

Book Review

Tashmai Thongurai, *ASEAN Community in perspectives of Professor Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai* • Chulalongkorn University Printing House, Bangkok 2014 (in Thai). pp 125 (230THB)

For the last twenty years, there exists a variation of economic and political changes throughout every region in the world. All countries have, without any doubt, dedicated themselves to rejuvenating national economy after global economic downturn, strengthening their political powers after dealing with the national security downgrade as well as raising their voice after facing the downtrodden practices from the high-bargaining-power countries. The Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN is a cooperation established in order to serve as a stage in which countries in South East Asia are able to jointly accelerate the economic growth, promote regional peace and stability, promote active collaboration and mutual assistance, maintain close and beneficial cooperation as well as represent its strong and united identity to the world of changes.

This book, consisting of 5 remarkable chapters, is written to respond the significance of global changes, in particular the emergence of regional economic and political cooperation named ASEAN, and is embedded in academic and political experiences of Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai who is a highly-acclaimed person serving many important positions both at national and in international levels, i.e., a Former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, a Former Minister of the Foreign Affairs, a Chairman of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council, a President of the Asian Society of International Law (2014-2015), to name four. In particular, this book illustrates a benchmark of an introduction to ASEAN Community in an academic way and, at the same time, is a completed dossier of political journeys of Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai himself to entail what ASEAN will look like by the end of 2015.

At the beginning, Chapter 1 introduces its readers to an overview of the development of ASEAN Community, starting from the establishment of the Association of South East Asia (ASA) in 1961 to the creation of Bangkok Declaration in 1969. It furthers describes how ASEAN Vision 2020 significantly triggered the development of ASEAN Community through the economic and political identification. To look closely at the relevance of Thailand to ASEAN, it discusses the key roles of Thailand in becoming an active ASEAN member and gaining profits from the launch of ASEAN Community. The chapter visually points out the limits of ASEAN Community and its reasons why ASEAN Community has to adapt, in itself, to fit the world economic and political currents. The most interesting point in this chapter belongs to the deep explanation of the “Three Pillars” of ASEAN Community, namely The ASEAN Economic Community, The ASEAN Political-Security Community, and The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

Chapter 2 exemplifies how ASEAN will achieve its goals by alliancing among each other, resulting in successful cooperation among regions i.e. the Ayewady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) and the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS). The efforts to strengthen economic systems of ASEAN do not come to an end by cooperating with countries within the region; nevertheless, ASEAN expands its strenuous capabilities and

versatilities to the high-bargaining-power countries by attracting them to invest in South East Asia, leading to the prosperity of economy and politics, i.e., Mekong-Japan Cooperation, US-Lower Mekong Initiative, ASEAN+3, East Asia Summit (EAS) as well as Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD).

Moving on to Chapter 3, this devotes to the highly-critical analysis of Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai to the launch of ASEAN Community. Contents cover opportunities, positive developments of ASEAN Community in order to clarify the real sense of its challenges. Further, Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai demonstrates to his readers why the changes of the world tuning its ears and focusing its eyes on ASEAN Community are significantly important. Albeit to the opportunity and positive developments of ASEAN, which might happen in all possible ways in the very near future, there are cement-based obstacles of ASEAN Community to its further development. To illustrate, ASEAN Community still lacks of a sense of ownership and a sense of participation. It is sensitive to outer pressures incurred from the high-bargaining-power countries. The issues of mutual confidence building and preventive diplomacy, international relation amongst members, the common foreign policies and the policy of 'ASEAN Affair Comes First' as well as unity are still unfortunately overshadowed by the ideas of individualism and nationalism of each country.

In Chapter 4, the author shows challenges of Thailand after becoming a member of ASEAN Community. Thailand is a prime mover in setting up the ASEAN Community in 1969 in order to coordinate resistance to outside economic and political intervention in South East Asia. This chapter further explores internal and external challenging factors of Thailand to ASEAN Community i.e. the readiness of Thailand to international economic competition, the national security and welfare, and the just-about-right organization. At the end, the book reaches its climax by concluding itself in Chapter 5 with suggestions to which ASEAN Community and Thailand might apply, i.e., the philosophy of sufficiency economy, the ASEAN-WAY methodology, the enhancement of a sense of participation, the support of Eminent Person Groups and Experts, and most importantly, the readiness of Thailand to play a role with a driving force in ASEAN Community in order to move ASEAN Community forward on its right tracks.

Overall, 'ASEAN Community in perspectives of Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai', by systematically introducing issues of ASEAN Community, is an excellent book for those interested in 'this' prosperously economic and political cooperation in South East Asia. Generally speaking, rather than a book on international economic law in the field of ASEAN Community, it is a book of rich contents and of precious experiences of Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai to ASEAN Community which a few people may know, and more importantly, this book has a mesmerizing merit of disclosing the issues of relevance between ASEAN Community and Thailand.

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