

BOOK REVIEW

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To exploit or to be exploited? The specter of Marxism has been haunting the study of political economy since the capitalist mode of production expanded worldwide. The class differences created by the division of production not only force workers to rely on capitalists but also make peripheral countries dependent on core countries. The critical problem is that “unequal exchanges” solidify the gap between the rich and the poor, making development a nonlinear process. Real-world cases provide more information about the difficulties in development. Colonizers’ destruction of the original social system trapped many Asian and African countries in restoring sovereignty and enhancing internal cohesion. Most developing countries cannot acclimatize themselves to immature democratic systems, resulting in inefficient governance and thwarting long-term economic development. Even Latin American countries in the “Backyard of the US” have been stuck in the middle-income trap after a short golden period of development. In the postcolonial era, newly independent countries struggled to eliminate their dependency upon the capitalist core. Nevertheless, with the rise of economic globalization, developing countries are in desperate need of the capital, markets, and technologies of the developed ones. Except for a few countries such as China, most newly independent countries have not overcome such a “dilemma” and are still locked in the periphery of the world system.

The above development predicament is what *Peripheral Development Theory* is all about. Taking world-systems theory as its analytical framework, this monograph is devoted to explaining the unique development process of Southeast Asian countries. A core question Wang Zhengyi would like an answer to is: Why does Southeast Asian countries’ dependency upon big powers persist after gaining independence?

Before proposing any explanation, we must first acquaint ourselves with the theoretical pillar of this book, which treats regional development as a matter of geography



and history. The structural characteristics of geography determine Southeast Asian countries' long-term position on the fringes of the world system, marking the starting point of regional history. Before the Age of Discovery, Southeast Asia was geographically isolated from other regional systems by virtue of its natural environment, with water surrounding it on three sides. The area's association with the Chinese Empire in the north was peripheral, maintained on the margin of Chinese civilization through the "tributary system." Later, in the sixteenth century, European predators successively colonized Southeast Asian countries due to the area's significant trade routes and abundant natural resources. This led to the incorporation of Southeast Asian countries into the capitalist production system worldwide, pinning those countries on the periphery of the Western European world system.

Correspondingly, the historical process shaped by the game of the great powers persistently influenced the geopolitical characteristics of Southeast Asia. On the one hand, although the colonial system was dismantled after World War II, Southeast Asian countries were still deeply involved in the confrontation between the capitalist and anti-capitalist world systems. This ultimately resulted in the sharp divergence in ideology and development paths among Southeast Asian countries. On the other hand, the rising tide of regionalism in the post-Cold War era spurred Southeast Asian countries to resolve their conflicts with each other and participate in world politics in a coordinated manner. Wang posits that development is not a matter of any single country. It is necessary to take geographical and historical structures and the actions of both neighboring countries and external powers into consideration to understand the development strategies and dilemmas of Southeast Asian countries.

Immanuel Wallerstein's discussion of the "world periphery" is not only a manifestation of Eurocentrism but also a realistic depiction of peripheral countries' dependency upon the core—politically, economically, and socioculturally. In his book, Wang discusses how changes in the geography and history of Southeast Asia before and after World War II continue to affect Southeast Asian countries' development in the above three aspects.

At the domestic level, the long colonial history has had a far-reaching influence on the socioeconomic development of the countries of the region. European colonists treated those countries as trade ports on their way to East Asia and as suppliers of raw materials to Europe, promoting the development of coastal areas and the cultivation of specific cash crops such as coffee beans. Consequently, Southeast Asian countries generally faced two economic problems after gaining independence. One was the imbalanced development between coastal and inland areas. The other was the imbalanced industrial structure in which the self-sufficient agricultural sector dominated domestic production, while the development of manufacturing industry, symbolizing industrialization and modernization, lagged. Capital and technology were so scarce than labor in most post-independence countries that Southeast Asian economies all initially chose to develop labor-intensive industries. To compensate for the lack of capital, countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia joined the capitalist camp to obtain loans and investments from and exported primary products to European countries, further maintaining their dependence upon the capitalist core. In contrast, the four Indochina Peninsula countries were relatively backward in promoting development due to their closed, centrally

planned economies. Nevertheless, Indochinese countries' active political participation in the anti-capitalist world system inferred their dependency on the Soviet Union.

The legacy of the colonial economy further affected the social development of Southeast Asian countries after independence. As most native Southeast Asian people were engaged in farming, the vacancy of merchants caused by the colonial trade boom was filled with a significant number of Chinese and Indian expatriates. Mass immigration not only changed the population structure of Southeast Asian countries but also contributed to severe economic inequality among ethnic groups due to the division of labor between indigenous people and immigrants. For instance, in newly independent Malaysia, the Chinese had been an already competitive clan against native Malays. The wealth advantage of ethnic Chinese aroused anti-Chinese sentiments among Malays, bringing about a series of violent conflicts and the introduction of discriminatory ethnic policies. These controversial events were just a microcosm of the broader social divisions across Southeast Asia. Extensive conflicts between the indigenous and new settlers over citizenship, language, and religious beliefs placed countless obstacles on the path to rebuilding the national cohesion of Southeast Asian countries.

The postcolonial domestic structure laid the foundation for the future development of Southeast Asian countries, but Wang extends his research perspective beyond the traditional unit of analysis – the nation-state. In this book, the Southeast Asian region is also investigated as a whole so that the political and economic interaction among countries constitutes the driving force of regional development and arouses tension in the process of regional integration. The first and foremost problem of newly independent nations is to restore their sovereignty. The borders delimited by the sphere of influence during the colonial period substituted for the original borders determined by nature, history, and ethnicity, triggering many border disputes among Southeast Asian countries after World War II. In addition, these countries had varied positions on the delimitation of territorial waters, continental shelves, and exclusive economic zones, extending disputes into the ocean for marine resources.

In adjusting the domestic industrial structure, although they all regarded foreign trade as the main force of development, Southeast Asian countries adopted different developmental strategies due to differences in resource endowment, previous roles in the colonial economy, and choices of the postindependence political system. Singapore and Brunei embraced a completely export-oriented economy. Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines pursued a mixture of internal- and external-oriented strategies with a focus on the export side. Countries that initially adopted import-substitution strategies, such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, also gradually transformed into export-oriented countries. With reference to the success of European integration, a large unified regional market could endow Southeast Asia as a whole with enhanced bargaining power in the global market to accelerate development. However, the heterogeneity in developmental strategies persuaded Southeast Asian countries to adopt beggar-thy-neighbor tariff policies. The intense competition for foreign capital further increased the difficulty in pursuing intraregional coordination and common development.

Furthermore, there were obstacles to reconstructing the social systems in Southeast Asia. The longstanding influence of the surrounding ancient civilizations of China and India, coupled with colonists' interventions, resulted in a multiethnic and multifaith

Southeast Asian society, with significant differences across countries. Unfortunately, national governments have generally turned to extreme ethnic policies to remedy the imbalanced economic structure. As a result, the rise of nationalist sentiments and ethnic conflicts tore apart the already fragile regional society and posed more challenges to constructing a “sociocultural community.”

When we treat Southeast Asia as a whole and an autarky, the complex political and economic structure generates a significant “centrifugal force” inside the region; however, when we place Southeast Asia in the worldwide geopolitical structure and historical process, there still exists a growing “centripetal force.” In the post-Cold War period, changes in the world system mainly occurred in the following three aspects. First, economic integration has expanded worldwide. The rapid growth of free trade, the significant increase in multinational corporations, and mounting foreign investment all make it easier for Southeast Asian countries to attain production factors, especially capital. Meanwhile, the domestic markets of developed countries have been more open to labor-intensive economies, making export-generated growth more feasible. The second change is the rise of regionalism. European integration has realized multifield cooperation under formal institutional arrangements, while Asian regionalization is characterized by openness, flexibility, and informal rules. Southeast Asian countries have been actively exploring closer cooperation and tighter integration to make the region a new pole in the multipolar international system. Third, American hegemony has been declining while China is on the rise. The war on terror and the subprime mortgage crisis have dragged the United States down from the altar of order and civilization, while reform and opening-up have unleashed China’s enormous potential to be an influential power. Playing important roles in both the US Asia–Pacific Rebalancing Strategy and China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the Southeast Asian area has once again been involved in disputes among different world systems. The shared concern for regional security and economic prosperity has united loosely organized Southeast Asian countries.

Let us return to the core question Wang raised: Why has Southeast Asian countries’ dependency upon big powers persisted after gaining independence? The colonial legacy in social and economic structures resulted in weak state capacities of Southeast Asian countries, making it difficult for them to achieve industrialization independently. Instead, during the Cold War, the bipolar international system provided a shortcut for newly independent countries to develop. The integrated market of the capitalist world system granted member countries access to loans, investment, and export markets. Such resources laid the foundation for the outward-leaning industrialization strategies of the six countries in the Malay Archipelago, guaranteeing their rapid development later. Although the relatively closed anti-capitalist world system did not provide countries on its side with vibrant market infrastructure, backward countries still obtained strategic and technical guidance on constructing their national economic systems and essential security assurances from leading countries such as the Soviet Union. Those anti-capitalist countries also joined the global market after the Cold War. In a nutshell, although Southeast Asian countries are no longer subordinate to external powers in the postcolonial period, they are still highly dependent on the capital, technologies, and export markets of developed countries for their own development. The capitalist mode of production and global economic integration have jointly preserved the economic

dependency of Southeast Asian countries upon the world core. In the post-Cold War era, through the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Southeast Asian countries have united to participate in the world market and international politics.

II

The birth of ASEAN, a regional community, has made possible an integrated regional market and strategic coordination among Southeast Asian countries. The second question Wang would like to explore is: Can ASEAN terminate the longstanding dependency of Southeast Asian countries upon external powers?

We can divide ASEAN's development process into three stages. In 1967, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand jointly issued the "ASEAN Declaration," announcing the official establishment of ASEAN. In the first stage of its development, lasting until 1991, ASEAN merely functioned as a "political forum" dedicated to resolving internal conflicts. The "Singapore Declaration" issued in 1992 marked the beginning of the second stage of ASEAN as a formal regional organization. During this period, member states started to discuss economic integration and committed to founding the ASEAN Free Trade Zone. Meanwhile, the enrollment of the four Indochina Peninsula countries in the 1990s and Brunei earlier in the 1980s endowed ASEAN with the representativeness of all Southeast Asian countries. The third stage of ASEAN began in 2003. The Asian financial crisis breaking out at the end of the twentieth century and the corresponding political turmoil in Indonesia exposed the weakness of ASEAN's loose institutional arrangements to advance macroeconomic coordination and crisis management. Therefore, the "Bali Concord II," issued the same year, proposed to build a more institutionalized and comprehensive "ASEAN Community."

The "ASEAN Way" is a series of unique principles of Southeast Asian countries that summarize their interaction through ASEAN. Wang further illustrates the three main principles of the ASEAN Way. The first is flexibility. Allies are persuaded to avoid conflicts and take common positions using as many measures as possible, which are not limited to traditional formal rules but also include adaptive negotiations. The second and most crucial principle is consensus. ASEAN carries out every proposal only when all member states support the proposal. Joint actions are maintained upon verbal agreements without obligatory institutions such as voting. The third is intergovernmental cooperation, meaning all decisions are made on the national level without the intervention of a legally binding supranational institution such as the European Union (EU).

As mentioned above, disputes concerning borders and differences in development strategies and culture were mounting among Southeast Asian countries upon gaining independence. The informality and voluntary nature of the ASEAN Way were suitable for this regional alliance full of internal tension, allowing the allies to "proceed at a pace that everyone is comfortable with." The establishment of the ASEAN Free Trade Zone was the best practice of the ASEAN Way that each member country promoted intraregional trade liberalization at a different pace according to its own specific conditions. Although the ASEAN did not establish a customs union, all member countries realized tariff reductions or exemptions. However, the other side of the coin of nonobligatoriness was the severe shortage of coordination and mobilization capacity. In the early 1990s,

when Southeast Asian countries were immersed in the joy of the “East Asian Miracle,” ASEAN failed to detect and stop excessive lending of bankers and supervisory oversight of governments in time. Moreover, ASEAN was unable to prevent countries from enacting unilateral policies that disregarded the collective interests of the region. These flaws in capacity have seriously harmed intra-ASEAN cohesion.

The “ASEAN Way” coordinates the intraregional relations of Southeast Asia, while “ASEAN-led” is the principle for Southeast Asian countries to interact with countries outside the region. The degree of adherence of Southeast Asian countries to the ASEAN-led principle largely determines the resolution of their dependency upon the world capitalist core. In economic and trade cooperation, ASEAN countries pledge to take collective action, such as signing Free Trade Agreements with external countries under the “ASEAN + X” framework. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is the latest achievement under such an ASEAN-led framework.

However, insufficient economic integration within ASEAN has undermined the effectiveness of these trade agreements in practice. The industrial structures of Southeast Asian countries are characterized by high homogenization and poor complementarity. This structural problem, coupled with the nonobligatory feature of ASEAN, incentivized member countries to impose various nontariff barriers on intraregional trade. Consequently, any economic and trade cooperation under the ASEAN-led framework lacks the necessary and sufficient infrastructure, dampening the effectiveness of these collaborations. This has also prompted Southeast Asian countries to pursue preferential bilateral trade agreements with external countries rather than relying solely upon ASEAN-centered free trade agreements. Those trade agreements, bilateral or multilateral, ASEAN-led or not, overlap and intersect with each other, resulting in a “noodle bowl” structure. The large number of trade agreements related to Southeast Asian countries further defeated the expected ASEAN-led framework. Moreover, Southeast Asian countries were all in urgent need of foreign investment to address underdevelopment. According to the statistics Wang provided, even in the recent period from 2004 to 2014, intraregional mutual investment accounted for less than a quarter of the total investment received by ASEAN countries. The remaining 75% of capital came from countries outside the region. For both trade and investment, ASEAN countries are individually dependent on external countries rather than intraregional exchanges and mutual assistance, let alone participating in global economic networks under the ASEAN-led framework.

Concerning regional security, ASEAN has been actively holding the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The Asia–Pacific area maintained relative peace and stability under the bipolar hegemonic balance of power during the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, ASEAN turned to multilateralism to ensure the security of Southeast Asia. As the major platform for security dialogue and regional cooperation, ARF hosted a meeting of foreign ministers every year, inviting all members and even external countries to exchange their views on regional security issues. In the development of ARF over the past two decades, ASEAN has secured its agenda-setting power and has been persistently strengthening its leadership in the forum, making remarkable achievements in regional security. Despite these successes, the ARF approach still has structural limitations. First, in terms of capability, ASEAN, as a regional organization, cannot guarantee regional security on

its own. The essence of multilateralism is to incorporate the interests of world powers so that ASEAN can benefit from the checks and balances among external countries. Second, in terms of approach, the ASEAN Way excludes intraregional conflicts from the agenda rather than effectively resolving those hidden perils. If ASEAN becomes so institutionalized that it cannot overlook these problems in the future, internal conflicts, given the absence of a regional hegemon either in the form of a country or a coercive ASEAN, would still require external intervention to resolve. Last, in practice, although ASEAN has ostensibly become the key figure of ARF, it remains questionable whether ASEAN could uphold its independence regarding its internal security issues, given the rise of neighboring China and the American pivot to Asia.

Wang believes that to resolve their longstanding dependency upon external powers, Southeast Asian countries need to unite more closely around ASEAN to join global communication as an economic community and a security community. However, the prerequisite is that ASEAN first become a sociocultural community. Otherwise, the already established economic and security community will not last long. Although the EU is a quarrelsome community, a high degree of cultural identity among EU members preserves the community's internal cohesion. In contrast, given the ethnic and linguistic differences as well as disputes over sovereignty and ideology, the region still needs some time to break the national boundaries in cognition and forge a common identity as "ASEANers." The founding of ASEAN provides Southeast Asian countries with feasible measures to eliminate dependency, but the immature alliance cannot achieve this goal in the short run. The changing geopolitical conditions caused by the rise of China further complicate this issue.

III

Whether in ancient, modern, or contemporary times, China has always played a pivotal role in the development of Southeast Asia. The third question posed by Wang, a Chinese scholar, is: Are China's past prosperity and its recent revival the causes of the peripheralization of Southeast Asian countries?

Before the Opium War, Southeast Asian countries maintained a stable tributary relationship with China. Many scholars interpret this relationship as the dependency of the former upon the latter, but this assertion is questionable on at least two points. The first is that China never annexed Southeast Asia. There was neither conquest nor military protection by China. The other point is that tribute was not only an expression of political admiration but also a necessary means of trade. Accepting tributes legitimized Chinese emperors' supremacy over Southeast Asian visitors. In exchange, the host country grants the tributary countries the right to do business in its territory. In other words, Southeast Asian countries obtained the *de facto* right to trade in China in the name of tribute, which was a clearly reciprocal political-economic relationship. Meanwhile, economic exchanges between governments promoted private trade and labor flows between China and Southeast Asia, driving the economic development of Southeast Asian countries. From a geographical point of view, Southeast Asia was indeed on the verge of an influential Chinese civilization. However, this geographical feature did not bring about colonization or conquest, nor did it lead to economic colonization based on an international division of labor or differences in factor

endowments. In other words, the relationship between ancient China and Southeast Asian countries was not the kind of dependency and exploitation considered by dependency theory. In contrast, the shared prosperity of the two areas through tributary trade resembles the “Community of Shared Future for Mankind” that China calls for today, characterized by win–win cooperation.

The twists and turns in China’s modern history reconstructed the relationship between China and Southeast Asia. The defeat in the Opium War dragged China away from the core of the East Asian regional system and suppressed it on the periphery of the capitalist world system. Correspondingly, the tributary relationship that showed respect for China’s advancement no longer existed. In the following century, Japan and other colonial powers dominated the development of Southeast Asia. After World War II, China and Southeast Asian countries gained independence successively, with hostility and cooperation coexisting among the newly independent nations due to their different ideological choices. The five founding countries of ASEAN all joined the capitalist camp to rely on the US and European countries for development and security while taking precautions against the new China. The four Indochinese countries became members of the communist camp and, thus, were comrades of China. Nevertheless, as anti-capitalist countries generally adopted relatively closed market systems, the economic ties between China and the Indochina Peninsula remained weak. With the geopolitical structure of the Cold War beginning to collapse after the 1980s, China set out to revive itself by pivoting toward the market economy. Since then, it has become a leading force affecting current Southeast Asia, alongside the US and Japan.

The past forty years of interactions between China and Southeast Asia prove that trade and business still dominate the relationship between the two parties. China has joined multiple ASEAN+X free trade arrangements and signed respective bilateral agreements with Southeast Asian countries in the meantime. China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative has also brought significant amounts of infrastructure investment to Southeast Asia. Throughout history, China and Southeast Asian countries have engaged in a relationship of reciprocity, without dependency or exploitation. In the political arena, there remain disputes over the “nine-dash line” in the South China Sea among China and Southeast Asian countries. However, the relevant countries adhere to “putting aside disputes and pursuing joint development” in dealing with South China Sea issues, suppressing the conflicts in the interest of pursuing economic collaboration. Moreover, ASEAN keeps inviting the US and Japan to participate in the ASEAN Regional Forum, sustaining the checks and balances among external powers. Although the internal disputes of ASEAN will easily disrupt such an idealized mechanism, there is much less military involvement in great power competition around Southeast Asia in the post-Cold War era, significantly reducing the need for Southeast Asian countries to remain dependent upon any external power for security.

From the ancient tributary relationship to the contemporary close political-economic interaction with China, although Southeast Asian countries are geographically on the edge of the Sinosphere, they have always been independent of China in terms of politics and security but engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship with China in terms of economic development. The competition between China and the United

States in the post-Cold War period makes it the best choice for Southeast Asian countries to take the middle path between great powers in an ASEAN-centered manner. China is not the cause of the peripheralization of Southeast Asian countries but rather a structural factor that is helping those countries “step out of the periphery.”

IV

As a seminal book on political economy, *Peripheral Development Theory* applies Wallerstein's world-systems theory to its analysis, inheriting the idea of a Marxist class struggle. During the colonial period, Southeast Asian countries were politically, economically, and socioculturally dependent on European and American capitalist countries. After gaining independence, they maintained their economic dependence upon external countries and sought necessary capital and technology from “unequal exchanges.” The class difference between core and peripheral countries is solidified in dependency theory. Although world-systems theory is open to the possibilities of transformation between the core and the periphery, the theory lacks a feasible channel of system change. It is this drawback that Wang Zhengyi attempts to overcome in existing theories.

World-systems theory treats the world as a whole but does not escape the statist perspective when accounting for the differences between components of the system, namely, countries, leaving any supranational cooperation out of consideration. In the existing core-periphery structure, peripheral countries strive to move toward the core, while core countries continue suppressing the periphery to prevent possible class changes. As peripheral countries are underdeveloped, a feasible strategy for them is cooperation and collusion, intended to reshape their embedded power structure when countering the core. The giant political-economic complex of the European Union ended European countries' dependence on the US, raising Western Europe to construct a new pole in the current multipolar world. Although there remain obstacles to the regional integration of Southeast Asia, the increasingly institutionalized ASEAN has assured its dominance in securing regional stability. The ASEAN has also improved the bargaining power of Southeast Asia in the world market by integrating the internal market of the region. Therefore, we find it possible for Southeast Asian countries to step out of the periphery when we transcend the shackles of sovereign boundaries and treat the supranational Southeast Asian region as a leading actor on the world stage.

What lacks sufficient explanation is whether it is dependency or merely mutual dependence of Southeast Asian countries upon external countries in the postcolonial era. It is the prosperity of core countries at the expense of peripheral countries that makes dependency, which we usually judge based on whether the periphery successfully upgrades its industrial structure from agriculture-dominated to manufacturing- or service-dominated and its economy from low value-added to high value-added. Building upon the above criterion, there was an unarguable dependency of Southeast Asian countries on European and American colonizers before World War II, while no dependency existed in the interaction between ancient China and Southeast Asia. However, after Southeast Asian countries regained independence, many of them, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, adopted import-substitution strategies during their industrialization process. Singapore even leaped forward to establish financial service and high-end manufacturing industries as the pillars of its economy. Undeniably, leading

capitalist economies have provided indispensable capital and technologies to Southeast Asian countries in recent decades. More evidence addressing the persistence of unequal exchange and the suppression of the core upon the periphery under such economic interactions may be needed to support the contention that there remains a dependency of Southeast Asian countries on advanced external economies in the postcolonial era.

In addition to theoretical innovation and supplementation, Wang also pointed out two errors in utilizing or opposing world-systems theory. One is Eurocentrism, common in European and American social science research. Eurocentric theories emphasize the applicability of European or American political systems and industrialization processes to the rest of the world, ignoring the dramatically different history and culture of Asian countries. The Confucian legacy spawns developmental states, which have helped Japan, South Korea, and Singapore achieve rapid industrialization and modernization. The ASEAN Way, which is regarded as the rejuvenation of traditional Javanese village culture in Indonesia, is promoting internal reconciliation and common development among Southeast Asian countries. Eurocentric thinking would misguide us in analyzing the world system and hinder the proposal of new theories devoted to illustrating the development of Asia. The other error entails ethnocentrism and cultural centralism. Segmenting the integrated world system into mutually independent clusters and asserting that ethnic and cultural differences inevitably cause conflicts will bias scholars' judgments on the future of globalization and regionalization.

As a work on international relations, this book contributes to the development of constructivism. Wang holds a similar view as that of regime theory that international institutions or regimes could persist under cooperation among relevant countries instead of solely depending on hegemonic stability. The formation and maintenance of such cooperation are then based on common interests among the countries involved. Macrostructures cannot determine common interests alone, while sociocultural factors play crucial roles in this process. Take the regional integration of Southeast Asia as an example. The establishment of ASEAN was largely due to the commonalities among the founding countries. First, they all joined the capitalist world system. Second, they are all members of the Nonaligned Movement. Third, they regained independence almost at the same time. Such commonalities made development, without dependency, the common interest of ASEAN countries and assured them that regional integration would better fulfill such common interests, eventually leading to the creation of ASEAN. However, the subsequent enrollment of the Indochina Peninsula countries amplified the ideological differences within ASEAN. The error of domestic policies intensified intraregional hostility and conflicts among ethnic groups. The stubborn economic inequality repeatedly triggered social unrest throughout Southeast Asia. These issues led to difficulties in building a unified sociocultural community so that Southeast Asian countries were barely able to reach a consensus on common interests, which caused twists and turns in developing the ASEAN economic community and security community. Constructivists regard regional integration as a process of shaping collective identity, in which culture and ideologies matter greatly.

Can regional integration help Southeast Asian countries escape their dependency upon the world's great powers? Wang Zhengyi's answer is "yes." However, the dilemma of ASEAN's institutionalization and the continued involvement of external powers in regional issues have cast a shadow on the feasibility of this solution. *Peripheral Development Theory* shows us a comprehensive review of Southeast Asia's development experience, but realists may continue to challenge its practical value.

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