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TITLE:


ASEAN's Path to Regional Autonomy:
Lessons Learned from the European Union

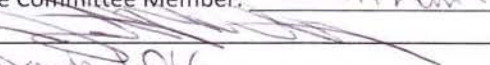
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ASEAN's Path to Regional Autonomy

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) have very distinct histories. However, today both the EU and ASEAN intend to create prosperity and stability through economic cooperation and the possibility of collective security. Some argue that the EU has achieved a greater level of regional power as a result of the functioning of its structure, regulatory and rules-based charter, and internal accountability. Brad Nelson, President of the Center for World Conflict and Peace, argues that the EU is, “the most successful regional bloc in existence. Like the Europeans, ASEAN countries have made it a priority to remain autonomous and independent, not tethered to or dependent on one or more actors in the world.”¹ Both organizations face economic and security challenges that they have approached in accordance with their institutional and national cultures, unique regional histories, and the conditions of regional diplomacy architecture. “The basis of regional cooperation in Europe and Southeast Asia has been different reflecting historical experiences, geographical considerations, religious and ethnic cleavages, and the nature of the political and economic regimes.”² ASEAN differs because it utilizes consensus building to deal with security, conflict prevention and resolution issues.

ASEAN has pursued a path most appropriate for its objectives and the circumstances of Asia Pacific geo-politics. A strategy of enmeshment, security cooperation, and collective economic initiatives all support the maintenance of stability and sovereignty of ASEAN member states as well as the comprehensive “human security” of individual citizens.³ As a security apparatus, ASEAN remains weak against external threats. Rather than a binding alliance, the member states choose to enhance its security from external threats through increased interdependence, individual bilateral agreements, and non-aggression pacts and treaties through a hub-and-spoke architecture. This strategy still requires ASEAN to align with external powers as

part of a hedging strategy that gives its members the greatest amount of diplomatic flexibility. There are impediments to ASEAN evolving into a more EU-like organization, mainly the traditional principle of non-interference, the so called “ASEAN way.”⁴ However, the 2007 charter, while maintaining this principle, clearly set the conditions for a potentially more regulatory institution. ASEAN’s goals for Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural Communities, as outlined in the 2015 Blueprints, puts ASEAN on a path to greater regional autonomy but still requires additional measures to make ASEAN more self-reliant. ASEAN can learn both positive and negative lessons from the EU experience as it evolves into a more powerful institution. The EU provides ASEAN with a case study for the challenges associated with developing a rules-based, single market economy while fostering a single social identity but historical, cultural, geographic, and political differences make the EU’s experience an imperfect blueprint for ASEAN. Global powers and international organizations seeking to support ASEAN’s growth should strive to advance an ASEAN which maximizes its unique cultural and geopolitical strengths rather than promoting the EU model. ASEAN can achieve its regional objectives, attain greater autonomy, and reduce its dependence on external alignments or alliances by enhancing military interoperability capabilities, making ASEAN the primary hub for diplomatic arrangements with non-members, transitioning to a more regulatory and rules-based institution, fostering a competitive single-market and production economy, and creating a cohesive Southeast Asian identity.

This paper will compare and contrast the EU and ASEAN while examining five functional areas that contribute to the success of a regional collective. The paper will outline the history, context, and purposes of both the EU and ASEAN and then evaluate their consolidated military capabilities, diplomatic and security architectures, organizational regulatory

frameworks, economic communities, and cultural cohesion. The ASEAN evaluation will include recommendations on how ASEAN can enhance these functions to achieve greater autonomy and self-sufficiency. The paper will then address counterarguments and impediments to ASEAN achieving these objectives and offer conclusions to support the thesis. The main focus will be ASEAN, but to do so, the paper must first examine the EU in some detail.

History of the EU

The EU's roots can be found in the post-World War II conditions of Europe. Its stated intent was "ending the frequent and bloody wars between neighbours."⁵ The infancy of the Union began with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950 by Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. As the Cold War progressed, it became even more important to absorb additional European states. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome transformed the Coal and Steel Community into the European Economic Community, a common market. In 1973, Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined, followed by Greece in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986. In 1986, the Single European Act moved the organization from a common market to a single market in which regulations on the free movement of labor and capital were removed. This consolidation was furthered in 1993 with the implementation of the four freedoms: movement of goods, services, people, and money. Most significantly in 1993, the Maastricht Treaty created the European Union. From 1995 to 2007, 15 more countries joined the EU and in 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon modernized institutions within the Union. In 2013, Croatia became the last country to join the EU, which had evolved into a single market union of 28 states espousing the freedom of movement of goods, services, people and money. Silviu Negut and Marius-Christian Neacsu argue, "The European Union is, by far, the most highly integrated regional bloc: obviously, primarily, from the economic point of

view; partially, political and it is also trying to achieve diplomatic integration; for the future, defence integration.”⁶

EU Security

Although there is currently no single EU armed force or military alliance, consolidated EU military capabilities would prove extremely formidable (Figure 1). Total EU ground forces are 1.54 million with 2.4 million across all armed services, giving the EU the potential to be the third largest armed force in the world behind China and India with US and Russia following. Italy, France, and Germany alone account for approximately 43% of the overall force with Spain, Greece, and the UK in the next tier.⁷ However, this statistic only serves to demonstrate sheer quantity and scope. It provides some perspective and context but does not account for differences in quality and military capabilities among the EU states. Additionally, the EU has

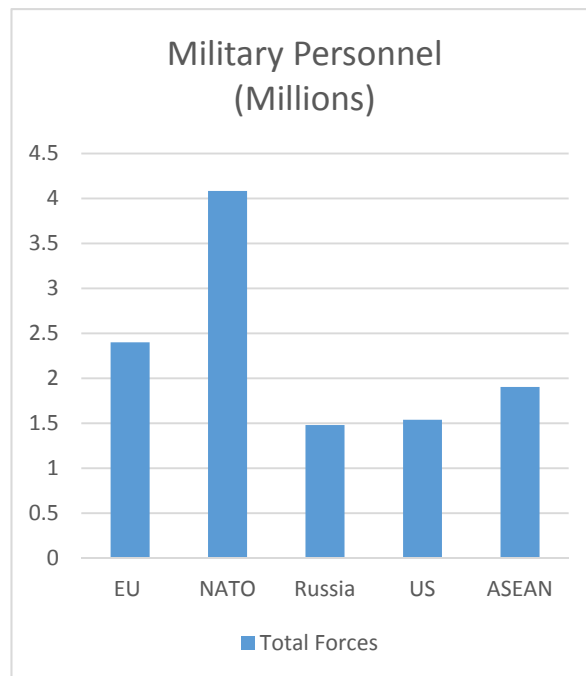


Figure 1 (Source: Nationmaster and Jane's Defense)

two nuclear armed states in its membership unlike ASEAN.

The EU has utilized several mechanisms to enhance the security of the union including alliances and security cooperation organizations. The most formidable of these to which 22 of the 28 EU states belong is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It is important to note that the EU and NATO are separate. While there are six EU states that do not belong to NATO, there are also five NATO states that do not belong to the EU. NATO's impact on EU security is great, because many EU members do not see the need for additional security arrangements. At the same time, EU members want to be capable of ensuring their own security without the US. Nicholas Rees argues, "In contemporary Europe, while NATO remains the principal security actor, and certainly America's preferred partner, the EU has become a significant security actor alongside other regional organisations such as NATO and the OSCE [Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe]." ⁸ The EU has developed military structures and capabilities, a security concept, intelligence capabilities, and battle groups. The EU can plan military and civilian operations and deploy armed personnel, police and civilian response teams for disaster relief, peacekeeping and offensive deployment. However, the EU still requires asset sharing arrangements with NATO to execute many of these. Additionally, the EU is coordinating more with the OSCE. ⁹ The EU has focused on threats such as terrorism, trafficking, and pandemics and has improved cooperation via information sharing and empowering Europol and the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX). ¹⁰ The EU has a *Justice and Home Affairs Action Plan* to counter terrorism, a common European arrest warrant, a counter-terrorism organization (Eurojust) subordinate to Europol, a *Common Foreign and Security Policy*, and an EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator. ¹¹

Euro Corps serves as another security cooperation organization in which nine of the EU states conduct combined operations. Euro Corps was founded in 1992 by France and Germany and has since expanded to include Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg, Greece, Turkey, and Italy. In 2016, Poland will join. Austria, Finland, and Canada also fill headquarters staff positions but do not provide forces for operations. Euro Corps' mission capabilities include humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, security assistance, and low-intensity conflict operations. The Corps is available for employment by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe via a new NATO framework agreement. The Corps has participated in operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Afghanistan and will be the force Headquarters for the EU Battle Group in 2016.¹² The EU Battle Group is critical to implementation of the 2003 European Security Strategy. EU member states, with the exception of Denmark and Malta, are now committed to the full operational capability of two 1,500 man, battalion-sized battle groups.¹³ Both Euro Corps and the EU Battle Group, however, are neither significant enough to provide for the defense of the EU nor a forum for conflict prevention or resolution.

The security apparatus utilized by the EU, which is most comparable with contemporary ASEAN security architecture (specifically the ASEAN Regional Forum), is the OSCE. The OSCE began as a Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1973.¹⁴

The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects. It therefore addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities. All 57 participating States enjoy equal status, and decisions are taken by consensus on a politically, but not legally binding basis.¹⁵

The OSCE is not synonymous with the EU but serves as a valuable forum and instrument as every member of the EU is also a member of the OSCE.

ASEAN's Path to Regional Autonomy

The OSCE is forum based and non-binding much in the same way that many ASEAN forums function. The OSCE is comprised of many states from outside the EU including Russia. It is in this forum where the EU can best engage Russia on European security matters. The OSCE is a complicated and imperfect institution in that it utilizes members such as Russia and Ukraine to mediate conflict in Transdnistria with the aid of EU and US observers, while at the same time sending OSCE observers to Gokuvo and Donetsk to mediate conflict between Russia and Ukraine.¹⁶ Despite the fact that the EU already possesses a lot of institutionalized security architecture, it does not seem that the EU will form its own European military. Simultaneously, NATO members do not seem eager to expand the alliance at a period of increased Russian expansionist aggression in former Soviet States. The membership of the EU, NATO, and OSCE are so misaligned, it would be impossible to ever unite the EU with one military arrangement without the complications of overlapping alliances (Figure 2).¹⁷



Figure 2 (Source: www.nato.int, www.osce.org, www.europa.eu)

Some have argued that despite the significant strength of the European States, the EU and the OSCE have been unable to ensure security (Figure 1).¹⁸ They point out that the EU has

struggled with issues of border management and counter-terrorism, and has been unable to deter aggression against members of the OSCE. Sergei Lavrov argues that European Security has been significantly weakened in the last 20 years, specifically in arms control, lingering conflicts, reemerged tensions and conflicts, and the “atrophy” of the OSCE. He further asserts,

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organization a real opportunity emerged to make the OSCE a full-fledged organization providing equal security for all states of the Euro-Atlantic area. However, this opportunity was missed, because the choice was made in favor of the policy of NATO expansion, which meant not only preserving the lines that separated Europe during the Cold War into zones with different levels of security, but also moving those lines eastward.¹⁹

He claims that the OSCE resigned itself to supervising humanitarian issues in the former Soviet areas and missed an opportunity to bring all of the European states into a single, legally binding organization. Lavrov adds “whereas in the North Atlantic Alliance the indivisibility of security is an obligatory, legally confirmed norm, in the OSCE it is limited...without any legal or practical embodiment.”²⁰ What Lavrov fails to concede is that the EU has never been invaded. Additionally, he fails to put the focus on post-Cold War NATO expansion in context.

Development of the OSCE may have been preferred in hindsight but at the time, a focus on NATO expansion was seen as a means of keeping the US engaged in Europe when European states most feared the US would withdraw or lose focus. With regard to Russian aggression in Ukraine, it is highly unlikely that a stronger EU would have had the political will to enter military conflict with Russia over the Crimea. Russia wants to see the OSCE become a strong and effective organization as demonstrated by their support of the Corfu Process.²¹ This is in Russia's self-interest as a member of the OSCE who can utilize “artificial linkage tactics” to drive the agenda.²² The ASEAN parallel to the Russian Federation's membership in the OSCE is clearly China's participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN+3.

A Rules-Based EU

The EU differs from ASEAN in that it is rules-based and member states are held accountable to ratified legislation in the same fashion a countries' legislature acts. The EU is based on the rule of law. All actions are founded on treaties ratified by all EU members. Decisions are made through ordinary legislative procedure and the Treaty of Lisbon greatly increased the policy areas where this applies. "A directly elected European Parliament" approves legislation from or independent of the EU Council which is composed of the governments of the 28 EU countries.²³ The Union has significant power as demonstrated by the fact that the parliament can block proposals from the council.

EU law is based on three fundamental principles: direct applicability, direct effect, and the primacy of EU law over member state law.²⁴ Regulations approved by the Council apply within each member state without the need for national ratification and EU citizens can invoke rights granted to them by EU law in their own national courts. The Lisbon Treaty ensured that all citizens would be provided with freedom, security, and justice regardless of borders.²⁵

It took nearly fifty years for the EU to achieve such a level of authority through "the gradual development of responsibilities assumed by the EU in the economic, political, social, environment and military fields. Along time, the EU extended its fields of action, passing from its economic activity to the social, political, military and environment fields."²⁶ Brad Nelson also points out that the EU "is now a relatively cohesive entity on economic and legal affairs. The European Commission has substantial political power."²⁷

Funding the EU

Consolidated funding is critical to fostering a strong, centralized, regional organization. The EU funds its budget from member contributions, import duties, and from a percentage of

value added taxes by each member country. The EU does not directly raise taxes or set tax rates. Taxes on citizens of member states are determined by the national governments. The EU does supervise national tax rules to ensure they are consistent with certain EU policies, such as “promoting economic growth and job creation, ensuring the free flow of goods, services and capital around the EU.”²⁸ Decisions on tax matters require unanimous agreement by all member states. The EU, as a whole, has significant reserves and was able to spend the equivalent of 37% of the EU's annual GDP to prop up banks when the 2007-2008 financial crisis arrived.²⁹ The economies of Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain continue to strain the EU economic system but the collective has proven to be resilient to date. “Today, the EU is one of the major economic world actors. From the economic point of view, the EU represented 25.23% of the world GDP in 2011, that is 17.578 billion dollars, which made it the first economic power of the world in terms of nominal GDP and power of purchase.”³⁰

EU Identity

The EU has over a long period of time developed a more cohesive European identity. “[T]he EU is based on a set of common values and interests unanimously shared by the Member States (MS) and their citizens,” states Teodor Frunzeti.³¹ Further that, “The EU, as we know it today, is the result of a process that is complex, concerted, voluntary, dynamic, progressive and of a long duration. This process was based, since the beginning, on a community of values and interests in a continuous evolution.”³² The evolution of the EU demonstrates to ASEAN that the development of a collective identity takes significant time. Shared values in the EU such as “Human rights, social solidarity, liberty of enterprise, equitable sharing of the results of economic growth, the right to a protected environment, the respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, harmonised synthesis between tradition and progress are to the Europeans a

true heritage of values.”³³ The EU has focused largely on the rights of the individual European citizen promoting peace, liberty, justice, and solidarity, believing that globalization has somewhat rendered national governments incapable of doing this. The EU has strived to create shared identity through “the valorisation of cultural diversity in Europe to achieve a strong degree of communication. The principles of free movement and treating citizens equally...can be seen in the daily life of each European citizen.”³⁴ By influencing citizens and the European states to foster the same attitudes and interests, the EU has facilitated development and mitigated dangerous polarization between European citizens.³⁵ ASEAN can be analyzed better now that the development and contemporary status of the EU and its institutions have been outlined.

History of ASEAN

ASEAN was founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.³⁶ “The establishment of ASEAN in 1967 was itself a product of the Cold War and... provided an important means of counterbalancing the influence of the USA and Soviet Union, as well as China and Japan, in the region.”³⁷ ASEAN has since expanded to include Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The ASEAN Declaration aims to promote economic growth, social progress, cultural development, peace, stability, and the rule of law in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. ASEAN's fundamental principles are: Mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations; The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner; Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and Effective cooperation among themselves.³⁸ These principles provide both opportunity and challenges for the progression of ASEAN.

Both the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and ASEAN expansion to Myanmar made it clear that something had to change regarding the principle of non-interference. Shaun Narine argues that the 1997 crisis “undermined the confidence, born of economic success, that enabled ASEAN’s assertiveness on the international stage...[and] cast doubt on its aspirations to be an economic institution in the post-Cold War era, and that ASEAN could not address the crisis without violating the ASEAN way.” He concludes that although this weakened ASEAN in the short-term, it created some new opportunities, “notably its role in the ASEAN Plus Three meetings.”³⁹ Additionally, member states feared ASEAN would lose international legitimacy if something were not done about human rights violations in Myanmar. An example of a change that resulted is that prior to the 2007 Charter, all decisions were made by consensus and while consensus is still a requirement for the most important political issues, voting may now be utilized on lesser issues.⁴⁰

ASEAN Security and Military Capabilities

ASEAN and individual member states have traditionally secured their interests through alignment instead of alliance. Of the three Asian sub-regions, Southeast Asia is the only one that contains no great power.⁴¹ Unlike alliances which are formal agreements that usually obligates states to use force and co-operate in using their military resources, alignment is not formalized in treaties, but is rather defined by behaviors and actions.⁴² Alignment does not focus only on military arrangements but encompasses political, economic, and cultural aspects as well.⁴³ ASEAN currently utilizes security alignment, arrangements, and cooperation to counter what it views as its greatest threats. As part of an “omni-enmeshment”⁴⁴ strategy, member states still hesitate to acknowledge external states as threats to their security for fear of antagonizing and are unwilling to sacrifice sovereignty by joining a defense treaty. Evelyn Goh defines enmeshment

as “the process of engaging with a state so as to draw it into deep involvement into international or regional society, enveloping it in a web of sustained exchanges and relationships, with the

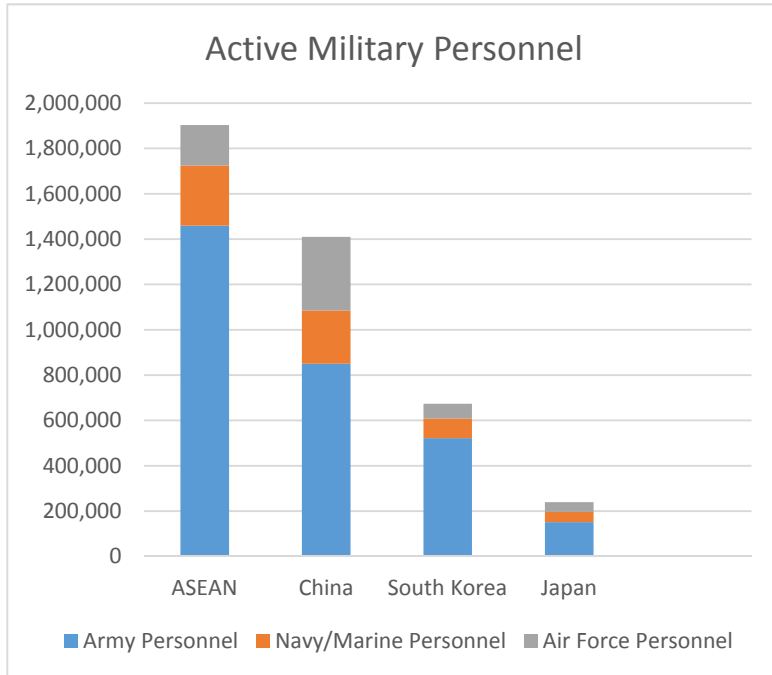


Figure 3 (Source: Jane's Defense)

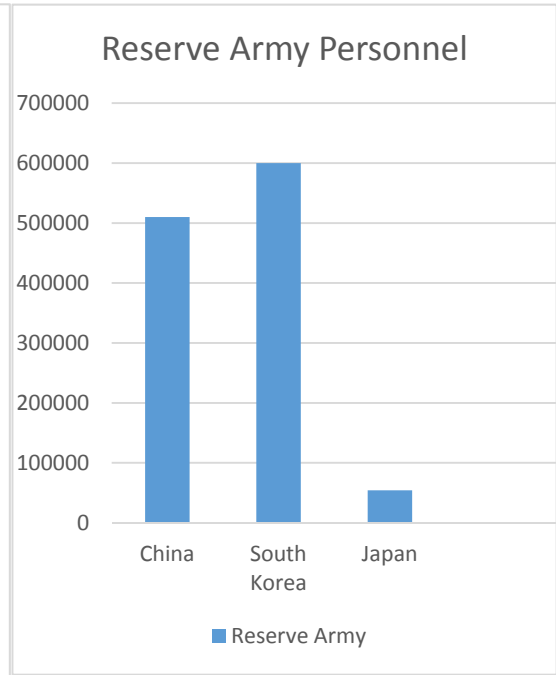


Figure 4 (Source: Jane's Defense)

long-term aim of integration.”⁴⁵

ASEAN is capable of aggregating a combined military force that would be a significant regional power. Relative to China, South Korea, and Japan, ASEAN could consolidate a larger number of active forces (Figure 3).⁴⁶ However it is important to note that, in addition to active personnel, China, South Korea, and Japan maintain significant Army reserve forces which ASEAN does not (Figure 4).⁴⁷ Additionally, many Southeast Asian states also utilize military forces for internal security, so not all forces are available for expeditionary or regional defense operations. In some instances such as Myanmar and Thailand, the military is even occupied with running the government full or part-time. While China possesses significant quantitative and qualitative advantages in aviation unit capabilities, ASEAN still maintains a competitive number of naval vessels (Figure 5).⁴⁸ While a combined ASEAN possesses a large military presence, it

could not win by itself against China. What a combined ASEAN is capable of is significant deterrence to Chinese aggression. China would earnestly have to consider the risks and long-

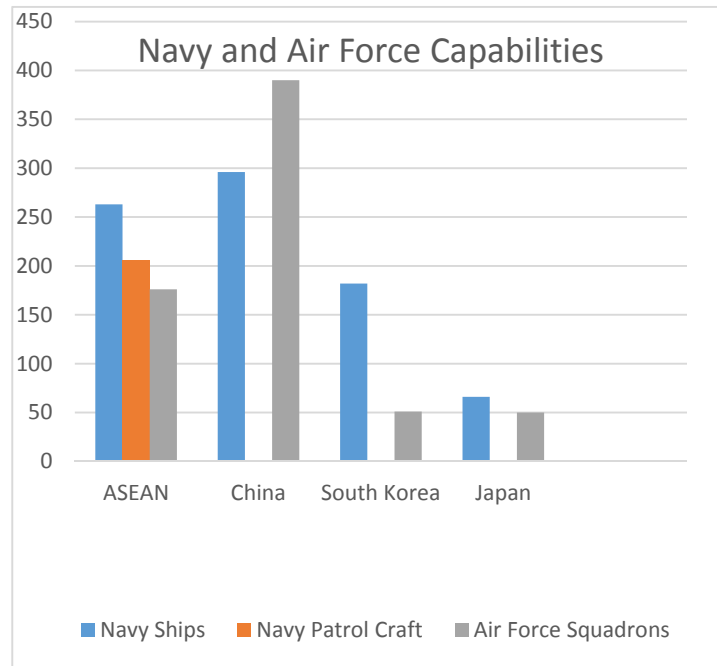


Figure 5 (Source: Jane's Defense)

term consequences of such a fight with a united ASEAN. An ASEAN capable of more interoperable military capabilities would provide a far greater deterrence than what exists today.

ASEAN currently utilizes multiple forums and agreements to coordinate and cooperate on security issues. Forums include defense ministers and officials meetings, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Convention on Counter Terrorism, ASEAN Security Policy Conference, and the Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime.⁴⁹ Treaties internal to ASEAN include the Declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, and agreements on Disaster Management and Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery of Ships in Asia.⁵⁰

In its *ASEAN Political-Security Community 2015 Blueprint*, ASEAN lists its security threats and concerns as terrorism, piracy, drugs, trafficking, cyber-crimes, fishing crimes, weapons smuggling, border management, infectious disease, poverty, climate change, and natural disasters.⁵¹ The blueprint and other regional security documents from the ASEAN Secretariat make little or no mention of external military threats. Military cooperation among the member states is not unprecedented, but it has largely been focused on non-combat operations. Bilateral and multilateral military exercises, HADR operations following Cyclone Nargis, the 2004 Tsunami, and Typhoon Hainan, combined counter-piracy maritime patrols by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (MALSINDO)⁵², and the establishment of combined operations and fusion centers all demonstrate cooperation and interoperability among the member states. The exercises are not purely in pursuit of enhanced cooperation and bring other practical benefits. “[T]he move to multilateral drills is also likely due to budgetary pressures. Sharing exercises could save costs and time, particularly in a time of financial constraints for many ASEAN countries.”⁵³

The ASEAN states have a total defense budget similar to that of South Korea (Figure 6) and they spend significantly less on personnel, per service member than China.⁵⁴ However, an examination of Asian defense budgets is indicative of how any relative military power ASEAN can muster will soon be eclipsed by China's rapid military growth. Compared to China, South Korea, and Japan, ASEAN is doing virtually no domestic military research and development and relies largely on international partners for foreign military sales (Figure 7). Another difference is that in the last decade, China's percent increase in military expenditures was more than quadruple that of ASEAN's, even with significant increases by Indonesia and Vietnam.⁵⁵ As

China and other regional powers continue to grow their militaries, the relative strength of a united ASEAN will be depleted barring significant increases in budgets and procurement.

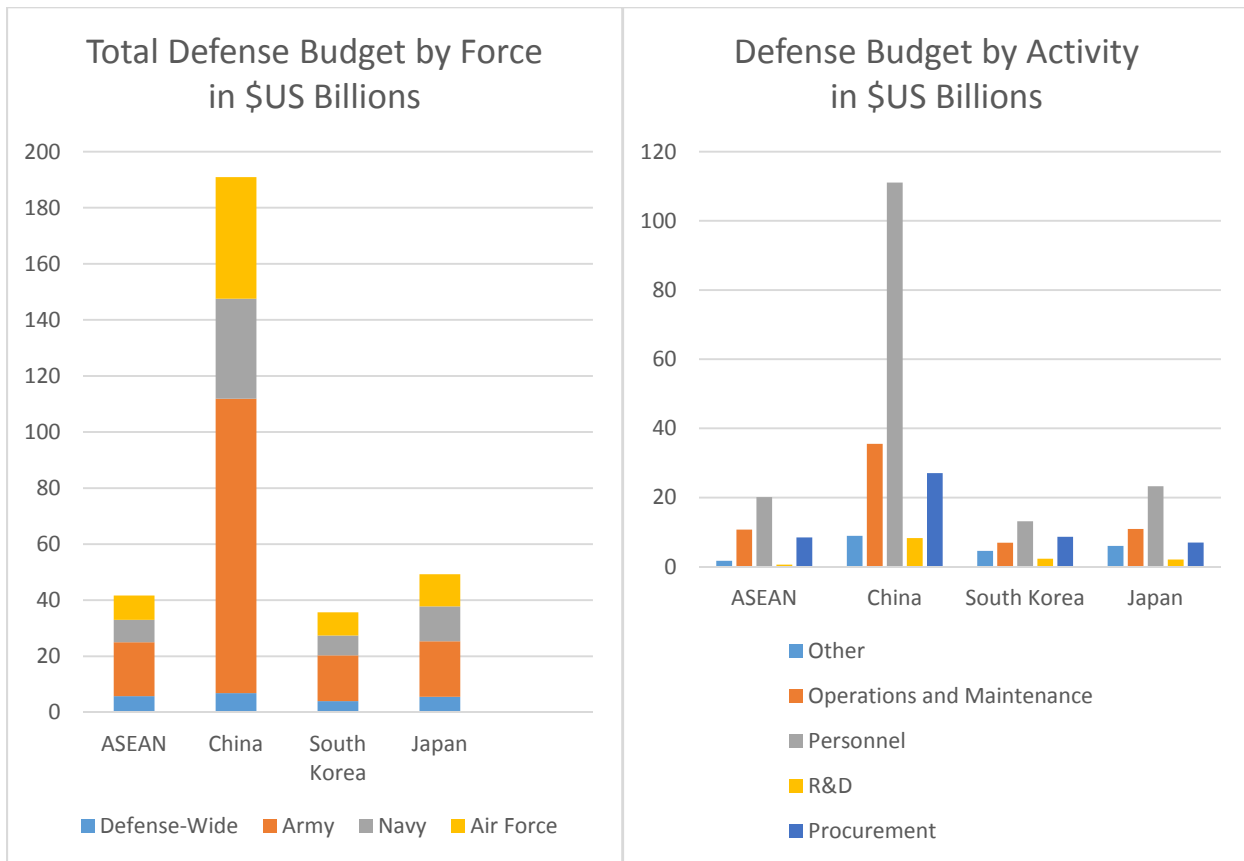


Figure 6 (Source: Jane's Defense)

Figure 7 (Source: Jane's Defense)

Despite its potential to form a large military alliance capable of significant deterrence, ASEAN does not demonstrate the political desire to do so as long as it remains confident in its security arrangements with the US. A NATO-like alliance does not seem feasible in the near-term. Nicholas Rees argues, “There is evidence of intergovernmental security cooperation over nontraditional security issues, albeit on a piecemeal basis, reflecting the limits of ASEAN as an organisation and the tendency of member states to want to act either alone or in tandem with preferred partners.”⁵⁶ ASEAN regional security cooperation is therefore difficult to achieve and, therefore, ASEAN still requires external partnerships.⁵⁷ S. Rajaratnam, one of the ASEAN founders, feared at its inception that ASEAN would be misunderstood to be an alliance and

warned, “we are not against anything, not against anybody.”⁵⁸ ASEAN prefers to continue to pursue non-interference agreements and non-aggression pacts. Appearing as if it were creating a threatening military alliance would greatly jeopardize ASEAN's economic goals. The achievement of those economic goals are what will ultimately provide ASEAN the power to enhance its security capabilities through economic regional interdependence in the near-term but also through the potential for military procurement in the future. Therefore, alignment should remain the preferred security architecture until ASEAN achieves the longer-term objectives of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

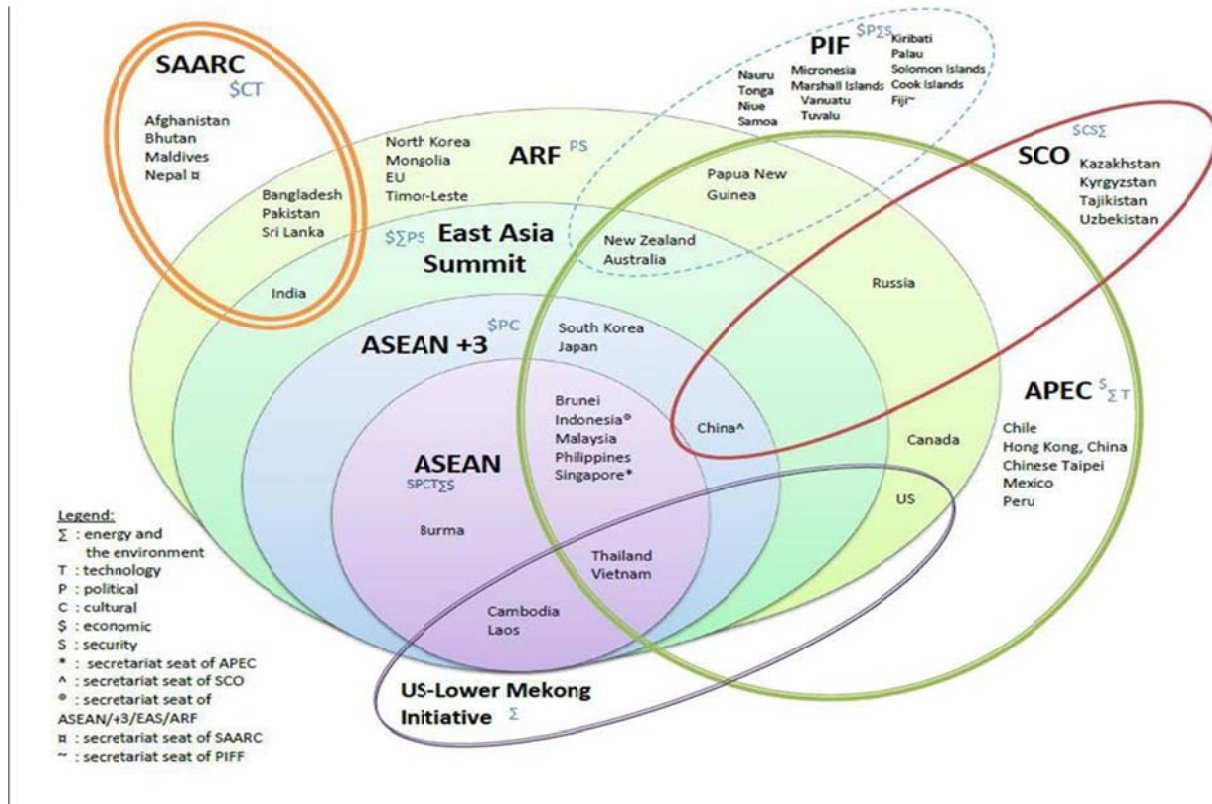
A future military alliance is feasible and regional geo-political circumstances certainly make it an appealing prospect in the long-term. Brad Nelson notes, “Internal reform - either within ASEAN countries or the institution itself - is probably an unlikely source of foreign policy change. Instead, security exigencies within Asia are what will likely drive ASEAN countries closer together.”⁵⁹ Although ASEAN struggled with expansion in 1997, it now is a geographically contiguous institution where member states are more open to greater levels of accountability for the good of the collective. Transnational threats have set these conditions and many have argued that in spite of all its struggles, security cooperation was always the most hopeful area with the greatest opportunity for success with all that ASEAN wanted to achieve.⁶⁰

Diplomatic Arrangements

As a means of becoming more autonomous and self-sufficient, ASEAN should seek to become the hub for external bilateral and multilateral agreements in lieu of numerous agreements between individual members and external powers. ASEAN employs both bilateral and multilateral security and military agreements and treaties to protect its regional interests. This results in a regional system of collective security which can be characterized by both hub and

ASEAN's Path to Regional Autonomy

spoke diplomatic alignments and omni-enmeshment regional interdependency. ASEAN Plus 1, ASEAN Plus 3 (APT), and the ARF are all examples of ASEAN's enmeshment strategy in which the forum and resultant agreements are with ASEAN as an entity instead of bilateral



agreements. ASEAN does include China in the ASEAN Regional Forum similar to how the EU utilizes the OSCE to engage Russia in security matters pertaining to Europe.

These forums are vital to engaging other regional and world powers in dialogue.

Unfortunately, many states focus more attention on achieving objectives through bi-lateral side deals at these forums instead of ASEAN business as a whole. The US prefers that the ARF be the venue for regional security dialogue while China wants to add security discussions to APT where the US is not a member.⁶¹ Other venues to promote regional security are the Council for

Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and ASEAN Institutes for Security and International Studies.⁶² ASEAN has also signed Treaties with external states such as the Declaration for the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.⁶³ China, a signatory to this declaration, has clearly violated its principles by its expansionist actions in the South China Sea, knowing that ASEAN and its allies currently pose no credible threat of war. ASEAN's most important and celebrated treaty arrangement is the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). ASEAN places high expectations on this treaty to influence behavior and keep ASEAN members free from state on state conflict. The TAC has been ratified by China, India, Russia, South Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka, France, Bangladesh, and the United States.⁶⁴

Become More Rules Based

ASEAN must become a more rules-based institution capable of enforcing regulations among members if it wants to strengthen its regional power. There are both opportunities and challenges to such a transition. The EU provides ASEAN with a contemporary example of a rules-based institution. "ASEAN has far to go to reach this level of regional integration. Indeed, within ASEAN, concerns about sovereignty, lingering bad feelings about colonialism, varied political systems and manifold conceptions of identity and self-interest, along with deficiencies in the rules and structure of the ASEAN institution itself, create roadblocks to regional unity."⁶⁵ ASEAN's legal structure is minimal as compared with the EU, however, the APSC intends to create a rules-based community.⁶⁶ When ASEAN expanded to include Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia, many of the original members perceived their harsh domestic policies to be undermining the international stature of ASEAN. This has led to some erosion of the principle of non-interference and thus, opened ASEAN to becoming a more rules-based

organization.⁶⁷ Additionally, the new charter has committed its members to democracy for the first time. This commitment to democracy and human rights propels ASEAN closer to an institution like the EU or OSCE. Sheldon Simon adds, “Regional security, if truly indivisible, entails neighboring states involvement in each other’s domestic affairs.”⁶⁸ ASEAN still cannot discipline members, allowing for continued human rights violations in Myanmar, but has come far from purely non-interference. Major political issues, however, still require consensus for which Myanmar or another state could veto.⁶⁹

Transitioning to a more rules-based organization will allow ASEAN to arbitrate numerous internal disputes which ultimately weaken the overall cohesive strength of ASEAN. “While Vietnam has territorial disputes with ASEAN members, for example over the Spratly Islands with the Philippines and Malaysia, they have not interfered with the overall cordial relations because ASEAN has never been a mechanism to resolve conflicting territorial claims among its members. Rather, ASEAN restrains such conflicts.”⁷⁰ Although ASEAN is not capable of resolving these conflicts, its ability to restrain them is as important. Additionally, it fosters the relationships which may lead to cordial resolution in the future.

Create an Economically Competitive, Single-Market and Production Base

The ASEAN Community 2015 goals clearly show that the focus is on the development of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to become a competitive, single market and production base which will enhance security through interdependence as it integrates with the global economy.⁷¹ The goals for the AEC are critical to supporting ASEAN as a secure and sovereign association of states. The blueprint calls for the free flow of goods, services, investment, capital, and skilled labor. The main focus of economic integration will be small and medium enterprises. Infrastructure development will be directed toward more efficient

transportation of goods, a single aviation market, information and communications technology, energy security, and tourism.

The AEC will also support the security apparatus and architecture by narrowing the development gap which contributes to regional instability and unrest. It will also provide a more cohesive approach to external economic relations, providing legitimacy to ASEAN and moving towards ASEAN becoming a hub in Asia instead of many of the spokes from another hub.

ASEAN has already achieved 85% of the goals established in the AEC Blueprint.⁷²

Additionally, ASEAN has received excellent rankings regarding the ease of doing business (Figure 10).⁷³ The creation of multilateral trade agreements between ASEAN and its neighbors has already made ASEAN less dependent on the World Trade Organization.⁷⁴ The total GDP for ASEAN in 2013 was \$3.62 Trillion as compared with China's \$12.38 Trillion which per capita equates to \$5,800 in ASEAN and \$9,100 in China.⁷⁵ A closer look at the ASEAN GDP shows that Indonesia accounts for more than 36% of this output followed by Thailand and Malaysia with countries like Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei barely contributing.⁷⁶ Comparatively, Japan, India, Australia, South Korea, and Taiwan posted 2013 GDPs of \$5 Trillion, \$1.8 Trillion, \$1.5 Trillion, \$1.2 Trillion, and \$485 Billion respectively.⁷⁷ ASEAN's GDP growth is 5.7% compared to China's 7.8%.⁷⁸ ASEAN is China's third largest trading partner behind the US and EU. China invested \$5.9 Billion into ASEAN in 2011 alone and both parties have entered into a five year agreement to expand free trade.⁷⁹ From 2001 to 2013, ASEAN was the second fastest growing economy in Asia, growing by 313% with China growing at 575%.⁸⁰ Comparatively, the EU grew by only 100% during that same period.⁸¹ ASEAN has surpassed three out of the four BRIC countries, Brazil, Russia, and India.⁸²

ASEAN's Path to Regional Autonomy

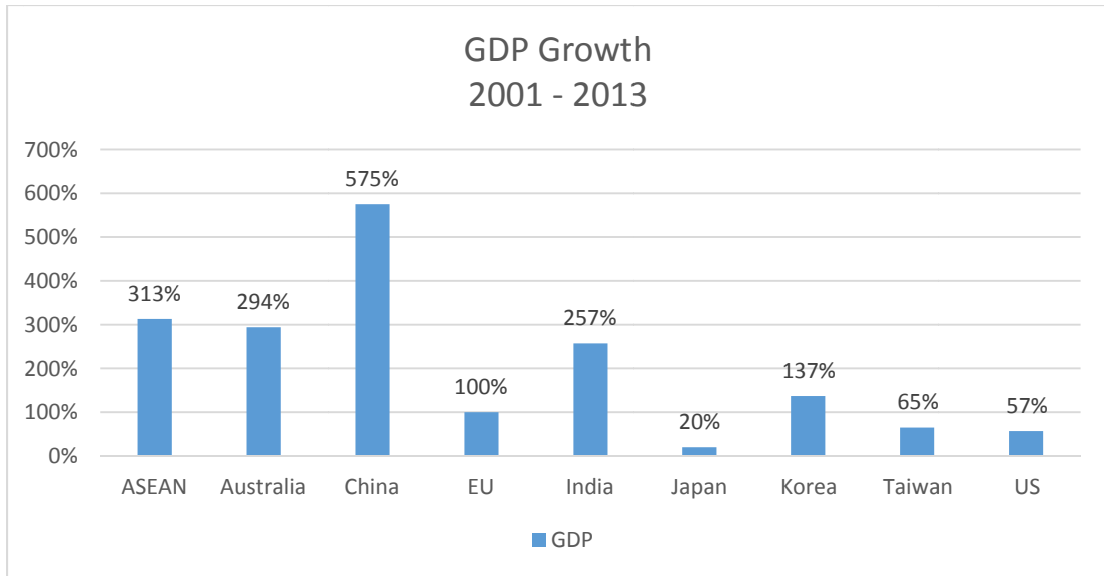


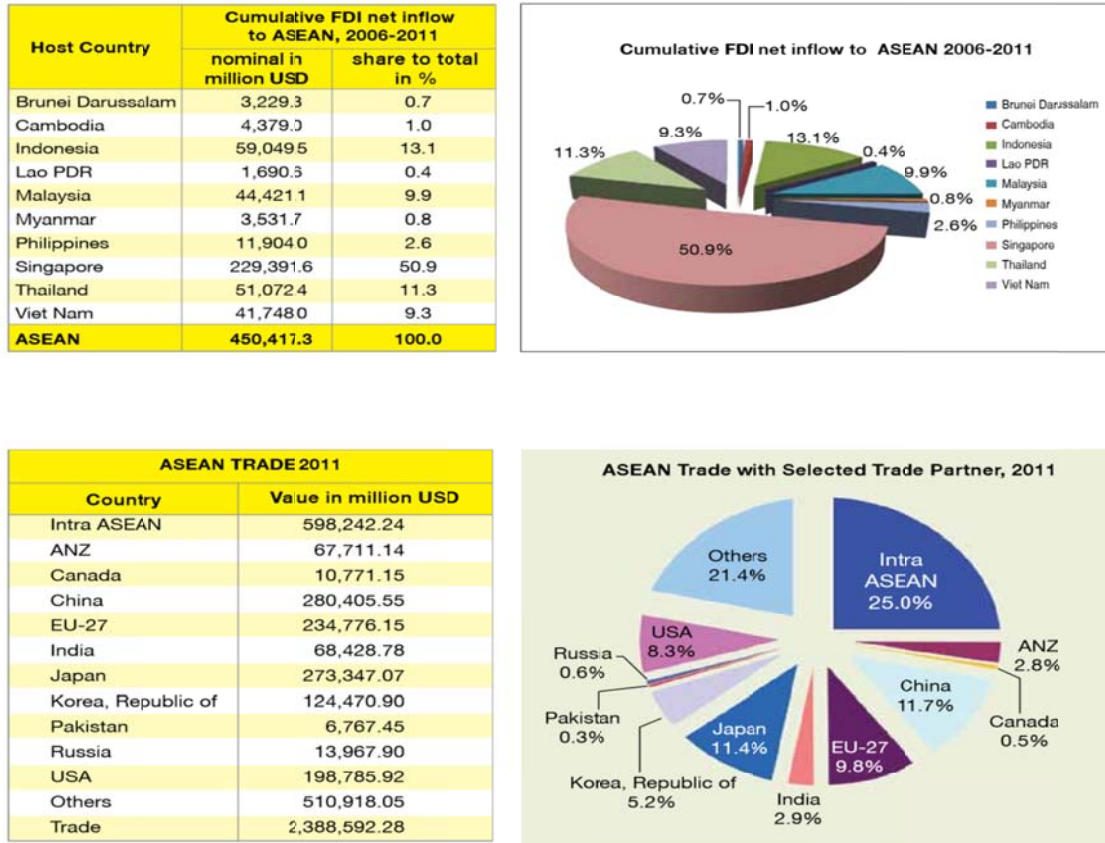
Figure 9 (Source: East-West Center)

Country	Ease of Doing Business Rank (out of 133)	Starting a Business	Protecting Investors	Trading Across Borders
Singapore	1	3	2	1
Malaysia	6	16	4	5
Thailand	18	91	12	24
Brunei Darussalam	59	137	115	39
China	96	158	98	74
Vietnam	99	109	157	65
Philippines	108	170	128	42
Indonesia	120	175	52	54
Cambodia	137	184	80	114
Lao PDR	159	85	187	161
Myanmar	182	189	182	113

Source: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>

Figure 10 (Source: East-West Center)

ASEAN's Path to Regional Autonomy



Source:
 ASEANStats Database as of September 2012 for FDI.
 ASEANStats Database as of November 2012 for Trade.

Figure 11 (Source: AEC Factsheet)

ASEAN has made significant progress toward achieving an AEC but there is still much to be done. It is estimated that more than 85% has been achieved on the liberalization and facilitation of the free flow of goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and capital.⁸³ The Secretariat affirmed that the AEC was still the best strategy for preserving ASEAN's competitive strength and that more work was needed to achieve integration targets. The Secretariat charged countries to "redouble their efforts" to attain the priorities set by Leaders in the Phnom Penh Agenda in April 2012.⁸⁴ The call to action has been largely met. The ASEAN economy will more than double by 2020, but states like the Philippines need to make significant

ASEAN's Path to Regional Autonomy

reforms as recommended by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development or they will fall behind the rest of ASEAN.⁸⁵

Country	Growth rate of gross domestic product at constant prices		Inflation rate (year-on-year growth of CPI at end of period)		Exchange rate at average of period		Unemployment rate ^{1/}	International merchandise trade ^{2/}						Year-on-year change in foreign direct investments net inflow ^{3/4/}		
	percent	percent	national currency per US\$	Currency	percent	percent		percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	US\$ million	percent
Brunel Darussalam	-2.3	0.2	1.27	Dollar (B\$)	1.7	61.9	21.0	82.9	(7.5)	(0.4)	(5.8)	(157.3)	(21.7)			
Cambodia	7.0	4.6	4.041	Riel	0.3	63.7	113.1	176.8	-16.8	106.8	61.8	451.6	35.4			
Indonesia	5.1	8.4	10.485	Rupiah (Rp)	6.2	17.9	18.1	36.0	(3.4)	(4.5)	(4.0)	3,832.5	20.8			
Lao PDR	7.6	6.9	8.030	Kip	1.9	22.4	23.3	45.8	1.8	(16.5)	(8.4)	486.6	114.0			
Malaysia	6.0	3.2	3.28	Ringgit (RM)	3.1	71.8	64.0	135.8	2.6	1.5	2.0	(1,583.3)	(12.9)			
Myanmar	8.7	-	995	Kyat	4.0	16.8	24.7	41.4	(3.9)	35.1	16.3	(1,674.7)	(63.9)			
Philippines	6.1	4.1	44	Peso (PPP)	6.4	21.7	23.8	45.5	14.5	4.0	8.8	2,340.7	60.6			
Singapore	2.9	1.5	1.27	Dollar (S\$)	2.9	133.1	119.0	252.1	(0.1)	(1.8)	(0.9)	15,960.0	28.4			
Thailand	0.7	1.7	33	Baht	0.7	61.0	61.1	122.1	(0.9)	(8.6)	(4.8)	(1,461.8)	(11.2)			
Viet Nam	6.0	6.0	21,131	Dong	3.6	79.5	78.2	157.8	11.6	10.3	11.0	300.1	3.4			
ASEAN	4.7	n.a.	n.a.	n.i.	n.a.	50.2	48.0	98.3	1.7	-0.3	0.7	16,494.4	15.7			

Sources: ASEAN Macro-economic Database, ASEAN Merchandise Trade Statistics Database, ASEAN Foreign Direct Investment Statistics Database (compiled/computed from data submission, publications and/or websites of ASEAN Member States' national statistics offices, central banks and relevant government agencies, and from international sources)

Symbols used: - not available as of publication time; n.a. not applicable/not available/not compiled; Data in *italics* are the latest updated/revised figures from previous posting.

Notes: 1/ Brunei Darussalam is 2012 figure and Lao PDR is 2010 figure; 2/ Trade Data 2014 are as of 17 June 2015; 3/ Unless otherwise indicated, figures include equity, reinvested earnings and inter-company loans; 4/ FDI 2014 figures are preliminary as of 26 May 2015.

Figure 12 (Source: www.asean.org)

Indicators	Unit	2011	2012	2013	2014	Remarks
Total land area	km ²	4,435,674	4,435,617	4,435,618	4,435,618	
Total population	thousand	598,926	606,856	614,741	622,250	
Gross domestic product at current prices	US\$ million	2,210,915	2,343,196	2,409,216	2,573,589	
GDP growth	percent	4.9	6.0	5.3	4.7	ASEAN figure is estimated using country growth rates and country share of world GDP valued in PPPs from the IMF WEO Database July 2015.
Gross domestic product per capita at current prices	US\$	3,691	3,861	3,919	4,136	
International merchandise trade	US\$ million	1,388,444	2,476,427	2,511,517	2,528,917	
Export	US\$ million	1,242,199	1,254,581	1,271,128	1,292,634	2014 figures are as of 17 June 2015
Import	US\$ million	1,146,245	1,221,847	1,240,388	1,236,284	
Foreign direct investments inflow	US\$ million	95,838	115,453	117,687	136,181	2014 figure are preliminary as of 26 May 2015
Visitor arrivals	thousand	81,229.0	89,225	101,055	105,083	2014 figure are preliminary as of 14 August 2015

Sources: ASEANstats, ASEAN Secretariat

Symbols used: - not available as of publication time; n.a. not applicable/not available/not compiled; Data in *italics* are the latest updated/revised figures from previous posting; p/ preliminary

Figure 13 (Source: www.asean.org)

Funding ASEAN

The 2007 Charter made no change to the ASEAN central budget despite the fact that the Eminent Persons Group called for EU-style cash transfers to the Secretariat based on the economic strength of each member. The current budget is constrained by the weak financial capability of Laos.⁸⁶ The single-market and production base created by the AEC has the potential to increase revenue and reserves for ASEAN. Although the AEC calls for tariff reduction percentages, the subsequent increase in trade quantity opens the opportunity for more

revenue to fund initiatives and emergencies. ASEAN states did all make an initial contribution of US\$1 Million to the ASEAN Development Fund (ADF), signed in 2005, and members are encouraged to contribute more.⁸⁷ Members were required to make an additional US\$100,000 contribution by 2007.⁸⁸ The ADF, although separate from the ASEAN operating budget, provides funding for numerous development projects and initiatives which are advancing ASEAN milestones.

Create a Cohesive SE Asian Identity

Creating a cohesive Southeast Asian identity is critical to strengthening ASEAN. ASEAN has completed 90% (57 of 61 action lines) to implement an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).⁸⁹ The goal for the ASCC is to create a community that is people centered, socially responsible, demonstrates enduring solidarity and unity, forges a common identity, fosters a caring and sharing society that is inclusive and harmonious where well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are achieved.⁹⁰ The community strives to achieve regional resilience, environmentally friendly sustainable development, good neighborliness, and shared responsibility via the principles of cooperation, collective responsibility, human and social development, respect for freedoms, gender equality, human rights, and social justice.⁹¹ The blueprint focuses on six characteristics of human development, social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, environmental sustainability, building an ASEAN identity, and narrowing the development gap. All of these will serve as mutually supporting efforts to ASEAN's security goals, but building an ASEAN identity and narrowing the development gap will have a significant impact on ASEAN attaining stability and security while strengthening its regional power. The initiatives seek to reduce poverty, protect the rights of migrant workers, and creates an Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), an

essential element of continued comprehensive security cooperation. Successful implementation of the ASCC will raise education and literacy while fostering an ASEAN, Southeast Asian identity that will enhance the cohesion of the member state's population. ASEAN is even utilizing video games and ASEAN quizzes to develop this shared identity.⁹² Although the ASCC faces financial, human resource, and technical expertise challenges, attaining this cohesion among the populations of Southeast Asia will strengthen ASEAN and discourage bilateralism of individual member states in the long-term.

ASEAN is a far more fragmented region than the more homogenous European states.⁹³ Even government structures vary greatly. Vietnam and Laos are socialist, Myanmar is ruled by a military junta, and Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand are democracies.⁹⁴ Michael E. Jones makes three recommendations at both the regional and local levels in order for ASEAN to achieve its vision for a shared cultural community. Jones recommends a regional and local education representation structure in which boards composed of education and business and industry sector experts would inform and drive educating Southeast Asian youth for the future. He proposes civil and multi-cultural education to tackle the issues of citizenship, including a global citizen curriculum on conflict resolution, universal and regional values, and civic responsibility. Education would also include travel to other ASEAN states. Lastly, he asserts that ASEAN must in the long-term establish a regional language. Currently, teaching English (the official working language of ASEAN) as a second language could bridge the gap of workers, skilled laborers, and technicians to be able to migrate across ASEAN.⁹⁵

Counterarguments

Many argue that there are simply too many impediments to ASEAN achieving greater regional autonomy. They list interoperability challenges, lack of trust, fear of antagonizing regional powers, lack of will to cede more sovereignty to the collective, and a fledgling Southeast Asian cultural identity as some of the critical obstacles. Militarily, the member states lack a common language, doctrine, and communications equipment, but more importantly, they lack similar risk tolerance and degree of stake-holding. Critics point out that there is still a great lack of trust among member states to the degree that specific language in the ASEAN Bali Concord II Declaration was needed to ensure members pledged to end subversive threats against each other to include providing safe-haven to dissidents and insurgents.⁹⁶ They argue there is not strong enough leadership to truly unite ASEAN even against existential threats. Brad Nelson argues, "ASEAN is a bloc of middle powers that lacks a clear leader. Of all ASEAN members, Indonesia - with its large population, rising economic base, strong military and functioning democracy - is best suited to be the leader of the bloc, but is unwilling to strongly and consistently assert itself. And even if Indonesia did make a bid for the leadership mantle, there is no guarantee it would go over well. Other ASEAN members could reject such moves and push back against them."⁹⁷

It is true that a weak association, lacking cohesion and conviction, could be dismantled by a regional actor such as China and that challenges to the strengthening of ASEAN exist but they can be overcome. Specifically, the ASCC Blueprint has established the correct milestones to foster a cohesive identity. These objectives simply require time, education, and messaging.⁹⁸ The APSC explicitly addresses the concerns of interoperability and the AEC will give ASEAN greater relevance, economic power, and interdependence with global powers. When we dissect the challenges facing an autonomous ASEAN, it must be in the context of the future status of the

Asia-Pacific. The ASEAN of 2025 will certainly be a stronger, more cohesive, and capable organization. If ASEAN remains dedicated to the objectives set forth in the APSC, AEC, and ASCC Blueprints it will not be simply relegated to what Nelson refers to the EU as, “a nice consultative body, a good tool to create connections with other states and international organizations, a powerful economic community...”⁹⁹ ASEAN possesses the raw potential to exceed those basic functions.

Conclusion

No one can doubt the importance ASEAN and the Asia Pacific will play in world affairs for the remainder of the 21st Century. Nelson goes even further, predicting that ASEAN will surpass the EU in power and importance, “The respect for and standing of ASEAN is quickly catching up to that of the EU. The flow of power from west to east, the rise of China, maritime disputes in the South and East China Seas and Southeast Asia's massive economic growth have all enhanced ASEAN's standing and importance in foreign capitals. Southeast Asia is the place to be nowadays. Russia, India, Japan, China and the US have all invested considerable time, effort, resources and energy in cultivating strong ties to ASEAN members...The future is Asia, and Southeast Asia, represented by ASEAN, is an essential reason for all the optimism.”¹⁰⁰

ASEAN achieving its full potential will serve a stabilizing function in the Asia Pacific and act as a more capable partner to US interests in the region.

ASEAN can certainly learn from the development of the EU into a rules-based, single market economy, with a more cohesive social identity and ASEAN should seek to incorporate the lessons from this organizational evolution. However, ASEAN, and any international organizations and partners seeking to support ASEAN's growth, must heed the historical, geographic, cultural, and political differences which make ASEAN distinct from the EU.

ASEAN should not strive to be more EU-like. Instead, ASEAN should endeavor to become an enhanced, more capable ASEAN which maximizes its unique cultural and geopolitical strengths and opportunities.

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