CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS TOWARDS BUILDING AN ASEAN KNOWLEDGE-SOCIETY: SOME OBSERVATIONS[1]

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ABSTRACT

Of late, there have been increasing efforts to create a knowledge society (or k-society) among ASEAN member countries both individually and collectively. Taking into account the importance of a k-society for ASEAN, a concept wider than k-economy, this paper will elaborate on the aspect of knowledge sharing (or the lack of it) and the consequent challenges and prospects towards building an ASEAN knowledge society. The paper is divided into three sections: (1) The possibility of a knowledge society (k-society) within ASEAN (2) Limitations in creating an ASEAN knowledge society (3) Prospects and Challenges for ASEAN knowledge societies vis-à-vis the European Union (EU) experience.

PRELUDE

The birth of ASEAN (or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), comprising Malaysia, the republics of Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and the Kingdom of Thailand in August 1967 was indeed a historic moment. It marked the beginnings of multi-lateral relations among member countries, the first of its kind, in the region which had the ultimate objective of bringing into its fold all the Southeast Asian states.[2] The Bangkok Declaration, signed on 8 August 1967, to commemorate the birth of ASEAN by the five founding members was a communiqué calling for joint efforts to promote economic cooperation, social progress and cultural development in the region. Apart from that, the association also aimed at safeguarding the political and economic stability of the region against big power rivalry and to serve as a forum for the resolution of intra-regional differences.[3] The Bangkok Declaration succinctly underscores these objectives, it states that:

> The Association represents the collective will of the nations to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom, and prosperity.[4]

In other words, the primary aim of the grouping was to create an "ASEAN community", i.e. a community in diplomacy, economics, culture and others.[5] The vision of creating an ASEAN community succeeded, to some extent, in particular with the growth of its members from ASEAN 5 to ASEAN 10 within a span of 30 years. Nonetheless its flaws or limited engagement within the grouping and the general populace of ASEAN countries has earned it the appellation "an imagined community".

Since its birth, ASEAN has indeed progressed beyond the fields of diplomacy, cultural and social activities. Its main area of focus apart from security especially in the communist counter-insurgency periods of the 1960 and 1970s has been economics. Economics became an important agenda particularly after the end of the Vietnam War. The subject was first raised at the ASEAN Summit of 1976 at Bali. The Declaration of ASEAN Accord signed in 1976 attests to the importance of regional economic cooperation based on the principle of natural economic complementarities. The declaration states that:

> Member states shall take cooperative action in their national and regional development programmes, utilizing as far as possible the resources available in the ASEAN region to broaden the complementarity of their respective economies.[6]

From then on the growth of ASEAN has been benchmarked by regional economic co-operative frameworks while constantly holding onto the non-interventionist approach in domestic politics of member countries. In 1984, Brunei Darussalam was admitted as the sixth member. In 1995, Vietnam also joined ASEAN. Lao People's Democratic Republic and Burma/Myanmar became members in 1997. Cambodia joined in 1999.

Today, ASEAN economic cooperation covers the following areas: trade, investment, industry, services, finance, agriculture, forestry, energy, transportation and communication, intellectual property, small and medium enterprises, and tourism. The ten member countries that make up ASEAN have a combined GDP of Euro 4,117 billion (2001), but demonstrate large economic disparities among them. With a population of some 503 million people, they make up one of the largest regional markets in the world.[7]

Yet the development of a free trade area among member countries only materialised some 25 years after ASEAN was first founded. In 1992, member countries signed an agreement on the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barrier and the creation of a free trade area, called AFTA (or the ASEAN Free Trade Area). AFTA is expected to be completed by the year 2008. The objective of AFTA is the establishment of free trade between its members, with tariffs reduced to 0-5 percent.

In 1996, the idea of shared prosperity was further enhanced when member countries adopted the framework for Elevating Functional Cooperation with the theme of "Shared prosperity through human development, technological competitiveness, and social cohesiveness." The following plans were identified under this framework.

- ASEAN Plan of Action on Social Development
- ASEAN Plan of Action on Culture and Information;
- ASEAN Plan of Action on Science and Technology;
- ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on the Environment;
- ASEAN Plan of Action on Drug Abuse Control; and
- ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime

Meanwhile, with the demand for greater economic openness and partly as a lesson learned from the 1997 financial crisis, ASEAN decided to move from AFTA to an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The AEC will be characterized by a single market and production base, with free flow of goods, services, investment and skilled labour, and freer flow of capital by 2020[8].

Externally, ASEAN has further expanded with the ASEAN Plus 3 grouping, which includes ASEAN plus Japan, China and South Korea. This macro-regional entity involving nations beyond the Southeast Asian boundary is a quantum leap from the usual sub-regional cooperation referred variously as national economic territories (or NETs) or growth triangles such as the IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle), SIJORI (Singapore-Johor-Riau) triangle and BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Triangle). Compared to these NETs, ASEAN Plus 3 is a greater and formidable trading block and a worthy competitor to US and its bilateral trading partners.

There are many internal and external dynamics that will determine the extent to which economic integration will succeed in the ASEAN region. One, that is the focus of this paper, is knowledge sharing. There has been increasing attention from ASEAN in the sharing and dissemination of knowledge among member states with the understanding that it is one of the main internal dynamics that will push for greater economic integration.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The aspect of "building knowledge societies" has become high priority for ASEAN in the last few years. In a keynote address at the ASEAN Regional Workshop in 2000, the then Secretary General of ASEAN, Mr Rodolfo C. Severino stressed "there are few things at this time more urgent or more important for ASEAN than building knowledge societies".[9]

The focus on sharing knowledge i.e. building knowledge societies, albeit a little delayed, is crucial for the sustainability of an ASEAN community. It is also indicative of the growing importance of information and communications technology (ICT) as a tool for development and the realisation of k-society. Thus, efforts to build knowledge societies in ASEAN were inextricably linked to a simultaneous effort at developing and sharing information and technology. Nonetheless, Mr. Severino was quick to point out, "knowledge societies or "learning societies" are not merely knowledge and learning industries or knowledge and learning economies. Rather, the idea of a knowledge society goes beyond technology and its applications,

suggesting a more integrated or holistic approach wherein the impact of the information age is "not just on industry and the economy but on society as a whole and on people's very lives" [10] In other words, information technology is a tool not only to create k-industries and k-economies but more importantly it is a vital tool for the creation and sustenance of a k-society.

A pertinent question to ask is how aggressive is ASEAN in promoting the sharing of knowledge and research among and within ASEAN countries.

(1) *Is An ASEAN Knowledge-Society Possible?*

There have been significant developments in ASEAN indicating the positive prospects of realising an ASEAN k-society. The establishment of an ASEAN Information Infrastructure that was adopted through the Hanoi Accord (1998) is a case in point.

ASEAN INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE (AII) AND E-ASEAN

The aim of building a knowledge society within the ASEAN community is evident through the plan of action adopted in Hanoi in December 1998, which called for the establishment of an ASEAN Information Infrastructure (AII). The ASEAN members collectively resolved to develop the information content of the AII by 2004 through agreements on the design, standardization, inter-connection and inter-operability of Information Technology Systems (by 2001). This was the initial agreement that eventually led to the proposal for establishing an "e-ASEAN".

The concept of e-ASEAN aims to pull together and integrate ASEAN members' efforts in information and communications technology while maintaining links with the Global Information Infrastructure. Through inter-connectivity, e-ASEAN would attempt to harmonize policies, regulations and standards in information and communications technology within ASEAN. It would place priority on the use of that technology for tourism, trade, education and employment. It would pay particular attention to cooperation in the development of human resources for information and communications technology. It would be government led but private-sector driven. [11]

However, while the idea of a collective information infrastructure is essential as a means of knowledge and information networking and sharing, there are glaring obstacles towards realising e-ASEAN. These obstacles vary according to the type of networking and sharing in ASEAN. These can be divided into government to government sharing, private sector to private sector sharing and people to people sharing. Research institutes and universities fall under both government to government and private sector to private sector sharing.

The digital divide and the disparities in income distribution, education and literacy levels among member countries is a major obstacle for the lack of sharing and networking between people to people .

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX AND ASEAN

ASEAN countries today are still considered a part of the third world although there is obvious disparity among the countries in terms of infrastructural development as well as GDP growth rates, some of the ASEAN countries have performed more impressively than many of the European societies. But most of Southeast Asia's approximately 503 million people are poor and are not well educated.

The Human Development Index (or HDI) shows some of the disparities reflecting a region divided in many aspects. Table 1 shows that the gap in the HDI value of ASEAN countries is big with Singapore reaching 0.9 while Lao PDR managing 0.54. Even among the CLMV nations (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam), which only recently became ASEAN members, the gap is evident, with Laos recording the lowest HDI ranking.

Table 1: HDI (Rank and Value) and Income (GDP and Distribution) of ASEAN Countries

Country	HDI rank (position)	HDI value	GDP per capita (USD)	GINI Index
Singapore	25	0.9	24,481	42.5
Brunei	33	0.866	19,210	Na
Malaysia	61	0.796	9,512	49.2
Thailand	73	0.778	7,595	43.2
Philippines	84	0.758	4,321	46.1
Vietnam	108	0.704	2,490	37
Indonesia	110	0.697	3,361	34.3
Myanmar	129	0.578	Na	40.4
Cambodia	130	0.571	2,078	Na
Lao PDR	133	0.545	1,759	37

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2005* (all figures are for 2003)

In the field of education, disparities in adult literacy rate, enrolment ratio in schools and public expenditure on education further accentuate the gap among member countries and pose a huge problem for the viability of knowledge sharing among these countries. Brunei, Thailand, Philippines and Singapore have a high adult literacy rate ranging between 92.7 to 92.5 %, while Lao PDR and Cambodia have a relatively lower percentage of 68 to 73 %. (See table 2).

Table 2: Education: Literacy, Enrolment and Expenditure among ASEAN countries

Country	Adult literacy rate (%)	Combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools (%)	Public expenditure on education (% of total government expenditure)
Singapore	92.5	87	Na
Brunei	92.7	74	9.1
Malaysia	88.7	71	20.3
Thailand	92.6	73	28.3
Philippines	92.6	82	17.8
Vietnam	90.3	64	Na
Indonesia	87.9	66	9.0
Myanmar	89.7	48	Na
Cambodia	73.6	59	15.3
Lao PDR	68.7	61	11.0

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2005* (all figures are for 2003)

Poverty and education are inextricably linked. It is impossible for poor countries to invest heavily in education. But even large allocations alone cannot ensure the quality of education. The problem with all Southeast Asian countries, as with Asian countries as a whole, is that while there is emphasis placed on the importance of education and knowledge, there is a tendency to promote existing knowledge rather than to encourage the crossing of knowledge boundaries.

Southeast Asia or even Asia has been content for over centuries to let the west invent ideas while Southeast Asia/Asia gleefully absorbs and regurgitates western inventions. Moreover, Southeast Asia/Asia has been lulled into the belief that creativity must be expressed via the discipline of science. Therefore the study of science is more important than the study of human affairs (i.e. social sciences) and even the study of the latter must be based on quantitative-clinical models of analysis.

Besides, even when empirical data is available on Southeast Asian societies, there is a need to incorporate the data within existing theoretical frameworks. Writings, which are atheoretical, are deemed to be lacking in "intellectual weight". But adopting existing theoretical frameworks and applying empirical data, collected and collated from research among Southeast Asian societies, onto these frameworks risks the possibility of glossing over a very important point, viz. that Southeast Asian societies are not homogeneous. If anything they are a highly divergent - multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and very complex societies. There is an urgent need to reconcile or consider data in the light of local particularisms. Take the case of the Malays in Southeast Asia: the question may be asked, "Who are the Malays and

what are their socio-cultural characteristics?" Despite some common characteristics, differences exist among the Malays of the Archipelago, for instance, in the practices of the Adat Laws and the importation of "Arabic" values and norms *vis-à-vis* indigenous Malay practices in the performing arts and rituals which clearly vary from one Malay group to another.[12]

It is widely acknowledged that the modern era is a knowledge era and Southeast Asians/Asians are reminded too that they now live in a globalised world meaning, in effect, that like it or not Southeast Asia/Asia is open to western and the larger global influences.

Though in recent years, in Southeast Asia, there has been admission on the part of the ruling elite that creativity is indispensable, in practice there is no realization of its true meaning. There has not been even a serious attempt by ASEAN countries to take steps to acquire, more independently within the regional context, knowledge of one another's culture. Consciously or unconsciously they tend to learn about one another from those outside the region. In fact, the discipline of regional studies in Southeast Asia i.e. Southeast Asian Studies was born outside the region. Knowledge of the region as a whole too is mostly acquired from books authored by scholars from outside the region.[13] This "striking feature" of Southeast Asian studies/ historiography prompted historian Nicholas Tarling to raise the question if indeed, "Southeast Asia as a region is an outsiders' construct?"[14]

SOUTHEAST ASIA AREA STUDIES

Cornell University in the United States is the pioneer institution of higher learning offering Southeast Asian Studies as a discipline of study. The programme was introduced in 1950 assisted by funding from The Rockefeller Foundation. This was followed by the establishment of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies in Hull University, United Kingdom in 1962. In Australia, the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies was established in Monash University, Melbourne in 1965. This was followed by the setting up of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra. In Europe, the Center for Asian Studies in Amsterdam, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient in Paris and the Institut Asienkunde in Hamburg were established as teaching and research institutions focusing on the discipline of Asia/Southeast Asian Area Studies. [15]

Most of these universities also offer the study of Southeast Asian languages as a crucial component of the discipline of Southeast Asian Area Studies. While fellow Southeast Asians could hardly communicate in the language of their neighbours, American, European and Japanese researchers conversant in one or more languages spoken in the Southeast Asian region began to embark on intensive research, mostly anthropological in nature, to understand the region. It was only in the mid-1970s, that Southeast Asian Studies began to be offered in Southeast Asia.

University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur was the first to start the program of Southeast Asian Studies, offered at its Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

This was followed suit by other regional universities. Today the National University of Singapore and Thammasat University in Bangkok offer Southeast Asian Studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The increasing number of universities and research institutions such as the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore with a focus on Southeast Asia/Regional affairs encouraged research and disseminated knowledge on Southeast Asia.[16] It also paved the way for the birth of exchange programmes involving numerous Southeast Asian universities and research outfits.

The ASEAN University Network (AUN), the Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP) and the Asian Scholarship Foundation (ASF) are examples of initiatives created to encourage the sharing of knowledge of Southeast Asia transcending national (political) boundaries.

The birth and interest in regional studies, in particular Southeast Asian Studies and ASEAN Studies, in institutions of higher learning in ASEAN countries is a promising start to bridging the gap in knowledge-sharing among ASEAN member countries. The endeavour, however, does have some setbacks and limitations.

(2) *Limitations in Creating an ASEAN Knowledge Society*

The lack of intellectual independence is a distinct handicap in the knowledge era as knowledge or *k* as it is understood today does not refer specifically to what is known but to the capacity for the invention of ideas. And for this to happen there must be a suspicion-free flow and exchange of information (of course this excludes classified or confidential matters). Bureaucratic practices in getting access to information, research materials such as archival documents and government gazettes infringe upon academic independence. In fact it is easier to access records on colonial Malaya in Britain or on Indonesia in Netherlands than it is in the respective Southeast Asian countries. A Malaysian working on Thailand gets to look at Colonial and Foreign Office records as well as trade reports and old newspaper clippings on the country of research almost immediately after arriving and registering him/herself as a user at the Public Records Office in Kew, London. The whole process of registering and being issued a reader card is done in less than an hour and classifications of nationality and ethnicity are not an issue or prerequisite to be issued reader-cards. In some Southeast Asian countries, a prospective researcher will have to send in a written application along with a proposal of the research project at least three months prior to the date of starting research. Approval or permission to use archives and resource centres can take anytime between 3 to 6 months and before a reader-card is issued a certain sum of money must be placed as non-returnable deposit!

Apart from the limitations in conducting inter-ASEAN research and knowledge sharing, there are other substantial limitations to the creation of an ASEAN knowledge society.

Firstly, ASEAN is comprised of countries that are divergent in geography, history, culture and politics although there are some

commonalities as well. Different historical experiences, political developments as well as economic developments in the postcolonial era widened the division further.

There exists disparity among member countries in terms of internal and political developments. There are for instance, socialist versus capitalist blocks among member countries as well as military and religious-fundamental regimes, which can make working together a challenge. ASEAN is also economically divided between the "haves" and "have-nots". Some of the countries are capable of achieving NIC status while others grapple with closed-door isolationist policies or have only recently engaged in market –oriented open economies such as Laos and Vietnam.[17]

ASEAN is not ready to come to terms with globalisation and the k-era because it lacks common grounds or consensus. The aftermath of the Asian Crisis demonstrated differences in approaches among member countries, in fact it sent a clear image of a house divided; some countries were pro-IMF aid, others against and still others reluctant to offer aid to neighbouring affected countries. Some ASEAN countries are vocal and constantly voice out anti-globalisation sentiments for fear of the crippling effect on peasants and small producers while others have adopted "globalisation in totality". Meanwhile, poverty remains a big issue with some of the ASEAN countries; the economic disparity underlines the different approaches and cautious attitude towards globalisation. The problem is further exacerbated by the digital divide between the member countries

Some member countries lack internal development such as infrastructure for growth, and other weaknesses such as political instability, terrorist-threat as well as mutual suspicion. AFTA itself is "plagued by fears among member countries concerning the unequal distribution of gains".[18] In addition, the threat posed by territorial disputes among member countries serves to divide more than unite.[19] ASEAN nations act and react as individual nations rather than a collective grouping in settling disputes. Such actions tend to support the contention that "nationalism, and not regionalism, is the motivating force in the governance of the organisation [ASEAN]". [20]

Lastly, there is little dialogue among and with the people of ASEAN. Meetings are usually held at state or official (elite) level, the people (masses) lack an ASEAN spirit or a strong sense of a "community", and in fact to some the association is meaningless.

(3) *ASEAN vis-à-vis EU in knowledge/information sharing*

The sharing of information in general between ASEAN should be enhanced in view of the recent economic regional grouping of many countries such as the European Union (EU), NAFTA and the more recent grouping between the South Asian countries i.e. SAAAC. Of these, the EU has made a significant impact as a regional grouping.

In June 2002, European Heads of State endorsed the *e*Europe 2005 Action Plan, which sets up a number of targets to be achieved by the end of 2005, within the overall objective of the Lisbon Council for 2010 of "making

Europe within ten years the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world".[21] Consequently, the EU is in the process of adopting a new European law that will allow EU members to share a lot of information freely amongst them but at the same time prohibit members from sharing information with non-members for specific circumstances (Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council concerning statistics on the Information Society [COM (2003) 509]).

Although this exclusion is supposed to avoid countries with links to terrorism from obtaining information, many academics are concerned that the exclusion will also discriminate developing countries in general. The EU law-in-progress may sound like an extreme example or a premature warning to ASEAN member countries of the strengths and flaws in information sharing; but ASEAN as a regional grouping with a collective bargaining power stands a better chance of reducing the risk of being excluded by the EU as compared to the chances of individual nations hoping to be included in the information-sharing network. Furthermore, as more regional groupings are formed, ASEAN can compete better with these other groupings internationally as a strong collective voice for more FDI, R&D infrastructures, and export market.

CONCLUSION

It is not the intention here to provide such a gloomy picture of the future for an ASEAN knowledge society, but the symptoms of the current predicaments must be stated explicitly before a remedial cure can be prescribed.

Regional institutions working within the parameters of MOUs and bilateral or multilateral exchange programs such as the SEASREP (based in the Philippines) and AUN (based in Thailand) offer a glimmer of hope for the possibility of greater networking among ASEAN countries to encourage the exchange of information. But these micro-level sharing must transcend MOU universities and institutions to embrace all of Southeast Asia.

The ASEAN Way which has been the catch phrase of ASEAN governments and the ASEAN-ness promoted by ASEAN governments will remain elitist and state centric for as long as the people of ASEAN do not feel that they are a part of an ASEAN brotherhood or community (imagined or otherwise). It is important that, at this juncture, more of ASEAN's educated community should together endeavour to share, create and ideate towards the realisation of a k-society.

The active participation at the government-to-government level in knowledge sharing in ASEAN is evident from various government initiatives in security, trade and trans-boundary related environmental issues. However, this does not trickle down to knowledge sharing between people to people. Private sector sharing is limited to business activity. Thus, universities should play the strategic role in bridging the gap in attaining an ASEAN knowledge society. And as such, initiatives such as the SEASREP Travelling Classroom and the AUN Youth Exchange Programs are all

commendable and every effort must be made to ensure the success and sustenance of such efforts.

ENDNOTES

[1] This paper was presented at the 6th ASEAN University Network (AUN) Educational Forum, Yangon, Myanmar, 15 - 28 August 2004.

[2] SEATO and MAPHILINDO, two groupings formed prior to 1967 comprised fewer member countries and were indeed precursors to the formation of ASEAN.

[3] Overview: Association of Southeast Asian Nations, obtained from http://www.aseansec.org

[4] The ASEAN Declaration, Bangkok, 8 August 1967, obtained from http://www.aseansec.org

[5] Abd. Rahman b. Haji Yusoff, "Effective Program for ASEAN Industrial Cooperation 1978-1983" in B.A. R. Mokhzani et.al.(eds.), *ASEAN Economic Cooperation and the New International Economic Order*,(1980).

[6] Declaration of ASEAN Concord, Indonesia, 24 Feb 1976, obtained from http://www.aseansec.org

[7] EU-ASEAN, January 2003, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/asean/intro/index.htm

[8] "Towards an ASEAN single market and single investment destination", Ong Keng Yong Secretary-General of ASEAN at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2003, see www.aseansec.org/15365.htm

[9] "Building Knowledge Societies: ASEAN in the Information Age" (26 January 2000), Keynote Address by H.E. Mr. Rodolfo C. Severino, Secretary- General of ASEAN, at the ASEAN Regional Workshop on Building Knowledge Societies, Kuala Lumpur, 26 January 2000, see http://www.aseansec.org/3421.htm

[10] Ibid.

[11] See http://www.aseansec.org/3421.htm

[12] The extent of "Arabisation" of the Malay culture, for instance, is a debated subject in Malaysia. On the various meanings of being Malay and "Malayness" , see Timothy Barnard (ed.), *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, (2004).

[13] Among works on Southeast Asia, the most cited and probably the earliest of its kind is D.G.E Hall's , *History of Southeast Asia*, (1955, reprinted 1981). This was followed by Brian Harrison, *Southeast Asia, A Short History*, London: Macmillan & Co, (1963); Nicholas Tarling , A Concise History of *Southeast Asia*, New York: Praeger, (1966);); D.J. Steinberg (ed.), *In Search of Southeast Asia*, New York: Praeger, (1971); Milton Osborne (1979), *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History, NSW: Allen & Unwin*, (1979, numerous reprints thereafter) and finally, Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1992). The latter however, includes authors who are from the Southeast Asian region.

[14] Nicholas Tarling, " The Historians of Southeast Asia", in Andrew TH Tan, Michael LR Smith , Khoo Kay Kim (eds.), *Seeking Alternative Perspectives Of Southeast Asia*, Ipoh: Perak Academy, (2004), p. 34.

[15] Mohammad Halib and Tim Huxley (eds.), *An Introduction to Southeast Asian Studies*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, (1996), pp. 2-5.

[16] Ibid., p.6.

[17] For a frank analysis of the problems and challenges facing ASEAN today see K.Kesavapany, " ASEAN In The 21st Century" in Andrew TH Tan, Michael LR Smith , Khoo Kay Kim (eds.), *Seeking Alternative Perspectives Of Southeast Asia*, pp. 136-145. The author is a former Singapore diplomat and currently Director of ISEAS, Singapore

[18] Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia, ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, London and New York: Routledge, (2001), p. 143.

[19] See Andrew Tan, "Unspoken Fears: Inter-State tensions Within ASEAN", in Andrew TH Tan, Michael LR Smith , Khoo Kay Kim (eds.), *Seeking Alternative Perspectives Of Southeast Asia*, pp. 172-189.

[20] K.Kesavapany, "ASEAN In The 21st Century"in Andrew TH Tan, Michael LR Smith , Khoo Kay Kim (eds.), *Seeking Alternative Perspectives Of Southeast Asia*, p. 144.

[21] See eEurope 2005 Action Plan, europa.ev.int/eeurope/2005.