The ASEAN Guide

A Journalist's Handbook to Regional Integration in Southeast Asia

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Preface

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) strives for further regional integration. Since its foundation in 1967, the association has tried to enhance political, economic and socio-cultural collaboration of very diverse countries. The global financial crisis in 1997 deeply affected ASEAN Member States and accelerated the process of cooperation. The countries of the region shared a strong feeling that only by building additional mechanisms of cooperation and integration ASEAN could be resilient to challenges from outside. Currently, ASEAN aims at fully establishing its three pillars – the political, economic and socio-cultural communities – by 2015.

The process of establishing an ASEAN community has been supported by the Federal Republic of Germany. The "Capacity Building for the ASEAN Secretariat" project is a partnership between the ASEAN Secretariat and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. This programme seeks to improve the operational capacities of the ASEAN Secretariat, including enhancing its public outreach. To create a sense of belonging and consolidate unity in diversity, the Southeast Asian media are considered essential.

Within this programme the International Institute for Journalism (IIJ) of GIZ conducted training courses on the institutions, structures and policies of ASEAN. More than 100 mid-career journalists from all Member States of ASEAN successfully completed the workshops from 2008 to 2010. The result is impressive: Besides an intensified coverage of topics relating to ASEAN, the journalists have built networks and friendships all over the region cutting across political borders and helping the ASEAN community become reality.

As facilitators of the training courses and authors of this book, we are grateful to those who published this volume and supported us as we wrote this. Particularly, we thank Astrid Kohl, Marco Hamacher and Anke Melzer of IIJ for their helpful comments, not to mention their patience. We are greatly indebted to the numerous journalists participating in the training courses for interesting discussions and inspiring after-work karaoke sessions. Last but not least, we are thankful for the love and support of our families, even if sometimes we became too preoccupied with this project.

This Guide to ASEAN is based on teaching materials used and experiences made in the training courses. We hope that this handbook gives journalists across Southeast Asia and beyond a better understanding of the history, backgrounds, institutions and policies of an organisation which deserves more attention.

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Chapter 1

Why ASEAN matters

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, expressed admiration for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) when he visited the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia. "ASEAN is one of the most successful organisations which I look up to and admire," he said.[1] Undoubtedly, ASEAN has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the norms of the Westphalian international system that works to preserve the autonomy of sovereign nation states. The system was established in 1648 when major European powers agreed to respect the principle of territorial integrity by signing the Peace of Westphalia, named after the German province where the peace treaty was approved. As a result, 30 years of war ended and sovereign nation states became primary institutions of world politics.

"ASEAN is one of the most successful organisations which I look up to and admire." (Kofi Annan)

Over the course of time, however, it turned out that sovereignty alone does not ensure peace. The devastating wars of the 20th century killed millions of people worldwide and let everyone see that political stability and long-term economic growth could only be reached if states cooperate. ASEAN's generally peaceful history since its foundation in 1967 indicates the positive effects of international cooperation and reflects the progress of Southeast Asian regionalism. Indeed, ASEAN tries its best to have enhanced political, economic and socio-cultural collaboration of quite diverse countries as it strives for further regional integration.

ASEAN's generally peaceful history indicates the positive effects of international cooperation and reflects the progress of Southeast Asian regionalism

ASEAN's way into the 21st century

By founding ASEAN the 10 Member States have created the so-called ASEAN Way. This term refers to a partnership known for minimal institutionalisation, a low level of supranational elements and a preference for consensus-building.[2] ASEAN's fundamental principles include the following: "[M]utual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity for all nations; [and] non-interference in the internal affairs of one another."[3] These basic guidelines may sound harmless and even noble, but through the years the association's principles were object of sometimes severe criticism.

The ASEAN Way refers to a low level of supranational elements and a preference for consensus-building

The principles of mutual respect and non-interference in domestic affairs, for instance, were criticised to prevent the grouping from ensuring compliance among its members, as well as in resolving disputes between them. ASEAN's preference for consensus-building tended to reduce decisions to the lowest common denominator. Repeatedly, the association has been branded as a "paper tiger" for its failure to sanction erring Member States that violate agreements approved at the ASEAN level. In 2004, Rodolfo C. Severino, former Secretary-General of ASEAN, took up these arguments concluding that "the 'ASEAN Way' has been useful, even indispensable, to ASEAN in the 20th century." Even if the above-mentioned principles would remain essentially valid in the near future, Severino said that they "have to be modified and adjusted in application if ASEAN is to continue to be relevant and effective in the 21st century."[4]

ASEAN's principles have to be adjusted if the grouping is to continue to be effective in the 21st century

1 Kofi Annan on March 4, 2010 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta
2 Jürgen Haacke, ASEAN's diplomatic culture. Origins, development and prospects. New York 2003: Routledge, p. 3-7
3 Overview: Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Official Website of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Retrieved on July 9, 2008, http://www.aseansec.org/147.htm
4 Rodolfo C. Severino, Will there be a new ASEAN in the 21st century? Asia Europe

ASEAN's basic principles could be compromised by imposing an economic direction that seeks globalist ends

In fact, some of ASEAN's basic principles could be compromised by imposing, albeit indirectly, an economic direction that seeks globalist ends. It is possible to argue that the principles of "mutual respect" and "non-interference" are in some way subverted by agreements recently forged by the ASEAN Member States. For example, the ASEAN Vision 2020, adopted during ASEAN's 30th anniversary, has a "shared vision of ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward-looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies."[5] Being "outward-looking" means that a country should constantly assess what is in demand in the global market and should consequently make the necessary adjustments in terms of its policies and programmes. Even if the association does not explicitly state its bias for globalisation instead of protecting domestic industries, an outward-looking economic orientation naturally results in a country's being export-oriented and foreign investment-led.

ASEAN has embarked on various initiatives to support a market-driven economic integration

Since the global financial crisis in 1997, ASEAN has embarked on various initiatives to support a market-driven economic integration. Significant efforts have been made to forge closer ties through free trade agreements. The Finance Ministers of the grouping in cooperation with their partners in China, Japan and South Korea ("ASEAN plus three") have initiated a stronger monetary and financial cooperation, as well as an improved regional economic surveillance mechanism. ASEAN's way into the 21st century is paved by economic interests stimulating collaboration among the Member States despite their quite distinct political orders ranging from constitutional sultanates to presidential republics.

ASEAN's economic progress is significantly entangled with political developments in the region

ASEAN's economic progress is significantly entangled with political developments in the region. International as well as regional attention has been paid particularly to the case of Myanmar which became a member of the association in 1997. Scholars have identified Myanmar as one of the most "contentious" challenges to Southeast Asian regionalism.[6] The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, as the country is formally named, has been ruled by a military junta since 1962. The admission of Myanmar not only impaired ASEAN's external links with the global community, but also resulted in bringing a quite controversial player to the centre of the association's decision-making. The grouping's limited capacity to influence political change in Myanmar was frequently judged by observers inside and outside the region branding the organisation as a powerless talk shop. Myanmar has become "ASEAN's thorn in the flesh", as the Asia Times headlined in 2003.[7]

ASEAN stressed the need for Myanmar to continue to work with ASEAN and the United Nations in the road to democracy

Following the general elections in Myanmar held on November 7, 2010 and concerns about its fairness expressed, for instance, by the United Nations[8], ASEAN stressed "the need for Myanmar to continue to work with ASEAN and the United Nations in the road to democracy". Even with its principle of non-interference, the association encouraged Myanmar publicly to continue "to accelerate the process of national reconciliation and democratisation, for stability and development in the

Journal (2004) 2, p. 184

5 ASEAN Vision 2020. ASEAN Vision 2020 in 1997. Retrieved on September 9, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/1814.htm

6 Donald K. Emmerson, Critical Terms: Security, Democracy, and Regionalism in Southeast Asia. In: Donald K. Emmerson, ed., Hard Choices: Security, Democracy, and Regionalism in Southeast Asia. Stanford 2008: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Centre, pp. 26-29

7 Phar Kim Beng, Myanmar: ASEAN's thorn in the flesh. Asia Times Online from July 25, 2003.
Retrieved on August 25, 2010 from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/EG25Ae 01.html 2003

8 New York Times, October 22, 2010. Retrieved on October 23, 2010 from http://www.nytimes. com/2010/10/22/world/asia/22nations.html

country." In response to queries from the public, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Surin Pitsuwan, expressed hope that the elections' outcome "would enable Myanmar to be more confident in dealing with the rest of the world, and that Myanmar would also benefit from the journey towards an ASEAN Community by the year 2015."[9]
The future bodes well for ASEAN if it unambiguously continues trying to lend its voice in promoting and upholding human rights. ASEAN's tactful but clear remarks on the elections in Myanmar or, more generally, the foundation of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights in 2009 indicate the association's determination to raise human rights standards in the region despite obstacles and backlashes. Furthermore, it has to be noted that "the significance of Myanmar in Washington's and also the European Union's relations with Southeast Asia tends to be overstated", as political analyst Jörn Dosch pointed out.[10] ASEAN's pro-engagement approach to Myanmar differs from Western viewpoints. Rapid changes are not to be expected. Yet, the association's "groundbreaking role in paving the way for international aid to reach the victims of Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 may be seen as a tipping point for the grouping"[11], one in which words led to deeds, as scholars emphasised.[12]

The foundation of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights indicates the association's determination to raise human rights standards despite obstacles and backlashes

Pros and cons of regional integration

Regional integration has its advantages and disadvantages – in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.[13] On the one hand, there is said to be general peace and political stability in most of the 10 ASEAN Member States. There has been no open war among Member States since the founding of the association in 1967. However, ASEAN's perception as a paper tiger or talk shop stems from the lack of formal mechanisms to solve disputes (even the perceived minor ones) among Member States. The recent Thai-Cambodian border conflict over a land area around the Preah Vihear Temple has demonstrated the fragility of this long-lasting era of regional peace. It is likely, however, that the mere existence of ASEAN and its backdoor diplomacy have hindered both sides to take further action and engage in a "hot" war.
Through a joint foreign policy, it may be argued that regional integration would be beneficial in Southeast Asia. Then again, ASEAN Member States with more political leverage could end up dominating those with less political power and influence, as sceptics sometimes claim. However, ASEAN's principle of consensus-making helps balance different interests. As regards the movement of ASEAN peoples, regional integration results in increased legal security and even visa-free entry within the region. Of course, at times there may be a difference between the written policy and the one that is actually implemented as there could be occasional contradictions between rhetoric and action.

The Thai-Cambodian border conflict has demonstrated the fragility of the long-lasting era of peace in Southeast Asia

ASEAN's principle of consensus-making helps balance different interests

9 ASEAN Secretariat, Press release, Jakarta, November 11, 2010
10 Jörn Dosch, Southeast Asia's security and political outlook. In: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Ed.): Regional Outlook. Southeast Asia 2010-2011. Singapore 2010, p. 5
11 Michael Vatikiotis, ASEAN in search of relevance. Asia Times from February 28, 2009. Retrieved on August 7, 2010 from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/KB28Ae01.html
12 Emmerson, pp. 42-45
13 As to West Africa, read: Dirk van den Boom: ECOWAS: How regional integra tion works in West Africa. A handbook for journalists. Berlin 2010: InWEnt, pp. 7-10; as to Southern Africa, read: Christian Peters-Berries, Regional Integration in Southern Africa – A Guidebook. Berlin 2010: InWEnt, pp. 13-28

Pros	Cons
peace and political stability: no wars between Members States since 1967	no formal mechanisms to solve disputes between Member States
increased political relevance of the region by creating a joint foreign policy	countries with more political leverage might dominate those with less
increased legal security for citizens whilst travelling and working	occasional contradictions between rhetoric and action
enlarged market attracts foreign direct investments (economies of scale)	some Member States might benefit more from integration than others
regional bloc has stronger voice in global trade talks	complicated structure might lead to overlap and difficulties in understanding
breaking the power of selfish national interest groups preventing reforms	increased bureaucracy might consume a disproportional share of public money
low expenses of apparatus: to a large extent relying on national bureaucracies	difficult to create collective identity due to cultural and political diversity
greater regional awareness within the Member States and its peoples	weak links between economic integration and citizens who should be benefiting from it

Table 1.1: Pros and cons of regional integration in Southeast Asia

Integration translates to an enlarged market that could better attract foreign direct investments

In the age of globalisation, integration translates to an enlarged, unified market that could better attract foreign direct investments in Southeast Asia. Due to uneven development among ASEAN Member States, however, the more developed ones could end up benefiting more from regional integration. ASEAN keeps this in mind by emphasising the specific development needs of the so-called CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam).

If ASEAN strengthens its unity, the regional bloc has a stronger voice in negotiating bilaterally and multilaterally in the global arena. One disadvantage, however, is that the complicated ASEAN structure could lead sometimes to overlapping of functions and difficulties among Member States in understanding the consequences of their positions and commitments.

ASEAN's intergovernmental elements are by no means too costly, but in contrast relatively under-funded

As regards political development of the Member States, a stronger and more united ASEAN could break the power of selfish national interest groups that are against meaningful reforms. An offshoot of a complicated ASEAN structure, however, is an increased bureaucracy which could consume a disproportional share of public money. In other words, the expenditure programmes of ASEAN Member States would include more contributions to ASEAN and probably less allocation for social services like health and education. At present, however, intergovernmental elements of ASEAN's organisational structure, i.e., the ASEAN Secretariat are by no means too costly, but in contrast relatively under-funded. ASEAN still relies largely on existing bodies within its Member States.

An advantage of integration is greater regional awareness within the Member States and its peoples

A major advantage of integration in Southeast Asia is greater regional awareness within the Member States and its peoples. However, it is possible that the weak links between economic integration and citizens who should be benefiting from it would not be solved by regional integration. The political and cultural diversity of the Member States makes it quite difficult for ASEAN to create a collective identity. That is one of the

reasons why media and journalists in Southeast Asia are getting more and more relevant. Indeed, there are pros and cons to the ASEAN Way and the Member States face a tough balancing act as they try to unite. At the moment, the Member States hope that the difficulties they are facing now are mere birth pangs of a policy from which they would benefit in the future.

More than summits: ASEAN as a news topic

When Abhisit Vejjajiva, Prime Minister of Thailand, visited the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta in 2009, he said that "the perception continues that ASEAN is driven only by leaders and governments." If ASEAN could not be more responsive "to the needs of its people and one of that its people can have a say in, our goal of an ASEAN community may not be fully realized."[14] Vejjajiva's comment addressed directly the comparatively low public outreach of ASEAN. Being an intergovernmental organisation with limited political scope, the association has been quite reluctant to actively promote its goals, projects and even outcomes. Consequently, Southeast Asian media and journalists do not regard ASEAN's affairs as interesting news topics. It seems, however, that many ASEAN Member States as well as its various bodies are more and more aware that an ASEAN community can be built only when all sectors of society get involved.

ASEAN is more and more aware that a community can be built only when all sectors of society get involved

The ASEAN socio-cultural blueprint states clearly that the association shall be "people centred and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity […]."[15] Building a common identity means to reach out to the peoples of ASEAN. This requires intensified media coverage. Indeed, since the ASEAN Charter entered into force by the end of 2008, the ASEAN Secretariat professionalizes its public relations activities; it frequently organises press briefings and regularly releases information to the media. In cooperation with the International Institute for Journalism, Germany, journalists from all over the region now have a chance to participate in training courses enriching their knowledge on ASEAN's institutions and policies.

Building a common identity means to reach out to the peoples: This requires intensified media coverage

Yet, journalists and media do not have to wait for ASEAN to reach out to them. As a news topic, ASEAN and its policy fields are definitely newsworthy and important for media within and outside the region. Coverage, however, should not be limited to ASEAN summits or ministerial meetings. Nowadays, ASEAN undergoes great changes which in itself are a source of news stories. The relevance of ASEAN is increasing in a wide array of policy fields, from disaster management to poverty eradication, from Free Trade Agreements to the ASEAN Single Window, from the ASEAN games to youth empowerment.

ASEAN and its policy fields are newsworthy and important for media within and outside the region

ASEAN's newsworthiness is also increasing in today's age of globalisation. The 10 Member States of ASEAN have global importance because of their sheer size. They have a combined population of almost 600 million people, a land area of 4.5 million square kilometers and an increasing total trade. ASEAN's resilience in the wake of the recent global financial crisis is notable: Despite global economic woes, ASEAN's total trade in goods managed "to grow by 6.2 per cent, from US$ 1,610.8 billion in 2007 to US$ 1,710.4 billion in 2008."[16] Total ASEAN exports also expanded despite the global financial crisis.

ASEAN's resilience in the wake of the recent global financial crisis is notable: Despite economic woes, ASEAN's total trade in goods managed to grow

That certain parts of the world periodically experience financial and other crises makes ASEAN even more significant. A simple comparison of ASEAN's funda-

14 ASEAN Secretariat, Press release, Jakarta, February 21, 2009
15 ASEAN, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint. Jakarta 2009, p. 1
16 Joint Media Statement of the 41st ASEAN Economic Ministers' (AEM) Meeting, Bangkok, August 13-14, 2009

mental principles and the resulting policies and strategies proves to be a major source of a journalist's stories. In support of the citizens of ASEAN, journalists could also very well study the positive and negative implications of globalisation, for instance in the context of the social cost it brings to disadvantaged people.

Key points

- ASEAN tries its best to have enhanced political, economic and socio-cultural collaboration of diverse countries as it strives for further regional integration.
- There are pros and cons to the ASEAN Way and the Member States face a tough balancing act as they try to unite.
- ASEAN's policies are newsworthy and important for media within and outside the region; coverage should not be limited to ASEAN summits or ministerial meetings.

Chapter 2

Preconditions for regional integration in Southeast Asia

For many centuries Southeast Asia has been a part of the world whose fortunes were not only shaped by its local habitants but also by external powers. According to an expert, "[i]t was a theatre for the intersection of Indian and Chinese influence."[17] Later, Southeast Asia experienced rivalry and conflict for economic and political control with European colonial powers.

Not surprisingly, the sense of the region as a geographical unit gained currency only after the Second World War. Earlier indigenous habitants of Southeast Asia looked first at their particular kingdom, province or village. These local communities served as a basis to put one's life in order. Outsiders' perceptions of the region were dominated by India, China and centuries later also by European powers. Foreign writers in the 1930s, for example, thought of some parts of Southeast Asia as 'Further India'. Ironically, it was an Indian journalist and diplomat, Sardar Kavalam Madhava Panikkar, who was one of the first to use the term Southeast Asia instead of Further India. In the Second World War Britain and the USA created the "Supreme Allied Command in Southeast Asia" to identify the region in military and political terms.[18]

The sense of Southeast Asia as a geographical unit gained currency only after the Second World War

The vibrant, multifaceted history of Southeast Asia has somehow intertwined its peoples, economies and political systems. Nowadays, the countries of the region may be "one" in terms of location and the consequent affiliation with ASEAN and other regional and global institutions. The cultures, however, remain quite diverse, even within countries. The diversity of the region, as well as its rich and sometimes turbulent history from "courts, kings and peasants"[19] through revolutions and revolts to post-colonial independence, has set up and shaped preconditions for regional integration in Southeast Asia.

The vibrant, multifaceted history of the region has intertwined its peoples, economies and political systems

Early empires and external powers

Beginning in the second and third centuries, Indian traders and priest-scholars brought cultural values and religions, namely Hinduism and Buddhism, to the region. Indian and Chinese influences grew in the sixth and seventh centuries when the trading empire of Sri Vijaya rose to power. Its rise depended upon the east-west trade between China, the region itself and further west to India, Persia and beyond. A wide range of commodities originated in the region; especially important were spices as pepper, ginger, cloves, and nutmeg. For hundreds of years, Sri Vijaya situated in present day Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Southern Thailand controlled the ports and waters of the Malacca Straits.

The cultural impact of India and China on Southeast Asia varied from century to century and from region to region

Yet, the cultural impact of India and China varied from century to century and from region to region. In the case of Vietnam, Chinese rulers rather than Indian traders dominated the early period. The Philippines felt some Chinese influence

17 Rawdon Dalrymple, Introduction to the 1999 edition, in: Peter Church, ed., A short history of South-East Asia, 5th edition, Singapore 2009, p. XV

18 Estrella D. Solidum, The politics of ASEAN. An introduction to Southeast Asian regionalism. Singapore 2003, p. 5

19 Milton Osborne, Southeast Asia. An introductory history. 10th edition, Crows Nest 2010, p. 40

but never participated in the so-called 'Indianisation' due to their distant geographical location. The thriving port of Manila was dominated by Chinese merchants until the Spanish arrived in the middle of the sixteenth century. Foreign influences, regardless of their origin, did not replace existing cultural patterns but were absorbed by the local population, creating hybrid cultural forms visible up to present times.[20] The Islamisation of Indonesia, for example, began in the thirteenth century and created a broad spectrum of practices and intensities of belief. The spectrum ranges from more strict adherents to the principles of the Koran to a "more relaxed Islamic faith sustained alongside pre-Islamic beliefs and practices."[21]

Foreign influences did not replace existing cultural patterns but were absorbed by the local population, creating cultural forms visible up to now

From the ninth century onwards Southeast Asia saw particularly two states that were able to preserve their existence over a long historical period. Besides the maritime state of Sri Vijaya, it was the inland state of Angkor in Cambodia that extended its power by incorporating large sections of modern Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The temples of Angkor were built between the tenth and fourteenth centuries indicating the wealth and technological achievements of the highly developed Khmer society. This great empire came to an end in the fifteenth century, an "event of the deepest importance for mainland Southeast Asia, though quite unknown in Europe."[22] From that time onwards, slowly but surely, Thais gained control over the territories that comprise modern Thailand and concurrently absorbed much of Khmer culture. Thailand's architecture, dance forms, concepts of administration, and even the written form of the Thai language are much indebted to Khmer inspiration.

From the ninth century onwards Southeast Asia saw particularly two states that were able to preserve their existence over a long historical period

Unlike the Thais' recurring military pressure, the Vietnamese did not add directly to the collapse of Angkor. Its fall, however, enabled Vietnam to expand its territory into the areas that have been part of the Angkorian Empire. The first major Burmese kingdom of Pagan had also no direct links with the decline of Cambodia. It emerged on the banks of the Irrawaddy River in the eleventh century but was destroyed in the thirteenth century by invading Mongols coming from China. It took until the middle of the eighteenth century when the new Burmese kingdom of Ava extended its control over much of the territory of what is now Myanmar. This new regional power competed, at times bitterly, with the Thai kingdom of Ayudhya which collapsed in 1767 after the Burmese despatched an army to Ayudhya. At that time, Myanmar was "the strongest state in mainland South-East Asia."[23]

In the middle of the 18th century Myanmar was the strongest state in mainland Southeast Asia

This brief depiction illustrates that the course of Southeast Asia's early history was largely shaped by factors originating in the region itself. Yet, at the same time external powers, namely China and India along with Arab traders, affected and changed existing cultural patterns. The descendants of Chinese and Indian immigrants even became citizens in more than a few countries of the region, adding to its ethnic diversity and contributing to the economic transformation of Southeast Asia.

Traditional structures and the advance of colonialism

When the first Europeans arrived in Southeast Asia in the middle of the sixteenth century, they found well-established states, long-standing trading networks and rich cultural traditions. Each state and its local communities had their own peculiar political and social organisations. In the traditional structure of Muslim Filipino societies, for instance, sultans were the highest authority followed by the datus who provided aid in emergencies and advocacy in disputes in return for tribute and labour. In Indonesia and Malaya decision-making processes were based upon the

When Europeans arrived in Southeast Asia, they found well-established states, long-standing trading networks and rich cultural traditions

20 Osborne, p. 23
21 Peter Church, A short history of South-East Asia. 5th edition, Singapore 2009, p. 42
22 Osborne, p. 30
23 Church, p. 110

principle of 'musyawarah' – that is, discussing an issue until consensus is reached. As a result, the history of Southeast Asia did not begin with European colonial activities as Eurocentric historians suggested. In fact, the "European impact was highly varied and the force of its impact very uneven."[24] Accordingly, in-depth consideration is required to understand the outcome of Southeast Asia's colonial past. Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Great Britain and the United States of America significantly determined developments in the region. However, the histories of Burma as a province of 'British India' (Myanmar), 'French Indochina' (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam), 'British Malaya' (Malaysia, Singapore), Brunei as British protectorate, the 'Netherlands Indies' (Indonesia) or the Philippines under Spanish, American and Japanese control cannot be understood properly if the role of local people, traditional governmental bodies and prevailing cultural values are neglected. The only country in Southeast Asia that did not face colonial occupation was Thailand, in those days known as Siam.

The European impact on Southeast Asia was highly varied and the force of its impact very uneven

The arrival of the colonial powers called into question traditional beliefs, modified languages and changed ways of conducting government. The motives which drove the Europeans and much later the US Americans into Southeast Asia were manifold differing from region to region. Besides the determination to spread faith, particularly by the Spanish in the Philippines, it was primarily the possibility of opening new trading posts and exploiting the region's resources which encouraged early colonialists.

The colonial powers called into question traditional beliefs, modified languages and changed ways of conducting government

The spice trade initially was developed by Indian and Arab merchants, but it also brought Europeans to the region. The penetration of European commercial interests gradually evolved into annexation of territories, as traders lobbied for an extension of control to protect and expand their activities. Yet, the most important feature of the European advance into Southeast Asia was the creation of "borders that, with minor exceptions, have become those of the modern states of Southeast Asia."[25] New territorial boundaries cut across ethnic groups resulting in redistribution of peoples.

Achieving independence and the Cold War era

Except Thailand all countries of Southeast Asia engaged sooner or later in struggles to achieve independence. The end of the Second World War marked a new era of "facing the problems of achieving independence or of dealing with the reality of independence."[26] The nature of resistance and the ways post-colonial freedom were gained varied from country to country. The Philippines was granted independence by the USA in 1946, right after the war with Japan ended. In Indonesia autonomy was reached after a bitter armed confrontation. The Dutch rejected Indonesia's unilateral declaration of independence in 1945 provoking four years of guerrilla war. The hostilities were brought to an end in December 1949 giving Indonesia full control over its territory. Myanmar's Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League led the country to self-rule in 1948.

Except Thailand all countries of the region engaged sooner or later in struggles to achieve independence

At the same time, Britain continued to get hold of its former colony on the Malayan peninsula. The idea of a Malayan Union, promising all residents equal rights regardless of their ethnic heritage under British control, provoked harsh criticism by the ethnic Malay majority. In subsequent talks, however, the different ethnic groups including the Chinese and Indian minorities agreed to a federal administrative structure. The Federation of Malaya was launched in 1948 restoring the symbolic positions of the rulers of the Malay states but sovereignty within the Commonwealth of Nations was attained not before 1957.

24 Osborne, p. 70
25 Osborne, pp. 72-73
26 Osborne, p. 180

The Federation of Malaysia as a merger of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah (the former British North Borneo) was established in 1963. However, unresolved issues between the Malaysian majority of ethnic Malay and the predominately Chinese Singaporeans escalated in August 1965 leading to a separation agreement between the two parties. The prosperous sultanate of Brunei considered joining the Federation of Malaysia but decided not to due to economic and political worries. Brunei became a sovereign state in 1984.

Unlike the relatively peaceful political process on the Malayan peninsula, France set off a long-lasting war in its former colonies in 'Indochina'

Unlike the relatively peaceful political process on the Malayan peninsula, France set off a long-lasting war in its former colonies. The 'Indochina War' began in 1946 and ended after eight years with the fall of the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam. Cambodia reached independence already a year earlier, in 1953, when the French stood with their backs to the wall in Vietnam. After the Geneva Conference in May 1954, France withdrew from the entire region, Laos entered into years of continuing instability, and fragmented Vietnam was partitioned at the 17th parallel. Subsequently, Ho Chi Minh's government consolidated its power in the North while the South remained unstable. Unlike Ho Chi Minh, South Vietnam's leader was never genuinely popular. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that the opposing National Liberation Front (NLF) won sympathisers at all levels of the South Vietnamese society. The NLF (called "Vietcong" by its opponents) was sponsored by North Vietnam which itself was backed by China and the USSR.

In the 1960s, the Cold War between US-led Western countries and the USSR-dominated Eastern Bloc was in full course

In the 1960s, the Cold War between US-led Western countries and the USSR-dominated Eastern Bloc was in full course. In early 1965, US ground troops landed in South Vietnam and the US Air Force began bombing targets in both South and North Vietnam. What came to be called the 'Vietnam War' was "now unequivocally under way."[27] Taken aback by the bitterness of this war and in order to reject spreading communist ideals over the entire region, ASEAN was founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

The Cold War encouraged the foundation of ASEAN, while the end of this global conflict opened the door for the expansion of the grouping in the late 1990s

The Vietnam War continued until the Southern government collapsed after many years of horrific fighting in 1975. The last Americans evacuated just hours before the NLF and North Vietnamese forces entered Saigon. The next year the country was renamed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam while the Lao People's Democratic Republic was established in December 1975. In conclusion, the Cold War between the USA and the former USSR encouraged the foundation of ASEAN, while – decades later – the end of this global conflict opened the door for the expansion of the grouping in the late 1990s.

Obstacles and opportunities: Southeast Asia's diversity

One aspect which immediately comes across upon studying the history of Southeast Asia is its diversity

One aspect which immediately comes across upon studying the history of Southeast Asia is the sense of diversity, not only among the countries but also within them.[28] This diversity is a product of centuries of historical development within Southeast Asia's indigenous peoples and "enhanced by a maritime environment which facilitated external influences in the form of trade and exploration from countries such as China or the Netherlands."[29] The region's remarkable mixture of geographical conditions, historical experience, cultural traditions, languages, religions, ethnic groups, political orders and economic trends has often been described

27 Church, p. 193
28 Emmerson, pp. 20-22
29 Jing Heng Fong, Diversity in Southeast Asian History: Beginning to Understanding Southeast Asia Through Its Differences. Suite101 on March 6, 2009. Retrieved on July 3, 2010 from http://www.suite101.com/content/diversity-in-southeast-asian-history-a100839#ixzz17A3xWbx6

as an obstacle to regional integration. However, the wide range of cultures, political systems and economic developments also creates opportunities.
Geographically, Southeast Asia consists of two regions: Mainland Southeast Asia comprises Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and peninsular Malaysia, whereas Maritime Southeast Asia consists of Brunei, East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste.
The Southeast Asian population is far from being homogeneous. Although primarily descendants of Austronesian, Tai, and Mon-Khmer-speaking immigrants who migrated from Southern China during the Bronze Age and Iron Age, there are overlays of Arab, Chinese, Indian, Polynesian and Melanesian influences. Moreover, intermarriages between indigenous Southeast Asians and those of Chinese descent form a substantial part of everyday life in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam.

The wide range of cultures, political systems and economic developments creates opportunities

Country	Population (Mio)	Political system	GDP per capita (US $)	Religions
Brunei Darussalam	0,4	Constitutional monarchy	51,200	Muslim 67%, Buddhist 13%, Christian 10%, other or none 10%
Cambodia	14,5	Multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarch	1,900	Buddhist 96.4%, Muslim 2.1%, other or none 1.5%
Indonesia	242,9	Presidential republic	4,000	Muslim 86.1%, Protestant 5.7%, Roman Catholic 3%, other or none 5.2%
Laos	6,7	Communist republic	2,100	Buddhist 67%, Christian 1.5%, other or none 31.5%
Malaysia	28,3	Parliamentary republic and constitutional monarchy	14,900	Muslim 60.4%, Buddhist 19.2%, Christian 9.1%, Hindu 6.3%, other or none 4.9%
Myanmar	53,4	Military government	1,100	Buddhist 89%, Baptist 3%, Muslim 4%, other or none 4%
Philippines	99,9	Presidential republic	3,300	Roman Catholic 80.9%, Muslim 5%, Evangelical 2.8%, other or none 10.7%
Singapore	4,7	Parliamentary democracy	52,200	Buddhist 42.5%, Muslim 14.9%, Taoist 8.5%, Catholic 4.8%, other or none 29.3%
Thailand	67,1	Parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy	8,200	Buddhist 94.6%, Muslim 4.6%, other or none 0.8%
Vietnam	89,6	Socialist republic	2,900	Buddhist 9.3%, Catholic 6.7%, other 3.1%, none 80.8%

Table 2.1: ASEAN's demographic, political, economic and cultural diversity[30]

30 The World Factbook. Data retrieved on September 3, 2010 from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html

Besides the variety of political systems, the evident economic differences are deeply affecting ASEAN's policies

Besides the variety of political systems ranging from military junta, sultanate and socialist states to presidential republics, the evident economic differences are deeply affecting ASEAN's policies. Southeast Asia's economy depended greatly on agriculture. Yet, manufacturing and services become increasingly important. Indonesia is the largest economy in the region and the only member of the G-20 major economies. Newly industrialised countries include Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines while Singapore and Brunei are affluent developed economies. The rest of Southeast Asia, the so-called CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam), is still heavily dependent on agriculture. However, Vietnam is notably making steady progress in developing its industrial sectors.

The huge economic differences within ASEAN Member States are reflected by the respective gross domestic product (GDP) per capita which varies from more than 52,200 US Dollars (Singapore) to 1,100 US Dollars (Myanmar). The term GDP per capita refers to the value of all final goods and services produced within a nation in a given year divided by the average population for the same year.

The region has long associations with various religions cutting across national and ethnic boundaries

The region has very long associations with various religions cutting across national and ethnic boundaries. According to the number of followers, the major religions of Southeast Asia are Islam and Buddhism, followed by Christianity. Countries with a strong Muslim influence include Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. Buddhism is predominant in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Singapore. Roman Catholicism is especially strong within the Philippines marking its colonial past under Spanish rule. However, a wide variety of religions is found throughout the region, including Hinduism, Chinese religions and a swathe of animist-influenced practices. For example, in the world's most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia, Hinduism is dominant on the island of Bali.

Religion is not only a way of life, but has also often implications on politics

All religions comprise followers with different intensities of belief and a broad spectrum of practices ranging from strict adherence to more open forms of faith. The same religion is sometimes practiced differently in different territorial regions, such as the form of Buddhism in Laos and Thailand. Religion is not only a personal way of life, but has also often implications on politics illustrated, for instance, by the ongoing discussion on the role of Islam in Indonesia or by the conflict between the Catholic-dominated Philippine national government and the Muslim liberation movements in Mindanao, Southern Philippines.

While the variety of religions in Southeast Asia is remarkable, the diversity of languages is amazing and extraordinary. Languages differ from country to country, from province to province, sometimes even from village to village. Hence, many Southeast Asians are fluent in more than just their native languages. A Filipino might be educated in English and Tagalog, while his or her native language is Bicol, and at the same time he or she is learning another language such as Chinese, Korean, or Japanese for economic reasons.

Many Southeast Asians are fluent in more than just their native languages

As many Southeast Asian countries increasingly seek to integrate with ASEAN and the rest of the world, literacy in English is strongly emphasised. However, local languages are still important for going about daily life, as well as the communication of values and traditions over generations. The tussle between the two is often played out within educational policies. Examples include Malaysia's change of medium of instruction in teaching of math and science from Malay to English since 2002, as well as Singapore's continual tinkering of its bilingual education policy.

Compared to the wide cultural diversity of ASEAN Member States in terms of languages, religions or traditions, the economic diversity seems comparatively narrow. It is confined only to the different levels of development (or "maldevelopment", depending on one's framework of analysis) in each of the Member States.

Journalists who write about ASEAN realise that the association uses the term "nations" in order to refer to this immense diversity of cultures among its members. ASEAN's slogan "Ten nations – one community" emphasises the idea of unity in diversity.

The history of ASEAN as well as pre-ASEAN attempts to regional cooperation have shown that community building is easier said than done due to the region's incredible diversity.

Brunei Darussalam	Malay, English, Chinese, indigenous Borneian dialects
Cambodia	Khmer, English, French, Vietnamese, Thai, Chamic dialects, Chinese languages, others
Indonesia	Indonesian, Hakka, Minnan, Cantonese, Acehnese, Batak, Minang, Sundanese, Javanese, Banjarese, Sasak, Tetum, Dayak, Minahasa, Toraja, Buginese, Halmahera, Ambonese, Ceramese, Bare'e, Dutch, Papuan languages, others
Laos	Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, Hmong, Miao, Mien, Dao, Shan; French, English others
Malaysia	Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil, Hakka, Cantonese, Minnan, Hindi, Indian languages, Iban, Kadazan and others
Myanmar	Burmese, Shan, Karen, Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Mon, English, Chinese languages, Indian languages, others
Philippines	Tagalog, English, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Kapampangan, Bicol, Waray, Pangasinan, Ilongot, Spanish and Arabic, Minnan Chinese
Singapore	English, Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, Minnan, Cantonese, Hakka, Shanghainese, other Indian languages, Arabic dialects, others
Thailand	Thai, Minnan Chinese, Hakka, Cantonese, English, Malay, Lao, Khmer, Isaan, Shan, Lue, Phutai, Mon, Mein, Hmong, Karen, Burmese, others
Vietnam	Vietnamese, English, Cantonese, Minnanese, French, Khmer, mountain area languages (Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian, hmong)

Table 2.2: Language diversity in ASEAN[31]

Lessons learned: Pre-ASEAN attempts to regional cooperation

In its history, Southeast Asia experienced colonial exploitation, political instability, bitter wars and social crises. Particularly the Second World War deeply affected the entire region. When the Indian Council of World Affairs sponsored the "Asian Relations Conference" in 1947, several Southeast Asian countries accepted willingly the invitation. Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam along with representatives of 12 other Asian and African countries discussed the idea of intensified cooperation. Yet, smaller Asian countries expressed fear that their powerful – and with each other competing – neighbours China and India may dominate a regional grouping. A Burmese delegate was supposed to have said, "It was terrible to be ruled by a Western power, but it is even more so to be ruled by an Asian power."[32]

Since 1947, Southeast Asia has embarked on various initiatives promoting regional cooperation and integration

In a second attempt towards Asian cooperation, the "New Delhi Conference" took place on January 20, 1949. It was organised primarily in support of Indonesia's independence movement. After the Dutch re-invasion of Indonesia heated up in December 1948, the participants of the conference demanded a peaceful solution of the conflict within the framework of the United Nations. A few months after the

31 The collection is based on World Factbook's articles on the respective countries. Data retrieved on August 8, 2010 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_Asia#cite_note-39

32 Solidum, p. 13

New Delhi Conference, in July 1949, Philippine President Elpidio Quirino suggested setting up an "Asia-Pacific Union". The organisation should make sure that its Member States remain sovereign, Quirino claimed. Since he identified communism as the biggest threat to sovereignty, most states of the region did not participate in the proposed union to avoid involvement in the beginning Cold War.

Most states of the region did not participate in the Asia-Pacific Union to avoid involvement in the beginning Cold War

1947	Asian Relations Conference
1949	New Delhi Conference
1954 – 1977	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
1955	Bandung Conference
1961 – to date	Non-Aligned Movement
1961	Association of Southeast Asia
1963	Maphilindo

Table 2.3: Pre-ASEAN attempts to regional cooperation

Unavoidably, however, Southeast Asia was drawn deeper and deeper into the global confrontation between the USA and the former USSR. In September 1954, the Philippines and Thailand, together with Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, France and the USA, established the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) aiming at preventing communism from taking over Southeast Asia. According to the popular "domino theory," which in fact was more political speculation rather than academic theory, all Southeast Asian states would fall like dominoes under communist rule if the US did not maintain a military presence in the region, "especially if the states were neutralist such as Indonesia under President Sukarno, Cambodia under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and Burma under U Nu."[33]

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation was established to prevent communism from taking over the entire region

SEATO was conceived as a military organisation similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and was meant to help Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam fight communism. Yet, SEATO failed to intervene militarily because most of its Western Member States feared retaliation from China and the USSR. This provoked critical comments labelling SEATO a paper tiger. After the founding of ASEAN in 1967 and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the Philippines and Thailand were eager to cooperate with neighbouring countries, thus ending their SEATO memberships in 1977, when the organisation was formally disbanded. Both Thailand and the Philippines remained more or less firm US-allies.[34]

In some way as a response to the founding of SEATO, Burma and Indonesia along with Ceylon, India and Pakistan pushed forward another Asian-African Conference which took place in April 1955 in the Indonesian city of Bandung. The meeting of 25 African and Asian countries – later called "Bandung Conference" – promoted cooperation, opposed colonialism and proposed a non-aligned movement meant as a third power not siding with any party of the Cold War. In 1961, the Non-Aligned Movement was founded in Belgrade as an intergovernmental organisation of developing states advocating a middle course between the Western and Eastern blocs. The Non-Aligned Movement was largely the brainchild of Indonesia's first president Sukarno along with Jawaharlal Nehru from India,

In 1961, the Non-Aligned Movement was founded as an intergovernmental organisation advocating a middle course between the Western and Eastern blocs.

33 Solidum, p. 15

34 Amitav Acharya & See Seng Tan, Betwixt balance and community: America, ASEAN, and the security of Southeast Asia, in International Relations of the Asia-Pacific, Volume 6 (2006), p. 41

Gamal Abdel Nasser from Egypt and Josip Broz Tito from Yugoslavia.
As of 2010, the organisation has 118 members representing more than half of the world population.[35] Over the years, however, the organisation had little cohesion. Many of its members were actually quite closely aligned with one of the super powers. Since the movement was formed as an attempt to thwart the Cold War, it has struggled to find relevance since the Cold War ended.
In contrast to the Non-Aligned Movement, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), founded by Malaya, Philippines and Thailand in July 1961, was a purely Southeast Asian states' organisation. ASA aimed at upholding ideals of peace, freedom, social justice and economic well-being through cooperation. The proposed projects were very useful to develop mutual understanding and included, for instance, a waiver of visa requirements, the exchange of youth, a deeper cooperation on shipping, tourism, and trade as well as common political positions in international bodies. Malaya wanted as many Southeast Asian states as possible to become members.

The Association of Southeast Asia aimed at upholding ideals of peace, freedom, social justice and economic well-being through cooperation

However, most countries of the region begged off "due to lack of sympathy for a formal organisation, suspicion of a Western hand in the plan, and the preference for bilateral cooperation."[36] The cooperation of Malaya, Philippines and Thailand under the roof of ASA was suspended when the Philippines and Indonesia challenged the creation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. However, many of ASA's ideas for practical cooperation were adopted by ASEAN in 1967.
The Philippines opposed the formation of the Federation of Malaysia because it incorporated Sabah which President Diosdado Macapagal claimed to be Philippine territory. Indonesian President Sukarno also opposed the Federation since he perceived it as a neo-colonialist concept endangering the sovereignty of Southeast Asian nations. The tense situation encouraged the leaders of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaya to set up a new regional organisation called Maphilindo. In July 1963, Macapagal convened a summit meeting in Manila quoting Philippine freedom fighter Jose Rizal's dream of bringing together all Malay peoples by overcoming the artificial division created by colonial frontiers. Maphilindo as a regional association of the three countries aimed at solving disputes in the spirit of consensus.

In 1963, the tense political situation encouraged the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaya to set up a new regional organisation called Maphilindo

But Maphilindo broke up before it could function. The self-interests of the three countries and their leaders dominated the formation process and the traditional principles of 'musyawarah' (discussion until consensus) were not applied properly. The countries learned, however, that "political and military matters should not be allowed during the formative years of learning cooperation, that unity comes from goodwill and trust, and that Asian solutions for Asian problems always be used to preserve peace in the region."[37] The Maphilindo experience of intra-Asian conflicts interfering with the objectives of a regional organisation provided important lessons for the formation of ASEAN a few years later.

Maphilindo provided important lessons for the formation of ASEAN

35 For more information, read: http://www.namegypt.org/en
36 Solidum, p. 16
37 Solidum, p. 18.

Key points

- The diversity of the region as well as its rich and sometimes turbulent history has set up preconditions for regional integration in Southeast Asia.
- Southeast Asia has been a part of the world whose fortunes were not only shaped by its local habitants but also by external powers.
- The multifaceted history of Southeast Asia has intertwined its peoples, economies and political systems; the cultures, however, remain diverse, even within countries.
- The European advance into the region created borders that have become those of the modern states of Southeast Asia cutting across ethnic groups.
- The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation, the Association of Southeast Asia and the Maphilindo experience provided important lessons for the formation of ASEAN.

Further reading

Peter Church presents a history of Southeast Asia by providing details of what each country went through. Milton Osborne compares the experience of Southeast Asian countries.

Peter Church, A short history of South-East Asia. 5th edition, Singapore 2009

Milton Osborne, Southeast Asia. An introductory history. 10th edition, Crows Nest 2010

Estrella D. Solidum, on the other hand, gives a concise overview on pre-ASEAN attempts to regional integration:

Estrella D. Solidum, The politics of ASEAN. An introduction to Southeast Asian regionalism. Singapore 2003

Facts on the political, economic and cultural diversity of Southeast Asia may be retrieved from ASEANstats: http://www.aseansec.org/22122.htm

For comparison, the CIA's openly available World Factbook may be used as an additional source: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html

Chapter 3

From formation to vision: ASEAN's multifaceted history

When ASEAN was founded in 1967, the so-called Cold War had already heated up. The USA and the former USSR battled, mostly indirectly, in Vietnam. With its formation, ASEAN tried to create stability in a quite unstable political environment both externally and internally. The founding states of the association wanted to overcome their differences believing that cooperation would help stabilising the region in times of increasing political uncertainty. Later, ASEAN expanded its scope. The end of the Cold War encouraged ASEAN to open its doors uniting two former hostile blocs under one roof. The ASEAN Charter entered into force in December 2008 providing for the first time a constitutional base for increased cooperation. The near future of ASEAN is primarily characterised by ASEAN's goal to establish an economic, political and socio-cultural community by 2015.

With its formation, ASEAN tried to create stability in a quite unstable political environment

Building the grounds: Why ASEAN was established

Right after the Second World War, Thailand, the only uncolonised nation in Southeast Asia, tried to initiate cooperation among neighbouring countries.[38] The multiple attempts to regional cooperation in Southeast Asia – from the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 to Maphilindo in 1963 – put across the general notion that the region would do better if countries work together. However, the time was not ripe. As explained in the previous chapter, the decade after 1945 was largely characterised by struggles to achieve independence. Indonesia had its war with the Dutch. Malaya and Singapore were not yet independent. Burma negotiated with the British. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia fought a bitter war with France.[39]

Given the fragile nature of domestic political structures, the new and vulnerable states of Southeast Asia were seeking strength through alliances

The subsequent Vietnam War along with the increasing popularity of the North Vietnamese government under Ho Chi Minh in the middle of the 1960s reminded the future founders of ASEAN of their own communist insurgents. It was assumed that the cooperation of non-communist states could contribute to rejecting the spread of communist ideals over the entire region. Given the fragile nature of domestic political structures, the new and vulnerable states of Southeast Asia were seeking strength through alliances.[40]

The speculative but popular domino theory – a typical brainchild of the Cold War stating that all Southeast Asian countries would fall like dominoes under communist rule if the USA would withdraw its military presence – supported this belief. Besides the war in Vietnam as an external destabilising factor, the countries of the region also faced domestic instability. Thailand and Indonesia were challenged by ethnic insurgents, while the Philippines had communist rebels. Meanwhile, Singapore and Malaysia struggled with ethnic problems.

The immediate institutional forerunners of ASEAN proved to be unable to cope with the intra-regional disputes

The immediate institutional forerunners of ASEAN – the Association of Southeast Asia (1961) comprising Malaya, Philippines and Thailand and the Maphilindo (1963) consisting of Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia – proved to be short-lived and unable to cope with the intra-regional disputes between the Philippines

38 Solidum, p. 20
39 Jürgen Haacke, ASEAN's diplomatic culture. Origins, development and prospects. New York: Routledge 2003, pp. 16-31
40 Haacke, pp. 32-33

and Malaysia as well as between Indonesia and Malaysia. However, the creations and breakdowns of these organisations provided important lessons. By learning from failures, the political elites of ASEAN's future founding states experienced principles and mechanisms that could make an association resilient even when the going gets tough. Indonesia had aggressively opposed the foundation of the Federation of Malaysia, but its 'Konfrontasi' policy destructed its image.[41] Malaysia and the Philippines had differences too because the Philippines did not accept the inclusion of Sabah into the Federation of Malaysia.

By learning from failures, ASEAN's founding states experienced mechanisms that could make an association resilient

Thailand's Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman tried to reconcile Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines following basically the idea that regional cooperation would help stabilise the region in times of war and political uncertainty. When his Indonesian counterpart Adam Malik visited Bangkok, Khoman proposed to set up another regional organisation. Malik agreed since the military coup in Indonesia in 1965 damaged badly the international reputation of the country, prompting it to look for partners within the region to improve its image.

Cooperation helps stabilise the region in times of war and political uncertainty

As a result, Malik visited his Malaysian colleague, Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, in order to mend fences. At the same time, he invited the Secretary of Foreign Affairs Narciso Ramos from the Philippines, a one-time journalist (and the father of future Philippine president Fidel Ramos who served at that time in the Philippine contingent in Vietnam), to Jakarta for discussions on founding a new organisation. Singapore was also interested to join the association since it needed to find strength from its neighbours in the region after it was expelled by Malaysia in 1965 from the Federation.[42]

Today, it is almost forgotten that in this increasingly positive atmosphere, both Cambodia and Burma were also invited to join the association but declined. Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk and his Prime Minister Son Sann speculated about a Western intrigue while Burma suffered from the impact of the military coup in 1962. It preferred to protect its neutrality policy, as the revolutionary council under General Ne Win claimed. As was the case in Cambodia, North Vietnam and Laos dismissed the formation of the grouping as a Western creation. South Vietnam considered joining the grouping but its enormous burden arising from the war with North Vietnam was perceived as overwhelming for a new organisation.[43]

Cambodia and Burma were invited to join ASEAN's formation but declined

Promoting security: Foundation and first decades

In early August 1967, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand met in the beach resort of Bang Saen near Bangkok and negotiated the foundation of ASEAN "in a decidedly informal manner which they would later delight in describing as 'sports-shirt diplomacy.'"[44] Yet, it was by no means an easy process. Divergent national interests had to be balanced. Three countries – Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines – prepared drafts on how the envisioned association would be.

ASEAN's foundation was by no means an easy process since divergent national interests had to be balanced

While Thailand wanted a rather loose association promoting good neighbourliness, the Philippines wished for a legalistic charter, formally binding the members. Indonesia supported Thailand's idea of a loose community and advocated strongly the principles of 'musyawarah' (consensus) for decision-making. At the same time, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik insisted that foreign military bases in the region should be temporary. His plea was rejected by the Philippines since the

41 Haacke, pp. 36-38
42 Solidum, pp. 21-23
43 Solidum, pp. 21-22
44 Jamil Maidan Flores & Jun Abad, The Founding of ASEAN. Retrieved on June 17, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/7069.htm

country at that time was hosting the largest American military base outside the United States.[45] Likewise, the Philippines and Malaysia were still arguing on Sabah, as discussed in the previous chapter.[46]

Given the huge differences regarding national interests, it came in some way as a surprise that the association was finally founded. The informal climate created by the five Foreign Ministers contributed to the successful negotiations: "With goodwill and good humor, as often as they huddled at the negotiating table, they finessed their way through their differences as they lined up their shots on the golf course and traded wisecracks on one another's game, a style of deliberation which would eventually become the ASEAN ministerial tradition."[47] However, each country involved in the formation process had a real stake in membership. In order to find a common ground, the experienced diplomats brought into play two simple tactics to finalise the document. They made it brief and general.

Each country involved in the formation process had a real stake in membership

On August 8, 1967, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand sat together in the main hall of the Department of Foreign Affairs building in Bangkok, Thailand, and signed the document. The ASEAN Declaration (or Bangkok Declaration, as it is also known) marks the foundation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Subsequently, the five Foreign Ministers who signed the agreement were hailed as "the Founding Fathers of probably the most successful inter-governmental organization in the developing world today."[48] The Foreign Minister of Thailand closed the inaugural session of the newly founded association by showing appreciation to each of his colleagues. In particular, he expressed his gratitude to Adam Malik, the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, since he was the one who suggested the name and acronym of the organisation.

On August 8, 1967, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand signed the ASEAN Declaration

The ASEAN Declaration consists of just two pages stating in general terms the aims and purposes of the organisation. ASEAN is said to focus on promoting regional peace, economic growth, social progress and cultural development. The initial declaration is rather bland and non-specific. The still existing different national interests of ASEAN's founding members explain the document's lack of specificity about how such goals might be achieved.

The still existing different national interests of ASEAN's founding members explain the declaration's lack of specificity

Following Thailand's and Indonesia's plea for creating a rather loose association, the Bangkok Declaration states that the organisation would first have informal arrangements. ASEAN was designed not to serve as a supra-national organisation which marks an important difference to the European Union. The declaration as well as the hesitant early years of ASEAN revealed that the countries of Southeast Asia were trying hard to protect their sovereignty rather than pooling it. The centuries of dependency on foreign powers and the still fragile political systems in Southeast Asia preoccupied ASEAN's Member States with promoting internal political stability and domestic economic development in the first decade of its existence. This explains why the first ASEAN summit was held not before 1976.

ASEAN was designed not to serve as a supra-national organisation

ASEAN's first decade did not have many activities. The most remarkable achievement within this period was the declaration of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) on November 27, 1971.[49] That year, ASEAN celebrated its fourth birthday and the USA announced the reduction of its military presence in the region. Along with the ongoing war in Vietnam and the transfer of Chinese membership in the United Nations from Taiwan to mainland China in October 1971, the fear of external interventions in internal problems drove ASEAN's

The most remarkable achievement within ASEAN's first decade was the declaration of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN)

45 Solidum, p. 22
46 Haacke, pp. 35-40
47 Flores & Abad
48 Flores & Abad
49 ASEAN Declaration, retrieved on August 12, 2008 from http://www.aseansec.org/1212.htm

Member States to declare their neutrality. Critics, however, observed that some ASEAN members still maintained military relations with states outside ASEAN. As discussed earlier, the Philippines and Thailand put on hold their membership to the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) until 1977.[50]

The Asean Declaration

Bangkok, 8 August 1967

[…]

- SECOND, that the aims and purposes of the Association shall be:
- To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South-East Asian Nations;
- To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter;
- To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields;
- To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres;
- To collaborate more effectively for the greater utilization of their agriculture and industries, the expansion of their trade, including the study of the problems of international commodity trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of their peoples;
- To promote South-East Asian studies;
- To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves.

[…]

Table 3.1: Excerpt from the ASEAN Declaration[51]

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia aimed at a deeper collaboration politically, economically and culturally

Over the years, however, ASEAN has progressively entered into several formal and legally-binding instruments. The Vietnam War ended in 1976 with the defeat of the US troops and the subsequent unification of North and South Vietnam, prompting ASEAN to hold its first summit.[52] The major agreements signed in the mid-1970s were the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. Both documents aimed at a deeper collaboration not only in the politically but also economically and culturally.[53] Along with

50 Haacke, pp. 52-68
51 ASEAN Declaration, retrieved on August 12, 2008 from http://www.aseansec.org/1212.htm
52 Haacke, pp. 69-73
53 Both documents are available at: http://www.aseansec.org/24184.htm

expressing their desire to intensify cooperation, the members of the association agreed on the establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat because they felt that words needed to be accompanied by deeds. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 further pushed ASEAN towards regional cooperation.[54] For that reason, the tiny but rich sultanate of Brunei Darussalam was gladly accepted as the sixth member of the grouping after becoming independent in 1984.

Strengthening the economy: Expansion and trade liberalisation

After the Cold War ended in the late 1980s, ASEAN tried to strengthen itself in different ways. The first approach entailed membership enlargement. The idea of expanding the grouping was based on the hope that an increased population in the future would translate to economic strength. Against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, ASEAN's founders had already the foresight to promulgate that "the Association is open for participation to all States in the Southeast Asian region subscribing to the aforementioned aims, principles and purposes."[55] In July 1995, Vietnam was admitted as the seventh member of ASEAN. Laos and Myanmar became full members in July 1997, and Cambodia did so in December 1998. ASEAN's inclusive outlook paved the way for community-building not only in Southeast Asia but also in the broader Asia Pacific region.

ASEANs enlargement was based on the hope that an increased population would translate to economic strength

Although the new Member States did not add much economic weight, ASEAN's expansion seems to be a wise decision. First, it ended Southeast Asia's division into two quite hostile alliances, even though this step alone, as critics argued, did not provide "the building blocs for a new regional order in the post-Cold War era."[56] Second, the case of Vietnam shows that economic progress is a matter of time if proper steps are taken. A realistic analysis of ASEAN's expansion policy reveals, however, that the admission of four new members considerably widened the political, economic and cultural diversity of ASEAN. Furthermore, it must be noted that the membership of military-led Myanmar reduced ASEAN's reputation not only among Western countries but also among Asian neighbours, especially Japan. For several reasons, however, an expulsion of Myanmar is unlikely.

The admission of new members considerably widened the diversity of ASEAN

As Myanmar's direct neighbour, Thailand initiated in 1991 a policy of constructive engagement based on reality and pragmatism. Thailand's „constructive engagement" toward Myanmar was regionalised as an ASEAN policy in 1997. Both Thailand and Myanmar are deeply entwined; events in Myanmar often have direct repercussions on Thailand. Former Thai deputy foreign minister Sukhumband Paribatra explained this undeniable reality by saying that „Myanmar and Thailand [have] been permanent neighbours, sharing a 2,400-kilometer-long border. Most of this border has not been demarcated and passes through difficult mountainous and jungle terrain, inhabited by common ethnic groups, which historically both governments have not found it easy to rule."[57]

Thailands „constructive engagement" towards Myanmar was regionalised as an ASEAN policy in 1997

In addition to Thailand's pragmatic approach, other members of ASEAN are said to be in some way sympathetic to Myanmar since they also had been targets of sanctions and colonial interventions in the past. Finally, Myanmar offers significant natural gas and oil resources, attracting many countries inside and outside

54 Haacke, pp. 81-111
55 ASEAN Declaration
56 Michael Leifer, ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia, 1993, p. 276 as quoted by Haacke, p. 74
57 Phar Kim Beng, Myanmar: ASEAN's thorn in the flesh. Asia Times Online from July 25, 2003. Retrieved on August 25, 2010 from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/EG25Ae 01.html 2003

ASEAN.[58] In this context, ASEAN's policy towards Myanmar is expected to continue balancing between cautious criticism and faltering pragmatism, politically as well as economically.

1967	• Bangkok Declaration
1971	• Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration
1976	• Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia • Declaration of ASEAN Concord
1987	• Protocol Amending the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia
1992	• Agreement on the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme (CEPT) for the ASEAN Free Trade Area
1995	• Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone • Protocol to Amend the Framework Agreement on Enhancing ASEAN Economic Cooperation
1997	• ASEAN Vision 2020
1998	• Hanoi Plan of Action • Second Protocol Amending the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia
2002	• Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea
2003	• Plan of Action of the ASEAN Security Community • Plan of Action of the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community • Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II)
2007	• Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations • Declaration on the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint • Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015
2009	• Declaration on the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015
2010	• Protocol to the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms

Table 3.2: Essential documents representing ASEAN's development[59]

The global financial crisis in 1997 accelerated the process of economic cooperation

ASEAN's second approach to strengthen itself in the decades after the end of the Cold War is based on the idea that stability is reached best by intensified economic cooperation. In 1993, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was created. AFTA is based mainly on the Agreement on the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme (CEPT) for the ASEAN Free Trade Area which was drafted in 1992. ASEAN leaders pushed for trade liberalisation, since in an era of globalisation free trade and open competition become the norm. Their overall goal of establishing a free trade area was to increase the competitiveness of the region and of each Member State. The global financial crisis in 1997 affected deeply the ASEAN Member States and accelerated the process of economic cooperation. The crisis started in Thailand which had incurred a foreign debt burden, making the country bankrupt and resulting in its currency's collapse. As the crisis spread, most of Southeast Asia experienced devalued currencies, bearish stock markets, devalued asset prices and a precipitous rise in private debt.[60] To improve financial stability and foster eco-

58 Jane's, Natural resources (Myanmar), Sentinel Security Assessment – Southeast Asia, July 12, 2010, retrieved online on July 15, 2010 from http://www.janes.com/articles/Janes-Sentinel-Security-Assessment-Southeast-Asia/Natural-resources-Myanmar.html

59 All documents are available at: http://www.aseansec.org/145.htm

60 William C. Hunter, George G. Kaufman, Thomas H. Krueger, eds., The Asian

nomic growth, ASEAN initiated further steps and activities, as explained in the sixth chapter. The Member States shared a strong feeling that only by building additional mechanisms within the region could ASEAN be resilient to challenges from outside and ensure regional security and stability. Hence, the idea of an ASEAN Community was born. The ASEAN Vision 2020 signed in December 1997[61] and the more detailed Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (also referred to as Bali Concord II) in 2003 paved the way for deepening the cooperation by community-building.[62]

The Declaration of ASEAN Concord II paved the way for deepening the cooperation by community-building

Towards a rules-based organisation: The ASEAN Charter

Building on ideas formulated in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, the Eminent Person's Group (EPG) comprising senior representatives of ASEAN Member States drafted a charter to serve as a constitutional base of governing relations among members.[63] When ASEAN celebrated its 40th anniversary on August 8, 2007, the ASEAN Charter was completed. Not all proposals made by the EPG were accepted by ASEAN's heads of state. For example, the idea of an ASEAN Court of Justice as a final arbiter in Southeast Asian disputes about law was rejected. There was also no support for changing the bureaucratic mechanisms of the association: The EPG, for example, proposed that decisions should be based on consensus or, failing this, by a two-thirds majority of Member States. Furthermore, the senior representatives suggested formalising the participation of civil society – interest groups as well as citizens – by defining rules of a consultative process.[64] Even though these proposals were not approved, the ASEAN Charter marks an important step towards accelerating decision-making within the association and further enhancing cooperation among the Member States. Political analysts, however, concluded that despite a positive impact on the regional environment in Southeast Asia, the Charter is not a sign of "the dawn of a new era of far-reaching regional integration, let alone supra-nationality."[65] The Charter was ratified by the last Member State on December 14, 2008 and entered into force the next day.

The ASEAN Charter serves as a constitutional base of governing relations among members

For the first time, the document conferred a legal personality on ASEAN, transforming it from a rather loose grouping of nation-states to an intergovernmental organisation. Moreover, the Charter promotes a deeper market-driven economic integration and encourages a rules-based policy implementation based on accountability reports. As stipulated in the Charter, ASEAN comprises three pillars, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. To better bind the Member States to their own decisions, the mandate of the Secretary-General of ASEAN was expanded. He is now in charge of monitoring the implementation of summit decisions.[66] The endorsement of the ASEAN Charter can be seen as a concrete recognition by ASEAN's leaders that integration requires some degree of similarities

The Charter conferred a legal personality on ASEAN, transforming it from a rather loose grouping of nation-states to an intergovernmental organisation

Integration requires some degree of similarities in economic, political and socio-cultural development

Financial Crisis: Origins, Implications and Solutions. New York 1999: Springer, pp. 195-196

61 ASEAN Vision 2020. Retrieved on July 15, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/1814.htm

62 Declaration of ASEAN Concord II. Retrieved on February 2, 2009 from http://www.aseansec.org/15159.htm

63 The list of members of the Eminent Person's Group on the ASEAN Charter may be retrieved from http://www.aseansec.org/18033.htm

64 Carolina G. Hernandez: Institution Building through an ASEAN Charter, in Panorama, September 2007, pp. 9-52

65 Dosch, p. 5

66 ASEAN Charter. Retrieved on January 3, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf

in economic, political and socio-cultural development of Member States. Unlike the European Union, ASEAN does not have any formal admission criteria. The three pillars of ASEAN represent the goal of achieving cohesion after being admitted into the association. From a journalistic perspective, it is imperative to assess the economic, political-security and socio-cultural developments within ASEAN by constantly asking whether or not the ASEAN Charter has prepared the region adequately to respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

The ASEAN Charter serves as a firm foundation in achieving the ASEAN Community by providing legal status and institutional framework for ASEAN. It also codifies ASEAN norms, rules and values; sets clear targets for ASEAN; and presents accountability and compliance. [...] In effect, the ASEAN Charter has become a legally binding agreement among the 10 ASEAN Member States. It will also be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations, pursuant to Article 102, Paragraph 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. The importance of the ASEAN Charter can be seen in the following contexts: • New political commitment at the top level • New and enhanced commitments • New legal framework, legal personality • New ASEAN bodies • Two new openly-recruited DSGs • More ASEAN meetings • More roles of ASEAN Foreign Ministers • New and enhanced role of the Secretary-General of ASEAN • Other new initiatives and changes

Table 3.3: Relevance of the ASEAN Charter according to the ASEAN Secretariat[67]

Future challenges: New members and ASEAN 2020

The negative labelling of ASEAN as 'paper tiger' or 'talk shop' is aging and increasingly outdated

When ASEAN's heads of state met in 1997, they envisioned already an integrated community. Their goals were described in quite general terms in the ASEAN Vision 2020.[68] A few years later, ASEAN came up with its plan to fully establish the three pillars of the community by 2015.[69] Another four years went by and ASEAN declared the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015.[70] In 2009, the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015 was published. It presents ASEAN's progress in the various political, economic and cultural areas and outlines further steps. The roadmap reveals ASEAN's numerous advancements which prove that the negative labelling of the grouping as 'paper tiger' or 'talk shop' is aging and increasingly outdated.

67 ASEAN Secretariat, Quote retrieved on September 12, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/21861.htm
68 ASEAN Vision 2020. Retrieved on July 15, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/1814.htm
69 Declaration of ASEAN Concord II. Retrieved on February 2, 2009 from http://www.aseansec.org/15159.htm
70 Declaration of the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015. Retrieved on August 22, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/19260.htm

ASEAN has facilitated some degree of unity and solidarity among its 10 Member States. It has given Southeast Asia a regional identity which is also important in the formation and development of national identities. There exists a sense of belonging as an ASEAN member, at least in the context of being Asian. However, given the uneven level of development among the ASEAN Member States or the unresolved border disputes among some of them, there are arguments that the plan to reach an economic and political community may be impossible to achieve within just a few years. The ASEAN community by 2015 is indeed an ambitious project.

Given the uneven level of development among ASEAN Member States, an integrated community may be impossible to achieve within a few years

Therefore, it is likely that the ASEAN Vision 2020 is more realistic, at least in defining the target year of the envisioned community. However, journalists covering ASEAN should be aware that policy-making in a complex and dynamic world in any case must be regarded a process. The plan of an ASEAN community by 2015 encourages politicians, administrators and civil society to work harder in order to meet the timelines set. From that point of view, ASEAN's manifold activities relating to building an integrated community by 2015 can be considered useful, although the deadline may not be met. While ASEAN is working hard to accomplish this mission, Papua New Guinea and especially Timor Leste as potential new members are knocking at the association's door.

From a geographical point of view, there is cogent reason to add both as Member States to ASEAN. Both countries are interested to apply for membership. Timor Leste's and Papua New Guinea's stability is important to prove that each of them can contribute to the achievement of ASEAN's vision. For their part, the Member States of ASEAN may perhaps support their efforts and welcome them as the 11th or 12th member one day.

There is cogent reason to add Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea as Member States to ASEAN

Timor Leste (or East Timor) has diplomatic ties with all 10 Member States of ASEAN. In 2006, Timor Leste Prime Minister Jose Ramos-Horta said, "We had made in East Timor the strategic decision to join ASEAN sometime in the future."[71] Considered the first new sovereign state of the 21st century (it became one on May 20, 2002), Timor Leste has been an observer of ASEAN since 2002. Many analysts and diplomats, however, noted that the country has been struggling "to meet the strict criteria of the grouping including trade liberalisation requirements."[72]

To become new members of ASEAN, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea need to be recognised by all of its Member States. The countries should also agree "to be bound and to abide by the [ASEAN] Charter", as well as have the "ability and willingness to carry out the obligations of Membership." All admissions for membership are decided "by consensus by the ASEAN Summit, upon the recommendation of the ASEAN Coordinating Council."[73] Based on the requirements for admission of new ASEAN members, Timor Leste's and Papua New Guinea's political and economic stability is important to prove that each of them can implement agreements and contribute to the achievement of ASEAN.

Timor Leste has been struggling to meet ASEAN's admission criteria including trade liberalisation requirements

In the context of the country's political situation, journalists covering ASEAN could study, for instance, the state of press freedom and compare it with the situation in the other ASEAN Member States. In a study by the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), press freedom was said to be far from Timor Leste's priorities. "In the media sector, there were stirrings for some positive change […] The challenge for Timor's media will continue to be dependent on the young country's instability. The low prioritization for media reform and media rights will keep journalists and the press vulnerable and trampled under government's resolve for stability and normalcy."[74]

Timor Leste's and Papua New Guinea's stability is important to prove that each of them can contribute to the achievement of ASEAN

71 "East Timor Needs Five Years to Join ASEAN: PM," July 27, 2006. Retrieved on September 17, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/afp/154.htm

72 "East Timor Needs Five Years"

73 ASEAN. The ASEAN Charter, p. 6

74 SEAPA. Press Freedom in Southeast Asia (2009). pp. 32-34

That Timor Leste's press is now "partly free" is an indication that it is in the right direction as far as the strengthening of democracy is concerned

On a positive note, however, Freedom House ranks Timor Leste's press as "partly free" as in the case of ASEAN members Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. In fact, it ranks 78th out of 195 countries and territories surveyed in 2009, higher than the three "partly free" ASEAN Member Countries. Thailand was 122nd, Indonesia was 113th and the Philippines was 96th.[75] Timor Leste is currently striking that balance of providing freedom of expression while ensuring political and economic stability. That its press is now "partly free" is an indication that it is in the right direction as far as the strengthening of democracy is concerned. Soon, Timor Leste may be ready to become the 11th member of ASEAN. In March 2011, it submitted its application to join ASEAN. Indonesia as ASEAN's 2011 chair has requested all other Member States to give "urgent attention"[76] to this issue.

Key points

- After the Cold War ended, ASEAN strengthened itself by expanding its membership and intensifying its economic cooperation.
- The ASEAN Charter conferred a legal personality on ASEAN transforming it from a rather loose grouping of nation-states to a rules-based intergovernmental organisation.
- Given the uneven level of development among ASEAN Member Countries, the goal of achieving an ASEAN community by 2015 is an ambitious project.
- ASEAN's manifold activities to build an integrated community can be considered useful, although the deadline may not be met.
- Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste are hoping to become new members of the association in the near future.

Further reading

An in-depth study on ASEAN's formation and expansion:

Jürgen Haacke, ASEAN's diplomatic culture. Origins, development and prospects. New York: Routledge 2003.

Documents on ASEAN may be retrieved from the following sources:

http://www.aseansec.org/20430.htm

http://www.aseansec.org/24184.htm

75 Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2009 World Ranking. Retrieved on September 17, 2010 from http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fop09/FoP2009_World_Rankings.pdf

76 Prime Minister of Timor-Leste Visits ASEAN Secretariat. Jakarta, March 23, 2011. Retrieved on March 24, 2011 from http://www.aseansec.org/26063.htm

Chapter 4

More than 'musyawarah': Decision-making in ASEAN

Since its establishment in 1967, critics have labeled ASEAN as a paper tiger. The term refers to an individual or organisation that appears powerful but is not. On the one hand, ASEAN seems powerful because it is able to unite 10 politically and culturally diverse Member States towards common developmental goals. On the other hand, according to its critics, ASEAN's powerlessness is manifested by many weaknesses, e.g., its failure to take a leading role in resolving conflicts among its members. Over the years, ASEAN was also referred to as a mere talk shop. The grouping can facilitate dialogues. However, it cannot take decisive action on erring members, as critics argued.

The ratification of the ASEAN Charter proves to be a step in the right direction even if the ASEAN Secretariat itself admits that much more needs to be done.[77] After the ASEAN Charter entered into force on December 15, 2008, new institutions and decision-making mechanisms were established. The Charter introduced the ASEAN single chairmanship, set up the ASEAN Coordinating Council to enhance policy coherence and established the Committee of Permanent Representatives to hasten decision-making. As explained in the previous chapter, the Charter also enhanced the mandate of the Secretary-General and encouraged a rules-based implementation of policies.

After the ASEAN Charter entered into force new institutions and decision-making mechanisms were established

Key institutions: Summits, councils, secretariats

Decision-making in ASEAN depends on specific traditions of consensus-making and soft-institutionalisation. While elements of supra-nationality are still quite weak, the number of institutions serving ASEAN increased gradually. Being an intergovernmental organisation, ASEAN's highest authority is the biannual meeting of the heads of the 10 Member States called ASEAN Summits. The first summit was held on February 23-24, 1976 in Bali, about one decade after the association was established. After the second summit in 1977 in Kuala Lumpur, it took almost two decades before the heads of governments met on an annual basis. Between 1977 and 1995, there were only two ASEAN summits – 1987 in Manila and 1992 in Singapore – indicating the grouping's lesser significance in this period of time. The association has begun to meet regularly since its fifth summit in 1995 in Bangkok.

Elements of supra-nationality are still quite weak, but the number of institutions serving ASEAN increases gradually

While ASEAN Summits are responsible for directions and core initiatives for ASEAN activities, the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) comprising the Foreign Ministers of the 10 Member States acts as the policy arm of the association. Since the inaugural meeting of the Coordinating Council on 15th December 2008, the Foreign Ministers have met at least twice a year to enhance ASEAN's policy coherence and efficiency. In particular, the Coordinating Council tries to harmonise the policies of the three ASEAN Community Councils which consist of the sectoral ministerial bodies of the political-security, economic and socio-cultural

While ASEAN Summits are responsible for directions and core initiatives, the Coordinating Council acts as the policy arm of the association

77 ASEANWEB. The ASEAN Charter: Much Achieved, Much More Needs to be Done. December 16, 2009. Retrieved on October 10, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/24130.htm

communities. In addition, the Coordinating Council considers the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the work of ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat.

It remains to be seen how effectively the CPR streamlines its coordination mechanisms with the ASEAN Secretariat

The Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) was primarily established to accelerate decision-making processes in ASEAN and further institutionalise the workings of the association, making the 10 Member States more committed to fulfill regional obligations. Composed of representatives with the rank of Ambassador of each Member State, the CPR supports the work of the three Community Councils, coordinates with the ASEAN Secretary-General and the ASEAN National Secretariats. Since the inaugural meeting at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta on May 21, 2009, the CPR has met frequently, creating a positive and informal working climate among its members. It remains to be seen, however, how effectively the CPR harmonises and streamlines its coordination mechanisms with the ASEAN Secretariat as well as with the Community Councils for accelerated decision-making and the common good of the peoples of ASEAN.

ASEAN Summit	1976	Highest authority of ASEAN comprising the heads of governments/states responsible for all initiatives and directions of ASEAN
ASEAN Coordinating Council	2008	ASEAN's policy arm comprising the ASEAN Foreign Ministers coordinating the three Community Councils to enhance policy coherence
ASEAN Community Councils	2008	Comprising the relevant ASEAN sectoral ministerial bodies of the political-security, economic and socio-cultural communities
Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR)	2009	Comprises ambassadors of Member States and coordinates with the ASEAN Secretary-General to accelerate decision-making
ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC)	1976	Responsible for enhancing coordination and implementation of policies, projects and activities of ASEAN; headed by the Secretary-General
National Secretariats of ASEAN		Set up within the Foreign Ministries of the Member States aiming at implementing ASEAN-related activities at the national level

Table 4.1: Major decision-making institutions, years established and key responsibilities

The professionalization of the ASEAN Secretariat reflects the relevance of the association as a whole

The ASEAN Secretariat (or ASEC) was established as a result of the first ASEAN Summit in 1976. In general, the Secretariat is responsible for the implementation of policies, projects and activities as well as for the coordination of the ASEAN bodies. To some extent the institutionalisation and professionalization of the Secretariat over the course of ASEAN's existence reflects the relevance of the association as a whole. From time to time, the ASEC was restructured in accordance with the growing importance of the organisation. In 1992, for instance, the mandate of the Secretariat was enlarged, the tenure of the Secretary-General was increased to five years and an open recruitment policy was implemented. Five years later, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers agreed on the creation of the additional post of Deputy Secretary-General. Another important restructuring took place after the ASEAN Charter entered into force in mid-December 2008.

The Secretary-General of ASEAN monitors the progress of implementation of Summit decisions and agreements

The ASEAN Secretariat is now headed by the Secretary-General and four Deputy Secretary-Generals. Three of the Deputy Secretary-Generals are in charge of affairs relating to the three communities of ASEAN while the fourth Deputy Secretary-General is responsible for Community and Corporate Affairs. The Secretary-General is appointed based on merit by the Heads of Government. He or she initiates ASEAN activities and monitors the progress of implementation of Summit decisions and agreements. The Secretary-General represents ASEAN's views in meetings with other parties and interacts with entities associated with ASEAN.

ASEAN Political-Security Community Council
ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting
ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting
ASEAN Law Ministers' Meeting
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime
ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN Economic Community Council
ASEAN Finance Ministers' Meeting
ASEAN Free Trade Area Council
ASEAN Investment Area Council
ASEAN Tourism Ministers' Meeting
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry
ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting
ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation
ASEAN Ministers on Minerals
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology
ASEAN Telecommunications and IT Ministers' Meeting
ASEAN Transport Ministers' Meeting
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council
ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts
ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management
ASEAN Ministers' Responsible for Information
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment
ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting
ASEAN Labor Ministers Meeting
ASEAN Ministers' Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth
Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

Table 4.2: Bodies of the ASEAN Community Councils

Being an intergovernmental rather than a supra-national organisation, ASEAN relies to a large extent on the national bureaucracies of the Member States. This is why the apparatus of the ASEAN Secretariat is relatively small. Each Member State sustains a National Secretariat in its Foreign Ministry headed by a Director-General. The National Secretariats are responsible for organising and implementing ASEAN-related activities at the national level. An important task, specifically with ASEAN's new emphasis of a more people-centred approach, relates to the promotion of an ASEAN identity and increased awareness of ASEAN in the entire region. For journalists, it is useful to maintain contact with representatives of all major institutions of ASEAN. For Southeast Asian journalists working outside Jakarta, Indonesia, the National Secretariats are particularly important because they may serve as local mediators and interpreters of ASEAN's policies. Framing ASEAN's activities into a local context will increase the public outreach of the organisation and help make it more people-centred, as described by the ASEAN Charter.

ASEAN relies to a large extent on national bureaucracies of Member States

Framing ASEAN's activities into a local context increases its public outreach

Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights

One of the most widely discussed institutions of ASEAN is the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) established in 2009. According to the ASEAN Charter, the AICHR should promote and protect

human rights, shape and raise human rights standards and act as a channel for constructive cooperation on the issue of human rights. The Foreign Ministers of ASEAN said that this new institution will help realise a "truly people-centered ASEAN Community by 2015."[78] They see the establishment of the commission as a positive step in the promotion of human rights within the region. According to the terms of reference of the AICHR, the latter is a mere consultative body. It is „the overarching human rights institution in ASEAN with overall responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN."[79]

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) might raise human rights standards

However, there are critics who argue that "keeping Asean's policy of non-interference in other members' affairs and continuation of decision-making by consensus could result in a `paper tiger'". What is lacking is said to be an „effective enforcement mechanism."[80] In the context of human rights, ASEAN's principle of non-interference could render useless ASEAN bodies like the AICHR. ASEAN officials claim that the AICHR should operate "according to the regional context"[81] and, as declared in the Charter, "in accordance with the terms of reference to be determined by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting."[82]

It is not clear which concept of human rights guides AICHR's decision-making

It is not clear therefore which concept of human rights guides the decision-making of the AICHR. Despite socio-political and cultural differences of ASEAN countries, the 10 Member States generally adhere to the definition of human rights as stated in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[83] The Charter as well as its interpretation by the Foreign Ministers, however, raises the question whether ASEAN follows the understanding of human rights as universal principles, or in contrast perceives human rights as civil liberties depending on local context, as the phrase "according to the regional context" is suggesting.

As regards the widely-reported massacre in Ampatuan, Maguindanao (Philippines) which claimed the lives of 32 Filipino journalists on November 23, 2009, the family of the victims decided to bring the case to ASEAN. In February 2010, Filipino lawyers Harry Roque and Pete Principe who represent the 14 widows of the journalists killed during the Ampatuan massacre said that they already filed a complaint at the AICHR.[84] Whether or not the AICHR can help shed light on cases of human rights violations like the Ampatuan massacre remains to be seen. But it cannot be denied that ASEAN could help make other Member States aware of the human rights situation in the Philippines and in other parts of ASEAN.

The AICHR needs a clear mandate to take Member States to task for violating human rights

However, reading the pertinent provisions of the ASEAN human rights body in the new ASEAN charter, the terms are vague when it comes to ensuring the protection and upholding of human rights in the region.[85] The AICHR needs a clear mandate to take the Member States to task for violating human rights and should serve as an intermediary in filing cases before international courts. In the long run, ASEAN could even take erring countries to task through legal courts like the International Court of Justice as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations situated in The Hague (The

78 ASEAN Foreign Ministers: Press release. Hua Hin (Thailand), February 27, 2009
79 ASEANWEB, Terms of Reference of the AICHR. Retrieved on October 10, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/publications/TOR-of-AICHR.pdf
80 KI Media, ASEAN leaders ready to sign the toothless paper tiger landmark charter. Retrieved on October 10, 2010 from http://ki-media.blogspot.com/2007/11/asean-leaders-ready-to-sign-toothless.html
81 ASEAN Foreign Ministers, February 27, 2009
82 ASEAN Charter, Article 14.12.
83 The UN Declaration may be retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml
84 Danilo Arao, ASEAN intervention on human rights. February 15, 2010. Retrieved on October 10, 2010 from http://asiancorrespondent.com/danny-arao-blog/asean-intervention-on-human-rights-issues
85 ASEANWEB, Terms of Reference of the AICHR

Netherlands) or the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal. It is only by actively monitoring and filing the appropriate cases that the AICHR can make itself relevant. Beyond the public perception, what proves to be crucial is the making and reshaping of ASEAN into an organisation that makes its presence felt in the region as it makes itself relevant.
In the context of the idea of a more people-centred association, one of the positive goals that ASEAN could go for is to lend its voice in protecting and upholding human rights. Indeed, it has become hard for ASEAN through the years to hold Member States accountable for not adhering to various regional agreements. Only its future activities, however, can tell whether the formation of the AICHR is a step towards a rules-based organisation.

One of the positive goals that ASEAN could go for is to lend its voice in protecting human rights

Supporting bodies: From regional security to community-building

An important tool of preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region is the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). It was established in 1994 to address regional security concerns and preserve regional peace and stability. The ARF is perceived as the main cooperative security forum in the region. Besides ASEAN Member States, the current participants include Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Timor Leste, the European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation, North Korea, South Korea and the United States of America. The ARF builds upon decision-making procedures used over decades within the ASEAN context. Accordingly, decision-making aims at fostering dialogue and consultation, is consensus-oriented and based on the principle of non-interference.

The ASEAN Regional Forum was established to preserve regional peace

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)	1994	Most important security forum in the Asia Pacific addressing regional security concerns to preserve peace and stability
ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)	2009	Comprising representatives of each Member State in order to promote human rights and to raise human rights standards in the region
ASEAN Interparliamentary Assembly (AIPA)	1977	Comprises parliamentarians of Member States to create greater participation by the peoples of ASEAN countries
ASEAN Foundation	1997	Supports the ASEAN Secretariat by promoting greater awareness of ASEAN, people-to-people interaction, business collaboration, etc.
ASEAN Committees in Third Countries		Located in ASEAN's dialogue partner countries comprising the heads of diplomatic missions of Member States handling external relations with host countries

Table 4.3: Important supporting bodies, years established and key responsibilities

In order to enhance cooperation among representatives of the peoples of ASEAN, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation (AIPO) was founded in 1977. When the idea of a more people-centred association was created in 2003 and in a move towards establishing a more effective and closely integrated ASEAN community, the AIPO was transformed into the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). The AIPA will play a bigger role in the framework of ASEAN's decision-making, provided that more Member States would see the importance of parliaments and make their governments more democratic.
Another important institution to promote an ASEAN identity is the ASEAN Foundation. It assists the Secretary-General of ASEAN in terms of community building by supporting people-to-people interaction in all relevant areas. Financially, the ASEAN Foundation is heavily dependent on contributions from ASEAN Member States and third parties.

The ASEAN Foundation supports people-to-people interaction in all relevant areas

The ASEAN Committees in Third Countries handle ASEAN's external relations

In its dialogue with partner countries, ASEAN established the ASEAN Committees in Third Countries comprising the heads of diplomatic missions of the 10 Member States. These committees handle ASEAN's external relations with external partners, governments as well as international organisations situated in the respective host country. ASEAN Committees in Third Countries are located in Beijing, Berlin, Brussels, Canberra, Geneva, Islamabad, London, Moscow, New Delhi, New York, Ottawa, Paris, Riyadh, Seoul, Tokyo, Ankara, Washington D.C., and Wellington. The progress reports of all external activities are submitted to the ASEC by the Chairmen of the Committees.

The ASEAN Way: Consensus and the question of face

The ASEAN grouping was not designed to replicate the European experience. As shown in the third chapter, the formation of ASEAN was generally a result of the instability created by the Cold War and tensions between founding members. The historical background, particularly the centuries of dependency on foreign powers in colonial times and the subsequent struggle for independence, also affected the creation of the association. As a result, a study noted that the "defense of member-states' sovereignty was critical to building confidence and reducing suspicion, especially in ASEAN's early years."[86]

Binding each other without giving up control over their own country is the origin of the ASEAN Way

The regional desire to resolve tensions and generate collective strength in times of uncertainty conflicted considerably with the deeply felt need to uphold sovereignty. Binding each other without giving up control over their own country – this is the origin of the often quoted and intensively studied ASEAN Way. Political analysts have identified three distinct uses of the term.[87] As a political phrase, ASEAN Way refers to:

1. a way of resolving regional disputes;
2. a specific decision-making process; and
3. a process of identity building.

Not interfering with another country's problems was meant to stabilise ASEAN

Regional disputes should be solved by complying with the principle of non-interference. ASEAN Member States are expected therefore to "refrain from criticizing the actions of member governments towards its own people, including violation of human rights."[88] The idea of not interfering with another country's problems and respecting its national sovereignty was meant to stabilise the grouping.

However, critics think that the ASEAN Way is "no longer suited to the demands of the contemporary interdependent world, which is why it is widely perceived to have prevented ASEAN from acting appropriately in meeting a set of diverse challenges."[89] Despite this criticism, ASEAN publicly still emphasises the principle of non-interference. At the same time, the association draws on informal principles of dispute management including "stressing the virtue of self-restraint; adoption of the practices of Musyawarah and mufakat (consulting and consensus); using third-party mediation to settle disputes; and agreeing to disagree while shelving the settlement of conflict."[90]

The second use of the term is associated with the way ASEAN acts as an organisation. For decades, the grouping's decision-making processes were based on

86 Emmerson, p. 23
87 Haacke, pp. 3-4
88 Amitav Acharya, Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia. Asean and the problem of regional order. London 2001: Routledge, p. 58
89 Haacke, pp. 7
90 Haacke, pp. 4

consensus-finding by consultation, as ASEAN's former Secretary-General Dato' Ajit Singh explained in 1996: "Decisions are taken only when all are comfortable with them. Close consultations precede these decisions. Consensus is the rule. The question of face is very important and every effort is made to ensure that no party feels hurt in an argument or a discussion."[91]

Decisions are taken only when all are comfortable with them

In reality, this understanding of the ASEAN Way prompted the Member States to avoid confrontational topics and pursue only issues with some degree of acceptability at the regional level. This way of executing policies – by relying on consensus-building rather than on majority decisions – reduced ASEAN pronouncements quite often to the lowest common denominator. This then prompted critics to dismiss ASEAN as a mere talk shop. However, even critics have to admit that in the 1990s and beyond, particularly with the ratification of the ASEAN Charter, useful steps were taken to prepare the association for the challenges of the 21st century.

Relying on consensus-building reduced ASEAN pronouncements quite often to the lowest common denominator

As regards the third point, the ASEAN Way has been described as a method helping to construct a common identity of those participating in the process of decision-making.[92] As an intergovernmental organisation, ASEAN's policies were determined by political elites as citizens were excluded from contributing to policy-making. Not surprisingly, an overall ASEAN identity does not yet exist. It may be concluded that a common ASEAN identity can be created only if citizens believe that they have a voice in ASEAN.

Key points

- Resulting from the ASEAN Charter, new institutions and responsibilities were established aiming to accelerate and promote rules-based decision-making.
- The founding of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights is a promising step towards a rules-based organisation.
- The ASEAN Way refers to a specific form of decision-making and is based on the idea of binding Member States together without giving up sovereignty.
- An ASEAN identity can be created only if the citizens of the ASEAN Member States think that they have a voice in ASEAN.

Further reading

Jürgen Haacke, ASEAN's diplomatic culture. Origins, development and prospects. New York 2003: Routledge.

Donald K. Emmerson, Critical Terms: Security, Democracy, and Regionalism in Southeast Asia, in Donald K. Emmerson, ed., Hard Choices: Security, Democracy, and Regionalism in Southeast Asia. Stanford 2008: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center.

The website of the ASEAN Secretariat has more information on the institutions of ASEAN: http://www.aseansec.org/20021.htm

91 Dato' Ajit Singh as quoted by Haacke, p. 6

92 Acharya, p. 28

Chapter 5

ASEAN's Political-Security Community

From the very beginning, ASEAN Member States were aware that regional security in Southeast Asia is not ensured by military means but by economic, socio-cultural and political developments. The latter are said to be more effective forms of creating stability. As discussed in the third chapter, the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO), founded in 1954 to assist Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam fight communism, proved to be ineffective. As a result, the founders of ASEAN were convinced that national security should not depend on military alliances but on self-reliance deriving from socio-economic development and political stability, as explained in the fourth chapter.

Security should not depend on military alliances but on self-reliance deriving from socio-economic development

As one of its earliest political concepts, ASEAN established the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971. The Member States wanted Southeast Asia to be recognised as a peaceful region, free from any form of interference by outside powers. ASEAN did not face any "hot" inter-state conflict decades despite overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea around the Spratly Islands and disputed land borders, particularly the Thai-Cambodian conflict over an area around an ancient temple.

Besides reducing the risk of military confrontations, ASEAN's Political-Security Community is working on non-traditional security challenges. ASEAN is working on issues such as terrorism, human trafficking, environmental hazards and food insecurity. [93] Some of these challenges are already tackled by ASEAN's policy-makers; others remain still undecided or under bilateral consideration.

ASEAN is working on issues such as terrorism, human trafficking, environmental hazards or food insecurity

Growing impact: Neutrality and the conflict resolution in Cambodia

The idea to establish the ZOPFAN was a 1970 proposal by Malaysia. After the British left the country, Malaysia re-arranged its security policy as it took a neutral stand. ASEAN adopted the idea for neutralising Southeast Asia. The consequences of the Cold War, the Russian-Chinese conflict and the expansion of the Vietnam War towards Laos and Cambodia pushed ASEAN also to declare its neutrality. ZOPFAN stressed ASEAN's non-aggressive approach to international relations. To ensure peace and security among themselves, the Member States agreed to apply non-violent ways and means based on mutual respect and territorial integrity. The zone was designed to exclude major powers, but "its existence actually assumed the continuing presence of those powers."[94]

The Cold War, the Russian-Chinese conflict and the Vietnam War pushed ASEAN to declare its neutrality

With the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the relations between China and the former Soviet Union further deteriorated. The Sino-Soviet split divided the communist bloc, affecting directly Mainland Southeast Asia. The Communist Party of Vietnam sided with the Soviet Union whereas the Communist Party of then Kampuchea aligned itself with China. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 was meant to stop the expansion of China into the region and achieve advantages in the long-lasting struggle for regional dominance. Even though Vietnam's offensive also ended the Cambodian genocide under the Khmer Rouge regime and its leader Pol Pot, the invasion was internationally condemned. Kampuchea was considered a "sovereign nation, however repellent its government"[95] was.

The Sino-Soviet split affected directly Mainland Southeast Asia

93 Dosch, p. 3
94 D.M. Jones & M.L.R. Smith, ASEAN and East Asian International Relations. Regional Delusions, Northampton 2006: Edward Elgarp, pp. 53-54
95 Church, p. 26

ASEAN played an important role in resolving the Cambodian conflict

In this situation, ASEAN began to play "an important role in resolving the Cambodian conflict",[96] since it was interested in stabilising the entire region. Without directly addressing Vietnam, ASEAN foreign ministers called for a withdrawal of all foreign troops from Cambodia and the dismantling of the Phnom Penh government so Cambodians could exercise their right to self-determination through elections. Following the norms of the ASEAN Way, the association "applied its non-confrontational style to the situation through direct and indirect measures of restraint, pressure, diplomacy, communication and trade-offs."[97] From the early stages of the conflict, ASEAN concentrated its diplomatic effort on the United Nations (UN). It mobilised the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to isolate the 'puppet-regime' in Cambodia installed by Vietnam. ASEAN supported the Cambodian government in exile and secured its recognition by the UN as the legitimate government.

ASEAN moved from an inchoate and vulnerable collection of states to effective international partnership

This achievement signalled ASEAN's "apparent arrival as a mature regional organisation, marking the Association's passage from an inchoate and vulnerable collection of states to effective international partnership with a growing impact on the regional security order."[98] However, ASEAN became effective only because "its actions coincided with superpower interests."[99]

Integrative security policy: Multilateralism and the ASEAN Regional Forum

The end of the Cold War encouraged ASEAN to embark on an integrative policy envisioned by its founders

The end of the Cold War brought relative peace and security to Southeast Asia. It encouraged ASEAN to embark on an integrative policy envisioned by its founders. Alongside the strategy of widening its membership, ASEAN intensified its efforts to deepen economic and political cooperation. The creation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area in 1992, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994, the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) in 1995 and the ASEAN plus three in 1997 aimed at intensifying the interconnectedness of Southeast Asia for the common good of regional stability. The establishment of the ARF indicated an ambitious step forward. It sought to include all major political powers in the deliberation of Southeast Asian affairs. ASEAN hoped that the end of the Cold War would sufficiently motivate former rivals to seek greater convergence in their foreign policies, not least stimulated by their economic interests.[100]

The region has been shaped by the US ambivalence regarding its strategic commitments and the rise of China

Meanwhile, the ARF became the most important tool of preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region. The geopolitical milieu of the region has been largely shaped by two key developments, namely American ambivalence regarding its strategic commitments to the region and the rise of China as an economic and military power.[101] The forum brings together all relevant players addressing regional security concerns to preserve peace and stability. Participants include Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation, North Korea, South Korea, Timor Leste, the United States of America and ASEAN Member States. Since the ARF builds purely on consultative and dialogue-oriented procedures used by ASEAN since its foundation, its capacities are limited.

96 Gillian Goh, The 'ASEAN Way'. Non-Intervention and ASEAN's Role in Conflict Management, in Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs Volume 3, No 1, Spring 2003 (pp. 113-118), p. 118
97 Goh, p. 118
98 Jones & Smith, pp. 53-54
99 Jones & Smith, pp. 55
100 Jones & Smith, pp. 56-57
101 Acharya & Tan, pp. 37-59; Avery Goldstein, Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security. Stanford 2005: Stanford University Press

The way ASEAN addresses regional security issues through ARF is best demonstrated by a statement of its Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan regarding North Korea's artillery attack on South Korean Yeonyeong island in November 2010: "Since the ROK [Republic of Korea] and the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] have acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC)[102] and both are participating in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), I hereby appeal to them to refrain from the use of force or the threat to use force, and to uphold the TAC's principle of peaceful resolution of conflict and the ARF's spirit of goodwill in cooperation for common benefit. Permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula is long overdue, and the absence of permanent peace is benefiting no one. Further escalation of the confrontation on the Korean Peninsula will derail our hard-earned economic recovery in East Asia at a time when our region should be benefiting from growth and prosperity."[103]

Due to differences in security interests of ASEAN Member States, major external powers remain significant factors in the security of the region

Although ASEAN's importance has increased over the years, it has to be noted that "[d]ue to differences in security interests of ASEAN Member States, the role of major powers remain[ed] a significant factor in the security of the region."[104] Taking into account the history of Southeast Asia whose fortunes were continually shaped also by external powers, this does not come as a surprise. Unlike sceptics who criticise external influences in principle, realists point out that "[t]he overall stability and security of Southeast Asia will further benefit from the current four-way competition among the United States, Japan, China, and to a lesser extent, the European Union for regional influence that has resulted in the growing constructive involvement of these powers in the management of regional order."[105]

The security of Southeast Asia benefits from the competition among the United States, Japan, China and the European Union

By using the norms of the ASEAN Way, the association has been quite successful in balancing the various powers interested in the region. Scholars are convinced that in the area of security relations ASEAN has achieved at least three main goals:

1. ASEAN has created better relations with China. This could only be achieved because ASEAN "has taken an accommodative approach without relying on military measures."[106]
2. The improvement of regional security "has reduced the need for Southeast Asian countries to rely on external powers such as the United States."[107]
3. The ASEAN Regional Forum has enhanced "the centrality of ASEAN to Asia-Pacific regional security cooperation."[108]

The ASEAN Regional Forum has enhanced the centrality of ASEAN to Asia-Pacific regional security cooperation

102 The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia was signed on Febru ary 24, 1976 by ASEAN Member States. It may be retrieved from http://www.aseansec.org/1217.htm

103 ASEAN Secretariat, Statement of the Secretary-General of ASEAN on the Artillery Attack on ROK's Yeonyeong Island, November 26, 2010

104 Rizal Sukma, ASEAN and Regional Security in East Asia. In Wilhelm Hofmeister, ed., Security Politics in Asia and Europe, Singapore 2010: KAS, pp. 109-120

105 Dosch, p. 3

106 H. Katsumata, ASEAN's cooperative security enterprise. Norms and interests in the ASEAN regional forum, New York 2009: Palgrave, p. 26; cf. Li Mingjiang, Cooperation for Competition: China's Approach to regional security in East Asia, in Wilhelm Hofmeister, ed., Security Politics in Asia and Europe, Singapore 2010: KAS, pp. 121-134

107 Katsumata, p. 28; cf. Beverley Loke, Renegotiating Asia's Regional Security Order: The Role of the United States, in Wilhelm Hofmeister, ed., Security Politics in Asia and Europe, Singapore 2010: KAS, pp. 193-206

108 Katsumata, p. 28

It may be argued that "without the region's increasing fluency with multilateral practices and processes – albeit a 'soft' multilateralism at that – the security of Southeast Asia would probably have been far worse than it has been."[109]

Intra-regional conflicts and the formation of a "security community"

ASEAN had been called to take a more active role in resolving conflicts

Even though ASEAN was able to ensure its quite peaceful development for more than four decades, there had been calls for the association to take an even more active role in resolving intra-regional conflicts. Cambodia and Thailand, for example, have been reportedly „locked in a troop standoff at their border since July 2008, when the ancient Preah Vihear temple was granted UNESCO World Heritage status."[110] The Spratly Islands, on the other hand, is being claimed by six Asian countries, four of which (the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam) are members of ASEAN.[111] These are just two of the major conflicts affecting selected Member States of ASEAN.

ASEAN's diplomacy encourages Thailand and Cambodia to refrain from engaging in a devastating war

The Thai-Cambodian conflict over a 4.6-square-kilometre area around the Preah Vihear Temple on the one hand demonstrates the fragility of this long-lasting era of regional peace. Thailand explicitly refused ASEAN's assistance in resolving the conflict. The ASEAN foreign ministers followed therefore the principle of non-interference and did not go any further than saying that the association was prepared to help if requested by both parties. On the other hand, it may be argued that by applying backdoor diplomacy ASEAN has encouraged both sides to refrain from engaging in a "hot" war. In February 2011, after both sides engaged in gun fire and artillery duals, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Surin Pitsuwan, said: „This violent conflict must be brought under control and the two parties must return to the negotiating table soonest. [...] The situation has escalated into open conflict. And that will definitely affect our economic development, confidence in our region, tourism and prospect for foreign investment, which have just been picking up in light of the world economic recovery. [...] I understand both sides now welcome some form of mediation by the ASEAN leadership."[112]

Conflict resolution shall be guided by non-interference, respect for sovereignty and renunciation of the use of force

The way the association has dealt with the Thai-Cambodian border conflict illustrates how ASEAN's intra-regional security policy works. According to the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint, adopted by ASEAN leaders in March 2009, the Member States "pledge to rely exclusively on peaceful processes in the settlement of intra-regional differences and regard their security as fundamentally linked to one another and bound by geographic location, common vision and objectives. It has the following components: political development; shaping and sharing of norms; conflict prevention; conflict resolution; post-conflict peace building; and implementing mechanisms."[113] The process of conflict resolution "shall be guided by well-established principles of non-interference, consensus based decision-making, national and regional resilience, respect for the national sovereignty, the renunciation of the threat or the use of force, and peaceful settlement of differences and disputes which have served as the foundation of ASEAN cooperation."[114]

The principles of non-interference and mutual respect make ASEAN helpless in imposing sanctions on erring members

109 Acharya & Tan, p. 55

110 Mustaqim Adamrah. ASEAN urged to mediate intra-regional conflicts. Jakarta Post from August 19, 2010. Retrieved on October 10, 2010 from http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/08/19/asean-urged-mediate-intraregional-conflicts.html

111 Mong Palatino, The Spratlys and the Philippine Claim, March 26, 2008. UPI Asia.com. Retrieved on October 10, 2010 from http://www.upiasia.com/Politics/2008/03/26/the_spratlys_and_the_philippine_claim/2587/

112 ASEAN Secretariat. Surin to Thailand and Cambodia: „Let ASEAN help mediate soonest." Press release, February 5, 2011

113 ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint. Retrieved on September 12, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/18741.htm

114 ASEANWEB. ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action. Retrieved on October

This declaration gives the impression that ASEAN is confident that conflicts between and among Member States could be resolved through their own mechanisms. The principles of non-interference and mutual respect on the one hand recognise the sovereignty of the Member States, but on the other hand they make ASEAN somewhat helpless in imposing sanctions on erring members.

An Indonesian journalist assessing the newest ASEAN Dispute Settlement Mechanism[115] noted that "ASEAN is ostensibly still unable to settle discrepancies in the interpretation and application of the principles of its Charter. Worse than that, the willingness is also lacking because the member states largely enjoy making decisions via a consensus involving all member states without exception, despite the fact that certain member states have been seen to misinterpret or even reject such principles."[116] An international relations expert stressed this important point: "In any regional organisation, conflicts among members are indeed inevitable [...] [b]ut as we're heading toward the ASEAN community [in 2015], it is important to have a mechanism of regional conflict resolution, with an emphasis on solidarity."[117]

ASEAN's Dispute Settlement Mechanism is still unable to settle discrepancies in the application of the ASEAN Charter

The principle of non-interference also hinders any actions of ASEAN regarding sub-regional conflicts: "Southeast Asia's most pressing security issues continue to be those areas in which ASEAN […] [has] not yet been able – or allowed – to play a role in conflict management, namely the domestic conflicts within some Member States, including the Philippines (Mindanao), Indonesia (West Papua) and Thailand (Pattani) that have been caused by economic, political and socio-religious factors."[118]

Southeast Asia's most pressing security issues include domestic conflicts caused by economic, political and socio-religious factors

With regard to the specific issue of conflict resolution, ASEAN's Security Community Plan of Action states: "It is essential that any disputes and conflicts involving ASEAN Member Countries be resolved in a peaceful way and in the spirit of promoting peace, security and stability in the region. While continuing to use national, bilateral and international mechanisms, ASEAN Member Countries shall endeavour to use the existing regional dispute settlement mechanisms and processes in the political and security areas and work towards innovative modalities including arrangements to maintain regional peace and security so as to better serve theirs as well as collective interests of all members for peace and security."[119]

This particular action plan may be perceived as being too general, a situation that is understandable in the context of ASEAN's principle of non-interference. Diplomacy requires that protocols, guidelines and other procedures be written in a way that does not unnecessarily offend the parties concerned.

Not surprisingly, even the "implementation mechanisms" of the security plan of action are written in broad strokes: "The AMM [ASEAN Ministerial Meeting] shall take necessary follow-up measures to implement this Plan of Action including consultation and coordination with other relevant ASEAN ministerial bodies; to set up ad-hoc groups as appropriate; and to report annually the progress of implementation to the ASEAN Summit; as well as to introduce new measures and activities to strengthen the ASEAN Security Community as appropriate; [...] "The AMM shall undertake overall review of progress of this Plan of Action. The AMM shall inscribe permanently an agenda item entitled 'Implementation of the ASC

Even the implementation mechanisms of ASEAN's security community plan of action are written in broad strokes

10, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/16826.htm

115 For more information, read: Protocol on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms signed at Hanoi on April 8, 2010, retrieved on June 12, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/24447.htm#Article-5

116 Lina A. Alexandra, ASEAN dispute settlement mechanism: Anything new? Jakarta Post from April 9, 2010. Retrieved on May 2, 2010 from http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/04/09/asean-dispute-settlement-mechanism-anything-new.html

117 Adamrah

118 Dosch, p. 8

119 ASEANWEB. ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action

Plan of Action' in the agenda of its meetings; and [...] The Secretary-General of ASEAN shall assist the ASEAN Chair in monitoring and reviewing the progress of implementation of this Plan of Action."[120]

As the excerpts from ASEAN's Security Community Plan of Action along with the ASEAN Political Security Community Blueprint show, ASEAN relies heavily on specific principles guiding top-down procedures of decision-making. From an academic viewpoint, states interacting "through norms of behaviour that, by regulating or constraining their behaviour, create a degree of certainty in their relationship"[121] are called "security regimes" in contrast to "security communities".[122] This distinction allows assessing ASEAN's security policies from another angle. The most important difference between security regimes and security communities is that the latter are based on at least partial identification with one another in terms of self-image and interests.

Security communities are based on identification with one another in terms of self-image and interests

Security regimes are beneficial for its members since the certainty created by the norms of behaviour enable these states to pursue more than just their short-term self-interests. They can hope that short-term sacrifices will yield long-term gains. Security regimes, however, face a dilemma: The fear that another state is violating or will violate the common norms is an incentive for other states to strike out on their own. A security community on the other hand, is created "through a prolonged period of communication and interaction, find[ing] their identity […] and [evolving] as it assimilates the identities of the other members. Through this process the members develop shared values and understandings that generate a 'we-feeling'."[123]

The move from security regime to security community occurs when the form of interaction among the members expands beyond intergovernmental contacts

As a result, a security community is more than an organisational structure. It is something that has to be believed in, imbibed and nurtured by the people of a country. "The move from security regime to security community occurs when the form of interaction among the members expands beyond intergovernmental contacts."[124] ASEAN's motivation to create a Political-Security Community will have a much better chance to last if the peoples of the region get more concerned about security by engaging through more direct interactions with legislators, policy-makers and government officials. Dealing with non-traditional security challenges needs to be addressed not only by politicians and bureaucrats but also by citizens.

Non-traditional security challenges: Terrorism, piracy, human trafficking

ASEAN has taken a holistic approach to address trans-boundary haze pollution

Trans-boundary haze pollution, piracy, human trafficking or cross-national terrorist activities are subject to political discussions by ASEAN Member States and there have been agreements on these issues. To address trans-boundary haze pollution, ASEAN has taken a holistic approach to promote sustainable management of peat-lands, sustain local livelihoods, reduce risk of fire and associated smoke haze, and contribute to global environmental efforts particularly biodiversity conservation and climate change. A concrete result of these activities is, for instance, the Haze Watch project.[125]

Cross-national terrorists' activities have been addressed by ASEAN particularly after the 9/11 attacks

Cross-national terrorists' activities have been addressed by ASEAN particularly after the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre in 2001 and the Bali attack in October 2002. ASEAN has helped foster a "new cooperative spirit

120 ASEANWEB. ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action
121 Alan Collins, Forming a security community: lessons from ASEAN, in International Relations of the Asia Pacific, Volume 7 (2007) (pp. 203-225), p. 206
122 Collins, p. 206
123 Collins, p. 208
124 Collins, p. 209
125 For details, please go to Fire and Haze Today at http://haze.asean.org/

by hosting regular meetings and issuing proclamations, including the May 2009 communiqué produced by the Twenty-Ninth ASEAN Chief of Police Conference in Hanoi."[126] ASEAN's Chief of Police expressed readiness to develop capacity-building through specific training, sharing of experiences and best practices. Since major powers like the USA, Japan and Australia are also interested in regional stability, ASEAN can expect support in terms of equipment, training and expertise.

Over the past decades piracy has re-emerged as a security concern for Southeast Asia. With around 45 per cent of the world's reported attacks, the region is frequently referred to as 'pirate-infested'. In 2005, Lloyd's of London, an insurance company, declared the Malacca Straits a high-risk area, a term usually reserved for war zones. "In 2009 piracy hit a five-year high in the South China Sea, with ten reports of sea attacks reported there by October, surpassing the previous record of nine in 2005."[127] In the Straits of Malacca and Singapore incidents of piracy have also slightly increased. The scourge of piracy in Southeast Asia caught the attention of government and security officials across the globe. ASEAN's and bilateral responses to piracy in Southeast Asia have been quite effective though. The 'eye in the sky' initiative provides joint aerial surveillance of potentially threatening activities in the Strait of Malacca involving Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia.[128] Besides piracy, the countries of the region are suffering from unsettled maritime borders, illegal migration, smuggling, illegal fishing and environmental degradation.

Lloyd's of London declared the Malacca Straits a high-risk area, a term usually reserved for war zones

Human trafficking has also become an issue of growing concern. It is unclear, however, how many Southeast Asian women and children are trafficked annually. It is estimated that several hundred thousands are forced into slavery and prostitution. According to the US Trafficking in Persons Report 2010, Cambodian children are forced to sell sweets and flowers on the streets of Thai cities while Burmese women are forced into prostitution in Malaysia. Other countries in the region like Laos, Philippines and Vietnam also showed evidence of trafficking.[129] „Indonesia is […] to lesser extent a destination and transit country for women, children and men who are subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution and forced labour,"[130] the report said. Singapore, on the other hand, is a „destination country for women and girls subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution, and for some migrant workers in conditions that may be indicative of forced labour."[131]

It is estimated that several hundred thousands of Southeast Asian women and children are forced into slavery and prostitution

The Singapore and Thai governments have criticised the US report. „Thailand doubts the credibility of the US report because this came out despite our efforts to provide further updates," a Thai foreign ministry spokesperson was quoted as saying.[132] Human Rights Watch, a New York-based global rights lobby, suggested that ASEAN should deal with migration and trafficking together. At present, ASEAN places human trafficking as a security challenge and labour migration as a social challenge.[133]

ASEAN places human trafficking as a security challenge and labour migration as a social challenge

126 Paul J. Smith, Terrorism in Southeast Asia: A strategic assessment, in Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ed.): Regional Outlook. Southeast Asia 2010-2011. Singapore 2010, pp. 12-16
127 Dosch, p. 8
128 Dosch, p. 8
129 Marwaan Macan-Markar, Human Trafficking Exposes ASEAN's Underbelly, in Inter Press Service, Bangkok, June 17, 2010. Retrieved on October 23, 2010 from http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=51857
130 Macan-Markar
131 Macan-Markar
132 Macan-Markar
133 Macan-Markar

Key points

- ASEAN's engagement to resolve the Cambodian conflict was lauded as the arrival of a mature organisation with a growing impact on the regional security order.
- The creation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone and the ASEAN plus three intensified intra-Southeast Asia relations for the common good of regional stability.
- A regional security community is created through communication and interaction: Through this process the members develop shared values and understandings generating a 'we-feeling'.
- Trans-boundary haze pollution, piracy, human trafficking or cross-national terrorists' activities are subject to political discussions by ASEAN Member States and have led to a number of agreements.

Further reading

ASEAN's recent security issues including the so-called non-traditional security challenges are discussed by:

Jörn Dosch, Southeast Asia's security and political outlook, in Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ed.): Regional Outlook. Southeast Asia 2010-2011. Singapore 2010, pp. 3-8

Wilhelm Hofmeister, ed., Security Politics in Asia and Europe, Singapore 2010: KAS. This volume may be retrieved from http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_19799-1522-2-30.pdf?100608093225

In-depth studies on ASEAN's security culture and political developments are provided by:

Donald K. Emmerson, ed., Hard Choices: Security, Democracy, and Regionalism in Southeast Asia. Stanford 2008: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center

Jürgen Haacke, ASEAN's diplomatic culture. Origins, development and prospects. New York 2003: Routledge

D. M. Jones & M. L. R. Smith, ASEAN and East Asian International Relations. Regional Delusions, Northampton 2006: Edward Elgarp

H. Katsumata, ASEAN's cooperative security enterprise. Norms and interests in the ASEAN regional forum, New York 2009: Palgrave

Chapter 6

ASEAN's Economic Community

Political consolidation is important for ASEAN as the Member States try to develop their respective economies. The establishment of an Economic Community seeks to make regional development more equitable so that the less developed ones can catch up. By acting as one, it is hoped that the Member States could negotiate better terms with potential economic partners.

The establishment of an Economic Community seeks to make regional development more equitable so that the less developed countries can catch up

The world recognises the importance of ASEAN, as may be gleaned from the association's inclusion in the G-20 Summit in Seoul in November 2010: „In addition to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of Viet Nam, Chair of ASEAN, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore also attended the G-20 Summit for the first time in Singapore's capacity as a member of the Global Governance Group (3G)."[134] The Global Governance Group, skilfully orchestrated by Singapore, aims at rendering the G-20 process more consultative, inclusive and transparent.[135]

Socio-economic indicators underline ASEAN's global economic importance. Through the years, the grouping proved to be an investment haven. Its 590-million population is an encouragement for foreign investors to set up businesses in the region. Not surprisingly, the foreign direct investments inflow to ASEAN's 10 Member States amounted to US$ 39.6 billion in 2009. Exports and imports in 2009 were pegged at US$ 810.5 billion and US$ 726.3 billion, respectively.[136] ASEAN's total trade amounts to US$ 1.5 trillion as of 2009.[137]

Socio-economic indicators underline ASEAN's global economic importance

The global financial crisis and recent economic developments

It is imperative for a journalist to know that the diversity in ASEAN is not only socio-cultural: There is a wide gap in the development of the Member States' economies. In terms of export receipts, for instance, the 2009 data show that Singapore has the highest at US$ 269.8 billion while Cambodia has the lowest with around US$ 5 billion.[138] With regard to foreign direct investments inflow in 2009, it is interesting to note that the two countries have the highest and lowest: Singapore with US$ 16.2 billion; and Cambodia with US$ 530.2 million.[139] The disparities in economic development have created a two-tier ASEAN – on the one hand the six older Member States, on the other side the four newcomers, namely Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The latter four, however, are now on their way to economic development.

The disparities in economic development have created a two-tier ASEAN

In particular, Vietnam demonstrates that it is possible to erode the two-tier ASEAN by narrowing the divide between older and new ASEAN Member States. As Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said at the ASEAN Business

134 ASEAN Has Stronger Representation at G-20 Seoul Summit. Press Release on November 12, 2010. Retrieved on December 14, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/25583.htm

135 Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, The Global Governance Group ('3G') and Singapo rean Leadership: Can Small be Significant? Singapore 2010: ISEAS

136 Selected key basic ASEAN Indicators. Retrieved on December 13, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/stat/Table1.pdf

137 ASEAN Indicators

138 ASEAN Indicators

139 ASEAN Indicators

and Investment Summit in Hanoi in October 2010, Vietnam's economy grew at an average of 7.8 per cent for the past 25 years, including 7 per cent during the 2006-2010 periods, when the world was struggling to cope with and recover from the economic crisis. Vietnam's trade turnover has increased at a rate of 15 to 20 per cent annually, 25 per cent of which comprise two-way trade between Vietnam and the rest of its ASEAN neighbours.[140] As a result, Vietnam could serve as an inspiration to Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar as it has apparently the right mix of macro-economic reforms and political will. Through Vietnam's economic policies and programmes, it appears that prosperity is achievable and economic disparities in the region could be reduced.

Through Vietnam's economic policies, it appears that economic disparities in the region could be reduced

Generally, the ASEAN Economic Blueprint, describing steps towards an integrated Economic Community by 2015, indicates the strong will of ASEAN Member States to step forward from cooperation to greater integration. A push factor for a deeper economic integration was the Asian financial crisis in 1997. It demonstrated that Southeast Asia could not rely alone on existing multilateral financial institutions. The apparent solution was to give up the division into 10 separate markets and production bases by embarking on a path of closer economic integration, primarily by creating a single production base with a combined gross domestic product of approximately US$ 1.5 billion (as of 2009) and a single market covering a population of about 590 million people.

The ASEAN Economic Blueprint indicates the will of ASEAN to step forward from cooperation to greater integration

The recent global financial crisis has, yet again, underscored the fact that no country in the region is immune to global economic uncertainties. ASEAN was affected by the global decrease of trade, the reversals of foreign direct investments as well as the decline of overseas remittances.[141] However, according to Standard & Poor's (S & P), a financial market intelligence firm, for five ASEAN Member States, namely Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, a "V-shaped recovery is firmly on track". A chief economist at one of the S & P subsidiaries, said, "Fiscal and monetary policy stimulus has been a key growth driver for the Asean 5. […] And since several Asean economies are highly export dependent, increased external demand for the region's goods has also fueled growth."[142]

ASEAN+3 developed a regional liquidity support system and a more robust surveillance mechanism

In order to develop a regional liquidity support system and a more robust surveillance mechanism, the Finance Ministers of ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, Republic of Korea) set up an Action Plan to Restore Economic and Financial Stability of the Asian Region in 2009. In November 2009, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community Pushpanathan Sundram said, "ASEAN and its partners in the Asia-Pacific should now continue to take appropriate measures to sustain the fragile economic recovery, adopt appropriate strategies and policies to bring about a rebalancing of growth from a purely export-oriented growth model to a more blended model involving domestic and regional demand while diversifying the export sources."[143]

ASEAN has been relatively shielded from the negative impact of the recent global financial crisis

Indeed, ASEAN and East Asia managed to develop their economies quite steadily. The region has been relatively shielded from the negative impact of the recent global financial crisis and is now performing at the same level, or even better, than

140 Businesses and Consumers to Profit from Better Connectivity, Says PM of Viet Na. Retrieved on November 3, 2010 from: http://www.aseansec.org/25415.htm

141 Sanchita Basu Das, Regional Economic Outlook, in: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Southeast Asia 2010-2011. Regional Outlook, Singapore: ISEAS, pp. 65-71

142 Michelle Remo, Asean 5 seen to post robust gains in 2010, Philippine Daily Inquirer, September 29, 2010. Retrieved on September 29, 2010 from http://business.inquirer.net/money/topstories/view/20100929-295043/Asean-5-seen-to-post-robust-gains-in-2010

143 ASEAN News, Global Financial Crisis Report Launched, ASEAN Secretariat, November 30, 2009. Pushpanatham Sundram's keynote address may be retrieved from http://www.asean.org/documents/bul-0911-12.pdf

before the crisis. ASEAN resiliency may be gleaned from selected socioeconomic indicators. In 2009, the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) said that they were "pleased to note that despite the […] global economic woes, ASEAN's total trade in goods managed to grow."[144] In addition, the AEM noted the expansion of intra-ASEAN trade. This growth was "driven mainly by sustained growth in imports.[145] ASEAN's development model of balancing between national restructuring and opening up for foreign direct investment and trade apparently has served ASEAN Member States well.

ASEAN's development model of balancing between national restructuring and opening up for foreign direct investment has served ASEAN Member States well

This development model includes, for instance, the promotion of tourism. Tourism is a key factor in economic development for many Southeast Asian countries. Tourism, if correctly conceived, can be an important development tool and an effective means of preserving cultural diversity. Since the 1990s, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar have attempted to expand their tourism industries. According to ASEAN, its tourism sector was "well-performing […] despite the global economic slowdown. Intra-ASEAN travel was the major contributor with 49 per cent share of 65 million total international visitor arrivals in 2009."[146] The Roadmap for Integration of the Tourism Sector 2004–2010 and its follow-up initiative, the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2011-2015, show ASEAN's seriousness to reach an integrated Economic Community.

The ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan shows ASEAN's seriousness to reach an integrated economic community

In the entire Southeast Asian region (including Papua New Guinea), the travel and tourism sector employed in 2010 more than 22 million people. The contribution of travel and tourism to the gross domestic product of the region is expected to rise from 9.7 per cent (equaling US$ 164.9 billion) in 2010 to 10 per cent (equaling US$ 431.6 billion) by 2020. Southeast Asia's tourism economy is ranked 8th in absolute size worldwide and 6th in relative contribution to national economies.[147]

Another key feature of ASEAN's development thrust is the strengthening of ties with other Asian countries. In the case of China, the Memorandum of Understanding on the China-ASEAN Investment Cooperation Fund was signed in early 2010. As early as October 2009, ASEAN leaders have welcomed the initiatives of China "to contribute to the promotion of infrastructure development, which included the US$ 10 billion China-ASEAN Fund on Investment Cooperation."[148] Additional economic ties came in the form of ASEAN and China mutually agreeing to create a common free-trade area. Popularly known as ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), the arrangement originated from the suggestion of former Chinese premier Zhu Rongji in November 2001 to transform the area occupying China and Southeast Asia into a complete free trade area. The gesture also marked Beijing's effort to assuage the worries of ASEAN that the emergence of China would necessarily shut out its Member States both economically and politically. Indeed, the ACFTA, finally established in 2010, is significant as it "comprises a market of 1.9 billion with a combined GDP of about US$ 6 trillion and a total trade volume of US$ 4.3 trillion."[149] It is said to be "the largest free trade area, in terms of market size, and third after the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) in terms of economic size."[150]

Additional economic ties came in the form of ASEAN and China mutually agreeing to create a common free-trade area

In the case of the Republic of Korea (ROK), ASEAN reported the establishment

144 ASEAN Secretariat, Joint Media Statement, 41st ASEAN Economic Ministers' (AEM) Meeting (Bangkok, August 13-14, 2009), p. 1

145 ASEAN Secretariat, Joint Media Statement, 41st ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting, p. 2

146 ASEAN Updates, New Plan to Boost Tourism in ASEAN, January 26, 2010

147 Data retrieved on December 7, 2010 from http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Research/Regional_Reports/Southeast_Asia/

148 ASEAN Secretariat, Forum on China-ASEAN Free Trade Area Successfully Concluded, January 8, 2010

149 ASEAN Secretariat, Forum on China-ASEAN

150 ASEAN Secretariat, Forum on China-ASEAN

of the ASEAN-ROK Free Trade Area in 2009. "By 1 January 2010, exports of ASEAN products to ROK would enjoy duty-free treatment as ROK eliminates import duties on about 90 per cent of products it trades with the ASEAN Member States. Korean exports to ASEAN, in particular ASEAN 6 – Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – would also enjoy duty-free treatment on close to 90 per cent of products these members trade with ROK."[151]

The trade agreements with China and the Republic of Korea show ASEAN's efforts towards structural reform

The trade agreements with China and the Republic of Korea show ASEAN's efforts toward structural reform. In a statement, ASEAN noted: "There is a need for reform of regulatory frameworks in ASEAN in order to achieve an open trading and investment environment. This would in turn promote increased competition and regional economic integration."[152]

Advancing liberalisation: Free trade and investment areas

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the ASEAN Free Trade Area stand in marked contrast to each other

In 1992, ASEAN initiated the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), representing a clear break with the past when these governments had continuously rejected calls by the ASEAN business community and scholars to establish a free trade area for Southeast Asia. AFTA's adoption follows the 1989 establishment of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. For the Southeast Asian states, these two institutional arrangements dominated the regional economic landscape for much of the 1990s. "Nevertheless, APEC and AFTA stand in marked contrast to each other. While the former reflects a geographically dispersed trans-Pacific membership, AFTA reinforces a geographically concentrated Southeast Asian regional configuration defined by the membership of ASEAN."[153]

Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam are member economies of APEC

Established in 1989, APEC aims to facilitate economic cooperation and growth in the Asia-Pacific region. APEC has 21 member economies which account for approximately 40 per cent of the world's population, more than 50 per cent of the world gross domestic product and more than two-fifths of world trade. Six of the 10 ASEAN Member States – Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam – are member economies of APEC.[154]

ASEAN was challenged by market reforms in Eastern Europe and the People's Republic of China

The free flow of goods and services is obviously the primary objective of both the APEC and AFTA. The latter does not conflict with the provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) because it also seeks to promote free trade, even if the focus is on ASEAN. The beginning of the 1990s saw the changes in the global political configuration brought about by market reforms in Eastern Europe and the People's Republic of China, as well as the disintegration of the Soviet Union. ASEAN then saw the need to review and revise its plans in the context of changes in the international situation, especially the plan of the vast European community to integrate itself into one trading market.[155]

151 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN and the Republic of Korea to Soon Enjoy Benefits of Free Trade, May 29, 2009

152 ASEAN Secretariat, The Need for Structural Reform to Achieve Integration, No vember 25, 2009

153 Helen E. S. Nesadurai, Southeast Asia's New Institutional Architecture for Cooperation in Economics and Finance, Paper presented at the conference "Asia's New Institutional Architecture: Managing Trade and Security Relations in A Post 9/11 World", Berkeley APEC Study Center, December 9-10, 2005, p. 1. Retrieved on December 1, 2010 from http://basc.berkeley.edu/pdf/Nesadurai_SEAEconomicsFinance.pdf

154 Nesadurai, p. 1

155 The discussion of AFTA is an updated version of Danilo Arao's policy paper titled AFTA: Trading the ASEAN Way published in IBON Facts & Figures, April 30, 1995. The discussion of the AIA, on the other hand, is an updated and expanded version of Arao's discussion paper titled Analyzing the ASEAN Press and the

Apparently, ASEAN had to prepare itself with the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 which was slowly transforming itself into a European Union. In 1992, the 12 Member Countries signed the Treaty on Economic Union and the following year saw the start of the Single European Market. The AFTA could therefore be seen as a response to the growing trend of forming regional and world trade blocs. It could also be seen as a hedging point in preparation for GATT at that time, considering its adherence to free trade and tariff reductions, among others. The AFTA was formally created in January 1992 through the Singapore declaration. Its objective is to increase ASEAN's competitive edge as a production base geared towards serving not only the ASEAN market but also the international market. Theoretically, the AFTA has four primary objectives:

The AFTA could be seen as a response to the growing trend of forming regional and world trade blocs

1. increase intra-ASEAN trade by removing tariff and non-tariff barriers over a 15-year period starting January 1, 1992;
2. development of competitive advantages;
3. harmonisation of product standards and quality; and
4. rationalisation of economic development programmes aiming as efficiency and competitiveness.[156]

The objective of the AFTA is to increase ASEAN's competitive edge as a production base geared toward serving the international market

The approval of the GATT, however, prompted ASEAN to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers within 10 years starting 1993. Under the Singapore Declaration, AFTA covers all manufactured products. There are only two exceptions, i.e., unprocessed agricultural products; and products vital to the protection of national security, human, animal or plant life, and those of artistic, historic and archaeological value.

The Common Effective Preferential Treatment (CEPT) served as the main implementing mechanism of AFTA under which Member Countries gradually lowered tariffs on each other's imports through a tariff reduction schedule. As far as ASEAN is concerned, tariff reductions are nothing new since these have been implemented since 1948 when the GATT was established. Following the completion of the first, tariff-reduction phase of AFTA in 2002, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Economic Community project (AEC) in 2003 that aims to create an integrated Southeast Asian market by 2020 through a programme of deeper integration beyond the tariff reductions that were AFTA's main focus. The ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) replaced CEPT on May 17, 2010. ATIGA is meant to reduce further the costs of doing business as well as to simplify trade-relations in ASEAN.[157]

The ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement is meant to reduce further the costs of doing business as well as to simplify trade-relations in ASEAN

The ASEAN Investment Area (AIA), the framework agreement of which was signed on October 7, 1998 in Manila, seeks the "immediate opening up of all industries for investment, with some exceptions […] to ASEAN investors by 2010 and to all investors by 2020." The AIA also wants to promote "freer flows of capital, skilled labor, professional expertise and technology amongst the member-countries."[158] These objectives further qualify what is meant by an outward-looking orientation among ASEAN Member States. To encourage investors, ASEAN enumerates the benefits they stand to get:

The ASEAN Investment Area promotes freer flows of capital, skilled labor, professional expertise and technology amongst the Member States

ASEAN as a News Topic used by IIJ in its workshop for ASEAN journalists in November 2008

156 For details, please refer to: Arao, AFTA

157 More information on ATIGA may be retrieved from http://www.aseansec.org/Fact%20Sheet/AEC/2009-AEC-025.pdf.

158 Asean Investment Area: An update (n.d.). Retrieved on July 9, 2008 from http://www.aseansec.org/11461.htm

1. greater investment access to industries and economic sectors as a result of the opening up of industries;
2. national treatment, if investors qualify as ASEAN investors;
3. greater transparency, information and awareness of investment opportunities;
4. more liberal and competitive investment regimes;
5. lower transaction costs for business operations across the region.[159]

The privileges of a local investor will also be given to a foreign counterpart, making competition more even

In addition to the points above, journalists who want to write about the AIA should note that an ASEAN investor is "defined as being equal to a national investor in terms of the equity requirements of the member-country in which the investment is made. Thus, a foreign firm with a majority interest can avail itself of national treatment and investment market access privileges."[160] This simply means that the rights and privileges of a local investor will also be given to a foreign counterpart, making competition more "even".

Investors enjoy income tax exemption, foreign equity ownership, domestic market access and long-term lease for land

ASEAN reported that investors "can now invest in [the] manufacturing sector in any member-country subject to certain exclusions."[161] The same is now true for non-ASEAN investors. They also stand to enjoy special privileges like "income tax exemption, full foreign equity ownership, duty-free imports of capital goods, domestic market access, and at least 30-year long-term lease for industrial land."[162] As regards the latter, the Philippines enacted an Investors Lease Act in 1993 that provides for a 50-year lease of land for foreign investors, renewable for another 25 years.

One of the strategies of the AIA is to eliminate "investment barriers, liberalizing investment rules and policies and granting national treatment."[163] As early as 1999, ASEAN Secretary-General Rodolfo Severino said, "It is clear that ASEAN leaders have made regional economic integration a primary component of the region's response to the economic troubles that have hit it."[164]

Intra-ASEAN foreign direct investment flows are reaching the level of ASEAN's biggest investor, the European Union

The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) were optimistic with the investment situation in 2009 and the "resilience of FDI inflows to the region even in the face of adverse global circumstances." FDI inflows reportedly "remained high at US$ 60.2 billion in 2008, although lower than the record inflows of US$ 69.5 billion in 2007. In particular, intra-ASEAN FDI flows have proven more robust than anticipated, expanding by an exceptional 18.4 per cent in 2008 to US$ 11.1 billion."[165] The AEM's joint statement presents this significant observation: "The improvement reflects well on ASEAN integration efforts and the success of trade and investment policies that promote intra-ASEAN liberalisation through strengthened rules for trade in goods, services and investment. In value terms, intra-ASEAN FDI flows are reaching almost the level of ASEAN's biggest investor, the European Union."[166]

Journalists could try to analyse how national treatment under the AIA can benefit developed ASEAN countries like Singapore and affect developing ASEAN countries like Laos.

159 Asean Investment Area: An update
160 Asean Investment Area: An update
161 Recent developments in Asean economic integration (1999, September). Retrieved on July 9, 2008 from http://www.aseansec.org/11487.htm.
162 Recent developments in Asean economic integration
163 Asean Investment Area
164 Recent developments
165 ASEAN Secretariat, Joint Media Statement,41st ASEAN Economic Ministers' (AEM) Meeting (Bangkok, August 13-14, 2009), p. 5
166 ASEAN Secretariat, Joint Media Statement, 41st ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting

Simplifying cross-national business: the ASEAN Single Window

ASEAN is on its way to implement various additional agreements, e.g., the Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window aimed at expediting and simplifying the information flow between governments and trade. The required National Single Windows are operational in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand while Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam are expected to follow suit before 2012. Established in December 2005, the ASEAN Single Window is defined as "the environment where National Single Windows of Member countries operate and integrate."[167] It is said to be one of the measures to strengthen economic initiatives like the ASEAN Free Trade Area.

The ASEAN Single Window aims at expediting and simplifying the information flow between governments and trade

"A single decision-making shall be uniformly interpreted as a single point of decision for the release of cargoes by the Customs on the basis of decisions, if required, taken by line ministries and agencies and communicated in a timely manner to the Customs."[168] Therefore, a Member State's National Single Window has the following features:

Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam are expected to operationalise their National Single Windows by 2012

1. a single submission of data and information;
2. a single and synchronous processing of data and information;
3. a single decision-making for customs release and clearance.

ASEAN's policy-makers followed three objectives: "To provide a legal framework to establish and implement the ASEAN Single Window; to ensure the implementation of regional commitments by ASEAN to establish and implement the ASEAN Single Window; to strengthen the coordination and partnership among ASEAN Customs Administrations and relevant line ministries and agencies, and economic operators (importers, exporters, transport operators, express industries, customs brokers, forwarders, commercial banking entities and financial institutions, insurers, and those relevant to the international supply chain) to effectively and efficiently implement the ASEAN Single Window."[169]

As stated, the less developed Member States (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) are expected to operationalise their National Single Windows by 2012. The reason is mainly logistical: According to the agreement, „Member Countries shall make use of information and communication technology that are in line with relevant internationally accepted standards in the development and implementation of their National Single Windows."[170]

Member Countries shall make use of communication technology that are in line with international standards

Implementing the Economic Community: Barriers and outlook

The main motivation of the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was the "loss of economic competitiveness to emerging markets."[171] As a result of the globalised international market, the AEC Blueprint was adopted at the ASEAN Summit in 2007 in Singapore. It lays out action plans, targets and timelines of a "roadmap to accelerate economic integration and realize AEC by 2015." The blueprint aims for "ASEAN to be a: (1) single market and production base; (2) highly

The economic diversity of Member States is seen as a comparative advantage

167 ASEAN Secretariat, Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window (Kuala Lumpur, December 9, 2005). Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/18005.htm
168 Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window
169 Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window
170 Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window
171 Denis Hew, Towards an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015, in ASEAN Stud ies Center, The ASEAN Community: Unblocking the Roadblocks, Singapore 2008, p. 15

competitive economic region; (3) region of equitable economic development; and (4) [a] region that is fully integrated into the global economy."[172] As scholars have pointed out, the economic diversity of Member States is seen as a "comparative advantage since said countries can maximize complementarities among them and [it] encourages development of regional production network."[173]

The planned economic integration has its own share of problems

The planned economic integration, however, has its own share of problems: "ASEAN's weak institutional structure may be one of the reasons for its slow progress in economic integration." However, there has been progress in ASEAN trade and investment agreements since the 1990s. To address the slow economic integration, the ASEAN Charter is "envisioned to pave the way towards a more rules-based structure for ASEAN."[174] In conclusion, scholars have identified the following points to be taken into account[175]:

Some goals to establish an ASEAN Economic Community are vaguely defined

1. Regional cooperation based on the existing consensus-based decision making process not only undermines institutional development but slows down economic integration.
2. ASEAN could still be a highly competitive economic region by 2015.
3. The successful implementation of the AEC Blueprint is critical given the short timeline.
4. The main concern lies in getting member countries to comply with the Blueprint and meet the demanding targets and deadlines.
5. The ASEAN dispute settlement has to be made workable.

There are income disparities particularly of less-developed Member States

In another study, obstacles to a successful implementation of the AEC Blueprint were discussed. ASEAN is largely still a voluntary organisation with decisions being mostly non-binding nature. ASEAN suffers from a lack of capacity to enforce its decisions either at the regional or at the national level. Some goals to establish an ASEAN Economic Community remain vaguely defined and milestones are missing. ASEAN has a "[p]oor record in informing the public [and a] lack of transparency […] that may be attributed to spare members the embarrassment of failing to implement its commitments."[176] The study argues that the success of the AEC lies in a common understanding of the essence of each of the Blueprint's characteristics. In addition, economic integration should have concomitant initiatives to address issues related to uneven development. Among these are income disparities and poverty incidence particularly of less-developed Member States.

It is desirable that the implications on lives of people be given due attention

In analysing ASEAN's economic prospects, journalists may remember that regional integration is consistent with the thrust of globalisation. Development policies are therefore designed to further open up markets to facilitate liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation. An enterprising journalist can indeed explore several angles on ASEAN, although it is desirable that the implications on the lives and livelihood of the people be given due attention. Aside from the ones previously mentioned, there are several leads that can be pursued in relating ASEAN to the global financial crisis. Below are a few suggestions:

There are several leads that can be pursued in relating ASEAN to the global financial crisis

172 Hew, pp. 16, 18
173 Hew, p. 18
174 Hew, p. 27
175 Hew, p. 28
176 Hadi Soesastro, Implementing the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint in ASEAN Studies Center, The ASEAN Community: Unblocking the Roadblocks. Singapore 2008, pp. 35-36

1. How the proposed Asian Currency Unit (ACU) is similar to the sometimes defunct European Currency Unit (ECU) and the ACU's effects on the ASEAN economy;
2. Implications of liberalisation, as in the case of air transportation;
3. Relationship between ASEAN and its sub-regions like CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam);
4. Effects of devaluation on the people, particularly the marginalised sectors of society;
5. Use and misuse of whatever financial assistance (e.g., bailout programs) may be provided by international financial institutions;
6. Speculative attacks on ASEAN currencies in 1997 and the years that followed; and
7. Comparison of portfolio and direct equity investments at the ASEAN level.

A journalist's role, regardless of nationality, is to provide relevant information to the public. Media can help create an informed citizenry with regard to ASEAN by constantly monitoring the latter's actions and analysing the implications of their development policies and programs.

Key points

- Given its adherence to globalisation, ASEAN is directly affected by developments in the international market, including the economic crises in the 1990s and in the first decade of 2000.
- Selected socio-economic indicators, however, would show that the region was economically resilient even if there was a marked slowdown in economic growth.
- The ASEAN Economic Community seeks to strengthen regional integration by 2015. Various measures and mechanisms were put in place to achieve this vision. The ASEAN Free Trade Area, ASEAN Investment Area and the ASEAN Single Window are among the measures that seek to further liberalise the ASEAN market to facilitate free flow of goods, services and investments.
- The Member States of ASEAN need to work hard to ensure that the AEC Blueprint will be properly implemented.

Further reading

ASEAN Secretariat, Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015. Jakarta 2009

ASEAN Studies Center, The ASEAN Community. Unblocking the Roadblocks. ISEAS. Singapore 2008

Sanchita Basu Das, Regional Economic Outlook, in Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ed.): Regional Outlook. Southeast Asia 2010-2011. Singapore 2010, pp. 65-71.

Chapter 7

ASEAN's Socio-Cultural Community

According to the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint, the main objective of the ASCC is "to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible." This orientation is meant to achieve "enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced."[177]

Personal contacts help build closer ties within ASEAN serving as starting points of a socio-cultural community

The idea to create such a community came up after years of "functional cooperation". In the 1970s, ASEAN began to identify priorities for solving problems such as hunger, illiteracy, poverty, injustice or natural disasters. Since "[t]he solutions to such problems lie in the collaboration among technicians rather than with political elites"[178], functional cooperation encourages interactions between professionals from various fields. In theory – and in ASEAN's practice – these personal contacts helped build closer ties within the region not confined to the official level and therefore served as starting points of a Socio-Cultural Community.

Goals of and obstacles to socio-cultural cooperation

Just like many other ASEAN official documents, the 25-page ASCC Blueprint is carefully written in a way that does not dwell on specific courses of action. It focuses mainly on general principles all Member States should observe. The ASCC Blueprint outlines a number of concerns as regards creating an ASEAN community along people-centred and socially responsible lines. Six main areas are identified: human development, social welfare, justice, environment, ASEAN identity and development. These major issues are generally acceptable to the 10 Member States given their adherence and commitment to democracy and social justice. Even if there are countries like the Philippines and Myanmar whose human rights records remain an international concern, the ASCC elements had been crafted in a manner that is diplomatic and inherently in broad strokes.

The main areas of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community are human development, social welfare, justice, environment, ASEAN identity and development.

Despite the "general tone" of the ASCC, what proves to be significant is the involvement of the people through actual participation in the ASEAN community-building processes. For the longest time, ASEAN was perceived to be driven primarily by its leaders and governments. Yet, the Eminent Person's Group (EPG) that drafted the ASEAN Charter proposed consultative mechanisms to involve citizens, civil society groups and the business sector to give inputs in line with ASEAN's decision-making. The EPG was convinced that this would help ASEAN to be more on target with respect to people's aspirations and assist the association to remain focused on the implementation of agreed programmes, making it in the long run a more effective organisation.

What proves to be significant is the involvement of the people through actual participation in community-building

177 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint in Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015, p. 67

178 Solidum, p. 117

Human Development Advancing and prioritising education Investing in human resource development Promotion of decent work Promoting information and communication technology Facilitating access to applied science and technology Strengthening entrepreneurship skills for women, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities Building civil service capability
Social welfare and protection Poverty alleviation Social safety net and protection from the negative impacts of integration and globalisation Enhancing food security and safety Access to healthcare and promotion of healthy lifestyles Improving capability to control communicable diseases Ensuring a drug-free ASEAN Building disaster-resilient nations and safer communities
Social justice and rights Promotion of rights and welfare of women, children, elderly, and persons with disabilities Protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers Promoting corporate social responsibility
Ensuring environmental sustainability Addressing global environmental issues Managing and preventing trans-boundary environmental pollution Promoting sustainable development through environmental education and participation Promoting environmentally sound technology Promoting quality living standards in ASEAN cities and urban areas Harmonising environmental policies and databases Promoting the sustainable use of coastal and marine environment Promoting sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity Promoting the sustainability of freshwater resources Responding to climate change and addressing its impacts Promoting Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)
Building an ASEAN identity Promotion of ASEAN awareness and a sense of community Preservation and promotion of the ASEAN cultural heritage Promotion of cultural creativity and industry Engagement with the community
Narrowing the development gap

Table 7.1: Goals of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community[179]

179 ASEAN, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, Jakarta 2009

Even though ASEAN's Heads of State did not follow exactly the recommendations of the EPG, informal consultations with groups outside government, the use of dialogues, and the recognition of initiatives to include the peoples of ASEAN in community-building have begun to gain currency in official practice of ASEAN. These people-to-people interactions are supported by various international bodies and groups like the German-based GIZ as an organisation with the vision of fostering and building up capacities for leadership in training, network and dialogue.[180] Scholars stressed that the creation of a Socio-Cultural Community "embodies the ultimate ASEAN aspiration to improve the quality of life of its peoples, promote equity in sharing the benefits of growth, and foster a shared cultural identity."[181] There are, however, a number of factors that caused some unease within ASEAN Member States as a result of the ASCC blueprint's implementation:

The creation of a Socio-Cultural Community embodies the ASEAN aspiration to improve the quality of life of its

1. The number of ASEAN functional cooperation areas has increased considerably making it difficult to prioritise projects.
2. The lack of a unifying sector framework diminished the coherence and focus of activities relating to the Socio-Cultural Community.
3. The ASEAN Development Fund as a common pool of funds from Member Countries has not yet been fully set up.
4. ASCC stakeholders are not only diverse within Member States but also diverse across Member States in terms of maturity and capacities of social institutions.

The lack of a unifying framework diminishes the coherence of activities relating to the Socio-Cultural Community

In order for ASCC to move forward, "national initiatives will fundamentally drive the manner and extent to which the basic ASCC concerns of poverty, equity, and quality of life will be addressed."[182] The pace of initiatives will vary, "depending on the stage of development of legal, regulatory, and institutional framework in each state."[183] It is necessary therefore that cooperation and linkages between national and regional initiatives are clearly established.

Actual practices: From science promotion to HIV prevention

The promotion of science and technology (S&T) belongs to the major areas of the Socio-Cultural Community. The role of S&T in economic development cannot be underestimated. ASEAN leaders are hoping that by 2020, „ASEAN will be technology competitive, competent in strategic and enabling technologies, with an adequate pool of technologically qualified and trained manpower, and strong networks of scientific and technological institutions and centres of excellence."[184] ASEAN wants to promote the involvement of interested parties in the ASEAN community like the private sector in S&T undertakings, especially in research and technology development and commercialisation of technologies.[185]

ASEAN's Plan of Action on Science and Technology identifies six thrusts and 24 supporting actions

Since the establishment of the Committee on Science and Technology (COST) in 1978, ASEAN has developed a series of plans of action related to S&T. The Plan

180 In 2011 InWEnt became Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – German Corporation for international Cooperation. More information on GIZ programmes, including media training, may be retrieved from http://www.giz.org

181 Carolina S. Guina, The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, in The ASEAN Community: Unblocking the Roadblocks. Singapore 2008: ASEAN Studies Center, p. 65

182 Guina, p. 65

183 Guina, p. 65

184 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology (AMMST). Retrieved on October 24, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/19592.htm

185 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology

of Action on Science and Technology (APAST) 2007-2011 is one of them, duly endorsed by the ASEAN Ministers for Science and Technology in February 2007. The plan identifies six thrusts and 24 supporting actions and essentially provides appropriate guidelines for identification and formulation of programmes and projects to achieve better coordination and cooperation to strengthen the capabilities of science and technology in ASEAN. The current science and technology cooperation in ASEAN focuses on nine programme areas, namely food science and technology, biotechnology, meteorology and geophysics, marine science and technology, non-conventional energy research, microelectronics and information technology, material science and technology, space technology and applications, and science and technology infrastructure and resources development.

The science and technology cooperation focuses on food science, biotechnology, geophysics, marine science, energy research and material science

Aside from COST, ASEAN also established two science and technology-related centres to provide better services to ASEAN public and government agencies in the fields of meteorology and seismology. These are the ASEAN Specialised Meteorology Center and the ASEAN Earthquake Information Center. To further promote public awareness and ensure interaction between scientific communities and other concerned sectors, ASEAN organises regular events like the ASEAN Food Conference and the ASEAN Science and Technology Week. The outcomes of research works undertaken by ASEAN scientists and researchers are published regularly in the ASEAN Journal of S&T for Development. From time to time, ASEAN also issues various publications. These initiatives show that ASEAN not only recognises the role of science and technology in strengthening the ASEAN Community by 2015 but also serve as evidence that ASEAN intends to be technologically competitive in the years to come.[186]

The ASEAN Specialised Meteorology Center and the ASEAN Earthquake Information Center provide services to the public and government agencies

Another major concern of ASEAN's Socio-Cultural Community is narrowing the development gap among the 10 Member States. In this context, the "ASEAN-Help-ASEAN" movement has been stressed.[187] Such initiatives usually include documenting best practices and challenges of ASEAN Member States in implementing their respective policies and programmes on rural development and poverty eradication to facilitate information-sharing among them. According to the ASEAN Secretariat, the initiatives comprise promoting community-driven activities and people-to-people interactions aimed at narrowing the development gap in the region.

The ASEAN Rural Youth Volunteers Movement brings together professional volunteers from the region to support rural communities

For example, the ASEAN Rural Youth Volunteers Movement brings together youth professional volunteers from the region to support rural communities in their development efforts. There is also the ASEAN Plus Three Village Leaders Exchange Programme which builds the capacity of village leaders among Member States in promoting development in rural areas through building of networks, enhancing knowledge through study visits and exchanging of experience. There are many more grassroots economic development and poverty alleviation programmes aiming to narrow the development gap like One Tambon One Product (OTOP), Urban Community and Village Fund (UCVF), Sufficiency Economy Fund and Thailand's Baan Mankong Programme, which is a 'Cities without Slums' housing development programme.[188]

ASEAN endorsed a work programme for 2011 to 2015 to guide the region's initiatives to mitigate the impact of HIV

Another important area of cooperation under the Socio-Cultural Community concerns the impact of HIV and AIDS. In November 2010, ASEAN endorsed a work programme on HIV and AIDS for 2011 to 2015 to guide the region's initiatives to combat the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS across the region.[189] Ma-

186 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology

187 ASEANWEB, ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE). Retrieved on October 24, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/19606.htm

188 ASEANWEB, ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

189 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Intensifies Efforts to Address Impact of HIV and

jor thrusts identified in the work programme include more access to affordable HIV-related care and treatment services in the region. ASEAN's work programme on HIV and AIDS is meant to contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals of the UN, in particular the sixth goal which is to combat HIV/AIDS.

Apart from the work programme, ASEAN's other efforts like the conduct of research studies in addressing the impact of HIV in the region have also been making progress. For example, the first ASEAN regional report on HIV and AIDS showed that an estimated 1.54 million ASEAN nationals are HIV-positive as of end of 2009, a decrease from 1.58 million in 2007. The report highlighted varying levels of HIV epidemic affecting the region. Most ASEAN Member States have implemented prevention programmes targeting key affected populations such as sex workers, drug users, as well as vulnerable migrants. The report also called for a sustained collaboration to remove the barriers to the prevention of the spread of HIV and to sustain AIDS treatment and care.[190]

HIV prevention programmes target affected populations such as sex workers, drug users and vulnerable migrants

Considerable progress: Environmental issues and disaster management

A news report on December 1, 2010 notes that the National Capital Region (NCR) in the Philippines is „most at risk" of flooding and earthquake, citing an ASEAN risk assessment synthesis report. The NCR is followed by Jakarta (Indonesia), Yangon (Myanmar), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), Bangkok (Thailand), Hanoi (Vietnam), Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Nay Pyi Taw (Myanmar), Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Vientiane (Laos) and Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei) in terms of overall risks from typhoon, earthquake, tsunami, flood, epidemics, landslide, drought, volcanic eruption and forest fires. According to an expert of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), „the Philippines is prone to calamities because it is situated in the Pacific 'Ring of Fire'."[191]

The Regional Programme on Disaster Management enhances capabilities to deal effectively with natural disasters

To enhance ASEAN's capabilities to deal effectively with natural disasters, the ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management (ARPDM) gave a framework for cooperation from 2004 to 2010 containing ASEAN's strategy on disaster management. In addition, the ARPDM served as a platform for cooperation and collaboration with ASEAN dialogue partners and other international organisations. According to the ASEAN Secretariat, the ARPDM consisted of 29 activities, which are categorised into five major components.

Considering that there are typhoon-prone Member States like the Philippines, the ARPDM prioritises the establishment of an ASEAN Regional Disaster Management Framework. ASEAN notes, „Under this, activities will include development of a regional agreement on disaster management and emergency response; development of standard operating procedures to operationalise disaster response mechanism under the agreement; enhancing [a] quick response team of Member Countries; and [the] conduct of simulation exercises."[192] To spearhead with the implementation, the ACDM has prioritised a number of further projects, including the ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network and the ASEAN Day for Disaster Management.[193]

One of the most important tools of ASEAN's disaster management framework is the Emergency Rapid Assessment Team

AIDS in the Region, Press release from December 3, 2010

190 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Intensifies Efforts to Address Impact of HIV and AIDS in the Region

191 Michael Lim Ubac, Metro Manila is `7-11 of diasters'. Philippine Daily Inquirer. Retrieved on December 1, 2010 from http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20101201-306261/Metro-Manila-is-7-11-of-disasters

192 Ubac

193 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM). Retrieved on October 24, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/19599.htm

One of the most important tools of ASEAN's disaster management framework is the ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT). Recently, for example, it has been deployed to the Mentawai Islands in the western coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, after a tsunami devastated most of the islands on October 25, 2010. ERAT supported the Indonesian government with its assessment efforts and helped identify immediate needs in the affected areas. During the mission, the team worked with Indonesia's National Agency for Disaster Management, local government officials, and the Indonesian National Armed Forces. The team also cooperated with volunteers and aid workers from local and international NGOs like SurfAid International and Télécoms Sans Frontières which are supporting Indonesia's rapid assessment and relief operations.[194]

The ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management comprises heads of national disaster management organisations in the Member States

Aside from the multiple disaster incidents in Indonesia, other countries in the region also suffered recently from disasters. Cyclone Giri made landfall in the Rakhine State of Myanmar and Typhoon Megi struck the northern part of the Philippines. In Thailand and Vietnam, hundreds of villages were affected by floods. ERAT's deployment to the Mentawai islands was the third deployment coordinated by the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) which comprises heads of national disaster management organisations in the 10 ASEAN Member States. ERAT was first deployed to Myanmar following Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, and to Laos following the floods in September and October 2009. In Myanmar, ASEAN participated in the Tripartite Core Group (representing Myanmar, ASEAN and the United Nations) which took the lead in coordinating post-Nargis recovery activities. ASEAN's humanitarian task force ended in July 2010.

Unequal development: Media and cultural identity

ASEAN hopes to engage the media in promoting ASEAN's cultural heritage and arts

To create "a sense of belonging, consolidate unity in diversity and enhance deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN Member States about their culture, history, religion, and civilization"[195], the ASCC Blueprint mentions several times the role of the media. ASEAN hopes to "engage the mainstream media in promoting, on a continuing basis, all ASEAN programmes and projects, including ASEAN's cultural heritage and arts and the work."[196] Furthermore, ASEAN intends to increase media exchange and networking of communication personnel. These goals are included in the blueprint because an ASEAN cultural identity will gain relevance only if the media of the region participate in and join efforts of further integration. Yet, politics, economics, and media in each ASEAN Member State are tightly knit. One does not need to look far in assessing the situation of the ASEAN media.[197] Several references provide basic data on each of the Member States' media situation. The unequal development of the media among the 10 ASEAN Member States is rooted in their diverse historical contexts.

The unequal development of the media among the ASEAN Member States is rooted in diverse historical contexts

According to an early version of the ASEAN Media Directory, published by the German Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (KAF) in the 1990s, the ASEAN media scene ranged "from the very free in the Philippines and the almost totally free in Thailand (where government still controls broadcast media), to the pliant in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, to those strictly following party line as in communist Vietnam, Laos and military-ruled Myanmar."[198] The term "media freedom" was not clearly defined in that study, and one could extrapolate that it was related to the existence of pertinent laws

194 ASEAN Secretariat, Press release from November 4, 2010
195 ASEAN, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, Jakarta 2009, p. 21
196 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, p. 21
197 Danilo Arao, Analyzing the ASEAN Press and the ASEAN as a News Topic. Unpublished Paper presented at InWEnt workshop, Jakarta, November 18, 2008
198 A. Tan & Thomas B. Stehling (1998), The ASEAN media directory. Makati: Konrad Adenauer Foundation. p. xii

and the extent of private ownership of media. It was assumed that the provision of free speech and freedom of expression already makes the media free. In addition, the vibrancy of the press is based on the number of privately-owned media organisations operating in the country. KAF's latest Asian Media Directory (September 2010) provides an in-depth overview on the situation of the media in Asia, including ASEAN Member States.[199]

Media freedom is more than the existence of laws or private ownership of media

It is necessary to stress that media freedom is more than the existence of laws or private ownership of media. According to US-based Freedom House, press freedom in ASEAN Member States range from "not free" to "partly free."[200] Freedom House defines freedom as "the opportunity to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of the government and/or other centers of potential domination." It uses two categories in measuring the extent of freedom in an area – political rights and civil liberties. Political rights are said to "enable people to participate freely in the political process through the right to vote, compete for public office and elect representatives who have a decisive impact on public policies and are accountable to the electorate […] [while civil] liberties allow for the freedoms of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state."[201]

	Legal Environ. (0-30)	Political Environ. (0-40)	Economic Environ. (0-30)	Total (max. 100)	Status	Global Rank (out of 196 countries)
Brunei	28	25	22	75	Not Free	163
Cambodia	20	22	19	61	Not Free	134
Indonesia	18	19	15	52	Partly Free	107
Laos	26	33	25	84	Not Free	181
Malaysia	24	23	17	64	Not Free	141
Myanmar	30	38	27	95	Not Free	194
Philippines	13	24	11	48	Partly Free	97
Singapore	24	23	21	68	Not Free	151
Thailand	17	27	14	58	Partly Free	124
Vietnam	28	32	22	82	Not Free	177
ASEAN (average)	23	27	19	69	Not Free	N.A.
Note: Free = 0–30; Partly Free = 31–60; Not Free = 61–100						

Table 7.2: Freedom House: Map of Press Freedom 2010[202]

Seven Member States are considered not free while three are partly free

In assessing a country's state of press freedom, Freedom House analyses its legal, political and economic environments. The table shows that seven ASEAN Member States are considered "not free" while three are "partly free." On the average, the press in the ASEAN region is not free, based on Freedom House's methodology. In its study of the press situation, Freedom House notes: „Asia includes the two worst-rated countries in the world, Burma and North Korea, as well as China,

199 Alastair Carthew & Wieland Kley, eds., Asia Media Directory. Update September 2010, retrieved on October 7, 2010.

200 More information may be retrieved from http://www.freedomhouse.org

201 Frequently asked questios. (n.d.). Retrieved on November 4, 2008 from http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=265

202 Freedom House: www.freedomhouse.org

Laos, and Vietnam, all of which feature extensive state or party control of the press." It adds, „The Philippines slid three more points, to a score of 48, to reflect a climate of increased impunity, problems with judicial independence in media-related cases, and increased attacks on journalists covering political events."[203] This means that even if the Philippines had the best rating among the ASEAN Member Countries (and ranked 97th out of 196 countries worldwide), there is quantifiable proof of the culture of impunity there.

As regards the killing of journalists, the Philippines accounts for three-fourths of those killed in the ASEAN region

As regards the killing of journalists, the Philippines accounts for almost three-fourths of those killed in the ASEAN region from January 1, 1992 to October 4, 2010, according to data from the US-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). In fact, the Philippines (70 killed during the period in review) was second in terms of incidences of killings after Iraq (145). The Philippines was followed by Algeria (60), Russia (52) and Colombia (43).[204]

	Number	% Share
Brunei	0	---
Cambodia	8	8.25
Indonesia	8	8.25
Laos	0	---
Malaysia	0	---
Myanmar	3	3.09
Philippines	70	72.16
Singapore	0	---
Thailand	8	8.25
Vietnam	0	---
ASEAN (Total)	97	100.00

Table 7.3: Journalists killed on duty from Jan 1, 1992 to Oct 4, 2010[205]

The media in Southeast Asia are not always independent, vigilant and defiant of authority as they should be

In an article, Sonny Inbaraj, an editor of The Nation, Bangkok, wrote that the media are "not always independent, vigilant and defiant of authority as it should be – more so in Southeast Asia when state and business elites control the press and there exists legislation to jail journalists and editors if they `step out of line'. […] [I]n the West, media campaigns will not be mobilized where victimization, even though massive, sustained and dramatic, fails to meet the test of utility to elite interests – in other words, if the news runs against the interests of the state or economic elites."[206]

In any case, the media situation of the 10 ASEAN Member States shows the uneven levels of development which, at first glance, makes it hard to make comparisons among them. The Philippines and Singapore, for example, are diametrically opposed when it comes to the media's role in national development and the concepts of freedom of expression. There are governments that look at media as mere tools of the state and that they should only report on the "positive" and the "favorable," an attitude that is not entirely different from the occasional demand of media consumers for the "good" news.

There are governments that look at media as mere tools of the state

203 Karin Deutsch Karlekar, Press Freedom in 2009: Broad setbacks to global media freedom (n.d.). Retrieved on October 24, 2010 from http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=131&year=2010

204 Journalists killed (n.d.), retrieved on October 24, 2010 from http://cpj.org/killed/.

205 Committee to Protect Journalists

206 Sonny Inbaraj (1996), Free media in ASEAN: A reality or myth? Retrieved on July 9, 2008 from http://bar.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/HRD/1996/2.html

The unequal development of the media among the 10 ASEAN Member States may be rooted in their diverse historical contexts. It is understandable, for example, for the Philippines to have what Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) described as a "robust" media because it has a rich tradition of advocacy (even revolutionary) journalism dating back to the 19th century under Spanish occupation. Thailand and Cambodia, on the other hand, find it unacceptable for the media to report on anything negative about the King because doing so is perceived to compromise, among others, the culture in these particular countries.

Thailand and Cambodia find it unacceptable for the media to report on anything negative about the King

Besides strengthening the media, another effort to promote the ASEAN cultural identity is the assigning of a Member State as an ASEAN Culture Capital for a defined period of time. For the years 2010 and 2011, the Philippines is designated as the first "Capital/City for Culture for 2010 to 2011, and the country [is expected to] actively push for cultural initiatives as a key element in the region's community-building." Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Roberto Romulo noted: "Culture is the antidote to war and an important element in Asean Community-Building. There is a need to strengthen the Asean identity, and raise the profile of Asean within the region and internationally by celebrating the Asean arts and culture and promoting the growth of the region's creative industries."[207] Incidentally, the title of „ASEAN Culture Capital" is given to a country that hosts the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts meeting, held once every two years.

There is a need to strengthen the ASEAN identity by celebrating arts and culture

Key points

- Functional cooperation encourages direct interactions between professionals from various fields serving as starting points of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.
- The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community seeks, among others, to involve the people in the ambitious journey to create an ASEAN Community by 2015.
- The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community comprises six main areas, namely human development, social welfare, justice, environment, ASEAN identity and development.
- The general principles of the ASCC are generally acceptable to the 10 Member States as they reflect universal aspirations for democracy and justice.
- Journalists covering ASEAN may take into account the varied media situations in each Member State.

Further reading

Carolina Guina, The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, in The ASEAN Community: Unblocking the Roadblocks. Singapore 2008: ISEAS

ASEAN. Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015. Jakarta 2009

207 RP as Asean cultural capital, Inquirer.net, October 24, 2010. Retrieved on October 24, 2010 from http://globalnation.inquirer.net/news/breakingnews/view/20101024-299462/RP-as-Asean-cultural-capital

Chapter 8

Global perspectives: External relations of ASEAN

In 1976, the first ASEAN Summit expressed ASEAN's readiness to develop fruitful relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries. Since, ASEAN has established partnerships with countries and sub-regional, regional and international institutions. In conducting ASEAN's external relations, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting can confer on an external party different formal statuses ranging from dialogue and development partner to observer and guest.

After the Cold War ended, ASEAN intensified its relations particularly in Asia

The first formal dialogue partners were Australia (1974) and New Zealand (1975). The USA, Japan, the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union followed in 1977 and Canada in 1981. After the Cold War ended, ASEAN intensified its relations particularly in Asia. South Korea became a dialogue partner in 1991, Pakistan in 1993, India in 1995 and China and Russia in 1996. All these partnerships were meant to promote trade and investment, facilitate the transfer of technology and know-how, improve the access to markets of industrialised countries and support external partners to access the enlarged ASEAN market.[208]

In 2008, ASEAN and the United Nations joined forces to respond to the devastation left by Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar

ASEAN and the United Nations formalised their relations in November 2002 at the 56th plenary meeting of the United Nation General Assembly. Meanwhile both interregional organisations enhanced their partnership through numerous activities. In May 2008, ASEAN and the United Nations joined forces to respond quickly to the devastation left by Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar.[209]

Binding together East Asia: ASEAN plus three

ASEAN entertains a special relationship with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea

ASEAN entertains a special relationship with three of its neighbours. China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and ASEAN form what is called the "ASEAN plus three". ASEAN plus three reflects a broader East Asian regionalism in addition to Southeast Asian regionalism promoted by ASEAN. The political process binding together East and Southeast Asian countries was inaugurated in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997 in the wake of the global financial crisis. Whereas in Europe it was the end of the Cold War that led to the Eastern enlargement of the Union, it was "the Asian crisis that led to the institutionalization of the Asian idea."[210]

Interdependence and an external shock contributed to the establishment of ASEAN+3

An analysis of the formation of ASEAN plus three revealed that "[t]wo factors apparently contributed to the establishment of ASEAN+3: interdependence and an external shock."[211] At that time, ASEAN's economies were, to a certain extent, close to the three East Asian economies. The global financial crisis deeply affected the entire region, prompting ASEAN and its neighbours to initiate a stronger monetary and financial cooperation and an improved regional economic surveillance mechanism. In the "first phase of the institutionalization process, political leaders

208 Solidum, pp. 177-195; cf. ASEAN Secretariat, External Relations. Retrieved on September 3, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/20164.htm

209 United Nation's ESCAP Secretariat, Striving together. ASEAN and the UN (n.d.), Retrieved on October 12, 2010 from http://www.unescap.org/stat/statpub/ASEAN-UN-Study.pdf

210 Dirk Nabers, The social construction of international institutions: the case of ASEAN + 3, in International Relations of the Asia-Pacific, Volume 3 (2003), p. 132

211 Nabers, p. 121

in the region considered regionalism as a form of self-help mechanism in times of crisis."[212] The idea is reflected in a statement by former Thai Deputy Prime Minister Supachai: "We cannot rely on the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, or the International Monetary Fund but we must rely on regional cooperation."[213]

The Chiang Mai Initiative is a liquidity facility that offers Southeast Asian states emergency financing to respond to speculative attacks on their currencies.

Since its establishment, ASEAN plus three have cooperated mainly in the field of economy. Significant efforts have been made to forge closer ties through free trade agreements and other related activities. For example, ASEAN plus three engaged in a project to develop a regional bond market. Furthermore, it is "best known for its projects in regional financial cooperation, especially the so-called Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) which took effect in May 2000."[214] The CMI is a regional liquidity facility that offers the Southeast Asian states emergency financing to respond to speculative attacks on their currencies. In order to further strengthen the economic regional cooperation, in February 2009 the Finance Ministers of ASEAN plus three set up the Action Plan to Restore Economic and Financial Stability of the Asian Region.[215] This agreement aims to develop a more robust and integrated surveillance mechanism and liquidity support system.

ASEAN plus three includes a comprehensive regional cooperation agenda that covers both trade and security

Even though ASEAN plus three first concentrated on economic and financial issues, future cooperation includes a comprehensive regional cooperation agenda that covers both trade and security. The original interest of the Member States was to stabilise East Asia after the Asian crisis. This goal was complemented by a wide range of political and social goals. It seems as if the ASEAN Regional Forum is "responsible for traditional security affairs, including confidence-building, while ASEAN+3 has a much more complex mission, indicating the promotion of a much wider concept of security."[216]

The ASEAN plus three workplan for 2007-2017 includes measures to improve tourism within the entire region.

The recent deeper institutionalisation of ASEAN plus three in the political field is reflected by specific work programmes jointly addressing threats posed by terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, sea piracy, arms smuggling, money laundering, international economic crime and cyber-crime. Another important area concerns the joint development of the tourism sector. The ASEAN plus three workplan for 2007-2017 includes specific measures to improve tourism within the entire region. In fact, the workplan of ASEAN plus three includes a wide array of goals and projects to be reached until 2017.[217] For journalists, the workplan could serve as a valuable source to create news story ideas by asking which proposed activities were implemented already and how they could affect the people of the journalist's home country.

Unrivalled friends: ASEAN and the European Union

ASEAN's key position in the Asia-Pacific region made it an essential partner for the European Union in Asia

ASEAN's key position in the Asia-Pacific region, its dedication to peace and its economic weight made it an essential partner for the European Union in Asia. Informally, the European Union has been the oldest dialogue partner of ASEAN. Relations between both groups of countries began in 1972 when the European Community (EC) joined hands with ASEAN in a Special Coordinating Committee. The relations were

212 Nabers, p. 122
213 Thai Deputy Prime Minister Supachai as quoted in The Nation, Bangkok, on June 10, 2000
214 Nesadurai, p. 2
215 Action Plan to Restore Economic and Financial Stability of the Asian Region, Joint media statement of the Finance Ministers of ASEAN + 3 from February 22, 2009, retrieved on August 12, 2010 from http://74.53.24.87/news/uploads/5/as3_090222.pdf
216 Nabers, p. 132
217 ASEAN plus three workplan 2007-2017. Retrieved on September 16, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/21104.pdf

formalised in July 1977 when ASEAN Foreign Ministers agreed to cooperate with the then European Economic Community (EEC). A first ASEAN-EC Ministerial Meeting took place in 1978 at Brussels. The relations were institutionalised with the signing of the ASEAN-EEC Cooperation Agreement in March 1980.
With the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993, the European Community changed its name to European Union (EU), reflecting the more comprehensive nature of European integration. Over the years, the ASEAN-EU relations expanded, covering a wide range of areas including political and security, economic and trade, social and cultural, and development cooperation. The direction and pace of the dialogue are set by the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting which is held once every 18 to 24 months. The Ministerial Meetings review and initiate political, economic and socio-cultural activities.
In 2007, ASEAN and the European Union celebrated 30 years of EU-ASEAN relations by approving the Joint Declaration of the ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit, obliging both sides to address the interrelated challenges of climate change, energy security, environmental and other issues. In the same year, the so-called Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership and the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action to implement the declaration were adopted to move forward the dialogue relations of both groupings.

The ASEAN-EU relations cover a wide range of areas including political and security, economic and trade, social and cultural, and development cooperation

ASEAN-EC Programme for Regional Integration Support (APRIS II)
ASEAN-EC Programme on Biodiversity
ASEAN-EC Migration and Border Management Programme
ASEAN-EC Statistical Capacity Building Programme
ASEAN Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (ECAP III)
ASEAN Air Transport Integration Project (AATIP)
ASEAN FTA Negotiating Capacity/Support to the ASEAN-EU FTA Negotiating Process
Regional EC-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI)

Table 8.1: Selected cooperation programmes of ASEAN and the European Union

In the area of political cooperation, the EU is actively involved in the ASEAN Regional Forum as an intergovernmental forum aiming to promote peace through dialogue in Asia Pacific. The adoption of the ASEAN-EU Joint Declaration on Cooperation to Combat Terrorism in 2003 "represents the continued commitment of both sides to closely engage each other in responding to the challenges of international terrorism and contribute to international efforts to fight terrorism."[218]
In addition, both sides are implementing a cooperation programme on migration and border management. A special advisor has been appointed in the European Delegation in Jakarta to strengthen the relationship with ASEAN.
Due to the global financial crisis in 2009, total ASEAN trade with the EU declined to US$ 171.7 billion in 2009, a fall of 16 per cent from 2008. "Despite this, Europe remains ASEAN's top export destination",[219] the ASEAN Secretariat states. In terms of total trade, the EU is second after China. ASEAN received a total of US$ 7.2 billion of foreign direct investment (FDI) from the European Union in 2009 and it accounted for 18.4 per cent of the total FDI inflows into ASEAN in 2009. The number of tourists coming from the countries of the European Union rose from 6.5 million in 2007 to 6.9 million in 2008.[220]

The European Union is actively involved in the ASEAN Regional Forum

ASEAN received a total of US$ 7.2 billion of foreign direct investment from the European Union in 2009

218 ASEAN Secretariat, Overview of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations. Retrieved on October 3, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/23216.htm
219 ASEAN Secretariat, Overview of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations
220 ASEAN's trade and investment statistic data may be retrieved from

In order to further promote trade and investment flows, ASEAN and the EU agreed on the Trans-Regional ASEAN-EU Trade Initiatives (TREATI). This is a policy mechanism in economic and trade-related issues. TREATI is also meant to pave the way for the development of an ASEAN-EU Free Trade Area. The negotiating process on an FTA was based on a region-to-region approach, while recognising and taking into account different levels of development of ASEAN Member States. At present, however, both groupings have put negotiations on hold. It is not clear if and when the negotiations will resume.

Both groupings have put negotiations on an ASEAN-EU Free Trade Area on hold

Moreover, both groupings agreed on the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI) which is a policy dialogue process for promoting the ASEAN-EU dialogue relations in non-trade areas. Following the introduction of READI, a number of activities started ranging from consultations on human trafficking, labour and employment issues, air transport, climate change, energy, to ICT and science and technology. The European Union supports ASEAN integration and community-building in a number of areas, such as standards, quality and conformity assessment, intellectual property rights, energy, environment, capacity-building, and higher education. The EU has allocated € 70 million to the regional EU-ASEAN programmes for the years 2007 to 2013.[221]

The European Union supports ASEAN integration in areas such as intellectual property rights, energy, environment, capacity-building and higher education

The long-standing and passionate cooperation of ASEAN and the European Union is possible even though both groupings are quite different in terms of institutional structures, decision-making processes or the participation of interest groups and citizens. However, ASEAN has been "looking at the European Union's rich experience as we map out our own plans for becoming a Community by 2015," former Secretary-General of ASEAN Ong Keng Yong said. "We are not looking to take the EU model lock, stock and barrel. We simply cannot. The very nature of ASEAN as an intergovernmental organisation differs from that of the EU. However, we are looking for good ideas and best practices, and the European Union certainly has plenty of these."[222]

The very nature of ASEAN as an intergovernmental organisation differs from that of the European Union

The patterns of regional integration in Southeast Asia and Europe are quite different. While the European Union represents the "high-level institutionalized integration", ASEAN "represents the low level one".[223] The terms high and low level refer particularly to institutional structures, dominant principles and decision-making processes within the groupings. While the European Union has agreed on various supranational elements such as the European Parliament, the EU Council or the European Commission, ASEAN relies mainly on intergovernmental relations. Decisions are prepared by ministerial and senior officials' meetings and finalised by the heads of government at the ASEAN Summit. Further supranational elements of the European Union include a Common Court of Justice serving as the final arbiter in disputes about European law and the European Central Bank which is in charge of European monetary policy.

While the European Union has agreed on various supranational elements, ASEAN relies mainly on intergovernmental relations

There are many reasons why both organisations differ considerably. After the devastation of the Second World War, the Western European countries were ready to make strong commitments to promote collective security. Second, unlike ASEAN Member States, European countries have more or less the same political order, that is, the liberal democratic system. Furthermore, most European countries share qui-

http://www.asean.org/22122.htm

221 ASEAN Secretariat, Overview of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations

222 Keng Yong Ong, One ASEAN: a partner for Europe. AEJ (2008) 5, p. 443. The article refers to Ong Keng Yong by using the Western name order placing the sur name after the first names .

223 Guichang Zhu, Comparing the European Model and the ASEAN Way: Is there a Third Way of regionalism for the East Asian Corporation? in L. Dong & G. Hei duk, eds., The EU's experience in integration. A model for ASEAN+3, Bern 2007: Lang, p.156

	ASEAN	European Union
Reasons for cooperation	Peace, stability, economic growth	
Foundation	August 8, 1967	March 25, 1957
Member States	10	27
Admission criteria	not formalised	strict conditions
Population	≈ 600 mio	≈ 500 mio
Cultural patterns	relatively dissimilar	relatively similar
Political systems	heterogeneous	relatively homogeneous
Institutional structure	Heads of Government, Ministerial meetings	European Parliament, EU Council, European Commission
Dominant principles	Intergovernmental relations	Supranational elements
Decision-making	Consensus of heads of states / governments	Institutional triangle: Commission proposes legislation; Parliament and Council share legislative power; laws apply throughout EU
Participation of interest groups and citizens	Not institutionalised	European Economic and Social Committee; elections to European Parliament
Common Court of Justice	none	Final arbiter in disputes about European law
Central Bank	none	European Central Bank in charge of European monetary policy
Single Currency	no single currency	Euro as single currency adopted by majority of Member States

Table 8.2: ASEAN and the European Union in comparison

te similar cultural patterns. In comparison, Southeast Asia is a much more diverse region, i.e. in terms of religions or languages, as explained in the third chapter. Another reason for the quite distinct approaches of ASEAN and the European Union to regional cooperation may also be rooted in the policies pursued by the US towards the two regions. In Europe, the USA "enthusiastically promoted multilateral cooperation […] In Southeast Asia or broadly in East Asia, the United States chose to deal with East Asian countries individually and bilaterally, which constitutes a major barrier to the regional cooperation."[224]

The distinct approaches of ASEAN and the EU to regional cooperation may also be rooted in policies pursued by the US

Much to gain: ASEAN and the United States of America

The US approach to regional integration in Southeast Asia looks as if it is going to change in the near future.[225] When US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the ASEAN Secretariat in February 2009, Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan noticed a new interest of the USA in the region. "Your visit shows the seriousness of the U.S. to end its diplomatic absenteeism in this region," Pitsuwan said.[226]

Hillary Clinton's visit to the ASEAN Secretariat showed a new interest of the USA in Southeast Asia

224 Zhu, p.159
225 Dosch, p. 4
226 ASEAN Secretariat, Overview of ASEAN-US Dialogue Relations. Retrieved on December 10, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/23222.htm

Despite many years of US scepticism towards regional integration in Southeast Asia, the formal dialogue partnership of ASEAN and the USA began as early as 1977. In 1984, ASEAN and the USA acknowledged through a joint communiqué the important role each side "could play for current and future economic growth."[227] Through the years, both sides have come up with a number of agreements related to the trade in goods like tin and sugar. Aside from directly dealing with the USA, Member States of ASEAN also deal with the strongest country in the world through other multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organisation.

After Barack Obama became president, the USA modified its external policies

After Barack Obama became president, the USA modified its external policies. The heads of government of the 10 Member States of ASEAN and the USA held the first ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting on November 15, 2009 in Singapore. Prior to this, ASEAN and the USA had about 32 years of dialogue relations. According to the joint statement in 2009 titled "Enhanced Partnership for Enduring Peace and Prosperity," both parties are said to "have developed mutually beneficial cooperation in many areas, reflecting [their] broad shared interests guided by the Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership of November 17, 2005, the 2006 Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership, and Revised Priorities for Cooperation under the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership 2009."[228] The Philippines serves as the country coordinator for ASEAN-US dialogue relations from July 2009 to July 2012. As such, it is tasked to lead the drafting of the five-year Plan of Action.

As far as the USA is concerned, ASEAN is perceived as a key partner in the promotion of peace and prosperity

As far as the USA is concerned, ASEAN is now perceived as a "key partner in the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region."[229] This kind of partnership explains the commitment of both the ASEAN and the USA to further enhance economic cooperation and partnership through new initiatives under the ASEAN-US Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement.[230] Clearly, ASEAN has much to gain from continued relations with the USA. The economic relations between the two parties are described as "strong and dynamic" as two-way trade in goods reached US$ 178 billion in 2008. Moreover, "ASEAN is host to US foreign direct investment of $153 billion, making it the favoured US investment destination in Asia."[231]

The economic relations between the US and ASEAN are strong and dynamic

Not surprisingly, Assistant Secretary of State for Asia Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell said that President Barack Obama wants to "institutionalise" the US-ASEAN Summit. Campbell added that the United States „was seeking to play a greater role in the development of Asia and Southeast Asia."[232] No less than President Obama, in his joint remarks, stressed the US commitment to strongly support ASEAN's „ambitious goal of creating a community by 2015, including its bold effort to achieve economic integration, which will contribute to a sustained and lasting prosperity within this region and throughout the world."[233]

Institutionalisation and economic cooperation could be interpreted in various

227 ASEAN Secretariat, Overview of ASEAN-US Dialogue Relations

228 1st ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting. Joint Statement: Enhanced Partnership for Ensuring Peace and Prosperity, November 15, 2009, p. 1. Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://asean-us-partnership.org/uploads/asean-us-leaders-meeting-joint-statement.pdf

229 1st ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting. Joint Statement, p. 2

230 1st ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting. Joint Statement, p. 3

231 1st ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting. Joint Statement, p. 2

232 Endy M. Bayuni, United States reaffirms commitment to ASEAN, The Jakarta Post, September 25, 2010. Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/09/25/united-states-reaffirms-commitment-asean.html

233 Enhanced Partnership Team, 1st ASEAN-US Leaders Meeting, November 8, 2009. Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://asean-us-partnership.org/leaders-meeting

ways. However, the 2009 joint statement of ASEAN and the US gives one an idea of the direction these would take. Both parties, after all, see the importance of trade and investment liberalisation to economic growth and prosperity in the future. In fact, ASEAN and the US reaffirmed their commitment to accelerating regional economic integration in the Asia-Pacific. The broad, shared vision of a regional architecture that, among others, "respects the diversity within the region" should therefore be analysed in the context of economic convergence towards globalisation. In the same way, the joint statement's reaffirmation of the "importance of ASEAN centrality" may be interpreted as regional efforts to have a central, globalist theme in the pursuit of development goals.

Both parties see the importance of trade and investment liberalisation to economic growth and prosperity

That the USA supports other ASEAN initiatives should not come as a surprise. ASEAN's call on Myanmar to institute broad political and economic reforms as part of the Member State's democratisation process is a welcome development as far as the USA is concerned. At the same time, there is no debate in the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights as this is consistent with the international movement in promoting and upholding human rights. Other US-ASEAN commitments with regard to clean energy, food security, anti-terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are also consistent with past US pronouncements. Both the US and ASEAN could benefit from a partnership that is based on noble goals and ideas for as long as they remain committed to them and translate their words to deeds.

Both the US and ASEAN could benefit from a partnership for as long as they remain committed to their goals

Promising relations: ASEAN's links to Africa and South America

Compared to other continents, ASEAN has limited dealings with Africa and South America although the 10 ASEAN Member States deal with the countries on the two continents through international bodies like the United Nations.

Compared to other continents, ASEAN has limited dealings with Africa and South America

The African Union, through its socio-economic development programme New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), seeks a partnership with ASEAN. At the 8th ASEAN Summit in Cambodia in 2002, South African President Thabo Mbeki said, „[B]eyond the partnership among the Africans, the partnership between Africa and the developed North, of critical importance is also the partnership with the countries of the South, prominent among which are the ASEAN countries."[234] Mbeki also stressed the "common resolve to intensify the interaction between ASEAN and African countries to advance the common agenda of greater South-South cooperation."[235]

It seems there is much room left for improving relations with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which is a regional group of sixteen countries, founded in 1975.[236] Links to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were explored by ASEAN Economic Ministers who held informal consultations with SADC representatives in October 1997.[237]

ASEAN and African countries advance the common agenda of greater South-South cooperation

As regards South America, ASEAN's potential dealings with Latin American countries (i.e., territories in the Americas where Spanish and Portuguese languages are dominant) deserve close scrutiny. The links between ASEAN Member States and

234 ASEANWEB, Address by the President of South Africa and Chairperson of the African Union, Thabo Mbeki at the 8th ASEAN Summit, November 5, 2002. Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/14790.htm

235 ASEANWEB, Address by the President of South Africa

236 Dirk van den Boom, ECOWAS: How regional integration works in West Africa. A handbook for journalists. Berlin 2010: InWEnt

237 ASEAN Economic Ministers – Southern African Development Community (AEM-SADC) Consultations, Joint Press Statement, October 17, 1997, Subang Jaya. Retrieved on November 10, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/7918.htm; cf. Christian Peters-Berries, Regional Integration in Southern Africa – A Guide book. Berlin 2010: InWEnt

the countries of South America are getting closer. An informal meeting of foreign ministers representing ASEAN and MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) was held in Brasilia in August 2007 on the sidelines of the Forum for East Asia Latin-America Cooperation (FEALAC). On that occasion, ASEAN and MERCOSUR expressed their common aspiration to explore ways to strengthen interregional ties, including trade and investment cooperation.

The links between ASEAN and South America are getting closer

The first ASEAN-MERCOSUR Ministerial Meeting was held about a year later, in November 2008 in Brasilia. The conference was attended by ministers and high-level representatives of ASEAN and MERCOSUR and representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat. The participants stressed the constructive roles of both MERCOSUR and ASEAN in the promotion of peace, stability, prosperity, regional integration and sustainable development as well as community-building in their respective regions. The meeting considered means to enhance MERCOSUR-ASEAN cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, intellectual property, energy security, food security, agriculture, transportation, tourism, environment, people-to-people contacts, technical cooperation and other areas of mutual interest. The representatives of both regional organisations recalled the importance of the elimination of all forms of export subsidies to agricultural products, as well as substantial reduction of trade which in turn distorted agricultural support in major subsidising countries. Such eliminations and reductions were being done to promote rural development in developing countries.[238]

The MERCOSUR-ASEAN cooperation covers areas such as trade, intellectual property, energy and food security

In a study by the European Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), it was mentioned, however, that „the proliferation of intra-Asian trade agreements could divert trade away from Latin American and Caribbean exports, should intra-Asian trade be exempted from the high tariffs applied by the ASEAN countries, China, Japan and Korea to agricultural products, textiles, apparel and some machinery sectors."[239] The report adds, "ASEAN imports from Latin America are concentrated in primary goods and natural resources, whereas Latin America imports from ASEAN correspond primarily to the information and communications technologies sector, where tariffs have dropped substantially in recent years."[240]

Trade between ASEAN and Latin American countries has been demonstrating significant growth

For his part, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Economic Community Sundram Puspanathan said, „Trade between ASEAN and Latin American countries has been demonstrating significant growth. Trade value between the two economies showed tremendous growth, reached 24 billion US dollars from 2006 – 2007 with a growth of 200 per cent in that period, with surplus went to ASEAN countries."[241] Due to the global financial crisis, Sundram mentioned in 2009 that decreasing trades to the USA and European Union countries prompted ASEAN to look at the Latin American markets to sell their products. He said that ASEAN is „looking forward to establish bilateral free trade pact with Latin American countries. Chile and Singapore had already set up bilateral trade relationship."[242]

238 1st ASEAN-MERCOSUR Ministerial Meeting Brasilia, Press Statement from November 24, 2008 retrieved on December 1, 2010 from http://www.aseansec.org/22011.pdf

239 ECLAC, Latin America and the Caribbean Should Increase Ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), August 30, 2007. Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://www.eclac.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/prensa/noticias/comunicados/5/29695/P29695.xml&xsl=/prensa/tpl-i/p6f.xsl&base=/tpl/top-bottom.xslt

240 ECLAC, Latin America and the Caribbean Should Increase Ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

241 ASEAN countries eye Latin American Markets, People's Daily Online, October 12, 2009. Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90778/90858/90863/6781315.html

242 ASEAN countries eye Latin American Markets

Clearly, the nature of ASEAN's potential partnership with African and South American countries is still within the broad context of cooperation which all parties consider as mutually beneficial. Whether or not ASEAN's trade and other relations would be as active and dynamic as the USA and European markets remains to be seen.

Key points

- ASEAN establishes partnerships with countries and international institutions to promote trade, improve market-access and facilitate technology-transfer.
- ASEAN's cooperation with China, Japan and South Korea (ASEAN plus three) aspires to a comprehensive regional cooperation agenda that covers both trade and security.
- Despite differences in institutional structures or decision-making processes, ASEAN and the European Union maintain a long-standing and intense cooperation.
- The USA expressed new interest in ASEAN while ASEAN strives to enhance its ties with Africa and South America.

Further reading

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Chapter 9

Summing up and looking ahead: Challenges of future integration

The preceding chapters provide a basic explanation of ASEAN and how journalists may cover issues related to it:

Chapter 1 highlights the relevance of ASEAN and explains why there are several topics aside from annual summits that should hog the headlines. For example, the concept of regional integration is already a source of news as various parties argue the pros and cons of this ASEAN direction.

Chapter 2 provides the necessary context to regional integration by presenting a short history of Southeast Asia, analysing the region's political, economic and cultural diversity and discussing pre-ASEAN attempts to regional integration.

Chapter 3 contains the history of ASEAN from its formation to the ratification of the ASEAN Charter by the 10 Member States. There are also discussions on the possibility of having two new ASEAN members, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea.

Chapter 4 clarifies the decision-making process in ASEAN and identifies its major institutions. ASEAN has been branded in the past as a mere talk shop and a paper tiger, and this chapter analyses the pros and cons of such criticisms.

Chapter 5, 6 and 7 cover the three pillars of ASEAN – Political-Security Community, Economic Community and Socio-Cultural Community. These chapters discuss specific issues related to the communities, explaining towards the end the prospects of a common identity for the region.

Chapter 8 discusses the dealings of ASEAN with other countries, continents and international organisations as the 10 Member States try to achieve development by forging agreements that are mutually beneficial and acceptable to all concerned.

The complexities and nuances of the ASEAN Way may be summed up in two words: regional integration. That the 10 Member States agreed in 2007 to establish an ASEAN community by 2015 is a clear resolve to further unite the region, historical and cultural differences – as well as wide economic development gaps – notwithstanding. Through its principles stated in the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN hopes to work together in having mutually acceptable partnerships with other countries and international bodies.

Widely perceived as the region's version of the European Union, there is no clear timeline as regards a broader union in the future. All that has been discussed so far is the scenario where the ASEAN region will have „freer trade in goods, freer movement of labor and capital and free flow of services."[243] As explained in an Asian Economic News article, "The economically diverse countries of Southeast Asia, which comprise prosperous Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei and less-developed Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, are not willing to go as far toward integration as the European Union at the moment mainly because members are still guarded about individual political sovereignty."[244] The promotion of "freer" trade in goods and services means further adherence to

The preceding chapters provide a basic explanation of ASEAN and how journalists may cover issues related to it

The complexities and nuances of the ASEAN Way may be summed up in two words: regional integration

The economically diverse countries of Southeast Asia are not willing to go far as regards integration compared to the European Union

243 ASEAN leaders ink declaration for regional community by 2015, Asian Economic News, January 15, 2007. Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDP/is_2007_Jan_15/ai_n17136279/

244 ASEAN leaders ink declaration

globalisation. All Member States should therefore revise erstwhile protectionist policies in such a way that liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation can happen in their respective economies. Such policy directions are much easier said than done, considering the impact of globalisation on sectors of the economy that cannot compete with big local and foreign corporations that have strong financial, technological and other resources. Recently, ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan urged the Member States to step up intra-regional trade: „Unless and until Asean business communities make that fateful decision to cross borders into each other, it is difficult for me to see we will have an economic community by the year 2015 […] We need to increase our investments in each other's economies, so it becomes sustainable and competitive […] Here is the market, let's make it work."[245]

ASEAN Member States need to increase their investments in each other's economies

As regards challenges to future regional integration, the following issues must be taken into account:

ASEAN's future is challenged by various issues, from an uneven level of devlopment to strengthening civil society

- Uneven levels of development of the 10 ASEAN Member States that can hamper efforts in developing the entire region;
- Implications of globalisation on less-developed Member States, particularly on agriculture and on micro, small and medium enterprises;
- ASEAN's elusive balance between informality and the goal of establishing a rules-based organisation;
- ASEAN's highly decentralised structure and its low level of supranational elements;
- ASEAN's perception as a mere paper tiger where summits and other forms of dialogues are reduced to "talk shops" bereft of meaningful action or intervention;
- ASEAN's ability to be more proactive in resolving disputes among its Member States;
- ASEAN's role in worldwide movements on various issues like the protection of the environment and upholding of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons;
- ASEAN's stand towards Myanmar and human rights issues in general;
- ASEAN's increased power to make its presence felt in the region which could mean a rethinking of its principle of non-interference;
- ASEAN's commitment to become more people-centred by strengthening civil society, particularly the media.

US President Barack Obama used the word "ambitious" to refer to the planned establishment of an ASEAN community by 2015

Just like any development programme, the road leading to the ASEAN Way indeed has many obstacles. US President Barack Obama used the word "ambitious" to refer to the planned establishment of an ASEAN community by 2015, even if he finds the initiative laudable. But noble intentions start with ambition or a bright idea. It is then a matter of ensuring that the plans and programmes are strictly followed to achieve the mutual vision of strengthened regional integration.

245 Agence France-Presse, Asean chief warns 2015 single market goal in peril, November 30, 2010

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Abbreviations[246]

ACDM	ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management
AATIP	ASEAN Air Transport Integration Project
ACC	ASEAN Coordinating Council
ACFTA	ASEAN-China Free Trade Area
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
ACW	ASEAN Sub-Committee on Women
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AEM	ASEAN Economic Ministers
AEMM	ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting
AF	ASEAN Foundation
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AHMM	ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting
AIA	ASEAN Investment Area
AIPA	ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly
ALMM	ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting
AMAF	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry
AMBDC	ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation
AMCA	ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts
AMEM	ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting
AMM	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting
AMME	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment
AMMH	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Haze
AMMTC	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime
AMMST	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology
AMRDPE	ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication
AMRI	ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information
AMRSW	ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APRIS	ASEAN-EU Programme for Regional Integration Support
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ARPDM	ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASC	ASEAN Standing Committee
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

246 A list of acronyms used by ASEAN may be retrieved from http://www.aseansec.org/73.htm

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEC	ASEAN Secretariat
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ATIGA	ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement
ATM	ASEAN Transport Ministers
CEPT	Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme
CLMV	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam
CMI	Chiang Mai Initiative
COSD	Committee on Social and Development
COST	Committee on Science and Technology
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN
EASG	East Asia Study Group
EAVG	East Asia Vision Group
EC	European Commission
ECAP	ASEAN Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights
ECLAC	European Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECU	European Currency Unit
EEC	European Economic Community
e.g.	Exempli gratia = for example
EPG	Eminent Person's Group
ERAT	ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEALAC	Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
i.e.	Id est = that is
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
ISIS	ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
Maphilindo	Malaysia Philippines Indonesia
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market (Mercado Común del Sur)
NCR	National Capital Region
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NLF	National Liberation Front (called "Vietcong" by its opponents)
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
R & D	Research and Development
READI	Regional EC-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SEAPA	Southeast Asian Press Alliance
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SG	Secretary-General
SMEs	Small and Medium enterprises
SOM	Senior Officials Meeting
S & T	Science and Technology
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
TREATI	Trans-Regional EU-ASEAN Trade Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WHO	World Health Organisation
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

Tables

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