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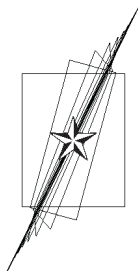
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## From the Editor

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Welcome to the *Special Issue of the Asia Pacific Social Science Review* (APSSR)! In this issue, I am joined by Mark Stephan Felix of Mahidol University and Bing Baltazar Brillo of the University of the Philippines as our guest editors.

In a prior edition, I articulated a need for our regional publication to assume an active role in raising issues and challenges for the ASEAN Community. As many of us know, the ASEAN Community was established on December 31, 2015 and is envisioned to function as a single region having integrated economic, political, and socio-cultural systems. Managing the ASEAN Community, let alone integrating its systems into a fully unified and functioning body, will be a mammoth and demanding task. Although the 10 member-countries (i.e., Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) are similar in some ways, their commonness is far overshadowed by their distinct differences—for instance in terms of their economic, political, and sociocultural foundations and complexities. These similarities and differences are certain to influence the ways in which the ASEAN Community would be managed and integrated. External forces—such as those emanating from globalization (e.g., the turns and shifts in the balance of global power)—would also bring forth further intricacies to the already complex regional goal. Amidst these complexities, there is a dearth of public discourses on issues and challenges related to the ASEAN Community.

Using key perspectives offered in, or drawn from, this Issue's roster of Research Articles and Research Briefs, we offer specific issues and challenges that we deem are important and have implications for and could form part of the agenda of the regional bloc. We hope that the information would help trigger—in some ways—the thinking and rethinking of the focus and direction of the aggrupation. We have nary an idea as to how these identified issues and challenges would fit into the conceptual and operational blueprints of the ASEAN Community. We do know, however, that guideposts are crucial organizational and process inputs if the regional body were to play a rightful role in the lives of its large (n=0.625 billion) and youthful (median age: 28.9) population.

*Brendan Howe and Min Joung Park* discuss the evolution of the “ASEAN Way.” Their report shows that the ASEAN Way has slowly evolved—from having a state-centric concept of security, which may not fulfill human welfare needs amidst ongoing threats from natural disasters, diseases, and crimes, to embracing human security perspectives. Furthermore, the report indicates that the “ASEAN Way,” which mandates state sovereignty and non-interference, has been through the years qualified, reconceived, or even violated, because member-countries have a need for each other owing to transboundary challenges. The authors highlight the three major catalysts to the evolution of the “ASEAN Way”—the transnational challenges that have been occurring in the region, the influence of Japan's development aid, and the role of multilateral “tracked” diplomacy. The report concludes that the concept of human security could form part of a strategy to making the public more responsive to the implementation of the ASEAN policies.

As the authors acknowledge, “the ASEAN’s achievements in human security are at best, patchy, appearing in vision statements but short on substance.” The ASEAN Community is challenged therefore, based on the authors’ words, “to push for greater institutionalization of human security, particularly through consideration of the views and inputs of non-state actors and civil society groups in the process of consultation.” There is a further need for the ASEAN Community to devise mechanisms as to how the body can engage into some member-countries’ internal affairs that directly threaten human security (e.g., related to the persecution and annihilation of an ethnic minority).

*Rhoderick V. Nuncio* writes about bonding (i.e., having cohesion, ties, and relationship) and autonomy (i.e., having personal freedom to express oneself and a commitment to participate in socio-political activities) among Singaporean youths. The author underscores the role of the Internet in both processes, which is hardly surprising for a country with a very high Internet penetration rate (>80% versus the global average of 49%). He stresses, however, that the Internet in the said country is heavily skewed towards fostering the bonding of the local youths to the prevailing social order (i.e., of “illiberal democracy” and “political monolingualism”) rather than forming in them socio-political autonomy, and most importantly, engaging them in counter-discourses. If and whenever a counter-discourse happens in Singapore, such as via YouTube which the author describes as a singular act of a few and of the opposition, the said discourse would remain largely unnoticed or ignored, or to some extent ridiculed. The author strongly laments this stark imbalance, yet he is seemingly hopeful of the youths’ involvement in “a plethora of possible counter-discourses.”

Like Singapore, the ASEAN Community should seek to also bond its youths with the social order, but in this case the order would be in relation to the vision, ideals, and aims of the regional bloc. Rather than adopt an “illiberal democracy,” however, the ASEAN Community would be better off in the long run if it were to embrace a regime of genuine activism and engagement of the youths. These youths would be the eventual implementers of the regional bloc, and given the formative character of the regional body’s blueprints, their contribution in the way of out-of-the-box thinking would be key to the future of the bloc. Also, following Singapore, the ASEAN Community should effectively employ the Internet and other modern technologies to establish a liberal democracy among all its member-countries. I must point out that a functioning democracy would not be realized overnight; as a process and as a work in progress, it has birth pangs, with much of its success linked explicably to effective collective leadership. At the most fundamental level, however, a social order that places people and their voices at the heart of the vital processes, would be key to enhancing the quality of humanity more than a social order latched on “political monolingualism.”

*Therdchai Choibamroong* discusses data with implications for Thailand’s tourism management, as he reports on expectations and satisfaction of two groups of Chinese—the “general” and the “quality” tourists. Using data from a sample of Chinese tourists from five key cities in China (n=848), Therdchai reveals that majority of the general tourists travel with their tour operators while most of the quality tourists plan their trips and travel by themselves. As such, the former, as the report indicates, would face difficulties related to immigration and access to tourist attractions. Both groups, however, are satisfied with the beauty of Thailand’s tourist attractions (e.g., because of their Thai-ness) and hotels (e.g., because they are safe and clean). To meet the demands of the Chinese tourists, the study recommends some action points for the local government and tourism industry.

The ASEAN Community continues to strengthen its tourism sector through its Tourism Strategic Plan, for example by employing better marketing strategies and improving infrastructures in its efforts to maintain the region’s attractiveness to tourists. As a top tourism performer, Thailand should continue as a chief player in pursuing the Plan; and China, as the world’s second largest economy, should remain as a key market of the Plan. Overall, the ASEAN Community must ensure excellence of its tourist attractions, services, and facilities among all its 10 member-countries to meet the expectations and satisfaction of the tourists. Although the ASEAN Community would be implementing a region-wide tourism program, it should not and cannot make its tourist attractions the same or monolithic throughout the region. Tourists should experience each member-country for its unique culture



rather than for its cultural similarities with other ASEAN countries. There lies the challenge therefore of how the bloc can conserve and sustain its unique tourist attractions, such as the Amphawa in Thailand which *Pajaree Ackaradejruangsri and John Paolo Rivera* are reporting about in their Research Brief.

Although tourism is a revenue source for the ASEAN Community (e.g., 5%–6% of the respective nominal gross domestic product of the member-countries comes from tourism), its overall effect on economic growth is limited. *Hanafiah Harvey, Fumitaka Furuoka, and Qaiser Munir* in their Research Brief provide evidence regarding the lack of contribution of tourism, and in contrast, the presence of contributions of real income and real exchange rates to the economic growth of Malaysia. The bloc's focus should be cast on matters having greater strategic impacts on economic growth rather than on tourism alone.

*Choo Chin Low and Khairiah Salwa Mokhtar* write about, and in the process, critique the external and internal migration control of Malaysia. Among others, the authors highlight the contradictions between Malaysia's national security and its economic interests as well as its internationalization goal, and they effectively relate these incompatibilities with the enforcement of migration control. At the outset of and throughout the article, the authors are clearly in favor of Malaysia to enforce its internal migration control, for which they recommend that it improves its digitization of borders, workplace enforcement, and regional cooperation.

Intra-regional migration will always be a compelling issue. Richer countries—amidst or sans economic uncertainties in the horizon—usually have preferences in terms of the numbers and types of migrants that they would want to host in their homeland. Certainly, they would want to welcome migrants who are skilled. The ASEAN has a Plan of Action for Cooperation on Immigration Matters, but, unfortunately, the document is not comprehensive. For example, it has only talked about skilled workers and professionals and not about ordinary citizens who have a more compelling economic reason to migrate; neither does the document discuss about illegal migration, which lies at the heart of the arguments advanced by the authors. Furthermore, how would the ASEAN Community respond to a key suggestion of the authors for deportation purposes—of having “a complete database and streamlining it to distinguish the different categories of migrants?” In addition, how would the ASEAN Community respond to the cross-border migration of people who do so because of ethnic cleansing and persecution? The regional bloc must discuss with member-countries, without equivocation, the many contentious issues and challenges concerning cross-country migration.

*Adilak Pumim, Chalita Srinuan, and Vinai Panjakajornsak* discuss evidence on factors associated with mobile phone customer loyalty in Thailand. With its very high mobile phone density (i.e., 967 per 1000 population), the ASEAN Community could tap mobile phone providers that have the solid trust and loyalty of consumers towards fostering regional development issues.

*Niphon Bundechanan and Wannong Fongsuwan* report on an integrated marketing communications of a health and wellness product among Thai Gen Y/Millennials. The ASEAN Community—a veritable market of products and services for health and wellness—can help guide the young generation in making informed health choices.

*Duangporn Kraiuth and Vinai Panjakajornsak* discuss the ASEAN readiness of Thai engineers using a structural equation modeling analysis. Given that Thailand is the region's second largest economy and is relatively advanced in many ways, the authors' findings are rather surprising. Other countries in the region should learn something from this study to benefit their own pool of engineers.

*Roberto Javier Jr., Marlon Era, and Cristina Rodriguez* highlight the role of midwives as key family planning providers. The ASEAN Community lacks medical doctors (e.g., in Vietnam, there are seven doctors for every 10,000 patients) so midwives are playing a vital role in filling the gap. While the region looks for a long-term solution to the shortage of medical doctors, it must strengthen its training and development of midwives as well as other allied professionals.

*Grachel Manguni and Tom De Herdt* write about the banning of home birth in the Philippines. Although with very serious health repercussions, home births are a continuing practice among millions of mothers in the region due to dearth of health services and sociocultural factors. To ban or not to ban would be a compelling agenda for the ASEAN Community.

Overall, this edition has raised several cross-cutting issues and challenges on public engagement, human security, tourism, migration control, mobile phone use, and health. We will help deepen our understanding of these matters as we pursue and publish more studies and discourses on them. Continue sending us your manuscripts. Let us hope that our contributions would help the ASEAN Community chart its destiny in the 21st century and beyond. See you!

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