

## ASEAN Study Group

September 10, 2009

[Research overview]

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007, adopting the “ASEAN Charter” and starting down the path to becoming a full-fledged international institution. Although praised as “the most successful regional organization in the world,” ASEAN confronts numerous issues, none of which are easily resolved. The regional and international environment surrounding ASEAN has also changed greatly. These new circumstances are characterized by progressing economic globalization, an increase in international pressure to conform to “global standards” such as by coordinating and unifying economic systems in line with the political values of human rights and democracy, the emergence of economic rivals such as China and India that could hinder the continued influx of foreign capital that has supported the economic growth of ASEAN countries, economic and political turmoil in the US, which has played a major role in the political and economic security of this region, and a deterioration in Japan’s political and economic vitality. Changes have also occurred within ASEAN. Even as they advocate the ASEAN Economic Community concept, the member states of ASEAN are intent on concluding bilateral free trade agreements with countries outside the region. Bilateral military cooperation with countries with extra-regional countries has also strengthened in recent years. ASEAN’s dream of building an “ASEAN Community” by a target date of 2015 does not appear likely to be realized easily.

On the other hand, ASEAN continues to maintain its leadership in the area of cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN+3 (APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS), etc. The presence of ASEAN as a “diplomatic actor” is hardly unwelcome. Possessed of both strengths and weaknesses, the ASEAN regime features co-existence of an “old ASEAN” and a “new ASEAN”; how should this be viewed? If we have entered an age in which the peace and prosperity of Japan will be increasingly influenced by its relations with the other countries of Asia, then it is extremely important to shed light on the systems and policy formation dynamics of ASEAN as one of the region’s influential actors.

This research will seek to elucidate the very “dynamics of ASEAN as a regional regime,” a

topic that appears to have been overlooked by Japanese researchers on ASEAN. Based on these findings, Japan's approaches to ASEAN policy in the 30 years that have passed since the Fukuda Doctrine will be reexamined from the perspective of ASEAN's operational mechanisms as a regional regime, and the future of ASEAN and Japan-ASEAN relations will be examined.

[Findings thus far]

Started in June 2008, this study group will conclude with the presentation of a report in March 2010. In FY2008 it held a total of 10 study group meetings, at which each member first briefed the others on the chapter assigned him/her; that content was then discussed among all members. At present, each member has prepared and reported on a revised version of his/her chapter incorporating the points for reflection brought up in discussions this fiscal year. A research study is scheduled to be conducted in Singapore from October, after which a rough draft will be completed around January 2010 and a report submitted in March 2010.

[Study Group]

Leader

YAMAKAGE Susumu      Professor, University of Tokyo  
Research topics: ASEAN and Japan: the ideal and reality of ASEAN (overview)  
ASEAN as the operating mechanism for a regional regime

Members

WASHIO Tomoharu      Senior Research Fellow and Operations Division Manager  
Japan Economic Foundation  
Topic: ASEAN and wide-area economic cooperation

SHUDO Motoko      Professor, Tsukuba University  
Topic: ASEAN and civil society

OBA Mie      Associate Professor, Tokyo University of Science  
Topic: ASEAN's external relations

SUZUKI Sanae      Research Fellow, Institute of Developing Economies  
Topic: ASEAN Central Secretariat's functions and roles

AOKI (OKABE) Maki      Research Fellow, Institute of Developing Economies  
Topic: CLMV and ASEAN

YUKAWA Taku            Doctoral Candidate, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences,  
University of Tokyo  
Topic: Reconsidering the “ASEAN Way”

Members/Administrative Secretaries

KIKUCHI Tsutomu      Professor, Aoyama Gakuin University  
Visiting Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs  
Topic: ASEAN and politics/security – building a security  
community

YUZAWA Takeshi      Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs  
Topic: The ASEAN Community and the US

Observer

SUKEGAWA Seiya      Acting Manager, Asia and Oceania Division, Overseas Research  
Department, Japan External Trade Organization