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## Summitry on the Regional Level: The ASEAN Summit and Regional Integration in Southeast Asia

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### Abstract

Summitry is a well-established form of interaction among states, which is conducted with various goals, such as addressing transnational issues, settling critical political disagreements, and forging an international order. Heads of state and government, competent persons to politically represent their states at the highest level, increasingly attend diplomatic relations and establish direct contacts with their counterparts thanks to the technological improvements in transportation and communication. They also gather on the regional level in an ad hoc manner or in the form of regular summits. In tandem with the intensification of regional interstate cooperation in an institutionalized way, summitry has become a considerable channel for the regional integration of states. In this sense, this study scrutinizes the consequences of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summits on the evolution of the Association from a historical and institutional perspective. Considering that ASEAN's performance primarily hinges on the consensual will of its member states, the study principally asserts that regional summits in ASEAN's institutional functioning have an extensive effect on the deepening and advancing regional integration in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords:** Summitry, regional level, regional integration, Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

**JEL Codes:** F50, F53, F55

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### Article Information

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## Bölgesel Düzeyde Zirve Diplomasisi: ASEAN Zirvesi ve Güneydoğu Asya'da Bölgesel Bütünleşme

### Öz

Uluslar ötesi sorunların ele alınması, kritik siyasal anlaşmazlıkların çözümlenmesi ve uluslararası bir düzen oluşturulması gibi çeşitli hedeflerle tatbik edilen zirve diplomasisi, yerleşik bir devletler arası etkileşim biçimidir. Kendi devletlerini en üst düzeyde temsil kabiliyetine sahip kişiler olan devlet ve hükümet başkanları, ulaşım ve iletişim alanındaki teknolojik gelişmeler sayesinde, artan seviyede diplomatik ilişkilere katılmaktadır ve mevkidaşlarıyla doğrudan temaslar kurmaktadır. Ayrıca söz konusu yetkili kişiler, ad hoc veya düzenli olarak, bölgesel düzeyde bir araya gelmektedir. Devletler arası bölgesel iş birliğinin kurumsallaşmış bir çerçevede yoğunlaşmasıyla birlikte, zirve diplomasisi, devletlerin bölgesel bütünleşmesine yönelik önemli bir etkileşim kanalı haline gelmiştir. Bu kapsamda bu çalışma, Güneydoğu Asya Uluslar Birliği (Association of Southeast Asian Nations-ASEAN) zirvelerinin Birliğin evrimi üzerindeki sonuçlarını tarihsel ve kurumsal bir perspektiften incelemektedir. ASEAN'ın performansının öncelikle üye devletlerinin mutabakatıyla oluşan iradeye bağlı olduğu düşünüldüğünde, bu çalışma, ASEAN'ın kurumsal işleyişi içerisinde bölgesel zirvelerin Güneydoğu Asya'daki bölgesel bütünleşmenin derinleşmesi ve ilerlemesi üzerinde kapsamlı bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Zirve diplomasisi, bölgesel düzey, bölgesel bütünleşme, Güneydoğu Asya Uluslar Birliği.

**JEL Kddları:** F50, F53, F55

## 1. Introduction

Technological improvements in transportation and communication have furthered the opportunity to establish more contacts among states, and heads of state and government have increasingly joined diplomatic interactions. Therefore, summitry has become a ubiquitous channel in conducting interstate relations, which is implemented with the purpose of addressing transnational issues, such as environmental degradation, health emergencies, climate change, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and economic crises, settling critical political disagreements, and forging an international order. Leaders of states meet in an ad hoc manner or, as a result of the intensification of organizational cooperation in international relations, in the form of regular summits. Thus, it seems telling to assert that summit diplomacy is a constant dimension of multi-stakeholder and polycentric global governance (See Dunn, 1999; Scholte, 2016).

Heads of state and government convene on the regional level in line with the intensification of regional cooperation in international relations. Regional collaborations have augmented since the end of World War II (Fawcett, 1995). European integration that commenced at the beginning of the 1950s, in particular, has led to a tendency for installing regional groupings among states. Though this tendency has had divergent repercussions, it has brought about the foundation of regional organizations across the different parts of the world, which seek to achieve integration among participant states (Söderbaum, 2016, pp. 20-27). In tandem with the advancement of interstate regionalist practices, summitry has become one of the diplomatic methods both in the management of regional governance (Mace et al., 2016b) and the conduct of interregional relations (Gardini et al., 2018).

In the framework outlined above, this study scrutinizes the consequences of ASEAN summits on the evolution of the Association from a historical and institutional perspective. ASEAN is a notable manifestation of regionalism and offers a relatively sophisticated form of regional integration in Asia (Cockerham, 2010). The Association, most members of which experienced a

common history epitomized by the colonial rule of European great powers, performs its actions on the basis of flexibility, consensus, and informality in terms of institutional functioning, the case of which the achievement of the goals stated in the founding international legal texts of ASEAN hinges on the affirmative will of its members. More clearly, political consensus among ASEAN members is critical in order to produce concrete results in the cooperation processes of the Association. Hence, the ASEAN Summit, a platform where the member states are politically represented by their heads of state and government, is considerably substantial for the progress of integration in the Southeast Asian region.

Considering that ASEAN's performance hinges primarily on the consensual will of its member states, this study principally asserts that regional summits in ASEAN's institutional functioning have an extensive effect on deepening and advancing regional integration in Southeast Asia. In this sense, it consists of six sections. Section two, following the introduction, is the conceptual and analytical part, which elaborates and frames integration on the regional level and provides some presumptions concerning the functions of regional summitry. Section three briefly specifies the historical evolution of ASEAN, from its foundation in 1967 to the signature of the ASEAN Charter in 2007. Section four examines summit meetings in the ASEAN institutional machinery and particularly peruses the ASEAN summits of 1976, 1992, and 2005, the decisions of which are rather consequential in the progress of Southeast Asian integration. Section five infers additional determinations and evolutions of the three summits referred to in the previous section. The last section discusses the conclusions within the analytical framework of the study.

## **2. Conceptual and Analytical Framework**

### **2.1 Integration on the Regional Level**

Integration on the regional level is a form of interstate groupings (Ateş, 2012, pp. 239-243), which may be observed in a variety of forms and intensities. Before elaborating and framing integration on the regional level, it is required to succinctly address the concepts of region, regionalism, and regionalization.

The region may be delineated as *"a spatial unit that is somehow distinguishable from the surrounding areas"* (Paasi, 2009, p. 214). A particular region may be demarcated by its physical/geographical and normative/ideational components, which distinguish it from outside. Yet, portraying a geographical partition as the region is a politically contested process. Accordingly, the region may be acknowledged as a constructed or built spatial unit (Van Langenhove, 2011). Affiliated with the identification of region, regionalism and regionalization concern activities toward building a region. These concepts are, at times, interchangeably harnessed but differ from each other. The former denotes *"the body of ideas, values, and policies that are aimed at creating a region"* and is also pertaining to *"a regional project or regional organization"*, while the latter *"refers to the process of cooperation, integration, and cohesion that creates a regional space (issue-specific or general)"* (Söderbaum, 2016, p. 3). It is less consistent and more spontaneous, primarily conducted by non-governmental actors. Though

bearing disparate connotations, regionalism and regionalization are not necessarily exclusive processes; indeed, they may bolster one another (Wunderlich, 2007, p. 3).

Regionalism may lead to regional cooperation or regional integration (Goltermann et al., 2012: 4). Regional cooperation marks cohesive and coordinated activities of states to attain collective purposes and mostly a formal and intergovernmental mode of partnership (Dosenrode, 2015, p. 5; Langhammer & Hiemenz, 1990, p. 2). Regional integration is a form of association beyond regional cooperation, which is identified in various ways. European integration has offered a fertile ground for the specification of the regional integration concept and the development of regional integration theory with different variations. The regional integration theory fundamentally depicts the concept as a process or condition in which states of a specific region transfer some of their sovereign powers to a center on the way to constituting a political community over the national level (Dedeoğlu, 2015; Sancaktar, 2013). Therefore, supranationality, which denotes both an international organization and the law produced by that international organization (Schroeder & Müller, 2011, p. 358), is widely acknowledged as the distinctive feature of regional integration.

Considering the creation of international organizations outside Europe, which seek to achieve regional integration and, though emulating the European integration model to a certain extent, their peculiar characteristics in terms of, for instance, institutional structure, decision-making procedures, or purposes of member states, together with the emergence of a new regionalist wave that highlights both formal and informal dimensions of regional cooperation (See Acharya & Johnston, 2007; Hettne et al., 1999; Malamud, 2013), integration as form of regionalism in building the region is supposed to be addressed beyond the European experience. In this sense, drawing on Van Langenhove (2011, p. 97), integration, for this study, may be identified as *"a process in which units move from a condition of total or partial isolation towards a complete or partial unification."* It may be implemented in various ways, which include eliminating barriers to economic interactions and movement of goods, services, persons, and capital, producing public goods by means of institutions and regulations, and forging a geopolitical identity by establishing relations with external actors, attending interregional dialogues or joining global multilateral organizations. Additionally, initiatives toward regional integration may also differ from the European integration model, along with other dimensions, in terms of institutional structure and decision-making procedures (See Closa, 2016).

## 2.2 Summity: Some Preliminary Determinations<sup>1</sup>

As is briefly stated in the introduction, technological advancements in transportation and communication sectors have facilitated the establishment of direct and swift contacts among the political leaders at the zenith of the state apparatus, and the number of summit meetings has augmented. Therefore, various forms of summity have emerged. Drawing on the classification formulated by Berridge (2010, pp. 166-174), summits may be grouped into three categories. The first of those is serial summits, which are conducted on a regular manner, such as the Group of Eight Summit, the Arab League Summit, the South Asian Association for

<sup>1</sup> With revisions and additions, this title is a summary of the previously published work by this author (See Yılmaz, 2022).

Regional Cooperation Summit, and the Summit of the Americas. The second is ad hoc summits. Such summits typically are held to address specific matters concerning international or bilateral relations. The talks between Nixon and Brezhnev in 1972 regarding arms reduction and the Camp David Summit of 1978 are examples of ad hoc summits. The last one is summits for high-level exchange of views, which are mostly carried out in an ad hoc manner. Leaders convene to achieve various goals in such meetings, which include understanding the intentions of other party or parties, gathering information, developing economic relations, and forging friendly relations.

As a form of modern diplomacy, summitry is a multifaceted way of interaction, which may be carried out to attain specific purposes. Its functionality in international relations may be exhibited in referring to the aims and conclusions of a particular summit. However, peculiar functions of summit diplomacy may be featured. First of all, summitry offers a platform for leaders at the highest level to know about the views and opinions of one another. It may also facilitate the removal of mutual distrust and misgivings and present opportunities for a more comprehensive collaboration among participants. Second, summit diplomacy ensures a chance for leaders to establish dialogue with their counterparts and socialize about conducting diplomatic activities. Third, since leaders personally attend talks, summits attract the attention of the media and public opinion, thereby providing symbolic significance. Last but not least, the direct participation of leaders in diplomatic processes may promote the national image of their societies (Yilmaz, 2022, pp. 192-193).

The functions of summitry briefly stated above are widely acknowledged. This study highlights and scrutinizes four interrelated presumptions about summitry on the regional level, which are to be tested to display the effect of ASEAN summits on the progress of Southeast Asian integration. First of all, considering that summits are the most discernible embodiment of a regional design (Mace et al., 2016a, p. 232), thanks to the participation of political leaders at the zenith of the state apparatus, they lend an impetus to advance regional cooperation and produce further political will for the intensification of regional integration. Second, being multilateral interactions in general (See Feinberg, 2013), regional summits present opportunities to discuss cross-cutting and cross-border issues, including economic crises, epidemics, terrorism, and environmental degradation, and so contribute to making the regional level a space for policy-making. Third, attendants of regional summits may promote the representation of their respective geographical areas as regions in world politics by directly forming contact with external actors and urging other organs of their regional organizations to participate in external relations. Fourth, regional summits, as manifestations of formal regionalist practices, may foster informal regionalism and exhort the attendance of civil society actors to the management of the regional integration process.

### **3. ASEAN: A Brief History of Its Evolution**

ASEAN is a regional organization, and its membership is demarcated by Southeast Asia (Demirbaş & Aydın, 2014, p. 72), a geographical area that was cartographically designated as a separate region during World War II and whose name was employed by British Southeast Asia Command. Southeast Asia was under the colonial rule of European great powers for a

long time, and states in the region, except Thailand, acquired independence in the post-World War II era (Yilmaz, 2023, pp. 34-35). These states aimed at constructing their national economies, achieving development, and strengthening the ability to protect themselves against foreign pressure and penetration under the conditions of the bipolar international system of the Cold War. The representatives of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand signed the "ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration)", the founding international legal text of ASEAN, on August 8, 1967, with the purpose of attaining peace, stability, and prosperity in Southeast Asia and forging efficient collaborations among the member states. Following the joining of Brunei in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Burma (Myanmar) in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999 to ASEAN, the number of its members rose to ten (Kühnhardt, 2010, pp. 160-161; Nesadurai, 2008, p. 225).

The ASEAN Declaration (ASEAN, 1967) is a very short text, which forged a mere regional cooperation among the participant states. The Declaration specified some broad and not neatly prioritized goals and purposes. It was stated in the Declaration that the signatory states were conscious of the requirement to enhance regional solidarity and that the Association aimed at accelerating economic, social, and cultural development through joint initiatives, based upon equality and partnership, to create a region of peace, stability, progress, and prosperity, and promoting collaborations in some specific policy areas. The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), convened annually or ad hoc if necessary and composed of member states' foreign ministers, was the primary body of the Association in the specification and implementation of policies. In addition, the Declaration projected three bodies: the ASEAN Standing Committee, participated by the present ASEAN chair (foreign minister of the host state or his representative) and the ambassadors to the host state from the other members, ad hoc and permanent boards of specialists and officials on particular matters, and a national secretariat in each member state to conduct the tasks of ASEAN.

Considering ASEAN's institutional design projected by the ASEAN Declaration, which was highly decentralized (Jetschke, 2012, p. 330), it may be inferred that yielding concrete conclusions of regional cooperation hinged on the volition of its member states. The Declaration introduced a loose form of intergovernmental cooperation with no central institutions or explicit integrative purposes (Weatherbee, 2019, p. 28). Moreover, the principles that were embedded in the cooperation processes of ASEAN have promoted its intergovernmental dimension. ASEAN members have designated "respect for sovereign rights", "non-interference in domestic affairs", and "consensual decision-making" as the basic tenets of regional order in Southeast Asia (Roberts, 2012). Together with these principles, informal procedural rules and flexibility have led to the crystallization of a peculiar form of collaboration, known as the "ASEAN Way" (Nesadurai, 2008, p. 227, 2009, p. 104).

In the first decade following its foundation, ASEAN's eligibility and performance in forging regional cooperation was controversial since the member states focused primarily on the attainment of national economic development, political stability, and nation-building after their independence, regional political problems brought about distrust among them, and the Cold War politics induced a turbulent milieu to Southeast Asia (Beeson, 2009, p. 20; Poon-Kim, 1977; Weatherbee, 2019, pp. 35-36). Toward the end of the 1970s, ASEAN members decided

to revitalize regional cooperation. The triumph of communist groups in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam in 1975 stimulated ASEAN member states to achieve regional solidarity, and the Cambodian issue was considered a common security concern and urged them to harmonize their foreign policies (Ojendal, 2001, pp. 164-165).

The end of the Cold War and the settlement process of the Cambodian issue offered opportunities for further regional collaboration in Southeast Asia. The number of ASEAN members increased, ASEAN member states signed a free trade agreement in 1992 (Hwee, 2023, p. 238), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was founded in 1994, ASEAN joined the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996, and the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) (China, South Korea, and Japan) was institutionalized in 1997 (Jetschke, 2012, p. 329). Moreover, in the post-Cold War period, the Association enjoyed the opportunity to adopt a more balanced stance between security-centered regionalism and development-oriented regionalism (Kühnhardt, 2010, p. 168).

Even though the post-Cold War period offered a fertile ground to advance cooperation within ASEAN, the particular regional problems of the 1990s displayed its ineffectiveness to deal with such problems. ASEAN member states could not achieve steadfast solidarity concerning the East Timor issue and the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, which induced the intervention of actors out of the region in Southeast Asian politics (Durmaz, 2023, p. 760). Therefore, ASEAN member states embraced an agenda toward attaining a more robust regional institutional mechanism and fulfilling the goals and purposes of the organization in the late 1990s (Yılmaz, 2023, p. 39). The process toward the reformation of ASEAN culminated in the signing of the ASEAN Charter on November 20, 2007.

The ASEAN Charter (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008) went into force on December 15, 2008. In the preamble of the Charter, it is highlighted that the peoples of ASEAN member states, motivated by the theme of "One Vision, One Identity and One Caring, and Sharing Community" and represented by their heads of state or government, are aware of the interdependence throughout the region, bounded by geography, common purposes, and shared destiny, and adhered to advancing community-building through promoting regional cooperation and integration, chiefly by constituting an "ASEAN Community", composed of political-security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars. Moreover, it grants legal personality to ASEAN, underlining its intergovernmental dimension and indicating the tenets to which the member states attach, and more elaborately specifies the purposes of the organization. The ASEAN Charter stipulates a more centralized institutional structure, in comparison to the ASEAN Declaration of 1967, which includes the ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Coordinating Council, which comprises ASEAN member states' foreign ministers,<sup>2</sup> the ASEAN Community Councils, the ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies, the Secretary-General of ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat, the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, the ASEAN National Secretariats, the ASEAN Human Rights Body, and the ASEAN Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign ministers of ASEAN member states continue to meet within AMM, which was established by the 1967 ASEAN Declaration (ASEAN, n.d.-a).

## 4. Summit Meetings in the ASEAN Institutional Machinery

Summit meetings in the ASEAN institutional machinery were ad hoc at first; in the regional integration process in Southeast Asia, they have become serial ones in an institutionalized way but may also be performed in an ad hoc manner. The ASEAN Declaration did not designate meetings to be participated by the heads of state and government of the member states as an organ of the Association and marked AMM as its leading organ to accomplish the goals of the Declaration. The 1976 Bali Summit settled that the heads of state and government of ASEAN members would gather when required, the 1987 Manila Summit (ASEAN, 1987) specified that they would meet every three to five years, if necessary, and the 1992 Singapore Summit agreed on the assembling of leaders formally every three years and also of informal meetings in between.

The ASEAN Charter designates the ASEAN Summit as one of the organs of the Association. According to the Charter, the ASEAN Summit comprises the heads of state or government of ASEAN members, which is held twice annually and, if necessary, convenes as special or ad hoc meetings. It is the highest policy-making organ of the Association, which is particularly tasked with producing policy guidelines and taking decisions on critical issues concerning the achievement of ASEAN's purposes, significant matters of interest to the member states, and all other subjects referred to it by the ASEAN Coordinating Council, the ASEAN Community Councils, and the ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies, and, with proper actions, addressing emergencies affecting ASEAN. The ASEAN Summit may also make decisions on topics referred to it under Chapters VII (Immunities and Privileges) and VII (Settlement of Disputes). It has some further engagements, which include appointing the Secretary-General of ASEAN and authorizing the foundation and dismantlement of Sectoral Ministerial Bodies and other ASEAN institutions.

Though the ASEAN Declaration did not designate meetings of heads of state and government as one of the organs of ASEAN and marked AMM as the leading body to carry through the stated goals in the Declaration, ASEAN summits had significant contributions to the institutionalization and intensification of the Southeast Asian integration process. The following subtitles examine the 1976 Bali Summit, 1992 Singapore Summit, and 2005 Kuala Lumpur Summit, respectively, and decisions made at these summits, considering the international and regional developments at those time.

### 4.1 1976 Bali Summit: Framing the Tenets of Cooperation in the ASEAN Region

The first regional summit within ASEAN was held amidst a turbulent situation in Southeast Asia. The fact that the communist groups in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam came to power and the US started to decrease its military presence in the region induced security concerns in ASEAN member states (Jetschke, 2012, p. 335; Ojendal, 2001, p. 164). These developments brought about the inclusion of their leaders to the regional cooperation process, and to display solidarity, they met in Bali in 1976 (Stubbs, 2016, p. 160).

The attendants of the Bali Summit deliberated on the pace of regional collaboration since the ASEAN's foundation and the latest developments affecting Southeast Asia, underlined the

resoluteness of the member states toward establishing close economic collaboration and considered the ways of promoting partnerships among them (ASEAN, 1976a). The 1976 Bali Summit adopted two significant documents, which were critical to forging the principles of the desired regional order in Southeast Asia, ensured institutional advancement of ASEAN, and specified the role of summit in the Association. The first of those was the "Declaration of ASEAN Concord", which set forth a course of action as an outline for the cooperation within ASEAN and designated the meeting of the heads of government of the member states as a platform for promoting political cooperation within the Association (ASEAN, 1976b). The second document adopted by the participant of the Bali Summit was the "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia" (TAC). This Treaty is still in operation and codifies the tenets to which the member states adhere, including mutual respect for national identity, territorial integrity, equality, sovereignty, and independence of all nations, the right of each state to continue its existence without foreign intervention, non-interference, disavowal of the threat or use of force, and effective cooperation (ASEAN, 1976c).

ASEAN member states were concerned about political and security matters of the 1970s. Additionally, the global economic crisis of this period stimulated these states to push economic cooperation forward to achieve tangible conclusions (Ba, 2009, p. 89). Hence, the leaders who attended the Bali Summit agreed on the installation of preferential trading arrangements as a long-run purpose, provided that unanimity among the member states was reached. They also decided that ASEAN member states' economic ministers would regularly gather to produce suggestions to intensify economic cooperation in the Southeast Asian region, which were to be presented to the deliberation of their governments. Moreover, the Bali Summit prescribed some cooperative initiatives for the accomplishment of industrialization on the regional level, including industrial projects, industrial complementation, and industrial joint ventures (Menon & Lee, 2019, pp. 4-5).

#### **4.2 1992 Singapore Summit: Preparing ASEAN to New Conditions**

Before the 1992 Singapore Summit, ASEAN encountered critical developments. The closure of the Cold War period has engendered transformations in security-oriented regionalism of the bipolar international system and the diversification of the agenda of regional interstate cooperation. Additionally, the acceleration of globalization since the 1980s and, relatedly, the tendency of states toward establishing regional economic blocs have placed the economic dimension at the center of the regional cooperation's agenda. The protective and inward-looking economic regionalism of the Cold War, the basis of which was formal regionalism, has been superseded by an open, outward-looking, and more inclusive/plural regionalist approach and practice in a world of increased interdependencies (Acharya, 2007; Fawcett, 1995, pp. 17-23; Hettne, 2003; Van Langenhove, 2011), which hinges on further integration of regions into the world economy (Sridharan & Srinivasa-Raghavan, 2007, p. 17). In addition to these developments on the global level, the conclusion of the Cambodian conflict in the early 1990s provided a constructive environment for Southeast Asian states to promote national and regional resilience through advancing intra-regional collaboration (Roberts, 2012, p. 59).

The new global and regional conditions required the reorientation of ASEAN for more substantial cooperation, a topic to which the leaders of ASEAN members paid attention. At the 1992 Singapore Summit, they stated that ASEAN would intensify the political and economic collaboration to assure regional peace and well-being. They also highlighted that the accession of all Southeast Asian states to TAC had great significance for widening regional collaboration. Furthermore, they committed to attaining the “Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality”, a declaration adopted by ASEAN member states’ ministers of foreign affairs at a special meeting of 1971, and a “Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone”,<sup>3</sup> considering the new conditions. Concerning the ASEAN institutional mechanism, it was settled that ASEAN Heads of Government would conduct formal meetings every three years and might also gather informally between formal meetings. Additionally, the participants of the Singapore Summit agreed that the institutional structure of ASEAN, particularly the Secretariat, would be promoted and provided with more resources, and the Secretary-General would be granted with further tasks for ensuring the efficiency of ASEAN’s actions (ASEAN, 1992c).

In addition to adopting the decisions regarding political, security, and institutional dimensions of regional collaboration in Southeast Asia, the leaders of ASEAN members also signed the “Framework Agreement on Enhancing ASEAN Economic Cooperation” (thereafter Framework Agreement) and “Agreement on the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme for the ASEAN Free Trade Area” (thereafter AFTA Agreement) in 1992. Intensifying economic collaboration among the member states had been addressed particularly since the midst of the 1970s. Their economic ministers conducted their first meeting in 1975. The participants of the 1976 Bali Summit also negotiated the enhancement of economic cooperation. However, the desired progress concerning the strengthening economic dimension of regional cooperation could not be achieved (Ba, 2009, pp. 89-97). Toward the end of the 1980s, officials, business groups, and academics addressed the opportunities and ways to advance intra-regional trade in Southeast Asia. Economic ministers of ASEAN members underlined the liberalization of trade within the ASEAN region, as well (Weatherbee, 2019, p. 144). In this sense, the Framework Agreement, which embraced an outward-looking approach, prescribed the advancement of intra-regional trade (ASEAN, 1992b). The AFTA Agreement identified products to be included in the “Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme” and provided a program for tariff reductions (ASEAN, 1992a).

Considering the new international system of the 1990s, ASEAN members paid more attention to relations with external actors, a topic that was also addressed at the 1992 Singapore Summit. In fact, this was not a new development since ASEAN had established relations with extra-regional states and international organizations since the early 1970s (Hänggi, 2006, p. 36). However, as of the midst of the 1990s, ASEAN has started to form interactions with other actors at the level of presidential/prime ministerial level, including the APT Summit and the East Asia Summit, which were founded in 1997 and 2005, respectively (Stubbs, 2016, pp. 164-165).

<sup>3</sup> ASEAN members signed the “Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone” in 1995 (ASEAN, n.d.-b).

### 4.3 2005 Kuala Lumpur Summit: Building the ASEAN Community

The post-Cold War era offered a favorable milieu for ASEAN members to further regional cooperation, but the crises that emerged toward the end of the 1990s proved the incapability of the Association to cope with the problems in its region. The 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, in particular, albeit affecting the states of the region to different degrees, displayed the interdependence between them and the inability of existing regional design to address economic problems (Jetschke, 2012, pp. 332-333). Additionally, the globalization process, which has accelerated since the 1980s, required the adaptation of Southeast Asian regional cooperation to the new wave of regionalism, which was now outward-oriented and more inclusive/plural. The members of ASEAN also encountered emerging non-traditional and inherently transnational security issues of common concern under the conditions of globalization, such as illegal immigration, drug trafficking, terrorism, and environmental degradation (Weatherbee, 2019, p. 169), which requires collective action. Therefore, ASEAN members engaged in broadening the scope of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia and revamping its institutional dimension in the late 1990s.

ASEAN member states' leaders more solidly addressed the topic of adapting the regional cooperation in Southeast Asia to changing conditions, which included the promotion of the institutional foundations of ASEAN. At the informal summit of 1997 held in Kuala Lumpur, they adopted the "ASEAN Vision 2020", which stated that it rested on *"a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership."* The document underlined the improvement of ASEAN's institutional basis to overcome the challenges of the forthcoming century (ASEAN, 1997). The ASEAN Summit of 1998, gathered in Hanoi, agreed on a six-year plan to attain the goals stated in the ASEAN Vision 2020, which included, among others, the topics of enhancement of economic cooperation and integration, preservation of the environment, achievement of sustainable development, consolidation of solidarity through strengthening resilience on the national and regional levels, and advancement of the Association's institutional design (ASEAN, 1998). The "Declaration of ASEAN Concord II", adopted at the 2003 Bali Summit, expressed the requirement of forming an ASEAN Community, which would hinge on political-security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars, to improve regional solidarity, resilience, and harmony and overcome the problems that the ASEAN region encountered (ASEAN, 2003).

ASEAN's reform process brought concrete conclusions at the ASEAN Summit of 2005, which were conducted under the name of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" (ASEAN, 2005a). The participants of this Summit affirmed their determination to enhance regional cooperation in Southeast Asia and adopted the "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Charter" and agreed on forming a group to generate suggestions on the essence of the ASEAN Charter and tasking the foreign ministers of the member states to create a task force to frame a draft treaty (ASEAN, 2005b). Consequently, the leaders of ASEAN members signed the ASEAN Charter at the Thirteenth ASEAN Summit, conducted by the motto of "One ASEAN at the Heart of Dynamic Asia" in 2007, which constituted the ASEAN Community (ASEAN, 2007).

## 5. Evaluation

The ASEAN summits of 1976, 1992, and 2005 have made notable contributions to furthering the regional integration level of Southeast Asia. Some further determinations regarding these summits may be specified to reach more evidential conclusions about the purpose of this study.

The 1976 Bali Summit was held in a period when ASEAN member states faced political and economic challenges. The decisions of this Summit ensured political support for achieving the goals stated in the ASEAN Declaration and, though their concrete outcomes became more visible in the 1990s, accelerated the economic collaboration process among the member states, such that after the first and second meetings conducted in 1975 and 1976 respectively, their economy ministers assembled three-times in 1977. Moreover, with the signing of the TAC, the 1976 Bali Summit forged the principles by which ASEAN members abide in their engagements with one another (Stubbs, 2016, p. 160). Additionally, it contributed to attaining foreign policy coordination between ASEAN members. The next ASEAN Summit of 1997 underscored the enhancement of ASEAN's relations with external actors (ASEAN, 1977). Thus, the heads of state and government of ASEAN members met the premiers of Australia, Japan, and New Zealand in 1977 (ASEAN Secretariat, 1988; Weatherbee, 2019, p. 56), and the Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC), a collective forum in which ASEAN comes together with its external dialogue partners, was initiated in 1978 (Roberts, 2012, p. 65).

The 1992 Singapore Summit was conducted to frame the prospect of regional integration in Southeast Asia, which encountered novel international and regional conditions. The increasing tendency of states toward forming regional economic groupings in international relations and attenuation of the divisiveness of national borders to economic activities under the conditions of globalization urged ASEAN member states to intensify regional economic cooperation in an outward-looking manner and, in this framework, the 1992 Singapore Summit adopted two legal documents to advance the economic dimension of ASEAN integration. Moreover, considering the post-Cold War uncertainties, the member states handled the political and security challenges with a regionalist comprehension. ASEAN members encountered the emerging global economic and security environments, and their leaders scuffled with the ambiguities of the immediate post-Cold War era. Goh Chok Tong, the Prime Minister of Singapore at the time, expressed that *"the challenge will be to keep ASEAN relevant and sought after in a situation where the great powers no longer need to compete for ASEAN's support and the European Community and North America are forming economic blocs"* (Hay, 1996, p. 256).

Regarding the new international milieu with its political/strategic and economic dimensions, ASEAN members acknowledged that Southeast Asia was no longer a self-contained region, and it needed to expand the regional order beyond Southeast Asia and establish relations with external partners. In this vein, the 1992 Singapore Declaration underscored the intensification of political and security collaboration with ASEAN's dialogue partners, harnessing PMC. This approach led to the creation of ARF in 1994 (Snitwongse, 1998, p. 189), which aims to promote dialogue and deliberation concerning the common political and security challenges of the Asia-Pacific region in a constructive manner (ASEAN Regional Forum, n.d.).

The 2005 Kuala Lumpur Summit agreed on the adoption of the ASEAN Charter, which was the culmination of the reformation process of the Association to address the regional economic and political challenges in a more efficient way. This reformation process also embraced an agenda toward rendering ASEAN more inclusive through empowering nongovernmental actors in the governance of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia. In fact, the 1967 ASEAN Declaration designated the attainment of welfare and security of the nations of Southeast Asia as one of the components of the regional cooperation, bodies were later founded for the inclusion of various groups, such as business persons and academicians, and the parliamentarians of ASEAN members initiated parliamentary cooperation, which made way for the foundation of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization in 1977; however, the regional collaboration in Southeast Asia had an elite-centered functioning, primarily directed by governmental officials, and the participation of civil society actors in this collaboration was limited (Collins, 2008, pp. 314-315; Sundrijo et al., 2020, pp. 19-21). After the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, the leaders of ASEAN members commenced nurturing the rhetoric of the "people-centered community", which included the pluralization of the policy-making process within ASEAN (Gerard, 2015, p. 366). The ASEAN Charter also designates a "people-oriented" regional collaboration, resting on the encouragement of all societal actors towards the participation of the integration process in Southeast Asia, yet it has no substantial provisions to forge an institutionalized way for the involvement of civil society actors in regional decision-making procedures (Collins, 2008, p. 326).

The ASEAN Charter, which renders ASEAN a treaty-based association (Weatherbee, 2019, p. 190), establishes a more centralized and sophisticated institutional design on the regional level and bestows legal identity on the Association, but it does not alter the intergovernmental dimension of ASEAN's functioning. Article 20 of the Charter specifies that "*as a basic principle, decision-making in ASEAN shall be based on consultations and consensus*", which demonstrates the intergovernmental aspect of the regional cooperation in ASEAN. Therefore, it may be suggested that the regional integration envisioned by the ASEAN Charter still hinges on the volition of the member states to a considerable extent, the basis of which is elite consensus.

## 6. Conclusion

Considering that ASEAN's performance hinges primarily on the consensual will of its member states, this study principally has asserted that regional summits in ASEAN's institutional functioning have an extensive effect on deepening and advancing regional integration in Southeast Asia. The ASEAN Summit is a platform of multilateral interaction, which has gradually become a constant dimension of regional governance in Southeast Asia and presents opportunities to the heads of state and government of the member states to deliberate on cross-cutting matters. It may be suggested that this platform functions as a forum for the leaders of ASEAN members to understand the opinions of one another and socialize with them about participation in diplomatic relations, which are among the widely acknowledged aspects of summitry. The three ASEAN summits elaborated in this study display that the leaders of ASEAN members address the international and regional issues of common concern and seek joint positions on these issues. Regarding the purposes of this study and the presumptions

that are suggested on functions of summitry on the regional level, these summits may provide particular inferences for understanding the place of summitry in the ASEAN integration.

The ASEAN Summit ensures political will for furthering regional cooperation in Southeast Asia, accelerates ASEAN's institutionalization, and mobilizes its organs towards the achievement of goals stated in its founding legal texts, which is quite essential for an interstate regional grouping featuring consensual decision-making, informal procedural rules, and flexibility. The ASEAN summits of 1976, 1992, and 2005 advanced the institutionalization process of ASEAN to different degrees and propelled the working of its organs toward the achievement of decisions that were made at these summits in line with the goals and purposes of its founding legal texts.

The ASEAN Summit contributes to the construction of the ideational dimension of the regional integration process in Southeast Asia, thereby facilitating the establishment of a regional order. The TAC has great significance in setting this dimension since it forges and elaborates the central tenets to which ASEAN members adhere in their engagements with one another. Therefore, it nourishes the normative aspect of the Southeast Asian region as a peculiar spatial unit. These tenets are also incorporated into the ASEAN Charter, which renders the Association a treaty-based organization. Moreover, the ASEAN Summit ensures a channel to discuss cross-cutting and cross-border matters in Southeast Asia, thereby marking the regional level as a space for policy-making. Accordingly, the assembling of heads of state and government of the member states within the institutional design of ASEAN in a regular manner signifies the regional level in Southeast Asia as a political space to deliberate matters of common concern and produce policies.

The ASEAN Summit stimulates the formation of relations between ASEAN and its dialogue partners and, thus, bolsters the ability of the Association to join global politics in representing the Southeast Asian region. Though ASEAN had formed external interactions before, the 1976 Bali Summit initiated the political coordination process to reach common positions on foreign policy between ASEAN members, and the subsequent ASEAN Summit of 1997 prescribed the improvement of ASEAN's external relations, which may be evaluated as initial steps for the representation of Southeast Asian region by the Association in international relations. The 1992 Singapore Summit also settled to deepen the relations between ASEAN and its dialogue partners, which later led up to the foundation of ARF, ASEAN's participation in ASEM, and the institutionalization of the APT Summit. It is fair to say that through attending the relations with external actors in the form of regional representation, the Association contributes to the actorship level of Southeast Asia in world politics.

The ASEAN Summit urges civil society actors to participate in the regional integration process in Southeast Asia. The 1992 Singapore Summit underlined to render regional collaboration within ASEAN more inclusive, which may be read as a response to changing patterns of regionalism in international relations. The reformation process that accelerated in the late 1990s aimed at transforming regional cooperation in Southeast Asia from an elite-centered process to a more inclusive one. However, considering that the ASEAN Charter accentuates the intergovernmental dimension of decision-making procedure and entrusts a minimal legal role to the involvement of civil society actors in the governance of the Southeast

Asian integration process, the claim that formal regionalism in this process persists may be proposed. Consequently, the norms of flexibility, consensus, and informality characterize ASEAN integration; thus, heads of state and government of the member states who are convening at the ASEAN Summit have considerable importance for furthering the integration level. The presumptions that are proposed to test the place of ASEAN summits in regional governance and their effect on regional integration of Southeast Asia require more research to comprehend the role of summitry in regionalist practices in general. Comparative studies may be fruitful, particularly, for instance, between international organizations that aim to integrate their participant states into a new political level and have supranational competences, like the European Union, and those that have similar features to ASEAN to produce more conclusive results for understanding the role of summitry in regionalist practices of states.

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The author declares that he has adhered to COPE guidelines and policies regarding the use of artificial intelligence tools.

#### ETHICS

The author declares that this article complies with ethical standards and rules.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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