
BOOK REVIEWS

***European Interests in ASEAN.* By Stuart Harris and Brian Bridges.** Chatham House Paper, no. 19. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1983. Pp. vi, 89.

Several papers have already been published on the economic aspects of ASEAN-EEC relations. However, Harris and Bridges have, I believe, produced the first book-length study of political as well as economic relations between the two regions, specifically from the European perspective. Thus it is a much-awaited addition to the growing literature on the external relations of ASEAN, as seen by an external "partner".

The authors have divided the work into seven short chapters. The introductory chapter raises some very pertinent questions around which the book takes shape. First, what are Europe's specific interests in ASEAN? Second, how have these interests changed over time? Third, what factors are likely to influence future European interests, positively or negatively? And, finally, is Europe's present concern with its interests in ASEAN consistent with its long-term interests?

Chapters 2 and 3 provide the essential but generally available information on the formation and development of ASEAN and the major features of its political and econ-

omic relations, both intra- and extra-regional. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 attempt to present the various interest areas in the ASEAN region where European countries have established their presence, again differentiating between bilateral and multi-lateral involvement. The authors have considered various aspects under the heading "Economic Interests", namely, issues in trade, investment, aid, and services like banking. Of the European countries, those in the EEC are considered the most important group, even though ASEAN accounts for only 2 per cent of the EEC's trade whereas for the ASEAN group the EEC accounts for about 11 per cent, third after Japan and the United States. But as the writers indicate, it is not the volume but the character of the trade pattern that is significant when discussing economic relations.

Politically, European countries would like to see a stable and peaceful Southeast Asia. However, there is no imminent possibility of their active involvement in the region, other than to support the various ASEAN policies in regional and international forums. The section on "Special Relationships" gives good insight into the bilateral political relations that have been maintained with certain ASEAN countries; the case of Britain and Malaysia/Singapore is an example, though in the British-Malaysian case, the relationship has seen some

troubled times as a result of changing circumstances and priorities set by the present Malaysian leaders. One could not but agree with the observation that "... there are no longer any 'special relationships' which would work substantially in favour of the interests of the European countries". On the other hand, one of the European countries that has made considerable inroads into the region where previously it had no colonial links, has been West Germany, which has established bilateral economic ties with some of the ASEAN members; however, the book does not go into the details of the relationship. It does point out, nevertheless, that Foreign Minister Genscher was largely responsible for enlarging Germany's and the EEC's interests in ASEAN.

One of the major issues where ASEAN sought EEC support was that concerning Kampuchea, in particular the U.N. seat for Democratic Kampuchea and related issues. There have been varying degrees of support from among the Europeans but this is not discussed in detail in this study. As the Kampuchean issue is one of the main political concerns of ASEAN, it would be of interest to readers to learn more of the European and EEC stands on this issue. Other important issues, such as disagreements between countries of the two regions concerning protectionism and access to markets, and views on the Law of the Sea Conference, are mentioned in the text but unfortunately are not adequately discussed.

The authors appear uncertain in some of their concluding assessments on the prospects for economic relations between the two areas. Although in the larger context Europe's relations "cannot be seen as wholly good" there are cases of bilateral interactions that seem positive. After all, "ASEAN is only one of the elements of Southeast Asian economic and political development that is important to Europe". Politically, Western European countries do realize that it is important to take into account the "ASEAN view" on certain

issues. In this respect, Chapter 6 is stimulating reading; it summarizes the relevant perspectives of European interests and discusses some of the salient features of related topics like Japan's role in the Pacific Community, and the Kampuchean issue — issues that have a bearing on European-ASEAN relations. The authors recommend that Europeans increase their level of participation in a region that could be in the forefront of economic and political development in Asia.

The major contribution of this study lies in the European perspective on European-ASEAN relations. Although it is not an extensive study, it presents some of the more salient points in a concise and interesting manner and would therefore be of help to Europeans, especially the business community who would prefer a general overview of the ASEAN region without being bothered by too many figures and academic analyses. Indeed, to achieve better business links between the two regions, potential investors and policy-makers need to be kept informed and it is publications such as the work by Harris and Bridges that contribute towards this end.

PUSHPA THAMBIPILLAI

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

***Economic Policies towards Transnational Corporations, the Experience of the ASEAN Countries.* By Friedrich von Kirchbach. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1983. Pp. xx, 632.**

There are few subjects that have given rise to more controversy in the field of economic development policy than transnational corporations (TNCs). On the one hand there are those who expect TNCs to provide capital, technology, management expertise, and the panacea to all the development problems of the host country. And there are those, on the other hand, who see in TNCs