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Halfway between Emporia and Westphalia: Exploring Networks and Middle Powers in Asia

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Abstract

The significance of middle powers has been theorized since the Cold War in an effort to ascertain the function of states that did not satisfy the military component of great powers, yet possessed significant economic capability and regional influence to exert power in global affairs. In this essay, the role of middle powers in Asia will be discussed in the context of three concepts in international relations: firstly, the concept of middlepowermanship as seen from a network theory (Latour, 1996; Hafner-Burton, Kahler, & Montgomery, 2009); secondly, in the context of Acharya's (2014) multiplex in Global IR; which expands the potentials of 'middlepowermanship' from a network perspective by incorporating various actants, and thirdly as a conduit for soft power flows, particularly in terms of a socializer (Thies, 2013) or norm diffuser. The second part of the essay will then explore various historical of networks within Asia and to what degree these models 'fit' modern interactions between nation states and other actors, and what roles middle powers and middlepowermanship could potentially play in these networks, in order to provide an impetus for further studies on middle powers in Asia.

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1. Middle Powers: Beyond capability?

From a question of physical properties or geographical location, the definition of middle powers has been contested due to conceptual ambiguity and their relevance in the exercise of global affairs vis-à-vis great powers. One set of definitions has emphasized their often significant economy yet the limits of exerting force, while other definitions portray middle powers as those states with a normative character, espousing a particular form of foreign policy-making behaviour. While states such as Australia and Canada were typical 'models' of the status-quo perpetuating liberal democratic middle powers (see Cooper, Higgott, & Nossal, 1993), it became increasingly clear that many numbers of post-colonial states started achieving the economic growth that was typically characteristic of middle powers and could no longer fit into the traditional model. This was particularly true of the end of the Cold War Era, which saw 'peripheral' developing countries beginning to exert a degree of influence in the World Economy. A number of notable Middle Powers that no longer suited the model of 'traditional' Middle Powers began to emerge, such as Brazil, Turkey, India, South Korea and South Africa – states that had arisen from very "different"

circumstances and were all too often postcolonial. In order to resolve the definitional debates between capability and behaviour, Jordaan (2003) suggested an alternative middle way, in that Middle Powers are first determined by capacity before being classified for their behavior into traditional and emerging Middle Powers. In his work, he argues that while "traditional" middle powers, that is, those states which exemplified early normative discourse on Middle Powers, were social democracies at the core of the world economy, emerging middle powers that began to achieve economic growth arisen out of authoritarian contexts, have high degrees of social inequality and differing socio-political values (see Jordaan, 2003). Huelsz (2009), however, points out that the definition of a middle power is itself vague and contested, and suggests two reasons to the motivations behind the classification of middle powers – firstly, they symbolize a desire to project a particular country's role and identity in the international community, and secondly, as there are few theoretical studies on emerging powers (Huelsz, 2009, p. 13-14).The incorporation and designation of emerging middle powers as a particular unit with ambitions to change the state system or influence state interaction, however, does not appear to take into account that the underlying assumptions of status-quo changing behaviour and attitudes may not view the world solely in terms of the nation-state dynamic located within an international system.

Network theory in IR can offer relational insights into the function of emerging 'middle powers' as well as actants in intermediary roles. Rather than attributes of a particular unit, the potential of middle powers to 'pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, [the] tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and [the] tendency to embrace notions of 'good international citizenship" (Cooper, Higgott, & Richard, 1993, p. 19) or *middlepowermanship*, result from a function of a network configuration. Networks can be used to describe non-hierarchical linkages between actors, and can range from a study of groups as small as dyads to a vast array of actors: a network is thus not necessarily selective about its units, as the actor network theory would suggest: Latour (1996) conceived of the units in networks as both human and non-human 'actants' (p. 373), that have the same 'semiotic price' (p 374) as each other in the sense that all units will have the same work in giving relations and interactions meaning, in creating, destroying, and distributing ties. Rather than possess immutable qualities and ties, networks are seen as emergent properties of persistent patterns of relations among agents or 'nodes' that can define, enable, and constrain those agents (Hafner-Burton, Kahler, & Montgomery, 2009, p. 561). Its connections can comprise of material and non-material products (Hafner-Burton, Kahler, & Montgomery, 2009, p. 562). Seen in this light, a middle power's agency is defined by a particular type of network structure; it is an expression of structure, rather than a set of properties inherent within an agent. (Hafner-Burton, Kahler, & Montgomery, 2009). There is an underlying struggle in the field of network studies to deal the equivalence of units, even as its object of study is relational

in nature, guided by the issue-area (social movements, identity formation) or type of relationship structure (the degree of integration or fragmentation in a network) that is to be investigated. The challenge rather comes in defining the limits of the concept of unit – does an individual statesman count as a 'unit'? How many individuals would comprise legitimate units when investigating an issue –area? And despite network position, are there still material or subjective limits to agency? While there appears to be no clear answer to these problems other than the broadly formulated concept of 'actants' stated above, there does appear to be conceptual acknowledgement that agents have a role in firstly, recognizing the opportunities and limitations that a network provides, and secondly, deciding how to make use of its positional power in the network. Empirical studies have shown a plethora of actors utilized in network research in International Relations: Kim (2014) acknowledges that South Korea should incorporate learnings from its position in a network comprising of hubs such as China, the USA and Russia by coming up with foreign policies that deal with the 'filling in' of structural holes between these hubs, whether through spreading norms or more closely integrating the DPRK into this network. Other network studies such as Keck and Sikkink (1998) focus on networks composed of smaller units, investigating the role of activists on a transboundary scale.

While important, material resources are not always the primary *enabling* mechanism for middlepowermanship. Firstly, material resources are not always convertible into multiple linkages. Secondly, material forces, while conceivably conducive to strengthening ties in some issue-areas, do not equate to the capacity of building *positive* linkages with certain units – Arab Gulf states, for instance, do not all figure highly in soft power rankings despite their wealth (see Monocle, 2014). Focusing on the ties themselves rather than the material forces behind them would thus give clearer insights into how 'flows' of information and norms can pass on to states that are only loosely linked to hubs. Thirdly, beyond the traditional material or normative definitions of middle powers, not all middle powers are created in the same configurations in a network or embedded in a system of ties with a high degree of shared meanings and symbolism – leading to different strategies and approaches for achieving multilateral solutions and compromises. The dilemma of assigning a value to immaterial and 'subjective' aspects of international relations has long been contested as not being of quantifiable, verifiable or consistent nature to be considered as variables, yet we have seen that the 'cultural' does in fact continue to be associated and expressed in relations and preserved through intersubjective meaning-construction.

In other words, network approaches can also entail a description of the reflexive relationship between structure and agent in a particular issue-area, the meaning attributed to existing ties, and other relational goals (Latour, 1996). The idea of networks, and the possibilities that this perspective offers in creating middle powers as well as the epistemological and ontological differences that

emerge from non-Western IR offers theoretical inroads into the complex dynamics that mirror the multiplex proposed by Acharya (2014) for Global IR. Acharya (2014) describes this world as including 'regional powers, international institutions, nonstate actors (good and bad), and multinational corporations' (p. 653), yet at the same time, within the multiplex are networks that are imbued not only with perceptions based on material strength but also cultural ties that 'provide power, information, and ideas, an actor's ability to introduce new norms, manipulate symbols and radically influence political outcomes,' (Goddard, 2009, p. 257) which will depend partially on a position in a network. There is thus significant potential for qualitative and discursive approaches while studying the effect of networks: Continuous behaviour and positioning creates a logic of common sense or doxa, in which "the natural and social world appears self-evident." (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). Units possess and foster ties with each other not merely out of rational calculations of interest, but out of propriety and custom. This can be linked to Putnam's (2000) definition of social capital, as 'social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (p.19), which speaks of a relational aspect of what has previously been associated with a non-material resource. The qualities of relations that can sustain long-term linkages continue through the creation of reciprocal norms, channels of information exchange, and constructions of identity that can be manifested by the quality and type of ties in the network.

The idea of the doxa as a set of dispositions that are constructed intersubjectively and through time can apply in networks that comprise of nodes with shared ideas and histories, and also remain entrenched in these networks for long periods. In these networks, agents with cultural or cosmological ideas and establish connections with other units, who may end up sharing and propagating these ideas in a form of norm diffusion. Due to these influences, a network that has strong cultural interactions and mutual understandings can be (or already are) closely integrated, however appropriating additional actors into this network that do not share the same degree of bonds can create a fragmented network with 'structural holes' – or weak or non-existent connections that can arise when actors do not share the same norms and principles that consist of an otherwise integrated network (Burt, 1995) that offer potentials for middlepowermanship. By understanding its positional power, or the power it is afforded by its configuration of linkages with other units, a unit can either ameliorate its position by either increasing linkages with units not densely connected or improving its number and quality of ties with other actors to attain influence. As middle powers, often in a position to correct 'holes' within the network, and identify actors that can cooperate with them in a particular issue-area, a country situated strategically, but not necessarily a hub as most 'great powers' are, can create bonds, influence the network structure and also change the degree of power they occupy in a network. In the case of cultural and ideational power, a middle power can work as a force for greater integration by filling the gaps of knowledge

and meaning between units, or as a liaison between peripheral actors and the hub. Amongst the various roles of a middle power previously in the literature are those of the socializer (see Thies, 2013, p. 61), or an agent that can create closer bonds among fragmented powers by socializing them into a denser network, and a broker of information and meaning between states. This is particularly relevant in the post-colonial world where the meanings of basic concepts: security, common identity and regionalism, can be infused with multiple subjective viewpoints. The dialogue between cultures and the roles that Middle Powers play in communicating between the 'hub' and less densely connected actors can be explored by determining the nature and existence of networks.

2. Context is everything: The Rise of Asia in a Post-Cold War World: Reconfigurations and continuities

The construction of networks in and between Asian states necessitates the exploration of continuities and discontinuities, appropriation and re-appropriation of histories, philosophies and cosmologies in the inter-societal and interstate relationships of today. While acknowledging the dominance of Western forms assuming universalism and continuity in the perception, description and construction of the world, postcolonial theories have endeavoured, particularly in the Global South, to articulate and impute emic and hybrid views of order in the current network of nation-states and other non-state actors with global ramifications. The growing emphasis on identities in global politics and in IR, particularly in constructivism and recent English school literature, have opened avenues for proponents of area studies and non-Western discourses to bring cultures, identities and cosmologies into the 'mainstream' of IR theorizing, the persistence of the 'box' of the universality of states, patterns of interaction and world-views.

Several challenges exist that complicate the localization of IR theory. Firstly, the acceptance and appropriation of the Westphalian state system is ubiquitous today, even if the ideals of a state also being a nation, and vice versa, have not. Wendt's Constructivism, while appropriating culture and identities into IR theory, did not move beyond the state as a unit of analysis. This 'middle way' between material and positivist theory and post-structuralist theory was able to bridge an apparent empirical deficit, yet at the same time presents the challenge of maintaining explanatory power while incorporating local and cultural features. Theories of the non-Western have responded to this challenge in several ways, firstly by re-appropriating Western theory while making room for local particularities, secondly by approaching the study of Non-Western IR from a postcolonial perspective, and thirdly by endeavouring to apply emic or nativist perspectives of governance into IR (Acharya & Buzan, 2010). The application of such theories to historical modes of connection between societies has been met with significant criticism as to the equivalency and constitution of units, the lack of empirical regularity and comparability between assumptions and the appropriation

of modern Western theories to states in Asia, as well as theoretical elaboration on the concept of hybridity. Rather than confirming the beginnings of peaceful development based on liberalism and a capitalist global economy, the end of the Cold War was followed by ethnic and sectarian wars that transpired during the nineties. The growing tendency to assert culture as a political dimension unveiled tensions that had been fermenting underneath the bipolar order of the world, largely in the context of decolonization, nation-building and settling questions of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nevertheless, a prime difficulty of re-imagining the theoretical role of culture in international relations, which in itself is diffuse, dynamic, and ideational, is the persistence of the state as a primary if not the sole political actor in the international system. In what sense can be culture expressed if not through states and regional associations and of what consequence is "culture" – whose definition and practice is in constant flux, in comparison to materialist calculations of strategy and interaction?

Culture is closely related to identity, which Wendt in turn connected to state interests. In matters of identity, the 'West' has reached a level of Gramscian-like hegemony (Acharya & Buzan, 2010, p. 17) that it is more difficult to theorize about identities have not in some way been influenced by Western thought. At the same time, the 'third room' between the colonized and the colonizer is inadequately theorized, primarily due to the difficulties of using localized theory to explain occurrences in the greater world. The traditional composition of the state system, with the states as the sole interacting units, excluded any non-state, intergovernmental and supragovernmental entities. Utilizing a network framework potentially enriches inquiries into the connections between these units, when one considers that network of interactions that overlaps with several other co-existing and equally valid networks that can be conduits of power, and accumulate power through their composition, such as in Putnam's (2000) social capital.

For instance, in the Middle East, a number of systems of interactions between states have suggested that while historical forms of interaction and networking strategies have persisted, they have been modified in accordance with the state system. Examples of these are elements of an Ottoman diplomatic culture, with characteristics such as presumed zero-sum outcomes, conflating local with international issues, reactive politics, the involvement of third parties and little distinction between strategy and tactics (Brown, 1984). Brown (1984) postulates that the historical modes of interaction between and amongst states is a continuation of their interactions and culture during the Ottoman Empire, while normative Arabism, as proposed by Barnett (1993, 1995), emphasizes the degree that the perceptions of how closely Arab states adhere to the Pan-Arab idea and common goals, such as support for Palestinian causes, was historically influential in regional political interaction. Middlepowermanship, under such a network, would require the knowledge of forms of interaction

and the best strategy to achieve a more integrated network through multilateralism, or 'multiplexism' – involving various actors and informal linkages.

The question then remains as to what seemingly disparate, mostly regional tendencies mean for both determining the composition of networks and how middle powers can take advantage of their position by recognizing the opportunities a network provides. 'Middle powers' in Asia have often been at the forefront of attempts to fill in structural gaps in information and communication, or even particular values. Kim (2014) has pointed out the role of South Korea in brokerage between the USA and the DPRK-, while Malaysia and Singapore were at the helm of Asian Values arguments. Middle powers are likely vehicles to transmit soft power, which Joseph Nye uses to describe 'intangible assets, such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority' (Nye, 2004) In the course of his work on soft power, he remains focused on the nation state as the bearer of soft power, for instance Japan and Germany, yet this implies that nation-states have cultures that are distinct and quantifiable, such as the production and consumption of movies, the number of cable channels, the popularity of traditional arts etc. Since the practice of middlepowermanship often involves promoting ideas with soft power through foreign policy or cultural diplomacy, it is hardly suprising that popular culture, institutions and foreign policy initiatives are intrinsically associated with the image of a state. At the same time, it appears that this is only true of self-satisfied states – those who are confident of a particular identity. In Asia, where identity is often contentious rather than presumed (Haacke, 2003), and where the idea of culturally and ethnically homogenous nation-state has been challenged by the arbitrary borders set by colonialism, there is an impetus not to subsume cultural bearers under the umbrella of a nation-state, rather to look at how ideas and values operate transnationally, across borders and through history and through different actors.

In the following sections, a number of points emphasizing on the regional connections and linkages between Asian countries are explored, which include examples of historical features and their 'fit' as conceptual models in the state system, as well as the possibilities of other multiplex networks of various actors. As the definition of network does not take into account if the units should necessarily be states, and can 'overlap' each other, they offer a manner of exploring the effects of non-state actors both on a global and regional scale.

3. Culture and Networks: The search for identities

The universalist tones of the discourse of the West have continued to be challenged at the margins (Acharya & Buzan, 2010). The acknowledgment, however, that key differences in non-Western and Western IR are imminent, is a key starting point to moving towards 'global' IR. Firstly, through participation in a democratic type of structure, in which groups have the mutually recognized freedom to engage critically with each other by posing challenges and questions, as it is with the

global platform. With regard to creating and imagining 'Asia', in the absence of primordial regional identities equivalent to today's political regions there is a struggle to find common ground to be found by which to articulate the goals and interests for any given particular community, more so for an ambiguous 'Asian' identity (Chong, 2003). In the Asia of today, we observe various attempts to fill in the vacuum of the pre-political of which unites disparate societies. Amitav Acharya (2010) outlined a number of broad ideational features that have historically linked Asian states to various degrees, under the framework of regionalization. He identified nationalist, imperialist, regionalist, and universalist or spiritual conceptions of Asia, which represent common threads of ideas that have been predominant in and around states in the region. To that, he added an exceptionalist Asia, referring to the reformist, exclusionary positioning of the region in reference to Asian values and The focus on local and regionalized versions of IR do not in fact detract from IR's efforts to theorize 'global' IR, or even 'Eurocentric' perspectives (Acharya, 2014), rather, the exploration of local perspectives on foreign relations and connections can begin the process of incorporating previously marginalized perspectives into formal, 'mainstream' IR theorization. Inevitably, customs, traditions, and religions act not only as a common feature by which many societies in Asia align their actions with a common goal, but also by which values and cosmology influence a number of core ideas that can influence state interests. This is important in this study for two main reasons, primarily, as they inform and regulate the creation of multilateral, compromise initiatives, and secondly, because they contain the epistemological content of what is 'good international citizenship' for any particular set of actors pursuing goals.

4. Networks and Geography

The interaction between societies, cultures and their interactions with territory has been a key component of regions and regionalization. If these interactions are based on strategic geographic positions and the utilization of this position, then there is reason to believe that geographical features, such as proximity and accessibility, play a role in structural particular networks – one's power is dependent on the material and semiotic features of the configuration of actors in those surroundings. The resurgence of theories involving geographical and environmental settings in International Relations has drawn attention to the strategic location of China as a landmass connected to both India and Central Asia, flanked by Japan and South East Asia along its Eastern coast. China's imposing landmass and resources dwarf neighbouring powers South Korea and Japan, and its borders with Central Asia have secured it an advantage in the construction of railways and pipelines in the framework of the One Belt One Road initiative as well as access to oil and natural gas reserves.

Apart from the centrality of China and its relative size and role in the region vis-à-vis Japan, South Korea, India, Pakistan and ASEAN, the geography of Asia has been known to facilitate trade relationships and emporia for several centuries. The archipelagic geography of Southeast Asia and its proximity to China promotes the development maritime theoretical perspectives of interaction between what are today's East Asian states, but used to encompass diverse forms of political order that were connected by complex networks of trade and alliances. Coastal cities of today's Southeast Asia were frequented ports that hosted trade from India, China and Japan, and during colonialism opened its corridors to Western traders from the Americas and across the Atlantic (Scott, 1994). The meanings with which this geography has been associated with over time have varied considerably, as with the actors, roles and networks. In his comparison of the alternatives to the state system formed by networks in the Mediterranean such as the Hanseatic League, and the maritime and archipelagic geography of East Asia, Gipouloux (2011) explains that unlike the systems of territorial occupation, networks of this kind emphasized control over sea-lanes and nodal points of the structure were more of a concern than territorial occupation: 'brokers' in such maritime regions dominated warehousing; the existence of unofficial economies; where port cities acted as main players and the goals of trade were autonomous from those of the nation state (p. 325). The state system in Asia, while reconfiguring the actors in these various networks into states rather than ports or warehouses, will still possess the geography to revive select elements of a maritime network by taking advantage of the era of globalization and the institutions and trade networks that have come along with it (p. 308). If a land-based initiative such as OBOR gains political currency based on historical linkages, maritime connections offer potentials to actors who wish to reappropriate these connections to promote trade or strengthen the maritime identity of actors in the region. Unlike the constrictions afforded by a state-as-unit system, Gipouloux (2011) notes the qualities of the globalized system that can be taken advantage of to create trade networks with functions similar to those in the past. Firstly, the physical maritime geography of the region itself remains, and secondly, the potential of multi-layered trade network relationships is high due to the seeming freedom and empowerment of commercially and culturally powerful trans-and subnational groups that can operate independently of security issues.

Researchers, however, have to exercise considerable caution when imputing modern ideas into the characterization of societies that clearly did not fit into a Westphalian model. The idea of the tributary system, for instance, is intimately linked with the role of Ancient China, and is also relevant in some form of political interaction today, but no longer with the same units: trading partners, rules or ports. The network aspect of this relationship is of particular interest as while there were links between through official channels between China and other states during the tributary system, with official Chinese junks being sent to trade with others, another network of

non-official relations proliferated alongside this, such as non-official trade and piracy (Scott 1994). The existence of unofficial cultural linkages between China/Chinese and the immediate region, rather than disappearing in the more formal alliances between nation states, have reappeared in today's Bamboo Network comprising of businessmen who migrated from China and populated nearby areas, where they often comprise of the few economic elite. The relevance of these units and connections with potential political and international consequences as seen from network theory would require recognizing the potential of such networks, determining the nature of the network, and the strength and effects of its connections within the Southeast Asian region and in the PRC and ROC (Gipouloux, 2011). These groups have been empowered to exercise 'middlepowermanship' despite not being states, in that they act as a conduit between their own nations and PRC or ROC, or between key individuals or groups within Southeast Asia and Chinese culture, which has been adopted in the Southeast Asian region to various degrees. The potentials of these groups in the framework of the competing geopolitical and development discourses of the PRC and ROC as 'models' for the rest of Asia are of note due to the dynamics between the recognition of authoritarian leadership and liberal democracy as coexisting, if not competing, paradigms in the developing world, particularly in Southeast Asia, where Asian Values (to be discussed in the next section) were first articulated. The soft power potentials of Overseas Chinese have indeed been recognized in the PRC with the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, which has since used migrants to foster ties of understanding, promote Chinese goals and to participate in China's 'modernization' (Ding, 2014). Either way, the effects of the tributary system and its applications within modern Asian interactions with China can serve as a conceptual background to analysing and comparing ancient systems of interaction with today's networks (Yaqin, 2007).

The maritime proximity and historical influence of Hinduism have been utilized to frame accounts of Southeast Asian relations as a 'mandala' which can be thought of in its ideal form as an integrated network where there are relatively strong cultural ties between members, at least in shared understandings about how a network 'works'. Historically a mandala comprised of a center, symmetry and cardinal points, or a 'circle of kingdoms within [a] ruler had to build relationships, on order to ensure the security of his own realm' (Lund, 2003, p. 1). Lund (2003) explored the reappropriation of this system of interaction in the modern world, relating it to the regionalizing practices of states in Southeast Asian states. ASEAN acts as the 'central deity', with mutual ASEAN goals such as peace, prosperity, progress and partnership as the 'internal cardinal points'. In this particular network, each unit is linked together by strategic gateways, represented by issue-areas, while external cardinal points that guide the decisions in the network are the US and China, International Organizations and NGOs. While the functional equivalencies between the ties in a mandala system and today's network of ASEAN states have to be explored in further detail, more

specifically in terms of the strength of metaphysical, social or cultural understandings between Westphalian states as opposed to the historical units of mandalas, there are empirical facts to be considered – an ideal 'mandala' appears as a tightly bound network with high closeness centrality, or the 'nearness' of one unit to another, yet there are still large gaps in common understanding between the states involved in ASEAN regarding the precise security functions the organization should exercise and how these should be accomplished, as well as in cultural and political similarities. However, disregarding the constraints of interactions amongst nation-states, is worth noting that historical mandalas are envisioned as concentric circles of local power radiating outwards and overlapping each other, there are notable qualities of these overlapping regions or peripheries that may manifest a type of 'middle power' today that may help convey particular norms, such as the unique geographical and cultural situating of the Philippine's Mindanao, where cultural, ethnic and historical lines intersect.

5. Networks and Identity

In matters of identity, the question of hybridity has always hung over the assertion that Confucianism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity etc. are variables that remain fairly consistent in their content. The point made by Appiah (2005, p. 110) that the essentialization of already-existing identities can not only reify a monolithic view of culture should be taken into consideration along with the tendency to legitimize the voices of already powerful actors within a particular culture, for instance conservative groups. This serves as a cautionary measure against appropriating labels arbitrarily, lest one resort to simplification and stereotyping, particularly in cases where the nation-state is ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous. In other words, in the process of exploring historical networks, the balance between unwittingly resorting to essentialism to prove a point about historical continuities and the acknowledgment of dynamic cultures must be struck. At best, the critique against making generalizations about identities draws attention to the existence of hybrid identities from their source cultures, but at worst, promotes multiple subjectivities that can easily be subsumed into 'personal lifestyles and cosmopolitan consumerism (that) does not extend to the state' (Modood, 1998, p. 381) Theoretically, cultural values and their acceptability as a source of norms and regulation can be treated as variables of continuity in that they are incarnated in 'concrete things'(de Dijn, 2010, p.: 64), and cannot be easily discarded. Cultures and religions thus exhibit features or a set of features that sustain their continuity while upholding their authenticity and coherency as a distinct 'in-group'.

Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam have, to various degrees, been appropriated across Asia for the purposes of consolidating identity and the forming political order. The concern here is not if these identities and religions can account for all or even most of the political behaviour of a state, rather, how particular values have been selectively appropriated and legitimated politically, as these have

numerous consequences for the speech acts of alliance-seeking powers. Haacke (2003) argues that struggles for recognition are intrinsic to regions such as ASEAN, and in consideration of the postcolonial history and focus on economic development in the region, recognition as legitimate and consolidated nation states appears to be a foundational goal of regionalization.

The imputing of supranational identities, however, has not always been successful despite long economic and religious ties between and among state and non-state actors in the region. The economic successes of Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, China and Singapore have variously been attributed to Confucian elements, although this explanation does not account for Korea's relative poverty prior to the 1960s *despite* Confucianism, the persistence of high levels inequality in China, and the ubiquity of hybrid models of governance and the appropriation of models from late modernizers in Europe, particularly in Japan. The appropriation of a number of Confucian ideals in a political forum was articulated in the 'Asian Values' argument in the Bangkok Declaration of 1993 emphasized the primacy of collectivism, authoritarianism and economic prosperity in Asia. The insistence of a set of values and ideals separate from the Western tradition were visible in the political sphere (Sen, 1997), particularly in the realm of human rights, as Western freedoms and liberal individualist lifestyles have been met with considerable scepticism from proponents of traditional values, yet at the same time, the idea of human rights appeared to flourish in other parts of Asia due to local agents involved in norm diffusion (Acharya, 2012) and socialization (Thies, 2013). The Asian Values declaration, however, was remarkable in the sense that it was an attempt by middle powers in Asia to reconcile the vastly different and heterogeneous cultures of Asia into the lowest common denominator, which emphasized a sense of hierarchy, collectivism, authoritarianism and commitment to economic development, and served a secondary purpose of juxtaposing the different flows of political norm-building among state-level actors in Asia.

The role of the concepts of *musyawarah* and *mufakat*, also widely espoused and practiced by small and middle powers, are visible in the painstaking process of ASEAN's consensus-building, its reluctance to institutionalize agencies that may interfere with sovereignty, and the aversion towards instituting collective security. The roles of middle powers as socializers can be further investigated in the framework of studies such as Gamas (2014), which uncovered ritual elements in ASEAN's secularization vis-a-vis the behaviour of China, revealing ties marked in hybrid relationships, the continuation of the 'ritual' on one hand, and the secular modes of action on the other, and Haacke (2003, p. 19), who suggested that ASEAN dynamics are more than just socialization, rather indicative of struggles for recognition, presenting a more conflicting and conflicted view of identity and collective memory contested by several actors. As ASEAN rows towards its goal, which appears to be an integrated network with some suprastate powers (Chong, 2003, p. 55), discovering how to tie up loose ends in networks can be a potential way forward – whether in 'deep' networks

of cultural exchange, shared cosmologies and values, or more procedural networks that encompass security-based aspects such as disaster coordination, defining security threats, resolving piracy and terrorism, or navigating globalized economies.

One of the more explicit connections between governance, law and religion of Asia's religions is to be found in the socio-political system and transnational but territorial community of Islam (ummah) that was envisioned in the Quran, which poses a quandary to the Westphalian nation state system. Today's Islamic world presents explicit yet heterogenous systems of political and social order. The tendency to make generalizations about 'Islamic' intentions (see Huntington, 1996) glosses over the varying forms of Islamic influence that perpetuate in Middle Eastern government– from a hybrid monarchy in the peripheral Gulf states, to theocracy in Iran, and the appropriation of the personal status code alongside civil law in the Western Middle East, as well as broad cultural areas where Islam is either a religion of the majority or has had a long historical tradition. There is therefore no particular 'model' that is valid for the entirety of states with a majority Muslim population, although there are reformist voices that stimulate-Islamic debates about the interpretation of doctrine.

Technology, transnational mobility and the influence of socializers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran have produced dynamism within an *ummah* that links different 'historical' regions of Islam, from Southern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Central, South and Southeast Asia, with diaspora communities in Western Europe, Oceania and the Americas. The nature of links between these various communities contains vast potentials to create awareness of the diversity of Islam and induce reforms in areas that have traditionally been viewed as Islamic peripheries. Despite the presence of large Muslim-majority states and communities within Southeast Asia, it has often been politically, and socially relegated to the peripheries of the Islamic world. The historical relations between Islamic communities in Southeast Asia, while well-documented, has also been infused with various origin myths that reflect the combination of spiritual and material life that has been crucial in historical Southeast Asian interactions. The history of the diverse peoples and religions that populated Southeast Asian territories is one of hybridity, syncretism and coexistence – this perception has dominated thinking about the territory so much as to imply that Southeast Asian Islam is insular and moderate in nature.

In order to determine the potential impact of inter-Islamic networks, Rabasa (2005) explored the connections between local traditions of Islam and the emerging connections between Islamic schools and universities and political movements. The networks between these institutions are crucial as it is often taken for granted that the Middle East is the center of Islamic Scholarship, with scholars from the Muslim 'periphery' often traveling to the core for further religious instruction. However, the study of Islamic theology has persisted in traditionally non-Muslim

societies such as Germany and the United States, partially due to the Muslim diaspora – Muslims now comprise of 6% of the total population of Europe (Pew Research Center, 2011a) and about 0.8% of the population in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2011b). Linkages between and within areas and Muslim /Islamic actants within the US, Europe, Central Asia, and South and Southeast Asia could further be explored, not only because they contain significant Muslim minorities, but also because of the historical legacies left by Islam within these regions.

6. The Role of Middle Powers and Small Powers in Regionalization

In the above we have identified features of Asian societies that have at various points been appropriated into the political discourse, or where historical parallels can be drawn. The middle power in the scenario of a network may coincide with what Grundy once called 'an intermediary' power (1976), although one must recognize that Grundy still bases his ideas on distributions of capability – his work conceives of smaller powers as the instruments or agents of core powers, who, while exercising this role can weaken the influence of a core power in a particular region. The study of networks and middle powers does not in fact assign a de facto sense of loyalty in middle powers, rather middle powers are enabled by the type of network. The question remains, however, how one can move away from a mere focus on distributional capabilities to other qualities of states that allow them to take advantage of positionality. Powerful social actors and states can utilize various strategies to increase degree centrality – the number of ties, and closeness centrality, the strength of the ties in a particular network. These ties, as mentioned previously, could come in the form of conventional bilateral and multilateral agreements, as has been highlighted by Kim (2014), or by using knowledge of the immaterial forces and relationships in network in order to revitalize old ties, interactions and ideas.

A middle power, from a positional perspective, is necessarily one that can take advantage of his or her position and understand the limitations of the network. If one assumes that a cultural network is replete with symbols, any one unit, favourably positioned, there is a need to understand how these symbols can be used in order to secure connections with potentially like-minded units, providing an impetus for qualitative, discursive and historical methods of study in IR. The grouping together of powers in a network, even if beginning for largely strategic reasons, may or may not begin to adopt its own cultural identity through largely soft power and immaterial ties or implicit understandings. The persistence of the above-mentioned factors, ideas and networks are crucial to understanding the roles and opportunities of middlepowermanship as practiced by various empowered actants and middle powers. Network theory captures the continuities and discontinuities of identities and identity-building politics by identifying the forces and ideas that link not only states, but also institutions, trading hubs and bearers of culture and tradition across

Asia. We have seen that cultural-historical networks, along with geographical linkages, have influenced the creation and propagation of new ways of imagining interactions and the flow of information, such as in the case of China and the declaration of Asian Values, and how individual actors within a network such as ASEAN can elevate identity-construction to a regional level by roles of socialization and norm diffusion, and vice versa, with the strength of network ties and the network structure being able to reinforce these norms.

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