The first type – think tank networks – is composed solely of think tanks and research institutes and excludes other non-state actors. Some networks are focused on a single policy issue (Global Climate Network) others are regionally based (ASEAN-ISIS, NEAT), or a combination of the two (Stockholm Network).\(^3\) Think tank networks share similar organisational structures and ideologies, and are usually organised based upon geographical location or issue area. It is not uncommon for an individual think tank to be a member of more than one network and/or to be involved in both domestic and regional levels of governance.\(^4\)

Think tanks networks in Asia are used to coordinate ideas between think tanks in different countries (coordinative discourse) and then facilitate the movement of these ideas via networks into domestic and regional policy-making spaces (communicative discourse). Networks such as these create alliances between think tanks, where information, ideas and expertise are shared. Alternatively, governments may use networks, such as those provided by think tanks, as a means to collaborate with other governments outside the confines of formal political institutions.\(^5\) For the most part, these institutionalised networks (CSCAP and ASEAN-ISIS) form the basis of analysis, as they are focal points for think tank influence. However, it should be noted that the density of the informal networks associated with individual members exponentially enhances the value of the formal networks.

The act of ‘networking’ itself is also significant in idea transmission, and it occurs both within and across formal network boundaries. Networking, in this sense, comprises the person-to-person relationships cultivated by think tank scholars and directors.\(^6\) These informal networks evolve from the personal, social, political, and professional relationships developed by individuals and are used to move information and resources

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\(^4\) Stone, “Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge.”


\(^6\) Stone, “Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge.”
amongst/between individuals and institutions.\textsuperscript{77} The influence of such networks in the promotion of certain ideas should not be overlooked. It is accepted practice for think tanks to rely heavily on the personal connections of its personnel. Without exception, all think tanks staff interviewed indicated that personal networks were “very” or “extremely important”.\textsuperscript{78} In some instances, the success of specific initiatives, programs or institutes depends upon these connections.\textsuperscript{79} Personal networks are important in disseminating ideas and perform an influential role in the maintenance or acquisition of funding, securing access to political decision makers and policy-making forums, and drawing attention to the research of the individual think tank.\textsuperscript{80} “These personal networks differ from individual to individual and defy generalization. They cross-cut policy domains, academic disciplines, institutions, and national borders. This kind of networking could be said to create “invisible colleges” of policy researchers.”\textsuperscript{81}

The last type of networks is a policy network. Policy networks can range from change-oriented “transnational advocacy coalitions”\textsuperscript{82} to issue-specific and stable “policy communities” or the more elite “epistemic communities.”\textsuperscript{83} The last category, of epistemic communities, is particularly relevant for this thesis as think tank networks clearly align with Haas definition of “networks of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issues area.”\textsuperscript{84} Some, though not all, think tank networks meet the four criteria for identifying epistemic communities, these are 1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for their actions; 2) shared causal beliefs or professional judgements; 3)
common notions of validity based on inter-subjective and internally defined criteria for validating knowledge; 4) a common policy enterprise.\textsuperscript{85} While all the think tank networks examined certainly qualify as being active parts of policy communities, not all of them are participants of epistemic communities. Likewise, an individual think tank network can be party to numerous epistemic communities relevant to individual issues composing the NTS agenda (i.e. climate change, pandemic diseases, terrorism, etc.). All three forms are significant in that they promote policy ideas by connecting actors and resources in pursuit of mutual political goals.\textsuperscript{86} Discursive institutionalism is particularly valuable for analysing ideational-based networks. When the power of ideas to influence institutions is taken into account, these networks have considerable power to shape regional ideas concerning security. Moreover, they deserve special attention, given the prevalence of think tanks in these communities and their ability to reach across state borders.\textsuperscript{87}

The relevance of regional networks continues to expand, as policy makers turn to them for advice in times of uncertainty. It is, thus, unsurprising that think tanks are enjoying access to political decision makers as experts on non-traditional security. Think tanks have taken great care to cultivate reputations of expertise on particular types of policy advice, especially security policy. In turn, regional officials have increasingly turned to think tanks during strategic instability to aid in interpreting existing knowledge and providing policy advice on emerging security issues.\textsuperscript{88}

Networks in all forms are extremely advantageous in the promotion of the non-traditional security agenda. They are also important factors in evaluating the political processes utilised by think tanks to access political structures, transmit ideas, and influence institutions. Think tank are expanding their influence in the governance of security issues but still lack decision-making authority and legitimacy as political actors; however, “[o]bserving their policy network interactions provides insight into the manner think tanks penetrate informal political circles and acquire entrée and access to decision-makers.”\textsuperscript{89} Not only are think tank networks vital in transmitting ideas across political arenas, but they are better able to respond to NTS issues in the increasingly dynamic security environment of Asia.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Stone, “Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge,” 37.
\textsuperscript{88} Cross, \textit{Security Integration in Europe}.
\textsuperscript{89} Stone, “Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge,” 38.
Due to the inclusion and frequent dominance of informal relations, networks are relatively flexible and can adapt comparatively quickly and easily to new actors or demands. While formal institutional linkages require considerable time and resources in order to be established in national law or international regimes, informal relations can be set up instantaneously among actors that have an interest in an exchange or collaboration on a particular security issue.90

Additionally, Keck and Sikkink observe that networks are more able to transverse national boundaries and address problems spanning borders, jurisdictions and governing structures. As such, they are better situated to deal with the trans-boundary characteristics of non-traditional security.91 Krahman agrees and remarks that

[the rise of security governance and networks appears to be connected in that the fragmented governance arrangements facilitates, or perhaps even requires, the adoption of networked forms of coordination among state and non-state actors.92

Think tanks have used their networks for both communicative and coordinative discourse, and used networking to skew the discursive process in favour of NTS interpretations of security. This aids think tank efforts to place NTS ideas on political agendas and tailor the frames under which policy solutions are presented. All of these factors are important in think tank efforts to institutionalise NTS ideas into regional governing structures.

**Institutionalisation**

Capie and Taylor claim that “[t]he gradual institutionalisation of defence diplomacy is becoming an increasingly prominent and potentially important feature of security dialogue in the Asian region.”93 Not only do I agree with this statement, but I argue that think tanks are actively involved in this process. Toward this end, they have used frames, agenda setting and networks to control discourse: ultimately seeking to institutionalise the NTS agenda into emerging and evolving regional security architectures. This outcome is difficult given the contested nature of security and regional resistance to institutionalisation. However, the trans-boundary nature of security is forcing the expansion of regional security institutionalisation, and think tanks have used this opportunity to embed new norms of governance corresponding with the NTS agenda.

Under discursive institutionalism, “[i]nstitutions are understood as the context within which agents think, speak and act, and at the same time as the result of agents’ thoughts,

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words and actions.” In other words, institutions simultaneously restrict the actions taken by political actors; at the same time, those very same institutions are being altered by those actions and choices. Because of their close but informal relationships with governments, think tanks have a distinct advantage when it comes to institutional change in Asia. Close governmental association allows them to act as internal political actors providing policy advice; concurrently, because they are not part of the formal governing structure, they can also act outside political institutions, thereby avoiding many institutional constraints.

Think tanks have numerous entrance points into the policy process, where ideas can successfully influence the construction, maintenance or alteration of an institutional structure. First, in the face of uncertainty resulting from NTS problems, think tanks have provided ideas which define and clarify sources of uncertainty. These frames are then used to define crisis and clarify the political interests at stake. Think tanks have used interest clarification to either reinforce or delegitimise existing institutions. In a location such as Asia, where a great deal of political attention is on NTS issues, regional institutions are facing increased scrutiny regarding their management of these concerns. Institutions that are struggling to cope with these problems are perceived as ‘failing’ to serve the interests of the political stakeholders (in this case, the nations of Asia). Likewise, institutions that ‘successfully’ manage NTS problems are perceived as effective and legitimate and are thus entitled to political support and influence.

Think tanks have redefined interests in such a way as to be a catalyst for institutional change in the region. Institutions failing to successfully cope with NTS issues must either change or be replaced. In these instances, think tanks become more than just policy entrepreneurs, they become governance entrepreneurs. Ideas providing blueprints for ‘ideal’ institutions can act as guides for political action by highlighting institutional aspects requiring change and suggesting the manner in which change is best achieved. Think tank provided ideas then serve as rallying points and coalition-building tools, around which collective action can be mobilised. Additionally, ideas promote future continuity by creating consensus amongst political actors as to what role institutions will fill and how this role will be executed. In this manner, think tanks can encourage exogenous change by criticising existing institutions. Simultaneously, they can encourage endogenous change by making ‘in-house’ suggestions for institutional improvement and efficiency. Think

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94 Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change,” 207.
tanks have engaged in the former by openly questioning the effectiveness of ASEAN and in the latter by submitting suggestions for changes to ASEAN. They highlight the paradox of rigid regional institutions and their inability to accommodate rapidly shifting security agendas. They then present persuasive institutional models for future forms of governance. Think tanks have acted as external actors to wield their criticism and then as internal actors by providing suggestions for change to ASEAN via the Eminent Persons Group (EPG). Many of the proposed suggestions, such as increasing institutional strength and establishing ASEAN as a legal entity, were eventually included in the final draft of the Charter.  

In some cases, if no institution is present or change is not an option, think tank promoted ideas can act as templates for new institutions. For example, globalisation has led many countries to recognise the need for regional or global regulatory bodies. Often, no precedent exists for such institutions or preceding institutions have been deemed dysfunctional to the extent that they need replaced (e.g., the League of Nations). Opportunities such as these are increasingly prevalent and provide valuable opportunities for think tank input, opportunities enhanced by the expanded reach of think tanks due to their involvement in policy networks and epistemic communities.

Finally, once an institution is established, it guides the policy-making process until it is challenged, altered or replaced. Because of this continuity:

Norms [and ideas] that are institutionalised matter in particular because they more easily find expression in law and culture. Institutionalized norms express a world view that influences behaviour not only directly, by setting standards of appropriateness for behavior, but also indirectly, through selective prefabricated links between values that individuals or collectivities habitually rely upon to address specific problems.  

The phenomena described above explains why institutionalised ideas continue influencing policy for decades or even generations and sometimes outlive the circumstance which gave rise to their initial creation. Institutionalisation is, by far, the most permanent and politically contested result of the promotion of the NTS agenda. As such, institutionalisation is a step-by-step cumulative process and is often preceded by the creation of discursive space and use of networking, problem framing and agenda setting to build up necessary political momentum.

97 Acharya, Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order.
99 The previous points have been adapted from Goldstein and Keohane, Ideas and Foreign Policy; Blyth, Great Transformations.
All three of the strategies identified are important parts of discourse. They are ways in which ideas are conveyed between political actors, and represent political processes used by think tanks to move ideas across political space. Analysing these three strategies sheds light on the relatively unexplored world of Asian think tanks, their networks, and their emerging roles in regional security governance.

**In Summary**

Think tanks in Asia are neither fully autonomous nor do they act as informal arms of the government. Instead, they act as bridges spanning the gap between the public and private policy worlds. To fully understand the capability of think tanks and their networks to promote ideas and encourage institutional change, one must be able to see them as both internal and external to the political structures of the region. Discursive institutionalism not only allows for this viewpoint but also identifies it as a necessary aspect of understanding institutional change. Discourse, when performed successfully, is then translated by political actors into political institutions. Charting the NTS agenda from ideas to institutionalisation requires a detailed and in-depth look at the discursive processes. The requirements of a methodology capable of examining multiple and non-comparable variables has led to the selection of process tracing as the most appropriate approach for evaluating think tank discursive influence. Process tracing allows for a nuanced look at the discursive process undertaken by think tanks and allows us to gain a clearer understanding of the contribution think tanks have made to the promotion of the NTS agenda.

**Methodology**

Tracing the movement of ideas is a complex and non-linear process spanning multiple scales of governance and encompassing immense numbers of political actors. Case studies were chosen as the most effective method of controlling the number and scale of actors in a manner conducive to studying discourse in the context of think tanks and non-traditional security. Discrete cases allow for an in-depth analysis of the political processes and mechanisms used by clearly defined sets of think tank actors. Analysis will be qualitative in nature and derive from a collection of primary source data from selected think tanks, interviews with people involved in Track II processes, and secondary academic literature. This information will form the basis for cross-case comparisons and within-case analysis using process tracing methodology. There will be four case studies in total, each one an additional layer to our understanding of think tank promotion of the non-traditional security agenda. The aim of using case studies

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100 Stone, “Recycling Bins, Garbage Cans or Think Tanks?.”
is to develop a comprehensive overview of how think tanks have used their combined political authority to build an interconnected system of informal political space, through which they have successfully promoted and institutionalised the NTS agenda.

**Rationale**

Process tracing, also known as ‘colligation’ or ‘macrocausal analysis’, is a method used to explain how numerous pieces of non-comparable evidence can be linked into a casual chain, thus creating a narrative of events. Particularly useful in examining discourse, this methodology analyses political processes that are often influenced by numerous intervening factors, none of which lend themselves to direct comparison. Concerning this thesis, process tracing shows “how specific actors carried certain ideas into the policy-making fray and used them effectively.” Process tracing offers considerable advantages in the study of think tanks and the NTS agenda by “uncovering traces of a hypothesized causal mechanism within the confines of one or a few cases.”

In this study, the hypothesized causal mechanisms are the discursive processes (enacted through creating discursive space, problem framing/agenda setting, networking and institutionalisation) used to translate ideas into institutional change. As Gerring notes, process tracing provides a variety of evidence of the operation of causal mechanisms, some of which may be more important than others, none of which are directly comparable, and all of which taken together may allow analysts to draw conclusions about the adequacy or inadequacy of an explanation.

This methodology allows researchers to ‘trace’ processes or ideas over time and space in a qualitative narrative format. George and Bennett illustrate process tracing in their book *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* with the example of a researcher who is shown a row of 50 numbered dominoes set upright on a table. The researcher can see only the very first and the very last domino, while the other dominos are concealed. The researcher leaves and returns to find that dominoes one and fifty are now lying down, with their tops pointed in the same direction. The immediate assumption is that one of the dominoes caused the other to fall, but this is not

103 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy,” 29.
necessarily true. For instance, while the researcher was gone, someone may have simply pushed down the dominoes at either end, or perhaps there was an earthquake, or, less dramatically, someone bumped into the table, causing only the two end dominoes to fall, or causing all of them to fall at once.\textsuperscript{106}

Process tracing considers the potential factors that lead to the fall of the dominos and traces the numerous variables which caused them to fall. In this study, the first domino represents think tank promotion of the NTS agenda, and the last domino represents new forms of regional security governance. The dominos in between signify how, or even if, think tanks are using political discourse to transform NTS ideas into institutions and, thus, influencing regional security governance. The only way to understand the process by which the two end dominoes went from standing up to lying down is to interrogate the relative roles of the rest of the dominoes.\textsuperscript{107} This is the aim of the four proceeding cases.

Process tracing is ideally suited to interrogating think tanks endorsement of NTS ideas. Determining what happened to the intervening dominos can be compared to determining the causal process between the actions of think tanks, the promotion of the NTS agenda, and changes in institutional structures in the region. The narrative linking the beginning and the end of this process must answer questions concerning actors, mechanisms of promotion, successful versus unsuccessful actors/ideas/discourse/etc., to discern how think tanks have encouraged new forms of security governance. Using a broad variety of qualitative data, process tracing creates a narrative that encompasses and contextualises all the variables contributing to the observed outcomes and combines all available information to answer the core questions: how have think tanks promoted the non-traditional security agenda in Asia, and what have been the institutional consequences?

\textit{Research Design}

Four case studies were conducted using process tracing to follow the political processes employed by think tanks to promote the non-traditional security agenda. Each focused specifically on the discursive strategies used and sought to discover whether these strategies resulted in institutional change.\textsuperscript{108} Case studies tested the ability of discursive institutionalism as a theory to explain the value of discourse in the transmission of ideas; additionally, they made a heuristic contribution by identifying new or under-theorised causal mechanisms utilised in this way and highlighted them for further study.

\textsuperscript{106} George and Bennett, \textit{Case Studies and Theory Development}.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Acharya, \textit{Whose Ideas Matter}; Ba, \textit{(Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations}.
This study shared the same dependent variables as the studies conducted previously by both Acharya and Ba focusing on institutional change. However, instead of using norms to explain institutional continuity, it has used norms (and other levels of ideas) to explain institutional change (both internally and externally motivated). Just as existing normative ideas have been used to justify current institutions, altering regional norms is being used to justify and encourage institutional change. Think tank control over ideational change at this level has given them the potential to exercise considerable control over the future shape of security governance in the region. The scale of this analysis focuses specifically on think tank networks as the main drivers of normative change, making it more restricted in scope than that of Acharya and Ba. Accordingly, the independent variables of this study were discursive space and the main strategies of discourse (problem framing/agenda setting, networks and institutionalisation) used within that space.

Justification of Case Studies

The analytical sample was composed of think tanks and think tank networks which produced NTS research, participated in Track 2 dialogues, and operated at multiple levels of governance (domestic and regional). The sample size was small, given the comparatively recent emergence of think tanks and their networks in the region, and the restrictive political environment in which they originate. Fortunately, a small sample size means that this study was able to provide a comprehensive look at all major think tank networks and regional dialogues that address security issues. Cases were comparative, as well as cumulative, in nature and the information gained from each case contributes to a larger picture of the NTS discourse, institutional change and security governance.

The four case studies selected were:

- The ASEAN-Institutes for Strategic and International Studies (AI). AI was the first think tank network established in Southeast Asia and is closely affiliated with ASEAN. Though it was not initially designed to focus on security, it has become an important location for the discussion of security policy in the region. AI has been particularly effective in making itself part of the policy and governing process and encouraging the institutionalisation of ASEAN as a governing body.

- The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). CSCAP was established alongside the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and maintains
an affiliation with this organisation. The network has expanded the reach of
think tank analysis across the Asia-Pacific and has increasingly turned its
attention to non-traditional security issues. It has actively pushed for greater
institutionalisation of regional security structures and sought to embed itself in
regional institutions.

- The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and its affiliated Track
II process, the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD). The Shangri-La Dialogue was
the first security dialogue, formal or informal, for Defence Ministers in Asia.
Since its initiation in 2002, it has become a centrepiece of regional security
governance. It has direct access to security and defence policy makers and has
been active in the promotion of non-traditional security issues.

- The MacArthur Asia Security Initiative (ASI). The ASI is the most recent
network to emerge and the most expansive – encompassing 27 think tanks
across the Asia-Pacific. It was established to provide security analysis on
security threats facing the Asian region and has been responsible for an
influx of research and expertise geared specifically at NTS issues and their
governance implications.

Sources of Data for Illustrative Cases

Each case study was composed of information gathered from primary and secondary
published sources, author observations of Track I dialogues, and author-conducted semi-
structured interviews.

Documentary evidence comprised a large part of the evidence used. Primary sources
were composed of publications issued from institutes, networks and governmental
bodies. The utility of each source was evaluated following standard social research
methods. Each document was scrutinised on four criteria: authenticity (genuine and of
unquestionable origin), credibility (free from error and distortion), representativeness
(typicality of the evidence contained), and meaning (clear and comprehensible). The
most relevant and valuable documents were those published by the think tanks in the
form of policy briefs, memoranda, research papers, etc. Documents originating from
international governmental and non-governmental organisations working with these
processes were similarly important, as they offered first-hand accounts of participants
and processes. Secondary sources included scholarly articles and books on think tanks,

109 Scott as referenced in Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods, 2nd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford
Track II dialogues, policy transfer, policy analysis, regional politics, norms, and the influence of ideas on political processes, etc.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The purpose of the interviews was to gather firsthand knowledge of think tank and Track II processes to supplement primary and secondary sources of information. Interviews were sought with researchers within each organisation who held positions of relative authority or influence. This was to ensure that the interviewee had a strong knowledge of the decision-making process within the organisation and an equally firm understanding of the organisation’s goals and motivations. While interviews with senior members of organisations were most critical, interviews were also sought from researchers directly involved with projects relating to non-traditional security. Researchers focusing on NTS programmes were more likely to be up-to-date on developments in the agenda and to have insight into the discursive processes used to convey NTS ideas. A total of fourteen formal interviews were conducted.

Each semi-structured interview consisted of a series of open-ended questions regarding the following topics:

- The organisation’s political goals and how these goals were pursued
- The relationship between the organisation and domestic/regional governing processes
- NTS ideas promoted
- Organisational involvement in Track II processes
- Strategies and mechanisms used in this promotion (framing/agenda setting/networks/institutionalisation)
- Institutional outcomes, as perceived by the interviewee

**Author Observations**

In addition to interviewing members of think tanks and Track II participants, research included observation of several dialogues to document the discursive processes at these gatherings. Information was gathered about the attendees, agenda, candour of the dialogue, and the interaction between Track I and Track II representatives. Numerous informal conversations were, held where participants gave unedited
opinions of the value of the dialogues and the promotion of the NTS agenda. Valuable observations into the undocumented aspects of Track II dialogues were made and are included in each case study.

Limitations

Illustrative cases provide insight into how ideas are constructed, promoted and conveyed by Track II processes. However, they do suffer from some limitations. Track II dialogues and the discourse regarding non-traditional security is conducted mostly at an informal level. It is, therefore, likely that some parts of the policy processes involved in the promotion of the NTS agenda are undocumented and must be left implicit. This gap in documentation has been mitigated to the best possible extent by interview material focusing on the undocumented aspects of Track II process and personal observation of these processes.

There were also limitations regarding the use of primary documents and semi-structured interviews. Primary documents obtained directly from think tanks provide only one side of the discursive process. Sources from think tanks reveal what ideas are conveyed and how, but cannot provide any information on how these ideas are received, interpreted or used by other parties involved in the exchange. Attempts to interview governmental actors and policy makers were largely unsuccessful, for reasons discussed below. Additionally, documents were likely biased in favour of the political goals of the institution and over-estimated the political influence of think tanks on the policy-making process. To address this bias, every attempt was made to seek out governmental accounts of the same or similar processes in order to connect governmental action to think tank ideational input.

Several limitations with interviews must also be noted. First, much like official documents, interviewees had a vested interest in making their organisation appear as influential as possible. Second, some interviewees may have been hesitant to make candid comments, possibly because they wished to portray their organisation in the most favourable way or from fear that such comments would have negative consequences upon their position or organisation. Third, practical issues concerning time, resources and access resulted in the inability to interview large numbers of researchers or researchers from every organisation involved in a specific process.\(^\text{110}\)

\(^{110}\) Smith discusses in detail limitations when conducting interviews in restricted political environments, such as those found in Asia. Smith, “Examining Ideas Emperically: The Political Discourse of Globalisation in Ireland.”
Every attempt was made to interview as widely as possible within the time frame allotted and the resources available. Interviews were conducted at several locations and across multiple institutions. Interviewees included think tanks directors, researchers and scholars at various levels, Track II participants, and academics familiar with Track II processes. Fourth, there are social constraints to conducting interviews in Asian countries. It was occasionally difficult to gain interviews without an introduction to, or personal connection with, each potential interview subject. Interviewees were also often hesitant to share personal experiences unless they had been previously acquainted with the researcher.\footnote{See Chow as cited in Richard Common, “Public Management and Policy Transfer in Southeast Asia” (Developed from the author’s thesis, D Phil, Ashgate, University of York., 2001), 40.} For the above reasons, it was not possible to interview policy-makers, despite several attempts. In an effort to discern the perceptions and opinions of regional policy makers’ toward think tanks, additional efforts were made to obtain primary accounts from policy makers in the form of speeches, interviews and government documents.

**Conclusion**

Each case study is aimed at revealing how specific think tanks and think tank networks engage in the discursive process. Process tracing is an appropriate methodology to trace the security narrative portrayed by the causal stories advanced by think tank networks in Asia. It is adeptly suited to collecting the disparate variables of creating discursive space, agenda setting/problem framing, networking and institutionalisation, to form a coherent whole of the complex political processes employed by think tank networks in pursuit of a new security paradigm.

Fortuitous historical and political circumstances have given regional think tanks privileged positions in terms of discursive power. Through each case study, this thesis uses discursive institutionalism to take a new look at how discourse is being used by think tanks to gain political influence. As a theory, DI is particularly well suited to the study of think tanks given their high dependence on discourse and their capability to engage in discursive processes. Additionally, their creation of designated discursive spaces has allowed them to develop new ideas for existing and emerging formal institutions, as well as serve as pseudo-institutions in the absence of formal alternatives. Consequently, they have become new and under-scrutinised spaces for the development and implementation of regional security governance in Asia.
Chapter 4

Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Institutes of Strategic and International Studies

“ASEAN-ISIS was an innovation spurring new institutions of regional governance via informal diplomacy”¹

Introduction

Since its establishment, the Association of Southeast Asia Nations – Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (AI) has been the leader of Track II diplomatic process in Southeast Asia and the larger Asian region.² Composed of think tanks from ASEAN countries, it is a loosely organised regional network running alongside the formal meetings and operations of ASEAN. Despite its modest political persona and ‘behind the scenes’ approach, the network has been an integral component in promoting the non-traditional security agenda in Asia.

AI was the first think tank network to strategically construct political space linking formal and informal politics, and it has served as the organisational template for many subsequent networks. In Asia, the vast majority of emerging Track II networks (including the three examined later in this thesis) have sought to emulate the creation of such desirable political space. AI’s unique discursive space has subsequently become an entrenched part of regional policy dynamics, and the network itself has been intrinsic to the development of both Track I and Track II processes in the region. It has provided timely policy advice, political spaces for innovation, and fostered a policy community informed by NTS ideas. It has served as the testing ground for both indigenous and imported ideas and allowed its members to tailor policy innovations to fit regional circumstances in a “kind of creative adaptation” geared towards facilitating ideational exchange.³ Almost from the outset, AI has pushed for new forms of security governance and played a recognised and active role in fostering new governing institutions in the region.⁴

⁴ Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”
AI evolved organically as the fruit of personal relationships between individuals from several ASEAN countries. Many of these individuals were leaders of national think tanks and it was “only normal that they formed the core of this emerging ASEAN network of scholars on security issues and international relations.” The nascent structures of AI originated in 1974, when the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) – Jakarta hosted a regional conference focusing on the development of ASEAN. Numerous other meetings followed, and during a series of ASEAN-US conferences, the idea of an ASEAN-focused network of policy researchers was introduced. Jusuf Wanandi from CSIS took up this idea and organised the first official meeting in 1984; AI was formally established in 1988.6

Initially, the network included four think tanks: the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia; the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia; the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, Singapore; and the Institute of Security and International Studies based at the Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. It also included one individual, Carolina Hernandez, who was the Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of the Philippines System.7 Informally, the network also included two think tanks from Singapore, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) and the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (later renamed the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies).8

AI has expanded alongside ASEAN. Vietnam’s Institute for International Relations (now the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam) was admitted in 1995. April 1997 saw the acceptance of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP). Laos joined in 1999 with the admittance of the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) and the ninth, and most recent, member of AI is the Brunei Darussalam Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (BDIPSS), which joined in 2001. Myanmar is currently the only member of ASEAN without a representative in ASEAN-ISIS.

The close relationships that AI think tanks have with their respective governments has been an important factor in the network’s ability to promote NTS ideas. Though AI is registered with ASEAN as a non-governmental organisation, the distinction between many AI institutes and their respective governments is so opaque that it is hard to distinguish.9 Think tanks in AI run the gamut from having clear governmental links to being almost entirely autonomous. Both the Institute of International Relations in Hanoi

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7 Soesastro, Joewono, and Hernandez, “Twenty Two Years of ASEAN ISIS.”
8 Aguilar, “Track 2 Diplomacy and the ASEAN Peace.”
9 Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”
and the participating institute from Laos are part of their respective states’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For other think tanks, governmental influence is subtler. For instance, many of the staff of ISIS Malaysia are governmental employees and the Executive Director is, ostensibly, a political appointee. Conversely, some institutes have equally high degrees of autonomy. Both the ISDS in the Philippines and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs are separated from the government in matters of staff and operations. Furthermore, relationships between think tanks and governments change and evolve over time. The CSIS in Jakarta was originally founded by the government and enjoyed a great deal of discursive influence on policy. However, a perceived dispute between the head of the CSIS and Indonesian President Suharto resulted in the CSIS falling out of favour (and influence). Consequently, CSIS took this opportunity to recast itself as an independent think tank free from governmental involvement.

Structurally, AI adheres to ASEAN norms and, “[w]hile it has a small and informal secretariat, it is built upon personal relations rather than hard rules or complex structures.” The network has been variously described as a ‘club’, policy network, or policy community. According to Kao Kim Hourn,

> ASEAN-ISIS was set up with the clear purpose in mind to structure programs to fill gaps and complement each other, rather than compete with one another in the region… The idea was to ensure that ASEAN-ISIS as a group of premier think tanks in the region was talking to other groups or institutions in other countries and regions.

This does not mean that AI think tanks are in agreement on all issues, but that they have the opportunity to engage in both coordinative and communicative discourse. In essence, “[c]onsensual knowledge is less the starting point than its preferred destination via the path of discussion and socialization.” In this space, disparate ideas can be coordinated and, once agreed upon, mobilised using each member think tank’s network connections.

The undeniably “complex and symbiotic relationships between the national and transnational, the unofficial and official, and Track I and Track 2 processes” must be taken into account when analysing Track II dialogues in Southeast Asia. Supplementing the formal linkages amongst AI members are the informal and ‘unofficial’ networks existing between think tanks and governments. These networks are more difficult to

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10 ASEAN-ISIS Participant #1, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011 confirmed in Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics.”
11 Track II Participant #1, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
12 Track II Participant #2, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
14 Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics,” 99.
15 Soesastro, Joewono, and Hernandez, “Twenty Two Years of ASEAN ISIS,” 1.
17 Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics,” 100.
characterise as they are based on the personal relationships of individual scholars with their respective governments.\textsuperscript{19} Often, close relationships between AI think tanks and their governments are cast in a negative light because of their potential for undermining autonomy.\textsuperscript{20} However, from a discursive point of view, these connections are valuable pathways through which NTS policy ideas can reach decision makers.

Personal connections in particular are important because AI does not have any formal channels connecting it to ASEAN. Lack of institutional structure has led AI to rely heavily on the informal connections between individuals to transmit most of its policy ideas. The network itself has a weak internal structure; members have no financial requirement to the network and are under no compulsion to contribute or participate.\textsuperscript{21} This weakness is compounded by the fact that not all AI think tanks are created equal and there is an understood hierarchy within the network. Some AI think tanks, generally the newer members of the network (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand), have limited ability to contribute in terms of funds or research capacity.\textsuperscript{22}

“Like the states that comprise ASEAN, the component units of AI vary dramatically in their composition, size, capacity, resources, political and social context, as well as their domestic and regional impact.”\textsuperscript{23}

Further complicating matters, the network is unbalanced in terms of individual think tank capacity. Despite active efforts at inclusiveness, several AI think tanks are, in all practicality, inactive or only marginally active at the regional level. This power disparity hampers AI efforts at exerting a united front to ASEAN and in fostering cooperative discourse amongst think tanks or communicative discourse between the think tanks and Track I actors. Often, the more powerful think tanks produce policy on behalf of the network and then present this policy to ASEAN as the result of collaborative efforts. Interestingly, the power distribution amongst AI think tanks is similar to that of ASEAN, with the original members of AI wielding more power than the members joining later.

Despite the structural limitations confronting AI, it has been credited as pioneering ‘Track II’ before the idea of Track II was ‘cool’.\textsuperscript{24} Over the last several decades, the network has played a significant role in establishing a flourishing Track II community in the region.

\textsuperscript{19} Dr. Tang Siew Mun, Director Foreign Policy & Security Studies, Institute of Strategic and International Studies – Malaysia, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 4 December, 2011. Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”

\textsuperscript{20} Kraft, “The Autonomy Dilemma of Track Two Diplomacy in Southeast Asia.”

\textsuperscript{21} Dr. Tang Siew Mun, Director Foreign Policy & Security Studies, Institute of Strategic and International Studies – Malaysia, interview by Author, 4 December, 2011.

\textsuperscript{22} Chap Sotharit, “Challenges and Prospects of ASEAN ISIS: Perspective from a Newer Member,” in \textit{Twenty Two Years of ASEAN ISIS: Origin, Evolution and Challenges of Track Two Diplomacy}, ed. Hadi Soesastro, Clara Joewono, and Carolina G. Hernandez (Jakarta: Published for ASEAN ISIS by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2006).

\textsuperscript{23} Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics,” 100.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
This community has become the centre of NTS promotion and has been intrinsic in providing the expertise informing the NTS agenda. Moreover, it has become a dominant venue through which NTS ideas are transmitted into ASEAN governing processes.

*AI as a Political Actor*

AI was established with two main goals. The first was to provide timely and relevant policy advice regarding matters of international relations. The second was to aid in regional coordination and cooperation – mostly through the auspices of ASEAN.\(^{25}\)

Shortly after its founding, members had to determine what kind of relationship they wanted with ASEAN. They opted for formal affiliation, though the nature of this affiliation required some debate.\(^{26}\)

Two different perspectives on the overall purpose of ASEAN ISIS soon surfaced. Some took the perspective that ASEAN ISIS was established for more philosophical or idealistic reasons. They contend that the establishment of ASEAN ISIS was the only approach to pull resources together in ASEAN among scholars and within the think tanks that were outside of the government framework in order to promote regional cooperation. On the other hand, others argued that ASEAN ISIS was actually created for more practical reasons. According to this rationale, there were few individuals engaging in regional studies and research, and it was important to maximize the availability of such scholars and thinkers in the region. They also needed a broad agenda as well as technical expertise for ASEAN.\(^{27}\)

The resulting relationship between AI and ASEAN reflects a compromise of these two perspectives. AI has the unique ability to operate both inside/outside of the state and act as a formal/informal political actor depending on political context. AI’s formal function is to provide state actors with policy advice in return for political access. According to Hadi Soesastro, AI has an ‘almost institutionalised’ relationship with ASEAN and enjoys reliable access to decision makers. For example, prior to the annual ASEAN Ministers Meeting (AMM), AI representatives meet with the ASEAN Senior Officials (SOMs) to share information gathered over the last year and make suggestions as to what should be addressed in the AMM.\(^{28}\)

While working in this ‘formal’ capacity, AI is subject to diplomatic norms imposed on governmental actors.

Simultaneously, AI has an ‘informal’ persona outside of state structures, where it engages in research beyond the boundaries of what state bureaucracies are willing to tolerate. In this capacity, it is not subject to the limitations of the ASEAN-way and can range widely in its search for innovative policy advice. Here, it can delve into sensitive and challenging security topics and trial ideas that would not be tolerated in formal


\(^{26}\) Hourn, *Whispering in the Ears of Power*.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 12-13.

\(^{28}\) Hadi Soesastro as interviewed in ibid., 21.
venues. Additionally, the informal nature of these interactions allows AI members to liaise with a diversity of actors both inside and outside the region.

AI’s ability to work both internally and externally to the system has made it an especially effective discursive actor and enhanced its ability to promote NTS ideas. Its agility in switching between types of discourse and levels of formality make the network flexible and better able to react to quickly developing security problems (usually NTS issues). Furthermore, the network can swiftly transition policy ideas garnered from one type of discourse (coordinative) and rapidly shift them into formal policy processes using another (communicative). It can take the NTS ideas it has cultivated in its ‘informal’ position and transfer these ideas to formal processes via its ‘formal’ persona. This allows the network to get ideas that would not otherwise have access into formal policy arenas. To facilitate the transition between coordinative/communicative and formal/informal processes, the network has cultivated political spaces in the form of meetings, conferences and informal networks.

Collectively, the South East Asian think tanks created a transnational network to sustain a governance space for regional cooperation. Thus, the network and its component organizations create, synthesize, legitimate, and disseminate useful knowledge [and have] played a significant role in the emerging regional governance system.  

AI’s ability to engage in discourse at both formal and informal levels has allowed it to exercise some degree of control over the types of ideas entering into regional security discussions. AI’s primary contribution to the NTS agenda has been the maintenance of this political space. In this space, the network has introduced, adapted, and conveyed NTS ideas to political decision makers in a manner favourable to their acceptance into the decision-making processes.

A unique combination of historical circumstances and social preferences has led to AI acquiring political authority in Asia. Even though ASEAN was initially established to deal with security concerns, many security matters were considered so contentious that a security mandate was left out of the 1967 Bangkok Declaration establishing the forum.  

ASEAN was still a nascent structure when it was confronted with strategic uncertainty caused by the United States’ withdrawal from Vietnam and the political upheaval in Indonesia in the 1970s.  

Because the only regional framework available to deal with transnational issues was ASEAN, and the forum had formally precluded itself from participating in security discussions, the sole alternative governing option available was the discursive space provided by AI. As a result, AI forums became locations for security governance, albeit only with informal status. The AI’s unique political situation was further reinforced by the fact that

31 Ibid.
The governments in the ASEAN countries were not capable of dealing with the increasing complexity of international relations due to limited research and policy analysis abilities. Thus, financial and human resource constraints in ASEAN countries expanded the roles of Track 2 actors.\textsuperscript{32} Lack of governmental capacity helped AI become the \textit{de facto} forum for transnational security issues. Via its provision of governing space, “ASEAN-ISIS[AI] has played an intellectual leadership role in ASEAN security issues”\textsuperscript{33} and the network’s main contribution to the management of regional order and security challenges has been in the form of ideas.\textsuperscript{34} The network used its claim to expertise, personal and institutional reputations, and proximity to state agencies as leverage to embed itself into formal security processes. It increasingly became viewed as a legitimate political player by using its expertise and resources to provide security policy in lieu of other governance options.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, it is evident that AI promotes the NTS agenda; however, it is less clear how such a disparate group of actors is capable of mobilising an agenda as complex as the NTS agenda across multiple hierarchies and scales of political space.\textsuperscript{35} Ideas alone do not lead to institutional change, they must instead be mobilised through political agents. AI has been one such agent, and discursive institutionalism provides a valuable insight into how the network has transmitted NTS ideas to political decision makers. The most important aspect of DI, and what renders it integral to the analysis of informal political actors, is its emphasis on \textit{context}, as well as content. Context includes the institutional environment where discourse is introduced, by whom, and in what way.\textsuperscript{36} In other words, it accounts for external factors when analysing the transmission and acceptance of ideas. The more control a political agent has over the context of idea promotion, the more effective that agent is in communicating ideas. Thus, DI can be used to explain how AI’s control of discursive space has been a valuable political tool that the network has used to privilege NTS ideas over others.

\textit{AI and Discursive Space}

The role of AI as a political actor and its ability to instigate institutional change are contingent upon its construction of political space outside of the structural and normative constraints of the ASEAN-way. AI has established discursive space at the confluence of formal and informal processes. These spaces are malleable locations for discussion that exist within and among the AI network. Throughout AI’s history,

\textsuperscript{32} Aguilar, “Track 2 Diplomacy and the ASEAN Peace,” 43
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{35} Hameiri and Jones, “Non-Traditional Security and New Modes of Security Governance in Southeast Asia.”
\textsuperscript{36} Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse.”
discursive spaces have been “forums where new social realities were constructed, debated and interpreted as individuals came into contact and interacted.” 37 Many of these spaces have become permanent forums as part of AI’s annual dialogues and meetings. Providing and managing this space for the creation and introduction of ideas gives AI power over what ideas are presented, how they are framed, who they are communicated to, and by whom; all important aspects of discourse as identified by proponents of discursive institutionalism. AI forums have been vital to the promotion of NTS ideas. They are the sole locations where think tanks can link the political connections and legitimacy of their formal personas with the challenging and innovative policy research derived in their informal capacities.

The dual nature of AI discursive space is evident in the tenor of AI meetings. AI Track II processes are not separate from Track I in any distinct manner; instead, they function as conduits of access for Track II ideas to Track I actors. Many of these Track I participants attend meetings in their ‘unofficial’ roles and then transition to their formal capacities to “provide policy recommendations to their respective governments.” 38 The dual identities of participants serve to highlight the artificial boundary between Track I and Track II. At the same time, they explain, in part, how Track II processes have so effectively responded to the policy needs of Track I and conveyed ideas across the ‘boundary’ between formal and informal processes.

Though it is less restrictive than formal processes, AI discursive space is not without its limitations. During one particular meeting, a Track I participant clarified that he did not have the luxury of academic freedom and, despite the informal nature of this meeting, there was no such thing as ‘unofficial capacity.’ 39 This statement reveals that the ‘informal’ and ‘unofficial’ nature of AI meetings do not release all participants from their obligations to maintain the government line. One researcher opined that, especially concerning states with less than democratic governments, ‘there are limits to autonomy’ for certain think tanks. 40 These limits may apply to what certain researchers can say, but they do not prevent them from listening to the ideas presented by other researchers from more liberal research environments. The neutral nature of these discussions encourages attendance from think tanks and officials across the political spectrum. Even if participants in AI meetings cannot directly engage with sensitive content, discussions can still acclimatise them to policy approaches and ‘radical ideas’ they would not have previously entertained. 41 The socialisation component of AI discursive space is important and one that should not be overlooked. As mentioned earlier, certain AI

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38 Katsumata, “The Role of ASEAN-ISIS in Developing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region,” 95.
39 Author observation of ASEAN-ISIS organised meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 4-6 December 2011.
40 Track II Participant #1, interviewed by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
41 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
institutes are, for all intents and purposes, extensions of governmental bureaucracies. Even if these institutes cannot participate in discussions, they are exposed to the ideas presented and their presence offers a direct link between NTS ideas and governmental policy makers. Repeated exposure to certain ideas can serve to acclimatise actors to certain security interpretations, giving them time to grow accustomed to and investigate potential policy changes. Over time, ideas may come to persuade recalcitrant states to alter their policy or, short of endorsing change, at least tolerating it.

AI tolerance for challenging issues is why its forums, along with other Track II process, are deeply immersed in the NTS debate. Within this forum, the NTS agenda has evolved over time from “regional engagement and commitment” to “tackling the wide array of human security and development issues.” This has included addressing the redesignation of some non-military problems as security and reconciling the implications of this redesignation on the diplomatic and institutional norms of the region. AI’s desire to provide timely and relevant policy advice has led it to recognise the importance of managing NTS issues. This has, in turn, prompted AI to promote the other ideas in the NTS agenda: acknowledgement of the trans-boundary nature of security, abandonment of the ASEAN-way, promotion of collective and cooperative ideas of security and, ultimately, strengthening of regional security architectures.

As part of the transition from traditional to non-traditional understandings of security, “[t]rack two activities have been instrumental in the emergence of common understandings of security in the region (a shared discourse) … It is the forum where non-traditional perspectives in security can be introduced.” Because of this, AI and Track II have “been credited with effecting changes in official perspective on broad security issues.” AI has actively identified many non-traditional issues as security threats. For example, “in 1994, the Asia Pacific Roundtable [an AI organised dialogue] had a panel on non-traditional security issues and a plenary session on human rights.”

AI has reliably identified NTS issues as security in the majority of its dialogues. An inevitable consequence of doing so is an acknowledgement of the trans-boundary nature of these issues and “[t]he presentation of NTS issues as “transnational” is itself insisting on governing them outside of national frameworks.”

For example, during an AI organised meeting in 2011, nuclear power was the focus of discussion and the conversation came to focus on the potential trans-boundary problems that come with the use of nuclear energy as a power source. Participants astutely argued

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42 Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics.”
43 Soesastro, Joewono, and Hernandez, “Twenty Two Years of ASEAN ISIS,” 2.
44 Ibid.
45 Kraft, “The Autonomy Dilemma of Track Two Diplomacy in Southeast Asia,” 347.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 348.
that ‘No individual state can argue that this is a sovereign issue’ and that it was an issue imminently suited for discussion in a regional fashion.\textsuperscript{49}

Paul Evans comments that AI challenges ASEAN diplomatic norms both in the ideas it promotes and the actions it takes.

\begin{quote}
AI departs from ASEAN practice. It has consistently operated on the edge of ASEAN rules and norms, especially in abandoning the concept of consensus as unanimity, using a “coalition of the willing” rather than a “lowest common denominator” approach to advocacy, accepting two-tier leadership and participation as the rule rather than the exception, advancing ideas including human rights and democracy that do not sit easily with official policies or ideologies of all member states, and refusing to be bound by a simple non-interference principle. A striking feature of some of the member institutes, especially in Indonesia, Thailand [and] the Philippines, is the willingness to discuss domestic problems openly and honestly, not only tolerating but encouraging outside comment.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

All of these aspects diverge from previous ASEAN norms. The construction of discursive space, and the nature of this space, is what has allowed AI’s successful promotion of the NTS agenda. Only from within its own sheltered forums, could AI have as effectively promoted the more challenging NTS ideas like the gradual move away from ASEAN diplomatic norms. Given AI’s status as part of the governing structure of Asia, it is not unreasonable to foresee a dispersion of the ‘new’ norms to other parts of the policy-making process. AI meetings often serve as spaces where topics considered off-limits in Track I discussions are openly aired and debated. This includes such topics as human rights violations, the potential for democratic reform, and criticisms of existing regional security mechanisms.\textsuperscript{51} While not in overt opposition to the ASEAN way, AI circumvents traditional diplomatic norms by promoting an ‘autonomous’ dialogue encouraging frank discourse and addressing sensitive issues.

While AI endorses forthcoming discourse, it has been hesitant to engage in direct confrontation or criticism – likely because most AI think tanks are closely affiliated with their home governments and dependent upon positive relationships for access to power. AI has also bluntly rejected some ideas that go too far against the ASEAN-way, even though they are in line with its overarching political platform. For instance, AI has promoted cooperative security, but was vocal in its rejection of the Asia Pacific Community (APC). The idea was not rejected due to its content, but because of the way in which the idea was proposed (without consultation or consensus), as well as the origins of the idea (then-Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd). The idea for the APC was seen as being ‘imposed’ from an outside source and, because it had not previously been presented or discussed by all involved parties (and, thus, went against the ASEAN-way’s preference for consensus and consultation), it was rejected with

\textsuperscript{49} Author observation taken at “The Fourth ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Dialogue”, 4-6 December 2011, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

\textsuperscript{50} Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics,” 100-01.

\textsuperscript{51} Author observation at ASEAN-ISIS meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 4-5 December 2011.
little consideration. ASEAN countries later concluded that the concept of an APC was sound – the proposal had simply been rejected due to Australia’s failure to adhere to diplomatic norms. The APC quietly disappeared and was subsequently replaced by an indigenously proposed security discourse, the East-Asia Summit (EAS). The EAS has gone on to assume many of the roles proposed for the Asia Pacific Community. Though the APC and the EAS are based on the same foundational ideas, it was the discursive environment under which they were introduced that determined their eventual acceptance and institutionalisation. Their drastically different success supports discursive institutionalisms’ claims that how an idea is conveyed is of equal importance to the content of the idea.

The value of discursive institutionalism for analysing think tank networks is in its capacity to accommodate the power of ideational actors. AI has done more than connect ideas to institutions. It has strategically selected, presented and promoted a specific ideational agenda. Its ability to control ideas, and its role as the bridge between knowledge and power, has made AI an essential and powerful component in the discursive process.

AI and the Non-Traditional Security Agenda

The discursive space cultivated by AI has become an important and influential location for the promotion of the non-traditional security agenda, and the network has pushed this agenda in a variety of ways. According to Diane Stone, AI has effectively influenced governing processes by performing three important tasks. The first task, which has already been addressed, is AI’s ability to innovate new ideas. I argue that they have done so and, that AI discursive space has been essential to the promotion and acceptance of the NTS agenda. In terms of NTS issues, AI discursive space has hosted NTS ideas too controversial for more formal processes and devoted valuable resources and expertise to their development. Second, think tanks broadcast ideas to other political actors via agenda setting and problem framing. This serves to get ideas onto political agendas, shape the debate surrounding them, and mainstream them into contemporary security discussions. Third, AI transmits these ideas through their formal or informal networking. Networks are an extremely important component of AI success and how the network actively pushes ideas into political processes. For instance, the network’s expansive array of formal and informal connections has been key to its success in getting NTS ideas embedded into regional governing structures and institutions.

52 Dr. Tang Siew Mun, Director Foreign Policy & Security Studies, Institute of Strategic and International Studies – Malaysia, interview by Author, 4 December, 2011.
I argue that the creation of discursive space is a vital part of broadcasting ideas and disseminating them into new political arenas. First, AI broadcasts ideas through its ability to frame problems and set agendas. AI control of Track II forums permits it to shape the frames under which ideas are presented and to set the agendas for discussion. The choice of how to frame policies is influential in determining the perception of issues, perceived appropriate responses, and the acceptance of policies by political elites. Using these tools, AI think tanks have presented many emerging issues, and re-cast enduring issues, in the framework of non-traditional security. Likewise, proposed policy responses have been framed according to NTS ideas and woven into the causal stories promoted by think tanks. Solutions derived from NTS ideas are framed in terms of strengthening regional institutions, contain ideas in opposition to the ASEAN-way, and include aspects of collective and cooperative security without an emphasis on consensus. Framing solutions in this way has long-term influence on policy responses and institutional developments. The network has then used its control of Track II forums to proactively place these ‘problem sets’ on regional agendas.

The power of framing goes beyond contemporary issues and sets the tone for the perception of future concerns. Forecasting ‘new’ security issues gives AI the advantage of controlling security discourse from the outset, from defining the problem, to articulating an appropriate solution. The Asia Pacific Roundtable (APR) and other AI forums are rife with diagnostic titles, such as ‘emerging security issues’ and ‘evolving security’, and these forums are used to identify and label what is considered security. This forward thinking discourse outlines discursive boundaries for ideas (and, thus, policies) prior to their transmission to Track I. For example, AI organised panel on Security and the Maritime Commons and framed the issue as one of coordinating navel cooperation. The panel did not focus on if regional navies would cooperate, but on how they would cooperate. Framing the panel in this way forced participants to work under the assumption that cooperation was a given and to accept this premise if they wished to participate in the discussion. Alternatively, frames can also keep certain issues out of security discourses. For instance, the APR agenda identified the Wikileaks scandal as a diplomatic threat, not a security one. Consequently, the discussions concerning Wikileaks focused on intelligence exchanges and not on security implications. AI’s ability to frame debates in this way influences how ideas are interpreted and pushes discussion towards actions in line with the NTS agenda.

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AI has been very strategic in its use of framing regarding NTS ideas. For instance, the agenda of the 2012 Asia Pacific Roundtable intentionally included sessions on water scarcity and trans-boundary migration. Doing so framed and presented these NTS issues as legitimate security concerns alongside traditional concerns. Labelling these issues as ‘security’ was a political move to garner attention from regional governing bodies and push these issues onto regional agendas. Once on the agenda of ASEAN, NTS problems and accompanying solutions then become the focus of political attention, regardless of their inherent challenges to the norms of regional diplomacy.

Not all AI think tanks have the opportunity to use framing as a strategy. Control over the frames under which ideas are presented is most often restricted to the most affluent (and, usually, the most active) network members. The majority of meetings held by AI are on an ad hoc basis, and the think tank initiating and organising the gathering controls the frames and agenda. The organising think tank(s) have a formidable amount of control over the discursive process. They control the content, as well as the context, of the meeting, including what Track I or non-AI affiliated participants are invited.

Fortunately for proponents of the non-traditional security agenda, the think tanks with the capacity and initiative to organise meetings also tend to be the most progressive. The forward-looking institutes of ISIS – Malaysia and CSIS – Indonesia often serve as the base for many annual AI meetings. SIIA in Singapore and the ISDS in the Philippines also have strong delegations at AI meetings. All four of these think tanks are agenda setters by Southeast Asian standards and have a history of promoting the NTS agenda. These powerful think tanks operate as hubs, inter-linking the various networks affiliated with individual AI institutes. Importantly, the remaining think tanks in AI (which are historically the more conservative and government-run) still attend gatherings and are exposed to these progressive ideas. Also, because these think tanks generally have less research capacity, they are likely to adopt the problem frames provided by their better-equipped peers.

The frames presented in AI forums are reinforced to domestic governments through the research conducted by individual AI think tanks. Governmental ties provide numerous opportunities for network think tanks to frame ideas for the domestic political and policy market. CSIS-Indonesia and ISIS-Malaysia have used such links to influence domestic policy. For example, in preparation for Indonesia’s turn at the helm of ASEAN, CSIS produced a memo endorsing the concept of an ‘ASEAN community’. This concept was later adopted by the Government of Indonesia as the theme of its tenure as ASEAN Chair. CSIS’s affiliation with the Indonesian Foreign Minister’s Office means that it is occasionally asked to contribute to speeches for the Foreign Minister. It has used this opportunity to publicly frame issues and give them legitimacy. In a similar manner, one staff member of ISIS-Malaysia stated that the

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55 Track II Participant #2, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
56 Track II Participant #2, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
institute was often asked to contribute to speeches for the Prime Minister – especially concerning foreign policy.57 Public declarations by political officials are powerful modes of problem framing and idea transmission. Such acts are springboards for ideas and can help them make their way into the public sphere and become part of public debate.58

Problem framing and agenda setting are an important first step in introducing NTS ideas into security discussions. Discursive space controlled by AI has made getting NTS ideas into mainstream security discourse much easier by providing a locale favourable to ideas outside of ASEAN norms. Once presented, frames can be used to persuade other political actors of the flaws in existing policy trajectories and of the prudence of pursuing other policy options. AI frames issues to adhere to the NTS agenda and then introduces them by placing them on the agendas of Track II policy discussions. From here, think tanks use discourse (coordinative and cooperative) to convince participants and political decision makers of the sagacity of the NTS agenda. After the NTS agenda has been introduced into these forums, it is carried across political space to other locations and actors via a dense collection of formal and informal networks.

Networking

AI networking consists of both coordinative and cooperative discourse. AI provides a framework for think tanks in the network to exchange research and information. It has coordinated the NTS agenda amongst AI members and actively uses network links to encourage “intensified communication among members of the Association.”59 This is a valuable tool when think tanks in the network have varying levels of research capability or autonomy. Think tanks with progressive or active research agendas can transmit policy advice to those not able or allowed to produce it themselves. This division of labour allows AI to maintain expertise in a wide variety of topics far beyond the means of any one individual think tank. Additionally, receiving think tanks can then adapt information to local standards and attempt to introduce it into the policy process.60

Even when think tanks maintain the government position on certain topics (for example, ISIS Malaysia and SIIA-Singapore regarding human rights), they do not prevent other, more outspoken, think tanks (ISDS-Philippines) from bringing up the topic for debate. Overall, AI offers a beneficial ideational and policy feedback loop where networks bring in information or political influence. In a like manner, Track I participants can go to AI meetings and seek out information and policy advice on vexing problems. According to one participant, Track I wants to be exposed to new ideas and recognises that it lacks the capacity to research all potential situations.61 AI coordinates all of these activities in

57 Track II Participant #1, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
60 Acharya, Whose Ideas Matter?
61 Track II Participant #2, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
a discursive location tolerant of dissenting opinions, lacking normative constraints, and
providing a convenient hub for networking processes.

In addition to its coordinative networking amongst institutes, AI also cultivates external
communicative networks via ongoing bi-lateral and multilateral meetings with other
think tanks, specifically in the US, Japan, Australia and South Korea.62 This has extended
the AI network beyond the boundaries of Southeast Asia and has provided the precedent
for other think tank networks, such as CSCAP. The network has partnered with the
ASEAN Economic Forum (AEF) and has also expanded its interactions with civil society
(Track III) organisations.63 Trans-regional connections serve to disseminate information
and amplify influence across the region. The amplification effect is not to be dismissed.
NTS ideas are more persuasive if they are promoted from several directions and multiple
actors and, much like other types of norms, the more think tanks push the NTS agenda
the sooner NTS issues will reach the ‘tipping point’ towards normative change.64

AI displays many of the traits of an epistemic community, which have helped the
network cultivate new norms. AI fits several of Haas’ descriptors of an epistemic
community.65 Indeed, the network is the very definition of a group of experts sharing
valid claims to authority in their areas of expertise. It shares principled beliefs
based upon support for ASEAN and regional cooperation through the provision of
knowledge, expertise, and ideas. These core values are expressed in the network’s
common policy enterprise of strengthening of ASEAN and enhancing regional
cooperation and stability. However, despite the fact that members share the basic
goal of increasing security cooperation it is not a true epistemic community. The
network is too diverse in membership and ideology to argue that it shares notions of
validity or causal beliefs. This is not to say that AI does not have discrete epistemic
communities within the network, or that some network members are not part of
external epistemic communities. For instance, each of AI’s three flagship activities,
the Asia Pacific Roundtable for Confidence Building and Conflict Resolution, the
ASEAN-ISIS Colloquium on Human Rights, and the ASEAN People’s Assembly are
all more epistemic-like when considered as individual entities. These three activities
gather specific individuals from the networks that would share causal beliefs and
professional judgements and are more likely to share common notions of validity. The
epistemic-like characteristics of AI have helped the networks promote policy ideas
from multiple venues through its claims to expertise.

63 Ibid; Caballero-Anthony, Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way.
64 For a more complete analysis of the norm lifecycle and the ability of non-governmental actors to
influence this cycle see Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. “Transnational Advocacy Networks in
65 Peter M. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,”
In addition to functioning as an epistemic community, achieving normative change also requires localising ideas for acceptance into domestic and regional political markets.\(^{66}\) This is where the value of networks and discursive space intersect. Networks gather ideas and policy advice from across the region and deposit it in AI discursive spaces; in these spaces, ideas can be adapted or ‘localised’ to conform with local norms and preferences. In essence, localisation is a form of re-framing ideas to fit indigenous political contexts. Once re-framed, the ideas are transmitted in their new form to policy makers.\(^{67}\) The indigenous nature of AI think tanks means they have the knowledge and cultural understanding to adapt ideas to local political conditions. They are also able to take ideas and present them as ‘local’ solutions, even if particular ideas have been adapted from external agents.\(^{68}\) AI think tanks can either localise ideas to the regional level and then transmit them to ASEAN, or tailor ideas to the state level and convey them to domestic audiences. In this manner, AI “has played a special role in filtering and adapting for ASEAN purposes the concepts and approaches developed in other parts of the worlds such as comprehensive and cooperative security.”\(^{69}\)

AI’s ability to adapt NTS ideas to local contexts has greatly aided the acceptance of NTS ideas into regional policy forums. Localised ideas have served as the basis of many regional governing institutions, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). As theorists of discursive institutionalism point out, it is not only the idea being transmitted, but by whom and how, that is important to successful discourse.\(^{70}\) The idea for something like the ARF was not new, but all prior proposals for similar dialogues were dismissed by ASEAN. The main reasons for rejections were because ideas were not sensitive to regional norms (called for too much institutionalisation), or they were perceived as being imposed upon the region by Western powers.\(^{71}\) In essence, they were not ‘localised’ enough to regional sensibilities to garner acceptance. The most recent example of this was the Asia Pacific Community mentioned earlier.

What made AI’s approach different was that the network was able to adapt the concept of a cooperative security organisation to local circumstances and make it acceptable to political decision makers. AI framed the idea to take advantage of regional norms and the current political climate by presenting regional cooperation as being in the interests of regional actors. It then produced a memorandum endorsing an ASEAN-Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) devoted to security issues that further “contribution to “a growing mood” in favour of an expanded security role for ASEAN.”\(^{72}\)

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66 Acharya, *Whose Ideas Matter?*


68 Acharya, *Whose Ideas Matter?*

69 Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics,” 102.

70 Schmidt, “Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously.”

71 Morada, “The ASEAN Regional Forum: Origins and Evolution.”

72 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 174.
then proposed the ARF as the logical solution to strategic uncertainty. It was under this ‘frame’ that the idea of the ARF gained political salience.

Eventually, this frame became so ubiquitous that ASEAN was compelled into action because the number and persistence of proposal for a regional security dialogue sent a very clear message to ASEAN: Not only was there a strong consensus and momentum for an expanded regional security dialogue … but ASEAN was now facing growing competition from rival frameworks.73

In 1992, ASEAN held a meeting in Singapore that was the first step towards the ARF. A declaration produced during this meeting conspicuously mentioned several informal ASEAN-sanctioned dialogues that provided the basis for the ARF (the Manila and Bangkok Seminars and two South China Sea Workshops).74 The contribution of AI in establishing the ARF was formally acknowledged by ASEAN in the Joint Communique of the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in 1993.75

**Institutionalisation**

The unrestrained and innovative nature of AI discursive spaces has evolved over time into an important part of regional governance. Particularly, because sensitive security problems requiring deliberation have been forced into these areas due to the diplomatic constraints of Track I discourses. Such an arrangement has proven beneficial to both Track I and Track II alike. Track II participants can actively engage in the policy-making process and Track I gets the benefit of open discursive spaces, the expertise provided by Track II, and the opportunity to experiment with new ideas. Regarding Track I participants at these forums, it has been observed that, “on many issues at least some of the [Track I] participants were articulating positions and trying out solutions that went well beyond the patterns of thinking in their own country or official policy positions.”76 These participants can trial ideas in the safety of Track II space and then transition them into Track I forums where they can receive political credit.77 The value of this discursive space is that it is neither distinctly Track II nor Track I. Instead, it exists where the actors, ideas and interests of Track I and Track II meet.

Over time, AI discursive space has been recognised as being valuable in several ways. Primarily, it is more open to ideas than Track I and is, thus, the preferred location to trial, transmit and cultivate new/sensitive ideas.78 Ideas introduced here can be discussed and altered to make them more palatable to regional structures and government officials. In addition to ideas, in this space government officials can suggest

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73 Ibid., 175.
74 Ibid.
75 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, “Joint Communique of the Twenty-Sixth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting,” (Singapore23-24 July 1993).
76 Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics,” 104.
77 Track II Participant #1, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
78 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 118.
topics for think tank research and think tanks can offer policy advice. In essence, this space is a quasi-institutionalised location, where ideas can be exchanged amongst and between government officials, think tank actors, academics, civil society actors, and other interested parties. Second, it provides a location for informal diplomacy between Track I actors. At AI meetings, officials can meet and discuss security issues outside of the formality and expectations of official ASEAN dialogues.

The establishment of the ARF is the most well-known instance of AI influence on institutional change, but it is not the only example. AI has used its political authority and discursive space to foment institutional change across the region. Diane Stone has observed that “[t]he body of policy related research conducted by think tanks from the ASEAN states, combined with their policy entrepreneurship, [has] contributed to wider political understanding about the possible benefits of regional cooperation.” Rülund agreed and commented that “the ASEAN-ISIS track two dialogue must be credited for keeping the region’s emerging security dilemma manageable. ASEAN-ISIS has successfully lobbied Southeast Asia and other governments in the Asia-Pacific to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) which may be regarded as a Southeast Asian Magna Charta for the peaceful settlement of disputes.”

Changing the ‘ideas’ of security and redefining state interests has successfully altered the security outlook of the region. AI has expanded the definition of security to include trans-boundary and non-military issues. In doing so, it has successfully highlighted the need for better governance and demonstrated to states that it is within their interests to approach security governance from a collective viewpoint. Moreover, AI has constructed causal stories that draw upon NTS ideas to guide the formation or transformation of regional institutions. Part of this process has undermined current understandings of security and the regional norms legitimising contemporary institutions. The resulting fluctuation in interests and expectations had contributed to a general atmosphere favourable to normative (and, thus, institutional) change.

In addition to circumventing the ASEAN-way in its own activities, AI has actively questioned the usefulness of ASEAN diplomatic norms in formal interactions. A meeting amongst the Heads of AI in 1998 focused primarily on emerging NTS issues. An unsurprising outcome of this discussion was increased scrutiny of the ASEAN norm of non-interference. While the report from this meeting acknowledged the importance of the non-interference principle it did so with some reservations. Specifically, it encouraged ASEAN to use the concept of ‘enhanced cooperation’ in instances where a country’s domestic situation presented a security risk for the region as a whole.

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81 Hourn, Whispering in the Ears of Power.
Another conclusion of the meeting was that, “in order for ASEAN to maintain its relevance and credibility it must address the economic crisis, environmental degradation, transnational crime, illegal immigration, democratization and human rights issues, as well as other non-traditional security challenges.” This conclusion is one example of a wider belief on the part of AI think tanks that ASEAN must adopt an NTS-guided agenda in order to remain relevant and to effectively address security.

Recently, criticisms of ASEAN norms have increased, with some ASEAN scholars arguing that

ASEAN itself must change. The “ASEAN way” could no more solve many issues in the future because everything is changing so quickly due to globalization ... Here the absoluteness of sovereignty a la Westphalia has become less relevant, while intervention in another country’s domestic affairs may be called upon more often.

AI has used causal stories to frame norm alteration as the only way to manage NTS issues. It has linked the ASEAN-way with ineffective security governance and articulated that ASEAN must abandon these norms if it hopes to effectively manage the region’s emerging security problems. ASEAN must accept the new norms implicit in the NTS agenda and apply these norms to how it deals with security. AI has portrayed normative changes as essential, if ASEAN wants to remain politically influential.

AI’s push for a stronger ASEAN is a product of its region-wide promotion of stronger regional institutions. AI think tanks have clearly linked the trans-boundary nature of NTS issues with the necessity for stronger regional institutions. The concept of a regional security dialogue had been around for quite some time, and AI had actively promoted the idea since the 1980s. In 1991, AI held a meeting where the idea for the ARF was formally outlined in a memorandum. It encouraged ASEAN governments to take on a collection of initiatives, including the creation of a new regional order in Southeast Asia and the strengthening of ASEAN. Network members subsequently submitted a copy to their respective governments for consideration.

The value of AI discursive space and its dual formal/informal nature were demonstrated during the creation of the ARF. An ‘unofficial’ attendee at the AI meeting was Japanese Ambassador Yukio Satoh, who found the idea compelling enough to pass it on to the Japanese Foreign Minister. In turn, the Foreign Minister made an official proposal to

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82 Ibid., 57-58.
84 Katsumata, “The Role of ASEAN-ISIS in Developing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region.”
85 Ibid.
the ASEAN Post Ministerial Meeting in 1991. Unsurprisingly, the Japanese proposal was very similar to the proposal put forward by AI and “it became clear that both ASEAN-ISIS and the Japanese had developed, in tandem, a number of similar security conceptions.” Official Japanese backing put the idea of the ARF onto regional agendas and gave it political traction. The Singapore government, which was also sympathetic to the contents of the memorandum, used it as the basis for discussing new initiatives for ASEAN at the 4th ASEAN Summit held in 1992.

Katsumata argues that AI contributed to the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) through the promotion of the following ideas: common or cooperative security thinking, inter-governmental forum for multilateral security dialogue, and the continuation of the ASEAN-way. It is in situations such as these that the importance of governmental relationships became clear, as Katsumata explains: “ASEAN-ISIS is not an ordinary NGO in that its member institutions have informal but strong links with their governments. Hence, the ASEAN-ISIS agenda for security cooperation achieved a smooth transmission to the respective governments.” Katsumata’s claims are supported by an analysis conducted by Hernandez. Hernandez compares the first six memorandums submitted to ASEAN by AI on policy outcomes and found a distinct correlation between the memorandums and the eventual decisions made by ASEAN. She also concludes that the original concept paper for the ARF was heavily influenced by AI input. ASEAN Foreign Ministers also acknowledged the important role played by AI, commending the network on promoting the ideas that enhanced security cooperation leading to the establishment of the ARF. Furthermore, as a network, AI pushed for an expansion of the scope of the ARF to include officials from other areas outside of the defence and foreign affairs.

After the ARF was established, AI continued to push for deeper and stronger regional institutions. In 2003, CSIS scholar Rizal Sukma submitted a paper titled ‘The Future of ASEAN: Towards a Security Community’ to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry. It should be noted that CSIS maintains a good working relationship with the Indonesian government, which also happens to be the de facto leader of ASEAN. In this paper,

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86 Wanandi, “ASEAN ISIS and its Regional and International Networking.” There are conflicting dates for the proposal put forward by Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama. Wanandi (2006) gives a date of 1992, while Ba (2009) and Caballero-Anthony (2005) give a date of 1991. The discrepancy is likely because of the dual proposals being put forward by AI and Japan. For the sake of clarification, AI proposals were delivered to the AMM in July of 1991 and to the 4th ASEAN Summit in January 1992. Katsumata, “The Role of ASEAN-ISIS in Developing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region.”
88 Katsumata, “The Role of ASEAN-ISIS in Developing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region.”
89 Ibid., 103.
90 Hourn, Whispering in the Ears of Power.
he proposed that ASEAN aim to become a Security Community by 2020. The main tenants of Sukma’s paper coincide with the programmatic NTS ideas of moving away from the ASEAN-way and of stronger regional security governance. The paper recommended a relaxation of ASEAN’s non-interference principle and a transition from consensus-based decision-making to an ‘ASEAN minus x’ option. According to Tan, a diluted version of this proposal was adapted in 2003 for the ASEAN Security Community (later to become the ASEAN Political-Security Community in 2007). Most importantly, some of the ideas introduced by Sukma were later institutionalised in the ASEAN Charter in the form of a consensus minus x provision (albeit a weak one) and the existence of a formalised dispute resolution mechanism to encouraging compliance.

Similar to its input concerning the establishment of the ARF, AI used its formidable discursive ability to embed NTS ideas into the ASEAN Charter. AI was a dominant voice promoting a Charter, which constituted the most definitive step towards strengthening ASEAN and giving it a legal personality. While the Charter was being considered, the network contributed suggestions at the special invitation of the ASEAN-SOM. Part of AI’s response was the production of the “ASEAN-ISIS Memorandum No.1 2006 on the ASEAN Charter.” The memorandum, at the behest of the heads of AI, departed from ASEAN norms to include a human rights mechanism and a focus on civil society.

They agreed that while it is important to recognise ASEAN’s norms and principles and past achievements in the Charter, there have to be new elements particularly, new ideas and institutions to strengthen ASEAN.

The memorandum was, in essence, a full-length template of a Charter for ASEAN based on NTS ideas. AI submitted this memorandum to the ASEAN Foreign Minister’ meeting in Bali, April 2006. At the same time, AI corresponded with members of the Eminent Persons Group appointed to consult with civil society and provide recommendations for the ASEAN Charter. Ultimately, many of the ideas presented in AI memoranda made the jump to the official ASEAN Charter, though often in a very watered-down form.

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94 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
Despite the comparatively weak institutionalisation called for in the Charter, there are notable correlations between AI recommendations and proposed regional mechanisms. In some instances, the mechanisms proposed by the document appear to be closely based on informal mechanisms already being operated by AI. For instance, the ASEAN ISIS Colloquium on Human Rights (AICOHR) is remarkably similar to the human rights commission proposed in the Charter. There are three AI forums in particular which appear to have influenced the ASEAN Charter: the Asia Pacific Roundtable (APR), ASEAN ISIS Colloquium on Human Rights (AICOHR), and the ASEAN People’s Assembly (APA). These three ‘flagships’ are heavily based upon NTS ideas and it is telling that they have been co-opted, in whole or in part, by ASEAN. Each process provides a good example of how ideas and institutions are ‘tested’ in the more forgiving Track II waters prior to immersion in Track I processes. They also provide an important link between informal activities and formal outcomes.

ASEAN has had considerable time to grow accustomed to some of these processes. The first APR in January 1987 brought stakeholders in the region together in an attempt to promote discussion and dialogue, reduce tensions, and build confidence. The Asia Pacific Roundtable is the oldest AI conference and is devoted primarily to security issues. To date, it is the largest and most inclusive Track II meeting in the Asia-Pacific, involving about 300 participants from more than two dozen countries. The APR has served as an important location where new ideas are introduced and new proposals regarding enhanced security cooperation are presented.

The Heads of AI are responsible of collectively deciding on the program for the APR, including the agenda, the topics and the role players. They have used the APR as a venue to openly address NTS issues and legitimise them as ‘real’ security concerns. It has portrayed non-military issues, such as natural disasters, economic stability, and gender as falling into the security realm. It has also emphasised the transnational nature of many security, issues such as infectious disease, transnational crime, piracy, and human security. Toward this end “[t]he agenda is broad and deep, and new as well as old, non-traditional and traditional security issues are discussed over three full days.” The APR’s stance on regional governance is clear, as evidenced by the programme of the Roundtable held in May, 2012. The first Plenary Session emphasised how the proliferation of security regimes in the region has still not managed to reduce

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101 Sukma, “ASEAN ISIS and Political-Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific.”

102 Hassan, “Asia-Pacific Roundtable: An ASEAN ISIS Initiative to Build Trust and Confidence.”

103 Wanandi, “ASEAN ISIS and its Regional and International Networking.”

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tensions and strategic misperceptions. The Fifth Plenary Session was more to the point and directly questioned whether the region was ready to “embrace a “higher” form of security governance beyond conference-diplomacy and confidence-building measures.”

The sessions not preoccupied with the future of security governance were mostly reserved for the distinctly trans-boundary and NTS issues of ‘Security the Sea Lines of Communication’, ‘Managing Illicit Transnational Migration in Asia’, and ‘The Role of Non-State Actors in Promoting Conflict Resolution’.104

An often-overlooked aspect of the APR is its function as a mechanism of socialisation for political actors with vested interests in Asia. The Roundtable in 2012 attracted notable presenters, such as the current Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak and the former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Also in attendance were current and former members of the ASEAN Secretariat, Ambassadors, representatives from NATO, governmental representatives, and the heads of most think tanks in AI and several from the region.105 The APR has consistently reinforced NTS ideas by demonstrating that discussions of security issues at the regional level are beneficial, and it has contributed to developing a habit of cooperation amongst regional actors.106 Socialisation of this kind likely aided in the eventual acceptance of Track I actors to more formalised regional security bodies like the ASEAN Regional Forum.

In another first for regional cooperation, AI established AICOHR in 1993 with the goal of seeking consensus and promoting confidence building on the sensitive issue of human rights. As one NGO participant noted, prior to the creation of AICOHR, there was really no place for such discussions.107 AICOHR openly challenges ASEAN diplomatic norms by focusing on human rights, a topic considered too sensitive for formal dialogues and a threat to the non-interference principal of the ASEAN-way. It was established specifically to create a discursive space “where differences in understanding of and approaches to human rights within the regional could be discussed without recriminations.”108 In this endeavour, AI has been successful, and it has institutionalised a space where ASEAN diplomatic norms do not hold sway and human rights are the focus of debate. According to AI participant Herman Joseph S. Kraft, AICOHR has contributed to regional governance by introducing and acclimating challenging ideas to ASEAN. This “has resulted in ASEAN now routinely acknowledging the importance

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”
109 Ibid., 86.
of human rights – a situation that was not normal when AICOHR was established.”

The forum has managed to maintain its forward momentum and has been rewarded for its efforts by the inclusion of a Human Rights Commission in the ASEAN Charter, institutionalising the responsibility to protect human rights at the Track I level.

The ASEAN People’s Assembly (APA) was the last flagship established in 2000 and the product of the AI Report of the Eighth Southeast Asian Forum submitted to the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting in 1998. The report noted that ASEAN lacked the structural capability to deal with emerging security issues and identified a greater engagement with civil society organisations and NGOs in the region as the best solution. The APA’s main goal is to facilitate the engagement between ASEAN and civil society organisations (sometimes known as Track III) in the region, and it had the support of ASEAN. In fact, in 1995, it was the Foreign Minister of Thailand (through ISIS Thailand) who asked AI to develop a framework for a “congress of ASEAN peoples.” However, AI’s vision of a peoples’ group was different than the vision held by ASEAN. ASEAN desired a regional intra-parliamentary union, while AI was pushing for a larger and more diverse people’s assembly containing representatives from all sectors of ASEAN society. AI was able to persuade ASEAN to broaden its vision of the APA to something more in line with the network’s views (and, incidentally, more in line with the NTS agenda).

The APA embodies several programmatic NTS ideas, and it persevered with these ideas even when they hampered its establishment. The APA redefines security to include NTS issues and expands the referent of security to include individuals as well as states. Even though ASEAN officials endorsed the ideas of APA, the Assembly’s challenge to many ASEAN norms resulted in its inability to secure funding from the ASEAN Foundation. Caballero-Anthony notes that “[t]he fact that the application was denied twice could also be seen as indicative of the reservations that some ASEAN officials actually had about the launching of APA.” Fortunately, AI’s dual identities (i.e., being able to act both inside and outside of the state) allowed it to turn from internal to external sources of funding, and support was secured from outside the region. The politically sensitive nature of APA was again highlighted when the first Assembly, scheduled to coincide with the Fourth ASEAN Summit Meeting, could not be held in Singapore due to political reasons.

Despite its difficult start, launch of the APA

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110 Ibid., 87.
111 Mely Caballero-Anthony, “ASEAN ISIS and the ASEAN Peoples’ Assembly (APA): Paving a Multi-Track Approach in Regional Community Building,” in Twenty Two Years of ASEAN ISIS: Origin, Evolution and Challenges of Track Two Diplomacy, ed. Hadi Soesastro, Clara Joewono, and Carolina G. Hernandez (Jakarta: Published for ASEAN-ISIS by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), 63.
112 Ibid., 56-64.
113 Ibid., 65.
114 Ibid.
demonstrated that engagement between all three tracks was possible. The APA has gone on to lead coordinative discourse between CSO and NGOs in the region, and has served as a platform for communicative discourse between Track I and Track III. Hernandez observes that “[t]he ASEAN Peoples Assembly (APA) is recognised in the VAP [Vietiane Action Programme] as one of the regional mechanisms for the promotion of people-to-people contacts, particularly to ASEAN community building.”

Each of these informal processes promotes the NTS agenda in its own way. “[T]hrough the policy process of ‘informal diplomacy’ that became institutionalised, ideational policy entrepreneurs had access to government, business and other political elites and their decision-making forums.” Furthermore, they are/or were, in essence, ‘trial runs’ of potentially institutionalised processes. They arguably demonstrate a direct, though delayed, link between institutionalised processes initiated in Track II later policy outcome at the Track I level.

Conclusion

For the last three decades, AI has served as the main Track II organisation associated with ASEAN. AI has grown from a collection of personal relationships to a network of think tanks dedicated to providing timely and relevant policy analysis. As part of this process, AI has created unique discursive spaces at the nexus of policy and practice. These spaces exist in AI organised meetings, conferences, workshops, and within formal and informal AI networks. Because these forums are free of ASEAN diplomatic constraints, it has fallen to AI to address security topics considered too sensitive for formal processes. Unsurprisingly, this has led AI to become the focal point for the promotion of the NTS agenda.

AI has been sensitive to the changing strategic dynamics of the region and has recognised the importance of acknowledging, labelling, and managing NTS issues; almost since its inception, AI has identified non-military issues as security threats. Furthermore, AI has identified the changes, both structural and ideological, which must be made in order to manage emerging sources of insecurity. The network has then undertaken the complex and often politically unpopular course of moving away from ASEAN diplomatic norms and promoting the structural changes, both at the Track I and Track II levels, deemed necessary to manage NTS issues and maintain political relevance.

AI has actively used its control of discursive space to promote the NTS agenda by assertively introducing, framing and disseminating ideas using its dense web of networks. In doing so, it has succeeded in mainstreaming non-military issues as legitimate security threats and has effectively portrayed the necessity of stronger regional governing institutions. AI effectively promoted the ideas of multilateral

confidence building measures in the 1980s, the establishment of CSCAP and the ARF in the 1990s, and is currently promoting the ideas of human rights, human security and an ASEAN Community.\textsuperscript{117} The network’s efforts have resulted in institutional change, the source of which rests on the promotion of specific NTS ideas by the AI network. I am in agreement with Diane Stone in that “[s]ome claims are made about the influence of ASEAN-ISIS albeit with the caveat that impact is variable, while often intangible and is time and context contingent. Nevertheless, ASEAN-ISIS was an innovation spurring new institutions of regional governance via informal diplomacy.”\textsuperscript{118}

The success of AI, especially in comparison to that enjoyed (or not) by the other three networks studied, is interesting for two reasons. First, the comparison between each case study reveals the importance of both internal factors, as well as external factors, on how each think tank network operates. AI think tanks often enjoy close relationships with their domestic governments and facilitated access to regional processes denied to those working outside the system. At the same time, AI operates within governing processes and must adapt itself to the accompanying norms. Second, AI is an excellent place to start in the examination of how think tanks, operating within governing processes, are able to influence discourse. It provides interesting insight into how each case study promotes different aspects of the NTS agenda in different ways. The next case study focuses on the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). This expands the breadth of analysis to encompass both the entire Asia Pacific region and the regional governing institution of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). It will be interesting to see how the expanded scope of CSCAP, coupled with the addition of other regional actors and interests, influences the success of CSCAP in institutionalising the NTS agenda.

\textsuperscript{117} Evans, “Track Two Leadership with Southeast Asian Characteristics.”

\textsuperscript{118} Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network,” 3.
Chapter 5

Expanding Beyond ASEAN – Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific

“If the ARF constituted the leading ‘Track One’ security forum for the region, the non-official Council for Security Cooperation (CSCAP) – led by academics and think-tank analysts – was the main ‘Track Two’ institution.”

Introduction

The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) is a region-wide think tank network affiliated with the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Building upon the network established by the ASEAN – Institutes of Strategic and International Affairs (AI), CSCAP is composed of 21 think tanks and expands Track II processes beyond Southeast Asia into the greater Asia-Pacific region. CSCAP’s primary function has been to inform and drive the ARF agenda through innovative research, policy analysis, and the provision of discursive space. As the Asia-Pacific struggles with strategic uncertainty, CSCAP has used its security expertise to interpret, inform, and guide the policy processes of the ARF. In doing so, it has asserted itself as a formidable political force in the region and used its influence to impose the NTS agenda as the primary organising paradigm through which to interpret security. The network has been very proactive in establishing discursive spaces that bring together policy makers and experts to discuss salient NTS topics. Through the establishment of national-level member committees and intensive networking at the regional level, CSCAP has developed multi-layered discursive spaces suitable for disseminating ideas horizontally and vertically to the most appropriate political actors. Its ability to move ideas across and between scales and hierarchies of politics has established it as part of a pervasive epistemic community endorsing the institutionalisation of the NTS agenda into regional governing processes.

One of the key features of CSCAP has been its ability to institutionalise both itself and NTS ideas into ARF policy-making processes. These ideas have begun to act as templates for institutional change, as the ARF seeks to adapt to emerging sources


2 Carolina G. Hernandez and Ralph A. Cossa, “CSCAP and the Continuing Search for its Track Two Identity,” in 2011: CSCAP Regional Security Outlook, ed. Brian L. Job and Erin Williams (CSCAP Canada, the Center of International Relations (CIR), University of British Columbia for CSCAP, 2011), 57.
of insecurity. The ARF’s struggle with emerging sources of security has provided ample opportunities for CSCAP to offer policy ideas to guide ARF action, and some of the network’s recommendations have informed the ARF’s approaches to security governance and institutional development. As this chapter will demonstrate, the ARF’s slow and hesitant attempts at transformation, coupled with its lack of capacity, have often pushed security deliberations and authority into CSCAP forums; this is reminiscent of the same shift in authority that occurred from ASEAN to the AI, discussed in the previous chapter. For some NTS topics, CSCAP has become a proxy governing space that has subsequently used its legitimacy in this role to actively shape regional security governance.

This chapter commences with a brief background of CSCAP and starts by evaluating the close historical relationship between CSCAP and AI. AI was essential to the formation of CSCAP and the majority of AI think tanks are also members of CSCAP. As a result, the networks share many similarities; however, over time, these shared characteristics have dwindled, as each network has gone on to assume a different role in regional security architectures. This has allowed each network to adapt an independent approach to promoting NTS issues to their respective Track I processes, while also allowing both networks to engage with either ASEAN or the ARF. It is important to acknowledge the shared characteristics between AI and CSCAP, while making clear distinctions between the two networks in terms of scope, audience and institutionalisation.

The main part of this chapter is divided into three individual sections and follows the progression of CSCAP from political actor to governing authority. The first section establishes CSCAP as politically influential at both regional and domestic levels. This section highlights interesting characteristics of CSCAP’s development (such as its maturing relationship with the ARF and its active self-institutionalisation). It re-evaluates CSCAP’s relationship with the ARF in light of the network’s discursive influence and focuses on CSCAP members’ abilities to work both internally and externally to the ARF as agents of political change. CSCAP’s outsider or ‘Track II’ status permits it to address policy issues considered too controversial for the ARF. Simultaneously, its concurrent ‘insider’ relationship with the ARF allows it to easily mainstream issues into formal processes after Track I actors have accepted the political salience of certain ideas.

The second section unpacks CSCAP’s creation of discursive space. As a result of its size, the network has an extensive policy reach and a multitude of venues for the discussion of controversial and sensitive topics. Using its discursive spaces, it plays an essential role in promoting NTS ideas and codifying policy promotion across the region through coordinative discourse. Like AI, CSCAP has used problem framing and agenda setting as important methods to shape regional approaches to security and to get security ideas onto regional agendas. It has also used its expansive network to disseminate ideas across the region and contribute to the larger epistemic security community in Asia.
CSCAP’s discursive space allows it to act as an interface between the region’s larger epistemic security community and the distinct political processes of the ARF. In this capacity, CSCAP is able to draw on ideas produced elsewhere, adapt them to local conditions, and then distribute them for use in targeted political contexts.

The third section focuses on CSCAP’s success institutionalising NTS ideas into governing processes. CSCAP has advocated normative change by undermining the ASEAN-way of diplomacy and replacing it with new norms based on the NTS agenda. CSCAP has effectively used discourse to encourage institutional transformation by expanding security agendas, incorporating non-traditional security ideas into mainstream security discourse, and promoting the institutionalisation of regional security structures (formal and informal). To conclude, the chapter recognises CSCAP as an important regional actor that has used its discursive spaces to navigate ideas between Track I and Track II. Its brokerage of ideas between formal and informal processes has effectively aided in altering the security paradigms informing the ARF’s approach to regional security governance and has subsequently helped lead to gradual institutional change.

CSCAP and AI

Track II processes encompassing the Asia-Pacific actually began several decades prior to the establishment of CSCAP and helped pave the way for the network’s establishment. In the 1970s and 80s, greater economic development and interconnectedness saw the development of the Pacific Asia Free Trade and Development Conference (PAFTAD) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC). These NGOs established a habit of cooperation among participants, fostered a sense of community, and devoted their expertise to developing and disseminating ideas to their associated Track I counterparts. As locations “for official but “unofficial” dialogue … [these] NGOs have contributed to greater official inter-action and enhanced mutual confidence”, developed habits of cooperation, and were a convincing example that regional cooperation was possible. The PECC and PAFTAD dialogues became the precursors to more formal modes of cooperation, and each provided “a sound “building block” for supporting cooperative arrangements at the governmental level itself.”

The success of the PECC and the PAFTAD, combined with the uncertainty regarding the post-Cold War security order and the rise of China, provided the impetus to create a formal security-focused organisation. For several years prior to the establishment

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4 Ibid.
of the ARF, Track II institutions (meaning AI) worked with Track I to “produce important points of consensus as to the basic requirements of security and what an ASEAN response might look like.” AI, in cooperation with numerous officials and academics, identified the lack of regional security governance as the main hindrance to dealing with strategic uncertainty. The outcome of this was the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum, which was designed to specifically deal with security issues in the Asia-Pacific.

At the time of the ARF’s establishment, there was a regional consensus that Track II processes (and their accompanying discursive spaces) were a necessary co-requisite for any new Track I forum. CSCAP had actually been established a year prior to the ARF; thus, it was both expedient and logical to designate CSCAP as the Forum’s Track II component. Explicitly, CSCAP’s formal role was to provide timely and relevant policy analysis. Implicitly, CSCAP also provided discursive spaces where officials in their private capacities could engage in discourse with NGOs, experts, and policy analysts outside of the diplomatic restraints of Track I.

As noted in the previous chapter, AI was integral in the creation of CSCAP, and it is unsurprising that both organisations share important characteristics regarding their “conception, approach, intentions, and substantive actives.” Formally established in 1993 by 10 think tanks from ARF countries, seven of CSCAP’s founding members are also members of AI. Of the two missing members, Laos elected not to participate and the Singaporean AI member, the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) was replaced by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS).

In the beginning, CSCAP was heavily influenced by the institutional structures and norms that limited and influenced AI. However, the network has slowly transitioned from being dependent on AI based networks and processes into a stand-alone process divergent from AI in terms of inclusion, audience, and institutionalisation. Over time, slight differences have become more pronounced, as the two networks have undertaken different roles in the policy-making process. These differences, though not drastic, have altered the nature of CSCAP’s discursive space to the extent that it can promote a broader and more challenging NTS agenda, to a wider audience, than AI.

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6 Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 176.
7 Jusuf Wanandi, Asia-Pacific after the Cold War (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1996). An in depth analysis of the influence of AI on the creation of the ARF can be found in Chapter 3, further references are Katsumata 2003, Soesastro et al. 2006, and Stone 2011.
8 Ibid., 121.
9 Evans, “Assessing the ARF and CSCAP,” 154.
10 Ball, “CSCAP’s Foundation and Achievements.”
11 Ibid.
First, CSCAP has a different scope in terms of policy focus and geographical scale. Since starting out with only 10 members (the same number as AI), CSCAP has expanded its membership to encompass the majority of states participating in the ARF. At present, CSCAP has 21 official members, one associate member (Pacific Island Forum Secretariat), and one think tank petitioning to join (Bangladesh). This makes CSCAP roughly twice as large as AI; inclusiveness at this scale has both positive and negative consequences. Membership includes think tanks from many of the major power countries, such as the United States and China, and represents a broader diversity of strategic interests and relative power balances than those found exclusively in Southeast Asia. On one hand, the network’s broad scope allows CSCAP to address issues occurring across the entire Asia-Pacific region. On the other hand, CSCAP has been criticised for growing too big to manage effectively. Diverse membership also makes it difficult to secure a consensus and, beyond the mutual idea of cooperative security and an aversion to conflict, member committees have very little in common. This has made promoting NTS ideas problematic, as not all CSCAP members are on board with endorsing such a sensitive agenda.

The second difference between CSCAP and AI is the potential audience for their policy advice. Whereas AI deals solely with foreign ministers, CSCAP’s potential audience includes both foreign affairs and defence officials, and in much larger numbers. This distinction has served CSCAP well, as NTS issues, especially acute policy issues, often fall awkwardly between the jurisdiction of Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers. Both CSCAP and the ARF have acknowledged that Defence Ministers and Foreign Ministers require a cooperative venue where they can work together to address NTS-like problems. At Track I, the ARF has incorporated Defence Officials into its regular dialogues by establishing the ASEAN Regional Forum Defence Officials’ Dialogue (ARF-DoD) and the ARF Defence Officials Meeting (ARF-DOM). This supplements the ARF’s already full calendar of meetings for foreign affairs officials. At the Track II level, CSCAP has worked around the ARF’s meeting and used its networks to link Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers in matters of security analysis, and has provided informal political spaces for both communicative and coordinative discourse. CSCAP’s affiliation to the ARF, and its subsequent access to the ARF’s defence processes, has expanded the potential audience for CSCAP’s policy advice. Access to

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12 Ibid. Member committees currently represented in CSCAP are Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea (ROK), DPR Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam. The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat is an Associate Member and Bangladesh is currently seeking to become a full member.

13 Track II Participant #2, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.

defence officials aids CSCAP’s promotion of the NTS agenda. The ARF provides a venue, where both foreign affairs and defence officials will likely face political pressure to address NTS issues and be looking for ideas to help them identify and organise their security priorities. Furthermore, in security-focused environments, particularly those populated by defence officials, the importance of NTS issues and the need for multilateral cooperation are more likely to be recognised.

The last important distinction between CSCAP and AI lies in CSCAP’s success in achieving a higher level of institutionalisation than most other think tank networks. Whereas the discursive spaces of AI are often *ad hoc* and transitory, the political spaces provided by CSCAP offer a more reliable and structured opportunity for member think tanks and political actors to convene and discuss security issues. During its first few years of existence, CSCAP actively expanded its membership, drew up a formal charter and a set of by-laws, and achieved secure financial footing. The CSCAP network is now considered ‘intensive’, with regularised meetings and cross-networks interaction. It has a formalised membership process and members must pay dues to the secretariat; these dues are then used to fund network meetings. This level of institutionalisation has allowed CSCAP to avoid the ‘free rider’ or lack of participation problems plaguing AI. Because members have a monetary investment in the network, they are more likely to be active participants. Members who fail to meet their financial obligations are expelled.

CSCAP is also more centralised in its organisation. Its steering committee meets twice a year and is responsible for approving the CSCAP budget, creating individual Study Groups (SG), and endorsing official memoranda. The Steering Committee also strategically determines the policy research direction for the network by setting the agenda and authorising Study Groups. Study Groups are the main mechanisms producing CSCAP policy research and are “given the tasks of undertaking policy-oriented studies on specific regional political-security problems.” The Steering Committee’s agenda setting authority gives it the power to determine what issues are included (or excluded) and the basic frame under which issues are constructed. In other words, the Steering Committee established the causal narratives that will inform the approaches taken by each individual Study Group. In observance of the influential role of ASEAN, each Study Group has at least one co-chair from an ASEAN country (with the exception of the North Pacific Working Group, which works outside of the territorial

15 Ball, “CSCAP’s Foundation and Achievements.”
16 Track II Participant #2, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
17 Dr Teng Siew Mun, Director of Foreign Policy and Security Studies at ISIS – Malaysia, interview conducted by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 4 December 2011.
18 Dr Teng Siew Mun, Director of Foreign Policy and Security Studies at ISIS – Malaysia, interview conducted by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 4 December 2011.
scope of ASEAN). Once established, Study Groups meet numerous times and cover a wide variety of issues.

The benefits of institutionalisation for the purposes of promoting NTS ideas have been both internal, with CSCAP maintaining a very coherent and binding internal network structure, and relational, as CSCAP has succeeded in embedding itself into the institutional process of the ARF and guaranteeing itself access to political power while maintaining some degree of political autonomy. No longer dependent upon government funding or the generosity of a few wealthy members, CSCAP has been able to devote its efforts to strengthening its discursive ability, increasing its formal ties to the ARF, and promoting its vision of the future of Asian security governance.

_CSCAP as a Political Actor_

CSCAP has always been considered a politically active component of the ARF. Despite being designed as a security dialogue, adherence to the ASEAN-way and the resulting security paradox have prevented the ARF from including sensitive security issues, such as NTS issues, in formal meetings. Consequently, NTS issues have routinely ended up in CSCAP forums, where the network has gradually taken over responsibility for their governance. Initially unspoken, this division of labour was solidified in the ARF meeting in 1995, which articulated the official perception of the role of ‘second track’ processes.

Given the delicate nature of many of the subjects being considered by the ARF, there is merit in moving[sic], the ARF process along two tracks. Track One activities will be carried out by governments. Track Two activities will be carried out by strategic institutes and non-governmental organisations in the region, such as ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP. To be meaningful and relevant, the Track Two activities may focus, as much as possible, on the current concerns of the ARF. The synergy between the two tracks would contribute greatly to confidence-building measures in the region. Over time, these Track Two activities should result in the creation of a sense of community among participants of those activities.  

The ARF’s acknowledgement of CSCAP’s integrated role places the network firmly into the realm of formal security politics, regardless of its ‘informal’ status. It demonstrates that the ARF perceives CSCAP as a location for policy innovation and discussion, and operates under the expectation that the network’s input will end up in formal dialogues.

In addition to the formal means of policy dissemination that will be addressed later, CSCAP has built informal political spaces alongside the formal processes of the ARF. From these spaces, it has acted as a governance entrepreneur, disseminating security ideas across state boundaries for the purpose of coordinating governance, and promoting new security paradigms. As Peter Haas notes, “control over knowledge and information is an important dimension of power and that the diffusion of new ideas

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and information can lead to new patterns of behaviour and prove to be an important determinant of international policy coordination.”\(^{22}\) Furthermore, because CSCAP’s discursive space rests on the boundary between formal and informal politics, it has better access to political decision makers. In fact, Track I officials are often present at CSCAP processes, giving them the ‘blended’ nature noted by Pauline Kerr.\(^{23}\)

The mixed nature of many CSCAP gatherings is an important component to CSCAP’s successful exertion of ideational power. CSCAP participants have commented that Track II operates on the basis of a complex compromise between autonomy and influence.\(^{24}\) There is a tacit understanding amongst CSCAP members that officials in their private capacities – both military and foreign affairs – must be included, in order to attract government resources and interest. Thus, CSCAP incorporates governmental officials into its processes with the understanding that “the prospects for implementation should count for as much as the intrinsic worth of any ideas generated in the second-track process.”\(^{25}\) As a consequence of this integration, CSCAP does not tend to directly criticise governments and usually focuses on policy research that is of direct interest to the ARF. In return, Track II actors have access to Track I processes and are given the opportunity to present new or alternative ideas.\(^{26}\)

This compromise between access and autonomy is reflected in CSCAP’s membership, which contains a variety of actors who run the gamut from being fully autonomous to operating as mere extensions of governmental bureaucracies. For example, the CSCAP representatives from India, Russia, and Vietnam are all parts of governmental ministries or have governmental ties that prevent meaningful autonomy.\(^{27}\) Because of this, conflicts occurring at the Track I level are sometimes carried into CSCAP discursive spaces and prevent constructive dialogue. During an interview, one CSCAP participant expressed frustration with certain member committees that regularly used CSCAP forums to promote government interests. It was also noted that some committees have attempted to restrict research outcomes that were unfavourable to their government.\(^{28}\) Other member committees have very few links to the governing structures of their respective countries. Lack of governmental oversight allows these institutes to freely entertain a broad agenda of policy research and then pass on ideas to the more constrained institutes (or, where institutes are branches of government, to directly lobby

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24 Dr. Jackson Ewing, Research Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and Dr. Alistair Cook, Research Fellow at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies, interview by Author, Singapore, 30 November 2011. See also Kraft, “The Autonomy Dilemma of Track Two Diplomacy in Southeast Asia.”
26 Compiled from interviews conducted during Track II meetings in Singapore (28-30 November 2011 and 1 December 2011) and Kuala Lumpur (4-5 December 2011).
27 Track II Participant #1, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
28 Track II Participant #1, interview by Author, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 2011.
governmental representatives). Many other member committees have a mixture of governmental and non-governmental representation, placing them somewhere along the spectrum between autonomy and independence.\(^\text{29}\)

The dual formal/informal status of CSCAP, in both its member committees and its relationship with the ARF, has undeniably aided its effectiveness as a political actor. The network can acquire and develop innovative ideas while functioning in its ‘informal’ capacity and then easily transmit these ideas to political decision makers by switching into its ‘formal’ roles. However, its blended nature is, understandably, considered problematic by some scholars.\(^\text{30}\) As Herman Kraft, a frequent Track II participant, points out:

> The linkage between track one and two provides track two diplomacy with access to privileged information and a position from which it could directly influence official policy. At the same time, it affects track two’s potential for critical thinking and, consequently, the quality of analysis and discussion.\(^\text{31}\)

The influence of the ‘autonomy dilemma’ on CSCAP research is unclear, and I would argue that the benefits outweigh the costs, as governmental affiliation permits CSCAP to create discursive spaces at the intersections of Track I and Track II processes. Through the creation of this political space, CSCAP has gained enough ideational leverage to outweigh or overcome any perceived cost of affiliation. CSCAP is in full control of the research conducted and can present the research in ‘causal stories’ aimed towards promoting its preferred agendas (in this case, the NTS agenda). Once embedded, these narratives can go on to influence future ARF policy. Furthermore, CSCAP’s ideational leverage is enhanced by its institutionalised access to policy makers. Each year, CSCAP convenes to organise a report for submission to the ASEAN Senior Official’s Meeting (ASEAN-SOM), directly linking their ideational input to power.\(^\text{32}\) Additionally, a former government representative and current Track II participant noted that Track I officials actively want to engage with Track II actors and participate in Track II meetings. He also noted that it is not uncommon for Track I to actively seek policy advice from Track II.\(^\text{33}\) For example, the ARF has called upon CSCAP to give presentations on important security topics, such as Preventive Diplomacy (PD) and maritime security.\(^\text{34}\)

However, the cost of governmental affiliation should be acknowledged. While there are no formal constraints on CSCAP research and forums, it is likely that the network’s

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\(^{29}\) Simon, “Evaluating Track 2 Approaches to Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific Region.”

\(^{30}\) Kraft, “The Autonomy Dilemma of Track Two Diplomacy in Southeast Asia.”

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 346.

\(^{32}\) Dr Teng Siew Mun, Director of Foreign Policy and Security Studies at ISIS – Malaysia, interview by author, Kuala Lumpur, 4 December 2011.

\(^{33}\) Track II Participant #6 (CSCAP, NTS-Asia, and Asia Security Initiative), interview by Author, Singapore 29 November 2011.

\(^{34}\) Simon, “Evaluating Track 2 Approaches to Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific Region.”
governmental relationships shape some of the issues presented in CSCAP forums and the frames under which they are examined. CSCAP is more likely to present research on topics of interest to the ARF; however, it still has control over the frames under which these topics are presented. Ball also notes that “[i]t is necessary to stress that support for the ARF process does not mean simply working to address the ARF’s current agendas.”35 He points out that the CSCAP Review Committee in 2009 highlighted that “CSCAP should stay ahead of the curve by providing early warning of future threats and security concerns.”36 Another limitation of affiliation is that certain CSCAP problem frames may avoid direct criticism of individual governments or policies by focusing instead on collective issues, like the need for more transparency and cooperation. However, these constraints are not universal across the network, and individual CSCAP think tanks have been very frank in their criticisms of the ARF, as will be shown later. For instance, as least one Track II participant is not hampered by the ASEAN norm of non-confrontation, as he noted that an effective way to acquire governmental attention was to do/say something that would make the government angry.37 Despite the limitations of affiliation, the benefits of CSCAP political space – where previously excluded ideas can make their way into governing processes – far outstrip any limitations arising from governmental affiliation. As Paul Evans writes, “[i]ts independence and creativity are valued as much as its connection to government.”38

**CSCAP and Discursive Space**

CSCAP’s discursive spaces are both larger and more malleable than the discursive spaces of the AI. It is a larger network, better allowing it to move ideas across regional and political space. It is also more diverse, granting it access to a larger array of ideas from different sources and locations. Moreover, CSCAP controls the creation and movement of ideas within these discursive political spaces, allowing it to privilege certain ideas over others and determining how, and to whom, these ideas are transmitted. Using framing, agenda setting, networking, and localisation, CSCAP controls both the content and context of these interactions (discourses). These roles give CSCAP a formidable impact on which ideas are introduced, accepted, placed on regional agendas, and which ones ultimately become templates for potential institutional reform.

CSCAP discursive space is valuable because it straddles the divide between autonomy/access and formal/informal spaces. CSCAP’s dual identity is similar to the one enjoyed by AI, but is more powerful given the comparatively stronger position of CSCAP.

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36 CSCAP Review Committee Report 2009, as cited in ibid., 256.

37 Track II Participant #6 (CSCAP, NTS-Asia, and Asia Security Initiative), interview by Author, Singapore 29 November 2011.

38 Evans, “Assessing the ARF and CSCAP,” 163.
relative to the ARF. CSCAP’s opaque political status gives it access to Track I actors through both formal and informal channels. Officially, CSCAP interacts with the ARF through briefings and memoranda. Unofficially, interactions take place through networks, conferences, and member committees. In all instances, CSCAP controls the discursive spaces where these formal documents are produced or where these informal interactions take place. It determines the participants in these discourses, the ideas under discussion, and how these ideas are presented. CSCAP has used its influence in these processes to promote programmatic NTS ideas into forums, where they can serve to clarify interests, suggest solutions, and provide blueprints for institutional change.39 In this way, the network has sought to redefine security in the region in terms of the NTS agenda.

Criticisms that the ARF and CSCAP are ‘talk-shops’ that produce few substantive policy results are misguided, as they do not take into account that these venues provide valuable modes of transmitting ideas.40 The purpose of both institutions is to exchange ideas and engage in coordinative and communicative discourse, though the content of the dialogues differs. While the ARF has a limited repertoire and diplomatic recourse to address emerging security issues, CSCAP does not. The network provides a discursive space where policy ideas (including criticism) can be exchanged and innovation can occur. In a region where such venues are hard to come by, CSCAP dialogues and networks provide an invaluable resource as “vehicles of multilateral consultation and exchange.”41 They offer coordinative and communicative venues for idea exchange and policy coordination that would otherwise be unavailable for both governmental and non-governmental actors.

Sheldon Simon points out that the ARF has recognised the value of Track II discursive spaces and reports that many of the more forward-looking states in the ARF have “encouraged Track 2 organizations within their respective countries to develop more innovative approaches to security.”42 It is telling that such requests have been put forward by leaders in ASEAN (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), as well as regional leaders, such as Australia, Canada, Japan, the ROK, and the United States.43 These requests are evidence that Track I actors are eager for Track II input concerning the future of security governance.

39 Goldstein and Keohane, Ideas and Foreign Policy.
41 Evans, “Assessing the ARF and CSCAP.”
43 Ibid.
Figure 2 illustrates CSCAP’s position as a discursive actor, with green representing discursive space. CSCAP sits at the nexus between formal and informal processes. It moves ideas between these two processes using discourse in the form of problem framing/agenda setting and networking as a means of coordinative/communicative discourse. In this space, regional diplomatic constraints are weakened and access to formal policy process remains.

**CSCAP and the Non-Traditional Security Agenda**

The bulk of CSCAP discursive space is devoted to promoting programmatic NTS ideas. Promotion can be as simple as introducing an idea for discussion or as complicated as establishing a Study Group to discuss evolving policy needs (e.g., Working Group on Transnational Crime and the Study Group on Asia-Pacific Cooperation for Energy Security). According to long time CSCAP and Track II participants Desmond Ball and Kwa Chong Guan, “CSCAP has had NTS on its agenda since its foundation.”

The network has a history of redefining security to include non-military issues, promoting cooperative and collective understandings of security, gradually moving away from the ASEAN-way, and strengthening regional security frameworks. Ball and Guan estimate that NTS issues have amounted to at least one-third of CSCAP’s total efforts.

CSCAP publications show a distinct tendency for the network to endorse the recognition of certain trans-boundary issues as security threats and have openly attempted to mainstream these ideas into the ARF. Evidence of intensifying CSCAP efforts to

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44 Ball and Guan, “Conclusions,” 266.
45 Ibid.
Since 2005, CSCAP has had several SGs devoted to NTS subjects, including those on Human Trafficking, Countering International Terrorism, Energy Security, Transnational Organised Crime and the Security implications of Climate Change. 46

Ball and Guan’s assessment that CSCAP’s agenda has been composed of one-third NTS issues does not include its promotion efforts towards strengthening regional institutions or promoting collective/cooperative security. Once these topics are included, over half of CSCAP’s efforts focus directly on the promotion of programmatic NTS ideas.

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Table 2. - List of all current and recently concluded CSCAP Study Groups47

Table 2 lists all current and recent CSCAP Study Groups. From this table, it is clear that the majority of current study groups focus on what could be described as NTS issues.

CSCAP has a variety of way to disseminate its research to the ARF and other political decision makers. Its produces formal memoranda, which must be approved by the Steering Committee and are then passed on to the ARF. The importance of these memoranda will be discussed in the next section. In addition to formal outputs, the network has also ‘informally’ pushed for normative change through other publications.

46 Ibid., 267.
CSCAP’s annual publication, the CSCAP Regional Security Outlook (CRSO) is another good way to trace the promotion of the norms favoured by some members of CSCAP. Some CSCAP members have used the CRSO as a political mechanism to identify NTS security issues, push ideas into the discursive sphere, call for political action, and promote institutional change. It is clear that CSCAP is pushing the boundaries of regional norms because some members of the network (usually those with strong governmental ties) have balked at its increasingly harsh rhetoric. When CSCAP first considered publishing the CRSO, the more conservative think tanks (i.e., governmental think tanks), such as China, expressed the desire that the norms of the region extend to the publication.48 When it did not appear that this desire would be accommodated, China requested a disclaimer at the beginning of each CRSO advising that its contents were the “sole responsibility of the authors and the editorial committee and do not necessarily reflect those of the member committees of CSCAP or their individual members.” This is an indication that some of the more conservative members of CSCAP were uncomfortable with the non-consensus based nature of the publication. More importantly, this shows that CSCAP has found a means to publicise challenging policy analysis without having to gain consensus. Progressive members of CSCAP have used the CRSO as a discursive mechanism to get policy advice and research to policy makers without having to secure Study Group consensus or Steering Committee approval.

The CRSO has been used to openly push NTS ideas, and undermine the ASEAN-way. It has been the conduit where CSCAP members have accused the ARF of ‘hiding behind’ its norms of non-interference in order to keep issues off of the agenda.49 The publication has consistently called for the ARF to shift its agenda towards issues such as piracy, trafficking of various kinds, terrorism, and climate change.50 Its most recent normative drive has been towards shifting the norms of security governance from the casual structures currently used by regional organisations to more legalised and institutionalised modes of security governance. To do this, the CRSO has first sought to undermine existing forms of governance by focusing on their lack of effectiveness. For instance, the CSCAP Regional Security Outlook printed that “it is disturbing to note that the rhetoric of cooperation, articulated after events such as the 2004 tsunami, has not been translated into effective multilateral response mechanisms.”51 The authors then emphasised the need for stronger regional institutions and criticised the slow pace and consistently low expectations of Asia-Pacific multilateralism. Moreover, the steps

48 Ball, “CSCAP’s Foundation and Achievements,” 44.
50 Ibid.
made regarding food security, disaster relief, and humanitarian aid were highlighted to demonstrate the gap between rhetoric and action. To further undermine the legitimacy of existing institutions, the editors conclude that “there is little to suggest that this existing institutional web is equipped to cope effectively with the emerging security agenda.”

The network’s creation of discursive space has allowed it to broadly question the ARF’s preference for the ASEAN-way of diplomacy and advocate new norms of governance. Demonstrative of the network’s dual insider/outside status, CSCAP approaches ideational and normative change in the ARF from both an internal and external point of action. It has taken full advantage of its ‘informal’ status and publicly challenged the ARF in a variety of areas. CSCAP members have also used their outsider status to highlight policy issues they do not believe are garnering enough attention. As demonstrated above, the network has openly criticised the failure of the ARF to move forward with preventive diplomacy and has publicly called for changes to the ARF agenda, institutional structure, and diplomatic norms. More often than not, these topics are related to the NTS paradigm and public criticism has become an important way for CSCAP to promote the NTS agenda. By highlighting issues and creating causal stories easily understood by policy makers and the public alike, the network is attempting to induce normative change. CSCAP’s ‘external’ criticisms are attempting to place pressure on the organisation to act – and, thus, to adopt the solutions sets provided by the ‘internal’ suggestions found in CSCAP memoranda.

**Problem Framing and Agenda Setting**

CSCAP has several opportunities to frame ideas for consumption and place these ideas on political agendas. As mentioned earlier, the CSCAP Steering Committee selects the issues that will receive the attention of Study Groups. The selection of topics for consideration already brackets which ideas will receive the attention of think tanks scholars and, consequently, be presented to decision makers. A major benefit of the circular policy process between Track I and Track II is CSCAP’s opportunity to frame ideas and desired policy responses prior to transmitting these ideas to the ARF.

Study Groups are often the location where this framing occurs. Study Groups are a reliable mechanism for CSCAP members to coordinate their agendas, exchange ideas, and develop memoranda, and they form an important part of CSCAP’s discursive space. The causal narratives adopted by each Study Group influence how issues are interpreted and understood, and the perceived appropriate political responses. Study Groups create a place on the political agenda for NTS ideas by controlling the discourse identifying both the *problem* and the *solution* to policy issues using framing. This means that they can frame politically salient issues as NTS problems and then frame the solutions as

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52 Ibid.

53 Keck and Sikkink, “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics.”
other components of the NTS agenda. For instance, CSCAP Memoranda No. 15 on *The Security Implications of Climate Change* framed climate change as a security risk due to its negative impact on public health, food availability, energy access and population displacement. CSCAP linked climate change with more accepted security issues, thereby legitimising it as a security issue in its own right. This done, CSCAP articulated the best response to climate change as strengthening institutions and enhancing regional and international cooperation.\(^{54}\) Because of how it was framed, this memorandum promoted a shift in the dominant security paradigm towards the acceptance of climate changes as a security issue and increased institutionalisation as the best solution.

Study Groups produce CSCAP memoranda, which are another important mechanism of agenda setting and problem framing for the network. CSCAP memoranda are the ‘formal’ means by which CSCAP challenges dominant ASEAN norms and are the official submissions put forward by the network as a collective organisation. Memoranda perform a significant discursive function as they are both the products of discourse (coordinative) as well as the means of discourse (communicative). Memoranda have been important tools to legitimise NTS research, present NTS issues to the public, and codify CSCAP’s stance on NTS issues using new causal narratives.

Memorandums are a good indication of the security concerns to which CSCAP hopes to draw attention. It is clear by looking a list of CSCAP memoranda that NTS issues have recently become a priority (Maritime Cooperation 1997, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008; Transnational Crime, 2003, 2004; Terrorism 2005; Responsibility to Protect, 2011; and Cyber Security 2012). In addition to highlighting specific policy issues, CSCAP memoranda are also a part of a broader campaign by CSCAP to challenge the underlying norms of ASEAN and the ARF. They occasionally criticise governmental policies and often challenge the status quo.\(^{55}\) Contrary to the norm of non-interference, memoranda have hinted that the domestic developments in some countries regarding income and economic disparities, leadership changes, expectations of political reform, minority problems and domestic insurgencies can contribute to regional instability. Linking domestic issues to regional stability undermines the ASEAN-way of diplomacy and casts previously taboo ‘domestic issues’ into the sphere of international concern and justifies interference into domestic policies.\(^{56}\) CSCAP Memorandum No. 1 clearly identifies that “[d]omestic development in some states could contribute to instability in the region.”\(^ {57}\) CSCAP has also attempted to pull some domestic issues into the regional arena. For instance, CSCAP Memorandum No. 18 on Implementing the Responsibility

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57 Ibid., 1.
to Protect reinforces the “responsibility of the state to protect its population from
genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”

Should states fail in the responsibility, it is then “The international community’s responsibility to assist the state to fulfil its responsibility to protect.”

While the memorandum took pains to point out that it only applied to the four specified crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, it is a small step towards blurring the lines between domestic and regional politics. The memorandum also provided practical advice for the ARF on how to institutionalise the Responsibility to Protect by creating a regional Risk Reduction Centre, giving a regional institution responsibility over an ostensibly ‘domestic’ topic.

Memoranda are important for articulating and emphasising the causal narratives promoted by CSCAP, as well as an important means of engaging in discourse. Chapter 2 identified several functions that discourse must perform in order to be successful. These functions are: cognitive, normative, coordinative, and communicative. The most influential CSCAP memoranda have effectively performed all of these functions. For example, Memorandum No. 2 clearly defined (framed) what constitutes Confidence and Security Building measures and identified their necessity in the region (cognitive). It then addressed the normative aspect of discourse by demonstrating the benefits of undertaking these measures and provided a coordinative framework for how these measures could be instituted. The communicative function was fulfilled by the CSCAP memorandum itself.

To date, CSCAP has submitted a total of 22 official memoranda to the ARF, many of which are directly related to non-traditional security issues and offer “some creative efforts to move beyond existing national positions.” CSCAP’s efforts to frame NTS issues as politically relevant appear to be gaining traction as the ARF’s Annual Security Outlook 2009 listed over a dozen NTS threats it now considered of interest.

Even if Study Groups cannot reach consensus and no memorandum is produced, Study Groups can still frame security issues via edited volumes of work or Chairman’s statements that do not require Steering Committee approval. Current CSCAP Chair Carolina Hernandez and former Chair Ralph Cossa write that recommendations coming

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59 Ibid.
60 Smith, “Examining Ideas Emperically: The Political Discourse of Globalisation in Ireland.”
63 Evans, “Assessing the ARF and CSCAP,” 165.
64 ASEAN Regional Forum, “ASEAN Regional Forum: Annual Security Outlook 2009.”
from a CSCAP study group, or in the form of a CSCAP memorandum, are more likely to be favourably received than purely academic reports, likely because of the close relationship between CSCAP and the ARF. These documents are another way that CSCAP have expressed non-consensus ideas to the ARF and put forward particular understandings of NTS problems.

**Networks and Epistemic Communities**

CSCAP has intentionally constructed and institutionalised multiple levels of networked discursive space for the propagation of key ideas. The breadth (regionally) and depth (nationally) has aided the network in persuasively disseminating NTS ideas from within and across the network to both domestic and international policy makers. The first level of discursive space is constructed as the domestic level in the form of individual CSCAP member committees (e.g., Aus-CSCAP, US CSCAP, and CSCAP Vietnam). Each state level CSCAP Member Committee is composed of a collection of academics, current and former government officials, defence officials and the occasional representative from the defence industry. For example, the Singapore CSCAP member committee includes representatives from Singapore’s ASEAN delegation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Home Affairs, a member of parliament, a representative from the Attorney General’s chambers, and members of three different think tanks. National member committees are the ‘spokes’ stemming from CSCAP’s regional ‘hub.’ National meetings are coordinative and serve as the focal point for introducing and framing ideas, which are then exchanged with other committee members at the domestic level. National CSCAP meeting have proven “to be useful vehicles for establishing connections among individuals who do not normally meet frequently or at all and who have an abiding interest in security matters.” Moreover, committee members then function as smaller domestic ‘hubs’, with their spokes representative of their personal connections to government or industry. Domestic networks provide coordinative and cooperative discursive spaces, the products of which (ideas) are linked into the regional network and its accompanying discursive space. CSCAP member’s networks are supplemented by CSCAP’s regular meetings and conferences. CSCAP meetings bring the network together to set the research agenda.

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65 Hernandez and Cossa, “CSCAP and the Continuing Search for its Track Two Identity.”
68 Evans, “Assessing the ARF and CSCAP,” 164.
(Steering Committee Meetings), coordinate and discuss policy (Working and Study Group meetings) or to exchange ideas via research products (General Meetings). CSCAP General Meetings are the largest gatherings and offer the National Member Committees the opportunity to renew contacts with each other and get a feel for the emerging security issues of the region. Held bi-annually, the most recent CSCAP General Conference in 2011 took place in Hanoi, Vietnam. CSCAP’s emphasis on NTS ideas was evident in the theme of the General Conference. The conference was devoted to ‘emerging security challenges’, such as maritime security, R2P, and water security, and assessing the role and “effectiveness of the regional security architecture in managing the respective dangers and dilemmas.” The Conference was attended by over 250 international and 150 local participants and, as has become habit, it was scheduled directly after the East Asia Summit (EAS) to encourage attendance by EAS participants. CSCAP General Conferences often lay host to Track I participants. In 2007, the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia and Indonesia’s Foreign Minister attended the General Conference. Their participation demonstrates officials’ interest in the ideas produced at these forums and also offers additional opportunities for discourse between Track I and Track II.

All of CSCAP’s activities, inclusive of its national committees, regional network and general conference, form one component of a much larger collection of regional security networks in Asia. Independently, each network has its own institutionalised structure; cumulatively, they compose a broad security network spanning Asia and beyond. As shown in Figure 3, CSCAP encompasses the entirety of ASEAN, ASEAN+3, ASEAN+8, and the Six Party talks. It also includes aspects of APEC, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). All of these affiliated organisations (included in Figure 3) provide political opportunities for CSCAP think tanks to shape security governance by conveying programmatic NTS ideas into additional regional or sub-regional forums.


Ibid.


Hernandez and Kim, “The Challenge of Engaging Track One in the Asia Pacific Region.”
Simon Sheldon has emphasised that CSCAP is a perfect fit for Peter Haas’ definition of an epistemic community. An epistemic community is a network of professionals with an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within their domain. CSCAP members have authority due to their status as security experts and – given the prominence, breadth, and depth of its networking activities – by influencing the prevailing norms in a given epistemic community, CSCAP can exert a form of limited security governance. Peter Haas identifies the power of these communities by noting that how states identify their interests and recognize the latitude of actions deemed appropriate in specific issue-areas of policymaking are functions of the manner in which the problems are understood by the policymakers or are represented by those to whom they turn for advice under conditions of uncertainty.

Most notably, some of CSCAP’s working groups have achieved the four criteria characterising epistemic communities. One example is the CSCAP Working Group on Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM). All Working Groups, just like CSCAP, share the principled belief that cooperative security as a key component of regional stability. The WG on CSBMs was able to craft a landmark ‘working definition’ and a spe-

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74 Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” 3.
75 Ibid., 2.
cific ‘statement of principles’ for preventative diplomacy. This definition and statement evidenced that the WG had come to a consensus as to the causal beliefs of the WG as to the content and context of preventative diplomacy, which subsequently laid the foundation for how CSCAP (and the ARF) would approach preventative diplomacy. In essence, the working group represents an epistemic community in that it has established internally determined criteria for validating the content of preventative diplomacy, and reaching a consensus on the causal relationships surrounding the issue. The members on the WG have then used their statuses as experts on the topic to promote the shared political goal of influencing the ARF.

Similar can be said of the CSCAP Study Group on Energy and Security. This study group was established with the goal of determining the causal relationships between energy and security. The Study Group’s evaluation was based on the common notion that all states shared the instinct to control their energy sources, and that they would do so with force if necessary. It also implicitly worked under the shared beliefs that states were going to continue to use fossil fuels and that scarcity of these resources was a driver for insecurity. The Study then made recommendations based upon these assumptions, using standards of validity based upon the ASEAN-way (i.e. respect for sovereignty, non-interference, etc.). Ultimately, and rather unsurprisingly, the Study Group attempted to inform the policy of the ARF on energy security towards “cooperation and coordination of … energy supplies to avoid conflict.”

Epistemic communities often provide the underlying problem frames calling for change and providing the institutional frameworks to guide change once sufficient political will has developed. CSCAP has actively pushed such frames, and the ARF and domestic policy makers have turned to CSCAP advice to make up for their own internal lack of research capacities.

Localisation

Just as CSCAP think tanks can promote broad ideational agenda up to and across epistemic communities, they can draw ideas down from the epistemic level and adapt them to local contexts. CSCAP manages the flow of ideas between different political constituencies (non-governmental to governmental and national to international) and one of the network’s most important roles is adapting external ideas (drawn from the epistemic community) to domestic or regional situations. Localising, similar to framing, adapts ideas to local political norms and situations, and is an effective political strategy.

78 Ibid., 243.
used to make some ideas more appealing than others. As articulated by Acharya and Ba, the way ideas are presented is an important component determining if they will be accepted into regional discourses.\(^79\) CSCAP will only expend the effort to localise policy ideas in line with its preference for the NTS agenda, thereby promoting the NTS agenda by excluding all other political alternatives.

Being able to adapt ideas to local contexts is intrinsically important given the breadth of membership in the ARF. With 21 members covering a diversity of economic, political, cultural and security interests, CSCAP acts as a necessary and powerful filter through which to adapt and accommodate ideas between political contexts. The role of the localising actor is especially important in Asia, as many states are suspicious of outsider influence and there is an enduring distrust for perceived Western “solutions”.\(^80\) However, many of the vocal and active participants of CSCAP come from outside ASEAN or other ‘Asian’ countries. CSCAP plays a vital role in adapting ideas to regional sensibilities and endowing them with perceived ‘local’ or ‘indigenous’ legitimacy. This permits ideas gathered from CSCAP’s engagement with the regional security epistemic community to be tailored to specific sub-regional contexts.\(^81\) For example, Evans noted that

> In CSCAP … the founding members included active and vocal participants from outside of ASEAN. Much of the security cooperation vocabulary has been borrowed from elsewhere, though, to be sure, substantially modified as it has filtered through regional discussions. Much of the intellectual legwork supporting concrete initiatives takes place outside of the ASEAN. Most importantly, many ideas about the role of international organizations in building peace have come from foreign ministries and research institutes connected to European and North American-style multilateralism.\(^82\)

CSCAP has been able to adapt ideas from its extra-regional members and apply them to local contexts. In this way “[b]oth CSCAP and ARF … have modified various security concepts in ways that reflect both ASEAN and Western approaches.”\(^83\)

CSCAP’s aptitude for moving ideas has allowed it to exert influence spanning from domestic levels (via localisation) up to the larger epistemic security community, far exceeding the geographical area covered by the ARF. Promoting ideas at all of these levels has had the beneficial effect of amplifying their exposure. As a result of coordinated idea promotion “[w]hen government officials get together after they have turned to a security epistemic community for advice, the officials will find out that they

\(^{79}\) Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, “Why There is No Theory in Asian International Relations?,” in Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association ( Le Centre Sheraton Hotel, Montreal, Quebec, Canada 2004).

\(^{80}\) CSCAP Working Group on Confidence and Security Building Measures, “Memorandum No. 2 – Asia Pacific Confidence and Security Building Measures.”

\(^{81}\) Evans, “Assessing the ARF and CSCAP.”

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 159.

\(^{83}\) Ibid.
share some similar ideas because they have gotten the same recommendations."\(^84\) By flooding the region with specific NTS ideas, the network has increased the likelihood that such ideas reach a normative tipping point and replace the established norms of the region. Once norms have changed, institutions will face obsolescence, unless they transform in order to adhere to the new norms of security and governance.

**Institutionalisation**

CSCAP’s identification and emphasis of trans-boundary security threats has coincided with its concurrent promotion of cooperative security in the form of stronger regional security institutions. Since its establishment, CSCAP has endorsed greater institutional responsibilities for the ARF and the very first memorandum produced by CSCAP in April 1994 focused on enhancing regional security cooperation. Building upon the success of governmental (APEC) and non-governmental (PECC and PAFTED) economic forums, which had previously served as useful mediums for cooperation, CSCAP emphasised the need for itself and the ASEAN Regional Forum to take up similar roles in relation to multilateral security cooperation in the region.\(^85\) The first Co-Chair of CSCAP wrote in 1996 that the ARF should be developed as part of global collective security system under the UN system, which is to be paired with real efforts to develop and strengthen it. This long-term objective is an important one to give teeth to a cooperative security approach ... It is also important to recognize that collective security is in the last instance global and indivisible ... In the end strengthened multilateralism in security is the only viable alternative...\(^86\)

A founding member of CSCAP noted that when the network was established, the idea of regional cooperation was new.\(^87\) An important aspect of CSCAP was to ‘socialise’ experts and officials to this type of cooperation. Sheldon Simon agrees and writes that Track II security efforts have successfully helped “alleviate the security dilemma by demonstrating that security can be mutually achieved.”\(^88\) Gradually, CSCAP has promoted a collective understanding of security that counters the dominant Cold War conception of military balances of power.\(^89\) CSCAP has also led by example in demonstrating that regional cooperation is both feasible and possible. In addition to demonstrating the benefits of cooperative security, CSCAP supports this understanding with publications and memoranda detailing the necessity and benefits of cooperative or ‘comprehensive’ security and how this cooperation can be achieved.\(^90\)

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84 Aguilar, “Track 2 Diplomacy and the ASEAN Peace,” 57.
85 CSCAP, “Memorandum No. 1 – The Security of the Asia Pacific Region.”
86 Wanandi, *Asia-Pacific after the Cold War*: 125.
87 Ibid.
89 As articulated by CSCAP’s ASEAN-ISIS founders in ibid., 83.
For instance, it was CSCAP which laid the ground-work for the ARF to progress in Confidence Building Measures. The Working Group on Concepts of Comprehensive and Cooperative Security’s memoranda, submitted to the ARF Senior Official’s Meeting in April in 1996, provided a discursive framework through which to define comprehensive and cooperative security in the context of the ARF and Asia. After providing these frames, CSCAP has gone on to use them to identify NTS issues as largely problems of cooperation. In this manner, numerous NTS issues have been presented under the assumption that collective/cooperative security measures are the best solution: economic interdependence (1996), regional security challenges posed by environmental degradation, food shortages and energy scarcity (1997), implications of the Asian Economic Crisis 1997-98 on the structure of regional security (published in 1999), and human security (2001).

Other Study Groups have focused directly on security cooperation. The Study Group on Multilateral Security Governance in Northeast Asia/ North Pacific was established with the goal of “exploring how a de facto multilateral security framework for Northeast Asia could be created from coordinating and linking the efforts of existing institutions in the region.” CSCAP meetings have provided fertile discursive spaces, where it has actively promoted

moving from competitive security to common and cooperative security via regional confidence building. This process, undertaken through Track 2 dialogues and WG projects, is designated to created ideation changes and social learning ultimately leading to new mechanisms for international security cooperation.

While the idea of cooperative security has caught on, the ARF and other formal processes have been slow to progress. This difficulty is especially clear in the stalled transition from confidence building to preventive diplomacy.

Just as CSCAP has demonstrated that security cooperation is possible, it has also been the driving force pushing the ARF to transition from Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to Preventive Diplomacy (PD). The ARF has struggled to make the move from low demand Confidence Building Measures to more concrete Preventive Diplomacy measures. The first Inter-Sessional Meeting on CBMs and PD was unable to reconcile the nature of NTS issues with regional diplomatic norms. Eventually, “[t]he meeting noted that any future proposals on PD ‘must take full account of the sovereignty of individual countries and that any future implementation of these proposals will take place at a pace comfortable to all.’” In other words, the meeting was unable to reach a compromise with the more recalcitrant members on PD measures and was unable to progress without consensus. Consequently, studies on PD were delayed and eventually outsourced to Track II institutions.

92 Ball, “CSCAP’s Foundation and Achievements.”
93 Ibid., 40.
95 Ibid.
In 1999, CSCAP organised a workshop in Bangkok focusing on Preventive Diplomacy. The workshop took place just prior to the ARF-ISG on Confidence Building Measures, and participants included 18 of the 27 members of the ARF who attended in their informal capacities.\(^7\) The Working Group was able to establish a ‘working definition’ of PD along with several key principles. The working definition was eventually adopted by the ARF in 2001 and has provided a framework through which the ARF has approached all of its subsequent matters of Preventive Diplomacy.\(^8\) According to a report by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade:

> The CSCAP meeting on preventive diplomacy held immediately before the ISG was successful in developing a set of draft principles. This is a useful and helpful document, which will no doubt form the basis of the ARF’s work in their area in the next year.\(^9\)

CSCAP continues to push for stronger regional governance. In 2007, at the request of ARF representatives, it held a one-off study group devoted specifically to ‘Preventive Diplomacy and the Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum.’\(^10\) The CSCAP Study Group submitted a proposal regarding the future of ARF institutional development. Unsurprisingly, the proposal promoted a stronger ARF and contained the following suggestions from CSCAP Singapore: (1) establish an ARF secretariat, which is an upgraded version of the ARF Unit; (2) create the position of an ARF Secretary General, with clear role and functions; (3) hold a regular ARF Summit with APEC or the East Asia Summit; (4) strengthen ties with the United Nations and other regional organizations and institutions; (5) adopt the ‘full consensus minus-x’ principle in decision-making, especially in emergency or crisis situations; (6) create the Regional Risk Reduction Centre; and (7) envision the role and niche of the ARF through a vision statement.\(^11\) Adoption of these proposals would strengthen the ARF through the establishment of a secretariat and, perhaps more importantly, do away with the necessity of consensus. It also commented that “the ARF should consider developing a Vision 2020 Statement that would clarify the ARF’s objectives and provide specific benchmarks for its progress”.

The ARF did, indeed, develop a 2020 Vision Statement, which incorporated many of the suggestions made at this meeting regarding the implementation of PD and necessary strengthening of ARF institutions (creating Friends of the ARF Chair

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\(^7\) Chairmen’s Report (Final), “CSCAP Study Group on Preventive Diplomacy and the Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum.”


\(^10\) “CSCAP’s Foundation and Achievements.”

and greater use of the Expert and Eminent Persons’ Meeting). The Vision 2020 Statement commits the ARF to “develop preventive diplomacy in priority areas the directly affect our peoples and that are insurmountable through our individual actions alone, namely those pertaining to non-traditional, trans-boundary and inter-state security challenges.” Full implementation would be a major step in institutionalising the ARF, progressing with Preventive Diplomacy, and reaffirming the legitimacy of the ARF as an action-oriented institution. These proposals were mobilised in the *Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN Regional Forum Vision Statement* in 2009.

The ARF has also adapted some institutional characteristics from CSCAP. The ARF Defence track has recognised the value of informal discursive space and has applied this knowledge to aspects of its ‘defence track’, where it has intentionally adopted think tank style structures for its dialogues. The ARF instituted an informal Defence Officials lunch devoted to the discussion of issues of common interests in an attempt to create discursive space favourable to security governance. This informal defence discussion was supplemented by the establishment of the ARF-Defence Officials’ Dialogues (ARF-DOD) in 2002. This dialogue is a clear attempt by the ARF to create ‘think tank-like’ discourse that is still under government control. Participants are not required to issue any formal statements for inclusion in ARF proceedings and all discussions are considered non-binding and informal so as to “allow for a more frank and free flowing exchange of views.”

The relationship between CSCAP and the ARF is paradoxically adversarial and symbiotic. CSCAP has challenged the ARF concerning its adherence to the ASEAN-way and slow adaptation to regional governing needs; however, it has also acted as a governing proxy for the ARF by supplying the informal diplomacy spaces where ARF policy can be trialled and developed. Furthermore, in exchange for providing innovative policy advice and discursive space, the ARF provides legitimacy to CSCAP forums and direct access to governing authority. The affiliation between the two organisations has ultimately strengthened both, as they have worked together towards stronger forms of regional security governance.

**Conclusion**

Using the political processes explored in this and other chapters, CSCAP has sought
to induce institutional change by promoting the NTS agenda. CSCAP has used its formidable discursive abilities, in terms of creating forums for discussion and in developing ideas, to provide ideas supporting changes in the institutions and norms defining the ARF. It has provided the discursive framework for Confidence Building Measures, defined and guided the move toward Preventive Diplomacy, and succeeded in institutionalising the ARF by pushing for an ARF Unit at the ASEAN Secretariat. It continues to promote institutionalisation through projects like the ARF Fund, a voluntary fund established in 2005 to support the development and implementation of ARF policies and decisions. 107

Ultimately, CSCAP has successfully promoted NTS ideas into the ARF from both formal and informal avenues of access. It has created discursive space where it has effectively cultivated ideas that have gone on to inform developments in the ARF’s purpose, policy and institutionalisation (as evidenced by the ASEAN Vision Statement 2020). As a discursive actor, CSCAP has used ideas to frame security ideas, shape political agendas and paradigms, and smooth the transition of ideas from one political fora to another. It has been able to coordinate policy across the region at a Track II level and to cultivate an expansive network for idea dissemination. CSCAP has succeeded in communicating important security ideas both vertically and horizontally to state and non-state actors. Most importantly, CSCAP discursive space has given it an unparalleled ability to transmit sensitive and challenging policy ideas across political space using the discursive mechanisms of agenda setting/problem framing and networks. Weaknesses in the ARF structure, internal constraints due to diverse CSCAP membership, and limitations imposed by the diplomatic norms of the ASEAN-way have hampered institutional change. However, gradual change has been occurring and each move, however slight, is a step towards institutionalising programmatic NTS ideas into the governing structure of the region.

107 Morada, “The ASEAN Regional Forum: Origins and Evolution.”
Chapter 6

The International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Shangri-La Dialogue

“As a key part of the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region, I consider this an excellent opportunity to gain a greater appreciation from the national and international perspectives, and share NATO’s views and understanding of this region.”

Introduction

The Asia Security Summit, commonly known as the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD), is the exception amongst the rule regarding regional security dialogues. The SLD is remarkable for a number of reasons, foremost amongst them, is that the Dialogue is the only Track I process that has been initiated and managed by a think tank, in this case, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). When it was created, the SLD was also the first and only regional option for Asian defence ministers and security personnel to meet in a multilateral setting. Because the SLD was created by a non-governmental actor and established externally to ASEAN, it provides a discursive space unlike any other available in the region at that time. This discursive space retains all of the political legitimacy and authority of a formal process but without the usual constraints of the Asian diplomatic norms. It provides a much-needed location for defence ministers to discuss security problems considered too sensitive for more formal policy-making forums. All of these factors have made the SLD the preeminent security dialogue in the region, formal or informal.

Three individual characteristics distinguish the SLD from other think tank organised processes: its Track I status, the structure and influence of its discursive space, and its rapid and high degree of institutionalisation. While traditional think tank networks like AI and CSCAP have operated from the sidelines of existing power structures, the IISS has broken from this mould and established its own process. Established in 2002, the

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2 Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”
3 Ibid.
The Shangri-La Dialogue has no governmental affiliations. In fact, at the time there were no formal defence ministers’ dialogues for the SLD to affiliate itself with. As a result, the Dialogue has become the de facto defence forum for the region. Its correspondingly high status has given the SLD a high level of political legitimacy and authority and has allowed it to exert substantial ideational influence over regional security discourses.

The discursive space created by the SLD is significant because it is both politically powerful and comparatively free from ASEAN norms of diplomacy. This is an unusual combination for the region where power is usually vested in formal dialogues like ASEAN, the ARF, and the ADMM Plus processes. But these processes are severely constrained in their use and exertion of authority because of the limitations imposed by diplomatic norms. The IISS has successfully melded the power and legitimacy of a formal process with the informality derived from the SLD’s status as an ‘external’ or ‘non-state’ process. The resulting combination is formidable in its ability to deal with controversial ideas, facilitate discourse, and then translate discourse into political action.

The IISS has adeptly used its attractive discursive space as a mechanism to promote non-traditional security ideas. And the Shangri-La Dialogue has become the main venue through which the IISS frames non-traditional security ideas as legitimate security problems, places these ideas on the agenda, and disseminates them through available networks. Interestingly, the inclusion of NTS ideas in the Dialogue has been an important factor in making the forum so appealing to security policy makers.

The SLD’s success has allowed it to evolve from a simple security conference into an accepted part of the regional security architecture. The first Dialogue attracted participants from 22 nations, 11 from the ministerial level. This number had risen to 28 by 2010, with high level representation from all participating nations. To date, the Shangri-La Dialogue is the most institutionalised and powerful security forum available in the Asia Pacific. The rapid pace of the SLD’s institutionalisation and its growing political influence is remarkable, given the generally slow pace of institutional change in Asia. Furthermore, the Dialogue has arguably served as a catalyst and a template for governmentally organised dialogues, which have emerged since its establishment.

This chapter commences with a brief history of the IISS. The IISS is a London based think tank that enjoys a global reach due to its overseas branches. An overview of IISS gives insight into the discursive tools used by the Institute and which are subsequently available to the SLD. This section then discusses the role of the Shangri-La Dialogue in regional security development. Even in its formative stages, the SLD was engineered to be distinct from other regional think tank processes. Special attention will be paid to how the SLD provided previously unavailable political space for discourse and has structured this space in a particular way. The Dialogue’s production and management

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4 Ibid.
5 Ball, “Reflections on Defence Security in East Asia.”
of this space, and how this has increased its discursive ability, will be addressed. Additionally, special attention is given to the distinctive political circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Dialogue and how these have contributed to its subsequent authority and legitimacy.

Following the introduction of the IISS, this chapter discusses how SLD discursive space has become an intrinsic part of regional security governance. The Dialogue has both a public and private persona, which loosely coincides with formal and informal political spaces. Publicly, it also offers rare opportunities for defence officials to meet, discuss security matters in a multi-lateral forum, and assert and clarify their country’s defence policy to a broader audience. Privately (or at least less publicly), the Dialogue is an opportunity for informal discussions targeting sensitive issues. It also caters for exclusive, and strictly private, meetings between defence officials, which take place both before and during the Dialogue. As the architect of the SLD, the IISS wields formidable authority over the content and context of the discourse occurring. It controls where the Dialogue is held, who attends (Track II participants), what issues are discussed, and how. The IISS combines its structural control with the ideational freedom granted by its non-state status. Free of ASEAN norms, the SLD entertains ideas and policies normally excluded from formal processes. Foremost, this means it is the location for the governance of many NTS issues. This section continues by looking at how the IISS has used its discursive space to promote the NTS agenda. A focus on problem framing/agenda setting, networking, and institutionalisation is used to demonstrate how the IISS, through the use of the SLD, has promoted NTS ideas directly and indirectly into regional security discourses.

Finally, the conclusion covers how the SLD’s discursive strategies have resulted in the successful transmission of ideas to policy makers, and the transformation of these ideas into concrete policies and institutions. Not only has the IISS successfully institutionalised the SLD, but it has also injected NTS ideas into other governing institutions, such as the ARF, the ADMM and the ADMM Plus processes. In this regard, the SLD has surpassed AI and CSCAP, who are restricted in the institutions they can influence due to their governmental connections. Ultimately, the discursive space of the SLD has allowed the Dialogue to become a well-regarded and important aspect of security governance in the region. The SLD has actively engaged with the NTS agenda as part of its position at the forefront of security. This has helped the Dialogue cultivate a reputation for being innovative and relevant to emerging security issues. Subsequently, other regional processes have taken note and attempted to emulate aspects of the SLD in an attempt to share in its success.
The Shangri-La Dialogue as a Political Actor

The Shangri-La Dialogue is a product of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a London based think tank with branches in Singapore, Bahrain and the United States. The IISS was founded in 1958 with the goal of promoting civilized dialogue in the face of the nuclear proliferation of the Cold War. Over time, the IISS has broadened its focus from nuclear deterrence and arms control to encompass all major aspects of security.\(^6\)

The IISS and all of its branches seek to inform government policy by providing timely and relevant policy analysis to political actors. As an organisation, it has sought to engage in the discursive process through the use of written publications, online databases, conferences, dialogues, lectures, and working groups. These activities, while often available to the public, are aimed at political and intellectual elites with the goal of facilitating coordinative discourse both amongst political and intellectual actors and within their groups.\(^7\)

The IISS’s Asia office opened in 2001, where it faced a political environment markedly different than that of Europe, especially concerning security. Asian nations have historically been hesitant to develop institutionalised security organisations, preferring to instead rely on diplomatic organisations. The region lacked a formal defence ministers’ meeting and, as a consequence, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was considered the “main venue for high-level, multilateral, inter-governmental security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific.”\(^8\) However, the ARF is a forum designed for, and dominated by, foreign ministers. It was not until 1996 that defence ministers were even invited to participate in the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). Though support for a defence ministers’ meeting had been expressed by regional actors, separate attempts by both the then US Defense Secretary William Parry and then Thai Defence Minister Yongchaiyudh to establish such a defence minister’s meeting were unsuccessful.\(^9\)

The IISS established the Shangri-La Dialogue in response to the “striking gap in the roster of inter-governmental meetings in the Asia-Pacific region.”\(^10\) The goal of the Dialogue was to initiate a forum for defence ministers aimed towards confidence building and fostering practical security cooperation.\(^11\) The IISS modelled the SLD on the annual Munich Conference in Security Policy (Wehrkunde) – a security dialogue

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\(^7\) Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
\(^9\) Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”
\(^11\) Ibid.
focusing on European and transatlantic security challenges. According to Ron Huisken, defence officials in Europe already met regularly in the formal meetings of NATO and the Western European Union, and the *Wehrkunde* developed as a kind of informal time-out.\(^\text{12}\) Huisken notes that Asia has taken the opposite approach and, where European Defence Ministers had formal meetings prior to establishing an informal one, Asia was to have “an informal time-out for Ministers in the absence of formal meetings.”\(^\text{13}\) Unlike the *Wehrkunde*, which operated in conjunction with an official security forum – NATO, the SLD was designed as a stand-alone process.

At the time, all other non-governmental (Track II) dialogues in the Asian region operated in conjunction with a governmental (Track I) counterpart. For instance, AI is the non-governmental counterpart to ASEAN, and CSCAP performs a similar function for the ARF.\(^\text{14}\) However, the IISS created the SLD with the intention of establishing the Dialogue as a Track I institution in its own right.\(^\text{15}\) The fact that no pre-existing defence minister’s meeting was available is a telling indication of the diffusion of defence and security operations in the region at that time.

Establishing a defence dialogue in Asia was an exceptionally complicated task, particularly for a foreign think tank. And, once the idea for such a meeting was envisioned, it was up to the Director of IISS-Asia, Dr John Chipman, to find a suitable location. Australia initially emerged as a potential host for the first Dialogue; however, Australia’s perceived remoteness made Singapore a more attractive location.\(^\text{16}\) Toward this end, Director John Chipman proposed the Dialogue to Singapore’s Minister of Defence and Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tony Tan. Dr Tan agreed with the necessity of a dialogue where defence ministers could meet in a multilateral and neutral setting to discuss matters of mutual concern.\(^\text{17}\)

Minister Tan agreed to act of the SLD’s behalf in Singapore. He contacted the Institute of Defence and Security Studies (IDSS) at Nanyang Technological University, a governmentally affiliated think tank, to determine if it was interested in being a local facilitator. The former director of the IDSS (and the then current President of Singapore, S. R. Nathan) offered the facilities of the IDSS, along with some organisational assistance. This arrangement would last until ISIS-Asia opened


\(^{13}\) Ibid.


\(^{15}\) Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.

\(^{16}\) Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”

Dr Tan then took the proposal to the Singaporean Cabinet, where it was approved and given further assistance from the Ministry of Defence and other Ministries. Involving the Singaporean government was a significant strategic decision and had several positive effects on the establishment of the SLD. The Singaporean government and the IDSS were able to provide funding and logistical support. Additionally, it also provided access to the personal and professional networks of Defence Minister Dr Tan and President S.R. Nathan. It also guaranteed the participation of Singaporean officials. More importantly, the involvement of the Singaporean government offered the Dialogue political legitimacy and helped establish it as a legitimate Track I forum. The IDSS and the Singaporean government acted as localising actors for the goals and methods of the Dialogue, endowing it with a regional origin and context, thereby rendering it more acceptable to other regional actors.

According to Dr Tan, Singapore was a good host for the Dialogue due to the following reasons: Singapore has good relations with its neighbours and regional actors, such as the US, China and India; Singapore is considered a neutral country in that it is neither large nor strong enough to militarily threaten its neighbours; it is perceived as being invested in regional stability without too much bias towards its own self-interests; and it is seen as an efficient and safe country, making it an adequate location for a meeting of high ranking military officials. All of these factors encouraged a positive reception for the SLD.

As seen in the previous case studies, the political, social and institutional context of discourse is of equal importance to the content of the idea being conveyed. In the case of the SLD, the combination of an unaffiliated international think tank with a friendly and non-threatening regional partner had favourably predisposed other regional actors towards the Dialogue. These factors, mixed with a shifting balance of power in the region, an uncertain security landscape, and the need for a regional defence minister’s meeting, further increased the Dialogue’s appeal. The Dialogue’s informal nature combined with the above contextual factors allowed it to take root, in spite of the region’s longstanding disinclination towards institutionalised security organisations.

Once the Dialogue had the support of the IDSS and the Singaporean Government, it used the personal and political networks of those involved to garner support and attract influential and prominent attendees. This was essential to establish the Dialogue as a serious security forum, particularly if it wished to be considered Track I. Using personal connections, Dr Chipman was able to secure the attendance of a US congressional delegation to the inaugural Dialogue and, as one IISS member commented, “with these signed up, it become much easier to get senior figures from the region involved. The process then became self-generating in a way, with senior US officials willing to attend

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18 Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”
19 Kato, “Shangri-La Dialogue a success.”
20 Ibid.
once those from the region signed up.”

This self-generating process has continued, and the number of nations represented, as well as the number of attendees at the ministerial level, has increased every year. The attendance of important political actors, the localising influence of the Singaporean Government, and the opportunity for defence ministers to meet multilaterally have made the SLD an attractive location for political and military actors to engage in discourse. These factors have legitimised the SLD as a Track I forum and contributed to the IISS’s image as an authoritative and politically impartial provider of policy information. The SLD is now well on its way to becoming a political process in and of itself, and the IISS has evolved beyond the role of policy analysis to “become an actor in some of the debates in a more direct way.” Desmond Ball is more succinct in his appraisal of the Dialogue’s influence in the Asia-Pacific: he concludes that “The SLD has had considerable policy impact.”

The Shangri-La Dialogue and Discursive Space

The most remarkable aspect of the SLD is that it provides political space outside of the formal discursive processes in the region. This has two very important implications for the SLD. First, this means that the SLD is free from the normative diplomatic constraints (i.e., the ASEAN-way) of diplomacy that characterises other regional discursive spaces but still enjoys the political legitimacy of a Track I process. Second, being the architect of this space has given IISS unprecedented freedom in the management of the forum and has allowed the IISS to control many important aspects of discourse at the Dialogue. The IISS determines the content of the discourse (what is said) as well as the context (who says what, to whom, and in what manner). This structural influence, combined with other discursive tools, such as agenda setting and problem framing, networking, and institutionalisation, has made the SLD an exemplary mechanism of promoting ideas through political space.

The SLD functions as a location for discourse in two ways. First, it sets the ‘stage’ for successful discourse, both coordinative and communicative. The IISS has structured the SLD in such a way as to encourage the active introduction and promotion of new ideas, including the programmatic ideas of the NTS security agenda.

The SLD is an established annual regional Defence Ministers’ meeting with a wide-ranging agenda and an uninhibited and partially public debate involving non-official experts from across the region. The SLD provides an important platform from which the national stakeholders in Asia-Pacific security may rehearse and clarify their defence policies, while simultaneously affording significant opportunities for more detailed, off-the-record discussion of key security concerns.

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22 Ibid.
23 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
25 Ibid., 20.
This approach to defence diplomacy is distinct from all other Track I regional dialogues, which have pre-determined agendas and inherent structural constraints inhibiting the introduction of new ideas. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel commented en route to the 2013 Shangri-La Dialogue, “there’s no other event, no other venue like it. It is that important.”

The first day of the SLD is composed of independently arranged bi-lateral discussions amongst defence ministers and military officials. These meeting give defence personnel the opportunity to meet privately with their counterparts and discuss sensitive security concerns. The Shangri-La Dialogue officially opens in the evening with a reception and keynote address delivered by the head of government of a participating state. These addresses often draw attention to the prevailing theme of the Dialogue, and the 2011 address delivered by Malaysian Prime Minister Razak focused on non-traditional security challenges and reiterated that “[t]hese [challenges] could not be dealt with by individual nations or by old security structures.”

The remaining two days of the Dialogue are filled with five or six ‘plenary’ sessions devoted to one of the reoccurring agenda threads of the SLD (these threads will be discussed in more detail in the networking section of this chapter). Plenary sessions serve as a broad platform for communicative discourse and provide a public venue for defence ministers to communicate ideas to the broader public at large. They are used by defence ministers to highlight security concerns, clarify their country’s security policy, and propose new policy ideas. For instance, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates used his 2011 plenary address to identify what the United States perceived as problems in the Asian region and then outline the policy of the US in regard to these problems. Secretary Gates also used this opportunity to reiterate the United States’ enduring commitment to the region – assurances which were widely reported in the international press.

26 Chuck Hagel, United States Secretary of Defense, “News Transcript: Media Availability with Secretary Hagel Enroute to Singapore,” (United States Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 30 May 2013).
27 Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”
The SLD is also the location for more subtle forms of signalling. The actions and composition of national delegations are often imbued with political meaning. According to Shangri-La participant Rory Medcalf, “the most important messages of the Shangri-La Dialogue … [can] be found among the barbs of etiquette, the clues between the lines, the whispers in the corridors, the things unsaid and the questions unanswered.”

What Medcalf is noting is the importance of the context of discourse and its impact on how ideas are conveyed. For example, the ‘charm offensive’ launched by Chinese officials at the 2013 Dialogue was widely seen as a gesture by the Chinese government (particularly to the US) that it was sincere in its indication that it was open to discussing sensitive issues. The United States’ enthusiastic response to this indication and its reciprocating good will was, in return, a subtle signal to the rest of the world that the two countries were actively working to overcome the thorny issues troubling their relationship.

The idea being conveyed (an openness toward discussing sensitive security issues) was augmented by the sympathetic way in which it was presented. The context of the idea added additional nuance and meaning to the content of what was being said. Even political interactions as mundane as public questions are awash with political significance. When a high ranking Chinese Lieutenant General posed questions to Vietnam’s Prime Minister and the US Secretary of Defense, it was interpreted as a sign of respect. Likewise, the assignment of a ‘mere’ Lieutenant Colonel to ask questions of the Japanese Defence Ministers was interpreted as ‘belittling.’

Though these seem to be informal gestures, they are evidence that discourse is interactive, meaning that how ideas are received by the audience is also politically significant. To put it bluntly, Chinese officials were indicating their willingness to entertain ideas concerning security if they came from the US or Vietnam, but were not receptive to ideas coming from Japan. And, as observed by Medcalf and others, when engaging in the ‘interactive process of conveying ideas’ the how and by whom are equally significant and important aspects of discourse as what.

More direct forms of discourse take place in the private simultaneous ‘special sessions’, which are held concurrently with some plenary sessions. Unlike plenary sessions, these are strictly off the record and provide a space for coordinative discourse between defence officials and experts regarding specific security issues as well as issues raised in plenary sessions. While the plenary and special sessions are very structured, defence

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officials also have the opportunity to interact informally at the private ministerial lunches held on the second and third days. None of the SLD sessions are subject to the norms of the ASEAN-way, and the private sessions in particular allow for frank and forthright discussion outside of the public eye and removed from public expectations.

As a means of encouraging the free exchange of ideas, the IISS has taken great pains to include Track II actors in the discursive process. A diverse array of Track II participants are regularly invited to attend and are given ample opportunity to interact with defence personnel over the course of the Dialogue. They can publicly ask questions as well as mingle with officials during breaks and at private sessions. The IISS goes beyond inviting scholars and academics and includes “journalists, business, lawyers, and opposition MPs … from those countries that have opposition MPs.”

This level of inclusion is very unusual for a Track I dialogue, and also makes it distinct from other Track II processes. According to one IISS staff member, the SLD is distinguished from indigenous Track II organisations such as CSCAP and the Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR) in that focused effort is made to ensure that NGO attendees represent a varied and useful array of viewpoints and that the “composition of attendees remains dynamic and is not prone to stagnation, as can sometimes become the case in the regional dialogue business.”

The last step the IISS has taken to create a productive location for communicative and coordinative discourse has been to steer away from making the SLD excessively formal and procedural, characteristics which have hindered discursive opportunities in other official regional dialogues. In direct opposition of the non-confrontational and consensus-based type of diplomacy dominating other regional forums, the SLD is known as a location for frank and forthright discussion. This is perhaps why Chinese delegates at the 9th SLD in 2010 felt able to openly discuss their government’s frustration with North Korea over the Cheonan incident. The open nature of SLD discursive space makes it no coincidence that NTS problems, given their politically sensitive nature, are more likely to be addressed at the SLD than in other, more restricted, forums. These sensitive problems can be broached in the plenary sessions (which are on record) and further articulated in the smaller break-out groups. The most sensitive of issues are often reserved for the private meetings which take place on the margins of the Dialogue and are held between defence officials.

On the sidelines of the scheduled plenary and special sessions, SLD organisers have provided private locations, where sensitive political topics can be discussed in private meetings removed from public scrutiny and diplomatic expectations. For many


36 Ibid., 364.

defence ministers, the SLD is the only reliable or easily manageable opportunity to privately speak with their foreign counterparts. These private bi-lateral meetings (up to 15-20 over the course of the Dialogue) are the most intense forms of coordinative policy available to defence ministers and have succeeded in producing some tangible policy results. The most often cited example of this is the ‘Eyes in the Sky’ initiative proposed by the then Malaysian Defence Minister Najib Razak. This initiative called for joint air patrols between Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia in an effort to combat piracy in the Malacca Straits. According to Singapore’s Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen:

the Shangri-La Dialogue played quite a useful platform, along the lines of mil[to-mil] and regional relations. The defence ministers concurred on a practical step to have joint maritime patrols ... As a result of those measures, piracy significantly dropped.

While there is a belief and even an expectation that the bi-lateral meetings are encouraging frank and open discussions, it is hard to confirm as these meetings are most often held in private. A rare glimpse into one of these meetings occurred in 2013, when the Shangri-La Dialogue was the selected location for the first meeting between U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and China’s General Qi Jianguo, deputy chief of staff for the People’s Liberation Army. Their first meeting was arranged by Singapore’s defence minister and held on the sidelines of the Dialogue. Secretary of Defense Hagel and General Jianguo opted for an informal meeting, but elected not to have the meeting in private. The informal tone of the Dialogue was on display as Mr Hagel first told Gen Qi that the U.S. was looking forward to “more ‘constructive engagements’ with Beijing” before bring up on U.S. concerns over China’s alleged role in Cyberspying. According to Shangri-La Dialogue attendee Rory Medcalf, “[t]o be sure, much of the value of the Shangri-La lies in the confidential meetings on the sidelines – leaders, military figures, even intelligence chiefs conferring in twos and threes. Here genuine statecraft is transacted, of the good old secret sort.”

The popularity of the private discussions held at the SLD has been such that the IISS instituted The IISS Fullerton Forum: The Shangri-La Dialogue Sherpa Meeting in 2013. The Fullerton Forum occurs several months before the SLD and is the next

38 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
40 Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence, Singapore, “Potential Threats to Regional Stability in Asia: Ng Eng Hen,” Keynote address delivered at the Fullerton Forum 18 February 2013.
42 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
43 Entous and Wong, “Chinese, U.S. Military Chiefs Break the Ice.”
evolution of discursive space. Expanding on the private bi-lateral meetings held at the SLD, the Forum is a strictly off-the-record meeting designed to provide a location for participants to prepare for the SLD. It provides a staging area to hash out the difficult issues prior to the Dialogue itself. The Forum is composed of a very elite group of policy makers and experts, usually totalling no more than 60 people (compared to the SLD’s average of 360). Participation is restricted to governmental and high level military officials, as well as a limited number of non-governmental participants from each participating country. The discursive space offered by the Fullerton Forum is valuable because it is the only location available for defence ministers to meet privately in a multilateral setting. Even the Shangri-La Dialogue only offers brief opportunities for private meetings, and often only bi-laterally. The Forum offers neutral discursive space where defence officials can map approaches and responses to issues likely to be broached at the SLD. The purpose of the private forum is to aid the SLD in its “tradition of serious debate and frank exchange which have contributed to more effective communication and to more effective multilateral diplomacy among the Asia-Pacific’s national defence establishments.” In other words, the Fullerton Forum provides an additional level of discursive space to supplement and enhance the space already present at the SLD. The ability of the IISS to gather together such influential security officials, combined with its control over the non-state participants from each country, is indicative of its influence in the region.

It is clear that the SLD (and now the Fullerton Forum) is a valuable platform for regional security actors to engage in both types of discourse. The above section has demonstrated the importance of the Dialogue’s context in terms of participation, structure, and the nature of its discursive space. The following section turns the focus to the content of the SLD. It examines the agenda of the Dialogue and the political tool employed the IISS to promote the non-traditional security agenda.

**The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Non-Traditional Security Agenda**

Programmatic Non-Traditional Security ideas are threaded throughout the structure and discourse of the Shangri-La Dialogue. This is not to say that the SLD identifies itself specifically as a promoter of the NTS agenda; however, the IISS openly acknowledges a broadening of the Dialogue towards “so-called ‘non-traditional’ concerns and ‘common security’ challenges.” The SLD has promoted NTS issues as a whole by giving them the same prominence and political salience already given to traditional security issues. First and foremost, the SLD challenges the traditional military-centric concept of security by including NTS problems on its agenda. By

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46 Ibid.

47 The Shangri-La Dialogue: 12.
addressing and identifying cross-border and non-military problems as ‘emerging’ or ‘new’ security problems, it brings attention to, mainstreams, and legitimises them at the regional level. The SLD treats NTS problems in a commensurate manner to traditional security, thereby giving it equal status.

Coupled with presenting NTS problems as ‘security’ in the generic sense, the SLD actively promotes programmatic NTS ideas as ‘solutions’ in the form of regional cooperation and collective security. In fact, the SLD has led by example in this regard. Much like AI and CSCAP in certain capacities, the SLD has served as a trial run for new modes of governance. The SLD is the first gathering of defence ministers, formal or informal, to be institutionalised in the region. The SLD has thus created a ‘norm’ of cooperation between defence ministers which, in turn, may have contributed to the consideration and establishment of other such regional security forums. The very existence of the SLD is evidence that a regional security dialogue is both feasible and practical. It has been argued that the SLD served as a sort of ‘trial run’ for the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting prior to its establishment in 2006. According to Ron Huisken, “it is reasonable to suppose that the Shangri-La process helped to erode the hesitations within ASEAN about allowing defence Ministers to establish their own forum.” Similar to Capie and Taylor, this chapter argues that the emergence and success of the SLD is part of an underlying shift in regional norms emphasising the utility and necessity of multi-lateral dialogues.

There is clear evidence that NTS ideas are becoming increasingly prominent at the SLD. The Dialogue regularly hosts discussions on specific NTS problems, along with enumerating on the broader NTS ideas of the transnational origins of security, collective security and the necessity for stronger regional institutionalisation. These ideas were clearly present in 2010, when then-President Lee Myung-Bak from South Korea addressed all of the delegates at the opening dinner of the Dialogue; in his keynote address, he stated:

Tackling climate change, attaining energy and food security, maintaining healthiness in our financial system, eradicating terrorism, preventing cyber attacks, stopping the illicit trafficking of drugs as well as humans are all new types of threats and challenges. These challenges are not stand-alone challenges but rather, they are often complex and interconnected. In this sense, they are comprehensive threats that require innovative solutions. Modern-day hybrid conflicts directly and indirectly affects all counties and regions, in one way or another. Especially in this day and age when globalization is so widespread and the spread of information so rapid, the complexity of security issues remind us of the importance of common responsibilities. No one country can tackle it alone but rather, regional and international cooperation is vital.

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48 Huisken, “ADMM+8: An Acronym to Watch”.
49 Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”
The importance of NTS ideas was further reinforced the next day in the Second Plenary Session titled ‘New dimensions of Security.’ In this session, India’s National Security Advisor, Shivshankar Menon, declared transnational peace and security a ‘global public good’ and argued “that security challenges have acquired new transnational dimensions, because of recent geopolitical, technological and economic developments, and that these have to be dealt with differently from traditional security issues.”

General Ma Xiaotian from China followed with a collection of proposals aimed at fostering an integrated, common, inclusive, cooperative, and evolving concept of security in order to manage NTS problems. He highlighted the role of an increasingly integrated ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defence Minister’s Meeting (ADMM) in contributing to regional stability and indicated China’s willingness to participate in these forums.

The security proposals, while still premised on the ASEAN-way of diplomacy, show an increasing commitment to multi-lateral security cooperation. China’s statements specifically are remarkable because of the country’s historic reluctance to be involved in multi-lateral dialogues.

By addressing NTS problems in such a prestigious and public forum, all three speakers are acknowledging the existence of NTS problems. Furthermore, they are lending them legitimacy equal to traditional security problems and publicising this legitimacy to the public at large. Finally, and most importantly, these statements politically commit defence ministers to pursuing the NTS ideas of cooperative security and strengthened regional security architectures. Minister’s statements are evidence that NTS issues and ideas are present at the Dialogue and have thrived in the fertile discursive space provided. What these statements do not do is explain how the IISS uses the Dialogue to promote NTS ideas beyond the confines of its own discursive space. Statements such as these have far reaching implications for the furtherance of the NTS agenda.

The following section investigates how the IISS’s discursive strategies of agenda setting/ problem framing, networking, and institutionalisation embed NTS ideas into existing and emerging forms of regional security governance. It is through the use of these tools that the IISS and the SLD have succeeded in changing regional institutions to reflect NTS ideas. Each discursive tool will be evaluated independently; however, it is understood that there is complex dependency between these and other factors in the discursive process.

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52 General Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of General Staff People’s Liberation Army, China, *Speech delivered at the Second Plenary Session at the 9th IISS Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue)*, 5 June 2010; ibid.
Agenda Setting/Framing

As addressed earlier, the agenda of the SLD is the prerogative of the IISS.\(^5^3\) It is formulated by the Director-General of the IISS and senior staff. According to IISS-Asia Executive Director Timothy Huxley, the agenda is designed for continuity from year to year and aims to provide a forum for enduring discussion on important regional topics. Reflecting this, the agenda’s contents are sensitive to regional security concerns and contain topics addressing enduring security problems as well as emerging security problems. According to Director Timothy Huxley, while the agenda is open to suggestions from participants, defence ministers appear satisfied with the SLD’s content and suggestions have rarely been forthcoming.\(^5^4\)

Over its 10 years of operation, the SLD has established a relatively stable agenda with only slight variations in theme or emphasis. Unsurprisingly, given the IISS’s enduring interest in the topic, nuclear proliferation and the management of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) are mainstays of the yearly Dialogue. The other dominant streams, as identified by the IISS, are as follows: the developing roles of the US and other major powers in Asia-Pacific security, maritime security, state security doctrines and plans, appropriate forms of security institution for the region, broadening of the security agenda and, of course, emerging and new forms of security.\(^5^5\) Often, these topics have emphasised practical cooperation amongst regional actors and strengthening regional security architecture with the goal of better managing emerging NTS problems. As the focus on NTS problems has increased, the focus on other topics has decreased. One topic which has lost ground is the focus on the development, budget, and modernisation of defence forces. This topic is likely included at the request of the SLD sponsors, many of which are large weapons or military technology companies. However, as the SLD has become more self-sustaining and less reliant on contributions from sponsors, the prominence of this topic has decreased.\(^5^6\)

Cognisant of the region’s preference for policy drawn along state boundaries and respectful of state sovereignty, the SLD uses state-centric frames when presenting NTS issues and setting its agenda. NTS issues are introduced as threats to state stability, which are subsequently linked to regional stability by highlighting their trans-boundary and regional natures. NTS frames of this kind were evident in the 2012 plenary sessions, where three of the sessions focused on the interconnected nature of security (Deterrence and Regional Stability, China and Regional Stability, and

\(^5^3\) Ball, Milner, and Taylor, “Track 2 Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific.”

\(^5^4\) Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November, 2011.

\(^5^5\) International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Shangri-La Dialogue.

\(^5^6\) Ibid; Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.” The IISS has openly acknowledged it receives financial support from Boeing, BAE Systems, DCNS, EADS, Lockheed Martin, Mitsubishi Corporation, Northrop Grumman, Singapore Technologies Engineering, Space Communications and Thales.
Emerging Risks to global and Asia-Pacific security). Sessions devoted to specific NTS threats, such as climate change, cyber crime and maritime security, further emphasised the collective nature of security. In addition to highlighting ‘new’ security threats, formerly ‘traditional’ security problems have also been reframed in a non-traditional manner. Piracy, given its transnational and cooperative nature, has been rearticulated a non-traditional security issue. In a like manner, certain types of crime (cyber, human trafficking, smuggling) that were formerly considered social problems have been a given a security status (in a non-traditional sense). Alongside identifying NTS issues as threats to states and the region as a whole, the SLD has presented new forms of collective security and governance as the solutions to these problems.

In a recent interview, the President of Singapore Dr Tony Tan (who, if you recall, was the Defence Minister of Singapore at the time of the SLD’s establishment) stated that the SLD was considered relevant to defence ministers precisely because it was seen as addressing important emerging problems.\(^\text{57}\) NTS issues, such as maritime security and counter-terrorism, have come to occupy more space on the agenda than formerly dominant security topics. Some NTS problems, maritime security, counter-terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation, contain obvious connections to traditional security. Others, such as climate change, disasters and disaster relief, energy and food security, and security of space and cyber space would not have been considered ‘security’ a few decades ago.

The IISS has capitalised on the growing salience of NTS issues and propelled the agenda by serving as a location where NTS ideas are articulated, codified and presented to political decision makers and the public. The IISS has acknowledged the shift from traditional security to so-called ‘non-traditional’ concerns and ‘common security’ challenges including energy, food and water security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and pandemic disease, as well as longer-established concerns over proliferation, terrorism and maritime security.\(^\text{58}\)

Since its inception, the SLD has held at least one (and often several) plenary sessions containing NTS ideas. These have taken many forms and can be categorised in three ways: those focusing on specific NTS threats (such as cyber security in 2010, 2012; climate change in 2008, 2010; terrorism/counter-terrorism in 2004-2010, 2012), those devoted to NTS threats more broadly (Emerging Security Threats in 2006, 2008-2012), or those addressing ways to enhance regional security cooperation in general (2004, 2006-2011).\(^\text{59}\) Making these problems the topic of plenary sessions opens up opportunities for communicative and cooperative discourse and gives ministers the

\(^{57}\) Tony Tan, former Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister of Singapore as quoted in Kato, “Shangri-La Dialogue a success.”

\(^{58}\) International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Shangri-La Dialogue: 12.

opportunity to state the position of their government on the issue and air any pressing concerns they may have. On a few occasions specific NTS problems have merited their own plenary sessions. The treatment of cyber security is emblematic of the growing importance of NTS problems. In 2010, it was coupled with space warfare and received discussion in one of the smaller ‘break out groups’ or special sessions. In 2012, the topic’s prominence had increased to the extent that Cyber Crime merited its own plenary session. This plenary session was then followed by a special session focusing on Emerging Risks to Global and Asia-Pacific Security, where the topic could be discussed in more detail.

The SLD’s agenda, and how it is framed, is symptomatic of a larger paradigm shift towards non-traditional security ideology. It is indicative of a growing acceptance of several NTS ideas: collective security, the redefinition of military-centric security, and a gradual distancing from the ASEAN-way of diplomacy. The IISS has been able to use the SLD to introduce NTS ideas into mainstream security discourse and keep these ideas in the political spotlight. It has been able to frame the threats of NTS problems in a state-centric manner to appeal to the existing security paradigm, while concurrently framing the solution of these problems in a broader regional based context. In turn, defence personnel have been attracted to the SLD because of its focus on salient security problems. They have also been drawn to the Dialogue as a location where they can speak more openly about sensitive security topics. In essence, the existence of NTS problems on the SLD agenda has been one of the factors that have made the Dialogue such a resounding success.

Networks

The SLD’s location at the nexus of Track I and Track II has established the IISS as part of both Track I and Track II policy processes. Consequently, the IISS has the enviable ability to promote the NTS agenda in both policy spheres much more easily than think tanks networking at a strictly Track II level. It could even be argued that the SLD functions as a kind of very elite, insider epistemic community according to the variables laid out by Haas. The SLD brings together a small body of experts to inform regional defence policy. The Dialogue’s reliable agenda is evidence of an established set of causal variables which inform its policy research and clearly define its policy enterprise. Both the SLD and the Fullerton Forum are driven by the IISS episteme of defence intelligence and security cooperation, with a focus on the military aspects of regional stability. Its preoccupation with what it calls ‘defence diplomacy’ demonstrates the shared professional judgements amongst SLD staff.

As a consequence of its dual nature, the IISS has two avenues to promote the NTS agenda: as a Track II actor engaging with regional security policy-making networks, or as a Track I actor using the SLD as a discursive platform. Though the IISS is not
formally part of any regional Track II networks, such as ASEAN-ISIS or CSCAP, it is still active in the broader policy community. As part of this group, the IISS engages in “coordinated or collective action aimed at changing international outcomes and national policies.” The IISS has declared that it will “[m]aintain, nurture and continually enlarge an international network of influential and knowledgeable individuals, corporate entities, governments and other bodies to ensure the effective dissemination of information, analysis and understanding of the subjects and activities addressed by the Institutes work.” Towards these ends, the IISS has established overseas offices in Washington, Bahrain, Singapore, as well as a digital office in Korea. These offices serve as locations where the IISS can connect with interested parties, organise meetings and forums, and disseminate ideas. Given its maturity, the IISS has developed a large number of historical networks and has a subscription base of over 2,500 members. Network members include government officials, armed forces personnel, the private sector, banks, risk consultants, NGO, and individual citizens. This network is a vast and well organised means for the IISS to disseminate NTS policy information directly to interested (and potentially influential) parties.

IISS’s formal network is supplemented by a myriad of informal linkages. Links may take the form of cooperative relationships with other think tanks and the personal networks developed by the institute’s scholars and members. The value of these networks, especially those between scholars and political decision makers, should not be underestimated. It is widely acknowledged that it was the personal networks of the, then Director General and Chief Executive John Chipman, which ensured prominent attendees at the first Shangri-La Dialogue. As early as 2000, Director Chipman approached Senator Chuck Hagel (who is now the United States Secretary of Defense) with the idea for the Shangri-La Dialogue. At the time, Senator Hagel was a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and served as an important localising actor for the idea. He proposed the need for a defence dialogue to other members of the Senate, such as Joe Biden and endorsed it to the leadership of the Senate, House, and Foreign Relations committee. He was able to convince the U.S. congress of the importance of the SLD and lead the delegation to the first Dialogue in 2002. These types of networks, time and again, have been deemed as ‘critically important’ when it comes to understanding what decision makers want and getting that information to them.

60 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
63 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
64 Hagel, “News Transcript: Media Availability with Secretary Hagel enroute to Singapore.”
65 Alan Dupont, Director of the Centre for International Security Studies, interview by Author, Sydney, 19 April, 2011.
In regards to disseminating information, the current head of IISS-Asia acknowledges that “[p]ersonal connections are absolutely everything.”

The value of the SLD as a means of maintaining personal networks and establishing new ones encourages ministers to attend year after year. The ideas presented at the SLD then gain access to formidable personal and formal networks of attendees as a means of direct transmission into policy. Given that personal networks played a prominent role in the creation of the SLD, it is only fitting that the dialogue now serves as a location where networks can be established, cultivated, or reaffirmed. In turn, the IISS can use both its own networks and those cultivated by the SLD to serve as a means of transmitting policy ideas to decision makers. Decision makers can then adapt these ideas to their own domestic norms and serve as localising actors when introducing them to their own policy-making circles.

The IISS has used network connections to coordinate and promote programmatic NTS ideas with other think tanks. Recently, the IISS and the Centre for International and Strategic Studies (CISS) in Sydney coordinated a NTS workshop titled the ‘Food Security in Asia Project’. The workshop was co-hosted by both think tanks and organised to run immediately following the SLD Dialogue, with all SLD participants invited to attend. In order to encourage SLD participants to stay on for the workshop, the think tanks offered to cover the additional cost of accommodation to those interested in staying. The workshop explored the connection between food scarcity and nation-state stability. Coordinative discourse between the IISS and the CISS allowed for the workshop to follow the Dialogue, thereby encouraging the attendance of high level officials and equating the problem of food (in)security with national security.

The IISS also uses the SLD to disseminate NTS ideas at the Track I level. It is often the only opportunity that defence ministers have to meet informally or multi-laterally, and it has become a networking hub for its participants. High-level defence and military participants use the Dialogue as a location to reinforce formal connections, as well as to cultivate informal networks. In turn, all of these networks have the potential to act as avenues of dissemination for the ideas and policies presented during the Dialogue. The SLD influences the intensive formal and informal networking occurring by managing who attends, the context of interaction, and the dominant ideas presented. As such, the SLD acts as a discursive location (as opposed to actor) on three levels: horizontally amongst Track I officials, horizontally amongst Track II officials, and vertically between Track I and Track II. By facilitating a multi-directional flow of information and ideas, the SLD is a prime location for the promotion of NTS agenda – and as a de facto location for NTS governance.

66 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
67 Alan Dupont, Director of the Centre for International Security Studies, interview by Author, Sydney, 19 April, 2011.
Institutionalisation

The IISS and the SLD have succeeded in institutionalising NTS ideas using two distinctive methods. The first concerns the successful institutionalisation of the SLD itself as a new mode of governance. The second is the Dialogue’s role in promoting or institutionalising NTS ideas into other regional forums.

The SLD is, by far, the most institutionalised of the four case studies evaluated and the only think tank organised dialogue operating at the Track I level. The SLD has become part of the Asia-Pacific security architecture because it has been able to demonstrate its usefulness to participants, attract regular attendance, monetary support, and be seen as a legitimate venue in which to devote time and resources.

Institutionalisation of the SLD has been driven by the Dialogue’s ability to clarify interests and identify potential solutions in the face of uncertain security situations; in other words, to create causal stories. It has done so using NTS ideas as its foundation. The Dialogue contravenes the ASEAN-way by encouraging frank discussion between participants as a means to clarify the interests of regional actors. Additionally, it is a location where the previously off-limits and avoided topics of domestic politics and trans-boundary problems can be discussed. This has gone a long way in acknowledging and addressing relevant and pressing security topics which have been passed over in other regional security forums. Once problems of importance have been identified, the Dialogue can then act as a rallying point for cooperative or collective action.

The SLD’s institutionalisation was helped along by the lack of any viable and effective Track I counterpart. In addition to becoming a regular feature of security discourse, the SLD has become formal enough to serve as the site of tangible agreements between states addressing non-traditional issues. In 2008, ministers attending the SLD agreed to a set of principles guiding responses to humanitarian disasters. This was mostly in response to the devastation cause by Cyclone Nargis and the Sichuan earthquake but also resolved lingering concerns regarding the responsibilities of governments when responding to disasters and the use of unilateral forces when delivering aid. It is noteworthy that this agreement occurred at the SLD and not at the ARF, the designated forum for security governance in the region.

The second means of institutionalising NTS ideas has been by transmitting these ideas to other regional forums. This external institutionalisation (the embedding of NTS ideas outside of the SLD) has occurred at both the domestic and regional levels and has been either done directly by introducing and discussing ideas, which are later applied to other regional institutions, or indirectly by introducing ideas to localising actors who then transmit the NTS ideas to other processes for discussion. Ideas introduced using the latter may be more favourably received as they appear indigenous in origin.

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The SLD has served as a communicative platform to promote the idea of cooperative security governance as well as a base from which to debate existing forms of security governance. The NTS ideas of strengthening regional structures and enhanced regional cooperation are continually discussed at the SLD with the goal of applying them elsewhere. In his address during the Second Plenary Session of the SLD in 2010, India’s National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon not only identified an array of NTS problems as significant security threats (climate change, cyber warfare, terrorism, energy security and a global tragedy of the commons) but, more importantly, he called for a rebuilding of the existing institutional structures of the international system to reflect current security realities. This proposed rebuilding would incorporate the power of non-state actors and be “inclusive and flexible enough to avoid the inadequacies of existing international organisations.”

Interestingly, he then references successful regional cooperation regarding the security of the Malacca Straits. Cooperation that is often credited to the Shangri-La Dialogue. Along a similar vein, United States Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, in his 2008 speech at the Dialogue, explicitly indicated the willingness of the United States to participate in a regional security organisation:

In recent years, discussions about a “new security architecture” in Asia have assumed more prominence. We certainly share an interest in institutionalizing various forums to deal with region-specific problems, and we intend to participate in their evolution. In the meantime, we will continue to depend on our time-tested Asian alliance architecture, a framework embracing many overlapping security relationships and still evolving after the end of the Cold War.

This speech is an indirect endorsement of new modes of governance or a ‘new security architecture’, and not one that is necessarily based on the ASEAN-way. Secretary Gates is using his speech to highlight what he perceives as a need for new forms of security governance to deal with increasingly complicated security situations.

The call for stronger regional institutions have not fallen on deaf ears, as Secretary Gates was able to use the SLD in 2010 to express his pleasure and acceptance of an invitation for the U.S. to attend the expanded ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) in Hanoi, while praising the increase in multilateral forums in Asian countries to discuss security issues. The next year, Defense Secretary Gates again reiterated support for strong multilateral forums by stating:

One of the critical challenges of the Asian security environment has long been the lack of strong mechanisms for cooperation between nations in the region. Over the past few years, I have made it a personal priority to support efforts under way to remedy this problem. This is the reason that last year the US was the first non-ASEAN nation to accept the invitation to join the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) forum. It was an honour to attend the inaugural

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69 Menon, “New Dimensions of Security.”
The SLD is likely the only communicative platform where such declarations could be made, and Defense Secretary Gates is using the Dialogue as a communicative platform. Declaring his support at the SLD is a strong show of support that enhances the legitimacy and perceived authority of the ADMM, and encourages further regional cooperation. Many other defence ministers expressed similar sentiments of support over the course of the Dialogue.

The SLD has become a prominent platform for both communicative and coordinative discourse on the topic of regional security cooperation. The norm of stronger regional security governance appears to be gaining acceptance, and even countries traditionally suspicious of multilateral frameworks are beginning to demonstrate cautious support. In 2013, the Keynote address of the SLD was given by the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Nguyen Tan Dung. The prime minister pointed out the increasing severity and acuteness of NTS issues. He subsequently commented that, while there were plenty of existing security architectures, “what is still missing, or at least still insufficient, is the strategic trust in the implementation of those arrangements.”

In addition to serving as a forum for discussing and promoting regional security organisations, the SLD has led by example. It is arguable that the SLD served as a precursor to the creation of the ASEAN Defence Minister’s Meeting (ADMM). A few years after the creation of the SLD, ASEAN reconsidered the need for a Defence Minister’s meeting and established the ADMM in 2006. There are two different perspectives concerning the influence of the SLD on the creation of the ADMM. This first is that the SLD created a ‘habit of cooperation’ amongst defence ministers which led the ASEAN countries to realise the feasibility and value of a defence ministers meeting. The second is that the SLD was established as a response to the slow and ineffective forums offered by ASEAN. The meeting subsequent success challenged the supremacy of ASEAN as the sole legitimate regional actor. ASEAN was forced to established the ASEAN Defence Minister’s Meeting as a way of demonstrating is continued legitimacy.

Tellingly, the two organisations share many similarities. At present, the SLD hosts a larger number of defence ministers, but the ADMM has moved quickly to expand its political footprint. In 2010, the ADMM established the ADMM Plus, which is composed

73 Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister, Vietnam, “Building Strategic Trust,” Keynote address delivered at the 12th IISS Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue) 31 May 2013.
74 Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia; Huiskens, “ADMM+8: An Acronym to Watch”.

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of the ten ASEAN Defence Ministers along with the defence ministers from the United States, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, and South Korea. Though the ADMM Plus only meets triennially it is almost as large as the ARF. During their annual meeting, the ADMM started taking on security problems once mainly discussed at the SLD. The ADMM has placed great emphasis on promoting regional defence and security cooperation and has adopted concept papers concerning the role of the military for humanitarian and disaster relief, the role of civil society and the defence establishment and, most interestingly, non-traditional security. It has also taken on some of the structural characteristics of the SLD, such as informal meetings held on the sidelines of the formal Dialogue. During the 2011 ADMM meeting, ASEAN Defence Ministers met informally with the then current United States Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta. Despite these similarities, there are still some significant differences between the two organisations. Firstly, the ADMM still operates under the same institutional and normative constraints inherent to all ASEAN gatherings. This gathering is considered formal and, as such, there are pre-understood stances on particular problems that often prevent meaningful discussions from taking place. Desmond Ball writes that when comparing the locations of the SLD and the ADMM in regional security architectures, it will be a while before the ADMM-Plus will be prepared to tackle the inter-state issues that form the main themes of the SLD…The ADMM-Plus does not provide an opportunity for publicly airing, let alone debating, policy positions.

In addition to the ADMM and ADMM Plus meetings, the SLD may have contributed to the establishment of other regional discursive processes. In 2004, Beijing put forth the concept of the ARF Security Policy Conference (SPC) which was aimed at senior defence and security officials. The similarities between the agendas of the two gatherings are undeniable and “[a]ccording to some observers, the SPC idea was a direct response to the establishment of the SLD.” For example, during its 6th meeting in 2009, the SPC identified the need for greater regional cooperation, acknowledged the transnational nature of NTS problems and identified terrorism, transnational crime, natural disasters, maritime security, climate change and cyber security as significant NTS threats to the region. It is plausible to believe that the prominence of NTS problems on the agenda of the SPC are in direct response to the promotion of such problems by the SLD. Likewise, it is reasonable to believe that the creation of the SPC was an attempt by the Chinese to counter the SLD’s growing influence.

76 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
78 Interview with IISS staff member in Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”
79 Ibid.
According to the Director General and Chief Executive of the IISS, Dr John Chipman, “These Dialogues [Shangri-La Dialogues] work because they have a direct impact on policy formation.” Though this claim is strongly debated by regional security scholars, the unusual and innovation discursive space provided by the SLD has distinguished the Dialogue from the majority of both Track I and Track II regional forums. Despite the proliferation of other regional security dialogues such as the ARF’s Security Policy Conference, ASEAN’s ADMM, and ADMM Plus meetings, the SLD shows no signs of being supplanted by any of the more ‘formal’ security dialogues.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the SLD provides an unmatchable location for defence personnel to coordinate discourse in bi- or multi-lateral groupings and to articulate (communicate) government policy to a wider audience. The IISS’s ability to initiate a forum and attract such influential officials is indicative of both its status as a leading Track I process as well as its ability to guide regional security discourse. The IISS has created a unique multi-tiered political discursive space adept at facilitating all levels of discursive interaction. It has become an important political actor by creating discursive space for security governance. As a result, the SLD has become a permanent and increasingly important aspect of Asian security governance.

The IISS has used its control of the SLD to promote NTS ideas. It has constructed causal stories using NTS frames and placed issues using these frames onto its agenda. In doing so, it has thrust the NTS agenda into Asian, and global, security discourses. In addition to brokering NTS ideas between decision makers and experts, the SLD has incorporated NTS norms into its structure and conduct. For instance, the SLD has not only endorsed new or stronger forms of security governance, it has become a new form of security governance. The Dialogue has proven to the region that a defence ministers’ meeting is not only possible, but effective, and an important tool through which to govern. It has also incorporated other aspects of the NTS agenda into its processes. For example, the SLD has deviated from traditional norms of diplomacy by shifting away from non-confrontation and consensus based processes. It has then taken norms that would be considered unacceptable in governmental processes and turned them to its own advantage. Many participants have noted that it is the existence of frank and forthright interactions in the Shangri-La Dialogue, and its inclusion of sensitive security issues, that have made the forum so appealing.

The shift from traditional to NTS based norms seen in the SLD has started to influence other regional governing structures. Pre-existing institutions face increased pressured to respond to NTS issues and to meet louder calls for more effective security governance. The ‘defence track’ of the ARF has been galvanised to adopt stronger security cooperation measures to meet the growing expectations for security governance.

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Arguably, the ADMM and the SPC were established in response to the growing prominence of SLD and have adopted many of its characteristics. Yet, despite the efforts of formal actors, the SLD’s discursive space remains unique in Asia. The SLD’s non-governmental origins have allowed it to create political space that governmental processes have simply been unable to recreate.

The SLD has been invaluable in shaping and controlling the political processes surrounding the NTS agenda. It has used its legitimacy as a Track I institution to promote the NTS agenda at both Track I and Track II levels. Its discursive space has provided a fertile location for the development and spread of NTS ideas and has served as an important platform for their dissemination via agenda setting, framing, networking, and institutionalisation. Ultimately, the SLD constitutes a new evolution in security governance in Asia. It is a hitherto unheard of combination of think tank innovation and normative freedom combined with unfettered access to the most powerful decision makers in the region. This makes the Shangri-La Dialogue the most successful think tank processes examined in terms of turning NTS ideas into political action. Using its discursive space, the Dialogue has effectively challenged the existing governing norms and started replacing them with new ones. As these norms have changed, regional institutions have altered their structures to fit these new normative expectations. In this way, the Shangri-La Dialogue has transformed ideas into institutional change and has initiated a gradual, but clear, reordering of regional security governance.
Chapter 7

The MacArthur Foundation’s Asia Security Initiative

“[E]pistemic communities are channels through which new ideas circulate from societies to governments as well as from country to country.”

Introduction

The focus of this chapter, the Asia Security Initiative (ASI), is an interesting addition to the previous three case studies. The Initiative contributes in its own way to all three of the networks already presented as well as to the promotion of the NTS agenda as a whole. The ASI was established by the MacArthur Foundation in May, 2009. For this initiative, the MacArthur Foundation has devoted US$68 million dollars to the study of Asian security issues over the course of 7 years. Grants stemming from the ASI have gone primarily to fund research projects focusing on energy security, water and conflict, migration, nuclear non-proliferation, security cooperation, and regional security architectures (ostensibly all types of non-traditional security). The ASI has worked to codify and organize NTS research across the region, and its investment in Asia-Pacific think tanks has fostered an active network of NTS researchers dedicated to promoting the NTS agenda. Thought it was only recently established, ASI activities in the region have been responsible for a notable influx of NTS based research and expertise into Asian governing forums. Consequently, any analysis of think tanks and their promotion of the non-traditional security agenda in Asia would be incomplete without examining the ideational influence of the ASI.

The following chapter proceeds in three sections. The first section substantiates the ASI as political force. Because the ASI exercises political power differently than the previous networks, demonstrating political influence is a more complicated endeavour. Unlike AI, CSCAP, or the IISS, the Asia Security Initiative (ASI) does not directly interact with, nor aim to influence, formal governing processes. This section argues that the ASI, through the construction of an epistemic community, has used knowledge

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1 Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” 27.
and ideas to achieve political influence by altering the dominant security discourses in the region. The ASI focuses on “knowledge creation and dissemination unlike the other network types that are directly political and policy oriented.”3 The ASI works to link affiliated think tanks, security scholars, and experts in the region together through developing an expansive policy network based largely on NTS ideas. New security paradigms emerging from this community have been used to explain the political uncertainty surrounding emerging security issues, redefine states’ interests in the face of these issues, and determine the appropriate policy responses.

The middle section applies our theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism to the epistemic community created by the ASI. Discursive institutionalism literature has only been used sparingly to address the ability of these communities to influence institutions through discourse.4 This section (and the chapter in general) aims to fill in this analytical gap and contribute to the wider constructivist literature by unpacking the power of the ASI as an epistemic actor and the influence of its component think tanks as individual discursive actors. In particular, this section looks at the discursive space created by the ASI and how this space has been intrinsic to its promotion of the NTS agenda. Out of the scrutinised think tanks networks, ASI’s discursive space is the most innovative and far-reaching: it is free of governmental influence and global in scope. Through the lens of discourse, this section examines how ASI actors have used the discursive spaces of the Initiative to engage in both coordinative and communicative discourse and, in doing so, have successfully mobilised the NTS agenda. The expert discourses amplified by the ASI have become embedded in structures and institutions by informing the policies and assumptions upon which they were (or potentially will be) built, and this is how the ASI has converted its investment in ideas into structural and institutional change.5

The concluding section considers the enduring impact of the ASI’s epistemic community and analyses its capacity to guide security policy into the future. It scrutinises the long term influence of the ASI in terms of normative and institutional change and queries how the creation of NTS based policy networks and experts will have a lasting influence on the future of Asian security governance.

Background

The MacArthur Foundation is one of the largest independent non-profit foundations in the United States. Though most well-known for its support of public media, it also provides loans and grants to international programs pursuant to its core goals of

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3 Diane Stone, “Knowledge Networks and Global Policy,” in CEEISA/ISA Conference (Central European University, Budapest, Hungary 28 June 2003), 3.
4 Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings.”
5 Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”
producing a “more just, verdant and peaceful society.” Philanthropic foundations like the MacArthur Foundation (e.g., Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie) have been powerful forces supporting the construction and viability of international knowledge networks (of which epistemic communities are a subset). In particular, they “provide key resources for think tanks and universities to conduct research and investigate the viability of transmitting policies developed elsewhere.” Through the funding of research projects, international foundations are actively “involved in the transnational spread of ideas, values and norms as well as specific programmes.” In other words, international philanthropies can target funding in such a way as to help to create new forms of expertise – including expertise on security governance.

The Asia Security Initiative is the outcome of a long history of MacArthur Foundation involvement in Asia. According to the former President of the MacArthur Foundation, Jonathan Fanton, the ASI was established because:

[the growing economic and political power of Asia is transforming the globe … Over the coming decades, the Asia-Pacific will be the world’s economic engine, helping millions in the region to find new prosperity. Yet, in this time of great opportunity, security challenges – from power conflicts to resource scarcity – threaten to undo the region’s many gains. As China, India, and other Asian nations become regional and global powers, Asia-Pacific nations must think anew about how our societies can work together to foster peace and prevent conflict.]

The decision to establish the ASI, and its focus on NTS issues, was likely encouraged by interactions between the MacArthur Foundation and regional think tank scholars. Prior to the establishment of the ASI, Professor Alan Dupont, who is the Director for the Centre for International Security Studies and a non-traditional security expert, met with the head of the MacArthur Foundation. During this meeting, which included other think tanks scholars, the idea for the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative was developed. Here, Professor Dupont broached the idea of an NTS aspect to the initiative. Professor Dupont is a vocal proponent for the NTS agenda and has openly commented on the lack of policy analysis devoted to NTS issues and the corresponding lack of infrastructure. Though it is unclear if he mentioned these factors during this particular meeting, given the MacArthur Foundation’s interactions

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8 Stone, “Knowledge Networks and Global Policy,” 31; See also Parmar, “American Foundations and the Development of International Knowledge Networks.”
11 Alan Dupont, Director of the Centre for International Security Studies, interview by Author, Sydney, 19 April, 2011.
with regional think tanks it can be assumed that it was aware of the political opportunities available to an initiative such as the ASI.\textsuperscript{12}

The ASI formally started with the award of almost US$6 million dollars to three Asian think tanks for the purpose of conducting research on emerging security challenges in the Asia-Pacific. These three think tanks: The East Asia Institute (South Korea), the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (Republic of Singapore), and the Centre for International and Strategic Studies (China), became the three ‘core’ institutes of the Asia Security Initiative. The ASI is divided into three research clusters: Northeast Asian Security Challenges, Asian Security Cooperation, and Internal Challenges. Each core think tank heads one of the research clusters and pursues research on their topic with a number of affiliated partner institutes. The core institutes, research topics, and grant amounts are listed below.\textsuperscript{13}

1. East Asia Institute, Seoul, South Korea ($2,000,000) Grant duration: three years.

   The EAI “will coordinate work on Northeast Asia, developing plans for international cooperation to decrease tensions over North Korea and Taiwan and among Northeast Asian nations.”\textsuperscript{14}

2. Nanyang Technological University – S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore ($2,500,000) Grant duration: three years.

   The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies has been tasked with directing the group on internal challenges. It will “concentrate on the need for international cooperation to help manage emerging transnational challenges.”\textsuperscript{15}

3. Peking University – Center for International & Strategic Studies, Beijing, China ($1,400,000) Grant duration: three years.

   The Center is to “[o]versee the regional security cooperation group, advising policymakers on how to make better use of multilateral institutions, bilateral relationships, and alliances to prevent conflict, manage difference, and foster peace and security.”\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{12} Alan Dupont, Director of the Centre for International Security Studies, interview by Author, Sydney, 19 April, 2011.

\textsuperscript{13} MacArthur Foundation, “2008 Report on Activities,” 34.

\textsuperscript{14} “Supporting Regional Cooperation for Peace and Security in Asia (Press Release)”.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
Out of the four networks studied in this thesis, the ASI is the most ambitious; it encompasses a total of 27 think tanks with a worldwide policy reach. Each research cluster forms a smaller structure under the broad umbrella network provided by the ASI. While the individual clusters possess their own specific research objectives, they engage in substantial cross-institutional collaboration with the other clusters. In addition to these cross-institutional links, ASI think tanks freely engage and communicate with non-affiliated institutes, networks, experts and policy-making communities.

**The Asia Security Initiative as an Ideational Actor**

The goals of the ASI were articulated by the then President of the MacArthur Foundation, Jonathan Fenton, during the launch of the Initiative. In his speech he stated that

> With MacArthur Foundation support the 27 institutions here with us today will lead advances in security policy research, forge productive relationships among scholars and practitioners within the region and around the world, and bring these new ideas and frameworks to policy makers and the public.\(^\text{18}\)

This indicates three distinct motivations for the ASI: to produce policy advice on NTS issues (create expertise), aid networking (disseminate expertise), and connect policy research to political actors (apply expertise). To pursue these goals, the ASI has targeted funding at a collection of think tanks to pursue a combination of capacity-building measures and individual research projects. In this aspect, at least, the Initiative is the only case study that does more than purely facilitate the movement of ideas across political space. It directly contributes to idea *creation* and the development of new forms of expertise.

Unlike the previous three networks, the ASI does not enjoy historical or institutional ties with regional governing bodies (AI and CSCAP), nor does it have an independent institutional structure (SLD). It is distinct from the other networks examined because it is removed from formal political processes. Lack of governmental access has meant that the ASI has had to promote the NTS agenda in a more subtle fashion. Thus, the Asia Security Initiative has approached political influence from the ‘ideas’ side of policy-making. The Initiative places emphasis on the creation of knowledge (ideas), as well as on the coordinative aspects involved in transnational and regional policy dissemination.\(^\text{19}\) Organisations like the ASI differ from political networks because its primary motivation “is to create and advance knowledge.”\(^\text{20}\) Once it has established

\(^{17}\) A list of all of the participating institutes, their locations, research topics and grant amounts are listed in Appendix A.


\(^{19}\) Stone, “Knowledge Networks and Global Policy.”

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 9.
expertise in the form of an epistemic community, it can then “share, spread and, in some cases, use that knowledge to inform policy and apply it to practice.”

The ASI is unique in that it is an intentionally constructed epistemic community. Unlike most of these communities, which evolve over time; the ASI was brought into existence by the MacArthur foundation through funding which targeted and linked think tanks already possessing shared causal and principled beliefs. As has been noted with other philanthropic organizations, “[with] their substantial financial resources, foundations are in a prime position for promoting norms and setting agendas for policy debate.”

Subsequently, the ASI has been able to tailor itself into an epistemic community, meaning it has established “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge.” The individual components of this community were already in place, but the ASI connected them and augmented their capacity to function effectively as region-wide sources of expertise. It has also linked together like-minded think tanks from across the region and emphasised their voices in policy debates. The recalibration of ASI think tank networks, ideas, and actors towards the promotion of NTS ideas has begun to align regional security communities with the causal narratives of the NTS agenda. Creating an epistemic community devoted to NTS issues allows the ASI to alter the paradigms or ideas upon which security, and subsequently governance, are based.

Epistemic communities use their claims to knowledge to guide “how states identify their interests and recognize the latitude of actions deemed appropriate in specific issue-areas of policymaking.” Schmidt recognised the power of epistemic communities as important discursive actors and noted that these ‘discourse coalitions’ as she calls them “often generate their own information” and “organize themselves in a variety of groupings … in order to influence the generation, shaping, and adoption of policies, often activated by entrepreneurial or mediating actors and informed by experts.” In the case of non-traditional security issues, epistemic communities create new forms of knowledge such as how to identify new security issues, the nature of these issues (trans-boundary) and how to govern them.

The ASI has supported research initiatives that promote its preferred interpretations of security, specifically, those coinciding with the NTS agenda. The promotion of the NTS agenda by the ASI network has begun to shift security discourses towards new non-traditional narratives of security. The ASI’s epistemic community constructs a specific type of causal narrative, which it has used to reconfigure inter-epistemic community

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21 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 2.
dynamics from traditional to non-traditional understandings of security. The causal narratives of the ASI reflect the NTS agenda, they recognise the trans-boundary nature of NTS issues and identify NTS issues as legitimate security concerns. These narratives also portray the ‘solution’ to NTS issues as a move away from ASEAN norms of diplomacy, embracing collective or cooperative understandings of security, and shifting to stronger forms of security governance.

The narratives produced by the ASI are significant because causal narratives and normative beliefs are influential in times of political uncertainty. And the uncertainty surrounding security and governance in Asia has provided a wealth of opportunities for the ASI to influence domestic and international policy. As an epistemic community, the ASI does more than provide one-off policy advice. Haas emphasises that “networks of knowledge-based experts”, such as the ones connected by the ASI, collectively hold “important dimensions of power” due to their control over “knowledge and information.” By virtue of their expertise, ASI think tanks can help states define their interests, develop causal stories to predict the potential consequence of political action or inaction, and provide specific policy advice to address distinct security problems. Haas further notes that “the diffusion of new ideas and information can lead to new patterns of behaviour and prove to be an important determinant of international policy coordination.” John Campbell agrees and comments that epistemic communities have the ability to alter policy-making using ideas. “At the international level “epistemic communities” are responsible for generating new ideas and disseminating them among national policy makers as well as others in the international community.” In this manner, “think tanks, research institutes, and university academics – notably economists – have affected industrial and macroeconomic policy-making.”

Unlike most epistemic communities, the ASI has a loose organisational structure, permitting it to act like a network of networks, or a ‘think-net.’ This means it “coordinates the activities of an international network” towards the production of knowledge in a specific field. The ASI’s nascent network has been reinforced by infrastructure investments enhancing ideational outreach in the form of meetings, conferences, and Web portals. This type of structure promotes open innovation, is more flexible than traditional think tanks structures, and is better able to respond quickly to new policy demands.

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26 Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” 2.
27 Ibid., 15.
28 Ibid., 3.
30 Ibid.
33 Mendizabal and Yeo, “The Virtues of Virtuality.”
The ASI’s investment in infrastructure is particular amongst think tank networks and deserves to be highlighted. Philanthropies often avoid dedicating funds to capacity-building measures, as such investments are perceived as wasted ‘overhead’ costs that take money away from the designated program. However, infrastructure investments ensure the long term policy outputs required for normative change. Backer writes that foundations are increasingly funding infrastructure works as they realise strong and healthy non-profits are better able to innovate. A study by Porter and Kramer concluded that foundations willing to engage in long term projects and focus on increasing grantees’ effectiveness created a value far beyond their initial investment. Long-term infrastructure investments enable initiatives to enjoy continued policy influence beyond the end of their initial grant. The ASI’s investment, though temporary, has created a self-sustaining pool of expertise dedicated to the articulation and dissemination of NTS ideas. It has also upped the quality, depth, and variety of ideas introduced into these spaces by providing new research positions, project funding, and improved communication and IT infrastructure. This approach is what has allowed the ASI to develop into an epistemic community, as opposed to a transitory think tank network, and made it more effective as a political actor.

The impacts of these investments on affiliated think tanks have been profound. The Director of one of the core institutes, Dr Mely Caballero-Anthony, commented that:

Having won the highest grant in the competitive MacArthur Foundation Asia Security Initiative (ASI) in 2009...the Centre has since grown from a modest outfit to a team of 17 faculty, research and administrative full-time staff working on the four key NTS themes of climate change, environmental security and natural disasters; energy and human security; health and human security; and internal and cross-border conflict.

Augmenting ASI members’ institutional capacity has amplified the reach of ASI research. ASI support has assisted the RSIS in “organising and co-organising close to 16 international conferences, workshops and seminars; and initiating new publications such the NTS Perspectives ... and the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative Working Paper series.” All of these outputs are products of ASI investment in a single think tank and have served to expand the political influence of ASI research. Given that similar levels of funding have been made to over 20 additional think tanks, the potential research

38 Ibid.
output is extensive. All outputs serve to construct new kinds of NTS based knowledge, emphasise the ‘expert’ status of the ASI as a network, and push NTS ideas further into regional security discourses.

Additionally, capacity-building has increased the number of agents specialising in the NTS agenda. The Asia Security Initiative has allowed for many fellows, post-doctoral positions and research analysts in the area of non-traditional security. By training and developing young scholars adept in understanding and promoting the programmatic ideas in the NTS agenda, the Initiative has sown the seed for years of expert policy production. Agents are essential components to agenda mobilisation, and increasing the number of experts (i.e., agents) transmitting the desired ideas is an efficient and enduring means of promoting a specific paradigm. The ASI has also succeeded in attracting people to the region who have an interest in NTS issues. This build-up of human capacity, paired with increased institutional capacity for research, has further bolstered the ASI’s claim as a community of policy experts. Moreover, the resultant higher levels of research output have consequently drawn more political attention to NTS issues.

Nevertheless, as proponents of discursive institutionalism note, ideas alone are not the only relevant factors in inducing institutional change. The acceptance of ideas is also dependent upon the political environment at the time of their introduction, as well as the access that ideas have to regional institutions. The uncertainty surrounding strategic security and governance in Asia has helped the ASI in its pursuit of political influence. The timing of the ASI takes advantage of the rise in demand for NTS policy advice. The initiative is counting on Asian states to turn toward the ASI and its affiliated think tanks for guidance on how to address the uncertainty of the current strategic situation. It is at these points of uncertainty, or ‘critical junctures’ where states may turn to think tanks seeking advice of appropriate political responses. At these critical junctures, think tanks, through the privilege of their “special position in the policy process … come to the fore and influence public discourse and thus public policy, by framing the arguments of policy-makers and politicians.”

The ASI’s approach appears to be working and political decision makers in Asia have enthusiastically welcomed the ideational contributions of the Initiative. The Secretary-General of ASEAN, Surin Pitsuwan, gave the keynote address at the launch of the ASI. In it, he praised the MacArthur Foundation for its ‘very unique approach’ and expressed his support for the fundamental premises of the ASI. The Secretary-General’s interest appeared to stem from the research capacity that the Initiative would bring to the region:

39 Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings; Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination.”
40 Track II Participants #5 and #7, interview by author, Singapore, 30 November 2011.
41 Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change,” 206.
I would like to commend the foundation for having the foresight and leadership of identifying this very unique approach. I think all of us agree with the assumption behind this approach, that the challenges, the problems, the threats, all over the landscape of East Asia are too numerous, too complicated, too urgent, for any particular individual, or even a group of individuals can [sic] pursue leisurely. Like in other parts of the world which have had more time, more opportunity, and more resources.

His endorsement of the ASI’s research was followed by a declaration that the Initiative would help ASEAN by “helping us ask and define that question of how to manage security challenges in a flat world where barriers and borders used to protect us.” Secretary-General Pitsuwan’s identification of the ASI an active participant in regional policy-making seems remarkable at first; however, it makes sense in light of his broader acknowledgement that state and regional governments are struggling to cope with policy demands of emerging security issues. He noted that “We [the ASEAN Secretariat] can hardly make any intellectual contribution in the preparation of the issues to be deliberated ... We are not an implementing agency, we are not a research agency, we are beneficiaries.” His admission is indicative that at least some leaders in Asia have recognised regional limitations for policy research and are interested in the ASI’s ideational and policy contributions. He went so far as to imply that ASI research can expect the patronage of ASEAN by concluding his remarks with: “I will wait for the product of your research and see if we can apply it.” It appears that, at least in the case of ASEAN, the ASI has found a willing recipient for its expertise, as well as a helpful ally through which to push for institutional change.

The potential for the ASI to influence security policy is vast, particularly in light of the uncertainty surrounding NTS issues and the relative lack of policy guidance available to regional governments. Additionally, many ASI affiliated organisations “are likewise enmeshed into regional policy dialogues, international alliances or multilateral initiatives”, allowing them easy access to policy-making circles. The following section applies discursive institutionalism to the ASI and demonstrates how the network has taken advantage of these opportunities to promote specific understandings of security. In particular, it focuses on the importance of the discursive spaces crafted by the ASI. The network has used these spaces to generate expertise and they have acted as vital locations for policy formulation and debate. In essence, the ASI has functioned as a ‘discursive amplifier’ by augmenting members’ abilities to engage in both coordinative and communicative discourse. It has strategically emphasised certain political agendas over others and cultivated multi-scalar networks as effective means of disseminating these new norms across the region.

42 Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN, “Keynote Address,” Speech delivered at the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative Launch 29 May 2009.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
The Asia Security Initiative and Discursive Space

The ASI operates in a different ideational arena than the other three networks. This network has used discourse at the epistemic (paradigmatic) level to promote the NTS agenda and seek to alter regional governing institutions by shifting prevailing norms. AI, CSCAP, and to some extent, the SLD all exist in the political space between Track I and Track II processes. All three are dependent in some way on governmental patronage and, consequently, must engage with ideas relevant to governmental processes. This restricts them in both the types of ideas they deal with (mostly policy or programmatic) as well as their breadth (limited by the tolerance of their respective audiences). However, the ASI is not governmentally affiliated, nor does it cater directly to governmental officials. Instead it is functionally ‘outside’ of political processes and operates at the epistemic (paradigmatic of world view) level of ideas.

The network transcends politics and occupies ideational space unconstrained by political or structural limitations. ASI discursive space has become a valuable mechanism for avoiding the limitations of the ASEAN-way and pushing the boundaries of security analysis in Asia. Being entirely distinct from formal processes frees the ASI from the normative diplomatic expectations influencing other discursive spaces in the region. Furthermore, the non-governmental nature of the ASI has broadened and deepened the types of NTS ideas entertained, researched, and promoted via these enhanced networks. Despite this separation, the ASI wields political influence through its provision of expertise and its ability to create and use discursive space to put ideas on ideational agendas. Using discursive institutionalism, this chapter demonstrates how the ASI, even though it is outside of formal processes, is a significant ideational actor that can influence policy through engaging in and facilitating discourse.

As a result of its ‘above politics’ design, even the most progressive of the other networks examined cannot boast the open political space provided by the ASI. The Initiative has served to tie the policy specific research of other think tanks into overarching themes, normative frameworks, and cause- and-effect relationships. The resulting causal stories form an important component of the ASI’s epistemic community and help to codify regional perceptions linking NTS issues with the need for more cohesive security governance. The ASI has connected member think tanks with discursive spaces that are not only tolerant, but encouraging of provocative and innovative security ideas. Thus, it has created a space for think tanks and security scholars to connect regarding the trans-boundary nature of insecurity, the necessity of collective/cooperative security understandings, the shortcomings of the ASEAN-way of diplomacy, and the necessity of strengthening or reforming the current regional security architecture. In addition to NTS ideas already promoted by other think tanks networks, the ASI has further expanded the scope of NTS scholarship. It has entertained both the ‘sidelined’ topics such as human security and internal conflicts, as well as taking the
'big picture’ perspective on issues such as environmental migration and regional energy security. The network’s ability to address the entirety of the NTS agenda has added an additional normative layer to the non-traditional security knowledge network.

Furthermore, ASI discursive space benefits from a broad and more diverse membership base. This expands the networks, encompassing more expertise and offering a wider variety of views and capabilities. When selecting think tanks from within the region, the Initiative has conspicuously failed to include any that are governmentally controlled. This is likely because ASI members were selected on the basis of their ideas and research agendas, and not their political or geographical affiliation (like AI and CSCAP). Consequently, they can take innovative ideas that are outside regional norms and ‘import’ them through the ASI. Once in the ASI network, these ideas can be localised by Asian think tanks for specific domestic contexts.

Regional decision makers have been drawn to the discursive space provided by the ASI. ASEAN’s Secretary-General explicitly acknowledged the normative limitations within ASEAN and identified the need for ASI-style discursive space in the region.

We [ASEAN] are extremely sensitive about interference. We are extremely cautious about making statements about problems inside neighbouring states. Knowing full well that the problems are flowing toward us, engulfing us, implicating us, and in the end the entire global community will look at us and ask ‘Why haven’t you done anything?’

This speech makes it clear that ASI discursive space is seen (at least by certain members of ASEAN) as a means of circumventing the constraints of the ASEAN-way. Given that this comment was made by the Secretary-General, it is also clear that ASEAN is aware of and openly endorsing venues outside of these normative constraints. This statement, combined with the support of ASEAN noted previously, is a telling indication that governmental actors are recognising the limitations of current diplomatic norms – as well as the limitations of their own institutions – and are exploring alternatives.

The Asia Security Initiative and the Non-Traditional Security Agenda

The ASI has used discursive space to explore the implications of NTS issues on Asian security and create expert paradigms for dissemination to its epistemic members. The ASIs paradigms are largely constructed from the causal narratives of the NTS agenda. That is to say, that they endorse a broadening of security from traditional security concerns like ‘great power conflict’ to include NTS issues like ‘resource scarcity’ as equal threats to peace and prosperity. Individual think tanks, especially those in Research Cluster 3, have been very open about their emphasis on NTS issues. The dissemination meeting for this cluster was suitably titled the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative Dissemination Meeting on Non-Traditional Security. The meeting had three

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47 Pitsuwan, “Keynote Address.”

main themes: it emphasised the importance of NTS issues, highlighted the connection between NTS issues and state stability and prosperity, and linked the effectiveness of NTS management with necessary changes in regional governance. All of these efforts tie into the underlying themes of the NTS agenda culminating in the promotion that stronger regional security architectures in Asia are essential for achieving the “new ways to work together in the interests of peace and prosperity” that are the ultimate goals of the ASI.

ASI has used its new paradigms to push for new modes of governance. ASI think tanks have used these spaces to argue that NTS management is intrinsically dependent on enhancing inter-state ties – including altering existing forms of governance or creating new ones. They have approached the nexus between NTS issues and governance using numerous understandings of cooperation (bi-lateral, multi-lateral, regional), but all approaches eventually coalesce into calls for fundamental shifts in how security is governed. At the Keynote address for the Dissemination Meeting, Professor Ramesh Thakur, Director of the Centre for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament at ANU, again articulated the ASI’s belief that NTS issues required regional cooperation. He focused specifically on the increasing salience of NTS issues and acknowledged the tension between traditional and non-traditional understandings of security. He concluded that countries no longer have the luxury of addressing emerging threats alone as the nature of these threats requires regional management to be addressed effectively.

The connections between NTS issues and regional cooperation were again highlighted in the Dissemination Meeting Report:

These research areas [regional security cooperation and NTS issues] are increasingly complementary. Many of the findings from the research conducted by the RSIS Centre for NTS Studies demonstrate the significance of multilateral institutions in addressing transnational issues such as disaster management, climate change, energy security, and internal and cross-border conflict.

The ASI’s emphasis on developing new modes of governance can be found throughout the Initiative’s research. Programs supported by the ASI reliably call for changes to existing institutions or the creation of new ones based upon the links between effective NTS management and regional cooperation. For example, leading up to the establishment of the ASI, the MacArthur Foundation and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies held an independent conference focusing specifically on

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49 Author observation, MacArthur Asia Security Initiative Dissemination Meeting on Non-traditional Security (NTS), Marina Mandarin Hotel, Singapore, 21-22 November 2011.
52 Ibid., 4.
53 Ibid.
Asia’s security architecture. Here, multiple speakers identified the need for “greater cooperation and integration between ASEAN members … to deepen its level of institutionalisation.” Associate Professor Mely Caballero-Anthony, Head of the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, discussed the creation of institutions within ASEAN specifically geared towards NTS governance.

Other ASI supported meetings in other parts of the region have echoed this narrative. At a conference on Maritime Security put on by CSIS (which, interestingly, is a member of AI and CSCAP), Rory Medcalf from the Lowy Institute commented that “the region’s infrastructure of maritime confidence building measures or CBMs is generally flimsy, non-existent in some places and little used.” Medcalf referred heavily to a MacArthur Foundations supported report he published a year earlier that focused on ‘Major Powers and Maritime Security in Indo-Pacific Asia.’ The report highlights the lack of existing infrastructure for security governance, makes suggestions for more concrete measures in confidence building, and calls for the establishment of a regional incident reporting centre.

The ASI’s promotion of security cooperation has been stretched to apply to non-state actors as well. The Japan Centre for International Exchange (JCIE) received a grant to study the importance of non-governmental forces on regional cooperation. The JCIE report emphasised the value of non-state actors (such as think tanks and civil society actors) in contributing to regional security cooperation. Furthermore, it identified the lack of coordination as a major stumbling block for non-governmental organisations engaging in regional security.

In the resulting conference report, Jusuf Wanandi, a Senior Fellow at the CSIS, expressed that:

There are many issues – such as climate change, health, human trafficking, and piracy – in which we need more expertise than we have and thus we must draw upon the specialized knowledge of civil society ... This means that the challenge ahead is to expand the degree of networking among and with civil society, which has not developed as much as it should. Track 2 dialogues involving government officials and convened by civil society organizations are necessary to inform and help governments.

55 Ibid., 5.
The vast majority of ASI institutes focus on NTS issues and they have produced a wealth of policy and expertise based on NTS causal stories. Overwhelmingly, these stories have turned away from traditional governing norms and have either explicitly or implicitly called for new forms of regional security governance. ASI discursive spaces have been important locations for coordinative discourse, where member think tanks can synchronise their regional policy approaches. Once ideas have been codified, they can then be passed on to regional decision makers through communicative discourse, “[t]he process itself [discourse] is one in which the coordinative discourse can be seen to prepare the ground for the communicative.”

Think tanks engage in coordinative discourse to unify their ideational agendas, they then engage in communicative discourse to transmit, present, and legitimise these agendas to governing actors. NTS ideas cultivated in ASI discursive spaces are shifted from informal policy forums to formal ones by either individual think tanks or by governmental officials participating in their ‘non-official’ capacities. Communicative discourse is used to bridge the gap between ideas and political power by allowing these actors to become “mediators between society [in this case the ASI] and governments or between governments and international organizations in order to promote institutional and policy change.”

Mediation between society and government can take many forms and the preferred approaches used by ideational actors have been problem framing, agenda setting and networking.

**Problem Framing and Agenda Setting**

The Initiative’s impact on the discursive process stems from its influence on identifying, framing, and developing security paradigms that reflect NTS ideas. Foremost, it has actively framed continuing and emerging security issues as NTS problems, and then placed these issues on regional security agendas. Furthermore, it has used frames to influence regional security agendas by emphasising certain interpretations of security over others.

Because the ASI functions in a different discursive space than other think tank networks, framing and agenda setting is often a two-step process. The first level is controlled by the MacArthur Foundation and occurs at the regional level under the auspices of the ASI. The ASI has framing power via its strategic funding of specific research programs and it has shaped its discursive agenda by sponsoring research that favours “particular lines of inquiry at the expense of others.” Typically, foundations “do not close off

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61 “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse; Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change.”
62 “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change,” 205.
other avenues of investigation but choices are made in the allocation of resources that favour certain research agendas.”

In essence, the ASI has been able to ‘steer’ security research by targeting funding specifically for NTS projects. ASI support for the NTS agenda raises the profile of these issues by increasing research output and the number of agents promoting specific ideas. Consequently, these ideas are more likely to receive media attention and find their way into policy discussions.

A brief look at the projects funded by the ASI demonstrates that the Initiative favours NTS interpretations of security. The bulk of a US$2.5 million grant awarded to the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies was given to the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies. The mission of this Centre is to advance understanding of NTS issues, emphasise the importance of NTS to policy makers, and build the capacity of domestic and regional organisations to respond to NTS issues. Other grants were awarded for research on energy policy in Asia (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy – US$750,000), water resource conflict in Asia (Strategic Foresight Group – US$400,000), food security and conflict (University of Sydney Centre for International Security Studies – US$400,000), and the security implications of climate change in South Asia (Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies – US$350,000). These topics have not historically been considered ‘security’ but are being re-framed as such under the support of the ASI. Augmenting specific research agendas and providing infrastructure and dissemination capacity positively influences which ideas receive cultivation and are ultimately conveyed to policy makers. However, the ability to augment a specific research agenda should not be confused with having control of policy outputs, frames or proposed policy responses.

The second level of framing takes place at the level of each individual think tank. MacArthur Foundation grants have relieved some of the pressure experienced by member think tanks to conform to restricted research agendas and allowed them to pursue more diverse avenues of research. In Asia, which has a comparatively underdeveloped civil society and philanthropic culture, financial support outside the realm of government sponsorship or contract is difficult for non-governmental organisations to secure. Difficult financial times have made for fierce competition

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65 The ability of foundations to ‘steer’ policy is articulated in ibid. Peter Haas also articulates that the predispositions of funding agencies can influence the pursuit of specific research programmes. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination.”
69 James G. McGann and Erik C. Johnson, Comparative Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy (Northampton, Massachusetts; Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2005).
over limited resources. As one journalist commented, that the financial downturn has left some think tanks in the unenviable position of plotting “a course between sufficiently vocal critique to be worth bothering with and not gnawing too hard on the paymaster’s hand.”\textsuperscript{70} Providing funding has freed up ASI think tanks to expand their research repertoires to a range of topics unlikely to receive government sponsorship. Institutes receive funding with a broad mandate and can use their discretion to interpret the exact frames under which they will produce policy.\textsuperscript{71} A good example is how the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) has used its funding from the ASI to redefine Maritime security as an NTS issue and then used it as a catalyst to promote institutional change.

Under the auspices of the ASI, the NBR received a grant of US$1.2 million to research maritime energy resources and South Asian regional cooperation.\textsuperscript{72} The NBR’s approach is a useful example demonstrating how think tanks can frame ideas at the individual level. The NBR used the first segment of its project to redefine maritime energy resources as an NTS issue in a workshop called ‘Non-Traditional Security Challenges in South Asia – 2025’. Once it had established these resources as ‘security’ it then portrayed their management as a catalyst for the promotion of regional cooperation in the following workshop ‘Non-traditional Security Challenges and Opportunities for Cooperation in South Asia – 2025’. Its most recent progression has been to supply a framework for regional cooperation in its initiative on Non-Traditional Regional Security Architecture for South Asia.\textsuperscript{73} The NBS’s strategic use of frames has reemphasised maritime security as an NTS issue, linked it to regional stability, and used it to promote the further institutionalisation of regional security processes.

Importantly, framing at the secondary level also provides the opportunity for each think tank to act as a localizing actor for NTS ideas – and bring the ‘outside’ ideas taken from ASI discursive spaces into the ‘inside’ policy processes accessible to individual think tanks. Being sensitive to regional social and political factors means domestic think tanks produce policy and research that is within acceptable local norms. Likewise, they can take policy ideas received from other sources and adapt them to local conditions, thereby constructing ‘local’ expertise on these issues.\textsuperscript{74} Policy suggestions framed or ‘localised’ in this manner are more likely to

\textsuperscript{70} Andy Williamson, “Thinktanks are in crisis. To survive, they must become ‘do tanks’,” The Guardian, 27 August 2011, Williamson comments are referring specifically to the status of British think tanks but his comments are equally applicable to think tanks in Asia. Financial constraints and their impact on research autonomy are well documented; For further information see Chapter 1 of this thesis or Kraft, “The Autonomy Dilemma of Track Two Diplomacy in Southeast Asia.”

\textsuperscript{71} Interviews with Track II Participants #5 and #7, interview by Author, Singapore, 30 November 2011.


\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

be accepted by domestic (or regional) institutions, as they are perceived as coming from ‘indigenous’ sources.\(^{75}\) Localisation is an effective means of overcoming or circumventing the region’s traditional suspicion of external ideas. Once ideas have been framed and localised (if necessary), they are propagated across Asia through the multitude of networks that plug-in to ASI discursive spaces.

**Networks**

The ASI functions as a horizontal network stretching across the Asia-Pacific and connecting think tanks through the provision of discursive space. The Initiative has served a co-ordinative function and provided a nursery for many NTS policy ideas. As these ideas have matured, they have been transferred from Track II to Track I processes through an additional series of vertical networks. These networks join individual ASI think tanks to regional and domestic governing institutions and can be both co-ordinative (with other think tanks) or communicative (with domestic and regional governments) in nature.

Adding a further layer of complexity, these formal network connections are supplemented with a myriad of informal links held by individual think tanks scholars. Cumulatively, the ASI’s networking efforts have resulted in a dense web of interconnected networks spanning local and regional levels of governance. This multitude of pathways means that expertise and ideas originating in the ASI can traverse the network effectively when seeking the appropriate political opportunity for access and implementation.

The top-most network is the ASI itself, which serves to connect 27 think tanks across the globe with co-ordinative discursive spaces. Networking has been a significant aspect of the ASI’s approach and has been the primary conduit of co-ordinative discourse amongst member think tanks. It has brought together practitioners and elites in security studies through conferences and seminars in order to form networks to further strengthen its preferred ideational paradigm (in this case the NTS agenda).

Furthermore, it has served to connect individual think tank networks into the overarching network provided by the ASI, making the Initiative a sort of ‘network of networks’. These ‘secondary networks’ are equally, if not more, significant in linking NTS ideas to political power than the network formed by the ASI. Secondary network connections exist between think tanks in different networks, or from think tanks to domestic and regional governments. Both types of connections help spread ASI ideational influence and contribute toward the normative goal of redefining security by mainstreaming the NTS agenda.

Through mutual membership, the ASI has direct links to several governmentally affiliated think tank networks. Members with dual affiliations (like CSIS or the RSIS)

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\(^{75}\) Acharya, *Whose Ideas Matter?*
can act as ‘insider’ think tanks functioning as conduits to convey the ‘outsider’ policies produced in ASI discursive spaces. In this way, the ASI has fully taken advantage of the “overlapping network styles [that] … allow some knowledge actors to traverse scholarly/policy subject fields and sometimes to act as ‘brokers’ … between insider and outsider communities.” For example, several ASI members are also members of CSCAP (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Australian National University, Pacific Forum CSIS and Yonsei University). This dual membership offers ASI several avenues of access into CSCAP forums and dialogues. The ASI also has representation in the Network of East Asian Think-tanks (NEAT), including one of the Initiative’s cluster leaders, the East Asia Institute in Korea. NEAT is a think tank network established in 2002 and it was designed to be the Track II counterpart to formal processes in East Asia, such as the East Asia Forum or ASEAN associated processes (e.g., ASEAN +3). Representation in NEAT expands ASI ideas horizontally to the 13 other members of the network. It also expands ASI influence vertically into the formal policy-making processes of East Asia. All of these networks serve as contributors, localisers, and transmitters for Initiative funded research.

In addition to linking into governmentally affiliate networks, the ASI has also expanded its reach laterally into additional non-governmental networks. For instance, the ASI has strong connections to the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia). NTS-Asia is not linked to any governing processes and is a think tank network devoted specifically to the study of non-traditional security issues. The goals of NTS-Asia are to strengthen networks amongst scholars and analysts, build capacity for long term research, and promote the understanding and study of NTS issues in the region. NTS-Asia was actually established by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in the early 2000s and is a proponent of many of the same goals as the ASI (likely a contributing factor as to why the RSIS was selected to lead Research Cluster 3.) In addition to the RSIS, several other ASI think tanks are also members of NTS-Asia (Centre for International Security Studies-Sydney and the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies). Through its connections with NTS-Asia, the reach of ASI research is expanded to an additional 18 think tanks. More importantly, many of these ‘secondary members’ belong to other influential networks with important governmental connections in the region. The Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, Inc. (ISDS) and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies – Jakarta (CSIS) are also members of AI and CSCAP. As we have seen from the earlier case studies, AI and CSCAP both have important governmental connections which could be useful in getting ASI research into formal policy-making processes. These two think tanks can serve as conduits to introduce ASI research into AI and CSCAP forums for consideration and

76 Stone, “Knowledge Networks and Global Policy,” 12.
77 Network of East Asian Think-tanks, “NEAT”.
debate. By linking into the ostensibly coordinative network of NTS-Asia, the ASI gains access to the communicative influence of powerful think tanks within the network. Through these connections, the ASI can tap into and utilise the dual identities of its members which have proven valuable in linking ideas to political power.

Coordinative and communicative networks have been fundamental to the successful promotion of NTS ideas to decision makers. ASI scholars or independent scholars drawing upon ASI research have used the multi-layered networks within and surrounding the ASI to introduce, persuade, and push NTS ideas into mainstream political discourses. Once in dominant security discourses, these ideas can go on to support existing institutional transformations and justify additional institutional change.

**Institutionalisation**

Proponents of discursive institutionalism highlight that “actors can gain power from their ideas even where they may lack the power of position – as in the case of discourse coalitions that manage to have their own social construct adopted.” This is the approach that the Asia Security Initiative has taken concerning institutionalisation. It has not sought to institutionalise itself but has, instead, focused on embedding the NTS agenda into regional processes. It has pursued this goal in two distinct ways. First, it has supported existing and emerging institutions where NTS ideas are dominant.

The ASI has actively supported security processes that are sympathetic to NTS ideas, including one of our earlier case studies. The IISS received over US$1.5 million in support for the Shangri-La Dialogue between 2008 and 2011. As argued in Chapter 5, the Shangri-La Dialogue has become an integral part of regional security architectures and embodies and promotes numerous NTS ideas. In addition to supporting the Dialogue, the MacArthur Foundation provided funding to send Track II participants to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue, helping to train the next generation of NTS specialists.

The ASI has also supported research geared towards the establishment and/or institutionalisation of new security processes, particularly those developed to address NTS issues. For example, the ASI has provided over a million dollars to three think tanks earmarked for research on regional security architectures, specifically on the permanent institutionalisation of the Six-Party Talks. Another good example is the NBR project mentioned earlier, which demonstrates ASI support for establishing new forms of governance. Though the NBR project is the first time that proposals for regional security governance have been developed, it provided an important location for the workshopping and articulation of these ideas. The NBR project of Maritime Security

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80 Timothy Huxley, Executive Director IISS-Asia, interview by Author, Singapore, 25 November 2011.
81 MacArthur Foundation, “2008 Report on Activities.” The three think tanks involved are the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (USD$500,000), Policy Alternatives Research Institute (USD$525,000), and Yonsei University (USD$200,000).
also reiterated how important discursive space is to both NTS research and institutional change. This project provided multiple discursive venues in the form of workshops, conferences, and publications that ultimately contributed to its final institutional outcome – a hypothetical framework for regional cooperation. The final project report specifically highlighted the importance of discursive opportunities in achieve this outcome:

The project and its applied methodology offered a unique space for participants to explore alternatives to traditional security cooperation efforts and examine collaboration on non-traditional security as one plausible pathway toward developing a more stable security architecture for South Asia.82

The proposed cooperative framework emerging from this space, while not the first time such ideas have been proposed, is a step closer to institutionalising new forms of regional security governance. This project also reaffirmed and pursued additional means of cooperation, such as the possibility of pursuing subregional cooperation, potentially by expanding the definitions of ‘South Asia’ to include Southeast Asia.83

Second, ASI’s other efforts at institutionalisation have focused less on specific components of security architectures and more on embedding NTS ideas into dominant security discourses. Once NTS ideas are embedded in these discourses, they gradually influence how institutions are perceived and constructed. At the MacArthur Dissemination Meeting held in 2011, there was a sense that the Initiative had been successful because the term ‘non-traditional security’ had increasingly been used in ASEAN circles and seen on the agenda of ASEAN ministerial meetings.84 However, the Initiative’s influence will be greater than this. The true impact of the Initiative is not only in putting certain key phrases on regional agendas but is altering the entrenched paradigms which currently determines regional understandings of security.85 ASI-funded research has inundated the region with NTS ideas by cultivating regional NTS expertise and linking it together in a structured epistemic community. NTS ideas have spread through the region in both formal and informal venues and have made an appearance in most regional forums. The same goes for the growing acknowledgement that NTS issues require regional responses. Further, it has reinforced the initial surge of NTS research with an investment in intellectual and institutional capital guaranteeing continued research outcomes with NTS causal stories. ASI investment in NTS ideas had shifted the dynamics of regional security discourse to favour the NTS agenda. Prior to the establishment of the Initiative, regional think tanks were already engaged in this behaviour on a smaller scale. However, the Asia Security Initiatives provision

83 Ibid.
85 Hay uses the term ‘ideational path dependence’ to explain the influence of ideas on the formation of institutions Hay, “Constructivist Institutionalism... Or, Why Ideas into Interests Don’t Go,” 7.
of dynamic ideational space for the cultivation of these ideas has helped bolster the prevalence of NTS expertise and push NTS paradigms closer to the normative tipping point.

The influence of the Initiative on the NTS agenda in terms of policy and institutions will be long term. It will have forged new networks and institutions founded on, and devoted to, the principles of these ideas. It will also have contributed substantially to the cultivation of an epistemic community associated with all aspects of the NTS agenda and new paradigms for security in the region. The Initiative will have trained and supported scholars with a passion for such ideas; these scholars will continue to promote the NTS agenda long after the Initiative has ended. As the ideas cultivated in ASI discursive spaces work their way through the academic and policy processes, they will come to inform the paradigms defining security. This has already started to occur in the growing acceptance of NTS issues as ‘legitimate’ security and in the growing push for stronger regional cooperation. As these ideas are embedded in the construction of security, institutions will be forced to adjust and adapt to these new security and governance paradigms.

**Conclusion**

The Asia Security Initiative is a suitable network with which to conclude our case studies because it demonstrates the broadest layer of think tank influence on NTS ideas, the epistemic level. Each think tank network examined in this thesis has promoted the NTS agenda in a unique manner and level in governing processes. The SDL has engaged with security policy makers as a Track I network, while the AI and CSCAP have facilitated NTS ideas from the space between Track I and Track II. The ASI is an additional step removed from Track I and Track II processes and engages with ideas at the epistemic level. As an epistemic community, the ASI has become a repository of formidable expertise capable of helping guide security governance into the future. Together, all four networks have constructed a multilayered network engaging in communicative and coordinative discourse across all hierarchies of governance for the promotion of NTS ideas.

The epistemic nature of the ASI places it at the frontline of idea creation. Because it operates outside of traditional scales of government, the ASI has successfully constructed discursive spaces free from the diplomatic norms and structural limitations endured by other Track II actors. The ASI has used this freedom to push an agenda and frames that are more innovative, far-reaching, and provocative than the other three networks studied. Using coordinative discourse, the ASI has established the cause-and-effect relationships to establish new policy paradigms for the interpretation of emerging security concerns. It has then used communicative discourse to articulate broad ideational constructs and disseminate them through plugged-in networks. The efforts of the ASI have resulted in a well-equipped and dedicated body of experts devoted to the
analysis and promotion of NTS ideas. These scholars have used their expertise to inform domestic and regional agendas, connect with other like-minded scholars, and promote the NTS agenda at all scales of governance (domestic/regional, formal/informal).

Instead of investing all of its resources on a single institution, the Initiative has focused on promoting ideas into the larger policy arena. These ideas are then dispersed with the help of think tanks and their networks into numerous institutions where they can have a gradual and cumulative effect. Exposing regional actors to NTS ideas acclimatises them to their presence and increases the likelihood that these ideas will be taken up as the security situation continues to change. The elastic and far-reaching discursive spaces of the ASI have connected and empowered non-traditional security scholars and formed an interconnected web of think tanks across the globe. It has subsequently exerted political influence by linking together think tanks through a complex and enmeshed networks founded on the analysis of non-traditional security issues in Asia, and using these links to distil its ideas.

The ASI, through constructing an epistemic community, has achieved more than any one of its component parts could have achieved individually. Its extensive reach has allowed the ASI to codify and promote the non-traditional security agenda, complete with policy advice and the participation of experts, across huge political spaces spanning all levels of governance. Deploying a network approach has been intrinsic to the ASI’s ultimate success in disseminating ideas because

A network amplifies and disseminates ideas, research and information to an extent that could not be achieved by individuals or institutions alone. Moreover, a network mutually confers legitimacy and pools authority and respectability in a positive-sum manner where the network becomes perceived as a locus for scientific authority.  

The ASI has used its ideational influence to act as a ‘global governor’ and to “exercise power across borders for the purpose of affecting policy.” The ASI’s provision of discursive space has supplied a location where NTS ideas have been introduced, explored, and communicated – ideas that are beyond the scope and agenda of even the most tolerant of governmentally affiliated networks. It has contributed to the construction of the emerging NTS paradigm by providing an important discursive platform amongst and between political actors, constructing new and important links between existing think tanks networks and scholars, and assisting them in coordinating approaches to NTS promotion. Furthermore, the ASI’s investment in infrastructure and intellectual capacity has given its NTS research endurance to continue promoting NTS ideas after the end of the Initiative. Ultimately, ASI research aims to shift dominant security discourses from traditional to non-traditional paradigms and change the way regional security is governed.

87 Avant, Finnemore, and Sell, Who Governs the Globe?: 356.
Chapter 8

From Think Tanks to Governance Entrepreneurs

Think tanks are more than idea brokers; they are also creators, developers, and advocates that vigorously promote the ideas, frames, and justifications of specific political agendas. This thesis has interrogated the collective mobilisation of certain think tank networks in pursuit of specific ideational agendas in Asia. In doing so, it has brought ideas back into politics and placed ideational actors at the centre of institutional change. This thesis has built upon previous research on think tanks that examined their ability to induce change in existing institutions and/or create new ones. Continuing this line of inquiry, this thesis used discursive institutionalism to explain how think tanks have used ideas to highlight the need for institutional change and provide policy alternatives. It traced their use of discourse, and their creation of discursive space, to push ideas into policy-making circles. Moreover, it examined the normative impact of think tank networks’ promotion of a unified ideational agenda and interrogated the impact of this promotion on regional forms of governance. In doing so, it linked institutional change to the endorsement of specific ideational agendas and placed think tank networks into the larger framework of international security actors. This is the first study to compare think tank promotion of the non-traditional security agenda and do so across a range of networks in Asia.

Over the last several years, constructivists and institutionalists have worked towards a theoretical middle ground. Some constructivists have come to recognise that ideas, and their agents, are constrained by the institutions in which they operate, and that “[i]deas can have the power of persuasion, but they need institutions and interests behind them.”\(^1\) In a like manner, institutionalists have begun to acknowledge that ideas have the ability to shape institutions, especially in times when state interests are unclear. This thesis emerged at the confluence of these two theoretical foundations in the form of discursive institutionalism (as it is known by institutionalists) or constructivist institutionalism (as labelled by the constructivists). The arguments articulated in the previous pages have contributed to the constructivist agenda in Asia by exploring the nexus between these two theories. It has examined how think tanks have promoted new

\(^1\) Stone, “Private Philanthropy or Policy Transfer? The Transnational Norms of the Open Society Institute,” 271.
“dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world”\textsuperscript{2}, and how this has altered the socially constructed collective meanings, interpretations and assumptions that determine the “identities, interests and behaviour of political agents”.\textsuperscript{3} Drawing from both institutionalism and constructivism, this thesis turned to the agent-centred constructivism presented by Blyth and his ‘causal stories’. This has shed light on how the ideas inherent in the NTS agenda “do more than alter preferences; they reconstitute agents’ interests by providing alternative frameworks through which uncertain situations, and the place of agents within them, can be understood.”\textsuperscript{4} Using inter-elite persuasion, think tanks have demonstrated both their power as political actors and the fungible nature of state interests.

This thesis has applied agent-centred constructivism to think tanks in order to analyse their influence on Asian diplomatic norms. It developed and expanded upon Alice Ba’s argument that the institutions in Asia are products of ideational-based development. Using this premise, it was possible to demonstrate that the new normative agenda promoted by think tanks is gradually undermining the traditional norms of the ASEAN-way. As new norms have emerged, states are being forced to re-evaluate their interests and realign their institutional structures to adhere to new ideational standards. As a consequence, the same ideational processes that constructed ASEAN are actively deconstructing it and pushing the institution to adhere to new governing norms.

The four case studies have provided a picture of the multi-layered and interconnected nature of think tank networks in Asia. While each network is distinct in character and structure, they have significantly overlapped in membership and ideology. The previous chapters have examined the engagement of these networks in discourse and their successful dissemination of non-traditional security ideas to political actors at all levels of government. Each network has used causal stories to link current problems with potential solutions under the rubric of the non-traditional security agenda. Through their construction of discursive space, and actively employing agenda setting, problem framing and networking, they have successfully pushed NTS ideas into mainstream security discussions. In turn, these ideas have re-defined the substantive content of security in the region, challenged enduring diplomatic norms and, ultimately, encouraged and guided the restructuring of Asian security governance.

This thesis has identified three central themes: the status of think tanks as political actors, the importance of discourse and discursive space, and the connection between ideas and institutional change. The first theme recognised think tanks as political entities and unpacked their roles as ideational agents in the mobilisation of political agendas. The second theme identified the use of discourse and the importance of discursive space


\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 324.

\textsuperscript{4} Blyth, “Powering, Puzzling, or Persuading? The Mechanisms of Building Institutional Orders,” 762.
as integral components of think tank influence. It traced the ways in which think tanks used discourse and discursive spaces to promote non-traditional security ideas, alter traditional governing norms, and impose new norms on existing and emerging regional security structures. The last theme linked the ideational influence of think tanks to institutional change. Think tanks have successfully begun to rearticulate the substantive content of security and, in doing so, have redefined appropriate forms of security governance. Each of these themes is briefly revisited in the following section.

Think Tanks as Political Actors

The first premise of this thesis was that think tanks are discursive actors who exercise power as political agents. This is contrary to arguments by some scholars who characterise think tanks as extensions of governmental bureaucracies. To address this differing viewpoint, we turn to Kraft, who has comprehensively compiled a list of the five main characteristics calling into question the utility and relevance of think tanks as independent political actors. Kraft’s observations are representative of the main objections to categorising Asian think tanks as independent and politically relevant. He claims that Track II in Asia suffers from an ‘Autonomy Dilemma’ because: 1) they are too enmeshed in governmental processes; 2) their security discourse is too narrow; 3) they are part of an elite club unavailable to civil society; 4) they are nothing more than talk shops, and; 5) the infrastructure of Track II in the region is fragile. His observations, which were made in 2000, are a useful starting point from which to sum up how think tanks in the region have changed since this time to become the influential political forces they are today.

Kraft’s first criticism is that think tank tanks are too closely involved with regional governments to provide meaningful and legitimate alternatives to governmentally sanctioned policy. However, I would argue that the nature of the relationship between think tanks and governments has shifted to become increasingly balanced and reciprocal. This is evidenced by the tendency of officials to seek out policy advice from think tanks, include them in Track I processes, and participate in Track II forums. In return for political access, think tanks have provided ideas and discursive spaces that are crucial in keeping up with the changing security environment. Despite being more embedded into the policy process than ever before, they have clearly started to pursue their own agendas, even if these agendas make their governmental affiliates uncomfortable (AI and CSCAP). Moreover, governmentally affiliated processes have been supplemented by think tanks lacking governmental affiliation (the SLD and the ASI being two pertinent examples). The addition of autonomous think tanks has reinvigorated Track II processes and pulled governmentally affiliated institutes, as well as Track I, into more vigorous and critical discussions of security policy.

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5 Rüland, “The Contribution of Track Two Dialogue Towards Crisis Prevention.”
In response to Kraft’s second point, that think tank discourses are too narrow, I would posit that such discourses have broadened since 2000. Affiliated networks have demonstrated their ability to critically engage with issues and have become more forceful in their criticisms of government. Instead of aligning more with Track I agendas as predicted, network agendas have diverged from stagnant state priorities and pursued more proactive approaches, as evidenced by their support of new forms of security governance. At the time of Kraft’s observation, non-traditional security issues were still marginalised in Track II discourses; however, since then, NTS issues have been mainstreamed into regional security discourse and are quickly becoming the dominant organising paradigm.

Third, while it is still true that think tanks are composed of intellectual and political elites, many think tank networks have taken steps to incorporate civil society into the broader security debates. The AI was responsible for the establishment of the ASEAN Peoples’ Assembly and the initiation of a human rights colloquium (AICOHR). Both are active efforts to incorporate civil society into regional governance. The SLD invites a diverse array of think tank and non-state actors to its Dialogue and gives them the opportunity to meet with defence officials. The ASI expanded the breadth of participants in regional security dialogues and has served to emphasise otherwise peripheral voices. Though state-centric approaches remain dominant, network agendas are turning more towards human focuses of security. Each network has made an effort to draw more perspectives into security making processes through engaging civil society and/or interacting with an increasingly diverse array of actors.

The fourth criticism levelled against Track II is the accusation that forums and meetings are mere ‘talk shops’ that lack any relevant policy outcomes. Kraft argues that, for Track II to be taken seriously, “there is a clear need to see more of the discussions in track two activities turn into meaningful proposals for policy coordination and cooperation.”7 There are two ways to view this criticism and challenge it, the first being that Track II is valuable because it provides a location for talk (i.e., discourse). The value of these forums lies in their provision of discursive space and their ability to link formal and informal political arenas (which was one of the main points of this thesis). In addition to providing valuable political space, Track II policy analysis has started to have a discernible impact on Track I processes. CSCAP has actively campaigned for a move from Confidence Building Measures to Preventative Diplomacy and provided the framework to do so. Likewise, AI proposals have been instituted into the ASEAN Charter. Furthermore, proposals by both networks supporting Defence Minsters’ Dialogues have coincided with the establishment of such forums. Additionally, the SLD has hosted agreements amongst Track I officials concerning appropriate state responses to humanitarian disasters and the development of a piracy surveillance program.

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7 Ibid., 349.
to protect the Malacca Straits. All of these outcomes are evidence of renewed, and occasionally successful, attempts to link discourse with political action.

Last, the fragile infrastructure described by Kraft has been overtaken by the more institutionalised and independent structures of today. As argued in the case studies, with the exception of the ASI, the other three networks have successfully entrenched themselves into existing processes. Governmentally affiliated networks have enjoyed enhanced and more institutionalised links with their respective governments, and the SLD continues to grow in size and influence. Kraft also astutely pointed out the problem of limited and inconsistent funding for Track II processes in the wake of the Asia Financial Crisis. In response to this, many think tanks have diversified their funding to make themselves more resilient to financial shocks. For example, CSCAP has achieved relative financial independence though the levy of membership fees. The SLD is unlikely to suffer from financial constraints given its political importance and, should the need arise; the Dialogue can rely on funding from its membership base and defence industry support. The ASI was funded from outside the region and was thus entirely removed it from local financial pressures (though still subject to the pressures of its region of origin).

Arguments questioning the utility and relevance of think tank networks in Asia are gradually losing their relevance, as think tanks become self-supporting and more politically powerful. The relationships between think tanks and governments have trended from being very unequal towards more balanced and mutually beneficial. Think tanks’ stronger positions vis-à-vis governments have permitted networks to expand their agendas, seek the inclusion of civil society and other non-state actors, and push for concrete changes in state policy. Consequently, they have developed from their marginalised and co-opted beginnings into more independent policy operatives.

The Importance of Discourse and Discursive Space

Returning to the second theme, the previous chapters have articulated each network’s use of discourse and the creation of discursive space to achieve influence. First and foremost, think tanks have employed discourse to help them fulfil their purposes as idea brokers, and Ladi observes that think thanks,

When they have the power, they transfer knowledge to discourse and they then act as carriers of coordinative and communicative discourse. To be a carrier of coordinative discourse means that the think tanks participate in the creation, elaboration and justification of policy and programmatic ideas, when these are negotiated between policy-makers. They can promote specific ideas, specific framing of policy issues, and provide arguments for the debate by participating in advocacy coalitions.

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9 Ladi, “Think Tanks, Discursive Institutionalism and Policy Change,” 212.
Conceptualising think tank networks as carriers of discourse explained their success in moving the NTS agenda from the margins of policy analysis to the centre of policy debates. It also clarified how, in the process of engaging in ideas, think tanks wielded control over ideas and used this power to create, cultivate, and endorse specific policy agendas.

Applying discursive institutionalism to think tanks has revealed the phenomenon of discursive space as a distinct political mechanism used to facilitate coordinative and communicative discourse between formal and informal political processes. This thesis has identified the construction of discursive spaces as a key feature of network success and contributed to the works of Stone, Ball et al., Ladi, and other scholars of Track II, by explicating the inherent value of the political spaces provided by think tanks. It also furthered the works of Hameiri and Jones, and Krahmann, by providing a valuable tool for explaining the emergence and influence of non-state actors in exercising governing authority at the regional or transnational levels.

The ability of think tanks to engage in discourse and move ideas across political space has allowed them to wield ideational influence beyond the scope indicated by their political status. This is significant because think tanks have used this influence to alter norms and interests guiding security policy and, thereby, rearticulating the content of security discourse. They have actively cultivated discursive spaces as a means to enhance their discursive abilities. What is more, this thesis has contended that think tanks have pursued, and are pursuing, political agendas with non-traditional security ideas as their centrepieces. Unpacking think tank political influence has revealed a combination of traditional, as well as innovative, mechanisms used to mobilise the NTS agenda. Within these spaces, they have variously utilised problem framing, agenda setting, networking and institutionalisation to embed both themselves and NTS ideas into governing processes. Process tracing has allowed us to follow the active participation of think tanks in policy-making and highlight the assertive roles they have taken in defining security in Asia. Identifying the political mechanisms used to engage in discourse is an important contribution to the theoretical development of Discursive Institutionalism. Up to this point, the causal mechanisms of DI have been severely under-conceptualised, a weakness of the theory acknowledged by Vivien Schmidt and other DI scholars. As a result, the potential of DI as an important explanatory value has been underutilised. This thesis has remedied some of these limitations and

12 For examples, see Schmidt and Radaelli, “Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues; Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy.”
clarified the political components necessary for effective discourse in the context of non-state actors engaging in informal modes of diplomacy and governance.

The empirical studies have supported the above assertion and demonstrated that think tanks have proactively supplied, developed, and advanced NTS ideas to regional security makers. All four networks have promoted variations of the NTS agenda and, indeed Track II, “is the forum where non-traditional perspectives in security can be introduced. Track two has been credited with effecting changes in official perspectives on broad issues of security.” For instance, AI put NTS issues on the agenda of its Asia Pacific Roundtable as early as 1994. CSCAP has articulated the importance of NTS issues through is formal memoranda to the ARF and, informally, through publications like the annual CSCAP Regional Security Outlook. The Shangri-La Dialogue has openly acknowledged the expansion of its security agenda to include non-traditional security issues and endorsed this as a positive aspect of the dialogue. Moreover, the very foundation of the MacArthur Asia Security Initiative is heavily reliant on the NTS causal stories that have linked levels of energy and water security, cooperation and security architectures to regional stability.

Construction of discursive space along the margins of formal processes and in the gaps of regional governance has allowed think tanks to privilege their discursive acts and promote certain ideas over others. In the context of Asia, such spaces have provided a valuable and rare opportunity for a free (or freer) exchange of ideas. All networks studied have used discursive spaces to control the ideas introduced into the policy-making process, how these ideas are framed, and in what context. Acting as political agents, and using discourse and discursive space, think tank networks have concentrated their efforts on integrating NTS ideas into regional governance. Their success in this endeavour leads us to our third theme: that the NTS ideas promoted by think tanks have resulted in institutional change.

Ideas and Institutional Change

Third, this thesis has articulated that think tank promotion of the non-traditional security agenda has effectively re-defined the meaning of security in Asia. Working both internally and externally to regional institutions, think tanks have supplanted previous norms defining security and governance and replaced them with norms taken from the non-traditional security agenda, specifically from the concepts of regional cooperation and collective security. Writing about this transition, Caballero-Anthony observed that:

[I]t appears that ASEAN member states, as well as China, South Korea and Japan, are prepared to adopt more intrusive arrangements when certain issues threaten the security of states and societies. This is a significant development ... given that the regional norm, at least until the emergence of new transnational security threats, has always been for non-intrusive forms of regional arrangements.

13 Kraft, “The Autonomy Dilemma of Track Two Diplomacy in Southeast Asia,” 347.
14 International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Shangri-La Dialogue.
As part of their push to change norms, think tanks successfully acclimatised governing officials to these formerly ‘radical’ ideas, and guided regional policy makers, using causal stories, to the ‘logical’ conclusion that increased regional security cooperation was the best way to address NTS threats. The transition from one set of norms to the other has forced a re-evaluation of power dynamics between state and regional institutions and resulted in institutional change. It has opened up further opportunities for think tanks to influence emerging institutions through the provision of blueprints and frameworks guiding policy change occurring due to normative shifts.

The influence of think tank persuasive power was found in the AI’s input into the establishment of CSCAP and the ARF. More recently, AI has exercised ideational authority by contributing to the ASEAN Charter, which was an important step in strengthening ASEAN through the expansion and institutionalisation of the organisation. CSCAP has also pushed for the institutionalisation of its Track II component, the ARF. CSCAP proposed the establishment of an ARF Secretariat, and has called for a more proactive stance from the ARF in terms of regional cooperation. Though direct connections are hard to come by, the promotion of NTS issues by CSCAP may have contributed to the development of the ARF-Defence Officials’ Dialogue. The ARF-DOD agenda focuses on the NTS ideas of strengthening the ‘defence track’, and the forum clearly equates security with natural disasters, climate change, terrorism, and piracy – all NTS issues.

Think tanks have been crucial players in framing NTS issues as items of mutual concern and as a means of encouraging ‘soft’ military cooperation in the form of humanitarian aid and disaster relief. Over time, this type of cooperation has been transformed into more substantive forms of mutual governance. In 2002, China and ASEAN signed the ‘Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues. This process enjoyed active ARF Track II support (CSCAP), which was used “to feed ideas to the intergovernmental track one level, culminating in agreements at the ARF ministerial meetings.” The ASEAN-China declaration was a significant step, which reiterated both parties’ determination “to strengthen and deepen cooperation in the field of non-traditional security issues.”

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16 Alice Ba notes a similar phenomena occurring in ASEAN prior to the establishment of the ARF and the APT. She observes that both organisations were initially rejected but later successfully established, once regional actors had grown accustomed to the idea. In both cases, specific political actors served as champions of these ideas and, when the time was appropriate, offered them up as the “obvious” solutions to regional problems. Ba, (Re)negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

17 Ball and Guan, “Conclusions.”


The SLD has managed to institutionalise both itself and NTS issues into regional governing structures. The SLD is embedded in security governance to the extent that it is considered by some to be a legitimate competitor to the ADMM+. Even if the ADMM processes were not established to counter the growing influence of the SLD, they have adopted many of the characteristics of the forum – including an active engagement with the NTS agenda. The SLD may have also been the proximate cause for enhanced cooperation at the level of the ARF, as the ARF Security Policy Conference (SPC) initiated by China is seen as a direct response to the growing influence of the SLD. And, like the SLD, the SPC has had NTS issues prominently on its agenda. Further, the SLD has also been an important platform from which NTS issues could be identified and articulated to the region and public at large. Officials have used the Dialogue to urge for greater regional security cooperation, and the forum has even been used as a location for governing decisions on NTS issues. For example, the SLD was where regional actors agreed upon a set of principles guiding regional responses to humanitarian disasters.

Think tank success in encouraging structural change in Asia highlights the changing dynamic of power in the region between state and non-state actors. As noted by Ba, regional cooperation is a product of ideational processes and, thus, ideational actors wield important political influence. This observation is significant for the study of international relations, because ideational actors are able to exercise influence over states by defining their interests and altering the norms under which they operate. Even the ASI, which has no institutional structure of its own, provided an avenue for further policy development of NTS ideas. In this way, it has the potential to impact regional governance in the future by shaping the security epistemic community in the region. Driven by non-traditional security issues and other aspects of globalisation, regionalism is increasing and governing authority is shifting from state to regional organisations. Think tanks’ growing influence challenges the traditional IR understandings of the interface between political power, legitimacy, and ideas in policy-making.

Future Research Opportunities

The themes threaded throughout this thesis open up a number of options for further research. The previous chapters have demonstrated Discursive Institutionalism’s usefulness in linking ideas and institutional change, and the theory offers a valuable lens through which to view new constellations of security governance – particularly when looking at non-state actors. Following the scholarship of Diane Stone, my work has used the concepts found in Discursive Institutionalism to link think tanks to policy-

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21 Capie and Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia.”
making via the use of discourse and the provision of discursive space. The potential of Discursive Institutionalism to explain the importance of discursive space and the power of ideational actors in international relations merits further research. Policy-making at regional and international levels, especially in Asia, is discourse dependent and significant influence rests upon how ideas are conveyed, in what context, and by whom. This is especially true in light of the increasing number of non-state actors involved in security processes. Discursive Institutionalism can provide insight into the power dynamics between state and non-state actors and appropriately account for the influence of ideas on policy and institutional change.

Another avenue of inquiry emerges from the construction of political spaces outside state control. These spaces represent a significant political opportunity to engage in discourse for state and non-state actors alike, especially in illiberal and restricted political situations. Developing better understanding of the interface between ideas, political power, and institutions is increasingly valuable in a world where the number of non-state actors (i.e., idea actors) is burgeoning. Discursive spaces are proliferating alongside a growing number of think tank networks seeking access to security processes. The networks discussed in this thesis have been joined by a myriad of new ones developing alongside emerging governing institutions. The Network of East Asia Think-tanks (NEAT) and the East Asia Forum (both established in 2003) have affiliated themselves with the ASEAN+3 processes. The Track II Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutes (NADI) was founded in 2007 and is aligned with the newly established ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and the ADMM+Plus meetings. The increasingly crowded landscape of Track I meetings provides a wealth of previously non-existent political opportunities for think tank networks to engage in discourse and provide discursive space.

Moreover, think tanks are making concentrated efforts to connect with each other on regional and global levels and to expand their reach internationally. CSCAP and the ASI already have global links and, increasingly, think tanks are finding it not only beneficial, but imperative, to have a regional presence. Many institutes are opening international branches to further enhance their policy impact and networking opportunities. The International Institute for Strategic Studies has branches in London, the United States, Singapore, and Bahrain – giving it a global presence. These varied manifestations of think tank presence deserve further research, as they have the potential for significant trans-boundary influence. This is another instance where discursive institutionalism provides the tools to accommodate a study of think tank ideational influence, especially in regards to the strategic creation and utilisation of discursive space.

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22 Stone, “The ASEAN-ISIS Network.”; “Private Philanthropy or Policy Transfer? The Transnational Norms of the Open Society Institute.”
Think Tanks and the Future of Security Governance

At present, the demand for security governance in Asia far outstrips the capacity of existing governing structures. Regional trends show a growing desire for timely and effective security governance capable of managing NTS issues. This trend favours institutions that are more assertive and innovative, and highlights the effectiveness of think tank forums in comparison with traditional forms of governance. As this trend continues, it can have two potential outcomes concerning who wields governing authority in the region. The first potential outcome is that current institutional structures will evolve to meet security needs by institutionalising their processes, abandoning the ASEAN-way, and adapting cooperative forms of security. In this context, think tank networks will continue to support regional institutions in their current capacities and help guide institutional adaptation. In general, governmentally affiliated think tanks favour this first option, as the status quo guarantees them political access and legitimacy. However, the likelihood of this outcome rests on the adaption of formal structures to new governing demands. Attempts by regional modes of governance to change have been made but, as of yet, have not demonstrated a convincing ability to manage trans-boundary issues or escape the limitations of ASEAN diplomatic norms. The inertia of formal institutions has compelled AI and CSCAP to consider political alternatives to ASEAN and the ARF. CSCAP appears to be moving its focus away from the ARF and towards ASEAN, which is perceived as a more active and agile institution. As one CSCAP participant articulated, “the weaknesses of the ARF structure impose constraints on CSCAP. While new institutions have captured [the] attention of government leaders, the ARF finds itself increasingly neglected.”²⁵ CSCAP members noted in their most recent CSCAP Regional Security Outlook that, while the network plans to maintain its role as an intellectual advisor to Track I processes, it must evaluate the appropriateness of its current model of policy advice. CSCAP actors have realised that they are being marginalised along with the ARF and, to avoid this outcome, the network will “need to determine the nature of its engagement with current regional bodies while considering where its contributions to the regional cooperative security discourse best fit.”²⁶ There is already evidence of a search for more fruitful audiences as the CSCAP Regional Security Outlook in 2013 generally bypassed the ARF and focused its policy advice on ASEAN.²⁷

However, ASEAN is also struggling to move forward, and some of the think tanks in AI appear to be growing weary of the slow pace of progress. Disillusionment has reached the point where prominent members of AI think tanks have speculated on the potential

²⁷ See Desmond Ball et al., eds., CSCAP Regional Security Outlook 2013 (CSCAP, 2012).
structure of a ‘post-ASEAN’ foreign policy. For AI, this would presumably mean either a realignment of the network with a new regional organisation, or the disbanding of the network as individual think tanks seek more meaningful influence via other points of access. This leads to the second potential outcome, that current structures will not sufficiently adapt and the task of governance will increasingly fall to non-state actors.

There is already a dispersion of governing authority at the regional level and, instead of a single mode of regional governance, many “multi-level polycentric forms of public policy in which a plethora of institutes and networks negotiate within and between international organisations and private regimes have emerged as pragmatic responses in the absence of formal institutions of global governance.” In Asia, the think tank networks of AI, CSCAP, the Shangri-La Dialogue, and the ASI have already begun to emerge as governing actors, both in cooperation with governmental organisations or as individual entities. Should current structures like ASEAN and the ARF continue to drag their feet on institutional reforms, they could potentially find themselves marginalised as think tank-managed dialogues are deemed to be more effective avenues of security governance. In this scenario, AI and CSCAP would find themselves gaining influence relative to official forums and acting more and more in the capacity of governing frameworks. Independent forums would emerge to meet governing demands and fill gaps in governing authority and could potentially subsume governing authority once belonging solely to states. There is subtle evidence of this occurring with the popularity of the SLD vis-à-vis other formal governing forums.

Conclusion

The emergence of non-traditional security issues has created an ideational conflict which undermines existing regional institutions. These institutions now find themselves riven between the constraints of traditional governing norms and growing demands for new forms of security governance. As regional actors struggle to reconcile the dilemma between state autonomy and effectiveness in regional institutions, think tanks have emerged as significant political agents by articulating the ideas that define security, promoting agendas that address changing security needs, and providing blueprints that guide the way. Applying the concept of discourse to the interactions between think tanks and state officials has offered a revealing insight into the influence of ideas on political and institutional change. By illuminating the common ground between institutionalist and constructivist approaches, this thesis has brought ideas back into institutional change and situated ideational actors at the centre of analytical focus.

This thesis has demonstrated that think tanks are active participants in the political process, and that they have used ideas, engaged in discourse and constructed discursive

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28 Tan, “ASEAN Centrality.”
spaces to alter traditional norms, influence political processes, and shape security institutions in Asia. Think tanks have been recognised as integral parts of governing processes in the region that have pursued their own, clearly defined, political agendas. This has empowered think tanks as agents of change and challenged previous views of them as passive policy providers. Think tank success in instigating and guiding institutional change has raised important and politically relevant questions about sources of governing authority in Asia, and challenged the strict analytical dichotomy between agency/power and state/non-state actors in Asian governance. Each case study has shown that think tank networks are not ‘outside’ of politics but are firmly embedded into regional governing process. The evidence in this thesis has provided an analysis of the gradual, though clear, shift of governing authority from state to regional actors, and from official to unofficial forums. Think tanks have provided the ideas upon which security is understood and have influenced how the structures that govern security are built. What is more, each case study has hinted at the growing role of think tanks in providing security governance when state and regional organisations fail to meet governing needs.

In conclusion, think tank networks have exerted a great deal of influence on regional structures through their role as idea brokers. Their ability to direct the future of security governance in Asia is both important and underappreciated in International Relations scholarship. This thesis has propelled the constructivist agendas by refocusing attention on the power of ideas on institutional change in Asia. It has revealed how think tank networks across Asia have engaged with idea promotion from the policy to the epistemic levels and supported a regional normative shift towards new forms of security governance. It has highlighted the false dichotomy between formal and informal political spaces in the context of regional governance and demonstrated the power of ideational actors. In doing so, it has brought to light the importance of discursive spaces and demonstrated the interconnected relationship between think tank networks and governing institutions. Ultimately, this thesis has demonstrated that think tank promotion of the non-traditional security agenda has altered the way that both security and governance are perceived. It has revealed that think tanks have used NTS ideas as a catalyst for institutional change and played a valuable role in defining the future of security governance in Asia.
Appendix A

List of Institutes in the Asia Security Initiative

Core Institutes

East Asia Institute – Seoul, South Korea
$2,000,000 in support of policy research and capacity-building on Northeast Asian security challenges (over 3 years).

Nanyang Technological University, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies – Singapore, Republic of Singapore
$2,500,000 in support of policy research and capacity-building on internal security challenges in Asia (over 3 years).

Peking University, Center for International & Strategic Studies – Beijing, China
$1,400,000 in support of policy research and capacity-building on regional security issues in Asia (over 3 years).

Other Institutes

Australian National University – Canberra, Australia
$600,000 to support policy research on how the United States, its treaty allies, and other selected states could integrate their bilateral diplomatic, economic, and strategic interaction with multilateral institutions (over 3 years).

Center for Strategic & International Studies – Washington, D.C.
$450,000 to support policy research on how the U.S.-centred system of alliances can help to manage international security challenges in Asia in an era of changing power dynamics (over 3 years).

30 All information in this section is taken directly from the MacArthur Foundation, “2008 Report on Activities,” 34-35.
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue – Geneva, Switzerland
$600,000 to support research examining comparative responses to violent internal conflict in the Asia-Pacific region (over 2 years).

Centre for Policy Research – New Delhi, India
$750,000 to support research on South Asian Security cooperation (over 3 years)

China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies – Beijing, China
$160,000 to support research by Chinese technical and policy experts on the nuclear strategies and policies of states with nuclear weapons (over 2 years).

Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations – New Delhi, India
$450,000 in support of policy research by young South Asian Scholars and opinion-makers on Asian security issues (over 3 years)

Institute for International Economics – Washington, D.C.
$200,000 to support policy research on North Korea (over two years)

International Institute for Strategic Studies – London, United Kingdom
$1,350,000 in support of the 2009-2011 Asia Security Summits (the Shangri-La Dialogue) and research on how small and medium powers in the Asia-Pacific are responding diplomatically and militarily to changes in regional power dynamics (over 3 years).
The Institute also received a grant for $250,000 in 2008 in support of the Shangri-La Dialogue.

Japan Center for International Exchange/Japan – Tokyo, Japan
$500,000 to support research on how nongovernment forces will affect success in establishing security cooperation in East Asia (over 3 years).

Korea University Ilmin International Relations Institute – Seoul, South Korea
$600,000 to support a research project examining risks and responses to a collapse of North Korea (over 3 years).
Lowy Institute for International Policy – Sydney, Australia
$700,000 to support research on the constraints on and limits of multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific (over 3 years).

$1,200,000 to support research on South Asian regional cooperation and on maritime energy resources (over 3 years).

National Chengchi University, Institute for International Relations – Taipei, Taiwan
$550,000 to support policy research in cross-Straits relations (over 3 years).

National Committee on American Foreign Policy – New York, New York
$250,000 in support of international dialogues on East Asian Security (over 2 years).

National University of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy – Singapore, Republic of Singapore
$750,000 to support capacity-building and policy research on energy policy in Asia (over 3 years).

Seoul National University – Seoul, South Korea
$300,000 to support policy research on Sino-Korean security challenges (over 3 years).

Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Center for RimPac Strategic and International Studies – Shanghai, China
$180,000 in support of policy research on cross-Straits relations (over 3 years).

Stanford University, Center for International Security and Cooperation – Stanford, California
$125,000 in support of work on Northeast Asian security.

Strategic Foresight Group – Mumbai, India
$400,000 in support of policy research on water resource conflict in Asia (over 2 years).
Tsinghua University, Institute of International Studies – Beijing, China
$300,000 in support of policy research on cross-Straits relations (over 3 years).

University of California, San Diego, Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, La Jolla, California
$500,000 to support policy research on regional security architecture, including the permanent institutionalisation of the Six-Party Talks (over 2 years).

University of Tokyo, Policy Alternative Research Institute – Tokyo, Japan
$525,000 to support policy research on regional security architecture, including the permanent institutionalisation of the Six-Party talks (over 2 years).

Yonsei University – Seoul, South Korea
$200,000 to support policy research on regional security architecture, including the permanent institutionalisation of the Six-Party Talks (over 2 years).
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