ASEAN AND AI GOVERNANCE IN A MULTIPLEX WORLD: TOWARD A CONSTRUCTIVIST RESEARCH AGENDA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has increasingly become an issue of global governance, raising questions not only about technological development but also about norms, authority, identity, and international order. While much of the existing debate on AI governance has centred on major powers and institutions, e.g. the United States, China, and the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its member states remain relatively underexplored as regional actors in this field. This article argues that ASEAN's emerging engagement with AI governance should be approached not merely as a technical or regulatory response, but as a potential site for examining ASEAN identity and regional agency in a multiplex world. The article develops this argument through a focused conceptual review of scholarship on AI governance, constructivism, and ASEAN regionalism, alongside selected ASEAN policy documents. Drawing on constructivist insights, particularly the ideas of norms, identity, norm localisation, and Acharya's concept of multiplexity, the article proposes a research agenda for studying how ASEAN and its member states may construct, negotiate, and project their identities through AI governance. Rather than conducting an empirical analysis of ASEAN AI policy documents, the article identifies three possible directions for future research:

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the identity construction of ASEAN and its member states, the localisation of global AI norms in Southeast Asia, and the interaction between regional and national AI identities. The article connects multiplexity, norm localisation, and regional and national identity to frame questions about ASEAN's AI governance. These questions can guide future comparisons of ASEAN and member-state policy and help identify where regional guidance and national priorities may diverge.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, AI governance, constructivism, International Relations, ASEAN, multiplexity

Introduction

ASEAN as an underexplored AI governance actor

Southeast Asia represents a distinctive case because states in the region differ significantly in terms of economic capacity, political systems, cultural backgrounds, and geographical conditions. Despite the variations, states in the region have increasingly adopted AI according to their own needs and have governed it in different ways. Collaboration is also evident at the level of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which admitted Timor-Leste as its eleventh member in October 2025. ASEAN has made continuous efforts to develop regional approaches to AI governance. Starting from its ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025, published in 2021 to recognise the importance of AI, to the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics (ASEAN Secretariat, 2024) and its expanded guide on generative AI (ASEAN Secretariat, 2025), these documents illustrate the organisation’s growing role in this area. Additionally, based on its mission to develop Southeast Asians, ASEAN Foundation has offered online AI courses, covering topics from AI literacy to ethical concerns related to AI, via AI Class ASEAN website (https://www.aiclassasean.org) with the financial support from Google.

Existing research on AI global governance has examined different angles of AI, ranging from policy documents of states and companies to ethical issues. The research in this area has also paid attention to AI governance of Southeast Asian states and their collective attempts to oversee AI development and its impacts upon societies in the region. Recent studies have examined Southeast Asian AI policies and

ASEAN's evolving regional approach (Fong, 2026; Keith, 2024; Putra, 2024). What remains less clear is how ASEAN's self-presentation as a regional actor might relate to the identities claimed by its member states, and how that relationship could be studied in a multiplex order.

These developments show that ASEAN is no longer absent from AI governance. Yet they also raise a more conceptual question that remains insufficiently explored: how do ASEAN and its member states understand, present, and position themselves as AI governance actors? More specifically, how might global AI norms be interpreted at the ASEAN level, and where might regional and national accounts of responsible AI converge or differ?

Aims, arguments, and contributions

The aims of this article are threefold. First, I review studies of AI within the discipline of International Relations (IR) to identify gaps in the literature. Second, I examine research on Southeast Asia and AI to identify understudied dimensions. Third, rather than conducting an empirical analysis, I propose constructivist questions about how AI-governance norms may relate to the identities of ASEAN and its member states.

These proposed research areas could contribute to knowledge on how AI norms are constructed and how they may simultaneously constitute the identities of ASEAN and its member states. Although this research agenda is related largely to the discipline of IR, it simultaneously contributes to the broader literature of other disciplines, e.g. public policy and social development.

This article is a focused conceptual review rather than a systematic or bibliometric study. It brings together scholarly work on AI governance, international norms, identity, and multiplexity with selected ASEAN and United Nations documents. Sources are discussed for their relevance to the conceptual question, not as an exhaustive sample of AI-governance publications. Relevant scholarship was located through targeted online searches on AI governance, constructivism, norm localisation, ASEAN, and multiplexity. Works were selected for their relevance to the article's conceptual question, alongside the ASEAN and United Nations documents discussed

here. The review compares insights at global, regional, and national levels and uses the unresolved questions to develop a research agenda (Snyder, 2019).

AI governance as an issue in International Relations

AI governance beyond technology

To develop this research agenda, it is first necessary to clarify why AI governance should be treated as an issue of IR rather than merely as a matter of technological management.

In the past decade, global attention to AI has grown dramatically. The issue of AI has been examined through different disciplines and been addressed by newly established journals, such as Discover Artificial Intelligence and AI and Ethics, whose aims and scopes extend beyond the technological aspects of AI to cover various issues from multidisciplinary perspectives. AI governance has also been perceived as a global governance issue (United Nations, 2024). Tallberg et al. (2023) treat emerging AI regulation as a subject for empirical and normative research on global governance, including questions about actors, institutions, and ideas. This makes ASEAN's role relevant to International Relations even where the governance instruments are voluntary.

The existing body of research has surveyed the international AI regulatory landscape. Jobin et al. (2019) analysed 84 documents, issued five years prior to 2019, from private firms, government agencies, academic institutions, intergovernmental organisations, and various other entities worldwide, excluding African and South American nations, that encompass ethical concepts or guidelines for AI. Their analysis reveals a global consensus around five core ethical pillars, namely (1) procedural visibility and explainability, (2) justice and fairness, (3) safety and security, (4) accountability, and (5) data protection as human rights (Jobin et al., 2019). In the latest research, Bar-Gil (2026) also analyses ten fundamental AI ethics documents, published between 2018 and 2021, spanning academic, industrial, military, and national domains to determine if universal ethical concepts retain constant significance across many situations. They identify similar concepts with Jobin et al. (2019) but with more nuanced details which results in the total identification of 14

ethical criteria, including free market, agency traceability, and reliability. Both Jobin et al. (2019) and Bar-Gil (2026) show that the importance of ethical principles varies across contexts: the former finds divisions when it comes to how these principles are interpreted, prioritized, applied, and enforced across different sectors and actors, and the latter points to the re-contextualisation of ethical principles in accordance with particular institutional settings. The criterion of governability and traceability is notably absent in academic and industry documents; however, it is distinctly highlighted in military settings (Bar-Gil, 2026, pp. 3297, 3304).

In addition to literature scrutinising a number of AI documents issued by different actors, Evers (2024) examines the convergence or divergence in the language of the European Commission and major technology firms, such as Microsoft and Google, concerning ethical AI, finding that from 2018 to 2021, during the period of voluntary guidance, the discourse was predominantly hegemonic and depoliticised as all entities employed comparable language, whereas debate over the European Commission's 2021 proposal for an AI Act brought divergent policy preferences into view. Larsson (2020) utilises a socio-legal framework to examine the application of ethical guidelines as a governance mechanism in the development and utilisation of AI, concentrating on the experiences of (1) China's AI strategy in the New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan, Made in China 2025, and Beijing AI Principles, (2) Japan's Social Principles of Human-Centric AI, and (3) the European Union's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI and the 2020 White Paper on AI. In his findings, Larsson (2020) highlights the absence of explicit legal rules, despite certain ethical issues posed by the EU being rather well established in law and compares the Chinese emphasis on the advantages of AI for humanity and nature with the policy-oriented approach of the Japanese and the rights-based perspective of the Europeans. He highlights the importance of defining AI, the difficulties posed by the temporal disparity between technical advancements and changes in law, the necessity of transitioning from theoretical principles to practical processes in AI governance, and later calls for an interdisciplinary approach for the study of AI (Larsson, 2020).

Scholars have also raised different concerns regarding AI governance. Benkler (2019) warns that major technology firms lobby to shape AI governance in their own

interests. While recognising a role for business, he argues that firms should not dictate assessments of AI's moral and social consequences. Scharffs and Brown (2025) advocate for AI governance based on the principle of human dignity to distinguish between the beneficial and harmful applications of AI because AI lacks moral discernment. Their framework assesses AI according to its influence on human beings' inherent value, agency, and relationships, categorising it into three types: (1) dignity-degrading AI, (2) dignity-neutral AI, and (3) dignity-enhancing AI (Scharffs et al., 2025). Likewise, Jain (2025) references Maslow's hierarchy of needs to assert that AI may pose hazards to human dignity, such as heightened inequality.

Taken together, these studies show that AI governance is not only about identifying ethical principles, but also about how such principles are interpreted, prioritised, institutionalised, and legitimised by different actors. This is precisely where IR, especially constructivism, can contribute.

Taking Larsson's (2020) call as a starting point, I suggest that constructivism, with its attention to ideas, norms, and identities in international politics, can help explain who has authority to define responsible AI, whose values shape global standards, and how states and regions position themselves in global technology politics.

Multiplexity and AI governance

If AI governance involves competing interpretations of norms and authority, then it is also necessary to ask how these norms circulate in a changing world order. Acharya's concept of multiplexity is useful for addressing this question because it directs attention to multiple actors, multiple pathways, and the agency of non-hegemonic states and regions.

In recent years, IR scholars have also begun to examine AI from different theoretical perspectives. Those associated with realism point to the security aspect of AI within the anarchic structure of global governance. Horowitz (2018, pp. 38–39) points to "narrow AI," connoting specifically designed AI for specific purposes, and perceives AI as an "enabling technology," which could be utilised in combination with other technologies to realise states' national security. Specifically, in the realm

of military applications, AI can function in three domains: (1) directing physical entities, as there has been reduced reliance on human oversight in weaponry systems, (2) information processing through the automation of extensive data analysis in warfare, and (3) controlling and supervising, where AI aids in data analysis to generate forecasts that subsequently guide people's conduct (Horowitz, 2018, p. 43). Additionally, the nature of combat transforms, propelled by enhanced speed through AI or machine capabilities, despite humans ultimately making the last execution judgement (Horowitz, 2018, p. 49). AI may affect the balance of power and narrow military disparities because it can spread quickly. Horowitz (2018, pp. 39, 45) therefore argues that the distinction between AI as a technological innovation and as a military innovation matters when examining warfare. Regarding the fast pace development of AI and its potential in warfare, Payne (2018) similarly agrees with Horowitz (2018) on the potential impacts of AI on the balance of power and offers a comparative analysis of contemporary AI advancement and the Cold War evolution of nuclear strategy by highlighting similarities between the two. For Payne (2018), the latter is less transformative than the former as it did not modify the psychological core of strategic matters related to humans' cognition. AI development also leads to the reorganisation of the military sector as it contests conventional notions of warfare towards a more machine-driven manner (Payne, 2018, p. 20). According to Payne (2018), the employment of AI in warfare could raise ethical issues in cases of, for instance, automated hostilities without humanistic-based decision making of differentiating civilians from combatants during international conflicts.

Due to the fact that the potential impacts of AI in warfare could be unfavourable and unethical, IR scholars also paid attention to studying AI global governance, specifically ethics through the lens of constructivism in terms of norms. Acharya (2026) offers a different perspective from the realist accounts discussed above, focusing on the plurality of actors in global governance. This emphasis also invites comparison with accounts of international norm dynamics (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). He points to the conception of "multiplexity" or a "multiplex world order," which has five characteristics, namely (1) a world devoid of hegemony as a result of the decreasing power of the United States as the mere hegemon, (2) the

increase of prominent actors, including various states, regardless of their positions in global politics, international and regional organisations, and civic sectors, (3) evolving forms of interrelatedness in the realms of, for instance, economic and developmental activities, (4) increasing social and political variation as "multiple modernities" of both democratic and non-democratic regimes coexist, and (5) the multifaceted nature of collaboration and governance (Acharya, 2026, pp. 503–504). This concept could be perceived as an analogy for "a multiplex cinema," wherein the spectator selects from choices of film genres, performers, narratives, and producers (Acharya, 2026, p. 503). This is where the world order is "decentralized and diversified" and has "many folds" and "many parts" which are equally vital (Acharya, 2026, pp. 503–504). The concept also illustrates how many players integrate themselves inside networks of relationships that are both autonomous and mutually reliant and sheds light on a world where norms from influential sources are **not** merely replicated elsewhere; they are adapted and localised (Acharya, 2026, pp. 505–506). With regards to various and emerging global issues, he coins the concept of "multiplexity 2.0," which considers both conventional and contemporary topics of international affairs, where, for instance, the former are traditional security threats and the latter are cosmic space and AI (Acharya, 2026, p. 506). Acharya et al. (2023) also direct attention to interaction capacity: the ability of actors to organise cooperation. For ASEAN, this suggests asking whether regional forums and guidance give member states a way to shape AI-governance discussions despite differences in resources.

Acharya (2026, pp. 507–508) also develops the idea of "technological multiplexity": norms and practices surrounding new technologies do not form a single structure created by dominant actors. Instead, they present a "menu of choices" shaped by actors whose approaches both converge and diverge. He also notes that states lacking the capacity to develop AI technology or standards can choose among available options, similar to viewers in a "multiplex theatre," and points to the agency of these states. Singh et al. (2026, pp. 409–410) draw on Acharya's (2026) concept of multiplexity and argue that the global governance of AI cannot be readily encapsulated as a mere result of a simpler global power hierarchy. They consequently analyse how national and international entities synchronise their

efforts in AI policies via employing a computer-assisted approach on AI policy documents of international organisations (the United Nations, its organs and the European Union) and hegemonic and non-hegemonic states (Singh et al., 2026, p. 410). Their findings are congruent with the concept of multiplexity that powerful actors have not shied away from assuming leadership positions in the realm of AI policies or norms; yet, their activities do not constitute hegemony as previously conceived, due to the research findings indicating that global perspectives on AI can emerge from both leading and non-leading actors (Singh et al., 2026, p. 412). Singh et al. (2026) identify patterns across actors and policy texts. This article asks a different, narrower question: what regional and national claims to identity might such patterns contain, and how could future research examine them?

The relevance of multiplexity can also be seen in debates on the cultural and regional foundations of AI ethics. Several scholars have questioned whether dominant AI governance frameworks sufficiently reflect non-Western experiences and values. Although not identified within the discipline of IR and constructivism, researchers have pointed to non-Western identities in AI governance which reflect the agencies of the underrepresented. This argument corresponds to the United Nations's report on Governing AI for humanity of the exclusion of the Global South in some global AI programmes (United Nations, 2024). Garba (2025) notes that the majority of current AI ethical guidelines are grounded in Western viewpoints, emphasising individual liberties, self-determination, and utilitarianism and contends that incorporating perspectives from other cultures, such as the African ethical framework of Ubuntu, which values collectivism and social harmony, could enhance the social justice of AI governance. Similar research by Van Norren (2023) supports the argument of the inclusion of the Global South's social perspectives in global AI governance. Van Norren (2023) critiques the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) viewpoints on AI, contending that its general principles, such as individual rights and ethical governance, may not entirely correspond with the philosophy of Ubuntu, highlighting potential incompatibilities: transhumanism versus socially constructed personhood, economic rivalry versus communal sharing and kindness, and individual privacy versus collective transparency.

Taken together, these studies suggest that AI governance in a multiplex order is shaped by more than one major actor. Rather, the governance of this emerging technology has been interconnected with the ideas and roles of different actors, ranging from international organisations, (developed and developing) states to big tech companies. All these actors have their roles in defining AI, proposing what AI norms should look like and recommending actors' roles and identities regarding the development and deployment of AI. In this article, multiplexity describes the wider setting of multiple actors and available approaches; norm localisation concerns how outside ideas are selected and adapted; and identity concerns how ASEAN and its members present their roles through those choices (Acharya, 2004, 2026). These concepts guide the questions below rather than establish that ASEAN has already adopted one shared identity.

Although existing studies, such as Singh et al. (2026), have examined some Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand and Singapore, their methodological approaches may not fully capture how ASEAN and its member states construct their own ways of governing AI. In particular, large-scale or computer-assisted approaches may overlook the more nuanced ways in which policy documents express regional agency, local ideas, and identity claims.

ASEAN identity and AI governance

ASEAN provides a particularly useful site for extending this discussion because it has long been understood as a regional organization whose practices are shaped by local norms, institutional informality, and the ASEAN Way. Examining Southeast Asian countries' and ASEAN's AI policies could partly contribute to the global understanding of AI governance. Existing research on ASEAN has argued for the uniqueness of the way actors in the region interact.

Constructivist research, with its interest in norms and identity, has long pointed to the distinctiveness of the ASEAN Way. Ba (2020) analyses the historical context of ASEAN and identifies that the concept underpinning its establishment was associated with the articulation of regionalism as a manifestation of self-determination. Busse (1999) argues that ASEAN can be understood through

constructivism: its founding members moved beyond a purely power-centred approach and developed regional standards of behaviour, including non-interference and informal conflict resolution. Among many scholars attempting to conceptualise the ASEAN Way, Acharya (2009, p. 79) defines the concept as characterised by informality, a preference for consensus rather than majority voting, avoiding of formal practices, inclination towards unrestricted stances, and an intention to eschew controversial bilateral topics in multilateral meetings. The work of Acharya (2009, p. 6) also emphasises that ideas within the region or local beliefs were influential and at play with international norms, especially in the regional security domain, where external norms were selected and adjusted to be compatible regional desires. He also highlights the agency of non-western actors (Acharya, 2018) and ASEAN as a norm-taker through an active way of "congruence-building" and illustrates how transnational norms have influenced regional institutions and the region's role in transnational norm diffusion (Acharya, 2004, p. 240).

If ASEAN identity has historically been shaped by consensus, informality, and non-interference, then AI governance offers a new area in which these regional practices may be reproduced, adapted, or challenged. Scholars examining AI governance also point to the characteristics of the region. Putra (2024) argues that Southeast Asia has faced challenges in successfully regulating the utilisation of AI due to varied political systems and differing rights to digital and informational issues and ASEAN member states have struggled to establish a cohesive understanding of AI, having only released a guide on AI governance and ethics in 2024, without establishing legally binding rules for its implementation. Although the adoption of the ASEAN guide is voluntary, it possesses some advantageous qualities, such as establishing a foundation for regional discourse on AI governance and ethical concerns, encouraging human engagement in the administration of AI systems, and adopting an ecosystemic approach to policy (Fong, 2024). In Fong's 2023 assessment, six of ASEAN's then ten member states had AI strategies, while Brunei, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar did not (Fong, 2023, pp. 6–8). Brunei subsequently issued an AI governance guide, and ASEAN admitted Timor-Leste as its eleventh member in 2025 (Fong, 2026). These challenges may stem partly from ASEAN's emphasis on consensus and non-

interference (Putra, 2024) and from its limited authority to require members to follow regional rules, unlike the European Union (Fong, 2023). However, there are primary themes of the AI policies of some of the ASEAN countries which have such policies, e.g. the advancement of AI as a catalyst for economic advancement, developing human capital competencies to harness the advantages of AI applications and instituting ethical and governance frameworks for AI use (Fong, 2023, p. 7).

The mix of voluntary guidance and national policies also reflects the ASEAN Way of governing AI. Unlike several Asian nations which are transitioning from soft control via strategies and recommendations to stringent regulation via the establishment of laws and regulations governing AI (Xu et al., 2024), it is observed that ASEAN's strategies or policies for regulating AI could be built on best practices rather than being legally enforceable (Fong, 2023, p. 2). Keith (2024) likewise compares policies in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, which are not members of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), with those in Australia and Singapore, which are. Keith argues that the former place greater emphasis on human capital, while the latter focus more on ethical concerns.

On ASEAN’s future AI governance, Putra (2024) suggests three steps: (1) enhancing the significance of the issue within ASEAN's intra- and inter-regional forums to develop unified regional stances on AI; (2) implementing AI governance efforts in education, particularly through reskilling and upskilling initiatives to address forthcoming transformations in the workforce; and (3) creating a regional working party to address knowledge disparities among members resulting from varying levels of AI readiness in the region. ASEAN's guidance could support policy coordination, information exchange, and capacity building across member states (ASEAN Secretariat, 2024, 2025). AI tools could also assist officials in comparing policy texts, translating guidance, and exchanging information, provided their outputs are checked by people with relevant expertise. Yet shared guidance cannot remove differences in data accuracy, algorithmic bias, cybersecurity capacity, transparency, or the ability to provide human oversight. Those differences matter when assessing how far voluntary regional cooperation can go.

These studies are important because they show that ASEAN's AI governance is shaped by both regional diversity and institutional limits. However, they leave open a more constructivist question: how might these limits and choices also express ASEAN's identity and agency?

Building on this work, I suggest examining ASEAN's agency in AI governance, where regional norms, local beliefs, and ideas shape its approach.

Proposed research agenda

In the previous sections, I have discussed how AI governance could be approached as an issue in IR through issues central to constructivism, particularly norms, identity, and agency, and AI in the multiplex world order. I have also reviewed the existing literature on AI governance at the global and regional level and illustrate that the issue of AI is beyond its technological aspect. In this section, I propose three research directions which examine ASEAN AI governance through a constructivist lens. Existing work has examined ASEAN's AI governance frameworks and differences among member states (Fong, 2026; Keith, 2024; Putra, 2024). The three directions below focus on questions that remain for research on identity at both regional and national levels; they do not report findings from an analysis of ASEAN policy documents.

First, I propose research on the identity construction of ASEAN and its members. As shown in the prior section regarding ASEAN identity and AI governance, constructivist scholars may find it useful to examine how ASEAN and its member states construct their identities through AI governance. This is due to the fact that ASEAN member states view technology and regulate freedom of information differently within their territories. Their AI-specific policies might prioritise different aspects. For example, some states may emphasise economic growth and innovation, while others may prioritise political stability, information control, or social order. At the regional level, published ASEAN documents could be examined to see whether the ASEAN Way is reinforced and how ASEAN presents its role. It should be noted that these types of actors are for research ideas only. Future studies may find a combination of these identities or identify other forms of ASEAN identity that are not

anticipated here. A starting question is whether ASEAN's guidance presents it mainly as a convenor, a standard setter, or a source of practical support, and whether member states describe these roles in the same way.

Second, future research might examine norm localisation. The literature on AI in a multiplex world order has illustrated that in the realm of AI governance states have a menu of governance models from which to choose. Therefore, studying how ASEAN and its member states select different ideas from those outside the region, e.g. the policy documents of leading states on AI, the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act, and AI recommendations from international organisations, would be beneficial to understanding how these ideas are borrowed and negotiated when being localised in the region. This could be combined with an examination of the existing ideas of AI or technological governance prior to the arrival of outsiders' norms. By doing so, we might be able to see how ASEAN's and its member states' agency play key roles in norm reception and contestation. Researchers could compare the language of international AI principles with successive ASEAN guides and national strategies to identify which ideas are retained, changed, or omitted.

Third, the interaction of ASEAN's and its member states' AI identities might be of interest to constructivist scholars. As there are AI governance documents at both the ASEAN level and the member-state level on AI governance, examining how the identities of the regional and national levels interact in terms of their similarities and differences might help anticipate the future trajectory of AI governance in the region. In areas where differences occur, scholars might point to the causes and the potential solutions so as to promote regional efforts on governing AI. A useful question is when national priorities reinforce ASEAN's regional account of responsible AI and when they pull it in different directions.

Conclusion

This article has argued that ASEAN's engagement with AI governance deserves closer attention within IR. AI is not simply a matter of technological innovation or administrative regulation. It has become a political and normative issue through which actors define responsibility, authority, risk, development, and their

place in a changing world order. For this reason, ASEAN's emerging AI governance should not be viewed only as a regional policy response to technological change. It can also be approached as a possible site where ASEAN identity and regional agency are being constructed.

By drawing on constructivist ideas of norms and identity, as well as Acharya's concept of multiplexity, the article has suggested that ASEAN should not be treated merely as a passive recipient of AI governance models produced elsewhere. In a multiplex world, global governance is shaped by multiple actors, ideas, and institutional pathways. ASEAN's approach to AI governance may therefore be studied as an attempt to choose, adapt, and localise global AI norms in ways that correspond with regional practices, developmental priorities, and the ASEAN Way. Its preference for flexibility, voluntary guidance, capacity-building, and consensus-oriented cooperation may not simply reflect institutional weakness. It may also express a particular form of regional agency.

The article has proposed three directions for future research. First, scholars may examine how ASEAN and its member states construct their identities through AI governance, including whether ASEAN presents itself as a responsible, pragmatic, development-oriented, or autonomous regional actor. Second, future research may study how global AI norms are localised in Southeast Asia, especially how ideas such as ethical AI, responsibility, transparency, safety, and human-centred governance are selected, translated, negotiated, or contested in the region. Third, scholars may explore the relationship between ASEAN-level AI governance and the national AI strategies of member states, paying attention to how regional and national identities converge, diverge, or interact.

The main contribution of this article is therefore not to provide empirical findings on ASEAN AI policy, but to open a conceptual space for future research. It suggests that AI governance can become a fruitful site for rethinking ASEAN identity, norm localisation, and regional agency in IR. Its theoretical contribution is to bring ASEAN's regional and national identity claims into the same constructivist account of norm localisation in a multiplex setting. For policymakers, the proposed questions indicate where apparently common AI principles may conceal different national

priorities. The review is limited to selected published literature and institutional documents; it neither tests these propositions against policy texts nor includes interviews with officials. Future research could compare documents across members and, where feasible, use interviews to examine how the norms are interpreted in practice. By shifting attention away from major powers alone, future studies can better understand how regional actors such as ASEAN participate in shaping the politics of artificial intelligence in a multiplex world.

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