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DISCUSSION PAPER No. 9

**Chairmanship in ASEAN+3: A  
Shared Rule of Behavior**

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October 2004

**Abstract**

ASEAN+3 is a cooperative framework among ASEAN members and the countries of Japan, China and Korea. It functions at the senior official, ministerial and summit levels. This article concerns how institutions in ASEAN+3 affect development of the direction and nature of this framework. ASEAN+3 is regarded as a loose framework that has regularized meetings as its main activity but has no organizational settings such as the secretariat. Little institutional analysis has been conducted on the development of this framework. This article introduces 'Chairmanship' as an analytical concept in which the chair or chairing member plays an important role in preparing and managing meetings. 'Chairmanship' is therefore an institution with an organizational element. It is also a shared rule of behavior among member states in that the chair's roles are not explicitly written in documents. Thus, it can be argued that the ASEAN+3 framework has an institution with an organizational element that affects development of its characteristics.

**Keywords:** ASEAN+3, Chairmanship, the chair, ASEAN, preparation of meetings

**JEL classification:**

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## **Introduction**

In the late 1990s, 'East Asian regionalism' became a realistic term to describe several emerging relational frameworks in East Asia. The ASEAN+3 framework, which is often called 'APT' (ASEAN Plus Three), is one of the most important frameworks that advocates East Asian regionalism. This framework is a cooperative among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the countries of Japan, China and Korea. It functions at the senior official, ministerial and summit levels. It was founded in 1997 when the first summit was held among leaders of ASEAN+3 member states. The third ASEAN+3 summit in 1999 produced the first joint statement. This statement included the need for cooperation in economic, social, political, and security fields. Since then, ASEAN+3 has emerged as a comprehensive framework with a wide range of agendas, and ASEAN+3 members regularly conduct not only a summit but also various ministerial meetings.

This article concerns how institutions in ASEAN+3 affect development of the direction and nature of the ASEAN+3 framework. Institutions are defined in various ways, but this article adopts two definitions based on the following: (1) Young (1989: 32) focuses on social meanings of institutions indicating that they are 'social practices consisting of easily recognized roles coupled with clusters of rules or conventions governing relations among the occupants of these roles.' (2) North (1990: 4) wrote that 'institutions include any form of constraints that human beings devise to shape human interactions. Are institutions formal or informal? They can be either.' Using these two definitions, it can be seen that regularized ASEAN+3 meetings are institutions that promote cooperation and communication among member states. ASEAN+3, as its name

indicates, is an ASEAN framework that concerns external relations, and it was developed through existing ASEAN institutions (Oba 2003; Oba 2004). In 2000, ASEAN+3 finance ministers launched the Chiang Mai Initiative that involves a network of bilateral swap and repurchase agreement facilities among ASEAN+3 members. This agreement is one of the rules that member states are required to follow. Institutions, whatever form they take, are important analytical concepts necessary to understand characteristics of cooperation in the ASEAN+3 framework.

It is necessary to understand the basic institutional setting of the ASEAN+3 framework in order to determine what kinds of institutions affect development of characteristics of the ASEAN+3 framework. Multilateral frameworks range from international organizations to loose diplomatic associations. International organizations, on one hand, are mainly built on international treaties or legal agreements. Examples include the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). On the other hand, loose frameworks are generally based on conference diplomacy. ASEAN, G8 summit and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) are examples. Such loose frameworks are based not on legal agreements and supranational organizations but rather on holding meetings at regular intervals. Given that holding meetings is the main activity of the ASEAN+3 framework, this article introduces 'Chairmanship' as an analytical concept that will aid in understanding how institutions affect development of the ASEAN+3 framework. 'Chairmanship' is an institution in which the chair or chairing member plays an important role in preparing ASEAN+3 meetings.

### **Is ASEAN+3 institutionalized but less organized?**

Most approaches to understanding the ASEAN+3 framework conclude that it has two institutions: (1) regularized meetings and (2) rules for cooperation written in joint documents after these meetings (Tanaka 2003; Kikuchi 2001; Nabers 2003). Based on this conclusion, two institutional approaches may be used to analyze characteristics of the ASEAN+3 framework.

The first approach focuses on regularized meetings in ASEAN+3 and argues that any cooperation in the ASEAN+3 framework begins with regularizing meetings among ASEAN members and Japan, China and Korea. This argument is based on the assumption that the ASEAN+3 framework does not have organizational capacities. Archer (2001: 33) defines international organizations as ‘a formal, continuous structure established by agreement between members (governmental and/or non-governmental) from two or three sovereign states with the aim of pursuing the common interest of the membership.’ He adds that ‘the nature of the formal structure should be separate from the continued control of one member. It is this autonomous structure that differentiates a number of international organizations from a series of conferences or congresses’ (Archer 2001: 33). From this perspective, ASEAN+3 would seem to be less organized because it is not based on founding treaties, it has little legal character, and it has no internal organ. Hund (2003: 410) argues that ‘the APT process has developed only very few institutions, although the process itself can be said to be firmly established through regular summit and ministerial meetings.’ Webber (2001: 340) stated that ‘[a]lthough the APT, like APEC, is not based on any treaty or formal binding agreement between the participating states, and although it has no central secretariat, the web of relations

between the members has grown quickly since the first meeting of the heads of government in 1997.' By 2004, ASEAN+3 has had no organizational capacity but Stubbs (2002: 450) foresees the possible direction of the ASEAN+3 framework as moving towards the formation of an organization, arguing '[c]ertainly, both APEC and ASEAN have more organizational depth than the APT, but overall the APT has quickly embarked on some important, practical projects that will help to move the region forward in its quest for economic cooperation. The APT's potential as East Asia's main regional economic organization should not, therefore, be underestimated.' Regularized meetings are important institutional settings to promote cooperation and explain one characteristic of the ASEAN+3 framework. However, it is not clear in this approach whether or not regularization of the meetings can explain the development of the direction and nature of ASEAN+3.

The second approach argues that rules for substantial cooperation in the ASEAN+3 framework are written in official documents or statements that are taken as agreements among its member states. International Regimes Theory may shed light on this argument, focusing on formal and informal 'institutions' to explain cooperation (Young 1989; Hasenclever and Rittberger 1997; Krasner 1983; Haggard and Simmons 1987). 'Formal institutions' refer to written or legalized codes and organizations whereas 'informal institutions' refer to unwritten rules or codes of conduct and shared patterns of behaviors among relevant members. Analysis using the concept of 'informal institutions' is familiar in institutional theories (Hall and Taylor 1996). However, this work does not use 'informal institutions' as the central analytical concept, but rather as an aid in understanding the importance of 'formal institutions' (Keohane 1989:162-66). In this respect, an international regime is a difficult concept to distinguish from

international law.<sup>1</sup> Webber (2001: 341) mentions that ‘the first significant concrete “product” of APT is an agreement, reached at Chiang Mai in Thailand in May 2000, to establish a regional currency-swap facility to enable the states to protect themselves better against any future crises of the kind that swept through much of the region, with such devastating economic and social consequences, in 1997-98.’ The 1997 Asian crisis escalated regional awareness of the need to build financial architecture in East Asia. This characterized the ASEAN+3 as a framework for dealing with financial and monetary cooperation. In particular, resentment against the US on dealing with the crisis promoted monetary cooperation among ASEAN+3 members (Webber 2001: 358-9; Higgott 1998; Bergsten 2000). Dieter and Higgott (2002: 2) argue that ‘ “[t]he East Asian” region will become an increasingly important domain within which to explore protection against financial crises and what we might call “monetary regionalism” is now firmly on the regional agenda.’ The 2000 Chiang Mai Initiative is a concrete agreement and an important ‘institution’ for describing ASEAN+3 as a framework for promoting financial and monetary cooperation. However, this ‘institution’ reflects the direction and nature of the ASEAN+3 framework as being a result of consultation and negotiation among members who faced external events such as the Asian crisis. ‘Institutions’ that are the focus of this approach, do not explain development of the characteristics of ASEAN+3.

These two approaches describe basic institutional aspects of the ASEAN+3 framework but do not explain how institutions affect development of the direction and nature of the ASEAN+3 framework. Rather, they imply that non-institutional factors affect development of characteristics of ASEAN+3. Terada (2004: 271-72) and Webber (2001; 361-4) argue that Japan and China could exercise joint leadership to affect the

direction and nature of the ASEAN+3. However, this article proposes that institutions are still important as factors that affect the development of characteristics in the ASEAN+3 framework. The ASEAN+3 framework lacks organizational settings. Therefore, most approaches do not go beyond the conclusion that ASEAN+3 has no organizational settings. Internal organs in international organizations function to manage and organize meetings among the members. As long as there are meetings regularized in the ASEAN+3 framework, it is possible to find institutions with an organizational element to manage and organize these meetings. The concept of ‘Chairmanship’, introduced in this article, contains an organizational element that is an alternative to internal organs or other functional institutional settings. This analytical concept also has a meaningful implication for arguments regarding leadership described above in that the chair plays the role of ‘institutionalized leadership.’

### **Chairmanship as an analytical concept**

This article introduces the ‘Chairmanship’ as an analytical tool for determining how institutions affect the direction and nature of multilateral frameworks. ‘Chairmanship’ is defined as an institution in which the chair plays an important role in organizing multilateral frameworks through preparation of meetings. The chair is not assumed by a specific person but by one of the member states of the multilateral framework.

‘Chairmanship’ has three characteristics in affecting the direction and nature of multilateral frameworks. First, the role of the chair primarily consists of inviting new members, setting agendas, building consensus, and drafting joint statements. Second,

since the chair is assumed by one of the framework members, it is likely that the country holding the chair will attempt to promote its own national interests by taking advantage of the position. The chairing member state is also strongly affected by its own domestic institutions and divergent interests as well as relations with other members.

Third, the 'Chairmanship' is an informal institution developed with the mutual understanding of the members of the multilateral framework. The chair is usually a host country that provides the place for a meeting. The chair to follow will often be mentioned as the next host country in official documents such as joint statements released after meetings. These documents usually state the date, the place, and the name of the member state chairing the next meeting. However, official documents do not give specific details regarding what roles or functions the chair is expected to play in preparing for meetings. It is assumed in this article that the role of the chair has gradually been identified as the member state that takes charge of the chair by turn. The rotating chair thus attempts to invite new members, set agendas, and build consensus through the trial and error process of preparing meetings. These repeated behaviors construct roles of the chair as rules shared among members.

This analytical framework is supported by studies on the roles of chairs in several multilateral frameworks. As examples of regional multilateral frameworks, the European Community (now the EU) has an institution called the 'Presidency', and this role rotates among members every six months (Kichner 1992; O'Nuallain and Hoscheit 1985). The EU Presidency is mentioned in EU treaties. However, it is only stated that 'the office of the presidency shall be held in turn by members and it shall convene "meetings"' (Schout 1998: 3). Although the General Secretariat of the Council in EU

has released a *Presidency Handbook* (Council Secretariat 2001), it only explains the role of Presidency in broad terms and leaves different interpretations the role of this position. Tallberg (2003) introduced the idea of agenda-shaping powers of the EU Council presidency, arguing that agenda-shaping has three forms: agenda-setting, agenda-structuring and agenda exclusion. Elgström (ed. 2003: 1-2) correctly recognizes that having the EU presidency is seen as the opportunity to advance particular national interests, so the ways in which member states approach their presidency periods are diverse. The chair in APEC rotates each year, and the order of this rotation has not been fixed. *The Seoul Declaration* stated that '[p]articipants who wish to host ministerial meetings will have the opportunity to do so, with the host in each case providing the chairman of the meeting and [t]he senior officials' meeting will be chaired by a representative of the host of the subsequent annual ministerial meeting, and will make necessary preparations for that meeting' (APEC 1991). By 1998, ASEAN and non-ASEAN members took turns every other year. In 1998, however, it was decided that China and Mexico would chair the 2001 and 2002 meetings respectively (APEC 1998). As global frameworks, the G7 Summit (now G8 Summit) also has a Chairmanship in which the chair position rotates every year (Putnam and Bayne 1987). The chair position of the G8 summit is partly recognized in official statements that mention the name of the member state that will be the host or the chair of the next meeting<sup>2</sup>. It is argued that the chairs of APEC and the G8 summit play the roles of inviting new members, setting agendas, and building consensus (Suzuki 2003a).

As seen in these multilateral frameworks, official documents do not expressly indicate that the presidency and the chair have crucial roles such as setting agendas or building consensus. Identifying what kinds of roles the chair has depends on how

member states recognize the roles of this position. What is perhaps most important is whether or not the Chairmanship is institutionalized in an appropriate institutional environment that enables the chair to conduct its roles. The EU has several institutional settings including supranational ones such as the EU Commission. In many conventional issues, the EU Commission is given the right to propose and initiate EU policies. Therefore, it can be argued that the EU Commission takes part in setting the agendas for EU meetings. The UN Security Council has its Presidency selected on a nation-basis. However, the role of inviting new members, setting agendas, and drafting statements is mainly given to the UN Secretary-General (Davidson 1981). Rules and procedures in preparation of meetings in these international organizations are also made legal by their founding treaties. The presidency in these frameworks has only a limited role in preparing meetings. On the other hand, loose frameworks such as ASEAN+3 do not have such an organizational capacity. Instead, it can be argued that the Chairmanship provides a suitable analytical scheme for a loose multilateral framework. It also demonstrates that even loose multilateral frameworks have institutions that affect their characteristics.

### **The Chairmanship in ASEAN+3**

Apparently, ASEAN+3 has no organizational capacity. However, there has been a discussion among ASEAN members regarding this matter in response to Malaysia's proposal to set up a secretariat within the ASEAN+3 framework. In 2001, the press statement of the seventh ASEAN summit and the fifth ASEAN+3 summit indicated that

‘a proposal was made to establish an ASEAN+3 secretariat’ (ASEAN and ASEAN+3 2001). At the thirty-fifth ASEAM Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Brunei in July 2002, Malaysia was willing to offer seed funding of 10 million US dollars to cover the first five years of the secretariat’s operations (*New Strait Times*, 27 July 2002). Senior officials of the other ASEAN members expressed reservations about Malaysia’s proposal, insisting that they preferred to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat in order to promote cooperation in ASEAN+3<sup>3</sup>. ASEAN foreign ministers at the thirty-fifth AMM only concluded that ‘[w]e resolved to further strengthen the ASEAN+3 cooperation. In this context, we noted the need to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta and Malaysia’s offer to host the ASEAN+3 Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur’ (AMM 2002). During the thirty-fifth AMM, senior officials discussed three options: (1) Malaysia’s proposal to set up a new secretariat, (2) expansion of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta and (3) establishment of an ASEAN+3 bureau within the ASEAN Secretariat (*New Strait Times*, 27 July 2002). The second option means that the existing mechanism of the ASEAN Secretariat would be maintained without changing its organizational structure.

Cooperation in the ASEAN+3 framework has been dealt with by the External Relations and Coordination Bureau of the ASEAN Secretariat. Responding to discussion on the possibility of establishing an ASEAN+3 secretariat, the ASEAN Secretariat showed its support for setting up an ASEAN+3 Unit within the External Relations and Coordination Bureau of the ASEAN Secretariat. Setting up an ASEAN+3 Unit is more feasible than establishing an ASEAN+3 Bureau as another new bureau in terms of staff and budget constraints of the ASEAN Secretariat.<sup>4</sup> In the thirty-seventh AMM, ASEAN members announced in its joint statement that ‘[w]e welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN+3 Unit within the ASEAN Secretariat, which will assist

the ASEAN Chair in coordinating ASEAN+3 cooperation' (AMM 2004). Clearly, an ASEAN+3 secretariat had not been set up as of 2004. This joint statement, however, reinforced the argument that the chair be given important roles for the preparation of meetings.

ASEAN+3 is composed of a summit and other ministerial meetings (Suzuki 2004: Annex). As its name indicates, the ASEAN+3 Chairmanship is institutionally supported by the ASEAN Chairmanship. In other words, The ASEAN chair hosts ASEAN+3 meetings<sup>5</sup>. Accordingly, ASEAN+3 has a unique Chairmanship that only allows ASEAN members to assume its chair. In the ASEAN Chairmanship, the chair rotates in an alphabetical order each year. *The Bangkok Declaration* (ASEAN 1967) describes the '[a]nnual Meeting of Foreign Ministers, which shall be by rotation and referred to as ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. A Standing committee, under the chairmanship of the Foreign Minister of the host country or his representative and having as its members the accredited Ambassadors of the other member countries, to carry on the work of the Association in between Meetings of Foreign Ministers.' It can be argued that ASEAN+3 is regarded as one of the frameworks of ASEAN because ASEAN member states dominate the seat of the chair at ASEAN+3 meetings. ASEAN members, in particular its founding member states, have had experience in the chair since 1967. Japan, China and Korea, on the other hand, have no opportunity to assume the chair in any ASEAN+3 meeting. However, this rule may change in the future as in 2002, ASEAN+3 members began discussing how the three non-ASEAN members could be more actively involved in ASEAN+3 cooperation. There is a distinct possibility that Japan, China and Korea may assume the chair in future ASEAN+3 meetings.

The rotation of the ASEAN Chairmanship is based on an alphabetical rule. However,

due to the fact that each meeting was regularized in a different year, the same member state does not always chair all ASEAN meetings that are held in the same year. For example, in 1998, the chair of the ASEAN summit was Vietnam, and the Philippines was the chair of the AMM and ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting (AEM). The ASEAN+3 summit is a particularly important decision making body that determines the direction and nature of the ASEAN+3 framework. This fact relates to the historical development of ASEAN+3, a development that started at the summit level. This is in contrast to APEC and ASEAN where ministerial meetings were held first, and summits followed. In order to analyze how the chair works in determining the direction and nature of the ASEAN+3 framework, this article is particularly concerned with the ASEAN+3 summit and its chair<sup>6</sup>.

### **Work of the chair in ASEAN+3 summit**

The chairs of the ASEAN+3 summits in 1997, 1999 and 2000 are of particularly interest because these summits were turning points in development of the direction and nature of the ASEAN+3 framework.

In 1997, ASEAN invited Japan, China and Korea to its summit. This was the first ASEAN+3 summit, and Malaysia assumed the chair. The idea of inviting the three non-ASEAN countries to the ASEAN summit was proposed by Singapore at the 1995 ASEAN summit (Tanaka 2003: 283; Terada 2003: 262). In 1996, it was reported that ASEAN had considered the possibility of inviting the three countries (*Asahi Shimbun*, 22 July 1996). It was Mahathir Mohamad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia, who

realized this idea. As chair, he initiated an invitation for the three countries to attend the 1997 ASEAN summit.

Membership of ASEAN+3 has developed since Mahathir proposed the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) in December 1990. This group was renamed the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) after consultation among ASEAN members in 1991. Although the EAEG/EAEC has never been realized (primarily due to Japan's hesitation to support this proposal), ASEAN continued to discuss it in meetings from 1991 to 1997 (Suzuki 2004: 3-6; Terada 2003: 257-59). In October 1994, Singapore's Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, proposed an informal Europe-East Asia summit during his visit to France. This led to the founding of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996 (*Strait Times*, 22 October 1994). In preparation for the ASEM summit in Bangkok in March 1996, ASEAN members along with Japan, China and Korea held several ministerial meetings (Suzuki 2004: 3-6)<sup>7</sup>. During this process, Japan requested that Australia and New Zealand be included in ASEM, but Malaysia strongly rejected Japan's request on the grounds that Australia and New Zealand did not share Asian values (*Strait Times*, 24 July 1995)<sup>8</sup>. Malaysia blocked membership of these two countries in ASEM.

Throughout its participation in ASEM, Japan showed its interest in meeting with other East Asian countries (Suzuki 2004: 3-6). However, Japan's main priority appeared to be on the strengthening of the ASEAN-Japan relationship. In January 1997, then Prime Minister of Japan Hashimoto proposed an annual ASEAN-Japan summit (Terada 2003: 267). In response to Japan's proposal, Malaysia proposed a counterplan to have a summit among ASEAN members, and Japan, China and Korea (Tanaka 2003: 284). Mahathir also stated that China should be included when Japan was invited to the ASEAN summit, suggesting that it was better to have an amicable policy towards China

rather than to contaminate it (*Business Times*, 15 January 1997). As the same time, Malaysia proposed a compromise that the ASEAN-Japan summit be held after the ASEAN+3 summit in 1997 (Tanaka 2003 : 284). The ASEAN-Japan, ASEAN-China, and the ASEAN-Korea summit produced three separate joint statements rather than one statement at the ASEAN+3 summit level (ASEAN-Japan 1997; ASEAN-China 1997; ASEAN-ROK 1997). Malaysia initiated the idea of making an ASEAN+1 channel within the ASEAN+3 framework. However, Mahathir regarded the ASEAN+3 summit as the most important and suggested regularize it. His proposal was not accepted at the first summit in 1997 due to negative responses from Japan and China (*Asahi Shimbun*, 17 December 1997), but it did lead to holding the second summit. Without official agreement on regularizing summits, a second summit was held, and mutual recognition of regularization of summits was promoted among ASEAN+3 members (Tanaka 2003: 287-88). The 1998 summit chair was Vietnam. However, Vietnam did not initiate any proposals or seek to set an agenda for the ASEAN+3 summit. Vietnam had had no experience chairing the ASEAN meetings since it joined ASEAN in 1995. It was assumed that Vietnam could not conduct the role of the chair since it was still in the process of learning how to chair the meetings.

The 1999 ASEAN+3 summit witnessed the first joint statement at the ASEAN+3 level. The leaders of the ASEAN+3 members released a document entitled *Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation* (ASEAN+3 1999). The Philippines, who assumed the summit chair that year, proposed that the leaders should release the first joint document as the result of the summit (*Mainichi Shimbun (evening)*, 17 November 1999). The Philippines also proposed that an 'East Asia Security Forum' be established to turn the ASEAN+3 into a framework dealing with security and political matters (Baja 2000;

Layador 2000: 441-42; Nabers 2003: 125). This proposal was related to a territorial dispute in South China Sea between the Philippines and China. The Philippines attempted to bring China into a multilateral forum for discussion of security matters. It also attempted to draft a 'code of conduct' which would regularize behaviors of the relevant members on the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. ASEAN members and China could not agree on this draft due to China's refusal to accept it (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 23 November 1999; *Mainichi Shimbun*, 25 November 1999; *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 25 November 1999). The Philippines insisted on inserting an agreement to establish the East Asia Security Forum in the joint statement it proposed to announce at the 1999 ASEAN+3 summit (*Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun*, 10 October 1999). However, other members did not support the Philippines' proposals because they were less enthusiastic about establishing a new forum with specific functions. Further, most members were satisfied with the ASEAN Regional Forum which was established in 1994 to discuss security matters (*Asahi Shimbun*, 13 November 1999). For these reasons, leaders agreed not to establish such a security forum but instead agreed to strengthen cooperation in both security and political fields (*Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun*, 25, 29 November 1999). The joint statement included not only economic and social issues but also political and security fields as areas for cooperation. The proposal of the Philippines to set up a security forum did not materialize, but it played a driving force in developing the character of the ASEAN+3 framework as a forum for dealing with security issues. Such was legitimized by the first joint statement.

The 2000 summit was outstanding in that two proposals were made. First, Malaysia proposed to replace the ASEAN+3 summit with an East Asia summit.<sup>9</sup> Second, Thailand proposed that a free trade agreement (FTA) among ASEAN+3 members be

established (*Bangkok Post*, 26 November 2000). Goh Chok Tong, the 2000 summit chair, referred to these two big ideas by saying that ‘as chairman, I put them together, so you can say it came from me’ (*Strait Times*, 25 November 2000). He proposed to study these two ideas in the East Asia Study Group (EASG) that had been proposed by Korea (MOFA 2000; *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 25 November 2000; *Asahi Shimbun*, 25, 26 November 2000). Indonesia showed its dissatisfaction with the Singapore chair’s attempt to set agendas and build consensus. Abdurrahman Wahid, then President of Indonesia, accused Singapore of mismanagement of the summit and argued that Singapore was attempting to strengthen relations among East Asian nations in order to satisfy its own national interests (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 27 November 2000; *Asahi Shimbun*, 28 November 2000). Nonetheless, taking advantage of being chair, Singapore succeeded in placing two important proposals on the agenda of the 2000 ASEAN+3 summit. Singapore thus achieved a milestone, and ASEAN+3 began to deal with the above proposals.

Related to its national interest, Singapore welcomed further discussion on pursuing FTAs in East Asia. Since the end of 1999, Singapore has been a leading member in ASEAN in terms of signing bilateral FTAs. It signed FTAs with New Zealand, Australia and the United States. In East Asia, Singapore signed the Japan-Singapore Economic Partnership Agreement (JSEPA) in 2002.<sup>10</sup> At the 2002 ASEAN-China summit, ASEAN members and China agreed to establish an ASEAN-China FTA within ten years. This included the provision for an early harvest in which tariffs on mainly agricultural products would be removed (ASEAN-China 2002). During negotiations of the ASEAN-China FTA, Thailand and China decided to remove tariffs on 188 agricultural products, and this was completed in October 2003 (*Asahi Shimbun*, 21 August 2003).

This agreement was not a bilateral FTA, but a bilateral free trade deal of tariff reduction on several products. It was implemented earlier than deals between China and the other ASEAN members. Singapore also expressed interest in expediting a bilateral deal with China before realization of the ASEAN-China FTA (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 14 November 2003). In late 2003, Goh Chok Tong urged that China and Japan should seriously consider establishing a bilateral FTA between the two countries in order to speed up the process of creating an ASEAN+3 FTA (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 2 December 2003). From 1999 to 2000, there was a controversy concerning the relationship between the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and bilateral FTAs pursued by some ASEAN member states, in particular Singapore and Thailand. Malaysia expressed concern about the two members' attitude towards bilateral FTAs and insisted that ASEAN members focus on implementation of the AFTA (Suzuki 2003b: 297-301). Malaysia later began to react positively toward establishing FTAs with non-ASEAN countries. Although ASEAN members did not reach substantial consensus on this matter, they recognized that pursuing FTAs was a necessary strategy. Singapore led discussion on FTAs to help the ASEAN members reach consensus on such mutual recognition (Low 2003: 121-23). Since 2000, ASEAN+3 members have discussed the possibility of developing its FTA as an East Asia Free Trade Area (EAFTA). This was suggested by two reports of the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) and the EASG (EAVG 2001; EASG 2002). The 2003 ASEAN+3 economic ministers expressed the shared view that 'the establishment of EAFTA shall be a long-term goal which shall be evolutionary and step-by-step' (AEM+3 2003).

As for the idea that the ASEAN+3 summit should be replaced by an East Asia summit, Goh Chok Tong stated that ASEAN invited Japan, China, and Korea as its guests and

therefore hoped that ASEAN members would be invited by the three non-ASEAN members in the future (*Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun*, 25 November 2000). In this statement, he admitted the possibility for Japan, China and Korea to assume the role of chair at ASEAN+3 summits. Although the proposal to establish an East Asia summit came from Malaysia, the idea had been cultivated since Goh Chok Tong proposed an informal Europe-East Asia summit during his visit to France in October 1994. The proposal of an East Asia summit was mentioned in the 2000 report of the EAVG that had been established in 1999. In this report, it was suggested that the ASEAN+3 summit should be replaced by the East Asia Summit (EAS) (EAVG 2001). The 2000 ASEAN+3 summit witnessed establishment of the EASG, and the EASG submitted its report to the 2001 ASEAN+3 summit. In the EASG report, Singapore and Japan were leading countries promoting the concept of an EAS (EASG 2002: 8). The report suggested that it is necessary for developing an EAS to give greater ownership to China, Japan and Korea (EASG 2002: 59). As Goh Chok Tong admitted in 2000, this indicated that Japan, China and Korea should take charge of the chair of ASEAN+3 or some East Asia summit in the future (interview with an official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan on 16 March 2004). At the same time, the EASG report further expressed concerns of ASEAN members that ASEAN might be marginalized. It pointed out that ‘there is also a general feeling that evolution of an EAS should proceed in a gradual and balanced way, and a building-block approach is the best way forward’ (EASG 2002; 5, 59)<sup>11</sup>. In the ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in 2004, it was agreed that an EAS be held ‘at an appropriate time’ (AMM+3 2004). At this meeting, China showed its interest in holding an EAS in 2006. In response to this, Malaysia, the 2005 ASEAN and ASEAN+3 summit chair, showed its willingness to make the 2005 ASEAN+3 summit the first EAS

(*Asahi Shimbun*, 30 June 2004)<sup>12</sup>. It remains to be seen whether or not an EAS will be realized and if its realization will not marginalize ASEAN.

The 2001 ASEAN+3 summit chair, Brunei did not actively initiate any proposal or mediate conflicting interests among members. However, the 2001 summit chaired by Brunei provided an interesting example demonstrating how other members recognized the role of the chair. At this summit, Japan asked Brunei to draft a statement on anti-terrorism at the ASEAN+3 summit (*Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun*, 4 November 2001). The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US gave an incentive to Japan to show its position against terrorism in any meeting it might attend. However, Brunei, as the chair, did not respond positively to Japan's request due to negative attitudes of ASEAN members and China (*Tokyo Yomiuri Shimbun*, 4, 8 November 2001). Before the ASEAN+3 summit, ASEAN announced *ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism* at its own summit (ASEAN 2001). It therefore did not feel the necessity to announce one at the ASEAN+3 summit. China also succeeded in chairing the 2001 APEC summit in Shanghai that announced a similar statement against terrorism (APEC 2001). China was thus satisfied with its own initiative in APEC and did not support Japan's request, perhaps feeling that it might undervalue the APEC declaration on anti-terrorism. Brunei, taking these members into account, decided as the chair not to draft a statement on anti-terrorism. As a result, Japan's request was not accepted and there were no statements on terrorism at the ASEAN+3 summit. Nevertheless, Japan's attitude towards the chair implies development of mutual recognition among the members that the chair plays a significant role in drafting joint statements.

Behavior of the chairs in preparation and management of the summits in 1997, 1999 and 2000 indicates that the chair has the role of inviting states as new members, setting

the agenda, and building consensus. It is necessary, however, to investigate how the Chairmanship is institutionalized. As described earlier, the Chairmanship is an informal institution and its institutionalization is determined by mutual recognition and understanding of the role of the chair by members. The chair of ASEAN+3 meetings is also the current chair of ASEAN. The founding members of ASEAN have had experiences chairing meetings, but new member states have not. This explains the fact that Malaysia, the 'first' ASEAN+3 summit chair, could succeed to some extent in chairing the summit. Since it joined ASEAN in 1997, Laos, the 2004 ASEAN and ASEAN+3 summit chair, has never had experience with chairing a meeting. In 2003, Laos sent its senior officials to Malaysia to learn how to prepare and manage the 2004 summits (*New Strait Times*, 26 July 2003).

This kind of interaction at the senior official level between old and new ASEAN members is important for institutionalizing the Chairmanship. All member states share the rule of behavior for the chair not only in ASEAN but also in the ASEAN+3 framework. As discussed, the ASEAN+3 members look forward to future development of the ASEAN+3 framework with the active involvement of Japan, China and Korea in that the three members will probably chair ASEAN+3 meetings. By so doing, ASEAN+3 Chairmanship would give the member states an institutional setting that enables them to take part equally and actively in forming the character of the ASEAN+3 framework.

## **Conclusion**

The ASEAN+3 framework is regarded as a loose cooperative framework that focuses on regularizing meetings. However, this characteristic provides little motivation to analyze the direction and nature of the ASEAN+3 framework with its institutional aspects. Chairmanship is an analytical scheme that aids in understanding characteristics of the ASEAN+3 framework. Among multilateral frameworks, this institutional analytical scheme is particularly important for understanding loose frameworks such as ASEAN+3. This is due to the basic character of ASEAN+3 that is based on regularized meetings without any organizational entity that is in charge of preparing meetings.

As analyzed in this article, the ASEAN+3 summit chair has a role in preparing the summit. The performance and work of the chair varies with each member state, because each chair has different strategies for how to take advantage of having the position. Malaysia attempted to invite Japan, China and Korea to the ASEAN summit under Mahathir's EAEG/EAEC proposal. However, the invitation took a complicated form that involved holding both ASEAN+1 (Japan, China and Korea) summits individually as well as an ASEAN+3 summit. The Philippines initiated discussion on security issues at the 1999 summit through setting the agenda and drafting the first joint statement. Its role as the chair was consistent with its national interest involving territorial disputes with China. Singapore played an agenda-setting role as the chair when it sought to use the ASEAN+3 framework to pursue FTAs and discuss future institutional plans such as development of an EAS. Brunei was required to draft a joint statement on anti-terrorism although it was not doing this in its role as chair. Despite the fact that each chair achieved different results in its preparation and management of the summit, it can be

argued that the chair has the specific roles of inviting of new members, setting agendas, building consensus among members, and drafting documents. Methods used to analyze the institutionalization of the Chairmanship need to be discussed further, but the present study of this institution indicates that members share certain rules of behaviors on the preparation of meetings. The future development of ASEAN+3 that includes giving Japan, China and Korea opportunities to chair the meetings is now under discussion. Realization of this strengthens the argument that the Chairmanship is an important institutional setting that enables members to be actively and equally involved in forming the direction and nature of multilateral frameworks.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade is a typical example of an international trade regime that is not easily distinguished from international laws (see Finlayson and Zacher 1983). Kahler (2001) argues that the dispute settlement mechanism of ASEAN has been legalized whereas the one of APEC has not. This difference depends on strategic institutional choices taken by members in each framework.

<sup>2</sup> For information on the G8 meetings, refer to (<http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/>). Last accessed on 19 September 2004.

<sup>3</sup> For the Thai position, see (*New Strait Times*, 27, 29 July 2002). The Singaporean and Indonesian positions were confirmed by interviews the author conducted with relevant officials in October 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Interviews by the author with officials in the ASEAN Secretariat in October 2003. The existing bureaus in the ASEAN Secretariat are for (1) Economic Integration, (2) Finance and Integration Support, (3) Resources Development and (4) External Relations and Coordination.

(<http://www.aseansec.org/13106.htm>). Last accessed on 4 March 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Places where meetings are held are usually in the chairing member, but meetings of finance ministers are often held during plenary assemblies of the Asia Development Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Suzuki 2004: Annex). In these cases, the hosting country, who offers the place for meetings, is not the same as the one who assumes the chair. The chairs, even in these cases, are assumed by ASEAN members in turn. Other ASEAN+3 ministerial meetings tend to be held after relevant ASEAN ministerial meetings.

<sup>6</sup> The ASEAN summit chairs from 1997 onwards were Malaysia (1997), Vietnam (1998), the Philippines (1999), Singapore (2000), Brunei (2001), Cambodia (2003), Indonesia (2003) and Laos (2004).

<sup>7</sup> Several approaches show that ASEM was a turning point in determining the membership of the ASEAN+3 framework (Stubbs 2002: 441–3; Rüländ 2000: 432–3; Dieter and Higgott 2002: 32–3; Yeo Lay Hwee 2000; Webber 2001: 356–9; Tanaka 2003: 279–82).

<sup>8</sup> Malaysia was not happy with Australia's efforts in arranging for APEC. Australia rebuked Malaysia for its absence in the first APEC summit in Seattle in 1993 (Milne and Mauzy 1999: 140-1).

<sup>9</sup> Mahathir stated that '[w]e need to formalize the grouping and call it something' and further that 'there would be a need to define the meaning of East Asia as many countries might want to claim to be East Asian' (*New Strait Times*, 25 November 2000).

<sup>10</sup> For further information on the JSEPA, see Ogita (2003).

<sup>11</sup> Malaysia is eager to accelerate realization of an EAS and play an active role in this matter. It held the first East Asia Congress on 4-6 August 4–6 2003. On this occasion, Mahathir 'called on East Asian countries to openly say they want to have an East Asian economic grouping and stop hiding behind the label of the ASEAN Plus 3' (*New Strait Times*, 5 August 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Japan submitted a discussion paper on how to realize an EAS in the ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2004 (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2 July 2004).

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