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Cross-border infrastructure development in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) in reference to the emergence of a transnational security community

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to evaluate if cross-border infrastructure development is capable to have an impact on community building, and especially to contribute to the emergence of a so-called security community. The author believes, and thereby builds upon Karl W. Deutsch, that transaction and interaction could facilitate peace and stability and values the development of infrastructure across borders thereby as a core element. The setup for this research is the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS), one of the poorest regions in the world, but also one of the fastest changing ones. The area covers half of mainland Southeast Asia, and the Mekong River could be described as the natural bond among the countries of the region. To evaluate if cross-border infrastructure development has an impact on transnational security, the author introduces the Greater Mekong Sub-Region and its characteristics, describes the idea of a security community in depth, before he emerges on the development of infrastructure and the spillover effects. Furthermore this research evolves to which extend regional leadership could have an impact on community building.

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBTA	Cross-Border Transport Agreement
CTS	Customs transit and temporary admission system
EWEC	East-West-Economic Corridor
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
IICBTA	Initial implementation of CBTA
KHM	Kingdom of Cambodia; or Cambodia
LAO	Lao People's Democratic Republic; or Laos
MMR	Republic of the Union of Myanmar; or Myanmar
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Mekong River Commission
NSEC	North-South Economic Corridor
NTFC	National Transport Facilitation Committee
PRC	People's Republic of China; or China
SEC	Southern-Economic-Corridor
SKRL	Singapore-Kunming Rail Link
THA	Kingdom of Thailand; or Thailand
VNM	Socialist Republic of Vietnam; or Vietnam

1 Introduction

Early this year news resounded around mainland Southeast Asia that the governments of Laos and Thailand are on their way to sign a major contract with the China to boost the development of high-speed railway infrastructure within the region (The Economist, 2011). The plan to strengthen the transport infrastructure of the Mekong riparian countries is not as new as it might seem. A major step forward in developing the railway infrastructure of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) countries, namely Cambodia, China (PRC, specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region), Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, was a plan adopted in August 2010 in Hanoi (AFP, 2010). By 2020 the six before mentioned countries should be linked with an integrated railway system, serving a region with 300 million inhabitants. Looking into material provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), one of the main sponsors of the regional cooperation, reveals that the advancement of the railway infrastructure is part of the bigger goal to enhance linkages within the region.

Historical Background

To understand the regions potential which could arise from a stronger integration it is not only useful to look at the economic facts and figures, but also to understand its history and hence the arising opportunities. Back in history, with the expansion of the Chinese empire, a wave of migration throughout mainland Southeast Asia was triggered off. The so-called Tai people settled in the mountains and along the northern stream of the Mekong, and today their ancestors are to find in southern China, the northern borders of Vietnam and Burma, Laos and Thailand. Over the decades, those settlers developed a complex system of governance, which made their rulers becoming key actors in the formation of the pre-colonial nation states (Evans, 2002). The principal of governance was different to modern state concepts same as there was no clear affiliation to a single ruler. The smallest unit was a *mueang*, a city-state, which itself could be part of a larger *mueang* or a *mueang* confederation (Evans, 2002, p. 5). With the influx of new technologies and hence more powerful arms from the 13th to 15th century, the political landscape changed dramatically. During these days emerged what was a primary principal of government in Southeast Asia, a “patchwork of [...] *mandalas*” (Wolters, 1999, p. 27). It was characterised by a tributary system, which kept the defeated ruler in place and made him a subordinate. Outstanding were the loose and flexible relations, which allowed a subordinated *mueang* to have more than one sovereign (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, p. 9). This period was followed by an era of wars, during that the pre-colonial nation states emerged.

The Europeans arrived in the mid 19th century: The British occupied Myanmar, France took territories east of the Mekong, Thailand and China stayed sovereign, even if they had to seize land or rights to the Europeans. The European occupants brought with them the unfamiliar idea of fixed borders and a system of governance where the state keeps a close relationship to its subordinates. Besides that, the

colonial rulers laid the foundation for an efficient bureaucracy and hence economic development (Elson, 2009, pp. 20-23). With the end of World War II colonial rule was at question, nevertheless some of the Europeans occupiers did not leave voluntary. Starting off, as the struggle for independence, the area of what is also known as Indochina slid into a 30-year period of war. Besides the devastating effects, the Cold War drove a deep wedge between the countries of mainland Southeast Asia.

With the end of the East-West split, a door opened to bring peace and reconciliation to Cold War battlefields (Davison, 2011, p. 9). During the late 1980s early 1990s the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its members successfully resolved the military conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia. And with the accession of Vietnam (1995), Laos (1997) Myanmar (1997) and Cambodia (1999) to the ASEAN, regional cooperation emerged to a new level (Dosch J. , 2011, p. 195). At was at this point that the ADB stepped in to create a new forum of regional cooperation. It could be argued that back in the day's mainland Southeast Asia experienced a sense of community. Animosities among the different groups should not be concealed but history also reveals that cooperation, trade and cultural exchange were a vital part of mainland Southeast Asia. Evidence therefore is the system of *mandals* and the Chinese trading network connecting the region to the world (Maxwell Hill, 1998)¹.

Research & Structure

The aim of this dissertation is to research to which extend the development of infrastructure in the GMS supports the emergence of a community, thereby I will theoretically make use of the concept known as security community (Deutsch et al., 1968). Furthermore, it should be analysed how regional leadership could contribute to the process.

The dissertation is structured as followed: After the introduction gave a snapshot on the history of the sub-region, the following will introduce the GMS in detail, part of that is a review of each participating country and the common security challenges. This part is followed by the theoretical concept, which is twofold, on the one side the idea of a security community should be presented on the other side the concept of leadership, and thereby especially regional leadership. Section 4 analysis the GMS infrastructure projects and thereby focuses on the development of roads, railway, and trade facilitation. The section dealing with railway development is put aside, as this part is meant to analyse the role of leadership.

2 Introducing the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS)

The Mekong river with a length of 4,900 km is Southeast Asia largest river (Will, 2010), and the twelfth largest in the world (Dosch & Hensengerth, 2005, p. 264). From its source in the mountains of Tibet, to

¹ Further readings which discuss the trade pattern in mainland Southeast Asia during pre-colonial times (Forbes, 2008; Rush, 2008; Vaddhanaphuti, 2005, p. 153)

its mouth at the South China Sea, it crosses six countries (Cambodia, China – specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand & Vietnam) and its basin covers 800,000 km² (Schmeier, 2009, p. 30). Therefore, the river is the source of life for the people in the area. To safeguard the river, develop the area and improve the livelihood of the people two major initiatives have been found during the 1990s, the first, the ADB sponsored Greater Mekong-Sub Region project, which I will present more in detail in the following step, and the Mekong River Commission (MRC) an intergovernmental river basin management with the focus on the sustainable development of the river.

2.1 The GMS project

In 1992 The GMS was established with the aim to overcome the economic parallelization of the Cold War in Indochina, and to strengthen the economic linkages of the area. The ADB and the GMS member countries thereby opted for a market driven approach with the development of infrastructure at its heart (Schmeier, 2009, p. 46). Over the last two decades, the concept experienced some alteration, with the core approach untouched. The current vision for GMS is defined as “A GMS that is more integrated, prosperous, and harmonious” (ADB, 2011a), with a strategic focus on the so called ‘Three Cs’: Connectivity, Competitiveness and Community. Furthermore, the GMS has identified nine key sectors of development: transport, energy, telecommunication, agriculture, environment, tourism, human resources development, trade and investment (ADB, 2011a).

The principal of “Economic Corridors” was implemented in 1998, as a result of a reassessment after the Asian Financial Crisis (Masviriyakul, 2004, p. 304). Currently there are three main corridors: North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC), East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) and the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC) (ADB, 2011a); and as the map (p. VI) shows, several other corridors emerged over time to support the main ones. Infrastructure development is focused along these economic corridors, the approach allows a more streamlined and integrated development and the ADB expects spill over effects on the micro-regional level.

Institutional wise, the GMS is quite loosely organized: the ADB functions as the secretary, and the meeting of Prime Ministers is the highest body of decision making (takes places every three years). The later one also approves the Greater Mekong Sub-Rregion Framework, the last one adopted at the 10th GMS Summit in Phnom Penh 2002 (Krongkaew, 2004, p. 986; Schmeier, 2009, p. 47). Other decision bodies are the yearly Ministerial Conferences and Working Groups.

2.2 The GMS countries

Analysing the countries of the GMS, there is no need to do an in depth socio-economic analysis. Nevertheless, a brief look on the data will reveal that Thailand is the strongest economy (values for 2010 estimated, GDP per capita, PPP, US-Dollar, current prices), closely followed by China which is expected

to overtake Thailand soon (IMF, 2011). China is followed by Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar, with Vietnam not even presenting a quarter of the Thai GDP per capita. In the case of China, one should note that that the country itself is economically strong, however, both regions participating in the GMS are lacking behind.

China, the most northern country of the GMS members, got a superior position along the river. The country does not only possess the source and the head water, but also half of the river is on Chinese ground, therefore the country plays a critical role in the ecosystem of the river. China has two core interests: first of all, to utilise the hydropower capabilities, and secondly, to make the river navigable. Within the GMS project, China seeks to establish secure and fast routes to mainland Southeast Asia to foster the development in the underdeveloped provinces and therefore “linking south-western China to the world through Southeast Asia” (Krongkaew, 2004, pp. 980-981; Weatherbee, 1997, p. 188).

Currently the Thai government has three interests when it comes to the Mekong and the GMS project: Firstly, the government has identified the possibility to divert water from the Mekong and its feeder rivers for irrigation and to supply Bangkok (Schmeier, 2009, p. 35). Secondly, Thailand is interested, and already does so, in importing and generating electricity which comes from hydropower dams (Schmeier, 2009, p. 36). And thirdly, since the establishment of the GMS and because of China’s late accession in 1995 (Weatherbee, 1997, p. 179), the Kingdom, was and is interested to make use of its superior economic status to develop new markets and investment opportunities (Krongkaew, 2004, p. 980).

Myanmar has only a very limited access to the river in comparison to the other riparian’s. Nevertheless, it seems that the country has high hydropower potential which attracts especially Chinese and Thai investment (Schmeier, 2009, p. 33). Besides that, the country’s political situation also limits its economic capabilities and the extent to which development through the GMS could be fruitful.

Laos is the riparian which contributes most water to the river (Goh, 2006, p. 18) and 95% of Laos is part of the Mekong River Basin (Schmeier, 2009, p. 34). The landlocked country, along the middle course is highly dependent on the rivers fate. Not only as the means of transport, but especially as source of living. The country has inconceivable opportunities of hydropower development, which would enhance the economic development; however on the other side, it has to balance it against the livelihood of its people. As Laos is the only landlocked country within the GMS, it is highly supportive of any development which helps to overcome this disadvantage. Furthermore, as the country is in a process of economic transition, it welcomes any external support (Krongkaew, 2004, p. 981).

Cambodia is in a similar situation as Laos, with most of its territory being classified as basin. But with a position further down the stream, it is much more dependent on the decision and changes made upstream. Cambodia is still occupied to get back on track after decades of communist rule and therefore

welcomes the desperately needed infrastructure development (Krongkaew, 2004, p. 981), furthermore it sees regional cooperation as a forum to discuss and develop solutions for the utilisation of the Mekong.

The situation for Vietnam is quite similar to the one of Cambodia. The Mekong Basin only covers a fifth of the country (Schmeier, 2009, p. 37), but its abundant flow of water feeds the country and therefore the natural rhythm of the river should not be disordered. In contrast to Laos, the country could easily access the world markets; moreover, with an upgraded infrastructure it could even easier reach the markets in its backyard (Krongkaew, 2004, p. 981).

2.3 Traditional and non-traditional security challenges

Analysing the GMS and its countries, four challenges could finally be summed up, having already mentioned some of them before: river and water management, trafficking, economic competition, and exploitation and historic burdens.

There might be more (detailed) pre-existing information, especially scientific data; however, all riparian countries are interested in the exploitation of hydropower along the river. To balance each other's interests and to develop an understanding for each other is one of the major challenges of the Mekong riparian states. This issue does not come on its own; other existing 'projects' to use the water, e.g. to divert water away from the river, will also pose a challenge to the rivers ecosystem.

Another non-traditional security issue for the GMS is trafficking, both human (Anh, 2005) and drugs (Yem, 2005). Thailand thereby is "a regional hub for trafficking in persons [and] has fast become a major destination and sending and transit country for trafficking" (Jayagupta, 2009, p. 243), with the majority of trafficked women and girls ending up in the commercial sex industry. The other big issue is the production and distribution of illicit drugs with the Golden Triangle and its poppy fields at its centre. Today's challenges are especially the production of synthetic drugs (McKetin et al., 2008; Yem, 2005, p. 84).

Even if China is the only economic superpower sitting at the table, the role of Thailand should not be underestimated. Both China and Thailand follow their own agenda with the aim to expand markets for their goods and services (Dosch & Hensengerth, 2005, p. 274; Weatherbee, 1997, p. 179). Their neighbouring countries are afraid to get overrun by foreign goods, corporations and capital. A critical question is to which extent does the GMS facilitate the negative impacts of a free market or support a cohesive development of all countries. Krongkaew (2004, p. 993) mentions the economic disparity among the GMS countries, which could result in a patron-client relationship, rather than a relationship among equals (Krongkaew, 2004, p. 995).

The last big challenge is the of the region historical legacy. Apart from long standing animosities, which origin in most cases from pre-colonial wars, the majority of conflicts originated in the younger past. Border disputes among Thailand and Cambodia and in the South China Sea are legacy of colonial past and the emergence of nation states. The traces of the Cold War, and especially the history of a divided sub-continent, needs to be overcome with a new dialogue. Vietnam's invasion in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge complex resulted in dissent among the Southeast Asian countries (Schmeier, 2009, pp. 41-42). A relative new question which also belongs to the political sphere is the rise of China or - to put correctly - the question of China's role within the East Asian and international framework (Bellamy, 2009, p. 181). As this brief introduction reveals, there is a lot behind the surface, which could easily result in dissent or misunderstanding, which only could be overcome with a long process of trust and community building in mainland Southeast Asia.

3 Theoretical concept

I would like to answer the question, if an intra-governmental cooperation through the creation of infrastructure and the facilitation of trade and transport is capable to create an environment of peace and security which enhance leaders to tackle common threats and challenges together. Furthermore, I am convinced that leadership has a positive effect on a regional cooperation. Therefore, I will build upon the Deutschian concept of a Security Community (Deutsch et al., 1968), which belongs to the Social Constructivist school of International Relations and tries to explain the emergence of a community based upon the results of actions among the participating countries.

3.1 The Deutschian concept of a security community

The initial Deutschian concept, a child of the post World War II years, focused primarily on the North Atlantic (Deutsch et al., 1968). Nevertheless, it became a famous concept for East Asia, and especially ASEAN. According to Peou (2001) definitions of ASEAN as a community arose first in the second half of the 1980s, with Acharya (2009) being the major proponent of the idea during the 1990s and 2000s (Peou, 2001, pp. 123-124).

A security community, is defined as a community "in which there is real assurance that the members [...] will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way" (Deutsch et al., 1968, p. 5) or expressed differently, also by Deutsch: "peaceful change". Skimming through the literature several pre-conditions or requirements for a successful security community are given (Deutsch, 1988, pp. 273-274). A good summary of conditions is given by Capie and Evans (2002, p. 198f), where it is refined to three "requirements": the total absence of armed conflicts among members, absence of competitive military build up, and the existence of institutions and procedures to safeguard peace and to solve conflicts. Modern day scholars, emphasise the importance of interaction,

communication and the emergence of common norms, values and identity, which make the concept part of the Constructivist School of thought and thereby distinguish it from other security agreements².

3.1.1 The two distinct forms of a security community

Figure 1: Security Communities

	Non-Amalgamation	Amalgamation
Integration	Pluralistic Security-Community	Amalgamated Security-Community
Non-Integration	Not Amalgamated Not Security-Community	Amalgamated but not Security-Community

Amalgamation Threshold

Integration Threshold

(Deutsch et al., 1968, p. 7)

The concept developed by Deutsch and his colleagues, differentiates between two different types of security communities: the first, the so called Pluralistic Security Community (or Non-Amalgamated), and the second, the so called Amalgamated Security Community. The difference between them lies in the degree of integration. As the names already indicate, the pluralistic one is the less integrated compared to the amalgamated security community. For the GMS, the concept of an amalgamated security community does not apply, therefore the following will focus on

the pluralistic security community. Nevertheless, an amalgamated security community is defined as a “merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit” (Deutsch et al., 1968, p. 6).

3.1.2 Characteristics of a pluralistic security community

The perception and evaluation of a modern day security community has changed in comparison to the approach chosen by Deutsch in the 1950s. A major work on security communities was published by Emanuel Adler & Michael Barnett (1998), who tried to reevaluate and readjust the concept of Karl W. Deutsch. Adler and Barnett solely focus their discussion on pluralistic communities and thereby develop a very useful idea of nowadays international political arena. In other words, they distinguish between a loosely and tightly coupled security communities. A loosely-coupled security community thereby is defined as a region of “sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change” (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 30). Furthermore, a tightly coupled security community represents a group of states with a high degree of integration but have not yet reached the level of a unified nation state. However, the general definition given by Deutsch (1988, p. 281) for a pluralistic security community is still consistent: participating states agree on major political values, have the ability and willingness to understand each other and respond quickly and adequately “to one another’s messages, needs, and actions” without the use of military power.

² Further readings, see Acharya (2009, pp. 19-23)

Deutsch has brought forward several indicators or measures for the emergence of a (new) community. With his transactionalist approach, he assumed that a sense of community could develop through transaction and interaction among the people and governments of the participating states (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 7). Therefore, he tried to quantify his observation through measuring the flow of goods and people across borders. According to Acharya (2009, p. 23) he was criticised to rely on those figures, arguing that they would not describe the processes of interaction among the different social groups. His approach would be limited to the “process of social interactions”, which differs from constructivism which considers “institutions, norms and the inter-subjective process of identity building”.

For one of the next steps it is fundamental to understand the basic ingredients of a community because only by doing that it can be explained how a community could finally emerge. Therefore, it is very helpful to look at Adler & Barnett’s (1998, p. 31) characteristics of a community:

- 1) Shared identities, values, and meanings,
- 2) Many-sided and direct relations,
- 3) Exhibiting a reciprocity which expresses a long-term interest in the relationship.

If the development of a community is understood as a process, it is to ask how a group of states will finally fulfil these three characteristics. Following Acharya (2009, p. 23), it is beneficial to look at institutions, norms and identity. To discuss the whole sphere of those three topics is impossible; however, they should be linked to which extend they facilitate community building. Starting off with institutions it is clear that they are the engines of community development – a place where identities could be discussed and crafted, where relations among the community members could emerge and finally where long term relationships could be cultivated. Acharya gives an example when he mentions the possibility that “ASEAN may be a security community-building institution” (Acharya, 2009, p. 23). Moving on, the impact of common norms on a relationship could be discussed. However one should note that the understanding of norms may differ. Scholars agree widely that liberalism and democracy are a solid foundation for a security community. But also a shared developmentalist ideology could be common ground to develop a community (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 41). Identity has to be seen as the end result an emerging community or part of the path, which seems quite reasonable, considering Benedict Anderson (2006).

3.1.3 The three phases model of a security community

The before explained highlights two core issues, the process and the end result. The first one could be better conceptualised with Adler & Barnett’s three-phase-model, namely these phases are: “nascent”, “ascendant” and “mature” (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 48f). The nascent phase could be best described as the point in time where the states become acquainted with each other and thereby develop a concept of cooperation and investigate how they could increase their mutual security. The reasons therefore are very often manifold and could be internal or external (Adler & Barnett, 1998, pp. 37-38). Dur-

ing that period most actors are not aware about the direction the cooperation will develop, and if success is at all guaranteed. But if there are signs of closer linkages, the participants start to create the first low level institutions (Capie & Evans, 2002, p. 199). This is ascendant phase, which could be called the boom period of institutionalisation. The community now, develops strong institutionalised ties, and following the line out crafted by Adler and Barnett, this will be most obvious in security matters (1998, p. 54). The last phase, and thereby the ultimate goal, is reached in the mature phase. Thereby it could be distinguished between a loosely and tightly coupled security community, nevertheless the following is limited to general characteristics. The community members have now reached the stage where “dependable expectation of peaceful change” is the case (Capie & Evans, 2002, p. 200) and crossed the line, where the preparation for war seems impossible.

3.2 Regional leadership in International Relations

As the concept concerns cooperation and interaction, it might be useful to have a leading actor among the nations who group together. Therefore, the following will introduce some basics about regional leadership, before crafting the theoretical framework.

3.2.1 Benefits of regional leadership

Having a regional leader could be beneficial for those who follow or being lead. Dent (2008b) mentions four different functions and benefits of regional leadership: provision of regional public goods, resolving collective action problems, leading the regional community-building process generally and championing and representing the interests of regional community in the wider global community (Dent, 2008b, pp. 21-22). Especially the first three of them fit very well for a regional development initiative alike the GMS.

3.2.2 Appearance of a leader

A more in detail analysis of leadership will evoke a number of terms which are part of the realist/neo-realist and neoliberal thinking. A traditional and biased view of leadership is also criticised by Dent (2008a, p. 276ff), in his words, these days literature on leadership would be one-sided with its American perspective and furthermore stick to “hegemony, hierarchy and harder forms of power” (Dent, 2008a, p. 276). With the section below these terms should be introduced in more detail.

Power is elementary to realist/neo-realist thinking, and thereby defined as “distribution of capabilities” (Davison, 2011, p. 22), with military power at its centre, but extends also to economic strength and technological leadership. In realist/neo-realist thinking, power is to a great extent aligned to the concept of ‘hard power’, where the military and economically stronger state is capable of ruling the weaker ones and determines their decisions. Barnett and Durvall (2005, p. 67) criticise this one sided perspective of power, “no single concept can capture the forms of power in international politics”. However, it is important to understand the source of power because it finally legitimatise to rule as a

leader. Besides the material definition, there is a more ideational one, which is influenced by the Constructivist School of thinking. Thereby it relates to the idea of 'soft power' crafted by Joseph S. Nye during the 1990s. Being equipped with power, it is essential in which manner it is used, and this is where hegemony, hegemonic stability theory, and leadership come into play.

Destradi (2008, p. 10) gives a simple and straight forward definition of hegemonic behaviour, it has the purpose to realise the goals set by the hegemon. Even, as in most cases, if the use of force is absent; it is still about dominating the subordinated states. Thereby a hegemon could appear in two distinct ways: namely, altruistic or egoistic. The prevailing concept thereby is hegemonic stability theory, with the hegemon providing international public goods, to safeguard peace and stability in his sphere of influence (Dent, 2008a, p. 279). It could be discussed if the hegemon acts benevolent or coercive, Destradi (2008, p. 12) highlights this discussion in detail. More important to the concept is the argument broad forward by Dent (2008a, pp. 279-280), that a hegemon weights the cost and benefits of his involvements and bases his decision upon it.

Analysing leadership as its own concept, it could be questioned to which extent it must be discussed separately. As the above already presents different forms of how to 'lead' and Destradi (2008, p. 19) picks up some ideas of the already mentioned. But as she clearly points out, there is a distinction between hegemony and leadership: the leader leads the group for a common goal or objective. In contrast to the hegemon who acts on behalf of his own goals.

3.2.3 New forms of leadership

The study of Christopher Dent's "Regional leadership in East Asia: towards a new analytical approach" (2008a) points towards a new analytical framework. To which extent it leans more towards the hegemonic stabilizer or the leader as outlined by Destradi is questionable. Especially the sections about regional- and global-multilateralism reveals the fact that the world community opts for a more collective path.

An interesting observation is that this new form of leadership takes very often place within an institutionalized body, but why do regional leaders favour that sort of environment. Dent (2008a, p. 283) therefore refers to Pedersen (2002, pp. 685-686) and his concept of co-operative hegemony with its four main advantages:

- 1) Advantages of Scale; refers to the access of a unified market and the opportunities which come along for an economically strong cooperative hegemon and therewith the possibility to strengthen the cooperative hegemon's role on the international stage
- 2) Advantages of stability; the possibility to create a sphere of peace and stability which is spear-headed by the cooperative hegemon and supports his interests

3) Advantages of inclusion; integration of states which could beneficially contribute to the body or politically important for the cooperative hegemon

4) Advantages of diffusion, to expand the cooperative hegemon's ideas and norms within the region

Nevertheless, leadership comes at a price, not only for the followers who have to submit themselves to the leader and thereby give up their freedom. Much more the leader is in demand to share its power, and being committed to a regional organization comes most likely along with a high cost burden for the strongest part, and last but not least the leader needs a long time-horizon and has to commit to the regional organization (Pedersen, 2002, p. 678).

3.3 Final theoretical framework

Before the following will emerge on the theoretical framework, some preconditions which could be agreed without any doubts. The GMS is not comparable to ASEAN or EU; both are meant to facilitate regional integration and are not limited to regional cooperation, so therefore this research could be limited to loosely coupled and thereby pluralistic security community. As this research focuses on the infrastructure dimension, it will not give answer how to solve and overcome traditional and non-traditional security challenges, much more section 2.3 (p. 5) was meant to highlight the need for regional cooperation. Hence it seems beneficial to analyse the processes towards the establishment of institutions, norms and identity, and also to consider the Deutschian approach of interactions and transactions, and finally assess the phase of the potential security community. Last but not least, this research will look at the development of railway infrastructure and tries to evaluate the role of leadership for this particular case.

4 The GMS project & the development of infrastructure

As the forgoing explains, an important contribution to regional security is the existence of a mutual dialogue on the level of officials, but furthermore this needs to extend to the various social classes of citizens across borders. When only that is the case, the three characteristics of a community could come through (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 31). Discussing the development of infrastructure it is to ask how this could facilitate dialogue among the people. Looking at the GMS and the development of trans-boundary infrastructure and hence trans-boundary trade, experts talk about the hard- and software. Simply stated, the hardware represents the tarmac and the software the agreements and regulations in place. It is possible to move with three steps from the roads to the mind of the citizens, and therefore towards a community. The hardware could be classified as the facilitator of effective trade and movement of goods and people. Nevertheless, without the software in place, there will not be 'smooth' interaction. To put the software in place, officials of the participating states need to interact and thereby it opens the doors for further interaction on other fields. Finally with the software in

place, the interaction among the citizens is facilitated and gives them the opportunity to build relationships.

4.1 Infrastructure projects

4.1.1 North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC)

Figure 2: North-South Transport Corridor



(ADB, 2010d, p. vi)

Initially the NSEC was designed as a more or less straight connection between Kunming and Bangkok. These days it is split up into three sub-corridors (ADB, 2010d, p. 5): the Western Sub-corridor, containing the initial route, offering different alternatives (crossing from the PRC into Thailand through Myanmar or Laos, and a second split up between Chiang Rai and Nakhon Sawan within Thailand); the Central Sub-corridor, connecting Yunnan (PRC) with northern Vietnam and thereby the cities of Kun-

ming (PRC) and Ha Noi (VNM); and finally the Eastern Sub-corridor, offering two different routes from Nanning (PRC) to Ha Noi (VNM).

According to Stone et al. (2010, p. 17) the NSEC and especially the route between Kunming (PRC) and Bangkok (THA) are the most developed within the GMS. The action plan (ADB, 2010d) demonstrates that the majority of projects should have been completed by now, with the main target to upgrade the routes “from class or grade 2 or 3 to class 1”³. Especially the conditions of the roads in Myanmar and the missing bridge between Houayxay (LAO) and Chiang Khong (THA) are a bottleneck. Most roads have been successfully upgraded and the bridge is under construction and expected to be finished by 2013 (Ghosh, 2011). As soon as all construction projects are realised, which will result in a fully paved all-weather road link between Bangkok (THA) and Kunming (PRC) (Fujimura, 2008, p. 33) and the agreements are in place, the transit time will reduce significantly (Banomyong, 2007, p. 12). Furthermore all countries have participated in different activities to make the Mekong more navigable and developed the port infrastructure. Nevertheless, for this research water transport will be neglected as the transit time exceeds the road transport more than twice (Banomyong, 2007, p. 12).

4.1.2 East-West-Economic Corridor (EWEC)

Figure 3: East-West Transport Corridor



(ADB, 2010c, p. 5)

The EWEC route got a length of 1,320 km and thereby it crosses four countries. On the western shores of the Southeast Asia it starts off at Mawlamyine (MMR), crosses into Thailand at Myawaddy (MMR)-Mae Sot (THA). From there on the route continuous towards the East and crosses into Laos at the border checkpoint Mukdahan (THA)-Savannakhet (LAO). Within Lao it creates a West-East link, between Thailand and Vietnam, as the route makes its way into Vietnam at Dansavanh (LAO)-Lao Bao (VNM). As soon as the route hits the shores of the South China Sea, it continues southward towards Da Nang (VNM) (ADB, 2010c, p. 6).

³ Retrieved from (ADB, 2010d, p. 76): Class 1—an expressway that is sealed completely from pedestrians with concrete barriers on both sides of the road; class 2—a three-lane highway with unsealed sides and no middle dividers with a speed limit of 80 km per hour; class 3—a two-lane narrow and winding road with a speed limit of 60 km per hour.

According to the 2009 action plan (ADB, 2010c) most road infrastructure projects are completed. Very important was the Second Friendship Bridge between Thailand and Laos, which was finished in December 2006 (Fujimura, 2008, p. 34), and the upgrading of highways. Nevertheless, with the later one standards differ, as most roads in Thailand are now four-lane highways, the section in Vietnam has just been upgraded to a Class III highway and the road in Myanmar linking Thingannyinaug and Myawady has been 'completed'. Further goals are especially to improve interconnectivity to sea routes on both sides to enhance the forwarding of goods shipped in and out of Southeast Asia (ADB, 2010c, p. 11).

4.1.3 Southern-Economic-Corridor (SEC)

Figure 4: Southern Transport Corridor



(ADB, 2010b, p. 5)

The SEC is a parallel corridor to the EWEC but further to the south and spreads out along the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea. The main routes form a 90° shifted Y, starting off at the port of Dawei (MMR), going straight through Thailand and thereby passing by Bangkok (THA) before splitting up just behind the Thai-Cambodian border. From there on the northern string passes by Siem Reap (KHM) and finally ends in the seaside town of Quy Nhon (VNM). The southern string, on the other hand, connects to Phnom Penh (KHM) and Ho Chi Minh City (VNM) before it reaches its final destination in Vung Tau (VNM). Therefore, the later one represents one of the main routes within the whole of the GMS as it connects three capitals. Nevertheless as already mentioned, the SEC contains further routes which on the one hand should interconnect to the others but they are also contributed to the structure of the region, as for example the Southern Coastal Sub-Corridor, which starts in Bangkok

(THA) and runs all the way along the eastern shores of the Gulf of Thailand (ADB, 2010b, p. 5). It is to say, that officially the corridor starts at Dawei (MMR), nevertheless, the current development framework only sees the route between Dawei (MMR) and Bangkok (THA) as a possible extension (ADB, 2010b, p. 8).

When it comes to infrastructure the case for the SEC is also similar to the EWEC. Most important is the development of all season roads and river crossings. Thus far, the roads on the Thai side are all in good condition (ADB, 2010b, p. 25). Especially the routes which are known as the Southern Coastal Corridor have been upgraded during the last decade. A flagship project was the “a 1.9 km toll bridge across the Kah Bpow River (KHM)” (ADB, 2010b, p. 25). Another important river crossing is the Mekong River in Neak Loueng (KHM) where construction started early this year and is expected to finish within five years (AKP, 2011). The completion will eliminate one of the bottlenecks on the route Bangkok (THA)-Phnom Penh (KHM)-Ho Chi Minh City (VNM) (2008, p. 36). Generally speaking, without picking a single country, the southern tip of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, all need to catch up and improve their infrastructure and thereby need - and are already supported by - international donors. Another important task for the region is to upgrade the port infrastructure, which include port facilities and the access roads and highways (Bangkok-Laem Chabang in Thailand; Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville in Cambodia & Ho Chi Minh City-Vungau in Vietnam). Furthermore, Laos needs to upgrade its airports to improve accessibility (ADB, 2010b, p. 28).

4.2 Infrastructure software

Besides the infrastructure, it is important that the so-called "software" is in place, such as the regulations and agreements which facilitate cross-border trade and movement of goods and people - in case of the GMS this is the Cross-Border-Transport-Agreement (CBTA). According to Yushu Feng (2011), the process of negotiating those agreements is crucial to the regional cooperation. As countries need to develop a common understanding and perspective. Not only from an institutional angle, but also from a practical point of view is the CBTA important and different researchers point to the fact that red tape is thus far the biggest bottleneck of trade. The CBTA covers several fields “to develop and maintain a mutually beneficial, smooth, swift, rational, and efficient system of transport and communications” (Feng, N.A.). Namely they are: “one-stop customs inspection; improved cross-border movement of people (i.e., visas for persons engaged in transport operations); transit traffic regimes, including exemptions from physical customs inspection, bond deposit, escort, and phytosanitary and veterinary inspection; exchange of commercial traffic rights; and infrastructure, including road and bridge design standards, road signs, and signals” (Stone et al., 2010, pp. 17-18).

In case of the GMS it is possible to divide the development into three phases⁴: 2003-2007, 2007-2011 and post-2011. At the very beginning of the first phase in December 2003, the CBTA legally entered into force. As a result, the countries established the National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), the main negotiators for the annexes and protocols. From August 2004 till March 2007, the CBTA was implemented on a pilot basis along the EWEC (also known as the 'initial implementation of CBTA', IICBTA). By the end of 2009, four GMS countries (Cambodia, PRC, Laos and Vietnam) had ratified all CBTA annexes and protocols. During the second period, the participants agreed on substantial harmonization on the field of traffic rights and the customs transit and temporary admission system (CTS). Nevertheless, besides promising achievements, there is still a lot on the agenda for the current period. Thailand and Myanmar have not yet fully ratified the annexes and protocols. Furthermore, even so if traffic rights have been harmonized, there is a need to extend the harmonization throughout the region and review them where necessary. In case of the custom transit, with its leading role of the EWEC, the CTS has to be implemented there first before it will be extended to the other corridors. Throughout the whole process, NTFC officials have an outstanding position as they are not only responsible for negotiation and implementation but also for monitoring the achievements.

4.3 Evaluation

The above two sections give a good picture of the current state of development, even if it is not a detailed list of projects⁵. Doing a brief review of the presented and the theoretical framework, two things can be said: Firstly, the hardware development is on the home straight and most projects will be done by 2015 as it is officially planned (BOI, 2008). As for the software development, the basics are in place, which is a great accomplishment having in mind the numerous negotiations which have been necessary to get there. Nevertheless the process of implementation and further adjustments will be a big task for all involved parties.

Table 1: LPI GMS & EU12

	2006	2007	2008	2009	Trend
EU12	2.98	2.99	3.1	3.1	+
Cambodia	2.5	2.5	2.46	2.46	-
China	3.32	3.32	3.49	3.49	++
Lao PDR	2.25	2.25	2.37	2.37	++
Myanmar	1.86	1.86	2.33	2.33	++
Thailand	3.31	3.31	3.29	3.29	-
Vietnam	2.89	2.89	2.96	2.96	+

(World Bank, 2009)

⁴ This paragraph refers to background information provided by Mr. Yushu Feng in advance of my interview (Feng, 2011)

⁵ Detailed list of projects, please follow up on Krongkaew (2004)

It is clearly to see, that the GMS countries, taking steps ahead and thereby developing closer ties among each other. Nevertheless, it is also important to measure the increase efficiency and to analyse the direct effects on trade within the region. A first step, to get a better idea is to apply the current Logistics Performance Index (LPI), a aggregated weighted average of seven key areas of logistics performance (1=low to 5=high), which is also applied by Menon & Melendez (2011). Analysing the index, it becomes obvious, that the changes are marginal. To get a better understanding for the figures, the average of the new (post 2004) EU member countries is added, similar to Bafoil & Ruiwen (2010), who compared the GMS with Central Eastern Europe.

At a first sight, it seems that the GSM countries are not too far away from another transitional region of this world, nevertheless only two countries are above and a third is in the vicinity of the EU12 figures. Overall the GMS average is at 2.82 (2009), which is 0.19 digits below the EU12. It is no surprise that there are big differences among the countries. However, the majority of countries have improved their position. If this could be credited to the GMS is difficult to evaluate based on these data, nevertheless it is assumable that the cooperation has a high impact. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind, that the figures for China do represent the whole country.

4.3.1 Facilitating trade & transport in the GMS

“Cross-border road infrastructure in the GMS has had a discernible positive effect on regional trade and is considered a critical part of a broader effort to encourage regional integration to benefit GMS economies” (Fujimura, 2008, p. 30). The following table should give a first insight before analysing the facts and figures in detail to proof the above quote.

Table 2: Time & Cost Savings

Corridor	Route	Cost Savings	Time Savings	
Central Corridor	Vientiane–Laem Chabang ⁶	40%	43%	(Nathan Associates Inc., 2007, p. 3)
EWEC	Bangkok-Hanoi		34%	(Isono, 2010, p. 344)
EWEC	Danang–Mukdaharn ⁷	50%	42%	(Nathan Associates Inc., 2007, p. 4)
EWEC	Dansavanh-Lao Bao (border crossing clearance)		66%	(ADB, 2009, p. 89)
EWEC	Route within Lao PDR Route within Vietnam (NR9 / Highway 1)		75% 25%	(ADB, 2007b, p. 19)
SEC	Phnom Penh-Bavet (similar for Vietnam)		30%	(ADB, 2007a, p. 15)

Some of the above was first mentioned in Stone & Strutt (2010)

⁶ Cost Saving: US\$ 1,362 vs. the norm of US\$ 820; and 18.5 days vs. the norm of 10.5 days

⁷ Cost Saving: US\$ 1,625 vs. the norm of US\$ 825; and 12 days vs. the norm of 7 days

4.3.2 Case study: The North-South Economic Corridor

To give a detailed picture of the improvement, this section refers to the NSEC and the work of Banomyong (2007). The great advantage in comparison to other researches is twofold: First of all his estimation is based on historical, recent (as of 2006, the year of his survey) and predicted data, which therefore gives a picture of what is possible. Secondly, for his cost and time analysis he distinguishes between transport and port/border. He analysis three different branches of the NSEC, namely Bangkok (THA)-Kunming (PRC), the most interesting - but also most difficult, due to his sub-branches which does not include any data about the development over time. The other routes are Haiphong (VNM)-Kunming (PRC) and Nanning (PRC)-Hanoi (VNM). The following will present the Haiphong (VNM)-Kunming (PRC) route, as it links the economic centres of Yunnan (PRC) and northern Vietnam.

The 885km long route connects as Asian Highway 14 the metropolis of Kunming (PRC) and Hanoi (VNM), its final destination is the port of Hai Phong (VNM), which could be accessed from Hanoi (VNM) on the national Highway 5. Distance wise, the route is the shortest access to the South China Sea from the Province of Yunnan (PRC). Nevertheless, Chinese traders may prefer domestic ports and with the planned upgrade of the railway network the importance of road transport might decrease (ADB, 2010d, pp. 76-82).

Table 3 gives a first insight of the development of the Hai Phong (VNM)-Kunming (PRC) corridor and the expected reduction in time and cost till the year 2015, what is interesting to see, is that already the first GMS activities had an impact on the cost and time factors of this corridor.

Table 3: Trends in the Hai Phong-Kunming corridor

Hai Phong-Kunming	\$ per ton	Transit time
Year 2000	105	85 hours
Year 2006	87	58 hours
Year 2015	43	26.5 hours

(Banomyong, 2007, p. 14)

Looking at Table 4 there is the need to be aware that total cost and time have diminished (see Table 3). The aim of this overview is much more to show how the ratios have changed over the years and, hence, to show how the development had a positive effect. Glancing through the literature as also mentioned by Banomyong (2007, p. 4), the bottleneck of cross-border trade in Southeast Asia are the border crossings. His analysis does not only show the positive effects of successful hardware establishment but also points to the fact that the implementation of the software is successful.

Table 4: Trends in the Hai Phong-Kunming corridor

Hai Phong-Kunming	Transport cost	Port/Border & Transit fees	Corridor cost	Transport time	Port/Border crossing time	Corridor time
Year 2000	76%	24%	100%	55%	45%	100%
Year 2006	77%	24%	100%	50%	50%	100%
Year 2015	80%	20%	100%	52%	48%	100%

(Banomyong, 2007, p. 14)

4.3.3 The economic effect of time gains

A good resource to better understand the importance of time gains in transport is Minor et al. (2008). Their explanations aim to remark to which extent trade and transport facilitation has an impact on economic growth. Therefore, they refer to other examples and studies and give a good review on the literature before developing their model. With their model they estimate the economic gains of reducing the time to export and import by 25% with the result that “regional GDP [is] estimated to increase by approximately US\$ 800 million” (Minor et al., 2008, p. 13).

4.3.4 Facts & Figures

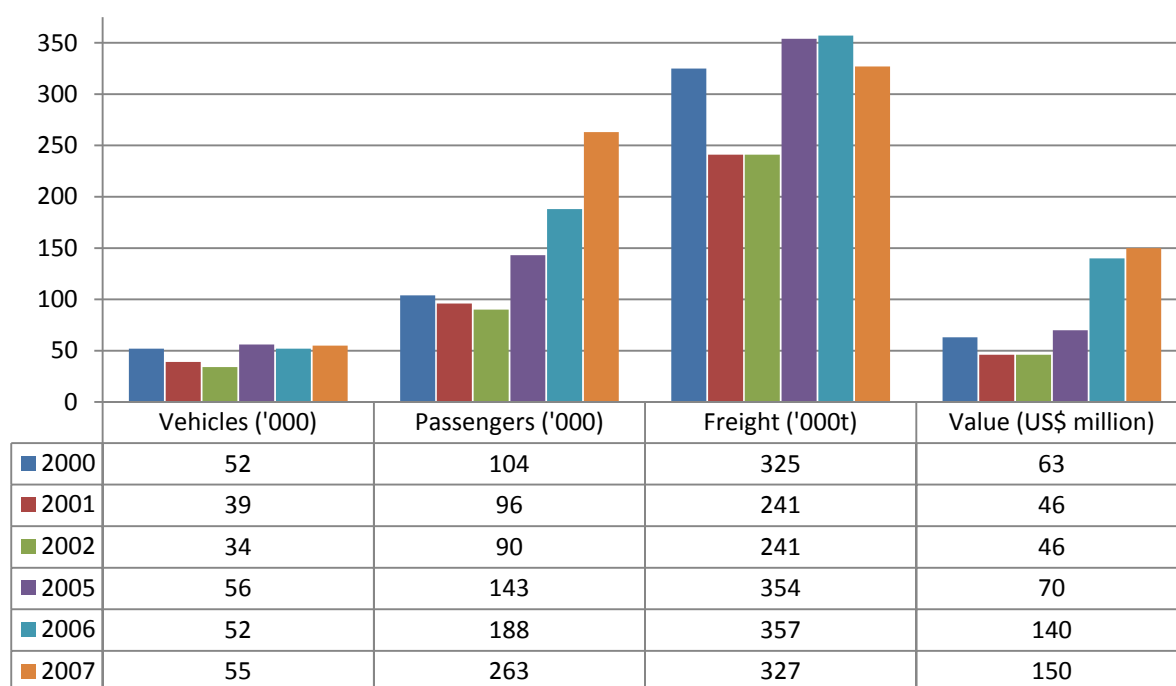
After reviewing the effects and benefits of cross-border trade and transport facilitation, some numbers which should underline the increase in trade among the GMS countries. Based on the United Comtrade database the AusAID publication says that the interregional trade has increased by 500% for the time periods of 2000 to 2008, and only 380% towards the outside world (CIE, 2010, p. 8). Besides the gains on national level, there are also positive effects along the route as Isono’s (2010, p. 347) studies reveals. Nevertheless there are also drawbacks on a regional level, as highlighted by Dr. Pupphavesa (2011) in our conversation at the beginning of July. The policies implemented through the GMS framework, are in particular beneficial for the big operators and thereby pose a challenge to the local small scale freight forwarders.

The amount of resources which actually give fixed numbers are limited, thus far the following will only present details about the EWEC. According to the ADB (2007b, p. 19) there is a significant increase of traffic along the route connecting Mukdahan (THA)-Savannaketh (KMH)-Khe Sanh (KMH)-Dong Ha (VNM) (Asian Highway 16 / GMS Route 2 / within Laos Road 9). With 300% more traffic at the border town of Dansavanh (LAO), and even a higher increase of traffic along the same route within Vietnam. The numbers of international and domestic buses on that route has also increased significantly. Luanglatbandith (2007, p. 13) gives more evidence of the positive effects along the EWEC, stimulated by the improvement of infrastructure. As also Dr. Pupphavesa (2011) mentioned “rapid expansion of exports and import” between Thailand and its neighbouring countries.

Even if Figure 5 is only for one particular border along the EWEC it gives a good impression of the changes due to GMS policies. Nevertheless, besides the mentioned limitation, it is also necessary to consider further externalities, e.g. the economic growth, which also has a positive effect on trade. During the represented period, both countries experienced average growth rates above 6.5% (IMF, 2011). Therefore, Vietnam seems to have the steadier growth and is less dependable on the world markets as in comparison to Lao PDR. For Figure 5 there are two observations which are useful for the analysis: First of all, the dint in 2001 & 2002, and secondly, the growths in numbers from 2005 on. As "Passengers" and "Value" present the ‘purest’ data, the analysis will be limited to these two indica-

tors. The dip in 2001 and 2002 could be a result of the 9/11 and the following economic downturn. Nevertheless, the GDP growth figures reveal that this is most likely credited to Lao PDR, as their economy experienced a growth rate which was reduced by almost 2% points. For the time of 2005 and afterwards there are two conclusions to be drawn, first of all, the positive trend of growth (upward sloping trend line) for both economies continued (IMF, 2011). Secondly, construction work on Road 9 was accomplished by the end of Q2-2005 (ADB, 2007b, pp. 32-33). Furthermore, Luanglatbandith (2007, p. 8) gives evidence that all projects along EWEC connecting Laos and Vietnam were opened or completed by mid-2005. And the above mentioned IICBTA memoranda of understanding (MOU) for the Dansavanh (LAO)-Lao Bao (VNM) section was signed in March 2005 and 16 months later the Thai-Laos border crossing on the EWEC followed.

Figure 5: Border Movements at Lao Bao (Vietnam), 2000–2007 (sum of both directions; Lao PDR to Vietnam)



No data for 2003 & 2004 available
(ADB, 2007b)

4.4 Railway development

As mentioned in the beginning, the Chinese government in cooperation with Southeast Asia states tries to develop a pan-Asian railway network. Without any question, the developed regional railway network will be very beneficial for the region and not only because it boosts trade, but it also enhances the connectivity and dialogue among the citizens of Southeast Asia.

4.4.1 The state of the GMS railway

To analysis corridor by corridor is not really helpful, therefore the following will directly emerge on a country to country analysis. Thailand (ADB, 2010d, p. 81) has a well established network with 4,000 km of track, which connects Bangkok (THA) with northern, north-eastern, eastern and southern prov-

inces and links to Malaysia and Singapore. Nevertheless, most of the network is single tracked, using a 1,000 mm gauge and thus far only one rail link to a neighbouring GMS country at the Nong Khai (THA) border crossing. The case for China is different, which traditionally has a good established railway network and invests a lot these days. For the two Chinese regions integration in the national network is spatial, with Guangxi being fully integrated and Yunnan only very limited. It is at the bordering regions of Vietnam and China where the different gauges split the continent, an example is the Kunming (PRC)-Hekou (VNM) railway, which is 1,000 mm gauge, in contrast to the rest of China (ADB, 2010d, p. 79). 1,726 km of Vietnam's 2,600 km long network are part of the Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh City route (VNR, 2011). Most of the tracks are 1,000 mm gauge, and only 178 km got standard gauge and 253 km dual gauge. Cambodia has two main tracks, the so called Northern Line (386 km) and Southern Line (264 km) which both start off in Phnom Penh. As a cause of the civil war, the rail network in Cambodia is not fully operational (ADB, 2010b, pp. 26-27).

4.4.2 Linking the sub-continent

Analysing the future development of the railways infrastructure in the GMS countries reveals that there is more to be considered than just the physical infrastructure (ADB, 2010a, pp. 7-13). But as the above states, the quality of the overall network is weak and so therefore upgrading and creating inter-connectivity should have priority. An extensive cost benefit analysis was conducted by CANARAIL Consultants Inc. (ADB, 2011c) for the four routes presented below. The major goal, besides individual country activities to upgrade their tracks, is to establish the so called Singapore-Kunming Rail Link (SKRL). The starting point for this venture would be Bangkok, as a link to the South is already established, with four different routes currently discussed:

Route 1: Bangkok-Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh City-Hanoi-Kunming-Nanning

Route 2: Bangkok-Vientiane-Kunming (via Boten/Mohan)-Nanning-Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City

Route 3: Bangkok-Vientiane-Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City-(via Tha Khaek-Mu Gia-Vung Anh)-Kunming-Nanning

Route 4: Bangkok-Kunming (via Chiang Rai-Boten-Mohan)-Nanning-Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City

As a look on the map reveals the routes vary, but they are based with the goal to use infrastructure already in place. Only Route 2 and 4 would need a substantial amount of new tracks to create a direct connection from Thailand to Yunnan through Laos.

4.4.3 Railway modernization & Chinese initiatives

Besides the fact that the GMS countries have recognised the need to upgrade their railway, China also promotes a high speed railway network connecting its southern province with mainland Southeast Asia and - in the future - also with the Malay Peninsula. The following will try to give a broad picture,

of both, the projects planned by the countries and the agenda crafted by China. For the latter one, the promotion of a high speed rail link should serve three goals: to establish the SKRL, even if it does not completely match with the broader regional framework of GMS and ASEAN+1 (Montlake, 2011), to establish a 'back door' to the Indian Ocean and hence access to new markets (Kuhn, 2011) and finally it should support Chinese companies and their endeavour for global markets (Manila Bulletin, 2010). An important step forward for China is to develop the tracks up to the border crossing. Two projects under way are the route Menghzi-Hekou to link with Vietnam and Dali-Ruili to connect to Myanmar. Another route considered would be Yuxi-Mohan and thereby the link to Laos (ADB, 2011c, p. 10). Myanmar is about to extend its existing network of 6,942 km by another 2,000 km and aims to connect its network with China and Thailand (ADB, 2011c, p. 10). All Burmese projects are sponsored by China and are the most advanced among those in Southeast Asia. The Chinese goal is to connect Myanmar to Yunnan, and thereby develop several critical routes, namely to the Kyaukpyu, a new port at the western shores of Myanmar, to Yangon and further down south to Dawei, and a third route linking China to northern Thailand through Myanmar (McCartan, 2011). Laos has *de facto* no railway network, except the link from Thailand which terminates just behind the border; feasibility studies to connect this dead-end with Vientiane (LAO) are under way. Other considered routes are links to Vietnam, China, and two more southern ones, which cross the country and thereby connect Thailand and Vietnam (ADB, 2011c, p. 9). In the case of Thailand, recent plans were limited to upgrade the current network. But triggered off by the Chinese, there is currently the discussion to develop a high speed railway network. The Chinese plan belongs to a bigger picture of the Kunming (PRC)-Vientiane (LAO)-Bangkok (THA) route with the long-term goal to connect Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Singapore (Kuhn, 2011). In the case of Cambodia, current activities are merely focused on upgrading and rehabilitating the mentioned lines. Furthermore, the government evaluates the feasibility of connecting its network with Vietnam (ADB, 2011c, pp. 8-9). The railway network in Vietnam is currently undergoing a major upgrade, and the focus is on the track between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and the links to its GMS neighbour countries. The program in Vietnam is not only limited to the tracks but also the implementation of new technologies, as well as a modernisation of the rolling stock. Furthermore, the government conducts studies in regard of a high speed link between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

The Chinese approach

China is not only encouraging its neighbours and supplying technical assistance, it also plays a critical role in planning, financing construction and even running the railway. For example in the case of Laos, a local official expects that 40,000 Chinese workers to be on the sites, with Myanmar it is agreed on a 50 year BOT (build, operate and transfer) contract for the 800 km long Muse-Kyauk Phyu railroad (The China Post, 2011) and, in the case of Thailand, it was planned to operate the railway under a joint-venture (Shih, 2011). Even so a MOU was signed with Laos in October 2010 and the one for the rail-

road within Thailand seemed to be ready to sign, there have been some drawback recently. The ground-breaking ceremony for the US\$ 7 billion project in Laos was rescheduled most likely because of the dismissal of the Chinese minister of railways earlier this year (Shih, 2011). And with an already expected political shift in Thailand the Chinese government did not hurry to sign the MOU before the new administration was in place, which, from today's perspective, was a wise decision as just recently the new Thai prime minister revised the high-speed rail plans to focus on a more domestic approach (Skulpichetrat, 2011).

4.4.4 The role of leadership

The construction of a high speed railway network in mainland Southeast Asia is a prime example of China's role within the GMS and its future plan for mainland Southeast Asia. Before the above described will be evaluated a summary of China's role within the GMS. Looking through the literature, there are three core topics, traditional and non-traditional security issues, (Hensengerth, 2009, p. 10; Summers, 2008, pp. 75-76) economic interests (Lim, 2009, p. 44) and redefining and shaping the role of China. Especially the last one is expressed in manifold ways, but thereby always advances China's position. Turning points for China's engagement in the GMS were the 2002 and 2005 summits; both were attended by the then Prime ministers and both declaring with words and actions that the country will take a responsible and leading role (Yoshimatsu, 2010, p. 89). Other authors write about the goal to establish through economic cooperation a new regional architecture and bring forward the idea of China's peaceful rise (Lim, 2009, pp. 48-49), to develop relations within Asia (Summers, 2008, p. 73) and to increase the countries influence (Hensengerth, 2009, p. 11).

Looking at the role of China, and thereby analysing the benefits (Section 3.2.1), the mode of leadership (Section 3.2.2) and how the country makes use of the new forms (Section 3.2.3), the following could be said. Without any doubts, the leading role of China, and especially the financial abilities are very much welcomed. In the case of Laos the cost of the railway project exceeds the countries annual GDP (Shih, 2011). Talking to scholars in Thailand (Dr. Bhongmakapat, 2011; Dr. Pupphavesa, 2011), they raised different perspectives; on the one side an expanded and faster railway could help to counter urbanisation as access to the countryside will be improved. On the other side, Thailand could end up being bypassed as the route aims to connect China and Singapore and it is questioned to which extent it will be beneficial for the lower socio-economic class, rather than the new middle class and big corporations. Especially for the poor GMS countries, it is seductive to reap the benefits of Chinese obligation while ignoring the trade-off. To tag Chinese behaviour as hegemonic would be wrong; however, presenting the country as an altruistic leader as defined by Destradi (2008) is also misleading. Much more, it could be said, that China takes responsibility developing ideas and thereby acts as a leader and takes care that the benefits outweighs the costs. The country understands - perhaps more

than maybe some other super powers - that an international framework like the GMS, ASEAN or other multinational dialogues and cooperation's serve as the ideal structure to bring forward its own goals.

5 Conclusion

As mentioned in Section 3.1, the baseline of a fully established security community is the absence of war and the assurance, that members will resolve their conflicts in a peaceful way. In case of the GMS it is generally known, border disputes are common within the region, and the military is still a strong political actor in a lot of Southeast Asian countries.. Nevertheless this should not disturb the fact, that the GMS got a high potential to facilitate peace and stability, same as for ASEAN which faces common challenges.

The section which deals with traditional and non-traditional security issues (Section 2.3) reveals, that the GMS has good reasons to advance the community aspect of its cooperation, as it is not only useful to advance economically but also to solve common challenges. So it is to ask to which extend the GMS fulfils the criteria crafted by Deutsch and his successors.

Evaluating the transactions across the GMS it is to say, that the cooperation project had a big impact on the intra-regional trade. In this context, it should not be forget, that there also other factors which have a positive influence, e.g. GDP growth or the advancement of ASEAN. But creating the physical infrastructure laid the foundation and opened routes and connections which have not been available before. Section 4.3.4 points to the facts that the amount of transaction has increased significantly over time. A further factor which will stimulate the trade across the region will be the establishment of a connected railway network. The argument, which is raised by modern constructivist scholars, that the amount of transaction is not an indicator of a community needs to receive true attention. Thus far this research is limited to trade facilitating infrastructure, and thereby the hard- and software. There are more input factors which could be considered, but this is behind the scope of this work. From the perspective of the author, the development of software plays an important role. First and foremost, before transaction and interaction could fully take place among the citizens of the GMS, the officials have to agree on a common framework. It is their responsibility to communicate the commonly developed identity and values, and create a network of relations among the countries. If on a high level no one expresses the interest in a long-term relationship, how should this continue throughout society? In the end, the success of the GMS will not be measured in the tons of tarmac and the kilometres of track laid, but in the implementation of an efficient CBTA. Only if that succeeds cross-border infrastructure development could really facilitate the emergence of a transnational security community.

The benefits of leadership are expressed in detail, not only in Section 3.2.1, but also in a later part of this research. Much more it is to question to which extend leadership is beneficial to facilitate a com-

munity. With their goal to establish a pan-Asian railway network, the Chinese make an important contribution to the advancement of the GMS. Nevertheless there are several other factors which have to be considered. First of all, the Chinese are not alone, it is important that they create a true “win-win” situation for the subcontinent. Not only Thailand, which is aware that the power relations changed over the last couple of years still wants to benefit from the regional cooperation. But also the smaller and poorer countries do not want to awake with the feeling of having undersold themselves. Therefore it is the task of China, and also Thailand to a certain extent, to balance the interests of the participating countries, and to guarantee besides their own benefit the benefit of the group.

In the end, it is to ask, at which stage the GMS is, and thereby it could be agreed, that it is a pluralistic security community in a nascent phase. Why nascent? Nascent because its low level of institutionalisation, furthermore the group does not know the direction it will develop. The concept of the GMS is not meant to facilitate regional integration; it is limited to regional cooperation. And an in-depth analysis of East Asia will reveal that the GMS is by far not the only regional grouping. The scenarios for the future could be manifold, but what could be said for sure: Thus far, the GMS was a very important contributor to economic development in mainland Southeast Asia. It might not fully live up to the criteria crafted by Deutsch, but nevertheless it helps to maintain peace, stability and security in the region.

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