Unity-in-Diversity?

Regional Identity Building in Southeast Asia

Kristina Jönsson*

Working Paper No 29
2008

Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies
Lund University, Sweden

www.ace.lu.se

*Kristina Jönsson is a research fellow at the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University

WORKING PAPERS IN CONTEMPORARY ASIAN STUDIES

General editor: Professor Roger Greatrex
Assistant editor: Nina Brand

Publications in this series:

1. Is the world Ready for a Coherent ASEAN+3? / Cesar de Prado Yepes / ISBN 91-975093-0-2
2. Renegotiating Gender and Power: Women's Organizations and Networks in Politics – The China Women Mayors' Association / Qi Wang / ISBN 91-975093-1-0
3. Re-evaluating Preventive Diplomacy in Southeast Asia / J. Michael Tivayanond / ISBN 91-975093-2-9
4. The Role of Law in Contemporary Indonesia / Mason C. Hoadley / ISBN 91-975093-3-7
5. Closing the Digital Divide: Southeast Asia's Path towards a Knowledge Society / Hans-Dieter Evers and Solvay Gerke / ISBN 91-975093-4-5
6. De-colonising Indonesian Historiography / Henk Schulte Nordholt / ISBN 91-975093-5-3
7. Path Dependence, Change, Creativity and Japan's Competitiveness / Cornelia Storz / ISBN 91-975093-6-1
8. China Regaining Position as Source of Learning / Jon Sigurdson / ISBN 91-975093-7-X
9. Prospering on Crime: Money Laundering and Financial Crises / Guilhem Fabre / ISBN 91-975093-8-8
10. Implementing anticorruption in the PRC – Patterns of selectivity / Flora Sapio / ISBN 91-975093-9-6
11. Shaping the Future of Asia – Chiang Kai-shek, Nehru and China-India Relations During the Second World War Period / Guido Samarani / ISBN 91-975726-0-8
12. The Consumer Citizen in Contemporary China / Beverley Hooper / ISBN 91-975726-1-6
13. Defining Southeast Asia and the Crisis in Area Studies: Personal Reflections on a Region / Victor T. King / ISBN 91-975726-2-4
14. Women in Politics in Thailand / Kazuki Iwanaga / ISBN 91-975726-3-2
15. The Return of Piracy: Decolonization and International Relations in a Maritime Border Region (the Sulu Sea), 1959-63 / Stefan Eklöf / ISBN 91-975726-4-0
16. Youth and the State in Contemporary Socialist Vietnam / Phuong An Nguyen / ISBN 91-975726-5-9
17. In the Ancestors' Shadow: Cultural Heritage Contestations in Chinese Villages / Marina Svensson / ISBN 91-975726-6-7
18. Policies and politics underlying the path for universal access to treatment against AIDS in Cambodia / Frédéric Bourdier / ISBN 91-975726-7-5
19. Issue without Boundaries: HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia / Kristina Jönsson / ISBN 91-975726-8-3
20. Modern Military Technology in Counterinsurgency Warfare: The Experience of the Nationalist Army during the Chinese Civil War / Victor Cheng / ISBN 91-975726-9-1
21. Reform after *Reformasi*: Middle Class Movements for Good Governance after Democratic Revolutions in Southeast Asia / Mark R. Thompson / ISBN 91-975727-0-5
22. 'The Two-Sided Family': The Impact of the Family and Everyday Life on Women's Political Participation in Rural Karnataka / Louise Nolle / ISBN 91-975727-1-3
23. Representations - Practice – Spectatorship : A Study of Haptic Relations between Independent Cinema and Market- led Urbanization in contemporary China. / Andreas Tibrand / ISBN 91-975727-2-1
24. The 'Paradox' of Being Young in New Delhi : Urban Middle Class Youth Negotiations with Popular Indian Film. / Elizabeth Williams-Ørberg / ISBN 91-975727-3-X
25. Poverty and Sustainability Issues of Microfinance in China: A Case Study in Fu'an, Fujian Province / LiLian Lau / ISBN 91-975727-4-8
26. A Case Study of HIV Prevention in Reform-Era Shanghai : From Risk to an Enabling Environment / Jacinthe Dumont / ISBN 91-975727-5-6
27. 'Pornography', Sexual Objectification and Sexual Violence in Japan and in the World / Tomo Shibata / ISBN 91-975727-6-4
28. China's Environmental Crisis: Why Should We Care? / Simona Alba Grano / ISBN 91-975727-7-2
29. Unity-in-Diversity? : Regional Identity Building in Southeast Asia / Kristina Jönsson / ISBN 91-975727-8-0

This working paper is published by the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University. The views expressed herein, however, are those of the author, and do not represent any official view of the Centre or its staff.

ISSN: 1652-4128
ISBN 91-975727-8-0
Layout: Petra Francke, Lund University, Information Office
Printed in Sweden by Lund University, Media-Tryck, 2008
© Kristina Jönsson

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to discuss the issue of regional integration and regional identity building in Southeast Asia. The idea is to problematise the quest for a regional identity by relating the efforts of integration to the issue of national identity building, multi-ethnicity and multi-cultural societies in times of globalisation. The paper consists of three broad themes intending to capture the complexity of regional identity building; regionalism and regional cooperation, tensions by diversity, and dilemmas of regional identity building in multi-ethnic societies illustrated by Laos and Burma/Myanmar. The paper is explorative in character, trying to combine different bodies of literature in order to better understand some of the contradictory processes related to regional identity building in Southeast Asia. A tentative conclusion is that without an accommodating, inclusive, and pluralistic society, the creation of a common regional identity will remain an elitist political project.

Keywords

Regionalism, regional integration, ASEAN, identity building, Southeast Asia, Laos, Burma/Myanmar

Contents

Prologue 1

Introduction 2

Regional integration 3
- Southeast Asia versus East Asia 3
- Conceptualising regionalism 6
- Southeast Asian regionalism and authoritarianism 9

Regional diversity 10
- Challenges for unity 10
- National identity building and room for diversity 13
- Trans-nationality and divided loyalties 15

The cases of Laos and Burma/Myanmar 17
- Nation building and ethnicity 17
- Laos and the building of a multi-ethnic nation 18
- Burma/Myanmar and the quest for a mono-ethnic nation 21

Concluding remarks 22

References 26

Prologue

The first draft of this paper was written four years ago, but for various reasons I never managed to complete the draft at that time. The paper was more or less forgotten until I read the special issue of *Contemporary Southeast Asia* "ASEAN at 40. Progress, Prospects and Challenges" (Vol. 29, No. 3, 2007). ASEAN held its 40th anniversary in August 2007, and about the same time the Burmese junta decided to drastically raise the prices of oil and fuel, with demonstrations and violent repression as a result. A critical response from fellow ASEAN member states eventually came, which to some extent was of a new kind, diverging from the so-called ASEAN way of non-interference in internal affairs. The behaviour of the Burmese regime stands in stark contrast of the image ASEAN wants to portray, and serves as a reminder of how heterogeneous the ASEAN member states are, and how difficult it is to create a united region when some of its member states are not interested in complying with the wishes of the others. It made me aware that the paper still had a point worth pursuing, namely that despite recent progress in terms of regional integration in Southeast Asia, illustrated for example by an increasing number of agreements and collaborative projects, there are nonetheless many challenges ahead in order to create a Southeast Asian community—for several reasons. Oftentimes slow economic integration or unresolved security issues are blamed for the halting regionalism. However, there are other issues that may challenge the regional project. In this paper I highlight the concurrent, and to a large extent contradictory processes of regionalism and identity building, because to some extent they create a divide between the member states. My interest in the topic was triggered by the quote below.

> We envision the entire Southeast Asia to be, by 2020, an ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by a common regional identity.
>
> We see vibrant and open ASEAN societies consistent with their respective national identities, where all people enjoy equitable access and opportunities for total human development regardless of gender, race, religion, language, or social and cultural background. (ASEAN vision 2020) [1]

To create a regional identity as described above is very ambitious and consequently also a real challenge. My intention with this paper is to discuss why I think it is such a great challenge.

[1] Kuala Lumpur, 15 December 1997, http://www.aseansec.org/10384.htm

Introduction

The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have a vision to create a common identity in Southeast Asia by 2020. Considering the recent history of the region this is quite significant. A decade ago Southeast Asia was divided into two blocs, one with the old ASEAN members Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Brunei, and the other with the newest members Vietnam, Laos, Burma/Myanmar,[2] and Cambodia. Despite integration efforts since the announcement, the region still suffers from unsolved conflicts and substantial socioeconomic inequalities between, as well as within, the countries. In order to create stability and to remain in power the regimes engage in different projects of strengthening their national identities creating contradictory processes within the countries, as well as among them. The aim of the paper is hence to discuss the issue of regional integration and regional identity building in Southeast Asia and to problematise the quest for a regional identity, as stated in the *ASEAN vision 2020*, by relating the efforts of integration to regional diversity and the issue of national identity building. I will argue that the quest for a regional identity is a political (elite) project and that without an accommodating, inclusive, and pluralistic society, a common regional identity will be hard—if not impossible—to create.

The literature on regionalism and regional integration has so far primarily focused on regional security and the economics matters of nation states, and the interaction and collaboration between the states together with the development and functioning of regional organisations. The region's violent past, strategic importance, and the last decades' exceptional economic developments can partly explain this. Attempts to measure regionalism have often focused on quantifiable indicators such as level of interaction. According to Acharya (2000: 1), regional perspectives on Southeast Asian politics and international relations are scarce. Also, there is relatively little written about regionalism from the perspectives of the conceptualisation of regions and regional identity building in relation to local and national identity formation processes, and what it takes to integrate individuals of diverse cultural and ethnic groups into a regional identity (Jones 2004: 143). This despite the fact that Southeast Asia is a mosaic of different cultural and ethnic groups, and that it is often pointed out that globalisation processes increase the risk of ethnic fragmentation (see e.g. Kinnvall 2002). Accordingly, different bodies of

[2] Burma was renamed Myanmar by the military junta in 1989, but the decision has been questioned by civilians as well as by parts of the international community (see e.g. Schairer-Vertannes 2001).

literature will be combined in order to better understand the complexity of regionalism.

In this paper "identity" is used in a very simplistic way, as the intention is to problematise the political project of creating a regional identity rather than to focus on identity issues as such. The process of identity formation is extremely complex and varies depending on time and space. Identities can be overlapping and individuals may have several identities. Southeast Asia encompasses everything from the urban middle class in Singapore to rural ethnic minorities in Laos, and state identity does not necessarily equal individual identity. Besides, what ASEAN actually means by a "common regional identity" is not entirely clear. Solidarity and cooperation, an increasing integrated market and more open societies appear to be keywords (see Jones 2004: 141), but say little about how to create a common identity in practice.

The paper is divided into three major parts: the first focuses on the development of regionalism in Southeast Asia; the second part highlights tensions of diversity in the region; and the third part presents two cases, Laos and Burma/Myanmar, as illustrations of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies that may challenge the quest for a common regional identity. Besides belonging to the newcomers and the economically poorest of the ASEAN member states having an arduous path to integration for those reasons, in both Laos and Burma/Myanmar the minority groups comprise a relatively large part of the population at the same time as the two regimes have chosen different ways to approach the minority issue.

Regional integration

This part of the paper focuses on some of the integration attempts in Southeast Asia from the 1960s onwards with special emphasis on ASEAN. The history and development of ASEAN cannot be ignored in understanding the regional project, even thought ASEAN by no means equals Southeast Asia as a geographical concept—East Timor has not been allowed to become a member for example. Accordingly, the paper also discusses the foundations for a region and whether there is anything special about Southeast Asia that may influence regional identity building.

Southeast Asia versus East Asia

During the last couple of decades, cooperation within regions has, in general, escalated. The most successful example of regional integration, the European

Union (EU), has even produced a "constitution" in order to enhance the integration process—even if it has had problems of getting it ratified. The NAFTA and Mercosur agreements in America are other, less ambitious, projects (Jones 2004: 141). In Southeast Asia, ASEAN is promoting increased integration, which, for example, is expressed in *ASEAN Vision 2020*.[3] ASEAN was created in 1967 with Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines as its founding members. The idea was to create an organisation for economic, social and cultural cooperation. However, security issues implicitly played a role (Acharya 2000: 84). For example, the fear of the communist Indochina and Burma/Myanmar was an important reason for creating the organisation.[4] Brunei joined ASEAN in 1984 as the sixth member. In 1995 Vietnam became a member, and in 1997 Laos and Burma/Myanmar followed. The membership of Cambodia was delayed until 1999 because of internal unrest (ibid: 135). Interestingly, Cambodia's entry into ASEAN was delayed due to political turmoil, while Burma/Myanmar was allowed to join already in 1997 despite severe human rights violations. The enlargement may be viewed as an act to balance the influence of China, as well as a search for internal equilibrium by checking Thai hegemonic ambitions on mainland Southeast Asia. Another reason was the increasing competition over natural resources in the region, an area in which the new members states are rich (Rüland 2000: 434-435).

The quest for a Southeast Asia region has not been consistently pursued over the years. The various collaboration patterns have made the process complicated—partly because of membership constellations and partly because they have been caught between security and economic considerations.[5] Furthermore, at the same time as ASEAN has been enlarged and thus created a stronger regional unit, the concept of East Asia has begun to emerge. East Asia consists of Southeast Asia (the ASEAN member states) and Northeast Asia (China, Japan and South Korea). The first attempt to introduce East Asia stems from the beginning of the 1990s and the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) within the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC), but it failed to be realised. The second attempt, ASEAN+3,[6] has been more successful. According to Takashi Terada (2003), the major explanation for this is the Asian financial crisis, the development of regionalism in other parts of the world, and Japan's promotion of ASEAN+3.

---

[3] In November 2007 the first-ever ASEAN charter was signed. Within a year it was ratified.
[4] ASEAN was also created to stabilise the region after Konfrontasi and the Malaysian-Philippine dispute over Sabah (Collins 2003: 128).
[5] See Cesar de Prado Yepes (2003) for a detailed account of the regionalisation process.
[6] The three are China, Japan and South Korea.

The leaders of ASEAN+3 have met on a regular basis since the mid 1990s to promote regional cooperation. The first informal ASEAN+3 meeting was organised in 1997 in order to promote political and economic cooperation at the top-level. The aim was to promote mutual understanding, trust, good neighbourliness and friendly relations to further peace, stability and prosperity in the region. The Asian financial crisis showed that Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia were closely interlinked, which naturally encouraged increased cooperation in the East Asian region. At the same time regional integration was expanding in Europe as well as in America, urging for an Asian response (Terada 2003). Interestingly, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)[7] cooperation contributed to the East Asian concept through meetings between the Southeast and Northeast Asian countries, which were necessary in order to develop a common Asian view (Gilson and Yeo 2004: 28).

Finally, while previously Japan was not interested in excluding the Pacific-part of an Asian region, it made a surprising turn-about on the issue. However, there are still doubts about more substantial East Asian regionalism, partly because of cultural differences and partly because of a fear of ASEAN being marginalized within an East Asian region (Terada 2003). Also, East Asia has nothing equivalent to the European Commission, or even a regional political structure. APEC is too heterogeneous to be relevant, and the ASEAN secretariat is sub-regional (Stevenson 2004: 841).

This development could explain ASEAN's move at ASEAN's seventh summit meeting, in Bali, Indonesia, in 2003, where initiatives were taken to revitalise Southeast Asian regionalism by the establishment of an ASEAN Economic Community, an ASEAN Security Community, and an ASEAN Social and Cultural Community. The member states felt there was a need especially to speed up economic integration in order to meet the challenges from China and India. Security collaboration was needed for creating stability in the region, as non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism, may damage the economies. Moreover, conventional security issues such as military conflicts between the Southeast Asian states were not seen as a danger any longer (Singh 2004: 2-3; Ferguson 2004: 396; Smith 2004). The vision of the initiative is primarily to create a single market with free flow of goods, services, investments, capital and skilled labour in 2020 (Hew 2004: 47;

[7] ASEM was established in 1996 by EU (then 15 members), the Commission and ten Asian countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Japan and South Korea). Today also the ten new EU members and Cambodia, Laos and Burma/Myanmar are members, i.e. ASEM includes today 39 partners. ASEM deals with economics, politics and the people-to-people and cultural dimension of international relations (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/asem/asem_summits/asem5/news/ip04_1178.htm; Reiterer 2002; Yeo 2000).

http://www.aseansec.org/10384.htm). Hence, there are clear ambitions to create a stronger Southeast Asian/ASEAN region, even if the agenda is highly voluntaristic, with limited supranational and institutional aspects (see Ferguson 2004: 395; Yoshimatsu 2006: 127).

Conceptualising regionalism

Hitherto Southeast Asia has been assumed to constitute a region. But what actually characterises a region? Most definitions are based on attributes such as geographic proximity, shared cultural and social characteristics and common history (Acharya 2000: 4). However, region is a contested concept.[8] The term Southeast Asia, for example, only came into general use during the Second World War (Acharya 2000: 7; Huxley 1996), especially in relations to Japan's occupation of the area during the Pacific War (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002: 591). Scholars have described Southeast Asia as a "unity-in-diversity", in the sense that Southeast Asia contains divergent and overlapping characteristics (see Acharya 2002: 3). For example, although the countries are neighbours, some of them are on the mainland while others to a large extent consist of archipelagos. Furthermore, mountains separate some countries while the Mekong River connects places creating different kinds of societies; there are similarities as well as differences between languages, culture, religious practices, and so on. On top of this, Southeast Asia today displays more homogeneity and convergence than ever before (Acharya 2002: 2, 4-5) due to the increasing integration and globalisation processes and the increasing socio-economic disparities in society.

However, "unity-in-diversity" is a confusing term insofar it is both descriptive and normative and can be viewed as a possible (political) solution to the tension involved in the integration process. For example, in the European case, "unity-in-diversity" well captures the Commission's efforts to create a more coherent EU while it at the same time allows for different national features. "Unity-in-diversity" avoids the (potential) clash between the creation of coherent political, cultural and social entities (*unity*) and "differing internal identity constellations (*diversity*)", and can therefore be used in the process of regional identity building (Hellström 2003: 182).[9] It is important to keep in mind though, that the integration process has come much further in Europe than in Southeast Asia—at least concerning common institutions—

[8] See Kratoska *et al.* (eds) (2005) for a comprehensive historical/geographical account of Southeast Asia.

[9] Note that the way Acharya uses the concept "unity-in-diversity" differs from Hellström—the former is more a description of a region while the latter is also a strategy as it can "be used to achieve greater homogeneity among the actors involved in the process of identity construction" (Hellström 2003: 182).

and the socio-economic, political and maybe also cultural differences are more pronounced in Southeast Asia than in Europe. Moreover, the increasing globalisation may lead to unification in some areas, such as trade agreements, and fragmentation in others, such as ethnic conflicts.

But even if we can establish criteria for a region, how can we understand regional integration and regionalism?[10] Some scholars see regionalism as a by-product of globalisation processes, i.e. regionalism is "determined by location and specificity within the world economy or traditional production structures". Regionalism can be described as a kind of re-territorialisation (Scholte 2000: 42). New alliances and collaboration patterns are created in order to cope with the new challenges caused by globalisation, and even if the states lose some of their power, regionalism strengthens the states vis-à-vis the rest of the world. At the same time a process of de-territorialisation is taking place, i.e. territories are not as important as they used to be. Borders simply loose their importance through increased integration, such as trade.

Adherents of constructivism see norm and policy diffusion—where the concept "unity-in-diversity" could play a role—as drivers of regionalism. Patterns of interaction in the form of regional collaboration shape the idea of a region through diffusion of norms, policies and practices of regional organisations and collaboration (formal as well as informal). For example, a common identity can be reinforced through peaceful conflict solutions in political, economic and territorial issues. Also, a united front to the outside world is identity strengthening (Acharya 2000: 10; also see Kivimäki 2001: 22), which the ASEM-process could be an example of.

Yet others take a more realistic approach arguing that the question of hegemonic power is decisive for regionalism, or that regionalism is defined by patterns of interaction—both concerning cooperation and conflict (Acharya 2000: 9). Different Asian regional initiatives such as ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA),[11] East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC),[12] and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC),[13] can be viewed as examples which

[10] According to Beeson (2003: 252) regionalisation implies processes that are largely the consequences of private sector-led economic integration, while regionalism is based on processes of regionally cooperation and coordination that are self-consciously driven consequences of political activities. This would mean that East Asia primarily is a sign of regionalisation, while ASEAN cannot be regarded as regionalisation due to the modest intra-regional trade between the ASEAN states (ibid: 259). Acharya (2000) uses the term regioness. However, for the sake of simplicity I will not make that distinction and primarily use the term regionalism (and regional integration).

[11] AFTA was created in 1992 (Acharya 2000: 150), but ASEAN's economic cooperation has always been subordinated to national security agendas. Economic development was viewed as the best way to "ward off communist and ethnic rebellions" (Rüland 2000: 427).

[12] EAEC was a first attempt in the beginning of the1990s to introduce East Asia as a region, but it failed.

[13] APEC suffers from not being completely Asian (the members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru,

demonstrate that the hegemony of regional politics and economic arrangements is a struggle between different state strategies which are seeking to define the regional project (Guerrero 2001: 5). According to Mark Beeson (2003: 252), the regional integration in East Asia, i.e. the ASEAN+3 initiative, will continue to be constrained by international tension and a form of reactionary regionalism. The so-called reactionary regionalism implies that regional initiatives both have been a response to external events and designed to mediate and moderate their impacts. For example, the USA's wish to form bilateral cooperation with the Asian countries has prevented region-wide integration and a regional identity (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002). Further, the ASEAN regional forum (ARF) was created in 1994 (Acharya 2000: 146) as an instrument for ensuring continued American involvement in the region—and to encourage China in good international behaviour.[14] But China, in turn, viewed the forum as "a vehicle for promoting multipolarity in the Asia-Pacific to counter America's unipolar status in a post-Cold War world" (Emmers 2001: 275). In this sense, ARF is a security cooperation responding to external events, which also include power-balancing considerations.[15]

As indicated above, there is nothing inherently natural about regions. Benedict Anderson's (1991) idea about nations as "imagined political communities"[16] can easily be transferred to "imagined regions", such as Southeast Asia and East Asia (Acharya 2000: 2; Ngai-Ling Sum 1996: 208). Regions have to renegotiate their identities because of societal changes caused

---

Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, United States, Vietnam). At the same time it has been unable to accommodate and represent the different Asian and Western impulses within it (Beeson 2003: 262).

[14] ARF has 27 participants and is the only Asia-Pacific-wide body that discusses political and security issues (the participants are the ASEAN members, their Dialogue Partners and Papua New Guinea, Mongolia, North Korea, Pakistan, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (Severino 2007: 412-413).

[15] ARF is not the first security cooperation in the region. Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954-1977, was created to oppose further Communist gains in Southeast Asia. However, it only had two members from Asia, Thailand and the Philippines (the other six were Australia, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United States) (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002: 592).

[16] The community is imagined because most of its members will never meet or hear of each other, yet they feel they belong to the same community or comradeship and are willing to fight and die for one another (Andersen 1991: 6-7). Anderson is interested in exploring the psychological appeal of nationalism, in other words what makes people willing to love and die for their nations. He is also interested in why people in certain circumstances come to imagine themselves as part of a nation (Kellas 1998: 56). His point of departure is that nationalism is a cultural artefact of a special kind (Özkirimli 2000: 143), made possible through education and exposure to ideas about nationalism. Anderson has been criticised for his view that "experiences of nationalism in Western Europe, America and Russia have supplied for all subsequent nationalism a set of modular forms from which nationalist elites in Asian and Africa had chosen the ones they liked" by, for example, Chatterjee (1993: 5) who claims that "anti-colonialism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins to battle with the colonizer" …"by dividing the social institutions and practices into two domains: the material and the spiritual", where the latter contains the nations cultural identity. He means that the national imagines in Asia and Africa are posited on difference with the modular forms of national society propagated by the modern West, rather than on identity (Özkirimli 2000: 155).

by globalisation, norm and policy diffusion and/or hegemonic power, forcing them redefine their interests in a similar way to the way states do (ibid: 210).[17] This leads us to the question of whether there is anything particular about Southeast Asian regionalism that distinguishes it from other processes around the world.

Southeast Asian regionalism and authoritarianism

The governments of Southeast Asia are without doubt the chief advocates of regionalism and of creating a regional identity. Accordingly, it is important how these actors perceive and interpret the idea of a Southeast Asian region (see e.g. Gilson and Yeo 2004: 25-26). It was not until the cold war was over and the Cambodia issue was solved that the idea of a region was reinvented and pursued. Before that Southeast Asia was deeply influenced by de-colonialisation processes, nationalism, and the cold war—which in turn was decisive for the regional pattern of international relations (Acharya 2000: 12, 72). In Southeast Asia regionalism is linked to authoritarianism, as authoritarianism "created the political basis for a common subregional political and ideological framework". The regimes could justify their rule in terms of the communist threat, ethnic unrest, and that economic development was facilitated by authoritarianism (Acharya 2000: 59). Authoritarianism, in turn, has been facilitated by the "ASEAN way", which is a method of conflict prevention and conflict resolution based on norms central to ASEAN, such as non-intervention in internal affairs and non-use of force in inter-state relations. Decisions are made through consultations and dialogue in order to reach consensus. Quiet diplomacy and informality are important means to avoid legalistic procedures and public scrutiny (Sharpe 2003; Katsumata 2003: 107). The "ASEAN way" is made possible because of the elitist nature of Asian politics. According to a senior Malaysian diplomat, 80 percent of the foreign ministers' important decisions were made during informal meetings.[18] The "Asian value debate" has also fed into the process of regional identity building by claiming that there is a common set of values in Asia. Although toned down the last few years, it still colours the view on democracy and human rights (Lawson 2005: 110).

Even today the ASEAN area is full of potential conflict such as the Spratly archipelago which is totally or in part claimed by Vietnam, China, Taiwan,

[17] See Chang 2005 and the Special Edition of Asia Pacific Viewpoint, Vol. 46, No. 3 for discussions about the rise of a "New Asia".
[18] According to Nischalke (2000) the "ASEAN way" is a myth, and the collaboration is based on functionality rather than shared visions.

Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei (Sharpe 2003: 240). Another example is the tension between Thailand and Burma/Myanmar over border disputes, refugees, Burmese illegal labour migrants, and the lack of dialogue with the opposition and ethnic minorities. All this undermines mutual trust, which is an important precondition for identity building (Rüland 2000: 431). Thus, compared to, for example, regional integration in Europe with its long tradition of democracy and peace (at least in the "old EU"), ASEAN stands out as both authoritarian and relatively burdened by conflicts—something that has consequences for a regional identity. It should be pointed out though, that ASEAN never had the ambition to become a "European Union" with far reaching institutional cooperation. ASEAN was originally set up as a diplomatic community more than anything else (Smith 2004: 416).

To sum up, the integration process in Southeast Asia has proceeded in waves, constantly challenged by sovereignty issues and various political considerations. Different organisations and countries have competed for spheres of influence over time, and presently ASEAN+ appears to be en vogue, pushing for further integration. A special characteristic of Southeast Asian regionalism is its emphasis on authoritarianism, and it is perhaps this foundation that creates the greatest challenge for a regional identity due to the limits it puts on regional diversity.

Regional diversity

This part of the paper highlights regional diversity and nation building, as counterforces and thus challenges to regionalism and the creation of a regional identity. It also discusses trans-nationalism and divided loyalties in times of increasing migration and porous borders, which challenge the present form of citizenship granted by individual states. This is the part of my argument that I find missing in the literature about regional integration and regionalism. While much of the analysis focuses on economic and security issues, the role of national identity building and citizenship is being discussed in other places, omitting an important aspect of the regional identity-building project.

Challenges for unity

Despite the efforts to increase regional integration, there are still many challenges ahead. For example, doubts have been raised whether ASEAN can build a (security) identity based on the "ASEAN way" without institutionalisation and legally binding agreements (Sharpe 2003: 248).

According to Tobias Nischalke (2002: 109-110), only conditional support can be found for the idea of an ASEAN community. He suggests that ASEAN is a rule-based rather than an identity-based community. He cannot find evidence of a regional collective identity based on "shared meaning structures, mutual identifications and norm compliance with the 'ASEAN way'." In fact, according to Nischalke security is still guaranteed through outside alliances, with the USA being the most important. What has united ASEAN until now is the code of regional conduct enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) from 1976.[19] Jürgen Rüland (2000: 38-39) argues that realist motivations are still valid in foreign policy behaviour in Southeast Asia, and that policy making is influenced by pre-colonial perceptions of the external world with unstable interstate relations and thinking in terms of balance of power and buffer zones. Further, one should not forget that the military is still influential in the region—Burma/Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines are cases in point—and that ASEAN tends to conceal disagreements in public (Nischalke 2002: 91).

Differences between values and political systems within ASEAN also impede the creation of a common identity. The discrepancies have become even more pronounced since its enlargement, and after the financial crisis when it became obvious that "Asian values" were no guarantee to economic success. Thailand, for example, has launched a number of initiatives promoting human rights and democracy that, for obvious reasons, are seen with suspicion by the more authoritarian regimes (Rüland 2000: 442). The Philippines and Indonesia have also started to adhere to the universalistic concept of human rights, which is opposed to the idea of non-interference—and thus not in line with the Asian concept of human rights (Kivimäki 2001: 9). Malaysia's former prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, who once supported Burma/Myanmar's admission to ASEAN, was also one of its critics, threatening to expel Burma/Myanmar from ASEAN due to its treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi (*The Economist* July 25, 2003; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 31, 2003). The brutal suppression of the street protests in Burma/Myanmar in September 2007 received even more severe criticism from several ASEAN member states and can be seen as an interesting change from the "ASEAN way". However, not all the ASEAN countries are as intransigent, as for example Malaysia and in their criticism, and it may be premature to suggest that the "ASEAN way" has given away to a more flexible

[19] ASEAN endorsed regional resilience in TAC, which means regional stability. If all member states strengthened national development addressing the threat from communist and ethnic insurgency there would be domestic security, which in turn would lead to stability in the region (Collins 2003: 129).

interpretation (Katsumata 2003).[20] ASEAN countries are still concerned over state sovereignty and domestic stability, and so far it has been impossible to agree on an appropriate style of regional diplomacy (Sharpe 2003; Katsumata 2003: 107).

As indicated above, Burma/Myanmar has caused a lot of diplomatic trouble for ASEAN. Another example concerns ASEM, where the European side for a long time refused to accept a Burma/Myanmar membership. A compromise could only be reached by not allowing high-ranking Burmese officials to participate in meetings. Burma/Myanmar constitutes an old dilemma in the region, the confrontation between commercial activities and human right issues (Bray 2002). ASEAN has engaged in so called "constructive engagement", as the ASEAN governments argued that a strategy of expanding economic ties was the most effective way to promote economic and political change, and allowing Burma/Myanmar to become a member of ASEAN is part of this strategy. Another reason to grant membership was to avoid Burma/Myanmar forming closer ties to China, which in turn could pose a strategic threat to Vietnam (*Journal of International Affairs*, Spring 2001).[21] However, in recent years there have been discussions about putting pressure for further political talks by using a carrot-and-stick strategy, i.e. to increase aid little by little at the same time as threats of banning all exports from Burma/Myanmar are posed if there are no changes towards democracy (Kurlantzick 2002). However, sanctions are not really effective as long as Burma/Myanmar's largest trading partners refuse to support them (*Journal of International Affairs*, Spring 2001).

Within the ASEAN-group one can also discern various cooperation patterns. For example, Laos and Vietnam have a special relationship through their political orientation. The relationship between Vietnam and Cambodia has been coloured by Vietnam's support of the Hun Sen regime after overthrowing Pol Pot in the late 1970s. The countries along the Mekong River (Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and China's Yunnan Province) cooperate in a number of issues. For example, they have discussed increased collaboration in the field of road and telecommunication, power links, trade, human resource development and tourism (*Associated Press*, September 23, 2002).

---

[20] But at the 11th ASEAN Regional Forum, 2 July 2004, the Ministers "urged Myanmar to take every action that will add substance to the expression of its democratic aspiration" (http://www.aseansec.org/16245.htm).

[21] Western governments have, in line with the views of Aung San Suu Kyi, taken a confrontational approach, imposing arms embargo and selective sanctions in the form of travel restrictions for leading members of the regime. Since 1997 the US has imposed a ban on new investments in Burma/Myanmar. However, existing investments are allowed to continue, for example the petroleum company Unocal—albeit not without fierce criticism (Bray 2002: 158).

Simultaneously, self-identity and how others perceive a country impinge on the relationships between the countries. Border disputes and mutual distrust go back a long time in history. The legacy of colonialism, the Cold War and the role of China exert a great influence over politics in the region. Vietnamese are not very popular in Laos and Cambodia (see e.g. Amer 2006), and the Thai tend to look down on Laos as a backward or underdeveloped country. Many Thai tourists travel to Laos to see "traditional values", while the Lao see themselves as protectors of the real Buddhist values which the Lao think that the Thai have lost. At the same time many Lao look up to the Thai in terms of development and sophistication (Evans 1999: 30). Consequently, strangers are frequently seen with suspicion and possibly also as a threat to national identity by introducing new ideas and practices (see e.g. Houtum and Naerssen 2001: 130). It is should be pointed out though that there are efforts to change the situation. For example, ASEAN is trying to create an awareness of a regional identity by introducing the issue into primary education curricula.[22]

National identity building and room for diversity

One important difference between European and Southeast Asian regionalism is the legacy of colonialism and the kind of nationalism it has created in many parts of Southeast Asia.[23] This kind of nationalism is in fact anti-colonialism and has been important in many parts of the "Third World" during the 1950s and 1960s. The problem was, however, that at independence the nationalists inherited the borders established by the colonial powers, and these did not always reflect cultural or national divisions. Consequently nation building was on the agenda for practically all the new states. Anti-colonial nationalism consequently turned into a nationalism of inter-ethnic disputes and conflicts (Kellas 1998: 94-95; Chatterjee 1993: 3; also see Özkirimli 2000: 182). This happened in Indochina and Burma/Myanmar. As a result, conflicts between ethnic minority groups and major groups have been a problem for the governments for a long time, and still are. For example, harassment of ethnic, mainly Christian, minorities in the highland of Vietnam led to a flow of refugees to Cambodia. The majority of ethnic Lao live in Thailand,[24] and

[22] Compare with Andersons' print-capitalism (1991), meaning that commercial printing made it possible to spread the idea of the nation and the ideology of nationalism (also see Kellas 1998: 57).
[23] Plenty has been written about nationalism in Southeast Asia despite criticism that nationalism is an ethnocentric concept with the west as a norm (see e.g. Tarling 2004: 15). I will leave that debate aside, and instead I will focus on colonialism and nationalism in multi-ethnic societies, and what consequences there may be on regional identity building.
[24] Approximately 20 million Lao live in Thailand compared to 4,5 million in Laos (Jerndal and Rigg 1998: 821).

there are Burmese refugee camps in Thailand, and so on (see e.g. Rajah 2002; Jerndal and Rigg 1998).

Thus, ever since the days of national independence the fear of collapse has haunted the states in Southeast Asia. Ethnic conflict is part of this fear, which is understandable considering that the region contains thirty-two ethno-linguistic groups, with each state containing at least four major ethnic communities (Yao Souchou 2001: 12). The ideology of "ethnicity" has to a large extent come into force in the process of modern nation-state building. The ruling powers became more or less obsessed with classifying people since modern nations had to consist of identified populations based on language, territory, economics and culture (Toyota 2003: 312). National identity is, however, not a straightforward concept. National identity may consist of more than one national identity, for example an ethnic identity and a state identity, which in turn may create conflicting loyalties (Kellas 1998: 21). Moreover, nationalism and patriotism focus on loyalties to the state, while ethnic nationalism may seek to disintegrate the state.[25] In other words, there may be conflicting nationalisms, which in turn may create conflicts (Tarling 2004: 26). A way to solve this problem is to become a multinational state which guarantees ethnic rights to the nations within it (ibid: 67), something that, for example, Burma/Myanmar has chosen not to do (see further below).

Today ethnicity and national identity building are important issues to many states. In times of rapid societal changes, nationalism is able to offer myths of ancestry and kinship to individuals. This in turn, creates a sense of identity, security and moral authority to individuals (David Brown in Tarling 2004: 24)—even if it may take time to persuade people that nationalism is the right way to go and not, for example, religion (Tarling 2004: 25). However, minority nations often exist within states. These minority nations are dominated by one or more majority nations, which holds the position of a hegemony, at the same time as most such ethnic groups are ethnically tied to nations elsewhere (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 6). Ethnic nationalism often arises out of a sense of alienation, but also of resentment against unfair political, economic, or social exclusion (Scheff 1994: 281). Few governments in Southeast Asia are as a matter of fact able to guarantee equal citizen rights to all. Instead most Southeast Asian states ethnicise their governance by informal policy preferences for one ethnic group, or structural discrimination based on "racial categories" (Yao Souchou 2001: 13). Practices of inclusion and exclusion are in reality strongly associated, or framed, by nation-building projects (Houtum and Naerssen 2001: 126). Indigenous people are often

[25] For a comprehensive discussion about nationalism in Southeast Asia, see Tarling 2004.

stereotyped as backward and ignorant, and Ken Kampe (1997) argues that the state authorities' preoccupation with teaching skills that meet urban rather than rural needs in the quest for nation building has contributed to making indigenous people alienated and eroded their sense of identity. Thus, the quest for a national identity may weaken as well as strengthen the nation.

Trans-nationality and divided loyalties

The ASEAN states' assurance that that they will not interfere in each other's domestic issues has facilitated the completion of the nation-state project (Tarling 2004: 199-200). At the same time, the nation-state project is challenged by the process of de-territorialisation and the diminishing importance of borders through the increased integration. Old bonds of allegiance and belonging upheld by ethnic groups that are spread across national borders also facilitate trans-national mobility (see e.g. Evans *et al.* 2000). This, in turn, leads to "trans-localised" identities, which potentially are contradictory (Toyota 2003: 302). As a result nations have "to deal with the confusing and conflicting nature of identity boundaries" (Jones 2004: 148). Especially "border people may demonstrate ambiguous identities because economic, cultural and linguistic factors pull them in two directions. They are also pulled two ways politically, and may display only a weak identification with the nation-state in which they reside" (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 60). For example, ethnic minorities in northern Thailand and Burma/Myanmar live in areas that extend beyond national boundaries. The failure to negotiate ethnic aspirations within the nation state has lead to armed separatist movements—extending to the neighbouring states (Yao Souchou 2001: 13). According to Janet Sturgeon (2004) new small border entities are being created in the borderland of China, Thailand and Burma/Myanmar. These are state appointed and serve to protect the border for the homeland at the same time as they enable illicit information, people and goods to cross the borders. This is made possible by drawing strategically on multiple identities. Violence forcing people to migrate has also contributed to the development of these small border polities (Sturgeon 2004: 464, 468).

Such trans-national social spaces and multi-local affiliations are nothing new. Historically, migrations, invasions, and displacements have been common in Southeast Asia. This, in turn, has led to repeated shifts of cultural borders and political loyalties. This means that ethnic identities have also changed over time (Toyota 2003: 310). However, this raises questions about identity—if identity should be related to the place of origin or place of

settlement—and today the increasing flows of trans-national migrants actually opens up new social space for marginalized individuals and groups previously constrained by officially imposed ethnic categorisation. Accordingly, identity becomes de-terriorialised and an "imagined community" of trans-localised identities (ibid: 317), or "imagined trans-national communities" (Donnan & Wilson 1999: 157) come into existence. Self-determination movements may also feel part of an "imagined community" through connection with exiles in diaspora. Their identity, or perception of identity, differs from those of the regime, and often such identities can be manipulated in order to motivate struggle. Refugees are another group that may feel they are part of a wider community through the Internet, media, meeting foreigners, travel, clothing and so on (Dudley 2002: 167, 171). These processes should also be taken into account when discussing regional identity building.

To sum up, regional integration in Southeast Asia has manifested itself in a number of organisations, most notable ASEAN, which has recently tried to speed up the integration process. However, the quest for a regional Southeast Asian identity has been challenged not only by conflicts among the member states, but also by initiatives to create a larger entity, namely East Asia (ASEAN+3). Economic gains stand against security issues and (old and new) power-balance considerations. There is still a fear of being dominated by a hegemonic power, be it regional or from other parts of the world. Integration has to a large extent been an elite project with the underlying wish of creating domestic stability without external interference in order to stay in power. Nevertheless, the last decades' democratisation has lead to splits among the member states with regard to domestic interference and human rights issues. Needless to say, the newest ASEAN members have accentuated the gap. Arguably, Southeast Asian regionalism is influenced both by power considerations and patterns of interaction primarily at the state level. Finally, the importance of the regionalism/authoritarianism should not be underestimated—especially not in relation to the issue of ethnicity and national identity building. By viewing the linkage from a "unity-in-diversity" perspective, the difficulties with a regional identity become evident. "Unity-in-diversity" requires that there is room for differences within the region, but considering the number of (ethnic) conflicts and the governments' fear of loosing control over their peoples, there is still a long way to go before such a means can be accepted and thus applied.

The cases of Laos and Burma/Myanmar

The choice of including Laos and Burma/Myanmar in the analysis is made on firm grounds. They are chosen not as representatives of Southeast Asia, but rather as special cases exemplifying the difficulties involved in creating a common regional identity. While poor economic performance and low level of development often are the main reasons put forward for regional integration difficulties, the focus here is on the role of national building and ethnic minorities in the respective countries.

Nation building and ethnicity

The nation state is a fairly recent phenomenon in Southeast Asia (Yao Souchou 2001: 4), and the ASEAN countries' particular concern over state sovereignty is obvious. Some states have become stable politically as well as economically, but others are still weak. What they have in common is that their main security concern is still domestic. Laos and Burma/Myanmar are among the weakest states in ASEAN. They are still at a relatively early stage of nation building, preoccupied with various domestic political and security issues trying to strengthen national identity (Katsumata 2003: 116-117). Many argue that for a nation-state to gain legitimacy its people must recognise that they share memories that can form a nation and that the state's boundaries coincide with the nation (Collins 2003: 23). Accordingly, a shared identity is crucial for the legitimacy of the state—something that has been, and still is, a challenge in Burma/Myanmar and Laos. In addition, both countries face problems with ethnic rebels (many of them involved in the drug trade, see e.g. Lyttleton 2004; Kusuma Snitwongse and Suchit Bunbongkarn 2003: 294).[26]

What makes Laos and Burma/Myanmar somewhat different from their neighbours (besides Cambodia and Vietnam) is their relative underdevelopment (se Rigg 2003: 12). This gap is actually widening between, for example, Laos and Singapore (Stuart-Fox 2002). Both countries (together with Vietnam and Cambodia) have experienced sustained stagnation or decline in human well-being. Socialist development failed in Laos (1975-86), and Burma/Myanmar has suffered from economic mismanagement (1962-today) (Rigg 2003: 328). At the same time people desire better lives through

[26] In Laos, there have been reports about violent outbreaks in remote areas and a few bombs have exploded in the capital. However, it is uncertain whether these incidents were conduced by organised groups or criminal individuals (see e.g. Jönsson 2002: 125).

economic development and modernisation,[27] and consequently ASEAN offers a possible solution to their problems. Some observers say that Laos joined ASEAN to get a sense of identity and belonging both within the region and on the international level (Pruzin and Weber 1996).

However, regional integration is problematic for a number of reasons—such as regional inequalities and political obstacles related to non-interference and human rights. In addition, ethnicity has made international cooperation difficult when donors focusing on poverty reduction want to target poor ethnic groups, like the Hmongs who are viewed as especially maltreated.[28] Underdevelopment and social exclusion is closely intertwined, and in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies such as Laos and Burma/Myanmar, the degree of inequality tends to be higher (Jones 2004: 145). Another side to this is that the poor and the socially excluded have little influence over their situation. For example, both in Laos and Burma/Myanmar people have been resettled. In Laos the "resettlement of ethnic minorities has become a central feature of the rural development strategy," moving people from the highlands to the plains and the valleys. However, resettlement implies leaving a well-known territory and changing a traditional way of life, and settling in a new environment and integrating into new culture references (Evrad and Goudineau 2004: 938)—something that many of the resettled people have had difficulties with. In Burma/Myanmar poor (ethnic) communities have been relocated to remote areas. Burma/Myanmar is also known for its policy of forced labour (Lanjouw *et al.* 2000; Grundy-Warr: 2004).

Laos and the building of a multi-ethnic nation[29]

A shift in consciousness about the nation came to Laos when French colonialism introduced the idea of "the history of the nation", and the elite became aware of the "backwardness" of their country and the reforms that were needed (Evans 1998: 185). Laos achieved full independence from the French in 1953, and in 1975 the communists came into power after a long

[27] See Yao Souchou (2001) for an interesting discussion about identity, modernity, and Asian resistance against the hegemony of Western values (e.g. Asian values and Asian particularism versus universal values).

[28] According to Grant Evans (2003) the harsh judgements of the Lao regime and its treatment of the Hmong minority is grossly unjust. Actually "the Lao constitution and laws are more tolerant towards minorities than many of its neighbours". The discrimination that can be found is not because of official discrimination, as one can find Hmong at all levels of the government, at school, in trade, etc. Many receive money from relatives overseas and are among those who are the best educated and most prosperous. The poor Hmong living in the countryside are no more or no less discriminated than other ethnic groups, although they are often associated with rebels in remote areas and with the opium trade.

[29] See Pholsena (2006) for a comprehensive account of Laos and the making of a multi-ethnic nation.

period of civil war that the royalists lost. Ethnic minorities became important in official portrayals of the people, which drew on the historical conditions of nation building and armed struggle for independence (Taylor and Jonsson 2002). The government's nationalistic discourse and ethnic categorisation were thus closely interlinked (Pholsena 2002: 180). But ethnic minorities were not only important in official portrayals. In 1975 ethnic minority groups were encouraged to join the struggle on the side of the communists, and also today the regime makes an effort to include representatives from different ethnic groups in leading positions.

Ethnicity was already reinforced during colonial times, as ethnographic classification became an important aspect of the colonial strategy. The French brought a new model of state and society, where the relationship between ethnic and racial identities were self-evident. The French identified peoples as "races," and they assumed that people could be ranked on a scale of progress in accordance with the evolutionary theories of the time. Consequently, people in the highlands were mapped according to their backwardness (Taylor and Jonsson 2002: 238). This patronising attitude towards the rural population is still in existence. One example is the National Ethnic Cultural Garden situated outside Vientiane. It was built to promote and disseminate the traditional cultures and fine customs of ethnic groups, but it has become an amusement and picnic park for Lao and Thai tourists. Besides some buildings of typical traditional ethnic Lao houses, there is a zoo and replicas of dinosaurs (from Savannakhet), which according to Grant Evans (1998: 127) revels a deeper prejudice that the ethnic groups are primitive and backwards.

There are today, according to official statistics, 49 ethnic groups distributed between four ethnic-linguistic categories in Laos (60 percent are ethnic Lao). In the 1950s Lao Lum (valley Lao), Lao Theung (Lao of the mountain slopes) and Lao Sung (Lao of the mountain tops) were introduced. The classification was intended to emphasise the unity of the country in order to eliminate the colonial classification based on racial connotations, and to build a sense of national identity, and the terms Lao Lum, Lao Theung and Laos Sung are still commonly used (Pholsena 2002: 185). The government continues to be preoccupied with ethnicity and ethnic classification. For example, the Lao population census in 2000 was based on ethnic criteria, and attempted to map Laos' invisible ethnicity through objectification of the "other" ethnic groups, defining cultural features on the one hand, and erasing the dominant ethnic group's ethnicity (i.e. ethnic Lao) on the other. However, the word Lao designates both the idea of ethnicity and of nationality, and this has in effect made Lao supreme as it both includes an ethnic group and the whole

population. To put it differently, there is an ambiguity that is both linguistic and conceptual (Pholsena 2002). This has caused a debate about how to use Lao—not the least among Lao expatriates who often belong to ethnic minorities (see e.g. Evans 1998: 8-9).

Since 1975 the regime has tried to create a different present by reconstructing the past through repression and reinterpretation (Evans 1998: 6). But according to Evans (1998: 11) the writing of history in contemporary Laos has been problematic. The idea with shared memories has become difficult in Laos for a number of reasons. Some people still remember the old regime with positive memories, while others lived in the mountains with the communist Pathet Lao and only have memories of propaganda about the feudal or neo-colonial regime. In addition to that, the younger generation know little of history and are more interested in modern lifestyles (ibid: 7). Jerndal and Rigg (1998: 810-811, 818) argue that Lao identity has been manipulated in the interests of national unity. They suggest that Laos presents a good example of Benedict Anderson's idea of the "invention of imagined national communities; the creation of state 'languages-of-power'; the remoulding of populations into new (national) units; and the retrospective invention of national identity". Ever since French colonialism, when France encouraged Lao nationalism in order to resist pan-Thai nationalism and keep Indochina together, the question of whether Laos deserves to be labelled a country has been debated.

In order to strengthen nationalism and to create a Lao identity, the authorities try to create myths and heroes. It is important for them to distance themselves from Thai cultural supremacy, but it can also be interpreted as a way to seek "local" modernity. One way is to make links to a royal past. By resurrecting old kings it is hoped that nationalism will be inspired (*Agence France Press* January 9, 2003; Evans 1998). Another way is to create heroes. There is, for example, a cult of Kaysone, the former leader of the communist party (since its foundation in 1955) and Laos (from 1975 to his death in 1992), which is a part of the state's strategy to invent national legitimizing myths. However, there is a limit to how much a cult can be developed, as any personality cult may drift too close to the cult of the overthrown monarchy (Evans 1998: 31).

Burma/Myanmar and the quest for a mono-ethnic nation[30]

In Burma/Myanmar the nation-building project was shaped by its relationship with Britain and India. Britain defined the borders and offered Western education. But neighbouring India also affected Burma/Myanmar by the annexation between the two countries which lasted until the 1930s (with the result that Burma/Myanmar was treated as a part of India), and also because the Indian model was found useful by the Burmese when seeking educational and political progress. At the same time, however, India was a focus of antagonism because Indians staffed the Burmese bureaucracy, lent money, and so on (Tarling 2004: 97-99). Burma/Myanmar became independent from Britain in 1948, and in 1962 the Burmese military seized power in a coup. In the 1980s a democratic movement started, leading to an election in 1990 in which the party National League for Democracy (NLD), with Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi as its leader, won a clear victory. However, the military refused to accept the results and Aung San Suu Kyi has remained under close surveillance ever since (Schairer-Vertannes 2001).

In Burma/Myanmar nation building has had, and still has, violent expressions. Burma/Myanmar has used a policy of assimilation to create a mono-ethnic nation (Collins 2003: 27). This approach is usually used where the hegemonic group has the control over the state machinery and can impose its own values on other groups within the state. However, at the same time as this may create a strong national identity, it may also create resentment in the peripheral communities as their identities are challenged. In Burma/Myanmar there are at least eight ethnic communities based on linguistic, religious, and regional divisions. Around 68 percent are thought to be ethnic Burmans. The major minority groups are the Karen, Shan, Arakanese, Kachin, Chin and Mon. Though most are Buddhist, the Christians have a leadership role in Karen State, and the Arakan State is home to about a million Muslims and Hindus (Reynolds *et al.* 2001: 96). When it became evident for the ethnic communities that they would not have autonomy under the military regime, their resistance to the assimilation policy became military. There are still groups fighting, but since 1989 the majority of the insurgents groups have signed ceasefire agreements with the military regime—even if many of the groups retain their weapons (Bray 2002: 157; Reynolds *et al.* 2001: 99; Smith 2005: 78-80).

The tensions in Burma/Myanmar continue because of the Myanmarisation/ Burmanisation where Burmese culture, language and Buddhism[31] are

[30] For a comprehensive account of present Burma/Myanmar and its modern history see Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Taylor and Tin Maung Maung Than (eds) 2005; Ganesan N. and Kyaw Yin Hlaing (eds) 2007.

absolutely hegemonic (besides political, economic and constitutional problems) (Collins 2003: 29, 31).[32] Myanmarisation implies that all citizens should feel like true Myanmar citizens, regardless of "race". The idea is to "crowd out all alternative concepts of unity that various ethnic groups and foreign languages might have expressed throughout history" (Houtman in Tarling 2004: 203). But the situation is complex, as people are divided by religion, languages and cast categories. For example, people can be Burmese Buddhists, Indian Hindus or Muslims, or members of native minority communities (Thant Myint-U 2001: 245).

Ethnic tensions and conflicts have resulted in migration and flows of refugees. Around two million Burmese citizens live in Thailand. Approximately 125,000 live in camps close to the Burmese border, and another 500,000 to 1,000,000 are workers who work in, for example, textile mills and construction jobs (*Human Rights Watch*, October 3, 2003). Ethno-nationalism is being recreated in some of the refugee camps and could feed fragmentation, but the articulation of Karen nationalism, for example, is weak as many realise that they may never return to their homelands (Rajah 2002: 533; also see Grundy-Warr 2004). The assimilation approach in Burma/Myanmar has obviously led to a backlash of the elite's nation- and state building project making Burma/Myanmar a weak state with areas not under government control (Collins 2003: 56; Lorch 2006: 19).

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper is to examine the political project of regional identity building in Southeast Asia. One the one hand, the prospects for further integration appear promising. ASEAN tries to further the integration process aiming at a common regional identity as proposed in the *ASEAN vision 2020*. On the other hand, "one is only as strong as one's weakest point". The newest members states have made the process complicated by making the organisation more diverse than ever, economically as well as politically. So,

[31] Buddhism is more important for the regime in Burma/Myanmar than in Laos. The British abolished at an early stage the monarchy in Burma/Myanmar and instead Buddhism has played an important role. The communist abolished monarchy in Laos in 1975 (see Evans 1998).

[32] One way to check for the present of national-states is to look for "the growth of myths and memories of common ancestry and history of the cultural unit of population; the formation of a shared public culture based on an indigenous resource (language, religion etc.); the delimitation of compact historic territory, or homeland; the unification of local economic units into a single socio-economic unit based on the single culture and homeland; and the growth of common codes and institutions of a single legal order, with common rights and duties for all members" (Anthony D. Smith in Hall 1999: 9-10).

even if a country such as Thailand, which is not obsessed with protecting an imagined national essence, is interested in further integration, there is also, for example, Burma/Myanmar, which adheres to a tradition of resistance (Lynch 2004: 340). Thus, one could question the gains achieved through the enlargement project considering all the problems associated with it. However, seen from a balance of power perspective, it makes sense. The member states are still afraid that powers with hegemonic ambitions, such as China in relation to Southeast Asia as whole or Thailand and Vietnam in relation to Laos, will gain too much influence. There is also a substantial amount of resistance within countries against too much external economic, political and cultural influence.

One also has to remember that ASEAN was designed as an organisation for states engaged in nation building rather than for creating a supranational organisation, and the quotes introducing the paper should not be over interpreted. Nation building is often a brutal business, and the states wanted to make sure that neighbouring states would not interfere in their domestic affairs. Consequently sovereignty remained firmly located at the national level rather than on a supranational level. The idea was to create a strong region based on strong states, not strong regional institutions. Also, as the security threats primarily were domestic, the function of ASEAN would be "to accelerate economic growth, social progress and culture development in the region" (Collins 2003: 128-129). The increased interest in furthering regional integration and the creation of a common regional identity can be explained by greater global competition urging for a stronger region, i.e. a reaction against "the West" (Lawson 2005: 113). Another explanation may be that ASEAN over the years has fostered a sense of a Southeast Asia region through the collaboration. At the same time, it seems unlikely that the "ASEAN way" will be abolished in the near future, which in turn may slow down the integration process.[33] And, if Southeast Asia becomes integrated in a larger East Asian region, the integration process will become even more complex.

Globalisation forces may encourage further regionalism, but it may also open up for fragmentation. Ethno-nationalism and trans-nationalism pose a threat to many states creating divided loyalties and thus also questioning the legitimacy of the regimes. There are different ways to deal with multi-ethnic societies in order to create a national identity. For example, Laos has chosen to create a common past and to include members of ethnic groups in the government structure. Although ethnic discrimination exists, the resistance

[33] Kivimäki (2006: 18) argues that a new "ASEAN identity" is being built based on a genuinely developed network of institutions rather than on elitist declarations.

is—at least so far—limited. In Burma/Myanmar the situation is different. The regime pursues a strategy of assimilation aiming at a mono-ethnic society based on Burmese values and identity. The result has been violent resistance against the Burmese hegemonic power with a large number of conflicts and widespread distrust. Laos and Burma/Myanmar provide good illustrations of the difficulties involved in creating national identities in multi-ethnic societies, and although the two countries are special cases insofar that they also are low-income countries and authoritarian, they are members of ASEAN and included in the realm of a regional Southeast Asian identity—despite their differences.

The description above fits well into the picture of Southeast Asia as a region characterised by some kind of "unity-in-diversity". But does it work as a political strategy to enhance a regional identity, as in the case of the Europe? It depends on how it is constructed, both regards "unity" and "diversity". Without doubt Southeast Asia is a region with great diversity, and each country is in fact composed of diverse cultures. The question is, then, how much "unity-in-diversity" can be achieved? And who should decide what constitutes "unity" and what constitutes "diversity"? So far dominant groups have clung onto power and limited the acceptance of a diverse citizenry, which has made the quest for a regional identity a political, elite-driven project. According to Jones (2004: 148, 152), regional identity will be nothing but an imposed superstructure with no facilities of governance until citizenship becomes a concern and focus of all ASEAN nations. The growing movement of people requires nations to deal with shifting identity boundaries and, due to the multicultural composition of the region, the importance of ethnic identity will most certainly grow in significance. Hence, it makes no sense to discuss regionalism and regional identity without including the issue of local and national identity building together with citizenship—at least not in times of globalisation. It is not possible to draw any conclusions by only looking at Laos and Burma/Myanmar, but at least the two cases open up for interesting and critical discussions of the political project regional identity building in Southeast Asia.

So, is a regional identity plausible by 2020? It is questionable. Maybe it is possible at the state level, if the political will is really there, but in order to make ASEAN truly regional the sense of belonging to a common identity, whatever it may entail, must be "imagined" at the individual level as well (cf. Emmerson 2005: 182). But maybe that has never been the goal. After all, in an increasingly globalised world lifestyles and rural-urban divides may be more decisive for identity than nationality. Identities are in a constant flux

that must be negotiated—they are contested depending on political and socioeconomic developments. Regardless of future developments, additional attempts to bridge the gap between different bodies of literature are warranted in order to provide a more sophisticated and nuanced picture of regional identity building in Southeast Asia.

References

Acharya, Amitav (2000) *The Quest for Identity. International Relations of Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Amer, Ramses (2006) "Cambodia's Ethnic Vietnamese: Minority Rights and Domestic Politics", *A.J.S.S.* 34:3 (388-409).

Anderson, Benedict (1991) *Imagined Communities*. London, New York: Verso.

Beeson, Mark (2003) ASEAN Plus Three and the Rise of Reactionary Regionalism. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 251-268.

Bray, John (2002) "Burma: The Dilemmas of Commercial and Humanitarian Engagement". *Corporate Environment Strategy,* Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 155-162.

Chan, T. C. (2005) "Place, memory and identity: Imagining 'New Asia'." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 247-253.

Chatterjee, Partha (1993) *The Nation and its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Collins, Alan (2003) *Security and Southeast Asia. Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Donnan, Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson (1999) *Borders, Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State.* Oxford, New York; Berg.

Dudley, Sandra (2002) Local Identities and Global Flows of Objects and Images. *Oxford Development Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 165-176.

Emmers, Ralf (2001) The Influence of the Balance of Power Factor within the ASEAN Regional Forum. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 275-291.

Emmerson, Donald K. (2005) "Security, Community, and Democracy in Southeast Asia: Analysing ASEAN". *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 6 (2) 165-185.

Evans, Grant (2003) "Laos is getting a bad rap from the world's media. *Bangkok Post*, July 8.

Evans, G, C. Hutton & Khua Khun Eng, eds (2000) *Where CHINA Meets SOUTHEAST ASIA. Social and Cultural Change in the Border Regions*, Copenhagen: NIAS. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Evans, Grant (1999) "Introduction: What is Lao Culture and Society?" in G. Evans, ed. *Laos Culture and Society*, Bangkok: Silkworm Books.

Evans, G. (1998) *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance, Laos since 1975*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Evrard, Olivier and Yves Goudineau (2004) Planned Resettlement, Unexpected Migrations and Cultural Trauma in Laos. *Development and Change*, 35(5): 937-962.

Ferguson, James R. (2004) ASEAN Concord II: Policy Prospects for Participant Regional "Development". *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 393-415.

Ganesan N. and Kyaw Yin Hlang (eds) (2007) *Myanmar. State, Society and Ethnicity.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Japan: Hiroshima Peace Institute.

Gilson, Julie and Yeo Lay Hwee (2004) Collective Identity-Building Through Trans-regionalism: ASEM and East Asian Regional Identity. In Wim Stockhof, Paul van der Velde, and Yeo Lay Hwee (eds) *The Eurasian Space. Far More Than Two Continents*. The Netherlands: IIAS; Singapore: ISEAS.

Grundy-Warr, Carl (2004) *The Silence and Violence of Forced Migration: The Myanmar-Thailand Border*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Guerrero, Dorothy (2001) *Regionalism and Alternative Regionalisms in Asia and the Pacific Basin*. Institute for East Asian Studies/East Asian Politics, Gerard-Mercator-University Duisburg.

Hall, Rodney Bruce (1999) *National Collective Identity. Social Constructs and International Systems*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Hellström, Anders (2003) (Re)making European Unity. In Bo Petersson and Eric Clark (eds), *Identity Dynamics and the Construction of Boundaries*. Nordic Academic Press.

Hemmer, Christopher and Peter J. Katzenstein (2002) *Why is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism*. International Organization, 56, 3, pp. 575-607.

Hew, Denis (2004) Regional Economic Trends, in *Regional Outlook, Southeast Asia 2004-2005*. Singapore: ISEAS.

Houtum, Henk van and Ton van Naerssen (2001) Bordering, Ordering and Othering. *Tijdschrift voor Economishe en Sociale Geografies*, Vol. 93, No. 2, pp. 125-136.

Huxley, Tim (1996) Southeast Asia in the study of international relations: the rise and decline of a region. *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 199-228.

Jerndal, Randi and Jonathan Rigg (1998) Making space in Laos: constructing a national identity in a 'forgotten' country. *Political Geography*, Vol. 17, No. 7, pp 809-831.

Jones, Michael E. (2004) Forging an ASEAN Identity: The Challenge to Construct a Shared Destiny. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 140-154.

Jönsson, Kristina (2002) Globalization, authoritarian regimes and political change: Vietnam and Laos, in C. Kinnvall and K. Jönsson, eds. *Globalization and Democratization in Asia. The Construction of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge.

Kampe, Ken (1997) What does foreign aid for education contribute to the maintenance of indigenous knowledge in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam? *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 155-160.

Katsumata, Hiro (2003) Reconstruction of Diplomatic Norms in Southeast Asia: The Case for Strict Adherence to the "ASEAN Way". *Contemporary Southeast Asia,* Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 104-121.

Kellas, James G. (1998) *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc. Second edition.

Kinnvall, Catarina (2002) "Analyzing the global—local nexus", in C. Kinnvall and K. Jönsson, eds, *Globalization and Democratization in Asia: the Construction of Identity.* London and New York: Routledge.

Kivimäki, Timo (2001) The Long Peace of ASEAN. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 5-25.
Kivimäki, Timo (2006) "Southeast Asian Security: A Short History", *NIASnytt,* no.1, pp-17-19.
Kratoska, Paul H, Raben, Remco, Schulte Nordhold, Henk (eds) (2005) *Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Politics of Space*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
Kurlantzick, J (2002) "Can Burma Reform?" *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, vol. 81, issue 6.
Kusuma Snitwongse and Suchit Bunbongkarn (2003) "New Security Issues and the Impact on ASEAN", in *The 2nd ASEAN Reader*. Singapore: ISEAS.
Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Robert H. Taylor and Tin Maung Maung Than (eds) (2005) *Myanmar. Beyond Politics to Societal Imperatives*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Lanjouw, S., G. Mortimer and V. Bamforth (2000) Internal Displacement in Burma. *Disasters*, Vol. 24, No. 3.
Lawson, Stephanie (2005) "Regional Integration, Development and Social Change in the Asia—Pacific: Implications for Human Security and State Responsibility". *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 107-122.
Lorch, Jasmin (2006) "Civil Society under Authoritarian Rule: The Case of Myanmar", *Südostasien aktuell*, 2, pp. 3-37.
Lynch, Daniel C. (2004) International "Decentering" and Democratization: The Case of Thailand. *International Studies Quarterly*, 48: 339-362.
Lyttleton, Chris (2004) Relative Pleasures: Drug, Development and Modern Dependencies in Asia' Golden Triangle. *Development and Change*, 35(5): 909-935.
Ngai-Ling Sum (1996) "The NICs and Competing Strategies of East Asian Regionalism", in Gamble & Payne, eds. *Regionalism and World Order*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press.
Nischalke, Tobias (2002) Does ASEAN measure up? Post-Cold War diplomacy and the idea of regional community. *The Pacific review*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 89-117.
Nischalke, Tobias Ingo (2000) Insights from ASEAN's Foreign Policy Co-operation: The 'ASEAN Way', a Real Spirit or a Phantom? *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 89-112.
Pholsena, Vatthana (2002) "Nation/Representation: Ethnic Classification and Mapping Nationhood in Contemporary Laos", *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 3, no. 2.
Pholsena, Vatthana (2006) *Post-war Laos. The Politics of Culture, History and Identity*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Pruzin, Daniel and Maya Weber (1996) Communist Laos Looks for Capitalist ASEAN Trade Bloc for New Identity, *Christian Science Monitor*, September 4.

Rajah, A. (2002) "A 'nation of intent' in Burma: Karen ethno-nationalism, nationalism and narrations of nation2, *The Pacific Review*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 517-537.
Reiterer, Michael (2002) *Asia-Europe. Do They Meet? Reflections on the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).* Singapore: Asia-Europe Foundation.
Reynolds, Andrew, Alfred Stepan, Zaw Oo and Stephen Levine (2001) How Burma Could Democratize. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 4.
Rigg, Jonathan (2003) *Southeast Asia. The human landscape of modernization and development.* London and New York: Routledge. Second edition.
Rüland, Jürgen (2000) ASEAN and the Asian Crisis: theoretical implications and practical consequences for Southeast Asian Regionalism. *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 421-451.
Scheff, Thomas J. (1994) "Emotions and Identity: A Theory of Ethnic Nationalism", in C. Calhoun, ed. *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, pp. 277-303.
Schairer-Vertannes, R. (2001) "The Politics of Human Rights: How the World Has Failed Burma", *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law*, vol. 2, no 1, pp. 77-118.
Sharpe, Samuel (2003) An "ASEAN way" to security cooperation in Southeast Asia? *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 231-250.
Scholte, Jan Aart (2000) *Globalization, a critical introduction*. Great Britain: Palgrave.
Severino, Rodolfo C (2007) "ASEAN Beyond Forty: Towards Political and Economic Integration", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 406-23.
Singh, Daljit (2004) The Asia-Pacific Security Environment, in *Regional Outlook, Southeast Asia 2004-2005*. Singapore: ISEAS.
Smith, Anthony L. (2004) ASEAN's Ninth Summit: Solidifying Regional Cohesion, Advancing External Linkages. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 416-433.
Smith, Martin T. (2005) "Ethnic Politics and Regional Development in Myanmar: The Need for new Approaches", in Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Robert H. Taylor and Tin Maung Maung Than (eds) *Myanmar. Beyond Politics to Societal Imperatives*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Stevenson, Adlai E. (2004) Regional financial cooperation in Asia. *Journal of Asian Economics*, 15: 837-841).
Stuart-Fox, Martin (2002) *Buddhist Kingdom Marxist State. The Making of Modern Laos*, Bangkok: White Lotus Press. Second edition.
Sturgeon, Janet C. (2004) Border Practices, Boundaries, and the Control of Resource Access: A Case from China, Thailand and Burma. *Development and Change*, 35(3): 463-484.
Tarling, Nicholas (2004) *Nationalism in Southeast Asia*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
Taylor, N. A. and H. Jonsson (2002) "Other Attractions in Vietnam", *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 3, no. 2.

Terada, Takashi (2003) Constructing an 'East Asia' concept and growing regional identity: from EAEC to ASEAN+3. *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 251-277.
Thant Myint-U (2001) *The Making of Modern Burma*, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
Toyota, Mika (2003) Contested Chinese identities among ethnic minorities in the China, Burma and Thai borderlands. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 301-320.
Yao Souchou (ed.) (2001) *House of Glass. Culture, Modernity, and the State in Southeast Asia.* Singapore: ISEAS.
Yeo Lay Hwee (2000) ASEM: Looking Back, Looking Forward, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 113-144.
Yepes, Cesar de Prado (2003) *Is the World Ready for a Coherent ASEAN+3?* Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University. Working Paper No 1.
Yoshimatsu, Hidetaka (2006) "Collective Action Problems and Regional Integration in ASEAN", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 115-140.
Özkirimli, Umut (2000) *Theories of Nationalism. A Critical Introduction*. Houndmills: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Web sites

http://www.aseansec.org/10384.htm
http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/asem/asem_summits/asem5/news/ip04_1178.htm
http://www.aseansec.org/16245.htm

News papers

Agence France Press January 9, 2003
Associated Press, September 23, 2002
The Economist July 25, 2003
Far Eastern Economic Review, July 31, 2003
Human Rights Watch, October 3, 2003
Journal of International Affairs, Spring 2001