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THE URUGUAY ROUND
**ASEAN TRADE POLICY
OPTIONS**

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OPTIONS**

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FOREWORD

While ASEAN economies are vulnerable and subject to external pressures over which they have little control, the ASEAN countries will have themselves to blame if they fail to take appropriate policy measures to improve the situation or to safeguard themselves against the vagaries of the international system. This is certainly the case with regard to the arena of international trade. Here the ASEAN countries have the opportunity to act collectively and effectively to achieve results beneficial to all of them. For instance, a move in this direction would be a review and re-evaluation of the possibilities presented by GATT. What exactly can and does ASEAN expect out of, say, the Uruguay Round? How is it going to achieve this goal?

Acting on such possibilities, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in 1986 launched a study on "ASEAN Trade Policy Options", that is, optimal options open to ASEAN in the context of GATT. It forms part of a series of similar studies focusing on Mexico, Brazil, India, Korea, and southern Africa as well.

"ASEAN Trade Policy Options" accordingly has several objectives. The first of these is to understand, from the ASEAN perspective, trends in the world's trading environment and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the present international trading system, especially those of international institutions such as GATT.

Secondly, it seeks to identify various policy options that would be open to ASEAN countries and to examine the implications of these policy options, including dangers of policy conflicts and scope for policy trade-offs.

Thirdly, given the available policy instruments and constraints, the study evaluates the optimum trade level for individual ASEAN countries. In this context, the pertinent question is whether individual ASEAN countries need to change gear and settle for something less than the idea or to change course and goals.

Fourthly, given the heterogeneity of the regional grouping, it investigates the extent to which policy options tend to differ between ASEAN countries especially since what may be desirable and feasible in one country may not necessarily be so in another.

Finally, it explores new avenues for joint and collective policy action on the part of the ASEAN member countries, both extra-regionally *vis-a-vis* third countries and intra-regionally with respect to one another.

Towards this end, a number of papers were commissioned and discussed in several workshops in the ASEAN member countries. The final versions of these papers were then presented at an international conference held in Singapore on 7-9 March 1988. In addition to the researchers, participants in this conference included senior ASEAN officials and specialists in trade matters. The discussions were lively and pertinent, with the researchers finding the various suggestions and comments useful in terms of revising the papers. It is these revised papers which comprise the present volume.

We would like to record our thanks to the researchers for their co-operation and to the Rockefeller Foundation for its financial support for the study as well as the various meetings and conferences associated with it. In thanking all of the foregoing, and wishing the collection of papers that follows all the best, it is clearly understood that responsibility for statements made and for the accuracy of the information provided rests exclusively with the individual authors.

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