

## 13

*Asianization and Rediscovering  
“Regionness”: from Interstate Relations  
to Regional Identity*

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**Introduction: Globalization and Regionalism in the 1990s**

Throughout the 1990s, “globalization” increasingly became a dominant phrase in political, economic, social and cultural arenas. Since globalization is not a single-faceted phenomenon, there are various interpretations of what “globalization” is really about. One interpretation involves universalization, where globalization is considered a universal process and the ideology of a liberal political economy is idealized; such is the case in democratic nations and in the free market. A second school of interpretation refers to particularization. As a countermeasure to the globalization thesis, there has been a growing emergence of cultural relativism and counter-globalization. The number of local-based movements emphasizing a specific cultural and religious background, as well as the overall number of anti-globalization movements, increased in the 1990s.

By opposing the two different interpretations—namely, universalization and particularization—this chapter suggests a third alternative: *mediation*. Universalization and particularization are not completely inaccurate in describing the globalization in today’s world, as they focus on just one side of the proverbial coin. The “real world” found itself with a combination of universalization and particularization; the best example of this is a series of movements that together are sometimes called *Asianization*,<sup>1</sup> wherein there are globalizing aspects on one hand, and national and regional cohesion on the other. Asianization is neither a clear departure from globalization nor nostalgia for regionalism, but a flexible articulation of both. The movement, on one level, constitutes a resentful response to globalization, while maintaining global political economic ties on another; it provides different interpretations of, and adjustments to, global capitalism, rather than a full rejection of it.

Discourses on Asianization are, however, nothing new in Asia; like those of any other political ideology, Asianization discourses existed before the term was

even coined. The genealogy of Asianization can be traced back over the last hundred years and more, and its discursive practices have been continuously articulated in confronting Western threats in the forms of colonialism in the past and globalization at present. There have been three movements of Asianization. The first wave developed at the beginning of the 20th century and constructed nationalist and anti-imperialist movements. The second movement emerged in the 1930s and 1940s and was closely associated with the Japanese war project. Despite its expression of Japan’s ultra-nationalism and endorsement of pan-Asianism (though not necessarily “Asianization”), this movement articulated the same structure: regionalism, together with resentment towards the West. Much later, the 1990s saw the third wave of Asianization, and an articulation of Asianization was accelerated by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998. Soon after the crisis, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, and South Korea formed ASEAN Plus Three (APT), and they gradually articulated a regional identity. The Asian financial crisis and the emergence of APT are considered watershed moments in the (re)configuration of the regional discursive structure of East Asia.

What, if any, are the key features of these Asianization discourses? Why have similar patterns of discursive practices *vis-à-vis* Asianization been repeatedly reproduced? Historically, Asianization discourses have been the articulation of two opposite logics: one that challenges and the other that emulates the West. On the one hand, while the name “Asia” was created in the West (as the outsider in Orientalist discourses), Asia is reconstructed as an articulatory space by confronting the West. On the other hand, Asianization does not constitute a full rejection of Western modernity. “Spiritual Asia versus material West” is a common theme for most advocates of Asianization, and a great number of Asianization discourses maintain the notion of a “spiritual Asia” while simultaneously exploiting Western material civilization. This sort of articulation has been reproduced in different words and at different times. Asianization discourses, in other words, are the synthesis of two contradictory logics. Post-crisis Asianization, for instance, attacks the ungovernability of globalization while maintaining connections with the global political economy.

The implications of the Asian financial crisis were, therefore, two-fold. First, Asianization in this context did *not* mean subservience to globalization; rather, the financial crisis intensified the antagonism between Asia and the West. It was therefore more than an economic crisis: while Asian states quickly recovered from their economic slumps, the crisis brought about a new antagonism between East Asia (i.e., Southeast Asia, China, and Japan) and the Anglo-Saxon states (i.e., Australia, Canada, and the United States), in what Richard Higgott calls the “politics of resentment” [1998b]. The crisis sharpened the development of an

“East Asian” as opposed to an “Asian-Pacific” understanding within the region [Higgott 1998a: 2].

Asianization is, nevertheless, *not* a full challenge to global capitalism. Despite their strong endorsement of regionalism and a regional consciousness, Asian states and societies have not come close to shutting the door on the global market. Asia maintains strong links with Anglo-Saxon countries and the global political economy. Asianization is not an ideology of isolationism and autarkic withdrawal, but a constitution of contradictory logics (i.e., regionalism and globalism).

The question of whether globalization or Asianization is at play, therefore, makes a false presumption, because Asianization is neither a cultural essentialism nor a regional isolationism, but the manifestation of an ambivalent relation to globalization. In short, the financial crisis articulated “globalization versus Asianization,” while simultaneously propagating “Asianization via globalization.”

This chapter thus grapples with how Asianization simultaneously challenges and exploits globalization; it will examine the transformation of Asianization discourses by contrasting and comparing the discursive practices of the 1990s. Conventional definitions of “regionalism” and “regionalization” show that regionalism is politically, and regionalization economically, oriented: the former requires a political and subjective construction of regional identity, whereas the latter indicates an economic grouping among particular states in a region [Fishlow and Haggard 1992; Haggard 1997]. This chapter rejects such a position, because no strict separation can be made between political regionalism and economic regionalization: regionalism and regionalization are shaped by discourses and across the boundaries of political, economic, and social spheres.

For those exploratory purposes, this chapter consists of four sections. The first three sections examine three different developments of Asianization discourses in the 1990s: the “Asian values” debate in the first half of the 1990s, the Asianization discourses in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98, and the process of institutionalizing the APT. Finally, the fourth section evaluates the transformations, over time, in such Asianization discourses.

### 1. Rediscovering Asianness: from Orientalism to Occidentalism

The 1990s witnessed a rediscovery of the Asianization discourses in the region as a whole; they comprise, in my terminology, the “third wave” of Asianization. Within this wave, there have been three successive stages of articulation; the following subsections will examine these in order.

#### *The “Asian Values” Debate*

The first stage of development took place in the early 1990s, with the so-called “Asian values” debate. The political intention of the debate was to accelerate a construction of a pan-Asian identity and a project that aimed to facilitate Asianization [Stokke 2000: 139]. Notwithstanding that the religious and ideological roots are Confucianist [Barr 2002: 5], “Asian values” in themselves are contemporary phenomena. Any “Asian values” debate tends to contrast Asian cultural values with Anglo-Saxon market values; in this sense, “Asian values” can be collectively seen, in a sense, as a relativist attack on the universal conception of human rights [Bruun and Jacobson 2000: 1]. While the “Asian values” metaphor has sharply attacked the universality of the Western notion of human rights, the arguments in reality have had little conceptualization; there is only a vague understanding of “Asian values.” The arguments consist of an indefinite combination of communitarianism, family values, and Confucianism [Barr 2002: 32–39] and may also include confidence in the “East Asian miracle” and critiques of neocolonialism.

The concept of “Asian values” was originally developed in Singapore and Malaysia but gradually penetrated the entire region. Although the concept of “Asian values” challenged the strong advocacy of Western counterparts, both Asian and Western values rely on a hierarchical value system (i.e., either Asia over the West, or the West over Asia). In other words, the “Asian values” debate can be interpreted as a debate between *Orientalism* and *Occidentalism* [Robinson 1996], wherein the Western side presents Asia as uncivilized and illiberal, and the Asian side views the West as immoral and unjust.

Orientalism discourses reappeared in the region during the 1990s, initiated by Fukuyama [1993] and Huntington [1996]. Notwithstanding that their views seem to clash—in that the former asserts the victory of Western ideology and the latter assumes the existence of rival civilizations—both articulate a similar conclusion: Western civilization and its ideology have reached the acme of human history, but rival civilizations remain that have opposed Western economic and political liberalism. In short, Fukuyama and Huntington articulate the common “West versus the rest” assertion [Ong 1999].

Against this backdrop, many Asians have challenged the Western discourse of Orientalism with a discourse of “Occidentalism” or “counter-Orientalism” [Rodan 1996]. Although “Asian values” were presented among them in quite different arguments, they commonly emphasized the decline of Anglo-American hegemony in East Asia and evoked an alternative Asian path.<sup>2</sup> “Many of the assertions of Asian values,” says Wesley, for example, “are also imbued with post-colonial sensitivities and resentments, imbuing East Asian cultural regionalism with a sense of distinctness from the non-East Asian world,

and particularly the West" [1997: 539]. Orientalism and Occidentalism are, however, two sides of the same proverbial coin: both are developed through a binary opposition of an inside and outside, such as that seen with Orientalism/Occidentalism, universality/particularity, globalism/regionalism (otherwise nationalism), individualism/communitarianism, and Western materiality/Asian spirituality. Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, for instance, notes that

Societies can go wrong quickly. U. S. and British societies have changed profoundly in the last 30 years. Up to the early [1960s] they were disciplined, conservative, with the family very much the pillar of their societies. Since then, both the U. S. and Britain have seen a sharp rise in broken families, teenage mothers, illegitimate children, juvenile delinquency, vandalism and violent crime. [1994: 4]

"Asian values" thus insist that "Asia" represents community, harmony, and a sort of mysticism, whereas the "West" represents individuality, immorality, and decline. The "Asian values" system is thus a reversal of Orientalism [Rodan 1996: 330]. Although advocates of "Asian values" attack their Western counterparts, no truly ontological differences between Asian and Western values can be pinned down; many argue that "Asian values were once also Western values" [Goh 1994; Mahathir 1995]. Furthermore, "Asian values" are similar to Western conservatism in numerous ways [Bruun and Jacobson 2000: 2; Freeman 1996: 357; Mauzy 1997: 218]. "Asian values" are therefore *not an Asian alternative to Western liberalism but an alternative in Asia to liberalism* [Rodan 1996: 337]. In extreme circumstances, "Asian values" have been used to justify authoritarian regimes, just as "Western values" and the Enlightenment resulted in a new form of colonialism. Occidentalism, like Orientalism, features internal tensions and contradictions; Occidentalism is the flip side of, not an alternative to, Orientalism.

For instance, the "Asian values" discourse attacks Western values but does not abandon liberal democracy itself; rather, it provides a different interpretation of liberalism. For example, Lee Kuan Yew states:

But as a total system [in the Western society], I find parts of it totally unacceptable: guns, drugs, violent crimes, vagrancy, unbecoming behavior in public—in sum the breakdown of civil society...In the East, the main object is to have a well-ordered society so that everybody can have maximum enjoyment of his freedom. This freedom can only exist in an ordered state and not in a natural state of contention and anarchy. [interviewed by Zakaria 1994: 111]

Lee's missive, on one hand, signifies a tension based on a binary pair—namely, the stable Asian society versus the anarchical Western society. While no fixed meaning of "ordered society" can be discerned, the stability of Asia has always been contingent upon the instability of the West. On the other hand, Lee does not deny the benefits of liberalism itself. He says that freedom can exist only in an ordered society; this is not a critique of freedom itself, but simply a different interpretation of it.<sup>3</sup> South Korean President Kim Dae Jung provides a similar note, stating that "genuine Asian values do not run counter to democracy, but coincide it" [1998].

### *The Bangkok Declaration: Political Practice of Asian Values*

The most significant articulation of "Asian values" in the region in the 1990s appeared in the Bangkok Declaration in 1993. At the conclusion of the United Nations Asia Regional Meeting on Human Rights, the Declaration was adopted by 40 Asian countries, including those in the Middle East but excluding Japan [Mauzy 1997: 220–221]. The Declaration maintained that rights are "universal in nature," but that they need to be implemented according to national, regional, cultural, and religious particularities [Bangkok Declaration 1993].<sup>4</sup> The Declaration radically opposes the Western concept of human rights and their politicization, as Western states sometimes use human rights as a tool of diplomacy and a condition of developmental assistance. The Declaration completely condemns "one category of rights" and "the application of double standards in the implementation of human rights and its politicisation" [Bangkok Declaration 1993].

The vocabulary of the Declaration is contradictory and ambivalent in its support of the universality of human rights; notwithstanding, it simultaneously propagates regional particularities [Bruun and Jacobson 2000: 2]. An implicit message of the Declaration is a regional negative response to the West, in the form of Occidentalism. A similar statement came out of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, which articulated that

...human rights are interrelated and indivisible comprising civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. These rights are of equal importance. They should be addressed in a balanced and integrated manner and protected and promoted with due regard for specific cultural, social, economic and political circumstances...*the promotion of human rights should not be politicised.* [ASEAN Secretariat 1993: 7; emphasis added]

That is, by opposing Western and universalist critiques of "Asian values," the Asian side of the debate has articulated that Asia and the West are different

systems of society—and that each requires a tailored implementation of human rights—while at the same time accepting that human rights are universal. The Chinese representative to the UN World Conference on Human Rights, Liu Huaqiu, asserts that

The concept of human rights is a product of historical development. It is closely associated with specific social, political and economic conditions and the specific history, culture and values of a particular country. Different historical development stages have different human rights requirements. Countries at different development stages or with different historical traditions and cultural backgrounds also have different understandings and practice of human rights. [1993]

Even Asian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also participated in the “Asian values” and human rights debate, with some even keeping a certain distance from Western human-rights NGOs [Mauzy 1997], given that they could be seen as “agents of the one-sided conception of human rights that reinforces patterns of global dominance” [Falk 1994]. In March 1993, several NGOs based in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines issued the Bangkok NGO Declaration<sup>5</sup> and accused governments of “double standards,” since the Bangkok Declaration had ignored serious human rights violations in Myanmar and East Timor. The emergence of NGO perspectives on human rights issues provides valuable implications *vis-à-vis* a regional identity, because intraregional NGO networks have promoted an unofficial solidarity in the region. As such, NGOs have been keen to “go regional” [Vatikiotis 1994: 16]. The Bangkok NGO Declaration asserted that

...our commitment to the principle of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, be they economic, social and cultural, or civil and political rights. There must be a holistic and integrated approach to human rights. One set of rights cannot not be used to bargain for another. [Bangkok NGO Declaration; see footnote 10]

Overall, the Bangkok Declaration contains the core features of the “Asian values” debate: Asian states and societies have articulated that notions like liberal democracy and human rights are universal but must be implemented in accordance with regional particularities. The Declaration strengthened regional solidarity and antagonism towards the West. In other words, the regional defense of political and social regimes in Asia from the politicization of human rights was not the sole political consequence of the “Asian values” debate; there was also

the development and articulation of regional identity on account of certain “Asian values” movements [Chan 2000: 70].

## 2. Bringing Back “Regionness”: from Asia-Pacific to East Asia

The second stage of articulation with regards to Asianization discourses occurred with the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98. Throughout the crisis, the tension between the globalization and Asianization discourses mounted. It was the “Asian values” debate all over again, and this is what I call the second “Asian values” debate: the first “Asian values” debate of the early 1990s made an issue of whether Western liberalism or “Asian values” provided the base of human rights issues, whereas the second “Asian values” debate of the late 1990s argued whether the Western liberal economy or Asian model provided a suitable basis for economic management.

In this second debate, the liberal camp rushed to attack the Asian system of capitalism. Francis Fukuyama argued that “Asian values”—which are ostensibly incompatible with liberal economics—had caused the crisis: “What the current crisis will end up doing is to puncture the idea of Asian exceptionalism. The laws of economics have not been suspended in Asia” [Fukuyama 1998: 27]. Likewise, International Monetary Fund (IMF) economist Paul Krugman articulates that

We all know now what we should have known even during the boom years: that there was a dark underside to “Asian values,” that the success of too many Asian businessmen depended less on what they knew than on whom they knew. Crony capitalism meant, in particular, that dubious investments—unnecessary office blocks outside Bangkok, ego-driven diversification by South Korean *chaebol*—were carefully funded by local banks, as long as the borrower had the right government connections. [1998: 74]

The liberal camp—especially the IMF, U. S. Treasury Department, and the Wall Street business community—were keen to attack the Asian state model by stressing its dysfunction, what they called “crony capitalism.” This critique focuses on two binary pairs—namely, “Western good governance” versus “Asian crony capitalism” and “Western transparency” versus “Asian corruption”—although the critics were blind to U. S. cronyism in the form of the electoral finance regime. The liberal discourse of globalization through the “Wall Street–Treasury Complex which commands tremendous influence over financial institutions like the IMF” [Bhagwati 1998] was immediately rearticulated to

promote capital liberalization against Asian crony capitalism, while the IMF's "one model fits all" ideology exacerbated the financial turmoil [Sharma 2003: 48]. In short, the globalization discourse signified a shift "from Miracle Asia to Crony Asia" in the aftermath of the crisis.<sup>6</sup>

U. S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers has repeatedly attacked Asia's crony capitalism and corruption, blaming Asian governments for the "absence of strong and credible domestic institutions and weak supervisory regimes," which he contrasts with "high levels of transparency and disclosure" in the West [1997]. Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the U. S. Federal Reserve, also attacked a number of unique Asian business networks as examples of crony capitalism—the Japanese *Keiretsu*, the South Korean *Chaebol*, and the overseas Chinese firms—stating that they were constructed "on the basis of association, not economic value" [1998]. Similarly, IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus argued that the lesson of the financial crisis was "not about the risks of globalisation, but...macroeconomic fundamentals that give markets confidence...[by maintaining] transparent and market-friendly policies" [1997a]; this is why, he says, "it would be a mistake to blame hedge funds or other market participants" [1997b], while some Asian leaders—including Mahathir of Malaysia—attacked the instability of the international market, including that caused by international speculators. Camdessus went so far as to identify transparency as the "golden rule, the key for modern management, economic success, and rational behaviour of global markets" [1998b].

In contrast, Asian states and societies saw the Asian financial crisis as a crisis of neoliberal globalization [Higgott and Philips 2000: 360]. Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia and Senior Minister Lee of Singapore argued that the Asian financial crisis was not a crisis of the Asian model; rather, they saw it as an opportunity to reassert the ideologies of "Asian values" and Asian unity, because Western capitalism, rather than "Asian values," had brought about the crisis. If "Asian values" and Asian cronyism were the real causes of the crisis—as Mahathir [1998a] asserts—how had Asia achieved an "economic miracle" 20 years earlier? In reality, crony capitalism is "analytically meaningless" [Woo-Cumings 1999]: the term itself stems from a critique of the Marcos regime in the Philippines, but evidence of major similarities in the rest of the region—such as in China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand—is hard to identify. If the term "crony capitalism" is marked by close connections between the government and business sectors, it is "not unique to Asian countries," since similar conditions have appeared in most developing countries [Tan 2000: 10].

Moreover, as the defenders of "Asian values" asserted, the crisis had hit South Korea and Thailand the hardest, despite the fact that these states had been liberalizing their economies since the early 1990s; meanwhile, the advocates

of "Asian values" (i.e., Malaysia and Singapore) and opponents of the rapid implementation of neoliberal policies (i.e., Japan and China) were less affected. More radically, Mahathir singled out George Soros and the Quantum Fund and condemned hedge funds as the real cause of the crisis [Prakash 2001].

The Asian camp argued that the crisis was a conspiracy on the part of Western capitalism. The revival of discourses on Asianization and regional consciousness emerged as an antipathy toward globalization in general and the IMF in particular—that is, the "politics of resentment." At the time of the financial crisis, most East Asian states felt hostile and distrustful towards the West and the IMF, an institution proven incapable of mitigating the crisis. Ultimately, similar to the "Asian values" debates, Western Orientalism maintained that Asian "cronyism" caused the crisis, while Asian Occidentalism argued that Western capitalism was unstable and ungovernable, and that these traits had led to the crisis. In other words, the legitimacy of the free, fair, and global Western capitalism was articulated *vis-à-vis* Asian crony capitalism, whereas Asian stable capitalism was articulated *vis-à-vis* an ungovernable Western globalization. Although the dichotomy of "Orient versus Occident" contains a false opposition—because both are shaped by discourses—a political consequence of the crisis was the articulation of "Asianness," as the "Asian values" debate provided fuel for the growth of regional consciousness. As a result, many Asians became suspicious of the role of the IMF at the time of the crisis.

In the aftermath of the crisis, Asianization discourses have gradually and steadily emerged and articulated anti-Western (and/or anti-IMF and anti-American) sentiments. The tension between Asianization and globalization increased as Asians burned with resentment at the damage inflicted by the financial crisis: the crisis rather demonstrated the risk of being closely linked with the United States-driven global economy. This antagonism relied on a new binary opposition between an Asian (regional) and Western (global) identity, and this is especially pertinent. Since the Asian financial crisis, the Western- and United States-dominated world order has been seen as a threat to Asian societies; the Asian financial crisis came to articulate an Asian regional identity and Asianization, in the form of "the revival of notions of an Asian identity in contradistinction to the West" [Hurrell 1995: 335].

More recently, Sakakibara declared that the age of socialism and Americanism ended with the close of the 20th century [2000: 1]. He contrasts America-centric global capitalism with the Asian mode of capitalism—namely, developmental states and the regional cooperation model—and articulates the notion that global capitalism is unstable and requires safeguards and adjustments. Sakakibara calls this "globalization without the invisible hand" [Sakakibara 2000: 25]. Mahathir expresses a similar view:

Globalization, world without border, a seamless world—these are great ideas. But already we have seen how much damage they can do to our currencies... What if the powerful countries where these corporations are based make use of power of these corporations to hegemonise, to colonise by another name. The people and resources will then belong to the foreigners. The last time the foreigners wield this kind of power they exploited the people and the countries. Will they not do it once again? [Mahathir 2000b]

Thus, the emerging movements of Asianization have radically attacked the West and globalization in general, and the IMF and the United States in particular. Asianization thus developed because of a resentment toward the Westernization of the world, and the financial crisis reactivated the politics of the line that divides Asianization and globalization.

### 3. Asianization of Asia: Beyond a Double Bind

The first and second stages of “Asian values” debates in human rights and economic issues, as the previous sections have noted, have further radicalized the process of regional institution-building. In the aftermath of the crisis, many Asian leaders began to consider revising the neoliberal globalization system. As one observer comments, “[t]he crisis may strengthen the trend toward the articulation of a regional ‘identity’ informed by political, institutional and socioeconomic realities rather than by an adherence to a globalised set of values and policy prescriptions captured by the banner of ‘economic liberalism’” [Higgott and Phillips 2000: 375].

The Asian financial crisis was, in this sense, not merely an economic crisis but a force driving the revival of regional consciousness. At the APEC summit in 1999, Chinese President Jiang Zemin stated that “The trend toward economic globalisation has brought about not only opportunities for development but also grim challenges and risks” [cited by Gills 2000: 395]. Asianization in the aftermath of the crisis has promoted numerous regional institution-building projects. Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand complained about the IMF’s slow response to the crisis; at the same time, Japan proposed the Asian Monetary Fund (AMF), which would have a budget of US\$100 billion to provide urgent financial assistance to the region. This proposal, however, failed, mainly because of American opposition. Soon after, in October 1998, the Japanese government announced the New Miyazawa Initiative, which provided US\$30 billion to other Asian countries. Although the AMF failed, moves towards a similar regional

monetary framework were made at the Chiang Mai. The Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) is expected to provide the necessary financial assistance for countries facing a liquidity shortage [Bird and Rajan 2002: 370]. The CMI safety net is considered an example of Japan’s active approach to the region and relates to many of the same issues as the AMF. A series of attempts to create a regional monetary architecture—including the AMF, the New Miyazawa Initiative, and the CMI—prove the rise of Asian monetary regionalism [Mundell 1997; Walter 1998].

More explicitly, ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea formed the APT at the ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1997. The APT represents a species of exclusive Asian regionalism similar to the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) and excludes Anglo-Saxon members [Milner 2000; Ravenhill 2002; Webber 2001]. Although APT has not yet been institutionalized in a strict sense, it shares implicit norms and principles with the EAEC and AMF. As Bergsten notes, APT has been “the most active regional grouping outside Europe, and already has more sophisticated machinery than the North American Free-Trade Agreement” [2000].

APT organizes regular meetings among member states (ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea) and recognizes the ongoing efforts of the East Asian Vision Group, which was set up at the 1998 Hanoi APT summit and researches and assesses East Asian cooperation [Stubbs 2002]. In 1999, the third APT summit took place, in Manila; for the first time, all heads of government attended. Numerous leaders articulated and legitimized the ideology of APT and Asianization: Philippines President Joseph Estrada stated that cooperation would result in “an East Asian common market, one East Asian Currency, one East Asian Community” [Ravenhill 2000: 330]; meanwhile, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji spoke in favor of “closer East Asian cooperation to strengthen and deepen effective dialogue mechanism” and South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung urged regional states to “nurture East Asian into a single community of cooperation” [Milner 2000: 1]. Likewise, Mahathir commented later that

The countries of Northeast and Southeast Asia have enough in common for them to come together and to act together... But cooperation on many things affecting them is entirely possible and productive. It may be an economic group or an East Asian Monetary Fund. But these things and many others are entirely possible for East Asia. [2000a]

Furthermore, at the fourth APT summit, in Singapore in 2000, all members agreed to push the representation of East Asian countries within the APEC process. At the fifth APT summit, in 2001 in Brunei, members agreed to build a

closer East Asian partnership, including the establishment of an East Asia Free Trade Area, an East Asian Forum, and an East Asian Summit. At the sixth APT summit, at Phnom Penh in 2002, ASEAN–China and ASEAN–Japan political economic relations were advanced substantially, as was the APT. Furthermore, Japan, China, and South Korea finally agreed to create the Northeast Asian Development Bank, which would help facilitate the growing regional consciousness [Rozman and Rozman 2003].

Although the IMF and the United States (and even some Asian governments) rejected the original proposal in 1997 for an AMF, they have agreed to the APT and CMI; this acquiescence appears to reflect the fact that the AMF attempts to directly replace the IMF, while the APT and CMI potentially function as regional supplements to the IMF and multilateral institutions. The United States has, in fact, softened its position on the AMF: Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, for instance, stated that the AMF “doesn’t seem to me to be a bad idea” [Christie 2001].

The emergence of the APT and CMI can be seen as a resurgence of the traditional opposition between Asian spirituality and Western materiality. The arguments of regional solidarity and regional safety nets, albeit not a full rejection of globalization as such, counter and readjust the Western ways of global capitalism and IMF-type neoliberal reform policies. Mahbubani, Foreign Minister of Singapore, has asserted that Asians have traditionally believed that the best way to progress is by emulating the West; however, the Asian mind today believes that Asians can work out their own solutions [1998]. Thus, the framework of the APT facilitates and stabilizes the regionalism of Asianization. The APT process of institution-building, although just a beginning, provides the strongest evidence of the formation of an Asian identity and Asian regionalism. These discursive practices express antipathy and antagonism towards the threats of globalization and stress regional solidarity.

#### **4. Beyond and Within: from Cultural to Political Discourses on Asianization**

The previous section briefly outlined three successive stages of Asianization discourses and uncovered the core logic of those discursive practices. Although concepts like discourse, articulation, Orientalism, and Occidentalism are abstract, my main research focus is on practice and how particular discourses on Asianization have been articulated in particular practices.

For the purpose of evaluating an overall picture of the Asianization discourses, this section consists of two subsections. The first will identify five individual

countries (South Korea, Japan, China, Malaysia, and Singapore) that are core members of the APT framework; that subsection will also discuss how individual states respond to Asianization discourses and how such discourses have been developed for each country. The second subsection, as a consequence of the three stages of discursive practice examined above, will evaluate the overall structure of discursive practices on Asianization.

#### ***Asianization and Individual Countries***

##### **(a) South Korea**

At the end of 1997, the South Korean government finally accepted IMF reform programs that promoted the further liberalization of financial and macroeconomic policies. Since then, well-organized trade unions have reacted by staging a large number of strikes and demonstrations. Initially, the movements were driven by leftists opposing IMF liberalization reforms; both the government and the trade unions, however, gradually made concessions by emphasizing economic nationalism, for the purpose of rebuilding the state economy. These social movements have also sought regional solidarity with other countries in the region and pursued an Asianization agenda. Since the currency crisis and the subsequent economic downturn, a number of workers’ movements have sprung up in South Korea. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) coordinated a number of strikes and public demonstrations throughout 1998 and the first half of 1999, in which tens of thousands of workers participated (the largest demonstration involved 120,000 people); these actions were taken “to protest planned job and wage cuts as well as the privatisation and denationalisation of enterprises” [Hart-Landsberg and Burkett 2001: 415].

Consequently, anti-IMF discourses quickly dominated national discursive spaces and turned into a radical economic ideology of national autonomy, expressing “Asia versus West” and “national versus foreign” antagonisms. These discursive practices finally converged in a popular discourse—expressed, for instance, by region-wide movements that sought regional solidarity and were determined to counter what they perceived as the Anglo-Saxonization of the region.

##### **(b) Japan**

Although the regional financial crisis essentially bypassed Japan, the country has been implicitly and explicitly affected in numerous ways. Since Japan has suffered a long-term recession since the early 1990s, and the government and business sectors have been closely involved in the region via both foreign direct investment and official development assistance, the Asian financial crisis was bad news indeed for the Japanese economy and its recovery. Within this context, it is understandable that Japan’s official stance quickly expressed solidarity with

its Asian neighbors.

Japan's most radical opposition to IMF policies appeared at the G7 central bank governors' meeting in Washington, D.C., in October 1998; there, a statement made by the Japanese ministry of finance stated that the IMF reforms created "inappropriate and unnecessary conditions which it should now reflect upon...[the IMF's demands for] reductions in government expenditure and the raising of interest rates invited a devastating chain reaction and made the economic confusion worse" [*Asahi Shinbun* October 7 1998: 11]. The Japanese government (more specifically, its ministry of finance) took a direct approach by proposing the AMF as a countermeasure to the IMF. Although this proposal was scuttled, many government and nongovernment intellectuals began to articulate anti-globalist discourses; the failed AMF proposal led to Japan's articulation of a new regional framework, the APT. In the process, a number of Japanese government and business personnel have aligned themselves with a discourse of common "Asianness."

#### (c) China

As a result of the financial crisis, China has gone further to enhance the state's capacity to control markets, and it has strengthened control over foreign exchanges and the banking system [Wang 1999: 539-42]. Although China was not interested in the emerging regionalism prior to the 1990s, it has, on the other hand, gradually abandoned its hegemonic approach to the region in the post-Cold War context [Chen 1993; Forges and Xu 2001; Yang 2003]. "Hence," it can be said, "in terms of its security environment, China now enjoys a much better situation than at any time after 1949" [Chen 1993: 239]. Although many countries continue to have territorial disputes with China, they do not increase the likelihood of regional conflict, because "China's consistent policy is to settle territorial disputes peacefully, through negotiation" [Chen 1993: 246]. Chinese Premier Li Peng, for example, visited Vietnam and the two governments reconfirmed their will to resolve territorial disputes peacefully through negotiation; they also agreed to widen their cultural and economic exchanges [Chen 1993: 247]. Recently, although the Shenyang Incident<sup>7</sup> caused a temporary diplomatic dispute between Japan and China, both governments reached a compromise just two weeks later [Wan 2003]. Moreover, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, China has gone further to engage in the process of the APT framework and has paid greater attention to constructing a friendly relationship with ASEAN.

#### (d) Malaysia

Malaysia has adopted a more radical approach since 1998, returning to a developmentalist ideology: trading in ringgit investments with foreign banks has been forbidden and all trade must be conducted in foreign currency [Beeson

2000; Gills 2000; Nesadurai 2000]. In the aftermath of the crisis, Mahathir leveled a specific criticism of hedge funds: "...currency traders have become rich, very very rich through making other people poorer" [Mahathir 1997]. Furthermore, Mahathir also attempted to articulate the threat posed by hedge funds (and unstable and exploitative global markets), rather than criticizing the institutional weaknesses and policy failures of Asian governments.

Although Mahathir initially blames hedge funds in particular, he gradually shifts his emphasis to attack globalist discourses in general. He maintains that the process of globalization should be handled much more carefully and implemented in different ways in different countries. "We must globalise," he says, "but we must do so carefully and slowly. We must recognise that the countries and nations whose borders we are going to dismantle are not all of the same strength or level of development. They need to be protected from the predators, at least for some time" [Mahathir 1998b]. Mahathir also condemns the unevenness and inequalities of the globalizing world, asserting that Western democracy benefits only rich people: "Globalisation today ignores the very poor. In a globalised world, wealth distribution should be equally global. But it is not" [Mahathir 2001]. In these discursive practices, an emphasis has been placed on "East Asian" alternatives to global and Western frameworks. Thus, Mahathir's discursive practices addresses globalization in general, and speculators and the United States in particular.

#### (e) Singapore

In the case of Singapore, the financial crisis has tended to strengthen, rather than weaken, state power in economic and social areas [Yeung 2000: 146]. Lee Yock Suan, Singapore's minister of trade and industry, asserts that

Globalisation is an inevitable process. Those who embrace it can harness its benefits. However, appropriate domestic policy measures and frameworks to strength the regulatory regimes and financial institutions must be put in place first. In addition, parallel measures need to be taken to improve the competitiveness of domestic enterprises as well as the skills of the workforce [cited by Yeung 2000: 147].

Tommy Koh, executive director of the Asia-Europe Foundation and Singapore's former permanent representative to the United Nations, maintains that Asianization is a form of regional cooperation based on "building trust, by a process of consultation, mutual accommodation and consensus" [Koh 1998: 48]; at the same time, this cooperation enhances regional institutionalization, giving rise to institutions such as the APT. The crisis thus demonstrated the necessity of supplementing the "ASEAN Way" through institutionalization.

Meanwhile, Singapore foreign minister Jayakumar notes that “it was also globalisation that allowed many developing countries, including those in East Asia, to enjoy decades of sustained economic growth, rapid industrialisation and massive improvement in their standard of living, health and education” [1998]. In a similar vein, Singapore’s Prime Minister Goh spoke of a “heartland–cosmopolitan” distinction—the former element maintains “our core values and our social stability” while the latter generates “wealth for Singapore” [1999]. Goh thus articulates a search for wealth based on core values and social stability. The idea is that, although Singapore is a strong advocate of “Asian values” and radically criticizes Western discourses on globalization, this does not mean that Singapore will abandon globalization as such. Rather, as seen with Singapore’s aforementioned discursive practices, a regional framework and cooperation can adjust the negative effects of global capitalism.

### *Asianization of Asia*

This subsection also attempts to describe the overall picture of the Asianization of Asia, while the previous section reviewed individual countries. The dichotomy inherent in the historically articulated “spiritual Asia versus material West” has been repeated and reproduced in a number of different forms and has been developed in three successive stages.

In the first stage (the first “Asian values” debate of the early 1990s), Asianization discourses were articulated against the backdrop of Western waves of Orientalism. The arguments sharply articulated the antagonisms of Western liberalism versus “Asianness.” Quite to the contrary, Asian Occidentalist arguments readily attacked Western values. The arguments concentrated on the breakdown of civil society in the West, as “evidenced” by broken families, violent crime, guns, drugs, and unbecoming public behavior. They were, in sum, an articulation of the “harmonious Asian society/broken-down Western society” dichotomy. Although “Asian values” arguments strongly confuted Western values, it did not mean that “Asian values” had abandoned their Western counterparts and reverted to a feudal society. In other words, the articulated “Asian values” were not an alternative to, but a different interpretation of, liberalism. The Bangkok Declaration provided the best example of this stance: it stated that human rights are universal but need to be practiced according to national, regional, cultural, and religious particularities. Indeed, no single model of human rights exists that transcends cultural borders.

In the second stage (the second “Asian values” debate of the late 1990s), the Western perspectives of the crisis tended to strongly accuse Asian economic management of crony capitalism. This was similar to the “Asian values” debate of the early 1990s. In contrast, Asians argued that “Asian ways” are

representative of a stable, harmonious, and up-and-coming region, while “Western ways” exemplify an unstable, exploitative, and declining region. Numerous discursive practices in the aftermath of the crisis articulated that the Asian financial crisis was not a crisis of the Asian economy *per se*, but a crisis of globalization; a tension was thus posited among a number of binary pairs: stable Asian mechanism versus unstable global market; regional safety nets versus cyber-capitalism lacking an “invisible hand”; and Asian prosperity versus globalization as another name for colonialism. While Asian states have radically attacked Western discourses of globalization since the financial crisis, none has withdrawn from systems involving globalization. In other words, although Asianization discourses overwhelmingly express concern about the threats of globalization, they also articulate how regional cooperation and institutionalization can readjust or counter the negative effects of Western globalization.

The third stage of regional institutionalization takes a step in this direction. The post-crisis Asianization discourses and the APT framework, the latter of which promotes regional cooperation within Asian countries, have stabilized the ideology of Asian unity, especially in monetary and economic terms. A number of discursive practices articulate Asian unity. Furthermore, the regional monetary framework strengthens the idea that regional organizations like APT and CMI are better and quicker than global ones (such as the IMF) in responding to crises. Within the APT framework, numerous regional projects—including the Vision Group, the CMI, and the East Asian Free Trade Area—have articulated an Asian regional identity.

In summary, in a resurgence of the traditional logic of “spiritual Asia versus material West,” the Asianization discourses critique Western discourses on human rights and globalization; concurrently, Asians have not abandoned democracy, human rights, and globalization. Asianization discourses, along with “Asian values” and Asian regionalism, are therefore far removed from any cultural essentialism or relativism; nevertheless, they express a regional solidarity and consciousness. In other words, the cultural discourses of “Asian values” have now transferred into political discourses of Asianization. The Asianization of Asia comprises two contradictory movements: a challenge of, and a readjustment to, globalization. Asianization does not completely reject global capitalism but interprets it in way different from the West, and therefore revises it. In other words, Asianization has attacked globalization discourses, but not globalization as such [Ravenhill 2002: 191].

### **Not Conclusion: the Implications of European Integration**

This chapter has explored the development of Asianization discourses, in terms of the way the region has discovered its “regionness” (or Asianness); it has especially focused on three successive stages of articulating Asianness, in the 1990s. The core features of the Asianization discourses harken back to the “spiritual Asia versus material West” dichotomy, which is also repeatedly reproduced and reinduced in similar moments of articulation.

The first stage articulated the “Asian values” discourses, in response to the dominant discourses of Western Orientalism, thus articulating the “harmonious Asian society versus Western society breakdown” paradigm. The second stage, as a counterattack of Western criticism of Asian crony capitalism, articulated that the financial crisis was not a crisis of the Asian economy, but rather a crisis of globalization; that counterattack thus advocated regional cooperation that contrasted with an unstable global market. The third stage, furthermore, accelerated the development of regional frameworks—such as the APT—thus advocating regional cooperation, whose proponents assert provides a quicker solution than global ones. As a result, the interstate relations of East Asia have become an articulation of a regional identity.

Likewise, individual countries—from which this chapter identified South Korea, Japan, China, Malaysia, and Singapore—have each articulated Asianization discourses in the aftermath of the crisis. Not in the least do these articulations indicate Asia’s isolationism against the globalizing world. Asianization is Asia’s particular reading of globalization; Asianization thus harmonizes with globalization in particular forms. In this way, the financial crisis and post-crisis regional cooperation witness “Asianization versus globalization” and, at the same time, “Asianization *via* globalization.”

While this chapter summarizes a common pattern among Asianization discourses, it does not imply that the analysis has been concluded within the Asian context. The question of regional identity, as examined in this chapter, is also a matter of political borders and centers on regional integration, not only within Asia but also with Europe. Some intellectual discussion of European integration and border politics is useful to understanding the Asian context. This section, therefore, is *not* a conclusion in a strict sense; with comparable implications being brought to bear on European integration, we need to rethink regionalism and regionalization in the Asian context.

Étienne Balibar sheds lights on the border politics inherent in the process of European integration. With regards to borders, Balibar focuses on *modes of inclusion and exclusion* [2001: 17]. However, he does not stress antagonistic

or exclusionary relations between the inside and the outside of Europe, but rather uniform relations within Europe. Accordingly, a “border of inclusion and exclusion” does not align with the sovereign border between the European Union and those outside. Clashes of race, religion, and culture will remain within Europe’s politico-social spaces, thus transcending European and extra-European border politics. Europe in itself, might constitute a border. Balibar writes,

...without even considering the question of “minorities,” we are dealing with “triple points” or mobile “overlapping zone” of contradictory civilisations rather than with juxtapositions of monolithic entities. In all its points, Europe is multiple; it is always home to tension between numerous religious, cultural, linguistic, and political affiliations, numerous readings of history, numerous modes of relations with the rest of the world, whether it is Americanism or Orientalism, the possessive individualism of “Nordic” legal systems or the “tribalism” of Mediterranean familial traditions. [2001: 20]

Balibar’s view is supported by the writings of Massimo Cacciari and Chantal Mouffe, each of whom radically propose a pluralized Europe rather than a simple unification. On the one hand, Cacciari suggests that a favorable world in which a certain number of cultural spaces and poles co-exist and constitute a variety of federative political entities. He maintains that we are facing a crossroads between a “universal empire” and global federalism [Cacciari 2002: 38]. Needless to say, he is in favor of the latter and strongly cautions against the idea that the Westernization of the world is the best solution. The world, according to Cacciari, needs to establish an international system that comprises regional poles and cultural identities, with federations among them that recognize their full autonomy.

Furthermore, Mouffe’s radical intervention in the discussion—which relies upon Cacciari—goes further, by emphasizing the historical relations between Europe and the West. Mouffe maintains that Europe should decide “to break the straitjacket imposed on it by the identity of the *West* in order to assert its identity” [2006; original emphasis]. Thus, what she calls the *Political Europe* “will promote a different civilisational model and that the aim is not simply to oppose American hegemony but also to offer an alternative economic and societal model” [2006].

Mouffe considers it a dangerous illusion, to imagine a cosmopolitan democracy and citizenship based on the very idea of humanity. Instead, she proposes a “double regionalization.” While on the one hand a form of regional integration consists of a diverse set of nation-states, regional integration, on the

other hand, has strongly linked subregions that belong to nation-states. This duality of regionalization envisages a new formation of pluralism, in that it enhances the capacity for popular participation at different levels [Mouffe 2002]. Finally, Mouffe rejects consensual and cosmopolitan views of Europe and asserts a pluralist formation of European integration, in which different actors participate in regional spheres at deferent levels.

In my view a truly *political* Europe can exist only in relation to other political entities, as a part of multipolar world. If Europe can play a crucial role in the creation of a new world order, it is not through the promotion of a cosmopolitan law that all “reasonable” humanity should obey but by contributing to the establishment of an equilibrium among regional poles whose specific concerns and traditions will be seen as valuable, and where different vernacular models of democracy will be accepted. [2005: 129; original emphasis]

What, if any, are the possible implications of these discussions, *vis-à-vis* Asian regionalism and regionalization? There are two possible implications. The first is border politics. According to Balibar’s logic, it is not that there is a border between the inside and outside of Asia; rather, there is one *within* Asia. Asia must be pluralized. Secondly, if the West or Occident must be questioned, the Orient must also be questioned. As a logical consequence, we must reconsider the binary opposition between Asia and the West; while Europe has departed from the sphere of the West, Asia has departed from the Orient, as well as from the discourses that conveniently defend them. A typical narrative on Asian regionalism over the past century had seen Asians reconfirming their unity as a countermeasure to Western threats; however, this is no longer the case. Although a sort of antagonism and adversarial relationships remain between Asia and Europe, both regions are moving onto a new stage.

### Notes

1. The term *Asianization* first appeared in Funabashi [1993].
2. For the core components of so-called “Asian values,” see Dupont [1996] and Milner [1999].
3. More recently, Lee Kuan Yew maintains that there are many variations of “Asian values” and also indicates that the dichotomy of “Asian versus Western values” is false and misleading [Barr 2002: 3–4]. That paper also contends that Asian-values debates are not mere Asian challenges to Western

universalism, but an articulatory practice that advocates Asian unity among different regional cultures.

4. For the Bangkok Declaration, see the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu5/wcbangk.htm> (last accessed October 9, 2005).
5. For a summary of the Bangkok NGO Declaration, see <http://www.ahrchk.net/hrsolid/mainfile.php/1993vol03no02/2050> (last accessed October 9, 2005).
6. For a detailed discussion of the construction of globalist and anti-Asian discourses initiated by the IMF and the U. S. government, see Hall [2003].
7. Chinese armed police entered the Japanese consulate-general’s office in Shengyang and removed five North Korean refugees. This caused a temporary albeit major diplomatic incident that created questions about whether China had violated Japan’s sovereignty.

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