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ASEAN's weak role in bilateral dispute settlement: The case of Preah Vihear (Phra Wihan)

Gabriela Steinemann

Abstract

This paper examines the role of ASEAN in the resolution of territorial conflicts between its member states. It studies the border dispute cases of Vietnam-Cambodia and Indonesia-Malaysia, before turning its focus to the Thai-Cambodian conflict over Preah Vihear (Phra Wihan). The domestic political contexts in both countries provided important reasons for the weak role ASEAN has been able to play. But the association's struggle to find a meaningful place in dispute settlement is not limited to Preah Vihear, and it will likely continue as long as member states are unwilling to make use of the mechanisms they once created. At the same time, the paper argues that ASEAN has been instrumental in providing venues for informal discussions as well as in the ad hoc diplomacy of its secretary-general and proactive chairs.

Introduction

This paper was originally written against the backdrop of what was portrayed in the Thai and international media as ASEAN's failed attempts to help solve the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia in 2011. It examines the possibilities ASEAN has at its disposal to facilitate the settlement of politico-security disputes between two member states, and reviews the implementation in practice of relevant provisions. Two case studies—the territorial conflicts between Vietnam and Cambodia on one hand, between Indonesia and Malaysia on the other—illustrate how, and to what extent, ASEAN has tried to find solutions in other contexts. Subsequently, the Thai-

Cambodian dispute over Preah Vihear, or Phra Wihan, is studied with a focus on the methods of conflict resolution that have been used by the two parties.

Diverging international outlooks, as well as the domestic political contexts in both countries, provided reasons for the weak role ASEAN has been able to play. But ASEAN's struggle to find a meaningful place in dispute settlement is a general one—not limited to Preah Vihear—which will likely continue as long as its member states are unwilling to make use of the mechanisms they once created.

**ASEAN provisions for dispute settlement**

**ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) 1967**

The association's founding declaration was silent as to what dispute settlement meant in practice. As Ramses Amer points out, this is paradoxical in the sense that one of the very motivations to establish ASEAN was the peaceful management of conflicts in the region. The Declaration did state as one of its general aims and purposes the promotion of regional peace and prosperity. This was to be achieved by "abiding respect for justice and the rule of law ... and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter."

**Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC, or Bali Treaty) 1976**

Nine years after its foundation, ASEAN adopted the TAC. As a code of conduct for the settlement of bilateral disputes, the TAC foresaw the establishment of a "High Council" made up of one ministerial representative from every member state. Along with its role to "take cognisance of the existence of disputes or situations likely to disturb regional peace and harmony," the Council would also mediate if bilateral negotiations failed. However, there was a lack of consensus among scholars as to whether member states could bring a dispute to the High Council or not. That they indeed could was not confirmed until 25 years later; during this time span, the High Council remained a mere intention and did not exist.

Although the TAC is open for accession by non-ASEAN states, its first protocol concluded in 1987 restricts participation in the
High Council to those non-members who are directly involved in the dispute under consideration. This reflects the members' desire to prevent outside interference in regional matters.

**Rules of Procedure of the High Council of the TAC 2001**

The High Council received its first clear modus operandi at the 34th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Hanoi in 2001. The Rules of Procedure provided clear guidelines for the work of the High Council. In principle, this was quite an achievement. But in practice, the body is not very strong—it cannot be, given the hesitant stance of member states towards it: they took 25 years to clarify the precise role they want it to play. This seems all the more astonishing as the Council does not have any legalistic-coercive power. Rather, it is a venue for discussion, seeking solutions through consensus. There is no risk for any party to be dictated to. In spite of this, the High Council has never been invoked. We may ask ourselves why. Is it because conflicting parties do not expect the Council to bring them further—having already tried bilateral negotiation, which they see as more practical than going multilateral? Or do they prefer not to involve ASEAN in their disputes for fear of creating tensions with other member states, given that they all depend on maintaining good relations with each other? The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in contrast, seems to be a more acceptable option because it is an external, entirely legal body detached from the politics of Southeast Asia.

**ASEAN Charter 2008**

The Charter dedicates a whole chapter (VIII) to the settlement of disputes. Article 22 states that “ASEAN shall maintain and establish dispute settlement mechanisms in all fields of ASEAN cooperation.” Article 23 allows conflicting parties to “request the Chairman of ASEAN or the Secretary-General of ASEAN, acting in an ex-officio capacity, to provide good offices, conciliation or mediation.” The High Council is reaffirmed as an instrument for conflict settlement in article 24.

**Political-Security Community Blueprint 2009**

The Blueprint reinforces the spirit of the Charter by declaring that “more efforts are needed in strengthening the existing modes of pacific
settlement of disputes to avoid or settle future disputes.” In addition, it proclaims an early warning mechanism to defuse conflict, fight terrorism, combat piracy and promote good governance.¹⁰

**ASEAN dispute settlement in practice**

Why haven’t mediation efforts been more effective? Conflict resolution provisions state mere aims at cooperation, and existing mechanisms are not utilized. Informal diplomacy between ASEAN members, or ad hoc offers of help from third countries to mediate a bilateral conflict, have been more common. More often than not, however, such help has been refused in practice, one example being the Indonesian proposals to mediate and send observers to the Thai-Cambodian border.

*Negotiation and decision-making: The “ASEAN Way”*

Many scholars have invoked the “ASEAN Way” to explain why progress towards action-oriented cooperation has been slow, including in mediation. The concept has been defined as consisting of four elements: informality; inclusivity; consensus; and non-interference.¹¹ As illustrated by the conflict resolution provisions mentioned earlier, the main priority of ASEAN member states is to manage bilateral disputes through peaceful means. Formal resolution mechanisms are not desirable because they are feared to disrupt relations between the disputing parties: Amer explains that dispute settlement is an aim for ASEAN countries, but not when it comes at the expense of maintaining stable relations with other members.¹² Government, especially security officials, have seen formalized mediation and enforced compromise to be signs of weakness and threats to sovereignty. Instead, they prefer to build confidence and understanding of each other’s positions by holding more informal meetings and taking decisions by consensus.

*Chairman’s and secretary-general’s roles*

The chairman and the secretary-general of ASEAN both have a potential role to play in the settlement of disputes, as suggested in the 2008 Charter. However, their involvement will continue to depend on the commitment and ad hoc efforts of each individual. Surin Pitsuwan was very proactive and effective in conflict-resolution diplomacy, for example after Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 and in the case of the Thai-
Cambodian border clashes in October 2008. Nonetheless, Vatikiotis advocates the provision of more resources in ASEAN to allow the good offices of the secretary-general and the chairman to be deployed effectively, which the relatively small secretariat currently makes impossible.¹³

Throughout his tenure, Surin Pitsuwan called for greater discussion of domestic problems within ASEAN and for members to support the “space between states,”¹⁴ meaning civil society and NGO initiatives, arguing that these had been successful in helping conflicting parties come to a lasting agreement, thanks to the fact that they built on local knowledge in peacemaking. However, as long as there is no high-level support for low-level mediation efforts, sustainable peace will be hard to achieve.

**Case studies: Bilateral territorial disputes and ASEAN’s role**

**Vietnam-Cambodia: border disputes**

Vietnam and Cambodia have been in disagreement over their land and maritime borders since the end of the First Indochina War in 1954. General tensions between the two countries were for a long time supported by mutual perceptions of the other as enemy and by different understandings of history: while Cambodia considers “that Vietnam has expanded its territory at the expense of Cambodia, ... in Vietnam the so-called march to the South is perceived as a gradual migration movement, not as an expansion at the expense of Cambodia.”¹⁵ Also, Amer sees the discrimination of and attacks against ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia up to the late 1990s as an integral part of overall bilateral relations since 1954.¹⁶

Clashes along the common land border erupted in 1975. Diplomatic efforts were disrupted in 1977, when border skirmishes turned into a full-scale war, ending in the taking of Phnom Penh by the Cambodian resistance forces and Vietnamese troops in late 1978.¹⁷ The heavy involvement of Vietnam in the People’s Republic of Kampuchea during the 1980s facilitated relations between the two countries and allowed the adoption of several agreements relating to their border disputes. The Treaty on the Delimitation of the Vietnam-Kampuchea Frontier, adopted in 1985, stipulated that the frontier would be the same as at independence. However, the pact was not accepted by the
opposition Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea,\textsuperscript{18} and the dispute continued.

Border tensions rose again in 1996 when the first prime minister, Prince Ranariddh, accused Vietnam of encroaching on Cambodian soil in three border provinces and of annexing parts of its territory.\textsuperscript{19} In Amer’s opinion, Ranariddh’s generally tough talk was meant to enhance his nationalistic image and fuel anti-Vietnamese feelings: he was using foreign policy to achieve domestic goals.\textsuperscript{20} A series of bilateral meetings led to the creation of working groups, a joint border commission, and commitments to solve the disputes through peaceful dialogue. In 2005, finally, the adoption of the Supplementary Treaty (to the 1985 pact) started border demarcation a year later.

Since 2005, the official slogan of Vietnamese-Cambodian relations has been “good neighbourliness, traditional friendship, comprehensive cooperation and long-term stability.”\textsuperscript{21} Previous statements\textsuperscript{22} looking to finalize land border demarcation by 2008 could not be respected, and the process was still not finalized in 2012.\textsuperscript{23} The stated aim is to build a peaceful borderline, primarily linked to economic development. Several border area projects have been initiated, such as the Cambodia-Vietnam Friendship Golf Course on the border of Svay Rieng and Tay Ninh provinces, which “aims to promote Cambodia’s relationship with Vietnam and to improve the social and economic status of the people in the two provinces.”\textsuperscript{24}

The Vietnamese-Cambodian border disputes have not been managed in a regional politico-security framework. All negotiations have been bilateral, and involving ASEAN seems to never have been in question. This is logical for the period before their accession in 1995 and 1999 respectively, but the diplomatic efforts leading up to the 2005 Treaty seem to have followed the same bilateral pattern. While the two states claim to cooperate within international and regional cooperation mechanisms,\textsuperscript{25} this has indeed happened at the economic—such as the Cambodia-Vietnam-Laos Development Triangle—but not at the political level.\textsuperscript{26}

ASEAN membership has admittedly promoted the use of peaceful methods in the resolution of Vietnamese-Cambodian differences. At the same time, the dispute simply never rose to an explosive level again, and their mutual animosity has decreased since the early 2000s.
Indonesia-Malaysia: Ligitan and Sipadan islands

Relations between Indonesia and Malaysia have, since the end of konfrontasi in 1966, generally been “amicable and symbiotic.” Still, conflicts have erupted. Indonesia has long been protective of its borders, its 1957 Archipelagic Principle asserting a claim to all waters around and between its land territories. One area that became the object of contention was that of Ligitan and Sipadan, two islands in the Sulawesi Sea. Claims over the islands arose in 1969 with the beginning of crude oil exploration by both countries along their respective continental shelves. But real tensions flared up only in the 1980s, when Malaysia started developing a diving resort on Sipadan. In 1981, Indonesia accused “foreign troops” of occupying Sipadan, reacted by sending patrol boats to the area and captured eighteen Malaysian trawlers “illegally” fishing in Indonesian waters. Subsequently, the two parties attempted to resolve their dispute through bilateral means and peaceful diplomacy, which showed a certain willingness to abide by ASEAN’s approach to conflict resolution. When negotiations failed, however, the case was referred to the ICJ in 1998. After four years of discussing “ambiguous maps,” the Malaysian construction of light towers in the 1960s, and a 19th century convention, the ICJ ruled in 2002 that Malaysia had sovereignty over Ligitan and Sipadan on the basis of its effectivités (activities on the ground). Indonesia accepted the ruling. Nonetheless, this peacefully resolved dispute gave rise to further territorial contentions between the two countries, notably over the land border in Borneo and over other islands.

As in the case of the territorial disputes between Vietnam and Cambodia, the two conflicting parties never referred their case to ASEAN. Instead of requesting the good offices of the chairman or the secretary-general, Indonesia and Malaysia preferred for an external entity to deliver a legally binding judgment. The High Council was not an option, as it was established only in 2001. Even so, one may argue that the Council—a discussion group based on consensus—would have been viewed as too weak by the parties to help settle their dispute. Meredith L. Weiss points out that bilateral talks between Indonesia and Malaysia were simply seen as more practical than going to ASEAN “despite the leading roles both play in [the latter].” This argument may indeed apply to all disputes among ASEAN members.
Even so, the association was not totally void of impact. In 1979, Malaysia had unilaterally published a map on which Ligitan and Sipadan were situated in its continental shelf. The strong opposition of all other ASEAN members had pushed the government to revise the map.\textsuperscript{34}

Preah Vihear

Dispute settlement attempts 1962-2011

In 1962, Thailand and Cambodia asked the ICJ to decide who had sovereignty over Preah Vihear. The court awarded the temple to Cambodia. However, no ruling was issued on the position of the border (let alone on the surrounding 4.6 square kilometers, which would only become an object of contention almost half a century later). Although Field Marshal Sarit pledged that Thailand would recover the temple one day “with blood and tears,”\textsuperscript{35} the conflict was put to rest for the following 46 years. In 2008, Cambodia—aiming to boost tourism—succeeded in getting the temple listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Thai foreign minister, Noppadon, had issued a joint communiqué to support Cambodia’s application. Pavin Chachavalpongpun argues that this was the beginning of a trend where Thai politicians exploit foreign affairs in order to undermine domestic political opponents. In his view, the Samak government was thus seeking to improve ties with Cambodia as part of its attempts to humiliate the previous Surayud regime.\textsuperscript{36} The joint communiqué sparked a political controversy, with the opposition, anti-Thaksin People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) accusing Samak of “selling the motherland.” The issue turned into an inter-state dispute when Thai nationalists crossed the border in July 2008 to plant the national flag at Preah Vihear.\textsuperscript{37}

As Carlyle A. Thayer points out, not only Thai but also Cambodian domestic politics hampered bilateral dispute settlement, with Hun Sen using the UNESCO listing to boost his domestic credentials in the 2008 electoral campaign.\textsuperscript{38} When troop reinforcements and several violent incidents eroded good faith on both sides, Cambodia raised the matter to the UN Security Council, as well as to the ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN+3 meeting in Singapore. The latter “urged both sides to exercise utmost restraint and resolve this issue amicably,”\textsuperscript{39} but
neither the UN secretary-general nor the ASEAN secretary-general wanted to get involved, suggesting the two countries solve their differences bilaterally. Bilateral talks ensued, but progress was slow and lacked concrete results. More fighting erupted in October of that year (2008), causing casualties. In an apparent change of strategy, this time Surin Pitsuwan appealed for calm and consulted with ministers from the region. Full conflict was avoided as local commanders pulled back and agreed on joint controls. Rather than being the result of the ASEAN secretary-general’s involvement, however, Vatikiotis argues that the crisis was defused thanks to “the instinctive avoidance of conflict, which is rooted deep in the region’s cultural DNA.”

The year 2008 ended with conciliatory talks on the sidelines of the Asia-Europe Meeting in Beijing; but further progress was blocked by the PAD’s occupation of Bangkok airports. Between 2008 and late 2011, there were at least eight armed clashes on the border. Until the UN Security Council and the ICJ got involved in May 2011, the dispute was managed bilaterally through the Joint Commission on the Demarcation for Land Boundary, the military Regional Border Committee and the General Border Committee. Probably motivated by domestic ambitions, the Abhisit government adopted a fairly nationalistic stance focused on state sovereignty and non-interference, insisting on the bilateral way and rejecting mediation offers from the ASEAN chairs, Vietnam and Indonesia. Thailand may also have felt that it lacked the support of other member states and, for this reason, rejected ASEAN dispute settlement.

Hun Sen, on the other hand, portrayed his country as the bullied victim needing (and deserving) regional and international help to defend itself against its “big” Thai neighbor. Cambodia wanted to make use of ASEAN as a mediating third party—not through the High Council, but through formal and informal meetings. In doing so, it seems that Hun Sen’s primary interest was not so much to boost ASEAN’s credibility, but rather to obtain sympathy and support from other members.

Pavin argues that the continuing political crisis prevented Samak’s successor Somchai from investing energy into Thailand’s ASEAN chairmanship between July 2008 and December 2009. Thailand also suffered embarrassment when the 14th ASEAN Summit in Cha-am had to be postponed in December 2008 due to the above-mentioned
Yellow Shirt (PAD) protests, and again when the second part of the Summit, held in Pattaya, was disrupted by Red Shirt demonstrations in April 2009.

The Abhisit government was not very successful in resolving the Preah Vihear dispute. Some have wondered whether the Democrats really wanted to solve the conflict. If they were influenced by the PAD, who arguably used the dispute to advocate its nationalistic program, Preah Vihear may have provided a welcome means for Bangkok to justify its anti-Cambodian stance. On the other side, it has been suggested that the Thai opposition and Cambodia deliberately created insecurity along the border to delegitimize the Abhisit government. After new clashes in early 2010, Cambodia again asked for ASEAN’s help. The then chair, Vietnam, in an attempt to give a role to the association, held consultations with member states about potential mediation and called on Cambodia and Thailand to refrain “from armed conflict and from acts that could affect ASEAN solidarity.” Thailand, on its part, explained that bilateral talks were sufficient to solve the problem.

Clashes erupted yet again in February and May 2011; the displaced border population reported that fighting had never been as serious. A large part of this conflict has been fought on the information front, with media reports, government statements and thus, publicly believed “facts” differing largely between the two countries. The UN Security Council, in its spirit of passing responsibility to regional organizations, “expressed support for ASEAN’s active efforts in this matter and encouraged the parties to continue to cooperate with the organisation in this regard. They welcomed the upcoming Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of ASEAN on 22 February.” For ASEAN, the UN’s endorsement of its dispute settlement efforts was an important sign of faith and was hailed as a “historic first.” Indeed, the chairman, Marty Natalegawa, had convened the 22 February meeting, showing considerable proactivity to involve the association in mediation efforts. Prior to the meeting, he had undertaken “shuttle diplomacy” by traveling to Phnom Penh and Bangkok amid the clashes. Alluding to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the ASEAN Charter, the meeting’s final statement reiterated the association’s dispute settlement approach. Further, Chair Indonesia, as ASEAN chair, managed to obtain the consent of both parties for the deployment of 30 observers to the disputed border area.
In late April 2011, new exchanges of fire caused deaths (including of civilians) on both sides and a new round of displacement. Again, bilateral talks were held on the sidelines of an ASEAN meeting; again, talks failed.\textsuperscript{53} Finally, the parties took their dispute to the ICJ for an interpretation of its 1962 ruling, in particular with regards to the 4.6 square kilometer area—which also remains disputed because the Thai-Cambodian border has never been fully demarcated. An order of provisional measures issued by the Court in July 2011 declared a demilitarized zone around the temple, ordered an immediate troop withdrawal, and urged both parties to give access to the Indonesian observers.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{Situation since 2011 and outlook}

Since Phua Thai's election victory in July 2011, relations between the two countries have improved and largely prevented further border clashes.\textsuperscript{55} Concurrently with this decrease in urgency to mediate, pressure from ASEAN itself also lessened with the end of Indonesia's chairmanship. While bilateral negotiations and military agreements defused tensions,\textsuperscript{56} ASEAN's role reverted to a minimal level. This ad hoc solution was certainly positive for the border population, but less so for the international rule of law. Contrary to the ICJ's order of provisional measures, the observers were not deployed; and although troops were withdrawn from the demilitarized zone, they were replaced by armed border patrol police.\textsuperscript{57} In 2013 the ICJ passed the border issue back for the two countries to resolve bilaterally. The situation on the border remained relatively calm given the importance both governments put on their good mutual interactions. However, dispute settlements based on personal affinities between high-ranking persons and regimes are often not sustainable. Bilateral relations alter with every regime change in Thailand. Moreover, unless both parties are genuinely willing to respect agreements and ICJ decisions, and cease to view their foreign relations as tools for domestic purposes, Preah Vihear is likely to remain contentious.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The methods used to manage this dispute have been mainly bilateral. Whenever ASEAN was called upon (by Cambodia) to help, its
reluctant response was for the two countries to continue their bilateral efforts. Apart from Surin's diplomatic efforts, the only real ASEAN-linked moves were the mediation offers of the Vietnamese and Indonesian chairpersons respectively—offers hardly accepted by the warring parties. That being said, discussions among diplomats in informal settings, for example on the sidelines of ASEAN meetings, did play a part. This illustrates that the grouping is in a good position to provide practical frameworks for dispute settlement. Existing ASEAN mechanisms themselves, however, have not been utilized by member states.

One reason that is often put forth for the Southeast Asian insistence on national sovereignty and non-interference is these nations' memories of relatively recent colonial rule and external military intervention. However, a comparison with Africa, which has had similar experiences but is much less opposed to regionalism and multilateralism, shows that the colonial past may not be a convincing explanation of why states cannot seek each other's cooperation more. More profoundly, the "ASEAN Way" is rooted in the Southeast Asian mentality, which opposes confrontation, legalistic regulations and imposed decisions. Multilateral problem-solving can fit perfectly into this framework.

National sovereignty is likely to remain the most fundamental element of any country in the world, despite—or because of—globalization. ASEAN member states will continue to preserve their national interests regardless of the common links and cooperation stipulated by the association. Bilateral relations will have priority, even though national interests may converge with regional aims.

How ASEAN's role in dispute settlement will evolve remains to be seen. The UN Security Council's acknowledgement of the association's recent efforts proves its increasing importance in international perception. As Hans H. Indorf argues, "intergovernmental organisations such as ASEAN reinforce the concept of the state.... Thus, border disputes are likely to persist among ASEAN member states; only the form of their settlement will be influenced by the pattern of past cooperation."58
Notes

1 The temple’s denomination is one element of the dispute. In this paper, the internationally used Cambodian name is applied as reflecting the 1962 decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which attributed the temple to Cambodia.

2 Ramses Amer, 'Conflict management and constructive engagement in ASEAN’s expansion,' *Third World Quarterly*, 20, 5, October 1999, p. 1031.


4 TAC article 14.

5 TAC article 15.

6 Amer ‘Conflict management,’ p. 1034.

7 TAC article 18.

8 http://www.asean.org/3639.htm (consulted on 20 August 2011).


12 Amer, ‘Conflict management,’ p. 1036.


16 Amer, ‘Cambodia and Vietnam.’ Amer expresses an arguably one-sided point of view by mentioning only Cambodia’s perception of Vietnam as an enemy, not vice-versa.

17 Amer, ‘Cambodia and Vietnam,’ pp. 93-95.


20 Amer, ‘Cambodia and Vietnam,’ p. 105. As seen in the chapter on Preah Vihear, it is possible to draw parallels between Ranariddh’s behaviour (as portrayed by Amer) and ‘Thai nationalists’ ambitions (according to Pavin).


ASEAN’s weak role in bilateral dispute settlement


26 No ASEAN statements on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border disputes (neither land nor maritime) could be found by the author.


29 Hans H. Indorf, Impediments to Regionalism in Southeast Asia: Bilateral Constraints among ASEAN Member States (Singapore: ISEAS), 1984, p. 22.


32 Weiss, ‘Malaysia-Indonesia bilateral relations.’

33 Weiss, ‘Malaysia-Indonesia bilateral relations,’ p. 172.

34 Indorf, Impediments to Regionalism, p. 22.


38 Thayer, ‘Cambodia.’


40 Thayer, ‘Cambodia,’ p. 92.


42 Thayer, ‘Cambodia,’ pp. 93-94.

43 Pavin, ‘The disputed Thai-Cambodia border.’

44 This argument is also brought forth with regards to the Philippines in the Sabah dispute. Indorf. Impediments to Regionalism, p. 27.

45 Pavin, ‘Diplomacy under siege.’

46 Pavin ‘The disputed Thai-Cambodia border.’

47 Pavin, ‘Diplomacy under siege.’


49 Personal discussions with Thai villagers displaced to temporary shelters in Kantharalak district, Sisaket province, in late February 2011. These people could not count how many times they had fled their villages in previous years due to exchanges of fire. Nor could they comprehend the political antagonisms, having lived all their lives in friendship with their neighbors on the other side of the border.
52 The observers' stated mission was "to assist and support the parties in respecting their commitment to avoid further armed clashes between them, by observing and reporting accurately, as well as impartially on complaints of violations and submitting its findings to each party through Indonesia, current Chair of ASEAN." http://www.aseansec.org/documents/N110222.pdf (consulted on 24 August 2011).
55 During pro-Thaksin regimes, Thai-Cambodian relations are generally good especially for economic reasons, which are said to often be linked to the personal interests of Thaksin. Kraisak Choonhavan pointed out during an academic encounter on 26 August 2011 that negotiations related to gas exploitation in the Gulf of Thailand have been easier in times of pro-Thaksin regimes.
58 Indorf, Impediments to Regionalism, p. 19.