

agency cooperation in its public bureaucracy. In the analysis of the implementation of the ACD and the AMMTC/SOMTC, the case studies verify that implementation is less likely to have problems when it involves a single issue and when there are fewer implementing agencies involved.

The country-specific nature of the difficulties encountered indicates that policy context is important and the nature as well as the problems of public bureaucracy in each country are complex. Therefore, although each country chapter has made policy suggestions for improving the conditions in their respective country, is there a common solution and can ASEAN contribute towards the formulation of such a common solution? Giulio Napolitano in the comparative study of ASEAN and the EU in Chapter 7 attempts to provide an ASEAN solution by suggesting the promotion of the development of a common administrative culture; developing stronger regulations and strengthening the roles and powers of a common supra-national organization such as the ASEAN Secretariat as possible ways to move forward towards improving policy implementation in ASEAN. These suggestions echo the constant refrain from ASEAN's detractors, that ASEAN needs to be more "rules-based". It also reflects the objective of the research programme that produced this book, which is integration through law, as opposed to the current practice of using discreteness, informality, consensus building and non-confrontational bargaining for cooperation and integration in ASEAN. Certainly, strengthening the rule of law is needed at the ASEAN level and also at the country level since corruption is a common issue that confronts most of the ASEAN countries in this book. It is prevalent in all the countries studied, with the exception of Singapore, even though the analysis of its role in public bureaucracy is quite disparate in each country chapter. Thus, a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between corruption and the rule of law is needed as the causes of corruption are varied and therefore multiple solutions are needed, with strengthening the rule of law as one of them.

## REFERENCES

- Bendor, Jonathan. "The Fields of Bureaucracy and Public Administration: Basic and Applied Research". *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART* 4, no. 1 (1994): 27–39.
- Evans, Peter and James E. Rauch. "Bureaucracy and Growth: A Cross-National Analysis of the Effects of 'Weberian' State Structures on Economic Growth". *American Sociological Review* 64, no. 5. (1999): 748–65.
- Fukuyama, Francis. "What Is Governance?". CGD Working Paper 314. Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, January 2013.

THAM SIEW YEAN  
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute,  
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace,  
Singapore 119614  
email: [tham.siewyeon@gmail.com](mailto:tham.siewyeon@gmail.com)

DOI: 10.1355/ae33-3m

---

***ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Integration: Progress, Challenges, and Future Directions.***  
**By Siow Yue Chia and Michael G. Plummer.**  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.  
Pp. 195.

---

This book provides a comprehensive overview of economic cooperation and integration in ASEAN through law since its early days. Chapters 1 to 3 give an introduction to the regional organization and a summary of broad economic indicators of its members, such as growth, population, trade and direct investment. While the first three chapters contain factual and statistical information on ASEAN, the subsequent three contain the core analyses of the book, which starts with the history of economic cooperation and integration among Southeast Asian economies (Chapter 4). This chapter includes an assessment of measures undertaken before the inception of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), borrowing from previous studies and in particular, from a book by the former ASEAN Secretary-General, Rodolfo Severino. Chapter 5 discusses initiatives that

have been introduced in the AEC and Chapter 6 suggests possible directions for integration.

There are two issues worth mentioning related to the book. First, various initiatives related to economic cooperation and integration launched as part of the AEC are not new concepts in ASEAN. In fact, they were introduced many decades ago, including preferential trade agreements like the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA, 1992) and other forms of economic cooperation such as the ASEAN Industrial Joint Venture (AIJV, 1983), Brand-to-Brand Complementary (BBC, 1988) and the ASEAN Industrial Cooperation (AICO, 1996). These agreements have not been substantially utilized as they were driven largely by common external threats to the region, such as the reintegration of China and India into global markets in the late 1980s and early 1990s as well as the initiation of free trade agreements in North America and Europe. Most of these were reactive responses to keep up the perception that Southeast Asian countries are attractive investment locations for multinationals, instead of actually promoting intra-ASEAN trade and investment. As a consequence, these agreements have been implemented slowly. Often, there has been a reluctance among governments in member countries to implement ASEAN-initiated policies.

Second, the book discusses in detail initiatives that are part of the AEC and how each has been implemented. In particular, the authors use the AEC scorecards — the main tool used to measure the extent to which AEC goals have materialized — as an example of an ASEAN initiative and discusses elements included and excluded in the scorecards. The key finding from the authors' analysis is while the scorecards can inform us of the extent to which the AEC has been implemented, they fail to expound on implementation problems in reaching these goals. Another shortcoming of the scorecards is that full implementation of all items in the AEC blueprint does not imply that economic integration is fully achieved. Regardless, the scorecards provide needed information to formulate expectations on the actual effect of the AEC to strengthen market-driven economic integration in Southeast Asia.

The last chapter of the book presents the authors' opinion on what ASEAN members can do to enhance economic cooperation and integration. Three possible areas are raised for discussion. They include: formulating a customs union among ASEAN members; governing flows of unskilled workers; and being active in regional initiatives like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). There is no doubt that these are upcoming challenges for the regional bloc. Among them, a proposal to create a custom union out of the AEC seems less convincing, at least to me. Given the vast gap among ASEAN members in many aspects including economic development, policy ideology and living standards, it would be unlikely to see ASEAN members come together to set up a custom union in the foreseeable future.

The suggestion on governing the flow of unskilled workers seems like a more plausible area of cooperation. ASEAN has countries that import and export workers and their intra-regional flow is increasingly important. Malaysia is the largest importing country followed by Thailand, whereas Indonesia and newer members like Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos are increasingly exporting their workers to other ASEAN members. Regardless of whether it is prioritized by ASEAN, such flows on an increasing magnitude take place and would become a facet of economic interdependence among its members. This is a potential area for members to cooperate and gain mutual benefits. It seems unavoidable for ASEAN to govern such flows to strengthen regulation and enhance cooperation. It does not seem justified that this suggestion is thought of as equally difficult to implement as the suggestion to form an ASEAN customs union.

One general shortcoming of the book is its short discussion about economic development in Southeast Asia. This is an important fact for readers to understand: the economic flows between Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. In particular, the diverse rates of economic development within East Asia (Northeast and Southeast) allow multinational enterprises to efficiently slice up their value chains and utilize different resource

endowments across the region to strengthen their international competitiveness. In this setting, production processes of a given product is fragmented and assigned to individual countries within the region according to the countries' comparative advantage. This resulted in increasing intra-regional trade and investment within East Asia. While there is a number of empirical studies examining intra-regional trade and investment, only a few were mentioned in the book. A better understanding is critical for policymakers in the region to promote further economic integration through law in the AEC.

All in all, this book is highly recommended for policymakers and audiences who are newcomers to the economic integration through law in Southeast Asia. It provides several facts that are usually omitted in previous studies but important in formulating our thoughts on how integration is attributed to ongoing market-driven initiatives in the region. I have no doubt that this book will be a key reference on economic integration in ASEAN and would be a great complement to other books that have been written in this area.

#### REFERENCE

Severino, Rodolfo C. *Southeast Asia in Search of an ASEAN Community: Insights from the Former ASEAN Secretary-General*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006.

ARCHANUN KOHPAIBOON

*Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University,  
99 Mu 18 Khlongnueng Sub district, Khlong  
Luang District, Pathum Thani, 12120 Thailand  
email: archanun@econ.tu.ac.th*

DOI: 10.1355/ae33-3n

---

***The ASEAN Economic Community: A Conceptual Approach.* By Jacques Pelkmans.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp 231.

---

On 31 December 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was officially launched with

the intent to mark a new milestone in the path to deeper integration in Southeast Asia. The AEC, together with the Political-Security Community and the Socio-Cultural Community form the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. Many questions have arisen regarding the significance and importance of this long-awaited achievement for economic development and the emergence of the region as a political actor on the international scene. With multiple Chinese initiatives in Asia such as the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank and the One Belt One Road initiative, the competing U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership initiative, as well as the conflict over the South China Sea, the discussion on the concept of ASEAN is timely.

The book focuses on the AEC and is part of a wider research project entitled "Integration Through Law: The Role of Law and the Rule of Law in ASEAN Integration" undertaken by the Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore, which aims at achieving a theory and conceptual framework of Asian legal integration. This explains why the book applies a conceptual approach to make the AEC intelligible. Two key concepts of the AEC are analysed in detail: the "single market" and "single production base for segments of global value chains" and their interrelations. The book also gives ample room to an extensive scrutiny of the instruments of implementation.

Following the short introductory chapter which justifies the conceptual approach, Chapter 2 is the longest chapter by far (69 pages) and is the core of the book. It delineates the foundations of economic integration in the general case and a modern stage approach specifying the logics of deepening the commitments and widening of the scope of the AEC. There are two aspects of deepening commitments: "negative" (the removal of discrimination and barriers) and "positive" integration (the joint action by member states to create new instruments, rules and institutions). One of the strengths of the chapter resides in the application of this framework to clearly locate where the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) and the