

Persisting Hope and Anxiety

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Two views dominated the SEA public understanding of ASEAN Community close to its implementation in December 2015. ASEAN Community was understood as a 'great transformation' which would change Southeast Asia politically, economically and socially, and would immediately make different to the life of almost 650 million people of Southeast Asia. This view tended to see ASEAN Community with the lense of the European Union. There was also tendency to see ASEAN Community simply as ASEAN Economic Community. This tendency was very clear especially in most analyses, reports as well comentaries in the media. The implementation of ASEAN Community was understood to transform ASEAN into a single economy. One year after its implementation, the great transformation did not happened. Neither did ASEAN turn into a single economy in 2016. The life of Southeast Asians continues as if nothing happened.

The two dominant views on ASEAN Community clearly indicates that a very big gap exists between the idea of ASEAN Community as formulated by the policy makers and people's understanding of the idea. For the policy makers, ASEAN Community is a *vision* of ASEAN in 2025. It is a work in progress toward its realisation rather than an achieved goal. For the people, ASEAN Community is understood as a new reality of Southeast Asia. Without proper knowledge, ASEAN Community does not only bring hope, but also uncertainty, anxiety and even fear to the people of Southeast Asia.

Vision, Roadmap and Implementation of ASEAN Community

ASEAN Community is a big idea which can and will change Southeast Asia very significantly. In the 9th ASEAN Summit in 2003, ASEAN's leaders agreed to transform ASEAN into an ASEAN Community. In its original plan, ASEAN Community would be realized in 2020 as stipulated in the ASEAN

Vision 2020 which was adopted in 1997 (ASEAN, 1997). Its implementation, however, has been accelerated. The need to develop a strong and cohesive ASEAN as well as to maintain its centrality in the regional and global dynamics has led ASEAN leaders to decide during the 12th ASEAN Summit in 2007 in Brunei to launch ASEAN Community in 2015.

The implementation of the ASEAN Community is outlined in the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community adopted in 2009 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009c). The Roadmap contains the Blueprints of the three Pillars of ASEAN Community: ASEAN Political-Security Community (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009a), the ASEAN Economic Community (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009b). Undoubtedly the blueprints provide very comprehensive goals to be achieved within each pillars.

Blueprints of ASEAN Community

POLITICAL- SECURITY BLUEPRINT	ECONOMIC BLUEPRINT	SOCIO-CULTURAL BLUEPRINT
<p>Rule-based, shared norms and values</p> <p>Cohesive, peaceful, stable, resilient with shared responsibility</p> <p>Dynamics and outward looking</p>	<p>Single market and production base</p> <p>Competitive economic region</p> <p>Equitable economic development</p> <p>Integration into global economy</p>	<p>Human development</p> <p>Social welfare and protection</p> <p>Social justice and rights</p> <p>Environmental sustainability</p> <p>ASEAN identity</p>

Aiming at bringing ASEAN’s political and security cooperation to a higher plain by ensuring that the people and Member States of ASEAN live in peace with one another and with the world at large, promoting political

development in adherence to the principles of democracy, rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights, promoting peace and stability in the region, develop mutually beneficial relations with its dialogue partners, and maintaining the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN in promoting regional architecture, and subscribing to a comprehensive approach to security, the blueprint of ASEAN Political-Security Community expresses ASEAN's commitment to uphold existing ASEAN political instruments such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), the Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality and the Treaty on the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). The blueprint also maintains regional security dialogues which ASEAN has promoted such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM). In addition, the blueprint also envision the emergence of regional initiatives for effective and early response to disaster as reflected in the the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER).

The ASEAN Economic Community Pillar, which actually is driving force of Southeast Asian regional integration, consists of two main elements, i.e., [1] the deepening and broadening of economic integration through existing and new initiatives with clear timelines and [2] the establishment of ASEAN as a single and production-based market within which goods, services, capital, investment as well as skilled labour move freely. The blueprint of the ASEAN Economic Community consists of four visions of Southeast Asia, namely a single market and production base, a highly competitive region, a region with equitable economic development, and a region which is fully integrated into the global economy. The liberalization of trade in goods, services, and investments envisioned in the blueprint should achieve these four visions.

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community blueprint is concerned with building a people-centered, socially responsible, and environmentally friendly ASEAN. The blueprint translates goal of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community into specific actions in education, social protection, environmental sustainability, engagement with civil society, and in building an ASEAN identity.

Discourse and reality

Looking at the vision, the Roadmap as well as the blueprints on ASEAN Community, no doubt that the discourse on ASEAN Community among the elite level tends to be very enthusiastic and positive. Despite the acknowledgement of the imbalances among the three ASEAN Community pillars, with the economic blueprint takes the lead, ASEAN leaders are very confident that the implementation of the blueprints of the three pillars has been progressing. The report of the Secretary General of ASEAN at the 25th ASEAN Summit in November 2014 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014) clearly indicates that the implementation of the blueprints of ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community reaches respectively 85 per cent, 82 percent and 97 percent. It is, of course, debatable what this statistical data actually means. In any case, it does not tell the whole story of the progress towards ASEAN Community. Indeed, as ASEAN Secretary General also admit it, a monumental work is facing ASEAN Member Countries in the years to come.

Seen from the Vision of ASEAN Community 2020, the implementation of ASEAN Community 2015 should be understood as the beginning of the long process towards its achievement. It should be understood as a milestone and part of a work in progress in which ASEAN member countries have to work harder to achieve it. There is no ASEAN Community as such as we entered into the year 2016. As the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015 clearly indicates, ASEAN Community 2015 is a stage among many stages toward ASEAN Community. It is this understanding of the meaning of ASEAN Community 2015 which has led ASEAN leaders not to launch long-awaited ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015 with much celebration (du Rocher, 2016).

Different from the elites and national policymaker, such an understanding of ASEAN Community 2015 as a work in progress is relatively absent among ASEAN people. Many understand the launching of ASEAN Community in 2015 as a great transformation in Southeast Asia which changes their life suddenly and dramatically in positive and negative ways. On the positive side, many understand the launching of ASEAN Community in 2015 means more freedom in 2016 in terms of movement of good, services and people. They assumed they could travel more easily within ASEAN countries without any

documentation such passport. Those engaging in economic activities have also assumed that the opportunity widely open in 2016. On the negative side, many are afraid of growing job and welfare insecurity with growing competition from other fellow ASEAN citizens.

Misunderstandings of the meaning of the launching of ASEAN Community in 2015 led to different responses among the people in different countries. In Thailand, among the most serious in anticipating ASEAN Community, close to the launching of ASEAN Community in December 2015 has led many universities to introduce programmes aiming at raising awareness of the students on the opportunities and challenges of the ASEAN Community. With the support of the government, they encourage the students to know other ASEAN countries and people.

In Indonesia, on the other hand, no such 'euphoria' of ASEAN Community exist. Not much information was available on ASEAN Community close to the launching of ASEAN Community 2015. The media did produce materials on ASEAN Community, but the impact was not so dramatic. At best, people did not respond enthusiastically about it. At worst, people began to fear of the challenges that ASEAN Community brought about.

Closing remarks

Now, almost one year after ASEAN Community was launched, most of the ASEAN people do not feel that there has been any change. Life goes normally and ASEAN Community does not seem to exist with them. It is a big challenge for the governments of ASEAN member countries to make sure that their people are really ready for an ASEAN Community. ASEAN Community will come, not very suddenly, but slowly and in stages. The ASEAN governments need to seriously promote and increase awareness of the coming of ASEAN Community as well as of the opportunity and challenges that an ASEAN Community will bring about. Otherwise, ASEAN people continue to live in false and unfounded hope and anxiety.

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