

Book Reviews

Thompson, E., Thianthai, C., & Thuzar, M. (2016). *Do Young People Know ASEAN?* Singapore: ISEAS –Yusof Ishak Institute.

As ASEAN countries are tying up towards closer relationships along the road map of the integration plan, many questions arise about the awareness and comprehension of what is about to happen among its citizens. And as part of the efforts to answer to these questions, a survey of 4,623 undergraduate students from 22 universities in the 10 ASEAN member states was initiated. The survey was completed in 2014 and was a follow-up to one completed in 2007. The project was supported by the ASEAN Foundation and the ASEAN Studies Centre of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. This book reports at length the results and analyses of the survey.

For ASEAN Study scholars and those who have kept a close look to the development of the region, this book is a spotlight shining on the mind of its young generation—the group of people who in every way will be affected by what happens to this region. The questions of the survey were subsumed into five topics: (1) attitudes towards ASEAN; (2) knowledge about the region and the Association; (3) orientation towards the region; (4) sources of information; and (5) aspirations for integration and action. The results intriguingly reflect the young ASEANers thoughts about the region where they reside: how much do they know about what is coming? how do they see it coming? how do they like it? what do they think about their neighbors? and many more. The multi-dimensional nature of the respondents' demographic background— such as nationality, religion, maritime-mainland, developmental stage, etc., render many angles for analysis and portray many pictures, both present and future, of young people in each country and the whole region.

For young citizens of ASEAN, the region is seen to associate with regionalism, cooperation among the members, and development. Surprisingly, economic cooperation (which was the main theme of promotional activities) was not very much implicated by the respondents. Laos remains the least known country, with not much to talk about; Singapore is a dream work destination; Thailand a dream travel destination and known for transgender culture; Myanmar represents politics and Aung San Suu Kyi; Cambodia: poverty and Angkor Wat; Brunei: oil and the sultanate; Indonesia: islands, being a large country and Bali; Malaysia: 'Truly Asia'; the Philippines: natural disasters and islands; and Vietnam: war, politics, and economic growth.

Along the eight chapters, this book provokes many thoughts as well as poses many questions. If generational differences showed a significant effect on the Brexit results, this book matters in every aspect of ASEAN's future.

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Das, S.B. (2016). *The ASEAN Economic Community and Beyond: Myths and Realities*. Singapore: ISEAS –Yusof Ishak Institute.

This book covers major economic and strategic issues related to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and other important regional initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region. It is one of the few publications which discuss the future of AEC in connection with other regional trade initiatives including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) from the political economy point of view. The first part focuses on the AEC itself with full coverage of trade, investment, skilled migration and other regional economic programs. The author discusses the progress of ASEAN and its regional cooperation efforts not only in terms of economic rationales, but also from political and strategic perspectives. Moreover, regional trade agreements between ASEAN and other trading partners including Australia, New Zealand, China, India, South Korea, and Japan are also covered. The author also makes direct comments on the low usage of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and makes policy recommendations to improve AEC's efficiency and its regional dynamism. But as this book is a collection of articles written at different times, there is a great deal of repetition and duplication.

Several sections, for example, repeat the basic components of the AEC (such as single market and production base) and make reference to different trade figures at different times. Interestingly, Chapter 6, "Five Facts about the ASEAN Economic Community", makes strong arguments that the AEC was not developed on the basis of the EU, as ASEAN's national states have maintained their national sovereignty, and regional programs are designed with a much more flexible manner. This chapter should be read by free-trade skeptics after the EU's political and economic turmoil following the Brexit referendum.

The second and third sections explore the issue of ASEAN centrality with other regional initiatives such as RCEP, TPP, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). Importantly, major international political economy perspectives such as fragmentation theory and the industrial agglomeration approach are discussed as an explanation of regional economic integration in ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific region. It helps explain the growth of these regional trade agreements. But this theoretical section (Chapter 18) should be included in the first section on the AEC, as it helps explain the growth of regional production networks, the logic behind AFTA and the AEC as well.

The author has done a good job in linking the AEC with other regional trade initiatives in the midst of strategic rivalries between the USA and China. Recent Chinese initiatives including the One-Belt, One-Road program and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are well discussed in connection with ASEAN's future economic linkages with China. However, ASEAN infrastructure development issues discussed in Chapter 18 and 19 did not include various high-speed train initiatives which involve China. They could be viewed as part of the One-Belt, One-Road program. The issue of Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), an initiative pushed forward by China mentioned by the author, is an important issue which should be followed in the future. This book, however, does not discuss much about the role of Japan in ASEAN's regional economic architecture. Despite the significant rise of China, Japan has for a long time served as an important regional actor in shaping ASEAN's trade and investment cooperation programs. In any case, people who are interested in ASEAN studies, economists, political scientists, diplomats and trade experts should not miss this book.

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