More Democracies, More Peaceful? The Influences of Democratic Peace Theory in ASEAN's Democratization Agenda and Possible Challenges

Shofwan Al Banna Choiruzzad
Department of International Relations, Universitas Indonesia and ASEAN Study Center, Universitas Indonesia, shofwan.indonesia@yahoo.com

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MORE DEMOCRACIES, MORE PEACEFUL? THE INFLUENCES OF DEMOCRATIC PEACE THEORY IN ASEAN’S DEMOCRATIZATION AGENDA AND POSSIBLE CHALLENGES

Shofwan Al Banna Choiruzzad
Department of International Relations, Universitas Indonesia and ASEAN Study Center, Universitas Indonesia

E-mail: shofwan.indonesia@yahoo.com

Abstrak
Artikel ini mencoba melacak jejak pengaruh Democratic Peace Theory (DPT) di dalam agenda demokratisasi ASEAN. Untuk itu, tulisan ini mengulas pengaruh DPT dalam dokumen-dokumen yang menjadi panduan bagi agenda demokratisasi ASEAN serta mengenali lebih jelas pengaruh tiga ‘aliran’ (‘strand’) dari DPT, yaitu (1) ‘institutional constraints,’ (2) ‘democratic norms and culture,’ serta (3) ‘economic interdependence’ di dalam dokumen-dokumen tersebut. Tulisan ini kemudian membandingkan antara asumsi dasar yang melandasi agenda demokratisasi ASEAN, yang dengan sangat kuat dipengaruhi oleh DPT, dengan kondisi politik dan keamanan negara-negara anggota ASEAN. Dengan melakukan hal tersebut, tulisan ini mencoba mengimbangi ‘optimisme teoritis’ dari DPT yang mewarnai agenda demokratisasi ASEAN tersebut dengan ‘kewaspadaan realistis’ bahwa demokratisasi dapat menjadi kotak pandora yang melepaskan bahaya. Demokratisasi dapat berlangsung dengan berkelanjutan hanya jika kita memahami kerumitan dan resiko-resiko di dalam proses tersebut.

Kata kunci
Democratic Peace Theory, demokratisasi, ASEAN

Introduction: Democracy and Peace

International relations theorists who seek for supporting the Democratic Peace Theory (DPT) will not be tempted to take ASEAN as part of their arguments. Despite the diversity of political systems among its members (furthermore, most of them are not a “stable democratic country”), ASEAN had been relatively doing well in maintaining peace in the region since its inception in 1967. Nevertheless, ASEAN’s recent democratization initiatives in the framework of ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC), led by Indonesia, shows considerable influences of the DPT.

In congruence with the DPT arguments which argues that there is a causal relationship between democracy and peace because “democratic states do not (or at least are less likely) wage war against each other,” documents of the APSC built, although in a rather subtle manner, a proposition that bringing more democracy to the region will
inevitably bring more peace in the region. For example, the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint stated that in order to “…ensure that the peoples and Member States of ASEAN live in peace with one another and with the world at large…” (APSC Blueprint, 2009, article 6), “The APSC shall promote political development in adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, respect for and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as inscribed in the ASEAN Charter...”(APSC Blueprint, 2009, article 7).

This article is aimed at critically examining the influences of the DPT in the ASEAN’s democratization agenda and identifying possible challenges for the optimistic proposition that “bringing more democracy will bring more peace in the region.” In order to elaborate the issues, several questions are asked: “What are the influences of the DPT in the formulation of ASEAN’s democratization agenda?” “Which strand of the DPT, ‘institutional constraints’ strand or ‘democratic norms and culture’ strand or ‘economic interdependence,’ is visible in ASEAN’s democratization agenda?” “Is the empirical observation of the political and security situation of ASEAN countries supports the proposition that ‘more democracy means more peace’ or it is not?”, and “What are the possible challenges for the proposition that ‘more democracy means more peace’?”

The discussion in this article is organized in this following arrangement. First, we will review the DPT and its impact to the policy making in international politics. This part will elaborate the basic tenets of DPT and identifying different strands within the DPT, including the ‘institutional constraints,’ the ‘democratic norms and culture,’ and the ‘economic interdependence’ strands (Layne, 1994; Szayna, Byman, Bankes, Eaton, Jones, Mullins, Lesser and Rosenau, 2001). It will also assess how the DPT had influenced the policy making process in the international politics. Following the discussion on the influence of DPT towards the policy making processes, this part explores the criticisms towards DPT, both criticisms towards the ‘theoretical’ aspect of DPT (criticisms towards its propositions and claims) and the criticisms towards the ‘practical’ aspect of it (criticisms towards its influence in the policy making, from misleading the policy makers to being prone to be used by policy makers to justify their aggressive/imperialist agenda).

After discussing the debates on the relationship between democracy and peace in the first part, the second part attempts to identify the traces of the democratic peace theory in the ASEAN Political Security Community. In order to do so, this article elaborates relevant documents published by ASEAN as well as the writings of leading intellectuals.
who had been steering ASEAN’s democratization agenda such as Rizal Sukma, the executive director of the Indonesia-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

As this paper will show, the DPT arguments resonated strongly in the narratives of the ASEAN’s democratization agenda. The APSC documents imply at least two layers of optimism. The first layer of optimism is the optimism that ASEAN members will be committed to the democratization agenda as written in the formal documents of APSC and translated it into real actions rather than diplomatic “talking shops.” Thus, by realizing the action plan of the APSC, ASEAN members will become more democratic. The second layer of optimism is echoing the belief of the Democratic Peace Theory that, as one proponent of DPT wrote, “the more democracies...the wider the zone of peace” (Russet, 1993). By transforming ASEAN member countries into democratic countries, or at least more democratic than before (assumed to be successful in the first layer of optimism), ASEAN is believed to become a more peaceful region. While I am also skeptical towards the first layer of optimism, this article, especially the third part of it, focuses on questioning the second layer of optimism: “If ASEAN members, especially the non democratic ones, are undergoing a democratization process, will this region become more peaceful?”

If democratization really happens among ASEAN members, will a more peaceful ASEAN be inevitable? Or, maybe we must be wary for other trajectories? This article explores the possible impacts of democratization to the regional security by looking at the existing political and security situation in the region. By assessing the possible security challenges if democratization really happens in ASEAN member countries, this paper aims to balance the optimistic tone of ASEAN democratization agenda with careful cautions.

**DPT and Its Critics**

Bruce Russet, a leading proponent of the DPT, put a confident title for the opening chapter of his book, *Grasping Democratic Peace*. It was “The Fact of Democratic Peace.” Indeed, for many supporters of the DPT, inside and outside the academia, the Democratic Peace is an irrefutable fact. As Jack Levy had pronounced, the supporters of DPT (often referred to as Neo-Kantian or Neo-Wilsonian) believe that “the absence of war between democracies comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations” (Smith, 2011).
This simple but brave assertion that the so-called ‘democratic peace’ is a fact is the core of the DPT. From this assertion, runs another simple yet brave argument that since democracies do not wage war against each other (although some proponents are less confident and modified this claim into ‘less likely to fight each other’), the Kantian idea of ‘perpetual peace’ is possible by enlarging the ‘zone of peace’ by making more countries democratic. When a pair of democratic countries happened to be in disputes with each other, they choose more peaceful means of resolution than other pairings of states (Dixon, 1994).

Even though the supporters of DPT acknowledged that democratic countries are not necessarily peaceful in their relations with other kinds of political system (Russet, 1993), they asserted that democratic countries are relatively more peaceful compared to non-democracies because they do not initiate ‘preventive wars’ (Schweller, 1992). When democratic countries are fighting wars, goes the argument, democracies are fighting shorter and with less casualties. While there might be frequent conflict between democracies and non-democracies, the fault lies in the non-democracies. Because non-democracies may use violence and threat of violence, they can easily exploit democratic norms of the democratic countries to force concessions. Thus, to avoid exploitation, democracies tend to adopt nondemocratic norms in dealing with non-democracies (Russet, 1993).

**Different Strands within the Democratic Peace Theory**

The unified belief that democratic countries are more peaceful does not mean that there is no diversity of views among the proponents of DPT. While all agree that ‘democratic peace’ is an irrefutable fact, they have different strands of explanations. Generally, observers agreed that there are two main strands within the DPT in explaining why democratic countries are more peaceful (Layne, 1994). The first strand is the strand of ‘institutional constraints’ which explains that democratic countries are less likely to go to war because of the constraints placed by democratic institutions (Siverson, 1995; Owen, 1994; de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson & Smith, 1999). The second strand is the ‘norms and culture’ strand, which points out that democratic countries do not wage wars against each other because they follow the same norms and culture of peaceful conflict resolution as have been developed within their domestic political processes (Russet, 1993). However, some other observers observed that there is also another important strand within the DPT, which is the ‘economic interdependence’ strand (Szayna, et. al.,
It must be noted that the three different strands are not mutually exclusive. Many supporters of the DPT are combining the explanations from those different strands.

The arguments of the ‘institutional constraints’ strand explains that democratic countries do not wage war with each other because of the institutional constraints placed by the democratic institutions of their domestic political system. In democracies, decision makers, including those who make decisions to go war or not, are accountable for public opinion, which is expressed freely through different channels. In this setting, war, especially against another democracy, is not a popular option because “they must answer to their citizens” (Doyle, 1983; Layne, 1994).

Furthermore, democratic institutions created ‘checks and balances’ within the political system. Unlike in non-democratic countries where the government can do anything without any constraints, in democracies executive actions are constrained by legal and constitutional constraints. To decide a war, the government must consult different stakeholders (e.g. through Parliament). The long process of the pluralist decision making also creates the opportunity to solve the conflict with other democracies peacefully, because both countries (which are democratic countries) could expect that the other party will not make a sudden attack. The positive assumption that the other country will not make a sudden attack stemmed from an expectation that the other country, as a democracy, is also having a long process due to the constitutional and legal constraints.

The institutionalization of general elections in democracies also matters, according to the supporters of the ‘institutional constraints’ strand of the DPT. Some scholars argued that because democratic elites are willing to be reelected, they are more cautious. Therefore, when facing a dispute with other democracy, they tend to prefer negotiations rather than going to war (de Mesquita, et. al, 1999).

The arguments of the ‘norms and culture’ strand is based on the belief of the democratic peace theorists that the democratic norms and culture of solving conflict peacefully applied in their domestic political system will also shape the norms and culture of interacting with other democratic countries (Layne, 1994). Russet argued that decision makers will try to follow the same norms of conflict resolution as have been developed within and characterize their domestic political processes. Furthermore, these decision makers will expect that decision makers in other states will also follow the same norms of conflict resolution as have been developed within and characterize their domestic political processes (Russet, 1993).
Based on these two assumptions, Russet asserted that violent conflict between democracies would be rare because democracies will follow norms of peaceful conflict resolution with other democracies and will expect other democracies to do so with them. In the other hand, there might be frequent conflict between democracies and non-democracies because non-democracies may use violence and threat of violence. To avoid exploitation, democracies tend to adopt nondemocratic norms in dealing with non-democracies (Russet, 1993). Thus, the supporters of DPT see that the problem lies in the non-democracies.

The arguments of the ‘economic interdependency’ strand put democracies in line with free market. According to this explanation, democracies are better able to offer credible commitments regarding the terms of trade and capital flows than authoritarian states. Thus, they are more inclined to trade with one another. The international trade will inevitably lead to interdependency. In this context, war is undesirable because the mutual benefits caused by trade will be loss if the countries are fighting war against each other. Trade creates transnational connections which favor accommodation rather than conflict (Szyarna, et.al., 2001; Oneal & Russet, 1997).

**Critic: Theoretical and Practical Aspects**

“Yet despite these brave assertions, the failings of the DPT theoretically, and the dangers it could precipitate practically should it be taken seriously by policymakers, have been evident since its beginnings.”

Tony Smith (2011)

After the end of the Cold War, DPT had established itself as one of the most influential theory among the academia, especially among the liberal scholars (Neo-Kantian or Neo-Wilsonian). Beyond the academic world, DPT had strongly influenced (or, as some critics noted, used by) the policymakers, especially in shaping the foreign policy of the United States. Recently, DPT plays significant role in supporting George W. Bush’ administrations’ invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Nevertheless, vocal criticisms could never be wiped out. Many scholars had criticized the theoretical fallacies of the DPT, the dangers of the influence of the DPT to the policymaking, or both. Many leading scholars of International Relations do not even call DPT as ‘democratic peace theory’ but ‘democratic peace thesis,’ because they are strongly questioning the validity of the primary claim of DPT. These critics reject the
confident claim of the DPT that ‘democratic peace’ is an irrefutable fact. They doubt that there is a causal relationship between democracy and peace (Waltz, 2000).

Tracing up several case studies, Layne pointed out that some wars between democracies are avoided not because they are democracies, but because of the fear of a third party (Waltz considered this as “a good realist reason”). They also criticized that the supporters of DPT often play with definition of democracy when they see some cases unfit with their theory (Layne, 1994; Waltz, 2000). Not only questioning the causal relationship between democracy and peace, critics even doubt that the DPT is worthy enough to be discussed because the universe is too small. Layne argued that there were only few democracies from 1815-1945 and wars are relatively rare occurrences (Layne, 1994). Asking why democracies never wage war against each other is like asking “Why do I never win a lottery?”

Other scholars warned about the danger of DPT to the policy making process. Tony Smith went as far as saying that the DPT had become a “full-fledged ideological defense of American Imperialism” (Smith, 2011). The DPT justified American imperialism by arguing that because the world will be more peaceful if there are more democracies, the United States must make other countries democratic, including by war if necessary. Other scholar argued that this was not the fault of the DPT. The justification of the Iraq War by the Bush administration was an abuse (or dubious reading) of the theory by the policy makers. Some policy makers, according to Anna Geis, were misusing DPT as a ‘political justificatory narrative’ for their own policies (Geis, 2011).

**Traces of Democratic Peace Theory in ASEAN’s Democratization Agenda**

**ASEAN’s Democratization Agenda**

The inception of the democratization agenda in the ASEAN could be traced back to the development of ASEAN after the 1997/1998 ASEAN Crisis. The first instances for the call of democratization for ASEAN member states in the ASEAN document were seen in the declaration of ASEAN Concord II or Bali Concord II in October 2003. The document, especially the part on ASEAN Security Community (ASC), mentioned the commitment of ASEAN members to bring “ASEAN’s political and security cooperation to a higher plane to ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment” (ASEAN, 2003). As Rizal Sukma, one of the leading thinkers behind the ASEAN’s democratization agenda, recalled, the inclusion of democracy in the document had received ‘the most
attention’ from inside and outside the region (Sukma, 2009). This was an interesting development, because it was for the first time the word ‘democracy’ mentioned at ‘such a high level of official scripture’ (Emmerson, 2005).

Despite the debates within ASEAN on the matter, the democratization agenda continued to be included in ASEAN’s discourse, especially in the documents related to ASEAN Security Community (then changed into ASEAN Political and Security Community). The word ‘democratic’ appeared again in the Vientiane Action Plan (VAP) (ASEAN, 2004a). The VAP mentioned that the ASC should be achieved by creating “a democratic, tolerant, participatory and transparent community in Southeast Asia” (ASEAN, 2004). The APSC blueprint in the Roadmap for ASEAN Community also included the ‘political development,’ which is “in adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance” (ASEAN, 2009). ASEAN Charter also placed good governance, the principles of democracy and the promotion and protection of human rights as the agenda of ASEAN (Cordenillo, 2010). While some observers such as Donald K. Emmerson noted that the mention of democracy was balanced by the strong reaffirmation of the importance of the sovereignty of each member states and the principle of non-interference (Emmerson, 2005), Sukma optimistically said that “although imperfect, ASEAN has in principle agreed a democratic agenda to work on” (Sukma, 2009).

The inclusion of the democratization agenda in the ASEAN could not be separated from the role of Indonesia. Many observers even noted that the democratization agenda is an ‘Indonesian initiative.’ Of course, this is not a coincidence. Indonesia had undergone a democratization process following the political reform after the 1997/1998 Asian Crisis. After a brief period of inward looking foreign policy, in early 2000s Indonesia started to be willing to reclaim its regional role through ASEAN. At that very moment, some leading Indonesian scholars, most notably Rizal Sukma, started to introduce the discourse of democratization as an ASEAN agenda (Emmerson, 2005). Indonesia’s Foreign Ministry captured this proposal and Indonesia quickly made it as its diplomatic agenda. At the ASEAN Senior Officials’ Meeting in June 2003, Indonesia proposed the elements of ASEAN’s democratization agenda, even though still avoided a direct reference to democracy. However, as Sukma mentioned, Indonesia called the imperative for ASEAN member states to “promote people participation, particularly through the conduct of general elections,” to “strengthen judicial institutions and legal reforms,” and to “promote human rights and obligations through the establishment of the ASEAN Commission on
Human Rights.” (Sukma, 2009; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2003).

In making the way for the democratization agenda, Indonesia faced a degree of resistance from other members. The use of the term, even once, triggered a debate during the drafting process of the Bali Concord II. As Emmerson noted, an ‘Asian diplomat’ recalled that ASEAN members were divided. Indonesia, Cambodia, the Philippines and Thailand argued to include the term ‘democracy,’ while Brunei, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam were objected to “the promotion of democracy as an ASEAN objective” (Emmerson, 2005). Indonesia even once compromised by agreeing to drop the proposal for ‘political development’ in the measures to realize the ASC in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, 2003 (Sukma, 2009). Nevertheless, with its weight as the largest country in ASEAN, Indonesia successfully included the agenda of ‘political development’ a year later in the 10th ASEAN Summit, which was resulted in the inclusion of ‘political development’ in the VAP and ASCPA (Sukma, 2009).

It is also interesting to note that while Indonesia, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported by some intellectual elites, was the promoter of the ASEAN’s democratization agenda, the issue was also controversial domestically. While many less democratic countries quickly passed the ratification of ASEAN Charter, which placed a high importance on democracy, Indonesia took a long time to ratify the charter. Politicians from different ideological spectrums criticized the Charter for different reasons. Finally, the House of Representatives passed the ratification in October 2008 with an addendum which openly stresses Indonesia’s leadership in the region (Ruland, 2009).

Traces of Democratic Peace Theory

To what extent the ideas of the DPT influenced the inception of ASEAN’s democratization agenda? This part attempts to identify the traces of the democratic peace theory in the documents of ASEAN Political Security Community. While there is no explicit reference to the DPT, the documents of the APSC, such as the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action (ASCPA) and the APSC Blueprint, mentioned the ideas carried out by the DPT.

Principal Argument: More Democracies, More Peaceful
As the principal claim of DPT argued, ASCPA viewed that the establishment of democracies will ensure the peace in the region. The document mentioned that:

“One of the main objectives of the ASEAN Security Community as envisaged in the Bali Concord II is to bring ASEAN’s political and security cooperation to a higher plane. In working towards this objective, ASEAN Member Countries shall promote political development in support of ASEAN Leaders’ shared vision and common values to achieve peace, stability, democracy and prosperity in the region. This is the highest political commitment that would serve as the basis for ASEAN political cooperation...In this context, ASEAN Member Countries shall not condone unconstitutional and undemocratic changes of government or the use of their territory for any actions undermining peace, security and stability of other ASEAN Member Countries.”

It also argued that “A conducive political environment will ensure continued peace, security and stability in the region.” In this context, what kind of ‘political environment’ is desired to ensure continued peace, security and stability in the region? The Annex of the document explained in the ‘political development’ part that this means the promotion of a just, democratic and harmonious environment. In order to do so, the ASCPA recommended various initiatives to strengthen democratic institutions and norms, including strengthening democratic institutions and popular participation, strengthening the rule of law and judiciary systems, legal infrastructure and capacity building, promoting free flow of information among and within ASEAN Member Countries, enhancing good governance in public and private sectors, strengthening effective and efficient civil services, and preventing and combating corruption.

Similar argument was reaffirmed in the APSC Blueprint (ASEAN, 2009). The Blueprint stated that in order to “...ensure that the peoples and Member States of ASEAN live in peace with one another and with the world at large...” (article 6), “The APSC shall promote political development in adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, respect for and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as inscribed in the ASEAN Charter...”(article 7).

Apart from the abovementioned articles, there are several other articles in the APSC Blueprint that echo the proposition of the DPT that “bringing more democracies will create more peace.” But, do the promoters of democratization agenda in ASEAN really mean it? It seems so. As Rizal Sukma had noted, Indonesia even included the idea of “to promote people’s participation, particularly through the conduct of general elections” in their original proposal regarding to the political development to realize the ASC in June 2003 ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting (Sukma, 2009). The intellectuals behind the discourse also seemed to believe it. Writing on the challenges for the democratization agenda, Sukma wrote: “While paying lip service to the importance of
democracy as a foundation of security, many member states failed to see how ASEAN could reconcile the principle of non-interference as the basis of peaceful intra-state relations in the region with the need to promote democracy –as a collective regional agenda- within a particular member state” (Sukma, 2009). This passage indicates that Sukma himself believes that democracy is an important foundation of security and peace.

If the ASEAN documents conforms the main argument of the DPT that bringing more democracies will create more peaceful region, what strands of DPT is visible? As we have discussed previously, different strands in DPT try to explain why democracies are more peaceful. Thus, instrumentally, if we are going to make democracy works to create peace, there are measures consistent with the explanations of these different strands.

For example, we can see that there is an influence of the ‘institutional constraints’ if there are articles in the documents which call for the strengthening for democratic institutions, including the rule of law (which will create constitutional and legal constraints for war) and broadening public participation in the decision making process. We can say that there is a visible influence of the ‘norms and culture’ strand if there are statements to build a shared democratic norms both at domestic and at the regional levels. Lastly, we can argue that the ‘economic interdependence’ argument is visible in the APSC documents if there are arguments to strengthen trade within ASEAN in order to achieve the just, democratic and harmonious region.

**Institutional Constraints Strand**

The ideas of the ‘institutional constraints’ strand do visible in the APSC documents. The APSC Blueprint (ASEAN, 2009), mentioned that “ASEAN’s cooperation in political development aims to strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, with due regard to the rights and responsibilities of the Member States of ASEAN” (article 12). In order to achieve the vision of a peaceful ASEAN, political development is taken as an important measure. ‘Political development’ here could be translated more explicitly into ‘strengthening democratic institutions.’

In line with the arguments of the ‘institutional constraints’ strand of the DPT that the stronger the rule of law, the bigger the constraints to go for war, the APSC Blueprint calls for the “cooperation to strengthen the rule of law, judiciary system and legal
infrastructure” (article 15). In line with the argument of this strand that the stronger the participation of the people to the decision making, the bigger the constraints to go for war, the Blueprint also calls for facilitating ‘free flow of information’ (article 15), ‘intensify exchange of experience and training courses in order to enhance popular and broader participation’ (A.1.1., actions (i) point c), and also ‘increase the participation of relevant entities’ (A.1.6).

**Norms and Culture Strand**

The ideas of the ‘norms and culture’ strand of DPT is also visible in the APSC documents. For example, the Blueprint stated that one of its aims is to ‘create a Rules-based Community of shared values and norms’ (article 12). The ASCPA (ASEAN, 2004b) stated that “In order to better respond to the new dynamics within the respective ASEAN Member Countries, ASEAN shall nurture such common sociopolitical values and principles. In this context, ASEAN Member Countries shall not condone unconstitutional and undemocratic changes of government or the use of their territory for any actions undermining peace, security and stability of other ASEAN Member Countries.” In this passage, it is clear that the document views that the entrenchment of democratic norms is highly correlated with the peace and security of the region.

Furthermore, the detailed plan for actions in the APSC Blueprint frequently recommended the building of democratic norms both at domestic and at the regional levels. For example, the document calls for ASEAN members to ‘hold seminars/workshops to share experiences on democratic institutions, gender mainstreaming, and popular participation’ (A.1.1., ii). It even recommends ASEAN to ‘promote understanding of the principles of democracy among ASEAN youth at schools at appropriate stage of education’ (A.1.8).

At the regional level, APSC Blueprint also ‘promotes regional norms of good conduct and solidarity’ (article 16). While these regimes, such as Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) are not necessarily created by democratic countries, they are creating the democratic norms of non-violent conflict resolution. According to the ‘norms and culture’ strand of DPT, if a country can expect that another country will not resort to violence in solving their disputes, the probability of war is getting smaller. Thus, it is in line with the ‘norms and culture’ strand of DPT that the existence of a shared non-violent norms of conflict resolution will help to minimize the possibility of war between countries.
Economic Interdependency Strand

It is understandable that the arguments of the ‘economic interdependency’ strand of DPT could not be found explicitly in the APSC documents, because the development of trade among ASEAN members is the focus of the ASEAN Economic Community. However, while there is no reference that building free trade between ASEAN countries, supported with democratic political systems which will ensure the continuity of the free trade, will create peace, the placement of ASEAN Economic Community as another pillar of ASEAN Political and Security Community conforms the argument of the ‘economic interdependency’ strand of the DPT. Although subtle, it could be understood that ASEAN places the development of democracy and free trade as a mutually strengthening pillars of the ASEAN Community.

Table 1. DPT Propositions and the examples of their traces in ASEAN documents

<table>
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<th>DPT Propositions</th>
<th>Examples of traces in the ASEAN Documents</th>
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<td>VAP, ASCPA, APSC Blueprint (article 6,7), ASEAN Charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Constraints Arguments</td>
<td>APSC Blueprint (article 15, A.1.1., action (i) point (c), A.1.6).</td>
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<td>Norms and Culture Arguments</td>
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<td>Economic Interdependence Arguments</td>
<td>ASEAN Community Roadmap (APSC and AEC as the pillars of ASEAN Community)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Balancing the Optimism: Identifying Challenges

Two Layers of Optimism

The APSC documents imply at least two layers of optimism. The first layer of optimism is the optimism that ASEAN members will be committed to the democratization agenda as written in the formal documents of APSC and translated it into real actions rather than diplomatic “talking shops.” Thus, by realizing the action plan of the APSC, ASEAN members will become more democratic. The second layer of optimism is echoing the belief of the DPT that, as one proponent of DPT wrote, “the more democracies...the wider the zone of peace” (Russet, 1993). By transforming ASEAN member countries into democratic countries, or at least more democratic than before (assumed to be successful in the first layer of optimism), ASEAN is believed to become a more peaceful region.

Rizal Sukma himself acknowledged that there will be challenges to the first layer optimism that ASEAN members will implement the ASEAN’s democratization agenda.
As he cautiously wrote, “The problem, however, lies in the willingness and the ability of ASEAN to implement this commitment. The extent to which ASEAN will be able to promote democracy in the region is open to question” (Sukma, 2009).

Despite being skeptical to the prospect of the democratization through APSC, this article does not focus on whether the ASEAN’s democratization agenda is reachable or not. Instead, this paper discusses the second layer of optimism that echoes the DPT: the optimistic proposition that more democracies in ASEAN will create a more peaceful region. To do so, this essay elaborates possible impacts of democratization in ASEAN by looking at empirical symptoms related to democratization in ASEAN’s member countries.

**Democratization: Opening Pandora’s Box?**

Democratization is like opening Pandora’s Box. Even when the intention was good, the result was not always as good as the expectations. “Peace” is not the only possible direction. Many scholars had argued that the process of democratization is often slow and stricken with violence. Democratic transitions are often colored with violent conflicts both inside (internal conflict) and outside (war against other countries) (Mansfield and Snyder, 2005).

Looking at the empirical cases of democratization in various developing countries, Jack Snyder (2000) argued that many democratic transitions often do not merely fail to prevent but actually becoming the trigger for nationalist conflict. The growing sentiment of nationalism lead some groups to identify (and tries to eliminate) enemies inside and outside the nation, as in the cases of Rwanda and Burundi (Snyder, 2000; Mansfield and Snyder, 2005). In this context, we must remember that even in the early days of democracy in France, French democrats are among the *agent provocateur* of the war between France against European monarchs in order to end the Monarchy in France (Fyffe, 1889/2004).

Based on the warning that democratic transitions often bring violent conflicts, this essay tries to identify possible challenges for the optimistic tone of the DPT and its shadow in ASEAN’s democratization agenda. It will go beyond the limits set by DPT theorists which often limit the definition of conflict at the interstate level (war as dyadic relationship) because it is insufficient to measure the level of peace only at the interstate level. Here, I argue that there are three categories of violent conflicts or security threats
potentially arise from democratization processes in ASEAN’s less democratic countries: internal conflicts (intra), interstate conflicts (inter), and transnational security threats.

Three Challenges: Intra, Inter, and Trans

Snyder’s warning that democratization often trigger ‘nationalist conflict’ should be an important reminder for ASEAN, which comprised of countries with heterogeneous ethnicities. Democratization could lead into intensification of domestic political rivalries. In this heightened political rivalries, groups or elites often employ identity politics to mobilize resources and to win the competition. In many cases, the fight for ballots turned into fight with bullets.

Recent case of the Rohingya people in Myanmar illustrates this point clearly. According to the official sources from the government of Myanmar, the riots in the Rakhine state (or Arakan) broke up between Muslim and Buddhist community after two incidents. According to the government, the sectarian conflict was started with the rape, robbery and killing of a young Buddhist woman by three youths in Yanbye on 28 May 2012 and the subsequent killing of ten Muslim persons in a passenger bus in Taungup on 3 June. Following the two incidents, riots broke out in Sittway, Maungtaw and Buthidaung (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2012). According to a report by Human Rights Watch, both communities attacked each other. Instead of providing security, the government is involved in the attacks, especially against Rohingyas (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

While the persecution against the Rohingya people by the Myanmar state had been started long before (IHH, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2012), the intensive involvement of the Buddhist Rakhines in the recent case illustrated that the formerly ‘vertical’ (state vs. people) conflict had been openly transformed into complex conflict where the vertical conflict mixed with ‘horizontal’ conflict (people vs. people) with a strong nationalist discourse. It is true that the role of the democratization of Myanmar is unclear in this context (because it is still unclear whether Myanmar is seriously democratizing itself), the element of ‘nationalist conflict’ is clearly visible. Despite the statement of neutrality by the government in this case, supporters of the government and the Rakhines spread the discourse saying that Rohingyas are not part of Myanmar but illegal immigrants. ‘Myanmar is attacked by foreign power’ or ‘Rohingyas are foreigners’ are clearly popular ethno-nationalistic discourses. Of course, this discourse is not new, because the government had stripped the citizenship of Rohingya people since 1982 and thus formally
sanctioning Rohingya people as ‘non-citizens’ or ‘foreigners’ (Human Rights Watch, 2012). However, this level of mass mobilization of the society (including religious leaders) and the framing of this as a ‘horizontal’ conflict by the government is relatively new. This new framing is important because the actor shifted from ‘the state’ to ‘the people.’ It is like saying: “you can blame an authoritarian regime, but you could not blame the will of the people.”

If we take Snyder’s warning seriously, this could be an early warning that democratization will also bring the possibility of a larger ‘nationalist conflict’ in Myanmar. The responses by ‘democratic leaders’ such as Aung San Suu Kyi and Burmese democratic activists indicated that a larger nationalist is not an impossible scenario. Aung San Suu Kyi was criticized for her silence. Many argued that she was cautious due to a calculation about the possible negative responses from her constituencies (Burma’s Rohingya Muslims, Aung San Suu Kyi’s Blind Spot, 2012). Some Burmese democratic activists even openly supported the campaign by the government of Myanmar to identify Rohingyas as foreigners. Exiled Burmese democracy activists held demonstrations to support the Military Junta’s plan to expel the Rohingya minority group to third countries (Exiles in Japan Backs President’s Rohingya Plan, 2012).

Of course, this is not to say that democratization is inherently bad because it will trigger nationalist conflict. In fact, democratization had helped civil societies in Myanmar to bring this issue to an international level and thus preventing a larger scale of violence. However, we must aware that there are possible scenarios that will follow democratization. Democratization does not necessarily create peace.

This is also true at the traditional arena of the DPT: interstate level. One important symptom to be cautiously watched is the tensions between Cambodia and Thailand in the issue of Preah Vihear temple. The dispute on the ownership of Preah Vihear or Phra Viharn (in Thai) is not new. Historically, the temple was built in the golden age of the Khmer Empire, which the Cambodians claim as their direct ancestors, in the 11th to 12th Century. However, this region was not always in the control of the Khmer Empire. In 15th Century, the Siamese Kingdom, which the Thais claim as their ancestors, took the control of many parts of the weakened Khmer Empire. In 1863, Cambodian King requested the status as French protectorate to avoid Siamese domination. Four years later, Cambodia gave territorial concessions for Siam in northern and western parts of the Khmer Kingdom, including the area around Preah Vihear. In return, the King of Siam renounced his claim of suzerainty over Cambodia. However, the dispute on the ownership
of the Preah Vihear region continued until the ICJ decision in 1962, which gave the ownership to Cambodia (SPICE Stanford, 2009).

The dispute resurfaced in 2008, following Cambodia’s application to include Preah Vihear as a UNESCO World Heritage site (under Cambodia, of course) and the political development in Thailand. Initially, Thai government was supporting this application. However, domestic political competitions in both countries had made the issue of Preah Vihear an important ‘nationalist rallying discourse’ and had changed the attitude of the Thai government. At the time in Thailand, the People’s Alliance for Democracy, or the ‘yellow shirts’ were calling for Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej (who had a close relationship with the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra) to step down. Thaksin’s supporters who were loyal to the Prime Minister, ‘the red shirts,’ also held demonstrations against the ‘yellow shirts.’ In this heightened political tension, the PAD started to use the issue of Preah Vihear to attack the government as ‘forfeiting Thai dignity and sovereignty.’ Responding to this accusation, finally the government withdrew its support for Cambodia’s application. After this development, both yellow and red shirts struggled to show their nationalist credential by heating up the issue of Preah Vihear. Domestic political factor was not only visible in Thailand. In Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Sen and Cambodia’s People Party used the issue of Preah Vihear to rally nationalist support for the national election in July that year. With this kind of development, it was not a surprise that several violent clashes happened between Thai and Cambodian troops (SPICE Stanford, 2009).

Another challenge for a more peaceful ASEAN that is supposedly created by the democratization of ASEAN is at the transnational level. Democratization often created stronger non-state actors, including transnational crime organizations or terrorist groups who are entrenched in particular segments of the society, at the expense of the power of the state. In Mekong region, where less democratic ASEAN countries are located, the regional integration (which accelerates free trade, which according to the economic interdependence strand correlated with the Democratic Peace) had already enlarged the scale of transnational security challenges such as human or drugs trafficking in the region (Bonnano, 2011).

Different types of conflicts and security challenges could easily merge with each other. For example, it is not impossible that the conflict in the Arakan/Rakhine state in Myanmar provoked retaliations from militant groups in Malaysia or in Indonesia. Not
only that the internal conflict transforms into a transnational security challenge, but it could even lead to an interstate conflict between different countries.

**Concluding Remarks**

“If ASEAN members, especially the non democratic ones, are undergoing a democratization process, will this region become more peaceful?” The answer is “not necessarily so.” However, this article is written not to argue for an ‘Undemocratic Peace Theory’ (i.e. that ASEAN is peaceful because many of its members are undemocratic) because the explanation might rests in various other factors than political systems. The elaboration in this essay does not imply that all security challenges came from democratization. For example, the persecution of Rohingya people in Myanmar or the Preah Vihear dispute had their roots in the colonial (or even pre-colonial) period.

The point of this article is that with this complexity, such as ethnic and religious divisions in various ASEAN countries and bitter historical memories between neighboring countries, democratization does not necessarily lead to a more peaceful region. There are symptoms in the ASEAN political and security situation that echo Snyder’s warnings on the possibility of negative impacts of democratization. Thus, it is important to balance the optimistic tone of the ASEAN’s democratization agenda, influenced by all strands of the DPT, with cautionary measures to prevent the unintended consequences of democratization.

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