

Challenges to the Future of ASEAN

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2015 established the ASEAN Community, Asia's first regional community, and celebrated 50 years of overcoming the challenges of an extremely diverse region. While the ASEAN's achievements are worth the praise it has garnered in the past, the future of the region seems to be anything but smooth sailing. This panel looks at some of the most pressing challenges that the ASEAN may face in the future, as echoed by many scholars of the region. The papers in this panel will examine the ASEAN principles of regional order vis-à-vis its relevance to the present context, the challenges of climate change and the commitments of the region to address this, and the Chinese factor in the development of the member states' foreign policies.

The ASEAN Way: Ontological (In)Security in the Troubled Waters

Denson Acomular (National University, Manila)

The ASEAN Way has been developed in the 1990s as a double principle of non-interference and consensus and has been the unifying norm among the member states of the ASEAN. Today the principle seems to be in question as to how the concerned parties are able to channel ASEAN influence over assertive China on the South China Sea. As such, this paper aims to analyze the ASEAN Way as a source of ontological (in)security of the region. Ontological Security is the ability of the "self" to maintain its cohesiveness over the disruptive external environment. Failure to attain such would incur insecurity and would leave the "self" reduced of its agency. To solve this, the "self" derives ontological security from self-assuring and other-assuring actions which are the narratives and routines respectively. Therefore, the research will look into the current territorial and maritime policies of the organization and the corresponding dominant narratives of each member states. The test of ASEAN relevance and influence in the region hangs on its capacity to attain its self-security. The question now begs whether the ASEAN Way works for or against this cause.

Accelerating climate action in the ASEAN: Challenges and mitigation opportunities for a high-risk region

John Lee Candelaria (Hiroshima University)

The Global Climate Risk Index lists Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam among the world's ten countries most affected by climate change, while the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports the risk of coastal flooding to be worst in Southeast Asia, with Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines suffering the brunt of this impending disaster. The ASEAN seem to be responding in earnest attention: ASEAN countries have asserted a certain level of commitment to this global concern, with nine out of ten members of the ASEAN being parties to the Paris Agreement, while all members have pledged their own Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to address climate change. Singapore, as the 2018 ASEAN Chair, has led the Climate Action Package Initiative to ramp up actions to address climate change. But more needs to be done in the regional level to accelerate climate action in this high-risk region. Using the lens of climate justice, this paper aims to examine the NDCs of ASEAN member states and the issues that hound the achievement of these commitments, in hope that a regional agenda be established to chart the actions and strategies of the region. After all, climate change does not distinguish geographic and political boundaries, and thus, merits a transnational approach.

Belt and Road Initiative and the Changing Patterns of Chinese Migration in Southeast Asia

Joselito Ebro Jr. (International School Myanmar)

In 2013, the People's Republic of China launched their ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which aims to rebuild China's position as a major power in the global economy and politics. Massive infrastructure projects etched by the trade agreements and deals served to build connections between China and the rest of the world. Along with these transactions, however, comes the flow of Chinese migrants creating tensions among local workers in host countries.

Not surprisingly, the region of Southeast Asia was not spared from this issue. Since the late 1700s, given its proximity, the area serves as a sensible location for Chinese migrants searching for better opportunities. The advent of the BRI facilitates a new form of Chinese migration capitalizing on the skilled, educated, and capital-rich investors driven by the ambition of fulfilling the BRI initiatives. Incidentally, this trend impacts the ASEAN's efforts in streamlining skilled labor mobility between member states. As the new waves of Chinese migrants compete with local workers in the region, a new trend of political and economic resentments looms in the background.

Using the context of the BRI and its impact to its partner countries, this paper traces the changing trends and patterns of Chinese migration in Southeast Asia. This paper addresses the question: How does the BRI redefine Chinese migration to South East Asia? By highlighting critical areas such as the number of migrants, the industries they belong to, and the reception of the local population to Chinese workers, the paper attempts to outline the extent and qualities of this new form of Chinese diaspora in the region.

Towards greater political participation from below: Rethinking the role of Filipino smallholder farmers in the age of ASEAN economic integration

John Raymond B. Jison (University of the Philippines Los Baños)

During the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit held in Cebu City, Philippines, the ASEAN Member-States envisioned an integrated ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015 that aims to create a globally competitive single market and production, which shall materialize through the integration of their economies. However, the ASEAN economic integration is foreseen by some to be detrimental to smallholder farmers rather than beneficial. For one, the agricultural system in the Philippines remains to be underdeveloped, rendering local smallholder farmers ill-equipped to compete in the free market. For another, the influx of cheaper agricultural imports in the local economy let alone the agricultural sector's loss of competitiveness leaves the fate of local farmers hanging in the balance.

This paper aims to shed light on two themes. Firstly, an analysis of the current state of Philippine agriculture and plight of the smallholder farmers in the Philippines is imperative in understanding the roots and nature of problems faced by the sector, as well as prospects for development or underdevelopment. Finally, the concept of participatory governance is discussed vis-a-vis the political economy of knowledge and access to information to reimagine the role of the smallholder farmers in the implementation of food and agriculture targets that are identified in the AEC Blueprint. This paper employs valuable concepts taken from David Easton's systems theory and Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony.

Single session