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ABSTRACT

ASEAN has launched the ASEAN Community at the beginning of 2016 in what was only the latest signal of a convergence with the integration path pursued by the European Union. Analysing the progress made by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations since 2003 on the road to building the Community—and what it has set for itself until 2025—it would appear that the association deserves little credit for developments in its socio-cultural dimension, while the lack of a formal defence agreement hinders its political-security growth. Even in the most advanced ASEAN Economic Community the inability to reach an agreement over a custom union casts a long shadow on its aspirations of creating a single market and moving from mere liberalisation to economic integration. However, ASEAN's ambitions for a rules-based system, while short of a European depth, still matters to the future of regionalism in Asia.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 27th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015, the group announced the establishment of the ASEAN Community by the end of the year, marking the culmination of a decades-long effort to integrate the region.¹ In the words of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak in his opening speech at the Summit, ASEAN is “a body with One Vision, and One identity; an

association that will be reborn as One Community, ready to take its place on the world stage as a new force in the Asia-Pacific and beyond”.²

The ASEAN was founded in 1967, comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. These nations would later be joined by Brunei Darussalam (which entered the association in 1984); Viet Nam (1995); Lao PDR and Myanmar (1997); and finally, Cambodia (1999).³ It was only in 2003, however, that the 10 ASEAN leaders resolved to create an ASEAN Community, a plan that has been anticipated with the signing in 2007 of the Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015.⁴

The ASEAN Community comprises three pillars, namely, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC); the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC); and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).⁵ Each pillar has developed on the path of a specific 'Blueprint' until 2015 and now in a renewed version from 2016 to 2025, as part of the general ASEAN Community Vision 2025.⁶ The foundation of the ASEAN Community invites comparisons with the European Union, and in particular its mid-Community phase as well as an assessment of what ASEAN has achieved so far and has set for itself until 2025. The complex integrational paths within the EU and ASEAN till date seem to be only superficially similar. A more substantial convergence is envisioned for the future, if ASEAN is able to live up to its ambitions.

SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY: INCIDENTAL SUCCESS

The ASCC appears to be the least developed pillar of the ASEAN Community. The first Blueprint of the Socio-Cultural project was based on an ASEAN Community that is people-centred; “a common identity and a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced”.⁷ In 2013 a mid-term review assessed positively the progress in this field, with 90 percent of all the planned actions addressed, but at the same time acknowledging the various challenges in the implementation, especially at the national level.⁸ These challenges can be extended to the other pillars as well. The obstacles that

have faced the ASEAN Member States (AMS) relate to financial and human resources, technical expertise or language proficiency, as well as coordination, monitoring and awareness of the initiatives among government officials and the general public.⁹

The new 2016 Blueprint celebrates the advances made in diverse areas like human development, social justice and rights, social protection and welfare, environmental sustainability, ASEAN awareness, and narrowing the development gap. Policy commitments such as the 'Declaration on Non-Communicable Diseases in ASEAN' and the 'Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women and Children in ASEAN' are presented as determining actions.¹⁰ The document points out various areas of improvement in human indicators across the region: the proportion of people living on less than US\$ 1.25 per day fell from one in two persons to one in eight in the last two decades; the net enrolment rate for children of primary school age rose from 92 percent in 1999 to 94 percent in 2012; the proportion of seats held by women in parliaments increased from 12 percent in 2000 to 18.5 percent in 2012; maternal mortality per 100,000 live births fell from 371.2 in 1990 to 103.7 in 2012; and the proportion of urban population living in slums decreased from 40 percent in 2000 to 31 percent in 2012.¹¹

Still, it is acknowledged that the region remains beset with a host of issues, such as: tens of millions remain in extreme poverty; intra-ASEAN migration is on the rise, from 1.5 million in 1990 to 6.5 million in 2013; malaria and tuberculosis remain significant threats in some AMS; and millions continue to be deprived of full primary education due to the lack of access to schools and high drop-out rates.¹² Other problems that continue to affect the AMS are hunger due to food price hikes; human-induced disasters; pollution; and extremism.¹³

It is difficult to assess what impact has been created by the ASEAN actions on these issues, which can all be better described in the overall context of developing countries. Under the ASCC framework, 109 actions are envisioned until 2025. Besides what is promoted in rhetoric, however, only less than a dozen of all the actions have had a concrete impact on the ASEAN mandate in this field. These include the ASEAN guidelines for

quality care and support of vulnerable groups; regional mechanisms to promote access to ICT for all; establishing a regional database for key sectors to support ASEAN policies and programmes; and, finally, to establish shared strategies to respond to the impacts of climate change as well as possibly establishing financial and insurance mechanisms for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

POLITICAL-SECURITY COMMUNITY: UNCONVENTIONAL COMMITMENT

The second pillar, which is somehow more mature, is the ASEAN Political-Security Community. One of the first documents to be produced by the ASEAN in relation to security was the 1971 Declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, mostly a statement against interference by outside powers in the postcolonial age.¹⁴ Several other documents have followed since then, such as the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and the 1995 Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.¹⁵ However, ASEAN members have been unable to produce a formal collective defence agreement; ASEAN represents merely an international regime that provides reduced uncertainty and risk.

A first Blueprint for the APSC was devised for the 2009-2015 period based on "the principle of comprehensive security" through norm setting, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace building.¹⁶ However, the focus seemed to be on intra-state and transnational security issues such as haze pollution from burning rainforests in Indonesia, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome epidemic in 2002-03, Avian Flu, and terrorism.¹⁷ Among the measures envisioned, what is worth mentioning are the regional exchanges among ASEAN defence and military officials at all levels, the 2011 ASEAN Defence Industry Collaboration with the overly ambitious aim of self-reliance by 2030, an annual ASEAN Security Outlook, the ASEAN early warning system, and the establishment of a network among the ASEAN Member States' peacekeeping centres to conduct joint planning, training, and sharing of experiences, especially in the context of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).¹⁸ Numerous table-top

exercises have taken place since 2012 and in 2013, the ASEAN Defence Ministers Plus its associates (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, ROK, Russian Federation, and the United States) for the first time held practical exercises in the areas of HADR, military medicine, counter-terrorism, and maritime security.¹⁹ In 2015 an ARF Disaster Relief Exercise took place in Kedah, Malaysia. Also noteworthy is the 2014 Direct Communications Link in ASEAN countries that aims to promote quick-response cooperation in emergency situations, particularly in maritime security.²⁰ The political side of the APSC is based on the 2008 ASEAN Charter, the previous legal personality base for ASEAN before the present Community form of 2015. Article 2 of the Charter urges member states to respect fundamental freedoms and the promotion and protection of human rights and social justice, and the promotion of these goals is also written about in the purposes of ASEAN in Article 1.²¹ In this respect, Article 14 provides for the establishment of an ASEAN human rights body whose activities are mostly declaratory and promotional, without a proper review mechanism to enforce its authority on member states.²² Dispute resolution is addressed through “good offices, conciliation or mediation”, through instruments like the 2004 ASEAN Protocol on Enhanced Dispute Settlement Mechanism.²³ In case of a serious breach of the Charter or noncompliance, Article 20 provides that the issue should be referred to the Head of State or Government Summit; Article 22 states that member states “shall endeavour to resolve peacefully all disputes in a timely manner through dialogue, consultation and negotiation”.²⁴ However, there is no express provision for sanctions in the event of noncompliance.²⁵

The 2016 Blueprint explores a development in the political dimension with Standard Operating Procedures on consular assistance by ASEAN Missions in Third Countries to nationals of ASEAN Member States where they have no representation and with ASEAN business travel card and even an ASEAN common visa for non-ASEAN nationals.²⁶ On Security, the 2016 Blueprint enhances its asymmetric threats dimension with an ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crimes covering, *inter alia*, money laundering, sea piracy, cybercrime and trafficking with the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and

Children.²⁷ Coordinated border patrols and inspections between ASEAN Member States are also an explored possibility in the Blueprint.²⁸ The scope of ASEAN regarding maritime security has been expanded with specific mention of the objective to maintain the South China Sea as a sea of peace, prosperity and cooperation.²⁹ In particular, ASEAN declares to resolve territorial and jurisdictional disputes without resorting to the threat or use of force, exercising self-restraint and, while specifically mentioning China, by promoting trust and implementing confidence building measures.³⁰ The ASEAN Secretariat is reinforced in several instances and the centrality of ASEAN in international processes is stressed. However, the 2016-2025 Blueprint remains mute on envisioning a collective defence agreement; there are only six declaratory actions in the chapter on strengthening ASEAN institutional capacity and presence.³¹

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY: THE STRUGGLING CORE

Arguably, the most developed and central pillar of the ASEAN Community is the AEC. The first step towards economic integration in the ASEAN was the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) concluded in 1992 by the then six members of the organisation. The agreement called for the reduction of import tariffs below five percent among the members, and for the elimination of quantitative and other non-tariff barriers to trade.³² Economic policy significantly developed with the 2008 ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint. Since then, the ASEAN GDP has nearly doubled with a combined GDP of over US\$2.5 trillion, while average GDP per capita grew by almost 80 percent to over US\$ 4,000.³³ By 2014, ASEAN has become Asia's third largest market, and the world's 7th.³⁴ After all, with a combined population of over 622 million, ASEAN has a vast consumer base, behind only China and India globally.³⁵ Further, over 50 percent of ASEAN's population is under the age of 30, making up a large proportion of both the current and future workforce.³⁶ Collectively, the intra-ASEAN market is the largest for ASEAN trade at 24.1 percent in 2014.³⁷ Likewise, the region has moved to 11 percent of total global foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in 2014 as compared

to five percent in 2007.³⁸ At 17.9 percent, ASEAN's intra-regional FDI inflows is the second largest in the world, behind only the EU.³⁹

The first Blueprint was divided into four main objectives, the first being the creation of a single market and production base through the free flow of goods, services, investments, skilled labour and freer flow of capital.⁴⁰ To date, the ASEAN-6 (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), have virtually eliminated their intra-regional tariffs, with 99.2 percent of tariff lines at 0 percent.⁴¹ For the CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam), the figure stands at 90.86 percent, giving an ASEAN average of 95.99 percent.⁴² Beyond tariffs, ASEAN also introduced a Self Certification Project to simplify the Rules of Origin for goods. Five member states are now using the ASEAN Single Window, a single point of entry where trade-related documents and information can be submitted to speed up customs clearances and reduce transaction times and costs.⁴³ The second objective is based on the adoption of common frameworks, standards and mutual cooperation across various areas, such as in agriculture and financial services, and in competition policy, intellectual property rights, and consumer protection. So far, ASEAN has concluded only three sectoral mutual recognition arrangements (MRA), namely, for electrical equipment and electronics, cosmetics, and medicinal products.⁴⁴ In total, eight skills-mobility-oriented MRAs have been concluded on engineering services, nursing services, architectural services, framework for surveying qualifications, medical practitioners, dental practitioners, the framework for accounting services, and tourism professionals.⁴⁵ Other actions included in this objective are the 2012 ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement, the 2014 ASEAN Bank Integration Framework and infrastructure projects like the ASEAN Open Skies Policy as part of the ASEAN Single Aviation market, and the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link, still incomplete, that will link ASEAN with China over a total length of 7,000 km.⁴⁶ The last two objectives relate to initiatives addressing SMEs and the ASEAN's full integration into the global economy with the "ASEAN+1" free trade agreements with China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁷ The overall implementation of economic integration measures rate was 79.5 percent, or 486 out of 611 measures.⁴⁸

The 2016 Blueprint acknowledges that CLMV countries will have to continue their commitments for the 2007-2015 period up to 2018.⁴⁹ The 2009 Initiative for ASEAN Integration—which sought to narrow intra-regional development gap by providing specific support to Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam—will continue beyond 2015.⁵⁰ The main focus of the AEC remains the deepening of the Single Market, especially in the trade of goods. Nonetheless, several novelties should be highlighted in other fields, such as the renewed effort in the Public-Private Partnership investments in the provision of universal healthcare in the region, the establishment of a common ASEAN consumer protection framework, and the ASEAN Single Shipping Market for maritime transport.⁵¹ The main innovation is in energy connectivity and integration with the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation.⁵² In the Plan, the first measure is an ASEAN Power Grid to initiate multilateral electricity trade in at least one sub-region in ASEAN by 2018.⁵³ The Trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline is another listed project for greater liquefied natural gas cooperation in the region.⁵⁴ Regarding environment-related energy policies, ASEAN aims to reduce energy intensity in the region by 20 percent as a medium-term target by 2020 and 30 percent as a long-term target for 2025, based on 2005 levels, as well as increasing the component of Renewable Energy to a mutually agreed percentage number in the ASEAN Energy Mix (Total Primary Energy Supply) by 2020.⁵⁵ Finally, in the context of ASEAN efforts in the global economy, the six ASEAN+1 FTA agreements will continue their process of consolidation in the 2016 Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.⁵⁶ According to ASEAN, the AEC will raise overall GDP in AMS by seven percent by 2025. However, doubts remain on the nature of the ASEAN economic integration, especially if compared with the European experience.⁵⁷

THE EUROPEAN WAY AND THE ASEAN WAY

As earlier discussed, the history of the ASEAN Community invites comparisons with that of the European Union, and in particular, the latter's mid-Community phase as the Union was known before 2007. Several

scholars have pointed out how the EU has become a model for several regional organisations, including ASEAN, in their community-building aspiration.⁵⁸ In 1973, only six years after the foundation of ASEAN, the European Economic Community and the Southeast Asian Organization signed an agreement; it was the first ever cooperation agreement of Europe with another regional body, signalling the willingness of the EU to promote regional integration elsewhere and the long-standing relations between the two organisations.⁵⁹ However, the equally complex integrational paths of the EU and ASEAN so far seem to be only superficially similar, with hope for more substantial convergence in the future.

In structural terms, before the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, the European Union was itself divided, like ASEAN today, along three pillars: the European Communities (divided itself in the former European Economic Community, the European Coal and Steel Community, and the European Atomic Energy Community); the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP); and the Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters (PJCC). In a creative effort, thematically, the socio-cultural and the economic dimensions of the ASEAN can be transferred under the first pillar of the European Union, while the ASEAN Political-Security Community is divided in the last two pillars.

Beginning with security, the European experience starts early on in its history, in 1948, with the Treaty on Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self Defence, more well-known as the Brussels Treaty.⁶⁰ While ASEAN issued in 1971 a mere declaration of neutrality, and another one of amity in 1976, the European countries stipulated in Article 5 of the treaty that, "If any of the High Contracting Parties should be the object of an armed attack in Europe, the other High Contracting Parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, afford the Party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power".⁶¹ It is important to note that this treaty and its implications was not incorporated in the European Union until the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, therefore, the EU and ASEAN did not, legally speaking, differ greatly in their 'Community phase' regarding collective defence.⁶² On the other hand, it can be argued that under the second pillar of the EU, the

Common Foreign and Security Policy, such clause was considered implicit because of the overlapping of the membership of the two organisations, three counting NATO. The EU, in those years, indeed moved further on in the scale of security integration.

In 1999 the EU's Treaty of Amsterdam defined the conditions under which military units could be deployed as humanitarian, peacekeeping and crisis management forces, as well as creating the post of the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, increasing the Union's external policy role.⁶³ Also in 1999 the Helsinki Headline Goal was established, aiming to build a European force of 60,000 troops, 100 ships, and 400 aircraft deployable within 60 days and sustainable for one year.⁶⁴ Under the framework of the Berlin Plus agreement with NATO, the EU was able to launch its first military operation, Operation Concordia, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in December 2003.⁶⁵ In order to support the development of these capabilities the European Defence Agency was established in 2004. The ASEAN is not expected to meet such integration by 2025. The lack of a collective defence agreement in the region, including through proxy organisations, incapacitates the implementation of measures that amount to more than confidence building.

Economically, the ASEAN Economic Community and its Single Market appears to resemble closely the European Economic Community and its Single Market. Reality is more complex, though. A noteworthy difference is that while the European and the ASEAN single markets agree in principle on the free flow of goods, services and capital, they differ when it comes to people.⁶⁶ Where the EU mentions simply 'people' as the first of the 'four freedoms' of its market, ASEAN refers to 'skilled labour'. Although nine out of 10 AMS citizens enjoy visa-free travel inside the region, this is hardly comparable to EU's principle of granting citizens the liberty to permanently emigrate, for economic reasons, to another member state. These immigrants are awarded the same rights and benefits of the citizens of that country, including political rights like that to vote.⁶⁷ However, the differences run deeper in the nature of the two frameworks, and two economic theories can help explain it.

The first theory is the classical Balassa stage approach of economic integration where five sequential stages are devised: free trade area; custom union; common market; economic or monetary union; and total economic integration with fiscal policy.⁶⁸ While the EU, with the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, provided for the creation of the first three steps of the Balassa model, the ASEAN moved seemingly directly from the first step to the third, bypassing the custom union step altogether.⁶⁹ Consensus to form a custom union with common external tariff rates is difficult to achieve in ASEAN, where tariffs can range between the 0.1 percent of Singapore and the 43.2 percent of Thailand.⁷⁰ At best, in the early AEC Blueprint there was a mention of an ASEAN Customs Vision which still fell short of an actual custom union. In the absence of a custom union, a genuine common market cannot be created as a member state would not allow foreign goods to flow in its market through another member state, bypassing the external tariff of the former. A possible explanation of the mismatch between the letter and reality is in the lack of precision, or even definition, that the ASEAN Single Market has suffered from its inception in the 2003 formulation of the ASEAN Community project.⁷¹ The second economic theory that could help in understanding the nature of the ASEAN single market is in the distinction between 'positive integration' and 'negative integration': the former stands for the active transfer of powers to common institutions, while the latter stands for the removal of barriers and discrimination in national economic rules.⁷² In other words, it is the difference between removing rules and making rules, such as agreeing on a common external tariff. Normally, both positive and negative integration are expected to fulfil a European-Union-like integration, however, in the ASEAN case the negative element is predominant. The result is a shallow integration, or trade liberalisation.⁷³ Further steps such as a common currency cannot be sustained without the previous ones, in spite of this issue having been discussed at the time of the Asian financial crisis of 1997, and notwithstanding the fact that East Asia remains the most 'plausible candidate' for a currency union after the Euro Area in terms of Optimal Currency Area.⁷⁴

The degree of institutionalisation of the two organisations is the key variable to explain most of the variations in terms of integration. Within ASEAN, there is no Southeast Asian equivalent to a European Commission, nor of the Parliament or of the Court of Justice; supranational authorities to deal with decision-making, law-making, enforcement and resolution of disputes. While ASEAN has indeed a secretariat, based in Jakarta, its powers are mostly logistical and figurative. Most of the organisation's engagements have historically relied on the so-called 'ASEAN way', which emphasises informality and consensus while avoiding binding agreements and regulatory frameworks. The ASEAN way also stresses the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the ASEAN way might not be so immutable. Since the inception of the ASEAN Community project in 2007, the reference to a rules-based system has been recurring in every official document while reinforcing the role of the Secretariat and reiterating the centrality of ASEAN in international processes.⁷⁶ Only 11 official ASEAN Summits have taken place in the first 29 years of the organisation's history, with ASEAN leaders preferring informal settings. After the ASEAN Charter of 2007, however, two official summits every year have taken place regularly up till date.⁷⁷ The Charter with the Bali Concord II signaled a new course in the organisation's history with the appointment of a secretary-general; the assignment of an ASEAN flag, an anthem, an emblem, and the declaration of a 'National ASEAN Day'; and most importantly, the accordance of an international legal identity for ASEAN itself.⁷⁸ ASEAN, while in substance might fall short, is increasingly treading the 'European way' in the semantics it employs, reflecting an aspiration to greater supranational institutionalisation.

Historically, both organisations arise from war theatres: the Second World War notably for Europe, and the Vietnam conflict and the Cambodian civil war for Southeast Asia. Both were faced with the communist threat within their members and, externally, as a ripple effect of the Cold War. Both used economic means to ensure security and stability. Both enlarged their membership to include communist-tied countries. However, this is just one of the many narratives that can be read in the myth and reality of the foundation and drives of both the EU and ASEAN. Both organisations

choose a flexible narrative. For example, the European Coal and Steel Community can be seen as a pure economic integration drive, but the Shuman Declaration at its base traces the roots of economics to politics and security when saying that, “the pooling of coal and steel production should immediately provide for the setting up of common foundations for economic development as a first step in the federation of Europe, and will change the destinies of those regions which have long been devoted to the manufacture of munitions of war, of which they have been the most constant victims”.⁷⁹

The origin of ASEAN can be traced to a security bloc aimed at creating political stability in the region. However, examining ASEAN's founding document, the Bangkok Declaration of 1967, it is possible to read that economic growth is the first objective being mentioned, though it is inserted in the wider context of an “Association (that) represents the collective will of the nations of South-East Asia 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”.⁸⁰ Both the ASEAN and the EU share a similar narrative, embracing a comprehensive appeal to community building and shared lofty values. Yet, prose is not manifest destiny. While it can be used to serve a European way for ASEAN, it does not tie the organisation to follow it as it can still be interpreted selectively.

CONCLUSION

The ASEAN and the European ways of building a community, while appearing to be converging on some degree, are still different. The EU remains an escapable model, even for a relatively old regional organisation such as ASEAN. However, there is not a single, perfect model for integration. Models do not need to be emulated in every aspect and it should be recalled that the EU itself is not a pure system as it incorporates as well a strong intergovernmental dimension. ASEAN's evolution has always looked at the European experience, and its narrative and stated objectives resemble those of the EU, albeit superficially. Since 2007, the convergence

has been increasing between the paths taken by the two regional organisations. Such convergence is only expected to increase in the long run.

At present, the ASEAN socio-cultural panorama is witnessing important improvements, though it is difficult to attribute these patterns to the ASEAN's mostly declaratory actions. The security integration in ASEAN is focused on intrastate and transnational security issues, its military exercises are not ASEAN-specific as they often involve non-ASEAN members, and the lack of a collective defence agreement in the region represents an obstacle to reach by 2025 the integrational objectives that may be comparable to what the EU has achieved in its past. Economically, the flagship project of the ASEAN Single Market is haunted by the need to achieve a Custom Union, an objective that is politically difficult and marks the difference between a mere trade liberalisation regime and actual economic integration in the region. Important achievements have been reported since 2007: Internal tariffs have been almost eliminated; six FTAs have being concluded between ASEAN and other Asian partners; while a blueprint for important energy integration plans have been set in motion. However, the world is witnessing the emergence of a 'two speed' ASEAN—with Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam lagging behind their neighbours' more liberal economies. Politically and institutionally, the 'ASEAN way' of informality and national sovereignty seems to be losing ground to a rules-based ASEAN legal supranational body. Yet, this is far from upsetting the present intergovernmental nature of the organisation which is not set to change further in the 2025 Vision. The pace and the ambitions of the ASEAN Community cannot be ignored, but there remains the underlying problem of a stark mismatch between expectations and reality. 

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