

## **Securitizing Climate Change in Southeast Asia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article surveys whether and how ASEAN, which places a high premium on *ASEAN Way* perceives and addresses climate change through the prism of Securitization Theory.

With a call for re-conceptualization of security and the building of a regional community by 2015, this paper suggests that issues hindering environmental cooperation are trumped by ASEAN's need to step up as one bloc to promote similar aspirations towards implementing measures to address climate change and avoid parallel states' insecurities. ASEAN's initiatives, particularly its progress on articulating climate change hint on how the issue will be slowly, but hopefully, incrementally addressed in the future.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Securitization, ASEAN

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

There is an increasing consensus that climate change<sup>1</sup> is the greatest collective challenge the humanity has and is confronting. Scientific **studies** led by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warn that billions of people will face greater risks to the general quality of life, due to climate change.

Based on a vulnerability mapping assessment developed by Yusuf and Francisco (2009: 12), the most vulnerable areas in Southeast Asia are the regions of the Philippines, the Mekong River Delta in Vietnam, almost all the regions of Cambodia, North and East Lao PDR, the Bangkok region of Thailand, and West Sumatra, South Sumatra, West Java, and East Java of Indonesia.

Developing countries are viewed most vulnerable because they have fewer resources to adapt-- socially, technologically and financially (UNFCCC; 2007). This was validated by a study conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) entitled *The Economics of Climate Change in Southeast Asia* (2009), which further underlined that Southeast Asia will likely suffer more from climate change than the global average.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of climate change has increasingly treaded alongside other transnational challenges, such as human trafficking, transnational crimes, economic instability, infectious diseases, etc. which are now in the usually traditional agenda of the international community. These new security challenges tend to prove the inadequacy of national responses and require cooperation at the regional level and beyond.

It is interesting to find out how a paragon regional organization among developing nations, whose inception in 1967 was driven by the aspiration of finding common solutions to common security problems, addresses the issue of climate change.

This paper therefore intends to see whether and how the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which places high premium on its normative principle of *ASEAN Way*, or non-interference and non-intervention principle, perceives and addresses climate change through the prism of Securitization Theory. Towards addressing this query, it aims to develop a matrix which maps out ASEAN's efforts to securitize climate change based on the organization's speech acts, i.e. (1) official statements; and (2) measures agreed upon to address the threat, i.e. (a) structural response and (b) on-the-ground programmes.

## **II. Securitization Theory**

At the end of the 1980s and within the context of the post-Cold war security environment and the emergence of a "new" security in Asia, a new breed of literature in International Relations challenged the realist and neo-realist theories into a wider intellectual debate which highlighted that the security agenda must be "broadened" to examine threats beyond state and military security, and "deepened" to include individual, social, and global concerns that extended security threats from the sector of military to environment, economic, societal, and political, also known as non-traditional security issues.

One of the most influential of the new approaches was articulated by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaape de Wilde in their book *Security: A new Framework for Analysis* in 1998, whose collective body of work is known as the Copenhagen School (CS). It develops a distinctive "constructivist-realist" position on the meaning of security. According to , "securitization" is a social process, hence its outcome is not a priori,

rather it is considered as a social product of what the relevant actors make of it (Curley and Wong: 2008). This means to say that security is regarded as a speech act constructed discursively by the actors who seek to securitize an issue.

CS has three key assumptions. Firstly, it defines “securitization” as the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. “Desecuritization,” on the other hand, refers to the reverse process, involving the shift of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal political process.

Secondly, an issue is considered “securitized” when it has been articulated rhetorically by a “securitizing actor” (government, international organization, civil society) as posing an existential threat to a “referent object” (those who have legitimate claim to survival, e.g. state, economy, ideology, etc). “Speech acts” are the means through which issues are said to become securitized. Speech informs and influences our perception of reality and has a direct impact on human behavior and outcomes.

Lastly, securitization is considered successful and complete once the securitizing actor succeeds in convincing a “specific audience” (public opinion, politicians, military officers, elites) that a referent object is existentially threatened. (Caballero-Anthony: 2006).

CS is also not without criticisms and this paper is cognizant of what the critics point out as the theory’s weaknesses. One of the more relevant criticisms to this paper is the theory’s inapplicability to Asia, or in this case, in Southeast Asian due to the states’ non-democratic and illiberal political systems.<sup>3</sup>

This particular criticism is stemmed from the obscurity of when securitization can be considered complete. Some scholars who tend to “revise” and apply CS in Asia, would argue that within the securitization spectrum of political and security solutions, securitization does not end by declaring rhetorically that an issue is a threat, but instead, it will only be completed when a second stage is implemented, i.e. to allocate resources and to act in order to mitigate the threat.<sup>4</sup>

In line with the CS “revisionist” view, this paper suggests that securitization happens, when both stages are completed. Inspired by how Haacke (2010:124-149) applies the CS’ Securitization Theory on regional arrangements, which he calls collective securitization, this paper suggests that the first stage is completed when all governments claim that the development poses a serious threat to a regional security, and that no one government sought to hijack the latter. This can be manifested through unambiguous rhetorical official statements in support of conclusions of the regional arrangement. The paper regards the second stage of securitization complete, when agreed

measures based on the existing shared security culture have been implemented. The measures do not have to be outside the normal dealings of the organization.

Through the Securitization Theory, this paper looks into of whether and how ASEAN addresses and perceives climate change, by addressing the following questions: (1) what “speech acts” were articulated? (2) what practical “measures” were implemented?; (3) has there been securitization of climate change in ASEAN?

### **III. Climate Change as an Environmental Security Issue in Southeast Asia**

The conception of security by Southeast Asian states subscribed to Northeast Asia’s view of security as “comprehensive security,” since ASEAN started in 1967. This view is markedly different from the western concept, as it provides a comprehensive, multi-dimensional, and holistic take of security, which underscores that a nation’s security begins form within- stressing the primacy of domestic security by solving internal sources of security threats such as communist insurgency, ethnic tensions, social division, and economic malaise (Dewitt and Hernandez: 2003)

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when sources of insecurity threaten not only the states, but also individuals, communities, region, and the planet, came the broadening of the object of security in the region, to include what is now called non-traditional security issues. These challenges warrant a response that goes beyond state borders. In ASEAN, this time, there is an increasing move for the re-conceptualization of ASEAN’s security discourse to non-traditional security.

ASEAN’s securitization of non-traditional security issues has recently gained a significant following in the academic literature.

Sovannasam (2005), for instance examined ASEAN’s securitization of transnational crimes such as terrorism, sea piracy, illegal drug trafficking, money laundering, trafficking in persons, arm smuggling, economic crimes, and cyber crimes. He surmised that ASEAN has acknowledged the nature of the threat of these transnational crimes and affirmed its commitment at the highest level to fight against these challenges.

Emmers, et al. (2008) in part agrees with the aforementioned contention of ASEAN’s securitization of transnational security issues, by suggesting that in addressing human trafficking, in particular, ASEAN states found the significance of using the regional association as an alternative policy vehicle to implement security response. However, they underscored how the region is still captured by states interests in addressing the said issue.

Meanwhile, what has been more studied on environmental security are the insecurities emerging from environmental degradation and severe environmental problems in Southeast Asia which directly affect basic needs of the society, triggering social, economic, and political instability of states. (Dupont: 2007, Clapp and Dauvergne: 2003, Sari: 2003, Tay and Paungmalit: 2010)

Dokken (2001: 509-530) posited that environmental security is a useful concept in relation to political perception of environmental interdependence in Southeast Asia, because if political actors address serious environmental problems as security matters, they are more likely to put them at the top of the agenda and deal with them in satisfactory manners.

Elliott (2007: 499) argues that while other transnational crimes are securitized by securitizing actors in Asia and the Pacific, environmental threats have remained un(der)securitized, as there seems to be no belief that this issue requires urgent attention. She accounted the lack of a “securitizing move” on environmental crimes in Asia and the Pacific to the relatively poor understanding of the policy challenges of environmental crimes, confusion about referent objects, institutional incapacity, mixed policy signals and the exclusion of environmental expertise from a closed community of security elites.

Tay (2008:219) examined ASEAN cooperation to address the haze pollution problem and suggested that nationalism still dominates in the region. He posited that after several years of haze negotiations at the regional level, ASEAN’s decision remained central to Indonesia’s action or inaction therefore clearly showing how the national level still trumps, arguably, the regional one.

Sari (2003: 207-225) argued that with more pressures held by the international community on developing countries to contribute in protecting global environment by mitigating climate change, there is also a perception that to succumb to such call, is a threat to the sovereignty of ASEAN developing nation-states, their right to development, and their security. He pointed out that the main reasons why developing countries refuse to limit their greenhouse gases (GHGs) are because the present accumulation of GHGs is a result of chronic emissions by industrialized countries since the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and that development Southeast Asian states may force them not to significantly reduce GHGs.

#### **IV. ASEAN’s Efforts to Respond to Climate Change**

ASEAN’s work on climate change specifically grew out of an earlier, more general focus on the environment agenda. The responses are influenced by the

necessary reactive initiatives that emerge from environmental problems in the region such as the haze problem, biodiversity issues, and disaster management.

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, this section will develop a matrix that will map out ASEAN's efforts to securitize climate change based on the organization's speech acts, i.e. (1) official statements; and (2) measures agreed upon to address the threat, i.e. (a) structural response and (b) on-the-ground programmes.

#### **A. ASEAN's Official Statements on Climate Change<sup>5</sup>**

It was only in 2007 when environmental policies have explicitly mentioned climate change in the association's declaration and joint statements.

Two statements sprung in 2007, which were issued particularly during or in parallel with the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in November 2007 in Singapore. It may be noted that this period was immediately prior Indonesia's hosting of the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the COP to the Kyoto Protocol, or the Bali Conference in December 2007.

The ASEAN Declaration of Environmental Sustainability which was signed on 20 November 2007 during the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit provided the first opportunity for climate change to be recognized as an emerging and mainstream environmental security issue concerning the region. The declaration aspires to address the need to (1) protect the environment; (2) conserve natural resources; and (3) respond to climate change.

In ASEAN's Declaration to the Bali Conference which was also adopted on 20 November 2007, the regional group expressed that the protection of the environment and the sustainable use and management of natural resources are essential to the long-term economic growth and social development of countries in the region. It also recognized that ASEAN is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. With these premises, ASEAN expressed interest in establishing an ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI). ACCI is envisaged to be a consultative platform to further strengthen regional coordination and cooperation in addressing climate change, and to undertake concrete actions to respond to the phenomenon's adverse impacts. According to a joint ASEAN press release, this initiative will strengthen the region's capacity both in mitigation and adaptation efforts, and in particular to bring forward the region's interests and priorities onto international negotiations on future climate regime as appropriate. Furthermore, through this declaration, ASEAN pledged to address the issue of climate change beyond 2012 through realizing an effective, fair, flexible and comprehensive multilateral arrangement.

On 21 November 2007 on the occasion of the East Asia Summit held after the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Singapore, the Singapore Declaration on Climate Change,

Energy and the Environment was signed. It involved ASEAN's East Asian counterparts, namely, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and the Republic of Korea. The declaration built upon the Cebu Declaration on East Asian Energy Security adopted on 15 January 2007 and the controversial APEC Leaders' Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development adopted in Sydney on 8 September 2007. The Sydney Declaration aimed at reducing energy intensity by at least 25 percent by 2030 from the 2005 levels and increasing the forest cover in the region by at least 20 million hectares of all types of forests by 2010. This was later questioned at the Copenhagen conference due to the overlapping commitments of reduction goals of the member-countries. The East Asian declaration committed the members to participate actively in the process of developing an effective, comprehensive, and equitable post-2012 international climate change arrangement under the UNFCCC process and support the results of the Bali Conference.

Prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the COP to UNFCCC and the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of COP to Kyoto Protocol held in Copenhagen, Denmark from 7-18 December 2009, ASEAN issued a joint statement during the 15<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Cham-am Hua Hin, Thailand. The statement committed its members to fully implement various measures to address climate change. However, this statement was considered weak because it did not include a clause promoting the support for a binding agreement to be adopted during the Copenhagen Summit.

Following the Copenhagen conference, which afforded an accord based on a non-binding and voluntary reductions principle, it is noteworthy that some ASEAN countries, although non-Annex I members of the Kyoto protocol, pledged voluntary green house gas (GHG) emission caps. Indonesia, which is reportedly the third largest emitter of GHGs in the world, committed 26 to 4 % GHG reductions, mainly from its forest sector, by year 2020. On the other hand, Malaysia committed to reduce 40 percent by 2020. It may be noted that both pledges were not coordinated by ASEAN.

Singapore, on the other hand, chose to group with the Alliance of Small Island States. This grouping has been declared most vulnerable to climate change and will most likely get prioritized in the allocation of the climate aid.

Last 10 April 2010 on the occasion of the 16<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit held in Hanoi, Viet Nam, government leaders of the ASEAN member states issued a joint response to climate change for the 16<sup>th</sup> Session to the COP and 6<sup>th</sup> Session to Kyoto Protocol which was held in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010. The statement renewed its support to the UNFCCC and its principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities and national circumstances. One of the strengths of this statement is that unlike its predecessors, it urged all parties of UNFCCC to work together in order to secure a legally binding agreement, particularly to limit the increase in average

global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level. However, the document supported the Copenhagen Accord, which it refers to as that although not a legally binding instrument, it provides elements that could be considered as input to the current climate efforts aimed at reaching a fair, equitable, and legally binding agreement that ensures a successful COP 16 in Mexico. This immediately caused dissatisfaction among the environmental groups who lament that the language of the ASEAN Joint Response suggests a compromise to integrate the non-binding Copenhagen Accord into the UNFCCC process.

The 17th session of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP 17) and the 7th session of the Meeting of the Parties (COP 7) to the Kyoto Protocol was held from 28 November to 11 December 2011 in Durban, South Africa. The session happened while extreme weather conditions of typhoons Nesat and Nalgae caused rising floods in Bangkok and the Philippines displacing hundreds of thousands of people. Crucial to the post-Kyoto climate regime, the Durban session has agreed that talks towards a new legal treaty will be held from 2013 to 2015, and must take into effect in 2020. The session was also useful in defining the management of the green climate fund, which is said to gather and disburse USD 100bn to help developing countries develop cleanly and adapt to climate change. The ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Climate Change to the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the COP to the UNFCCC and the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the COP to the Kyoto Protocol was adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit held in Bali, Indonesia on 17 November 2011, as usual expressed its support to the UNFCCC, including its contribution to the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA). It underlined ASEAN's willingness to participate in the technology and financial transfers through the green climate fund. It was noteworthy that the statement explicitly urged developed countries to provide assistance on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). The session made progress on REDD, which made Indonesia most keen among ASEAN member-states, it being among the third largest GHG emitter due to deforestation.

Also during the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit, Bali Concord III, a road map outlining strategies to strengthen the ASEAN community's three pillars, in security, the economy and in the social-cultural field was signed. Climate change was among the five socio-cultural issues identified as a priority. The other were natural disaster relief and prevention, health, education, and culture.



The table below shows the normative policies declared by ASEAN, which mentions or focuses on climate change.

<b>Norms and policies</b>	<b>Date</b>
ASEAN Declaration of Environmental Sustainability	20 November 2007
ASEAN Joint Statement to the Bali Conference	20 November 2007
Singapore Declaration on Climate Change, Energy and the Environment	21 November 2007
ASEAN Joint Statement to the 15 <sup>th</sup> Session of the COP to UNFCCC and the 5 <sup>th</sup> Session of COP to Kyoto Protocol	7-18 December 2009
ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Joint Response to Climate Change	9 April 2010
ASEAN Statement to the 16 <sup>th</sup> Session COP to UNFCCC and 6 <sup>th</sup> Session to Kyoto Protocol	10 April 2010
ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Climate Change to the 17 <sup>th</sup> Session of the COP to UNFCCC and to 7 <sup>th</sup> Session of the COP to the Kyoto Protocol	17 November 2011
Bali Concord III	17 November 2011

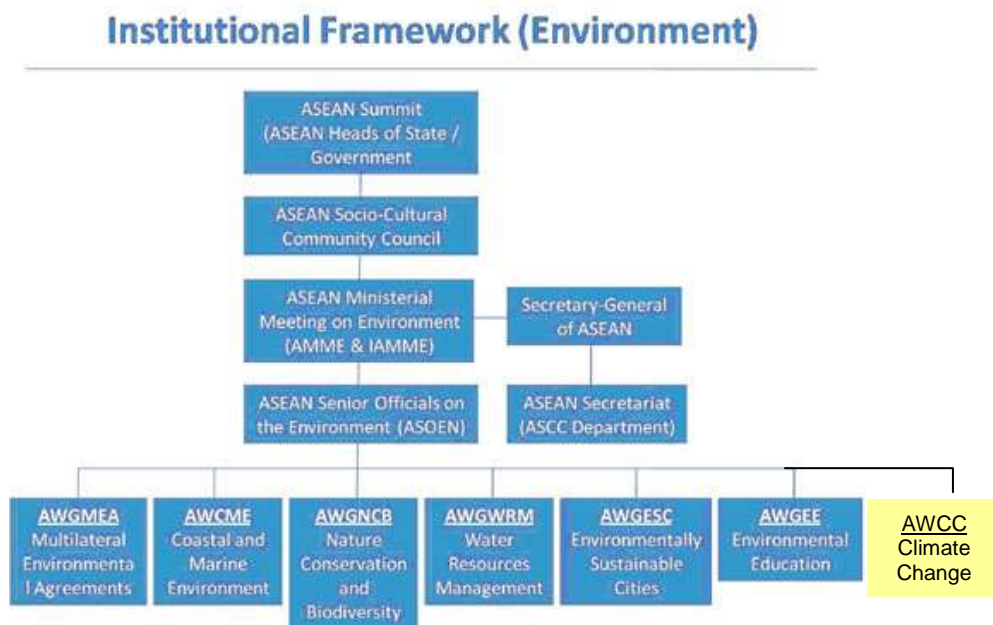
## **B. ASEAN's Structural Response to Climate Change**

With the dawn of the ASEAN Charter, which entered into force on 15 December 2008, ASEAN subsidiary organs and institutions were rationalized, including constituting the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) which comprises the ASEAN Foreign Ministers who formerly were loosely associated through the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. ACC coordinates with the three communities led by their respective ASEAN Community Councils.

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council (ASCC) today oversees the work of the ASEAN Environment Ministers (AEM). The ASEAN Environment Ministers are primarily responsible for policy and strategic matters related to the environment. The ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN), established in 1988W directly reports to the AEM and serve as the national focal points for promoting ASEAN's activities in their respective countries. It is assisted by six subsidiary bodies, namely: (1) ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME); (2) ASEAN Working Group on Environmental Education (AWGEE); (3) ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC); (4) ASEAN Working Group on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (AWGMEA); (5) ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB); (6) ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM).

Climate change issues used to be coordinated and reported by the Secretariat to ASOEN as it is considered to fall under “all other activities that do not fall within the purview of the respective working groups, such as promoting environmentally sound technology and harmonizing environmental policies and databases.”

Through the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment held in Hua Hin, Thailand on 7 September 2009, which called for the establishment of a structure to specifically tackle climate change issues, the seventh subsidiary organ under ASOEN was formed, focusing on Climate Change, called the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC). To date, the working group has already conducted its first meeting last 22-23 31 March to 1 April 2010 in Bangkok, Thailand. It called a special meeting on 22-23 March 2011.

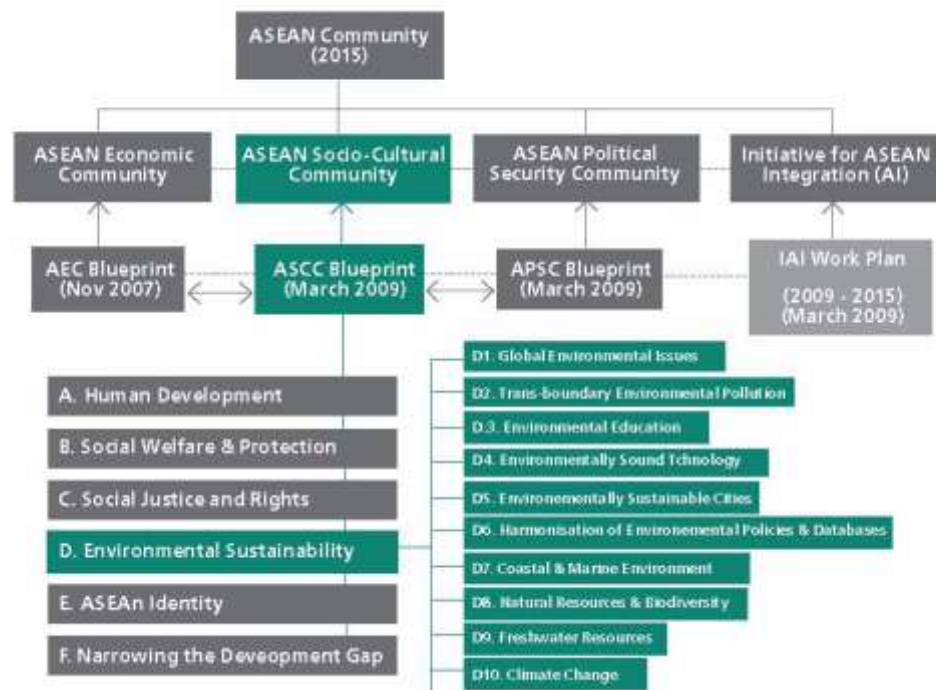


**Figure 1. ASEAN’s organizational chart on environmental cooperation**

On the larger institutional framework response of ASEAN aligned with the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit’s vision of an ASEAN Community and its call for a “clean and green ASEAN,” ASEAN environmental cooperation focuses on ten priority areas as reflected in the Blueprint for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASSC) for 2009-2015.

1. Addressing global environmental issues
2. Managing and preventing trans-boundary environmental pollution
  - Trans-boundary haze pollution
  - Trans-boundary movement of hazardous wastes
3. Promoting sustainable development through environmental education and public participation
4. Promoting environmentally sound technology (EST)

5. Promoting quality living standards in ASEAN cities/ urban areas
6. Harmonizing environmental policies and databases
7. Promoting the sustainable use of coastal and marine environment
8. Promoting sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity
9. Promoting the sustainability of freshwater resources
10. Responding to climate change and addressing its impacts



**Figure 2. Current ASEAN’s policy framework on environment**

### **C. ASEAN’s on-the ground work on Climate Change**

ASEAN leaders resolved to enhance cooperation in addressing climate change and in particular expressed their support to the development of ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI). ACCI is envisaged to be a consultative platform to further strengthen regional coordination and cooperation in addressing climate change, and to undertake concrete actions to respond to its adverse impacts. The scope of collaboration through the ACCI will include (i) Policy and Strategy formulation; (ii) Information sharing; (iii) Capacity building; (iv) Technology Transfer.

In line with the efforts to develop ACCI and the work of AWGMEA, ASEAN is currently promoting the “Cool ASEAN and Green Capitals Initiative”, which will focus more on local-level practical actions to address climate change through the involvement of the major city governments in the region. This initiative will be led by the ASEAN Capital City mayors or governors, with ASEAN playing an enabling and supporting role.

Education for Sustainable Development is also being promoted by ASEAN through the project jointly implemented with Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), called “Development of a Teachers’ Guide Integrating Climate Change.” This initiative aims to integrate climate change as a subject taught in Southeast Asian schools.

An ASEAN Energy Cooperation has also already initiated aimed at achieving regional sustainable energy development. The ASEAN 2020 plan envisions an energy-interconnected region through an ASEAN Power Grid and Trans- ASEAN gas pipeline projects.

The table below shows the on-the-ground work/ programme of ASEAN on climate change which only started in 2010.

**Table 2. On-the-ground work/ programmes of ASEAN on climate change.**

On-the ground work/ Programmes	Year
ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI)	2010
Development of a Teachers’ Guide Integrating Climate Change	2010
“Cool ASEAN and Green Capitals Initiative”	2010
ASEAN Energy Cooperation	2010-2015

## V. Analysis

In theory, the securitizing actors of the existential threat of climate change are the heads of states, foreign ministers, environment ministers and senior officials who participate on the decision-making on environmental matters in ASEAN meetings. The state, where largely security policy-making in ASEAN occurs is considered the referent object.

### Speech acts

ASEAN has a total of eight official rhetorical articulations on climate change through declarations, statements to COP sessions and Kyoto Protocol, and joint leaders’ statements between 20 November 2007 to 17 November 2011. Regarded as “speech acts,” the statements shape as well as were shaped by the realities of how the association perceives climate change, and therefore shows how ASEAN aims to address the issue. This means to say that since 2007, ASEAN has rhetorically articulated

climate change. Its audience i.e. the member-states of ASEAN have also accepted climate change as an existential threat, by adopting the declarations. This completes stage 1 of securitization. This has also provided a hint on how ASEAN will tackle climate change in the years to come.

However, there were major speech acts by member-states which were not coordinated with ASEAN. These were the announcements of Indonesia and Malaysia of their respective governments' GHG emission reduction. It may be noted that ASEAN, being a non Annex 1 country, in its statements to the UNFCCC COP and Kyoto Protocol was non-committal on GHG reductions and only articulated its support to limit the increase in average global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level. Indonesia's voluntary reduction of GHGs, seems to be aligned with its interests on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).

On a related matter was Singapore's decision to associate itself to small island states, instead of fully affiliating with ASEAN and facing the international community on one Southeast Asian voice.

### **Emergency Measures**

This paper subscribes that a complete securitization is achieved when the second stage, i.e. emergency measures were given funding and were implemented. For this paper, these measures refer to structural and on the ground programmes.

Organizationally, it was in 2009 when a technical working group tackling solely climate change was established. This working group directly reports to ASOEN, and ASOEN reports to AEM. In terms of ASEAN's framework, climate change was indentified one of the priority areas reflected in the ASSC blueprint for 2009-2011. This paper views ASEAN's initiative to form an ad-hoc committee to lead its climate change effort with importance. Although found noteworthy, forming such structure is a usual step for ASEAN and institutionalization of a highly-skilled group on climate change is deemed crucial to complete securitization in this aspect.

In terms of on-the-ground programmes, which are the initiatives cascaded by ASEAN to its member-states, there have been sporadic efforts whose funding do not necessarily come from the organization but from partner donor organizations. With four regional programmes, three of which are adaptation solutions, and one is a mitigation solution, ASEAN is seen lackluster in this aspect. It is deemed that there are plentiful of other regional opportunities that ASEAN has not explored. Funding come from donor organizations, mostly may come from the climate funds which generally make ASEAN initiatives unsustainable financially.

## **VI. Conclusion**

With a call for re-conceptualization of security in Southeast Asia and the aspiration to build a regional community in 2015, this paper provided an overview of whether and how ASEAN perceive and therefore address the so-called penultimate commons problem it has confronted thus far, climate change.

Since its establishment, ASEAN is widely known for its decision-making process anchored in non-interference and non-intervention principles that make the achievement of agreements and consensus on issues, more often than not, slow and at times, impossible. Juxtaposed to other non-traditional security issues, environmental problems in Southeast Asia are often viewed to be among the most marginalized issues because they are usually subsumed by other “more important” concerns and are typically not treated with a sense of urgency by decision-makers in their political and security agenda, among other issues.

This paper however shows that climate change has significantly been elevated in ASEAN’s security agenda through the articulation of the heads of states, environment ministers and senior officials. This move represents the importance and the sense of urgency they place in addressing climate change and therefore, their readiness to agree on measures to respond to the issue. Such articulation manifests a significant progress by ASEAN Member-States towards securitizing climate change. However, there are actions by some states such as expressing statements without the auspices of the regional organization, which attest that there still is some wariness towards the erosion of their state sovereignty.

Noting the steps taken by ASEAN in practice, organizationally and through on-the-ground programmers, this paper found that the efforts to address climate change thus far are weak and far from the aspirations expressed by the member states in the meetings. The nature, scope and number of practical measures of cooperation are deemed limited as there are more readily available collaborations that could be forged. In the same vein, financial resources for climate projects in the region must go beyond not being donor-driven.

The progress made by ASEAN on securitizing climate change, albeit not fully realizing it, foreshadows how ASEAN can be a key mover among the developing world in the international climate arrangement, specifically in bridging the schism between the claims of developed countries and developing countries.

This paper suggests that the issues that seem to hinder environmental cooperation in the region are trumped by the need for the regional organization to step up as one bloc to promote similar aspirations in order to implement measures that

address climate change and avoid parallel states' insecurities. ASEAN's initiatives on climate change, particularly the extraordinary progress it has exhibited on articulating the importance of addressing climate change hint on how the issue will be slowly, but hopefully, incrementally addressed in the future.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines the phenomenon as a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. (UNFCCC Article 1) There is therefore a distinction between the change in climate attributable to human activities or anthropogenic causes and climate variability attributable to natural causes.

<sup>2</sup> According to the ADB study, Southeast Asia's vulnerability to climate change can be accounted to its long coastlines, high concentration of population and economic activity in coastal areas, and heavy reliance on agriculture, natural resources and forestry. Among the worst case scenarios by 2100 include a 4.8 degree centigrade rise in temperature, rise of sea levels of up to 70cm, and loss of rice yields up to 75%. It further found that the mean cost of climate change for Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam- if the world continues with "business-as-usual- could be by 2100, equivalent to losing 6.7 percent of combines gross domestic product (GDP) each year, more than twice the global average loss.

<sup>3</sup> Aside from the questions of its inapplicability to frame the Asian security culture, CS is criticized for the marginalization of the voice of the other groups, supposedly outside the referred "policy audience" who accept the issue as a security issue. A staunch critic of CS is Bill Mc Sweeney who argues for the consideration of the unity of interpersonal, societal, and international levels of human behavior that should reflect the complexity and ambiguity of the concept of security.

<sup>4</sup> See Emmers, Ralf (2004) *Non-Traditional Security in the Asia-Pacific: The Dynamics of Securitisation*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press and Curley, Melissa G. and Wong Siu-Lun (2008) *Security and Migration in Asia: The Dynamics of Securitization*, New York: Routledge for examples of works by "revisionist" scholars of CS

<sup>5</sup> The ASEAN website (<http://www.aseansec.org>) and the declarations and statements themselves were the main reference for this section.