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ASEANFocus



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ASEAN

As Southeast Asia enters into the middle of 2016, we witness the election of a transformative outsider in the form of Davao city mayor Rodrigo Duterte to the highest office in the Philippines in their recently-concluded presidential elections. Duterte's victory will have an outsize impact on the region's geopolitical landscape as ASEAN awaits the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) on the Philippines' case in the South China Sea (SCS), as well as the Philippines' assumption of the ASEAN Chairmanship when the organisation celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2017.

The tenth ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting held in Vientiane last May testifies to the increasing willingness of its ten member states to pursue cooperation in the realm of defence and security. The ADMM's success in establishing direct links of communications among the ten defence

ministers as well as collaborations among the countries' various defence industries show the promising potential of the ADMM as a crucial aspect of the regional security architecture. Meanwhile, the recently-held Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kunming, China has surfaced simmering disagreements between ASEAN and China over the situation in the South China Sea. It only goes to show how the issue of territorial sovereignty over the South China Sea will continue to hover around ASEAN's agenda in the months ahead, especially in the ASEAN Summit in September later this year.

On the regional front, Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted the ten ASEAN heads of government to an ASEAN-Russia Summit at the resort town of Sochi. The first high-level summit of its kind on Russian soil signals President Putin's aspirations for Russia to play a more important strategic role in the Asia-Pacific. Ambassador Bilahari Kausikan of Singapore shares with us his thoughts on the future of ASEAN-Russia relations following the Sochi summit last May.

As with any discussion on ASEAN and Southeast Asia, it will be very hard to ignore China's looming influence in the region. In this issue of *ASEANFocus*, we shine a light on the oft-misunderstood One Belt One Road (OBOR) and Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiatives and their possible implications for the region's strategic and economic landscape. Dr. Li Mingjiang explains to us the motivations behind these two initiatives. Iis Gindarsah, Dato' Steven C.M. Wong, Phuong Nguyen, and Dr. Aileen S.P. Baviera provide us with a political-strategic reading of OBOR from ASEAN member states which will be most impacted by China's connectivity push into maritime Southeast Asia. Statistics that illuminate the intricate economic relations between ASEAN and China are featured in *ASEAN in Figures*.

In the lead-up to the seminal PCA ruling on the SCS, Dr. Edy Prasetyono writes on what Indonesia can do to help prevent conflict in the South China Sea. Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller gives us his perspective on the United Kingdom's monumental decision to leave the European Union (EU) following a historic referendum on 23 June, and the lessons ASEAN can learn from the Brexit debate.

ASC Fellow Termsak Chalermphanupap explains to us the work of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) for *ASEANInfo*, while Indonesia's AICHR representative Dr. Dinna Wisnu is featured in *Insider Views*. Last but not least, we are proud to feature a piece written by our intern Loh Yi Chin on Cambodian architect Vann Molyvann as part of *People and Places*, together with a piece on the beautiful Raja Ampat Islands in Indonesia.

How to be Strategic?

One of Singapore's most prominent public intellectuals assesses the Sochi Summit and maps the future of ASEAN-Russia relations

BY BILAHARI KAUSIKAN

The most important thing about the Sochi Summit was perhaps that it was held at all.

The meeting was the message.

ASEAN's agreement, after some initial reluctance, to hold the Summit in Russia can be presumed to be recognition, however inchoate, that Russia is a geopolitical reality that cannot be ignored. A corollary presumption is that irrespective of the attitudes of its Western dialogue partners towards Moscow, ASEAN will pursue its own interests with Russia.

But what are those interests?

ASEAN was reluctant to describe its relationship with Russia as "strategic" even though this is an adjective that ASEAN has used promiscuously or at least attached to other dialogue relationships without much concern for consistency of meaning.

This is perhaps understandable since the relationship with Russia is the least developed of ASEAN's dialogue relationships.

But the Sochi Declaration only said that ASEAN and Russia would "Further strengthen the Dialogue Partnership ... with a view to working towards a strategic partnership." The doubly qualified condition for strategic partnership does not suggest that either side regards this goal as a matter of great urgency.

Nor is there a realistic plan to move the relationship in this direction. The Sochi Declaration and the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) are laundry lists of aspirations, when they

do not merely record existing projects. Both documents were primarily intended to give a semblance of substance to an event whose significance was mainly symbolic.

The Russians wanted a Summit largely for reasons of *amour propre*; ASEAN's other dialogue partners have had summits, so why not Russia? ASEAN agreed largely because there was no reason not to agree; other dialogue partners have had summits, so why not Russia?

What ASEAN and Russia seem to have most in common at this stage of their relationship, is a penchant for privileging form over substance.

REALISING THE ASEAN-RUSSIA ASPIRATIONS

I would be pleasantly surprised if more than a few of the aspirations expressed in the Declaration and the CPA were to be substantially realised. I would be a little shocked if the report of the ASEAN-Russia Eminent Persons Group (AREPG) were taken as a serious guide to the future of the relationship.

Many of the areas these documents identified for future cooperation seem better suited for bilateral follow-up by individual member states than ASEAN-wide projects. But there is no harm in attaching the term 'ASEAN' to them even if this is not strictly accurate. I do not mean to suggest that there will be no movement forward in ASEAN-Russia relations.

Some ASEAN members, Singapore among them, are interested in developing links with the Eurasian Economic Union in which Russia is the largest and most developed economy.



Russia wants to expand economic and other ties with ASEAN. It is interested in, among other things, promoting arms and energy exports to Southeast Asia, attracting investments to the Russian Far East, cooperating in scientific research and anti-terrorism linkages. Some ASEAN members see it in their interests to respond positively in some areas, Singapore again among them.

The essential obstacle to moving ASEAN-Russia relations towards a strategic partnership is thus not the lack of scope or intention. What both sides must confront is the more fundamental and complex challenge of conceptualising how each fits into each other's visions of their roles in the region.

Neither side has ever seriously tried to do so and the Sochi Summit contributed nothing in this respect.

The lack of such a conceptual framework is what most starkly distinguishes ASEAN-Russia relations from ASEAN's other dialogue relationships. The US, China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the ROK and India all have defined ideas of their roles in East Asia. ASEAN has its own ideas of how these countries ought to fit into its own notion of regional order.

These ideas may well vary in scope and sophistication and the ideas of ASEAN and these countries are not always aligned. But these complications are beside the point: the point being that they exist as frameworks within which specific projects are instrumentalities and hence gives focus and strategic significance to these dialogue relationships.

Without such a broader conceptual framework, no matter how many items ASEAN – as individual states or collectively –

ticks off on the Sochi laundry lists, these projects will remain discrete and *ad hoc* and will not cohere into anything which has a strategic meaning that is larger than the sum of its parts; the number of such parts in any case is unlikely to be very large.

In this respect the ASEAN-Russia relationship resembles ASEAN's relationships with the EU and Canada. Neither Brussels nor Ottawa has a coherent or consistent concept of their role in East Asia. Consequently these are the least strategically significant of ASEAN's dialogue relationships.

ASEAN brought Russia into the East Asia Summit and other ASEAN-led forums almost casually, as if its size, geography and status as a nuclear weapon state and Permanent Member of the UN Security Council needed no further elaboration or deeper justification.

But these are generic factors which in themselves prescribe nothing very useful in the way of any specific concept of an East Asian role for Russia. Having admitted Russia, ASEAN has been content to let the situation drift. There is no consensus within ASEAN on what Russia's role should be, no interest in reaching a consensus on a role for Russia, or even awareness that a consensus on this matter is required.

On its part, Moscow still most naturally looks westward and defines and validates itself in relation to Europe and the US, not Asia. Its approach towards Asia has usually been tactical. Since the time of Peter the Great, Moscow has turned eastwards usually only after Western rebuffs or to gain Western approbation. Post-Soviet Russia's Asia policy fits into this historical pattern.

“Russia wants to expand economic and other ties with ASEAN. It is interested in, among other things, promoting arms and energy exports to Southeast Asia, attracting investments to the Russian Far East, cooperating in scientific research and anti-terrorism linkages.”



The souring of Russia’s relations with the West over Ukraine was the proximate cause of the latest phase of Russia’s turn to the east. But it was taken, I believe, reflexively under pressure and without a holistic assessment of overall Russian interests. It therefore risks locking Russia into a subordinate relationship with China and an essentially passive regional role.

Some signs of this are already discernible. China recently appropriated Russia’s position on the South China Sea. Russia’s stance on this issue is in fact more nuanced than China made it out to be, but Moscow had to bite its tongue and did not clarify its position. But fortunately the situation is not yet irreversible.

Let me conclude by declaring my interest. I was Ambassador to Russia and must plead guilty to having been a member of the AREPG. I take no joy in the current state of ASEAN-Russia relations that the Sochi Summit has done little to improve beyond atmospherics that are already dissipating. I believe that ASEAN-Russia relations do have strategic potential and that it would be a great pity if that potential went unrealised.

THREE CONDITIONS

To realise the potential, three conditions must be fulfilled.

First, ASEAN must reach consensus on what strategic role we want Russia to play in our region. This need not be difficult. ASEAN’s basic and enduring purpose is to help its members preserve some modicum of autonomy in the midst of great power competition. Russia as an active and autonomous participant in regional diplomacy will widen our scope for manoeuvre, particularly when, as I think will occur sooner or later, the US and China reach a new *modus vivendi* over Southeast Asia.

Second, to play an autonomous role, Russia must more clearly and clinically distinguish its interests on its western border

from its interests on its eastern border. Moscow has legitimate grievances in the west where the US and Europe made a fundamental strategic error in the immediate post-Soviet period by treating Russia as a defeated country. The West broke promises, explicit or implied, about the expansion of its security system in Europe as if Russian interests could forever be ignored. The crisis in Ukraine was the denouement of this mistake.

But the Western security system in East Asia is no longer directed against Russia unless Moscow makes it so by its positions on the maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas. Moscow should not let anger with the West drive its policy in East Asia.

Third, the West and in particular the US, must encourage Moscow to make this differentiation in its interests by itself differentiating its approach to Russia in Europe from its approach to Russia in East Asia. The current blanket system of sanctions against Russia only promotes Moscow’s dependence on China by depriving it of alternatives.

At the recently concluded Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Defence Secretary Ashton Carter hinted at US willingness to see Russia playing a security role in East Asia. It is not entirely clear what the US meant. But it is in Moscow’s interest to put US intentions to the test. This could be by a new articulation of Russia’s position on the South China Sea and clear support for UNCLOS when the Arbitral Tribunal reaches a decision on the legal issues that the Philippines brought before it.

Will these conditions be met? Only one is within ASEAN’s control. The most important decisions are clearly going to be made in Moscow. ■

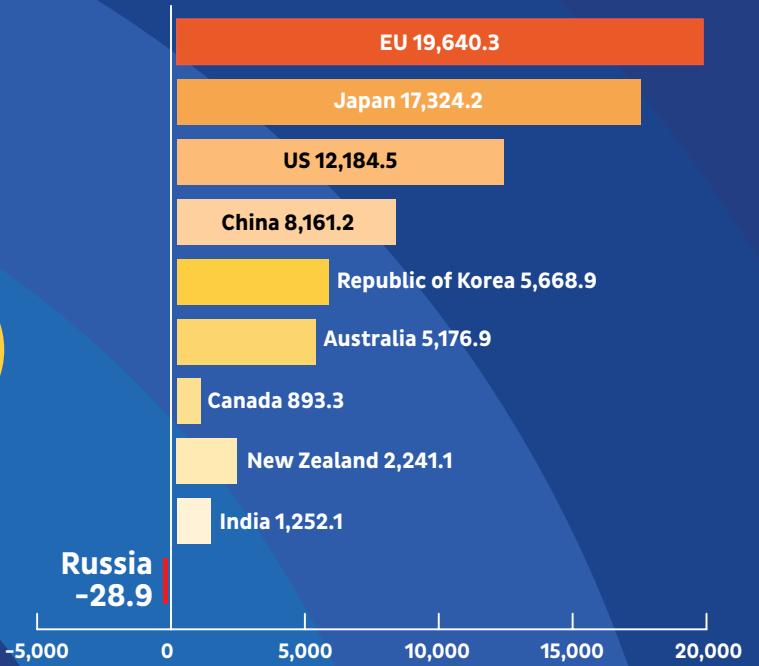
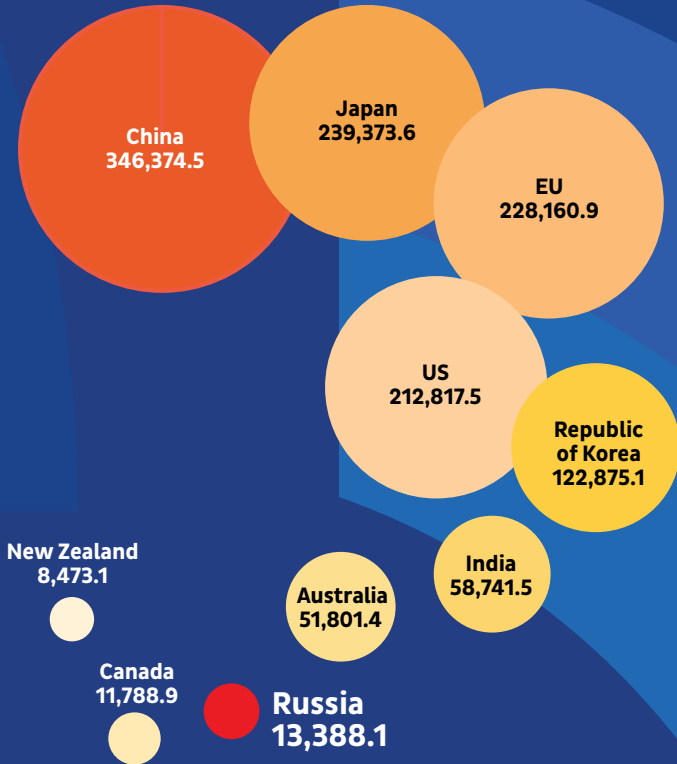
Bilahari Kausikan is Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore. These are his personal views.

ASEAN and Russia in Numbers

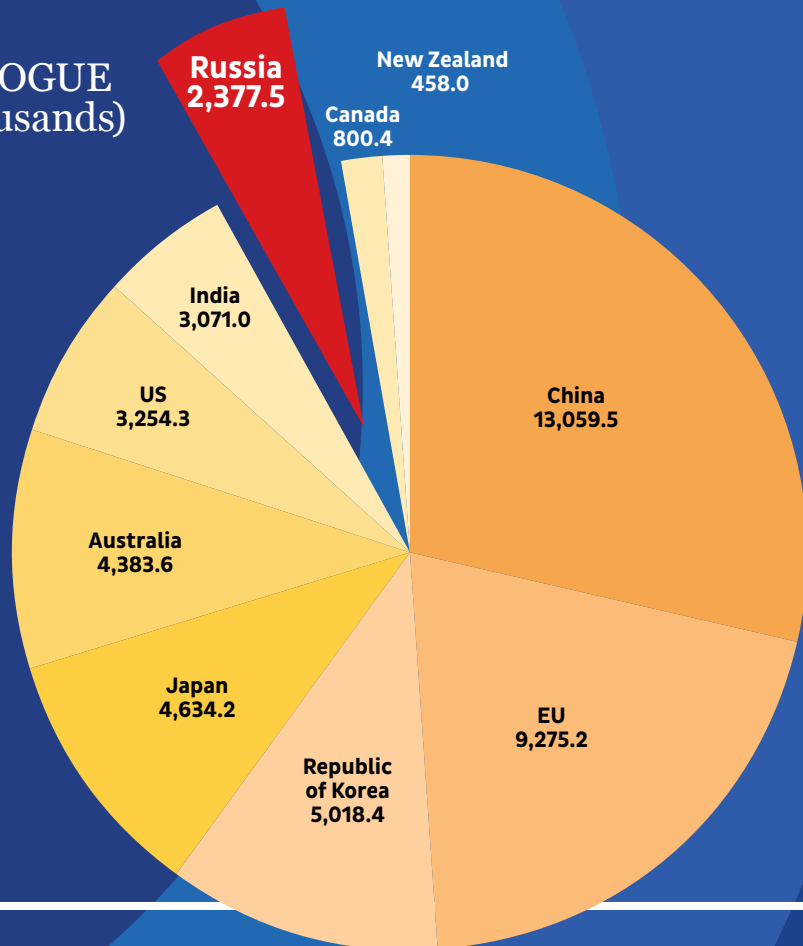
Source: ASEAN Secretariat; CEIC

ASEAN TRADE WITH DIALOGUE PARTNERS, 2015 (in US\$ million)

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT NET INFLOWS IN ASEAN FROM DIALOGUE PARTNERS, 2015 (preliminary, in US\$ million)



TOURIST ARRIVALS IN ASEAN BY ASEAN DIALOGUE PARTNERS, 2014 (in thousands)



OBOR: The Convergence of Economic and Strategic Interests

The hallmark of Chinese foreign policy today, there is much more to the One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR) than meets the eye.

BY LI MINGJIANG

Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled the “Silk Road Economic Belt” initiative during his state visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013. In an address to Indonesia’s parliament a month later, he announced China’s intention to introduce the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”. These two policies form the basis of China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) strategy. Since then, OBOR has become one of the most prominent political catchwords in China, and has also garnered considerable attention from the international community as well.

The OBOR initiative has been subsequently refined and expanded based on the ideas from Xi’s speeches in Kazakhstan and Indonesia. For over a year after Xi expounded his vision, various Chinese government agencies, research institutes, and media organisations have intensively researched on and heavily promoted the initiative. By early 2015, a Central Leading Group on OBOR was created, with Zhang Gaoli, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and concurrently the first-

ranked vice premier, serving as head of the Group. The Group’s office is located at the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). Zhang’s appointment and the location of the Group’s office indicate the importance China’s leadership attaches to OBOR.

In March 2015, the NDRC, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a paper entitled *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*. The document reflects the gist of Xi’s speeches and provides some details about OBOR, including its background, principles, cooperation priorities, cooperation mechanisms, and China’s preparations for its implementation. Thus far, it is the most authoritative and informative document on OBOR and will serve as its primary reference for some time to come.

OBOR emphasises five key areas of cooperation: coordinating development policies, forging infrastructure and facilities networks, strengthening investment and trade relations,



OBOR in a snapshot

CCTV America

enhancing financial cooperation, and deepening social and cultural exchanges. To many international observers, OBOR is largely or even solely about infrastructural connectivity. This perception is not without reason as infrastructure is probably the most important element in the OBOR blueprint. However, this view is not entirely accurate as there are four other areas of cooperation. For instance, the *Vision and Actions* document also includes extensive discussion about cooperation on industrial chains between China and other countries.

The OBOR reflects the convergence of the needs of China's domestic economy with its foreign policy interests. Four domestic economic realities have rendered OBOR possible and necessary.

First, China has accumulated a huge capital surplus and massive foreign reserves after nearly four decades of rapid economic growth. While China continues to receive significant foreign direct investment, it is increasingly poised to expand its outbound investment as well.

Second, the progress of China's Western Development strategy since the late 1990s has laid a good foundation for OBOR's initiation. Over the past 15 years, the local governments in China's western and border regions have actively pushed for infrastructure connectivity and sub-regional economic cooperation projects with China's neighbours with support from the central government in Beijing. Further developing the western provinces in order to reduce the disparity between these provinces and the coastal region remains an important policy objective for the Chinese leadership. Chinese decision makers understand that the success of the Western Development strategy depends heavily on the opening up of these provinces to countries in China's western flank and beyond.

Third, it is commonly acknowledged that China faces serious excess industrial capacity, particularly in infrastructure sectors such as the production of construction materials. OBOR is believed to be a partial solution to mitigate the pressures of excess capacity.

Fourth, there is growing interest among Chinese labour-

intensive and low value-added industries to move out of China because of rising labour costs and the government's intention to upgrade the industrial sector.

However, economic factors do not fully explain the genesis for OBOR. This is because the five areas of cooperation contained in the blueprint are priorities not just in China but also of many countries around the world. The intensity and high profile of China's OBOR campaign has to be understood from an international strategic perspective as well. To put it bluntly, Beijing hopes that OBOR could help expand Chinese influence in Asia and beyond. Chinese leaders understand

“Chinese leaders understand that China does not enjoy any soft power advantages vis-à-vis the Western powers. China is also unlikely to play a leading role in regional and international security. Consequently, the best foreign policy tool for China now and into the foreseeable future will be its economic power.”

that China does not enjoy any soft power advantages vis-à-vis the Western powers. China is also unlikely to play a leading role in regional and international security. Consequently, the best foreign policy tool for China now and into the foreseeable future will be its economic power. In the minds of Chinese decision makers, this is a tried and tested method. For instance, despite some countries' concerns about China's growing military might and heavy-handed approach to maritime disputes in the region, China's economic influence has helped Beijing to consolidate its strategic position in Asia. Beijing hopes that OBOR will lead to closer diplomatic and political linkages between China and other countries to introduce some constraints on its rivals.

In short, the convergence of domestic economic needs and international strategic interests has led to OBOR's introduction. Beijing appears to be committed to this initiative, with the Silk Road Fund already in place and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank bringing in additional sources of funding. Furthermore, this initiative enjoys widespread support and almost all of China's provinces have rolled out plans to back the initiative. It might not be an exaggeration to say that Xi may want the success of OBOR as one of the major foreign policy legacies of his presidency. ■

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China's Strategic Initiatives and Regional Order in Asia: The View from Jakarta

BY IIS GINDARSAH

The One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative is a showcase of China's growing centrality in regional order. This involves the development of two economic corridors: a land-based "silk road economic belt" linking the country's overland industrial centres to Central Asia and Europe, and a "maritime silk road" connecting its Pacific coastal commercial areas to resource-rich Middle East and Indian Ocean regions. In addition, Beijing has announced the creation of a US\$40 billion infrastructure fund to support the country's ambitious plans. These measures will help to position China at the heart of Asian trade architecture.

China's regional rise presents both opportunities and challenges in Indo-Pacific region. For Indonesia, the OBOR concept has provided a momentum to deepen its strategic partnership with China. The Joko "Jokowi" Widodo administration views that the Chinese Maritime Silk Road (MSR) plan is potentially beneficial and overlaps with Indonesia's "maritime fulcrum" agenda in terms of connectivity, safety and diplomacy. Specifically, Jakarta seeks to benefit from Beijing's new "silk road fund" to develop maritime infrastructures such as the construction of international seaports in Bitung and Kuala Tanjung.

Nevertheless, Indonesia remains uncertain about China's regional intention. From political and security perspective, the OBOR mega-project represents an expanded version of China's earlier "string of pearls" strategy centring on commercial, diplomatic and defence ties in countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Beijing's investments in maritime infrastructures will ultimately enable the Chinese Navy to access deep seaports and sustain extra-regional naval operations. Given enduring regional suspicions and unresolved territorial disputes, the expansion of China's power projection could further spur major power contests for geopolitical primacy.

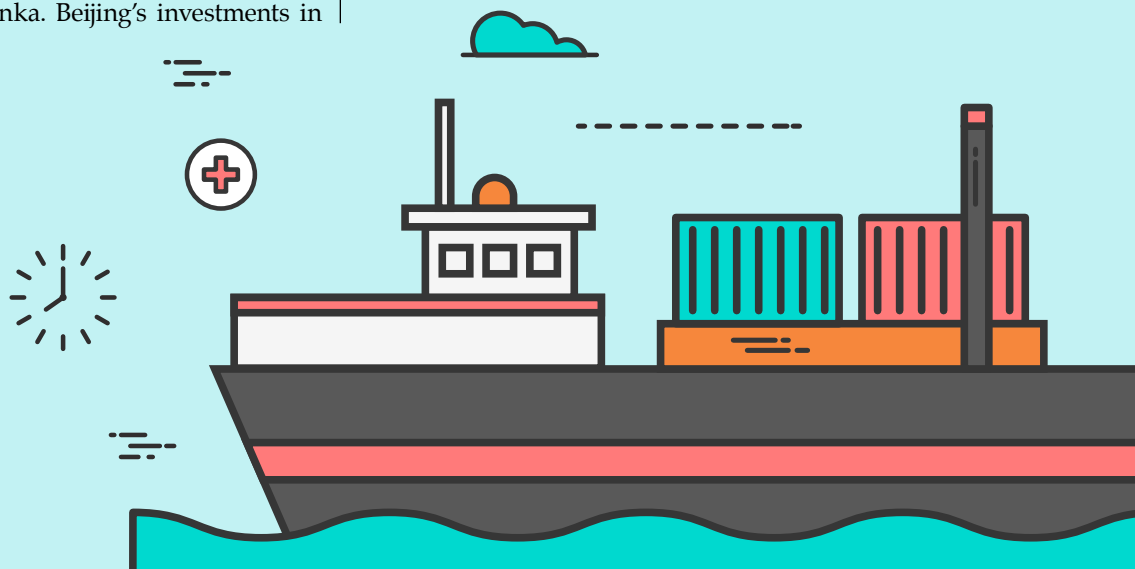
Apart from the OBOR ambitious plan, China's recent initiatives have highlighted

the increasingly intense diplomatic battle to shape the regional order. The most significant development is the establishment of Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) — a move that directly challenges the US-centred Asian Development Bank and World Bank. In supporting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's (APEC) "collective strategic study" on the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), Beijing is in fact cultivating support for an alternative to rival Washington's centerpiece of the economic pivot — the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Similarly, at the 2014 Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA), China's top leadership also called for "new regional security cooperation architecture", suggesting an attempt to de-emphasise the existing regional mechanisms involving the US.

Against that backdrop, the realisation of Indonesia's maritime fulcrum vision entails the maintenance of peace and stability in Indo-Pacific region. Like other ASEAN member states, it is uncomfortable to see China seeking to define its regional relationship in the context of competition with other major powers. These undertakings will pose a serious challenge to "ASEAN centrality" and destabilise the regional security architecture. ■

Iis Gindarsah is a researcher with the Department of Political and International Studies of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia.



OBOR, Malaysia and China

BY STEVEN C.M. WONG

China's involvement in Malaysian ports was already well underway when President Xi Jinping announced the OBOR initiative during his state visit to Indonesia in 2013. A month before Xi's visit, Guangxi Beibu Gulf International Port Group (GBIPG) concluded the purchase of 40 per cent of Malaysia's Kuantan Port Consortium (KPC). KPC has a government concession to operate the port until 2045, with a possible further extension to 2075. GBIPG, which operates four ports in Southern China, also holds a 49 per cent stake in the Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park to which it has committed US\$20 billion by 2020.

In April 2014, the Chinese operator of Malaysia's previously troubled Port Klang Free Trade Zone (PKFZ) handed over business facilities to SM International Wholesale (China) to operate the Port Klang International Trade and Halal Industry Centre. This centre aims to be an international logistics, procurement and global distribution platform for halal products.

In late 2015, Guangdong province announced its plan to invest US\$10 billion in a deep sea port together with an ocean park in the Malacca Gateway project, hardly 180 km from PKFZ. All this comes on top of already extensive Chinese real estate investments along the Johor coast. China Railway Group's joint-venture in Bandar Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur and its establishment of a regional headquarters there, also places it in prime position to secure the coveted right to construct and operate the high speed rail service from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore.



To complement the physical investments, this April, a plan was announced for an alliance among 10 Chinese ports and six Malaysian ports to facilitate customs and immigration clearance. China's diplomatic charm offensive has not been lacking either and following the low-key visit by President Xi's special envoy, Meng Jianzhu in May 2016, Malaysia has said that it is prepared to discuss further

possibilities of traditional (military) and non-traditional security cooperation with China. It is difficult to see how Malaysia's involvement in OBOR can do anything but dramatically escalate upwards.

One cloud on the OBOR horizon, a significant one, is the persistent intrusion of Chinese coastguard vessels in South Luconia Shoals, 84 nautical miles off the Sarawak coast since 2013. In late March and early April 2016, 100 fishing vessels, escorted by Chinese coastguard vessels, entered into Malaysian waters. A little publicised ship ramming incident also occurred at this time.

Given that Malaysia can be seen as an advanced showcase of China's OBOR initiative and that the world is watching China's every move in the South China Sea, China's policy of maritime assertiveness *vis-a-vis* Malaysia is inconsistent and even counterproductive. What should be a sterling demonstration of China's peaceful rise and win-win strategy of cooperation is blemished, if not marred, by its claims of historic rights of sovereignty and jurisdiction over shared/disputed waters in the South China Sea. ■

Dato' Steven C.M. Wong is Deputy Chief Executive of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia.

“Given that Malaysia can be seen as an advanced showcase of China's OBOR initiative and that the world is watching China's every move in the South China Sea, China's policy of maritime assertiveness vis-a-vis Malaysia is inconsistent and even counterproductive.”

Vietnam and the Maritime Silk Road

BY PHUONG NGUYEN

Since President Xi Jinping announced the launch of China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative in 2013, discussions on a 21st-century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative have at times featured in meetings between senior Chinese and Vietnamese leaders.

When the Secretary-General of the Vietnamese Communist Party Nguyen Phu Trong visited China in April 2015, Beijing used the opportunity to inaugurate Vietnam into the MSR, calling its participation "highly welcomed" and "rewarding."

The luck of geography puts Vietnam as the MSR's first stop in Southeast Asia. Under this initiative, Beijing and Hanoi agreed to upgrade Haiphong in northern Vietnam into a major container port that could be used for offloading cargo headed to inland areas of China, and saving time by bypassing Shanghai and Hong Kong. Reports indicate the upgraded port could be fully operational as early as 2018.

China envisions the MSR as the backbone of a network of cross-border roads, railways, and financial interconnectedness between China and countries along the route. In this vein, Beijing agreed to set up special task forces with Hanoi in the areas of infrastructure and financial cooperation during Trong's visit.

The two governments earlier agreed, during Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to Vietnam in late 2013, to forge ahead with projects under the planned Shenzhen-Haiphong trade corridor, which, once realised, will link the Vietnamese port city to the southern Chinese major trading hub. In addition, they agreed to conduct a joint feasibility study for a proposed high-speed railway connecting Lao Cai Province on the China-Vietnam border to Hanoi and Haiphong. Beijing also indicated its willingness to align the MSR's structure with Vietnam's own development strategy.

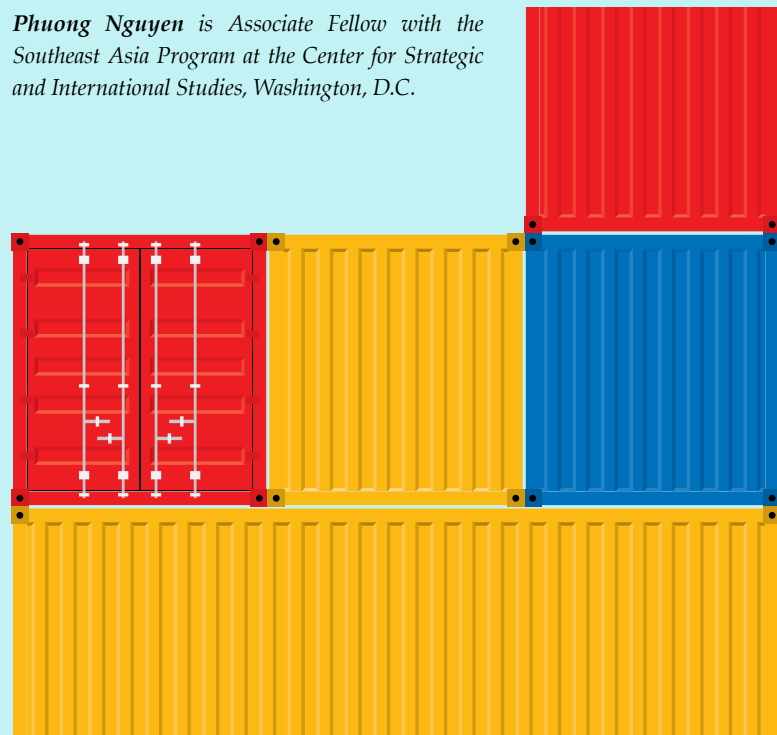
However, scepticism abounds among Vietnamese scholars over the true intent of the Chinese initiative despite the fact that Vietnam is slated to become an important node of the proposed MSR. Even though Vietnam is among the founding members of the Chinese-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Hanoi has yet to publicly endorse OBOR. In contrast, the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, has garnered widespread compliments and support among the Vietnamese leadership.

Two factors weigh heavily on Hanoi's decision-making and MSR's future in Vietnam. The first is Hanoi's own strategic

concerns over territorial disputes between Vietnam and China in the South China Sea. Official Chinese commentary sought to describe the MSR as having "friction-reducing potential" for the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. While Hanoi prefers to manage tensions in these strategic waterways, its strategy has leaned towards internationalisation of the dispute as a way of applying pressure on Beijing, rather than seeking any sorts of eventual bilateral compromise.

Second, rising nationalism and a heavy dose of anti-China sentiments ensure that Sino-Vietnam cooperation, especially with regards to joint economic projects, will be closely scrutinised by public opinion and civil society in Vietnam. Chinese investments became the target for popular protests and vandalism after Beijing deployed an oil drilling rig in waters near Hoang Sa/Paracel Islands claimed by Vietnam in mid-2014. Furthermore, controversies surrounding a Chinese-backed bauxite mining project in central Vietnam several years ago sparked a campaign among intellectuals and civil society groups demanding greater democracy and transparency from the government. For Beijing, this has the potential to complicate the implementation of its projects in Vietnam under the MSR banner — a fate similarly suffered by other ambitiously planned Chinese projects in nearby Laos and Myanmar. ■

Phuong Nguyen is Associate Fellow with the Southeast Asia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.



OBOR and the Philippines under Duterte

BY AILEEN S.P. BAVIERA

Chinese President Xi Jinping's 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) policy has been touted as a new grand strategy by some Chinese analysts, equivalent even to Deng Xiaoping's 'Reform and Opening Up' in the late 1970s. Its 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) component can potentially have a significant impact on Southeast Asia, promising greater connections with China through infrastructure, trade, investments, and people-to-people linkages. What do OBOR and the MSR mean for the Philippines, which is currently locked in a political-legal battle with China over maritime rights in the South China Sea (SCS)?

When the first maps showing the MSR 'route' were released, the Philippines was evidently bypassed, leading observers to conclude that it was excluded from China's plans. The Chinese side subsequently denied this, emphasising trade and cultural links that had long existed between the two peoples. After all, Quanzhou, the starting point of the ancient maritime traders, was the hometown of most Chinese-Filipinos who came as early as the Song dynasty.

Unsurprisingly, China has not been able to promote maritime cooperation actively in the Philippines. With the high GDP growth of recent years, a discourse emerged in Manila that it was fortunate not to have developed the degree of

dependence on Chinese markets and capital that some of its neighbours had. It was argued that Manila could thus take a more principled stand on sovereignty and maritime rights issues. But now that the Aquino government is on its way out, and President-elect Rodrigo Duterte has indicated a preference for a more pragmatic approach towards China, will China's MSR initiative have better prospects of gaining ground in the Philippines?

Security concerns are bound to remain, and rebuilding mutual trust will require strong political will. That said, Duterte's economic agenda prioritises infrastructure development. Cooperation in port development may be more sensitive than railways and roads because of their potential strategic functions, and China must contend with the fact that support for Philippine maritime industry development has traditionally come from the United States, Japan and South Korea. These considerations aside, the huge infrastructure gap that Manila needs to fill and the deep pockets that only Beijing may have at the moment may still lead to opportunities for cooperation. Worth noting too is that despite recent political tensions, trade and tourism ties between the two sides continued to grow, demonstrating that not everything in the relations has been totally politicised or securitised. ■

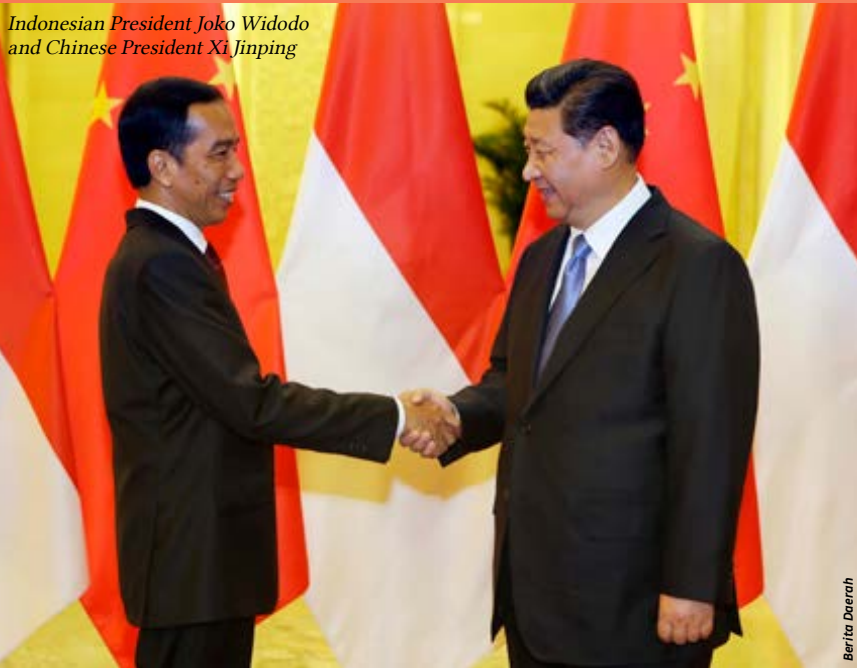
Dr. Aileen S.P. Baviera is Professor of Asian Studies at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines, Diliman, and Editor-in-Chief of Asian Politics and Policy.

“But now that the Aquino government is on its way out, and President-elect Rodrigo Duterte has indicated a preference for a more pragmatic approach towards China, will China's MSR initiative have better prospects of gaining ground in the Philippines?”

Indonesia and the South China Sea

BY EDY PRASETYONO

Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Chinese President Xi Jinping



Berita Daerah

There is a pressing need for both a more flexible response on Indonesia's part as well as direct talks between claimant states in the South China Sea disputes.

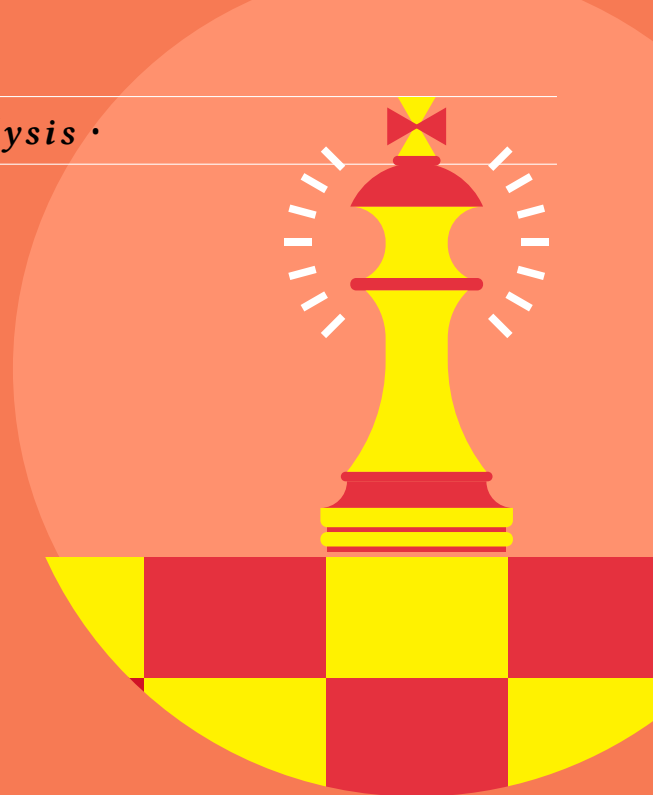
The South China Sea (SCS) conflict is one of the most delicate security issues in Southeast Asia. The conflict has in many ways shaped strategic rivalries involving the countries in the region and external powers. Various initiatives and diplomatic efforts have been sought to find a modality to find solution to the conflict. However, in the last few years, the situation has worsened and there is strong indication that the conflict is increasingly being militarised.

Under these circumstances, Indonesia, with its strategic position geographically and politically, must come to the fore to take the lead in finding solution to the SCS conflict. Indonesia needs to bring ASEAN and China to a fundamental understanding that South China Sea conflict is a test case for their future relationship. The SCS conflict tests China's ability to behave as a major power diplomatically and militarily. Simply put, whether China will be seen as a responsible major power depends on its policy and behaviour on the SCS conflict. A negative perception will bear a high diplomatic and political cost. The fundamental issue boils down to trust.

It has been very clear that Indonesia will not be party to the SCS dispute. Jakarta sees China's encroachment into the Natuna Island's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as an act of violation of Indonesian and international law. More fundamentally, once Indonesia becomes a party to the dispute and sees the recent Natuna cases in the context of territorial dispute, it means Indonesia has to deal with China's claim over the SCS.

“Indonesia must stand firmly to lead the initiative in solving the SCS conflict. In this connection, China and ASEAN need to continue negotiation on a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) as a political commitment and gesture for trust building.”





Indonesia does not recognize China's claim as it goes against international law. The recent incidents have not significantly affected the relationship between China and Indonesia. However, it has given new impetus and importance for the Indonesian naval forces' build-up in the Natuna area. In fact, the Natuna Islands and the surrounding areas are strategically important for Indonesia's naval power projection.

On the ASEAN side, the SCS dispute imposes a strong challenge to ASEAN unity and effectiveness as a regional institution in dealing with strategic issues with complex regional implications. ASEAN's solidarity and centrality will be undermined if ASEAN fails to rise up to these challenges. More fundamentally, a divided ASEAN is detrimental to both ASEAN and China as it opens the door for a more and damaging competition in the region.

Thus, Indonesia must stand firmly to lead the initiative in solving the SCS conflict. In this connection, China and ASEAN need to continue negotiation on a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) as a political commitment and gesture for trust building. The COC is not an instrument for resolving the SCS disputes. Rather, it is an operational

“Simply put, whether China will be seen as a responsible major power depends on its policy and behaviour on the SCS conflict. A negative perception will bear a high diplomatic and political cost. The fundamental issue boils down to trust.”

confidence-building measure (CBM) which underlines both sides' interests in, and commitment to, security and stability in the region. Thus, the successful negotiation of the COC must be a top priority for ASEAN and China. In fact, as a major power, China has the added responsibility to ensure that its rise is indeed peaceful and win the acceptance of the region and the world.

Indonesia should also do more to explore flexibility and points of convergence in negotiations and cooperation over the SCS. While the issues of sovereignty seem non-negotiable, new ways and areas of cooperation must be explored. This could be based on common interests and concerns such as the safety of trade route, humanitarian disaster relief at sea, and the protection of marine environment. Information sharing and early warning on those areas will strengthen mutual confidence between the two sides.

ASEAN and China will need to be more open to each other and discuss the SCS conflict directly. With an understanding that the SCS conflict will shape the future relationship between ASEAN and China, direct contact between the two sides must be explored. While China has consistently stressed on bilateral negotiations, the conflict in itself could have major impacts on the regional stability which requires ASEAN and China to find new ways to hold direct talks on the SCS conflict.

The management of the SCS conflict must rank at the top of the ASEAN-China priority list given the high stakes at play and the impact the SCS will have on this important bilateral relationship. Indonesia and ASEAN should take on a more active role in managing and resolving the conflict. Likewise, China should work hand in hand with ASEAN to ensure that the conflict does not become more internationalised any more than it already is and to roll back the militarisation of the conflict. ■

Dr. Edy Prasteyono is the Executive Director of the Centre for ASEAN Studies, University of Indonesia.

Lessons from Brexit for ASEAN

The problems facing the European Union today might provide ASEAN with some food for thought

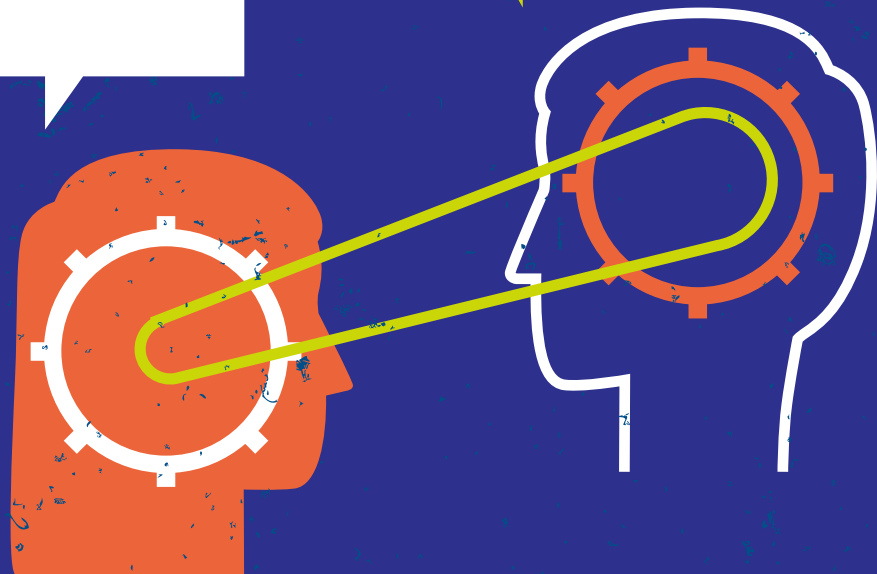
BY JØRGEN ØRSTRØM MØLLER

After 43 years of membership, the United Kingdom (UK) electorate have cast their ballots in a nationwide referendum on the 23rd of June to leave the European Union (EU).

Even though scepticism and criticism of EU membership have been visible for some time in the UK and some other member states, few observers would have dared to predict that the UK would come to this point. The stakes are high for the UK, the EU, and the world. The slim majority for “vote leave” has reverberated around the world politically and economically, and has raised questions on the future of economic globalisation and integration. Will the idea of a united Europe suddenly run into a roadblock sowing uncertainty about its future? Does it mean that economic globalisation and integration have run its course? Does Europe want to draw a line for how fast and how deep it wants to engage economically and perhaps politically with neighbouring countries? Is nationalism on the rise? Is this a first step towards erecting barriers to keep foreigners out?

Setting aside the fractious domestic politics that unquestionably has played an important role, how would an observer in Southeast Asia living in the throes of ASEAN community-building and economic integration view these developments? What lies behind the movement to rethink “Europe” and what are the lessons for ASEAN?

Judging by the reports in mass media, immigration plays the main role fuelling the feverish discontent among many Britons that EU is prying open the door for foreigners who take jobs away from Britons



“These economic analyses have not sufficiently swayed the British public to remove the issue from their top list of concerns. The influx of refugees and migrants to the EU from the Middle East has probably aggravated those misgivings.”

and enjoy social services paid for by the British taxpayer. To be sure, EU citizens are indeed coming to Britain to work. One of the virtues of the EU’s single market is precisely free movement of people which allows citizens from one EU nation to work in other member states without restrictions. A University College London study in 2014 found that UK’s open door policy has benefited the British economy since foreign workers in the UK paid more in taxes than the monetary value they received from the public sector. These economic analyses have not sufficiently swayed the British public to remove the issue from their top list of concerns. The influx of refugees and migrants to the EU from the Middle East has probably aggravated those misgivings. The public does not always distinguish between refugees/migrants coming from outside the EU and EU citizens, including Britons, moving geographically inside a large labour market. Immigration has transformed Europe over the past decades. For

the UK (and France), many of the new immigrants came from former colonies. In other European countries such as Germany, it took the form of what was labelled as guest workers who opted to stay. The result has been that Europe is no longer culturally homogenous. A sizeable minority of 5-10 percent is ethnically diverse and adhere to religions other than Christianity, maintain strong family ties to their birth countries, and seek cultural inputs from these countries in ways that are not always congruous with European ideals. For Britons, it is precisely this kind of multiculturalism that has led to uncertainties and compounded the fear for the erosion of the British identity.

In the eyes of many voters, the Commonwealth and the Anglophone world look more palatable and in sync with British identity and culture than the EU even if UK's place on the map underlines common interests between UK and its neighbours who are all EU member states.

A COUPLE OF LESSONS FOR ASEAN SEEM WARRANTED

The ASEAN elite may view economic integration through the prism of strategy, geo-economics, and geopolitics, but the ordinary voter does not. What matters most for the person on the street is how integration will impact his or her daily life, and how the opening of borders would mean for living costs, social services and the quality of life? They judge economic integration by the tangible results and not on the promissory pronouncements of benefits. The true test for the ASEAN Community is to deliver the “goods” on the ground. The proof of the pudding is in the eating!

ASEAN has made good progress in opening up markets and dismantling barriers for economic transactions, resulting in commendable growth rates and a rise in the standard of living. ASEAN needs to ingrain the virtues of the community

in the Southeast Asian mindsets by doubling its efforts to reach out to the people. It needs to live and act by its creed of “people-centred and people-oriented.”

The European elite have long taken it for granted that the advantages of the EU were visible and tangible, but the Brexit referendum shows that this is not the case. Young people forget the advantages of studying in other European countries. People overlook that it was the EU that made it possible for an EU citizen to seek employment in 28 countries without discrimination. Similarly, retirees can choose where they want to reside in their sunset years. The single market has done away with national barriers, but the EU is still besieged with red tape. ASEAN should avoid the same mistake. More importantly, it should not lose sight nor take the benefits of being in a community for granted.

Policy makers must explain why ASEAN matters and how support for the Community is key to regional stability and prosperity. The failure to connect with the masses will deprive ASEAN of the crucial support it depends on to deepen the sense of Community and oneness. The EU is learning this lesson the painful way, and that ASEAN would do well to heed them well in advance. ■

Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller is Visiting Senior Fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute and a former Danish Ambassador to Singapore.

“The ASEAN elite may view economic integration through the prism of strategy, geo-economics, and geopolitics, but the ordinary voter does not. What matters most for the person on the street is how integration will impact his or her daily life, and how the opening of borders would mean for living costs, social services and the quality of life?”



The Unknown Master Architect

Few have heard of Vann Molyvann, and yet some regard him as Southeast Asia's greatest living architect

Vann Molyvann pioneered the eclectic “New Khmer Architecture” of the 1950s and 1960s which fused traditional Angkorian, modernist and Japanese themes. The 89-year old Cambodian work has astounded foreign experts, who marvelled at Cambodia’s architectural prowess so soon after decolonisation. But Vann doubts his creations will survive the state’s relentless drive for urban redevelopment today.



ASEANForum

Vann was born to poor parents in Kampot province in 1926. He initially trained as a lawyer in Cambodia before winning a scholarship to further his education in France in 1946. Vann was enthralled by architecture and switched to studying this discipline a year later. While at the prestigious art school École des Beaux-Arts, he was influenced by the modernist ideas of the prominent architect Le Corbusier.

As Cambodia’s most qualified architect, Vann was designated Head of Public Works and State Architect by King Norodom Sihanouk soon after his return to his homeland in 1956. The intensely patriotic King Sihanouk aimed to utilise Vann’s expertise to express Cambodia’s aspirations and modernity after its independence in 1953. The royal patronage was crucial in helping the young Vann to realise his architectural visions. Many of Phnom Penh’s most famous landmarks—including its Olympic Stadium, Independence Monument and Chaktomuk Conference Hall—were constructed during what was termed Cambodia’s second “golden age”.

However, Vann’s masterful reconstruction of Phnom Penh was short-lived. King Sihanouk lost political control and was overthrown by a coup d’état in 1970 and Vann was forced to flee the country as the Vietnam War spilled over into Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge came to power shortly afterwards in 1975.

Many of Vann’s architectural gems have managed to survive the vehemently anti-urban Khmer Rouge regime only to face existential threats of a different kind in the post-conflict era. The Phnom Penh Centre has undergone extensive renovation to the point that it vastly differs from Vann’s original design, while the Preah Suramarit National Theatre and the Council of



The Phnom Penh National Olympic Stadium

Uncube Magazine



The Independence Monument, Phnom Penh

Vietnamiscenmadrid

Ministers building were demolished in 2008. The Phnom Penh National Olympic Stadium – Vann’s magnum opus – is now a commercial complex which floods every year ever since Vann’s intricate system of pools, which were designed to contain water from the monsoon rains, were filled in to facilitate expansion.

Like many other cities in Southeast Asia, Phnom Penh has had to contend with the ever-present struggle between heritage preservation and modernisation. From Manila to Penang, and Hanoi to Yangon, government authorities are working closely with civil society to not only save historically significant buildings from the wrecking ball but also educate the public and in the process imbue in them an awareness of their rich cultural and historical patrimony. The Vann Molyvann Project, an international team of architects which strives to protect his architectural designs by raising public awareness about their significance and painstakingly documents the specifics of Vann’s buildings to preserve their design, is one such laudable initiative.

One of Vann’s major architectural feats still stands majestically as the face of Phnom Penh to the world. Situated in the middle of Preah Sihanouk Boulevard and a stone’s throw from both the Olympic Stadium and the Royal Palace, the Independence Monument is at the heart of the city and the country. Independence Day celebrations and other major national events are typically held at or near the Monument. Unveiled in 1958, it blends the architectural styles of the ancient Khmer temples with the modernist mood of the mid-20th century.

Even as many of Vann Molyvann’s works lay fallow to the passage of time, the Monument will forever be a testament to his architectural genius and Cambodia’s timeless desire to honour its traditions in our modern times. ■

Sanctuary for the Soul

The breathtaking beauty of Raja Ampat in Indonesia's West Papua province have left visitors wondering whether their pristine turquoise waters that sparkle and house coral reefs and fishes of various hues, shapes and sizes is all just an illusion.



Contrary to popular belief, Raja Ampat does not only comprise of the four main islands of Waigeo, Batanta, Salawati and Misool, but is actually an archipelago of more than 1,500 islands off the north-western tip of Indonesia's West Papua province. The waters surrounding the islands is home to more than 1,000 species of fishes and 500 species of reef-building corals, and is touted as an extensive living library of the marine world.

Raja Ampat's name, meaning "Four Kings" in Malay, is derived from the local myth of a woman who came across seven eggs, four of which hatched into four princes. These four princes eventually became kings in the four main islands of Raja Ampat. The islands were once governed by the Sultanate of Tidore from Maluku before it was claimed by the Netherlands after the Dutch invaded Maluku. The locals are a mix of indigenous Papuan and Ambonese descent.

The small number of tourist arrivals has thus far protected the rich biodiversity and unadulterated beauty of Raja Ampat, but that could change very soon. In recent years, the Indonesian government has intensified efforts to spread economic growth and promote tourism beyond Java and Bali. Given the government's focus on developing Indonesia's maritime wealth, Raja Ampat fits the bill on all those accounts. The Indonesian Tourism Ministry has positioned the Raja Ampat islands front and centre in the recent advertising campaigns to promote tourist arrivals under the tagline "Wonderful Indonesia"



instead of the usual hotspots like Bali, Jakarta, Lombok or Yogyakarta.

The remoteness of Raja Ampat within Indonesia alone might deter many who consider the long travelling time too daunting. Visitors have to catch a six-hour flight from Jakarta to Sorong with a stopover in Makassar. From Sorong, they will be ferried to Waisai, the capital of Raja Ampat regency, where the journey will take another hour and a half to two hours. Alternatively, one could also fly to Raja Ampat from Bali with the same stopover in Makassar or Manado. To solve this problem, the Indonesian government is planning to build an airport located much nearer to the islands. Plans are also underway to develop resorts, infrastructure and basic amenities to not only accommodate the burgeoning number of tourists but also to allow easy traveling across the different islands which are accessible using ferries or chartered boats.

Over the years, Raja Ampat has increasingly become every diver's dream destination, and a sanctuary for those

who wish to get away from their hectic lives to seek peace and recharge their burnt out souls. But diving is not the only activity one can enjoy there. Those who prefer land-based activities can indulge in heritage tours to the villages, trek in one of the many rainforests in the islands while birdwatching, go on low tide explorations, or simply just laze on the many beautiful beaches there.

Alas, amidst the hustle and bustle that comes with newfound attention, maintaining Raja Ampat's pristine environment as well as developing it for the benefit and not to the detriment of locals must always be a priority. In that way, Raja Ampat can truly be a tourist destination that Indonesia can preserve for posterity. ■



The slow, steady work of promoting human rights

Despite its existence over the past seven years, many people are still unaware of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and even less know what its responsibilities are.

BY TERMSAK CHALERMPALANUPAP

Given that many Southeast Asian states are not too fond of revisiting their turbulent pasts, it is only natural for human rights to be a sensitive topic in many countries across the region. The discourse of human rights in each of the ten ASEAN member states is still something many governments grapple with in the course of their work. It is in this context that we can better understand the work of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

AICHR was established in 2009 under Article 14, Paragraph 1, of the ASEAN Charter, which stated that “in conformity with the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter relating to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, ASEAN shall establish an ASEAN human rights body.”

During the subsequent drafting of the Terms of Reference (TORs) for the ASEAN human rights body, the name “ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)” was chosen. The word “Intergovernmental” was deliberately included in order to emphasize the basic common understanding among the ASEAN governments that AICHR would be an intergovernmental body – not an autonomous regional body – accountable to the ASEAN governments.

Under its Work Plan for 2016-2020, AICHR professes to “continue to work to promote and protect human rights.” However, the Work Plan appears to approach human rights protection chiefly through thematic studies on issues relating to human rights, such as migration, trafficking in persons especially women and children, women and children in conflicts and disasters, and juvenile justice.

However, one issue of high sensitivity concerns the question whether or not AICHR shall have any role in major cases of alleged human rights violations in individual ASEAN countries. AICHR’s mandate from its foundation was clear – it was there to promote human rights, but not necessarily protect it. The issue of human rights violations had been discussed, but there was no consensus to give any role to any ASEAN body, including AICHR, to intervene in human rights cases at the national level. The lack of ASEAN consensus on this issue remains the case today.

At least two major human rights cases have been brought to the attention of AICHR: the massacre of civilians and journalists in Maguindanao, the Philippines, on 23 November 2009; and the disappearance of Lao civil society leader Sombath Somphone in Vientiane on 15 December 2012.

AICHR was convening its first formal meeting at the ASEAN Secretariat when the protestors gathered at its main entrance demanding justice for the Maguindanao massacre victims. Ambassador Rosario Manalo of the Philippines then duly informed her colleagues on AICHR that the massacre was under investigation by the Filipino authorities. Although the Sombath case remains unfortunately unresolved to this day, it has led AICHR to develop a “retreat” among its Commissioners to discuss discreetly and informally sensitive human rights issues through an in-depth and off-the-record exchange of views.

Despite the handwringing over the future of AICHR, one administrative change has taken place as part of the ongoing process to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat. The unit assisting AICHR’s work was moved from the Community and Corporate Affairs Department to the ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC) Department. This was a partial response to the suggestion that AICHR might need a dedicated secretariat to provide more support services, in light of the growing AICHR activities.

This year saw the appointment of a new set of ten AICHR commissioners who have gotten down to work and appear to be relatively more active than its predecessors. These commissioners will have their work cut out for them as AICHR sets their sight this year on trafficking in persons; the rights of persons with disabilities; as well as the linkages between human rights, environment and climate change. In addition, AICHR will also embark on a new thematic study on the legal aid systems across all ASEAN countries. The work of promoting human rights is neither glamorous nor attention-grabbing in a region where governments might have more important domestic and international priorities, but AICHR is well-positioned to take on the slow and steady work of promoting the rights of peoples across Southeast Asia. ■

Dr. Termsak Chalermpanupap is an ISEAS Fellow and Lead Researcher (Political and Security Affairs), ASEAN Studies Centre at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

ASEANFocus is honoured to interview Dr. Dinna Wisnu, Indonesia's representative to AICHR, to deepen our understanding of AICHR's work.



Dr. Dinna Wisnu was appointed to a two-year term as the Indonesian representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights in January 2016, alongside nine other representatives in the ten-member grouping. She is currently based at the Paramadina University in Jakarta, Indonesia, where she takes on various roles including as Dean of the Paramadina Graduate School of Diplomacy and Research Director of the Paramadina Public Policy Institute. An active public intellectual and commentator on Indonesia's foreign policy, she is a graduate of the University of Indonesia and Ohio State University.

AF: As part of the second generation of AICHR commissioners, how would you characterise its relevance in the Southeast Asian human rights scene today? How has AICHR evolved since its formation in 2009?

DW: AICHR should play a prominent role in mainstreaming human rights-based approach in ASEAN policies, working together with policy and decision-makers in ASEAN member states to ensure a humane community of ASEAN across the three pillars: political and security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars. At this stage the bigger portion of AICHR's role would be to inform policy and decision-makers across ASEAN member states on what human rights serve, how to implement human rights-based approach, and that they can work hand-in-hand with AICHR to do so. AICHR should initiate activities that would inspire support to human rights-based approach and actively offer assistance to ASEAN sectoral bodies and the leadership of ASEAN member states.

AF: What are the opportunities and challenges for AICHR in progressing from the promotion to the protection of human rights?

DW: The opportunities to promote human rights are available along with the more intensive integration process of ASEAN as a community; this requires ASEAN member states to communicate more intensively on policy directions as well as the impacts of public policies at individual country level and as a community of nations. The key challenge is that AICHR does not have sufficient mandate and resources to promote and protect human rights in more intensive manners.

AF: What were some of the considerations preventing a consensus for a comprehensive review of AICHR's Terms of Reference (TOR)?

DW: The decision to review the TOR does not rely on AICHR's will alone. The concurrence of the ASEAN Foreign

Ministers' Meeting (AMM), which means the leadership of ASEAN member states, is required to support any initiative to review the TOR.

AF: What are the 3 most important priorities in AICHR's second 5-year Work Plan for 2016-2020?

DW: AICHR encourages all its Representatives to initiate certain themes and choose the kinds of activities that would be agreeable to other Representatives. Examples of key themes: producing effective instruments and framework of cooperation to combat trafficking in persons; identifying common policies to protect migration across ASEAN; identifying common platform to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets (on universal healthcare, universal education, anti-corruption in education sector, rights to water, etc.); promoting human rights-based approach to youth and media professionals; and also developing a regional guideline to mainstream the rights of people with disability across ASEAN.

AF: What is the state of human rights advocacy in Southeast Asia?

DW: The state of human rights advocacy in Southeast Asia is still at the development stage. Activism on human rights advocacy remains uneven across places and countries. In some places we still need to raise the awareness of and encourage the government that human rights advocacy is part of our needs when engaging with the world.

“AICHR could do better by diligently inspiring civil society, business community and the state that promotion and protection of human rights is a great investment for nations’ development rather than a great burden.”

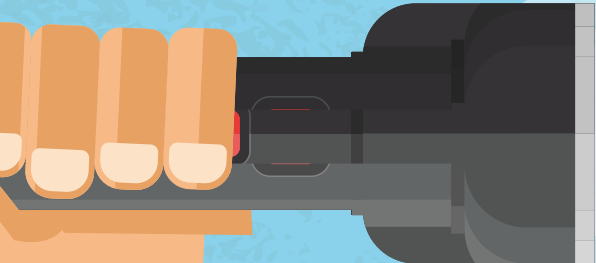
AF: What could AICHR do better to help raise awareness of human rights issues among ASEAN people?

DW: AICHR could do better by diligently inspiring civil society, business community

and the state that promotion and protection of human rights is a great investment for nations’ development rather than a great burden. ■

ASEAN and China Economic Relations at a glance

China may have had an extensive footprint in Southeast Asia since the seafaring traders of the early modern age, but in recent years it has become an indispensable economic partner to the region, and the trade, investment, and tourism numbers clearly indicate that.



According to the latest statistics ending in 2015, Chinese FDI inflows to ASEAN increased by more than four times since 2006. Despite the fall in FDI in 2012, the volume of FDI has noticeably picked up from 2010 onwards. Prior to 2010, the volume of FDI per year hovered at around \$2 billion each year apart from its drastic fall in 2008. In the same period, ASEAN's trade with China more than doubled. The rise in their trade has been extremely consistent, with a slight decrease occurring only in 2009. There have been significant increments annually until 2015, which saw a sharp decline of around US\$20 billion in trade value from the previous year.



Furthermore, there has been a steady increase in the number of Chinese visitor arrivals to ASEAN, with the total figure nearly quadrupling. The most rapid increases occurred from 2010 to 2013, with a rise of around 2 million visitors each year. Looking forward, China and ASEAN seems poised to grow ever closer to each other, setting a goal of US\$ 1 trillion in two-way trade turnover value by 2020. The ongoing upgrading of the ASEAN-China FTA, coupled with various Chinese projects in Southeast Asia, including the One Belt and One Road and Maritime Silk Road initiatives as well as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, will strengthen the close economic relations between China and ASEAN.

The outcome of the recent Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting hosted by China testifies to how inseparable economic goodwill in the region is with diplomatic and political goodwill. Given that peace and stability are crucial to economic growth and prosperity anywhere in the world, how far ASEAN-China economic ties will grow will very much depend on whether or not the two sides can work cooperatively and constructively in maintaining peace and stability in Southeast Asia. ■



FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) INFLOWS TO ASEAN FROM CHINA, 2006-2015 (in US\$ billion)

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
FDI Inflows	1.9	2.1	0.95	1.9	4.05	7.8	5.3	6.4	7.01	8.16

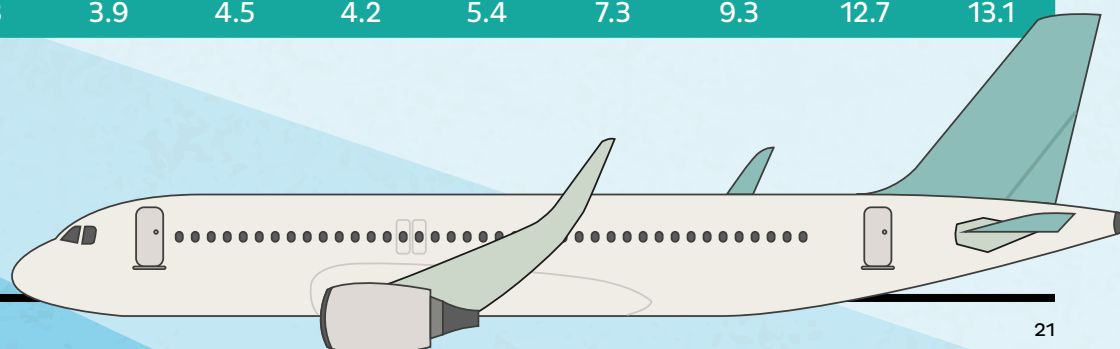
ASEAN TRADE WITH CHINA, 2006-2015 (in US\$ billion)

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Trade	140.04	171.08	196.8	178.2	231.8	280.1	319.4	350.5	366.5	346.4

CHINESE VISITOR ARRIVALS TO ASEAN DURING 2006-2014 (in millions)

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Visitor Arrivals	3.3	3.9	4.5	4.2	5.4	7.3	9.3	12.7	13.1

* preliminary figures
Source: ASEAN Secretariat; CEIC



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