

## APPENDIX I

# *ASEAN's Relevance: Has It Become Questionable?*

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Has ASEAN's relevance become questionable? Perhaps this question can be answered promptly by saying that ASEAN is still very relevant in the field of politics and conventional security, to moderate political and security disagreements among members. It seems, however, to be less relevant in the field of economics.

### **ASEAN's Major Objectives**

ASEAN's major goals as set out in the ASEAN Declaration in Bangkok on 8 August 1967 were, first, to reconcile intra-regional strife which characterized Southeast Asia at the time (in the form of border and territorial disputes, ethnic conflicts and animosities, religious prejudices, and the fear by smaller states of the bigger states). The second was to manage those conflicts and tensions and create a Southeast Asian regional order on the basis of the social and economic systems of each member country and the territorial status quo, and thus to "promote regional peace and stability". Both goals were to be achieved by way of a third goal, which was to speed up "the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region". ASEAN's founding fathers were

confident that economic and societal development, on the one hand, and peace and stability on the other, were tightly linked. They were further determined, and the fourth goal was “to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation” to “preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples”.

ASEAN was thus the result of its members' recognition of their inability to solve their disputes and conflicts bilaterally. On the other hand, it was also meant to serve as a political-cum-security framework.

These four major goals of regional endeavours in Southeast Asia were subsequently cast into four instruments for political and security building: the ASEAN Declaration; the Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), which was primarily meant to secure the recognition and respect for Southeast Asia as such a zone; the Bali Concord; and ZOPFAN's legal instruments, the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (TAC) in Southeast Asia and the Treaty on Southeast as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, which was meant to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and co-operation among the Southeast Asian nations. These instruments formalized ASEAN's role as an important contributor for peace and stability.

Since the Association's establishment, the ASEAN member countries have proved that they are capable of co-existing in peace and harmony. Although regional disputes and differences have not been resolved, the ASEAN countries have learned to diffuse or abate their conflicts and not to exploit it for their own interests at the cost of the Association. Hence, ASEAN's existence is a security guarantee for peaceful and harmonious bilateral relations, and as a corollary for long-term economic development.

It has become increasingly difficult to visualize a conflict between two or more ASEAN member states. Sub-regional relations have developed an ASEAN spirit, which strongly supports ASEAN regionalism. Despite the legal character of the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia, ASEAN's preference is for informal approaches to solving conflicts, placing emphasis on relationships rather than on formal structures, and emphasizing consensus building. There is a general distrust for a structured and legalistic manner of approach to conflicts without sufficient consideration of the situation and the emotional state of the conflicting parties.

But will this hold in the twenty-first century, which will be complicated by the deluge of globalization and fierce competition and, as a corollary, the multilateralization of security approaches and multidimensionalization of threats to security?

### **Multilateral Security Approaches**

Multilateral organizations in Asia were born during a period of great geopolitical change. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, in combination with the U.S. departure from its bases in the Philippines, provoked considerable uneasiness among political and security specialists in Asia on the future of regional security in the post-Cold War environment. The result was a proliferation in the early 1990s of official and unofficial multilateral security dialogues intended to address the imperatives of a new multipolar world. Academics and scholars were the driving force behind many of the first dialogues, including the Council on Security Co-operation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), established in Kuala Lumpur in June 1993, and the Northeast Asian Co-operation Dialogue (NEACD), established in California later that year.

The most important of the organizations to emerge from this ferment was the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). In 1993, the Clinton Administration reversed its previous policy of hostility to multilateralism and joined ASEAN as a founding member of the ARF, the first region-wide consultative body in Asia focusing on security issues.

The great variety of actors and the number of strains and conflicts in the region created the ASEAN Regional Forum to provide the region with an institution to absorb multilateral dialogues on security and to develop further the concepts of confidence-building, and preventive diplomacy, to find ways to resolve regional tensions and conflict, and to develop instruments for conflict resolution in the region based on the model of the TAC. The need to maintain stable relations among the major powers, which is a crucial and integral element underpinning regional stability, should be continuously emphasized and operationalized.

The ASEAN Regional Forum in its first session in Bangkok (25 July 1994) agreed to accept the objectives and principles of the TAC as “a code of conduct governing relations” between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, and political and security co-operation”

(Par. 6). At the sixth ARF in Singapore (25 July 1999), members recognized the TAC as “a key regional instrument for strengthening security in the region”. This will involuntarily promote the development of a “region-wide code of conduct” (Par. 10). Following this train of thought, the acknowledgement of non-Southeast Asian countries of the Treaty on Southeast Asia as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone is expected to contribute to the comprehensive denuclearization of the region.

### **Multidimensional Security Approaches**

The post-Cold War developments in the Asia-Pacific region have also produced new disturbances and threats, beyond the conventional field of foreign policy and security. It has expanded the threat dimensions to sustainable development and democracy. It is this complexity that creates the need to multidimensionalize the concept of security, comprising those aspects of security against narcotic traffic, international crime, formerly dubbed low-intensity threats, and increasingly against environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, emerging diseases, over-population, and political unrest as a consequence of these new kinds of threats.

Biodiversity loss is the fastest moving of all environmental problems and it is irreversible. It also hampers future prospects of achieving stability. So is environmental degradation, which is a threat driven by the production and consumption of goods and services in a manner that is not environmentally benign, such as the haze problem following forest fires in Kalimantan and Sumatra since 1997 (which for some time questioned the seriousness of the Indonesian Government to solve what is increasingly seen as a sustained crisis). This will need the institutionalization of disaster management. Emerging diseases are also a threat to security. Infectious diseases affecting humans, plants, and animals, which are spreading rapidly as a result of trade and travel, and — amplified by malnutrition — threaten the public, and productivity on a broad and intensive scale. Still another problem is over-population as a consequence of population growth. It is putting excessive demands on human and physical capacity to meet the needs for food, housing, health, employment, and education. Finally, political unrest also has its consequences. Warfare, ethnic and social clashes set back efforts

to meet critical human and environmental needs. They tend to be regional problems with global impact as a consequence of forced migrations and other disruptive effects.

The unpreparedness of Indonesia and other ASEAN countries to recognize and deal with the new dimensions of security straightforwardly is complicated by the emergence and widely applied concept of human security. The term means safety for people from challenges, threats, and disturbances, both violent and non-violent. The principal and conventional objective of national security is the protection of national territorial integrity and political sovereignty from external aggression. It is now considered to be insufficient in guaranteeing people's security. The concept takes people as its point of reference rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or sovereignty. Human security (which also emphasizes that women are equal partners of men in all walks of life and throughout their life-cycle) entails taking preventive measures to reduce vulnerability and minimize risk, and if prevention fails, remedial action is necessary. A human security perspective thus asserts that the security of the state is not an end in itself.

The concern for human security, or the safety of people, extends beyond national borders. It is seemingly a logical extension of current approaches to international peace and security. The United Nations Charter embodies the view that security cannot be achieved by a single state in isolation. The term "international peace and security" implies that the security of one state depends on the security of other states as well. A human security perspective seemingly builds on this logic by noting that the security of people in one part of the world depends on the security of people elsewhere. It seems to imply that the security of states, and the maintenance of international peace and security, is ultimately constructed on the foundation of people who are secure. Human security will thus have to be incorporated in the dimensions of national and regional security in the Southeast Asian region.

### **Economic Approaches to Security**

Asia's economic relevance came starkly into question during the dramatic financial crisis in 1997–98. It failed to find answers to the breakdown in their financial and economic systems (to their

weak financial systems, to their excessive unhedged borrowing by the private sector and to the lack of transparency in government and corporate sectors). Each member resorted to individual approaches to safeguard its own interests. Each member tried to overcome the crisis individually, each in co-operation with global financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and each followed its own prescriptions for economic recovery. Leaders often contradicted each other on the basic policies they had earlier agreed upon. It was even feared that relations with neighbours might be sacrificed in the process of finding solutions to domestic instabilities. These developments have turned the attention of member states inwards and, as such, made intra-ASEAN relations less cohesive, and indeed pointed to the resurfacing of longstanding tensions among member states.

Although ASEAN leaders met in December 1997 in the light of the crisis, and although they acknowledged that the depreciation of their currencies had resulted in serious regression in the economic well-being of their countries, their business, and their peoples, they failed to outline or pursue a united approach towards the IMF and the World Bank in dealing with the crisis. They only stressed "that ASEAN countries must remain united and show resolve in responding to the challenge posed by the currency situation".

These developments have led to the view that the Association lacks the resilient mechanisms to handle the dramatic impact of the crisis and justified the question of ASEAN's further relevance for the countries in Southeast Asia. It came short of the establishment of an ASEAN Surveillance Mechanism, which may constructively propose to a member country to modify or change its financial-economic policies which may have adverse effects on its neighbours or the region as a whole.

The Hanoi Action Plan was an attempt to again commit themselves to "greater integration" of their economies "as a primary expression of our co-operation and solidarity". The major thrust of the Hanoi Action Plan is to enhance greater economic integration and the speedy creation of an ASEAN economic region. ASEAN leaders will "spare no efforts to quickly restore financial and microeconomic stability, bring about early economic recovery and maintain sustained growth". ASEAN will continue with its open market policies, and its commitment to trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, as it recognizes that long-term

investments are the key to strengthening and stabilizing the region's currencies and economies. ASEAN has also boldly committed itself to accelerate AFTA, the ASEAN Industrial Co-operation (AICO) Scheme, and the ASEAN Investment Area (AIA) through consistent investment laws and policies. This is aimed at regaining business confidence, enhancing economic recovery, and promoting growth. An important decision is the wider use of ASEAN currencies in intra-ASEAN trade settlements, which was agreed in 1997. These commitments will be supported by further development of regional infrastructures, such as networks of electricity grids, gas and water pipelines, and transport and telecommunications links, which will enhance ASEAN's competitiveness.

The great scope and ambition of the programmes raise the question whether ASEAN will be capable of massively mobilizing the political will and resources in time and execute them with great determination. Unilateral approaches to face and handle the crisis still predominate among the member countries.

The latest developments have shown that the AFTA programme is more political economy than economy *per se*. It is an attempt to provide an adhesive for intra-ASEAN co-operation rather than a genuine mechanism for trade liberalization and facilitation. Even APEC has not been able to provide the necessary conditions for trade and investment liberalization and facilitation. It seems to have lost its momentum. APEC's summits have evolved into a talking shop for issues unrelated to trade, particularly to trade of the developing countries. They have developed into discussions on topics of liberalization and facilitation that are more of interest to the developed APEC members. Moreover, in the past three years APEC forums were dominated by non-trade issues: the financial crisis in 1997, the Anwar Ibrahim case in 1998, and the East Timor case in 1999.

The World Trade Organization seems to be a better avenue to liberalize and facilitate trade and investment policies of its members. If AFTA is to serve as an instrument for trade liberalization, it would have to be open to a wider commitment, which means that it has to be integrated into the WTO framework.

### **Whither ASEAN?**

ASEAN has developed a well-tested mechanism for co-operation and co-ordination in facing conventional threats under favourable

economic conditions, but it was paralysed by the regional crisis and has since not been able to devise and develop a mechanism in times of crisis, to face conventional and non-conventional security threats. ASEAN will not be capable of solving its conventional and non-conventional threats if it is unable to design and develop a new institutional infrastructure to face conventional and non-conventional security threats alike, in line with the concepts of national and regional resilience, of comprehensive or total security, or redefine or redesign existing institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, for the purpose.

The severe financial and economic crisis which had profound effects on the security outlooks and designs of the ASEAN countries seems to have shattered ASEAN dreams and simultaneously exposed the fragility of its security outlook and doctrine, and of ASEAN as a regional institution. It has failed to provide immediate answers to the economic collapse and thus individual approaches to safeguard the interest of each constituent member have prevailed. The leaders have frequently contradicted each other on the basic policies they had earlier made. It is feared that relations with neighbours may continue to suffer in the process of finding solutions to domestic instabilities. Long-standing tensions among members may resurface in new attire. It is from the political and security perspective that ASEAN still has a very important role to play, to safeguard the region from internal and external threats to its development, to its modernization programmes and processes as a consequence of unfettered globalization and fierce competition. It still has a very important role to play to guarantee the security of sea-lanes of communication for the trade and commerce of any member country. However, the expansion of the security spectrum has simultaneously made it possible for external forces and states and international institutions to intervene in the internal affairs of the Southeast Asian countries, particularly in the name of human security, sustainable development, and democracy.

These issues will have to be examined to find approaches to resolve them, by incorporating measures into the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia to make it compatible with the new security issues with its challenges to the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Southeast Asian nations, and the challenge of non-interference in the internal affairs of one another. This is our task for the twenty-first century. If such an attempt were to fail, then new, more comprehensive

instruments will have to be designed to meet the demands of the time.

It is important to factor non-conventional threats and threat perceptions into the existing security instruments, or design new instruments to include the new sources of threats. The security concepts and outlook and the recent developments clearly indicate that it will be very difficult indeed to sustain an artificial dividing line between the various dimensions of security and the levels on which they operate. It will also become increasingly difficult to refuse outright the proposal for “constructive intervention” (Anwar Ibrahim) or “flexible engagement” (Surin Pitsuwan, *Thailand’s Non-Paper on Flexible Engagement Approach*, 27 July 1998) as the dividing line between domestic affairs and external or transnational issues becomes less clear. “Many domestic affairs have obvious external or transnational dimensions, adversely affecting neighbours, the region and the region’s relations with others”. Next to the haze problem, the East Timor and Bank Bali scandals are cases in point.

In the near term, it would be necessary not only to sustain ASEAN’s relevance for member countries but also to make it more relevant, in order to achieve ASEAN’s Vision 2020, which is in the process of review.