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MYANMAR IN ASEAN
Regional Cooperation Experience

MYA THAN

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
Singapore
This book is dedicated to my mother and all of those who taught me aspects of life.
The country casts a kind of spell over its friends which they cannot break if they would.
John F. Cady
A History of Modern Burma (1958)

This is Burma, and it will be quite unlike any land you know about.
Rudyard Kipling
Letters from the East (1898)
# Table of Contents

**List of Tables and Boxes**

**Preface**

**Acknowledgements**

**Abbreviations**

**ASEAN Organizational Structure**

1. Introduction: Southeast Asia, Myanmar and ASEAN
   1.1 What is Southeast Asia? 1
   1.2 Socio-economic Characteristics of Southeast Asian Nations: A Brief Overview 2
   1.3 Myanmar: Geography, Demography and Natural Resources 7
   1.4 What is ASEAN? 9
   1.5 Objective of the Study 9

2. ASEAN: Evolution of Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia 11
   2.1 Evolution of Regional Cooperation and the Formation of ASEAN 11
     2.1.1 Objectives of ASEAN 14
   2.2 Political and Security Cooperation 15
     2.2.1 Intra-ASEAN Security Cooperation 21
     2.2.2 ASEAN and the Major Powers 22
     2.2.3 The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) 23
     2.2.4 ASEAN and Other Regional Organizations 24
   2.3 Economic Cooperation: From PTA to AFTA and AFTA-Plus 25
     2.3.1 From PTA to AFTA 26
     2.3.2 ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) 29
     2.3.3 Cooperation beyond AFTA 36
     2.3.4 ASEAN Investment Area (AIA) 37
     2.3.5 ASEAN Vision 2020 38
     2.3.6 Intra-ASEAN Trade and Investment 39
     2.3.7 External Linkages of ASEAN Economic Cooperation 40
viii CONTENTS

2.4 Functional Cooperation 47
2.5 The ASEAN Organizational Structure 51
2.6 Achievements and Problems of ASEAN 55

3.1 Myanmar: A Brief History 59
  3.1.1 Constitutional Democracy, 1948–61 61
  3.1.2 Revolutionary Council, 1962–73 65
  3.1.3 Burma Socialist Programme Party, 1974–88 66
  3.1.4 Under the SLORC and SPDC, 1988–2001 69
3.2 Recent Developments in the Social Sector 76
3.3 Summary 79

4. Myanmar in ASEAN 83
4.1 Why Myanmar Decided to Join ASEAN 84
4.2 How Ready was Myanmar to Join ASEAN? 86
4.3 Myanmar’s Participation in ASEAN 88

5. Myanmar-ASEAN Cooperation for Development 91
5.1 Myanmar-ASEAN Political and Security Cooperation 91
5.2 Myanmar-ASEAN Cooperation for Economic Development 93
  5.2.1 Myanmar-ASEAN Economic Relations 93
  5.2.2 Myanmar in ASEAN Economic Cooperation Schemes 99
5.3 Myanmar-ASEAN Functional Cooperation 103
5.4 Impact and Implications of Myanmar Joining ASEAN 104
  5.4.1 Political Implications of Joining ASEAN 104
  5.4.2 Economic Implications of Joining ASEAN 109
5.5 Summary 118

6. Conclusion: Issues and Challenges 121
6.1 Issues and Challenges Relating to ASEAN 121
6.2 Issues and Challenges Relating to Myanmar’s Accession to ASEAN 124

Postscript 127

Bibliography 129
List of Tables and Boxes

Table 1.1 Selected Economic Indicators, 2001: ASEAN 3
Table 1.2 Selected Social Indicators, 2001: ASEAN 6

Table 2.1 Number of Tariff Lines in the Tentative CEPT Product List for 2001 31
Table 2.2 Number of Tariff Lines with Tariffs 0–5 Per Cent by 2001 32
Table 2.3 Average CEPT Tariff Rates (1999–2003) 33
Table 2.4 Intra-Regional Export Shares, 1990–98 39
Table 2.5 Intra-ASEAN Trade: Trade Share (1975–2001) 40

Table 3.1 GDP, Per Capita GDP and Consumption (in million kyats) 63
Table 3.2 Sectoral Shares of GDP (%) 64
Table 3.3 Share of Employment by Economic Sectors (%) 64
Table 3.4 Average Annual Growth Rates and Sectoral Shares of GDP (%) 68
Table 3.5 Economic Performance: 1962–88 69
Table 3.6 Economic Performance: 1989–2001 74
Table 3.7 GDP Growth Rates (1989/90–2000/01) 75
Table 3.8 Selected Social Indicators in Selected Countries 77

Table 5.1 Myanmar’s Exports and Imports with ASEAN-6 95
Table 5.2 Myanmar-ASEAN Trade: Imports of Myanmar 96
Table 5.3 Myanmar-ASEAN Trade: Balance of Trade 97
Table 5.4 Foreign Direct Investment (Approved) Flow into Myanmar (as of 31/1/02) 97
Table 5.5 Tourist Arrivals in Myanmar by Country 98
Table 5.6 CEPT Scheme of Myanmar 100
Table 5.7 CEPT Product List for ASEAN-10 100
Table 5.8 Trade and FDI Flows between CLMV and ASEAN-6 115
LIST OF TABLES AND BOXES

Box I  Significant Reform Measures in Myanmar  72
Box II  Status of Economic Reforms in Myanmar  73
Box III  Myanmar-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation  106
Preface

The objective of this book is to help tertiary students of economics, history, international studies and economic geography in Myanmar to widen their knowledge of ASEAN and its integration process in general and ASEAN-Myanmar cooperation and Myanmar’s accession to ASEAN in particular. Textbooks and reference books in English for university students in Myanmar in all academic disciplines have become rare as a result of the country’s isolation since 1962, when the military took over.

Soon after the military takeover, nationalization was introduced in economic and service sectors such as foreign trade, domestic wholesale trade, foreign and domestic banks, industries, fisheries, and mining, under the “Burmese Way to Socialism”. Even private hospitals and schools were nationalized as required by the new self-reliance policy.

Consequently, in 1964, the medium of instruction in all academic institutions of primary, secondary and tertiary levels was changed — from English to Burmese. University staff were asked to prepare textbooks in Burmese; many of them were translated from old English textbooks. A number of compulsory textbooks in Burmese were published in the late 1960s and early 1970s but most of these have never been updated.

Then in 1981, English was reintroduced as a medium of instruction at schools and universities but at a very slow pace. The English language was again taught at primary schools despite many obstacles such as the lack of qualified teachers and teaching aids.

After a military coup in 1988, the ruling State Law and Order Council (SLORC) opened up the economy. Part and parcel of the economic reforms included liberalization of foreign and domestic trade, introduction of foreign and domestic investment laws, and private sector development. Thus English has once again become an important medium of communication and is being revived at the universities. The private sector has also been active in opening up English language schools, business schools and computer schools.

Moreover, SLORC (which changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council [SPDC] in 1997), unlike previous military regimes, has a proactive foreign
policy by involvement in international forums, including securing ASEAN membership. Thus interest in the English language has also rapidly grown in the country as the role of English as a language of learning, business, technology, international relations and diplomacy is being recognized.

However, there remains the enormous problem of a lack of textbooks and reference books in English at all levels of education, particularly academic books on subjects related to Myanmar compiled by native scholars. Moreover, due to a lack of foreign earnings, school libraries have been unable to buy textbooks and reference books in foreign languages.

Furthermore, as Myanmar joined ASEAN in 1997, the author feels that students of economics, history and international relations and businessmen should understand the impact and implications of Myanmar joining ASEAN. While there are several articles and book chapters by Myanmar citizens (locals as well as expatriates), these are either not in a book form or not in English.

Hence, it is obvious that there is an urgent need to fill the vacuum created by the lack of reference material in English, particularly on Myanmar’s accession to ASEAN, for students, businessmen, scholars and others interested in the subject. The author hopes that this book will help fill the gap in a small way.

This book begins with the formation of ASEAN, its evolution and its integration process. Before it continues to explain and analyse the impact of Myanmar’s accession to ASEAN, a brief overview of the country’s political and economic development is also presented.

However, there are limitations to this study. There are a plethora of studies on ASEAN in its more than 35 years of existence and the author could not include all aspects of the regional association’s operations. As an economist, the author might be biased in his presentation of ASEAN’s evolution and the associated issues and challenges as well as his analysis of Myanmar’s development, and the impact and implications of its accession. However, he also tries to assess ASEAN and its relations with Myanmar from political and security perspectives.

The author would be delighted, despite these limitations, if readers find this work useful.

Mya Than
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First of all, I would like to thank Dr Lau Sim Yee, Program Advisor, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), for his encouragement and trust in me to prepare this work. My thanks also go to my friends and colleagues U Myat Thein (former Rector of the Institute of Economics, Yangon), Dr Tin Maung Maung Than (Senior Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies [ISEAS], Singapore), Professor Suchit Bunbongkarn (former Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok), Professor Amitav Acharya (Deputy Director and Head of Research at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore), and Dr Pranee Thiparat (Chairperson, Department of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok) whose encouragement and comments concerning my work have been inspirational and valuable. Also, I would like to express my appreciation to the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) for its generous and kind sponsorship for this project. My gratitude is also due to Dr Chookiat Panaspornprasit, the Director, and the staff of the Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS), Chulalongkorn University, without whose hospitality and provision of facilities this book project would not have been possible. Furthermore, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues from ISEAS, Singapore, particularly, Ms Dayaneetha De Silva and her colleagues from the Publications Unit who made this book possible. Last but not least, my gratitude and appreciation to my wife, Yee May Kaung, for her dedicated support and understanding.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEGDM</td>
<td>ASEAN Expert Group on Disaster Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEM</td>
<td>ASEAN Economic Ministers</td>
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<td>AEMM</td>
<td>ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFDM</td>
<td>ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies Meeting</td>
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<td>AFMM</td>
<td>ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting</td>
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<td>AFPFL</td>
<td>Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFTA</td>
<td>ASEAN Free Trade Area</td>
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<td>AIA</td>
<td>ASEAN Investment Area</td>
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<td>AIC</td>
<td>ASEAN Industrial Complementation</td>
</tr>
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<td>AICO</td>
<td>ASEAN Industrial Cooperation</td>
</tr>
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<td>AIDC</td>
<td>Asian Industrial Development Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIEDP</td>
<td>Asian Institute for Economic Development and Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJJV</td>
<td>ASEAN Industrial Joint Ventures</td>
</tr>
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<td>AIP</td>
<td>ASEAN Industrial Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMBDC</td>
<td>ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMM</td>
<td>ASEAN Ministerial Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APIAN</td>
<td>APEC International Assessment Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APII</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Information Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regional Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASA</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASC</td>
<td>ASEAN Standing Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCLA</td>
<td>ASEAN Subcommittee on Labour Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASCOE</td>
<td>ASEAN Subcommittee on Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEM</td>
<td>Asia-Europe Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASM</td>
<td>ASEAN Summit Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASOD</td>
<td>ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASOEN</td>
<td>ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

ASEM  Asia Europe Meeting
ASPAC  Asian and Pacific Council
ASY  ASEAN Subcommittee on Youth
ATFOA  ASEAN Task Force on AIDS
BSPP  Burma Socialist Programme Party
BWS  Burmese Way to Socialism
CBMs  confidence-building measures
CEPT  Common Effective Preferential Tariff
CER  Australia and New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement
CMI  Chiang Mai Initiative
CMLV  Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam
COCI (ASEAN)  Committee on Culture and Information
COSD (ASEAN)  Committee on Social Development
COST (ASEAN)  Committee on Science and Technology
CSO  Central Statistical Organization
DEFAT  Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
ECAFE  Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East
EEAU  East Asian Analytical Unit (DEFAT)
EPG  Eminent Persons Group
ESCAP  Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN)
EC  European Commission
EU  European Union
FDI  foreign direct investment
FTA  free trade area
GATT  General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GEL  General Exclusion List (of products under CEPT)
GSP  Generalized System of Preferences
HPA  Hanoi Plan of Action
HRD  human resource development
IAI  Initiative for ASEAN Integration
ICT  Information and Communications Technology
IPR  Intellectual Property Rights
IL  Inclusion List (under CEPT)
IMF  International Monetary Fund
ISI  import-substituting industrialization
IT  information technology
MERCOSUR  Common Market of the South
MFN  most-favoured-nation
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBIP</td>
<td>non-binding investment principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIEs</td>
<td>newly industrializing economies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLD</td>
<td>National League for Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTB</td>
<td>non-tarriff barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTM</td>
<td>non-tariff measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBEC</td>
<td>Pacific Basin Economic Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECC</td>
<td>Pacific Economic Cooperation Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMC</td>
<td>Post-Ministerial Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>purchasing power parity</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Preferential Trading Arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTA</td>
<td>regional trade agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>South Africa Development Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Standing Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEANWFZ</td>
<td>Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATO</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>state economic enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEOM</td>
<td>Senior Economic Officials Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>Sensitive List (of products under CEPT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLORC</td>
<td>State Law and Order Restoration Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>small- and medium-enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEWG</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprise Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOE</td>
<td>state-owned enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOM</td>
<td>Senior Officials Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;T</td>
<td>science and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPDC</td>
<td>State Peace and Development Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (ASEAN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEL</td>
<td>Temporary Exclusion List (under CEPT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFP</td>
<td>total factor productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TILF</td>
<td>trade and investment liberalization and facilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIMs</td>
<td>Trade-Related Investment Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIPs</td>
<td>Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRQ</td>
<td>tariff-rate quotas</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA</td>
<td>Union of Myanmar Solidarity and Development Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZOPFAN</td>
<td>Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AEMM : ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting
AMM : ASEAN Ministerial Meeting
AFMM : ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting
SEOM : Senior Economic Officials Meeting
ASC : ASEAN Standing Committee
SOM : Senior Officials Meeting
AFDM : ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies Meeting

Source: www.aseansec.org
FIGURE II
ASEAN Organizational Structure

Secretary-General

Deputy Secretary-General (Economic Cooperation)

Office of the Secretary-General
Special Assistant (Institutional Affairs)
Finance
Personnel and Training
Administration
ASEC IT
Special Duties: Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; COCI; ASEAN Foundation
Special Assistant (Executive Affairs)
ASEAN Summit, AMM, ARF, SOM, ASC
Research and Analysis
Public Affairs Office

Deputy Secretary-General (Functional Cooperation)

Special Projects Unit
Transnational Issues
Drugs
Disaster management
Immigration

Bureau for Economic Integration
Trade Policies
Tariffs, Non-Tariffs
Customs
Standards & Conformance
IPR
Liberation of Services
Tourism
External Trade
Investment
Industry
SMEs
Legal

Bureau for Finance and Integration Support
Finance & Macroeconomic
Surveillance
Statistics
Infrastructure
Energy
Minerals
Transport
Telecommunications
e-ASEAN / ICT
Science & Technology

Bureau for External Relations and Coordination
ASEAN Plus 3
ASEAN Dialogue Partners
ASEAN Non-dialogue Partners
Inter-regional Organization
Programme Coordination
ASEAN Cooperation Plans
Evaluation
Trust Fund Accounts
Resource Mobilization

Bureau for Resources Development
Human Development
Labour
Civil Service
Social Policies
Health Education
Natural Resources
Agriculture/Fisheries
Forestry
Environment
Culture and Information

Source: www.aseansec.org