

For example, mineral fuels are vital sectors of the economy for ASEAN countries. Yet the book does not look at which country provides more incentives for exploration and production and how the incentive system differs between ASEAN and Australia. Similarly, the policy of one country has a significant impact on other countries — for example, intra-ASEAN oil trade declined after the Indonesian refinery expansion in 1984. The Australian liberalization policy in the energy sector may have a significant impact on the trade of mineral fuels in ASEAN. In a similar manner, environmental problems of the minerals industries have become vital issues in recent years. Although the issues of environment involve non-linear systems of causes and effects, their importance cannot be undermined.

Nonetheless the objectives of the book to provide information on the minerals industries in ASEAN and Australia and to examine the relationship between the two regions are well served, and academicians and policy-makers may find it useful. The analysis may also serve as a basis for future co-operation in minerals trade between ASEAN and Australia.

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***Oil and Natural Gas Resources in the ESCAP Region: Geology, Reserves, Production, Potential, Distribution.*** Bangkok: ESCAP, 1987. Pp. 154.

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This compilation by the Natural Resources Division of the ESCAP Secretariat contains some “data on the geology and structure of sedimentary basins in the Asian and Pacific countries, their hydrocarbon reserves and potential, and major oil and gas deposits and fields, as well as data on the current status and future trends of production, consumption,

trade and exploration activities in the region” (Preface).

Based mainly on a study prepared by the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Overseas Geology of the USSR Ministry of Geology (at the ESCAP Secretariat’s request), this slim volume consists of two parts: a brief survey of geological data on “proved” and “promising” sedimentary basins within the ESCAP region in relation to hydrocarbon accumulations as well as a short summary of the region’s status and prospects relating to the development, production, and trade of its oil and gas resources; and a country-specific description of the “hydrocarbon situation” in the region covering 29 countries out of the 39 countries and territories comprising the “ESCAP region” (*Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 1985* [Bangkok: UN/ESCAP, 1986], p. iv).

Notwithstanding its 48 figures and 38 tables, the data contained in this volume are mixed in terms of coverage, depth, and currency. This is to be expected in such cross-national compilations heavily dependent on standard secondary sources augmented by a variety of national sources. The relatively “static” nature of geological formations render them to be more susceptible to classification and analysis than the dynamic and volatile data on exploration, production, usage, and trading of oil and gas.

Treatment of individual countries’ hydrocarbon endowment from the geological standpoint seems to be brief but adequate given the highly technical nature of the subject. However, with regard to status, trends, and forecasts of exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon resources in the region one gets the impression that more comprehensive time-series data could be incorporated if national sources were extensively exploited. On the other hand, anyone familiar with the excruciating and frustrating task of assembling and collating variegated national data in this field, where many countries regard relevant data on oil and gas as strategic information to be dispensed with extreme caution, cannot but sympathize with the au-

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thors of this study who undoubtedly were also time constrained.

About one third of the world's sedimentary basins (a prerequisite for formation of oil deposits) occur in the ESCAP region where the majority of the countries — with the exception of Iran, Indonesia, Brunei, China, and Malaysia — are net oil importers. The high financial, economic, and political costs of oil imports warrant an optimal exploitation of the oil and gas resources of the region. In this

context, opinion leaders, policy-makers, and entrepreneurs from the region would do well to recognize the status and potential of oil and gas resources of the region. For such people as well as other interested non-specialists, this study would serve as a valuable introductory survey of the "hydrocarbon situation" in the ESCAP region.

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