Since the ASEAN + 3 process involving the 10 members of ASEAN plus Japan, South Korea and China began in 1997, growing regional economic links have had spillover effects on security co-operation, writes Fudan University Professor Wu Xinbo. Prompted by the changing security climate after the Sept. 11 attacks in the US, co-operation, especially on non-traditional security issues, has gradually reshaped East Asian ties.

This essay looks at the ASEAN + 3 process to illuminate the effects of economic regionalism on security in East Asia, which is broadly defined to include non-traditional security issues. I not only describe some of the major aspects of this process, but also offer an interpretation that draws on the insights of neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism.

**Spillover into Security Issues**

Security co-operation was not designed into the ASEAN + 3 process, but was a byproduct of it as a result of external events. Just as the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis served as a catalyst for greater East Asian economic co-operation, a series of non-traditional security crises in the early 21st century triggered the spillover of co-operation from the economic to the security realm.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks heightened the urgency of regional co-operation in dealing with non-traditional security challenges such as al-Qaeda. As a result, the first ASEAN + 3 Senior Officials’ Consultation on Transnational Crime was held in June 2003 in Hanoi, and subsequently became an annual gathering for senior law enforcement officials to exchange views on combating transnational crime in the region. In January 2004, the first “10+3” Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime was held in Bangkok, which endorsed co-operation in eight areas: terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, money laundering, arms smuggling, sea piracy, international economic crime and cyber crime. Subsequently, a Work Plan to Combat Transnational Crime was developed and endorsed for implementation. In addition to the annual consultations on crime, the ministerial meeting became a biennial gathering for ministers of public security, interior and internal security to discuss combating transnational crime in East Asia.

The decision by the 10 countries of ASEAN plus China, South Korea and Japan to begin collaborating on health-related issues was also event-driven, namely by the outbreak of SARS in China in the spring of 2003. Since then, two regional mechanisms have been established: the ASEAN + 3 Senior Officials Meeting on Health and ASEAN + 3 Health Ministers Meeting. These meetings are intended to promote collaborative responses to various health-related challenges, especially those concerning aging populations, emerging infectious diseases and the impact of globalization and trade liberalization on health. Specifically, the ASEAN + 3 countries have set up two frameworks on health co-operation, one on emerging infectious diseases and the other on traditional and complementary medicine. Within these frameworks, the participants have proposed concrete plans for action.

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami prompted the same countries to work together on disaster relief. In 2007, the first ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting was held to explore possible areas of regional co-operation, such as training programs and information sharing. This became an annual gathering of senior officials from the 13 East Asian countries to discuss co-operation in the management of natural disasters. In addition, other initiatives have been adopted to promote regional co-operation in disaster relief.

As demonstrated by co-operation on non-traditional security matters, the path from economic to security co-operation lies in nurturing the habits of co-operation, cultivating consciousness and an interest in extending co-operation into political and security realms, as well as providing institutional platforms for security co-operation. The spillover effect took place conceptually at the third ASEAN + 3 summit in Manila in 1999, which released a joint statement calling for continued dialogue, coordination and co-operation on political-security issues so as to increase mutual understanding and trust and to strengthen co-operation in addressing common transnational concerns. In reality, the spillover effect did not occur until after the September 11 terrorist attacks, which gave rise to the need for co-operation in non-traditional security areas. As the need for security co-operation rises, existing economic co-operation mechanisms can provide a venue to facilitate such a process.

**Shaping Norms**

The East Asian co-operation process is known for its regular and frequent meetings at various levels (summit, senior official, working), and socialization occurs within these institutionalized interactions of policymakers and elites. From the constructivist perspective, social interactions can not only shape identities and norms but also affect the way a country defines and pursues its national interests. In East Asia this process has given rise to a regional consciousness and a willingness to cooperate on security affairs. It has also helped develop common security norms and shaped security behavior.

In the case of East Asia, economic co-operation contributed to a regional consciousness among participating countries and spurred their community-building efforts. The vision of forming an East Asian community was endorsed by the sixth ASEAN + 3 summit in November 2002. Subsequently, the Second Joint Statement on East Asian Co-operation, released in November 2007, reaffirmed the long-term goal of building...
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The terror attacks in the US on September 11, 2001, the worldwide panic in 2003 over an outbreak of respiratory disease SARS and the catastrophic destruction of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami each contributed to a growing understanding in East Asia as elsewhere of the need for co-operation in an unpredictable world.

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ALTERING SECURITY DYNAMICS
The development of economic regionalism has altered East Asian security dynamics in a number of ways. First, institutionalized economic co-operation has helped to build trust and reduce suspicion, thus improving the regional security atmosphere. Second, economic regionalism has helped to form common security interests. With countries placing economic growth and co-operation at the top of their national agendas, a common interest emerges in securing and maintaining a stable environment in which economic gains are possible. This shared interest grows with the deepening of economic co-operation, resulting in pacific effects on the security policies of all member states. Third, economic regionalism facilitates co-operation and exchanges in traditional political-security fields. For example, multilateral and bilateral military and defense exchanges in East Asia have increased in frequency in recent years. The impact of economic regionalism on security is reflected not only at the national, but also at the international level. Interactions have taken on a weightier role in security calculations, leading to an East Asia that is becoming increasingly self-reliant in matters of security. This trend is gradually reducing the degree to which individual countries rely on the United States for security and reducing the role of the US as the ultimate guarantor of security in East Asia. In the long term, this trend will give rise to a new security architecture in East Asia in which relations among countries within the region will play a more central role in security arrangements.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS
The recent history of ASEAN + 3 summarized above largely conforms to the logic of both neoliberalism and social constructivism. Economic regionalism has contributed to greater security regionalism by promoting and facilitating security co-operation, shaping identity and norms, enhancing socialization, improving mutual understanding and trust, and expanding security links in the region. It is also apparent that in East Asia, the most tangible spillover effect of economic regionalism has been in the realm of non-traditional security matters, while co-operation on traditional security matters remains under-developed and less substantive. Given the short history of East Asian economic regionalism, it is understandable that its spillover effect in regional security has not yet fully materialized. Skeptics who tend to see the glass as half empty will emphasize the lack of progress as half full will emphasize the lack of progress. Those with a more positive perspective may celebrate how much already has been achieved through East Asian regional co-operation.

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