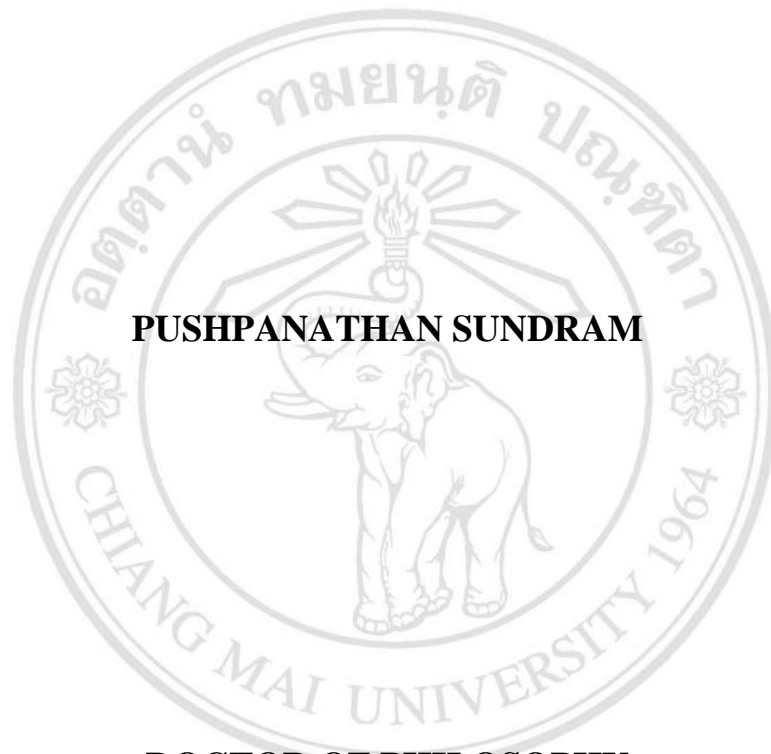


**A STUDY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN  
NATIONS AS NETWORK GOVERNANCE**



**PUSHPANATHAN SUNDRAM**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

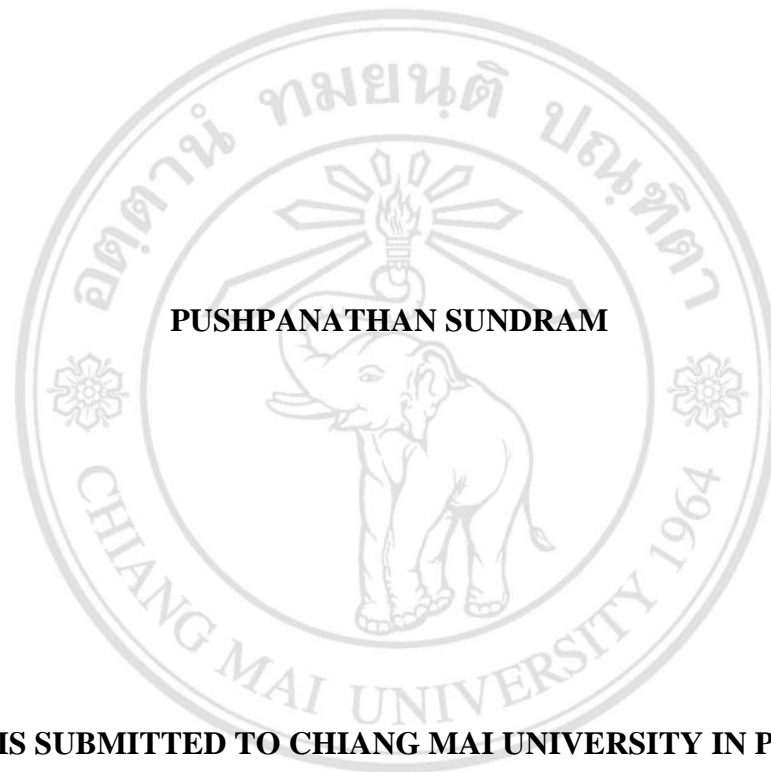
**IN PUBLIC POLICY**

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**GRADUATE SCHOOL  
CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY  
DECEMBER 2022**

**A STUDY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN  
NATIONS AS NETWORK GOVERNANCE**



**PUSHPANATHAN SUNDRAM**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL  
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THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN APPROVED TO BE A PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN PUBLIC POLICY


**Examination Committee:**


**Advisory Committee:**

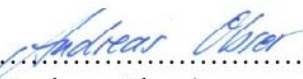
  
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.....Co-advisor  
(Asst. Prof. Dr. Patamawadee Jongruck)

  
.....Member  
(Asst. Prof. Dr. Ora-orn Poocharoen)

  
.....Co-advisor  
(Dr. Andreas Obser)

  
.....Member  
(Asst. Prof. Dr. Patamawadee Jongruck)

  
.....Member  
(Dr. Andreas Obser)

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## To

The ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Secretaries-General, and ASEAN Secretariat who are tirelessly working to build the ASEAN Community as well as the ASEAN Dialogue Partners and all the non-state actors for their contribution to regional integration. In particular, it was a great honour and privilege for me to have worked closely with the ASEAN Secretaries-General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan (Thailand, 2008-2012), Mr. Ong Keng Yong (Singapore, 2003-2007), Mr. Rodolfo Severino (the Philippines, 1998-2002), and Tan Sri Ajit Singh (Malaysia, 1993-1997) during my tenure with the ASEAN Secretariat from whom I learned the fine art/science of diplomacy, strategic thinking, and regional policymaking.

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**Dissertation Title** A Study of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as Network Governance

**Author** Mr. Pushpanathan Sundram

**Degree** Doctor of Philosophy (Public Policy)

**Advisory Committee** Asst. Prof. Dr. Ora-orn Poocharoen Advisor  
Asst. Prof. Dr. Patamawadee Jongruck Co-advisor  
Dr. Andreas Obser Co-advisor

## **ABSTRACT**

The research aims to study the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a network governance (NG) and establish an alternative framework to understand its policymaking and performance taking into account its norms and principles (underpinnings). Mainstream international relations (IR) and western theories have partly downplayed these underpinnings and attributed ASEAN's failure to them. These theories, driven by the EU as a model for regional integration, often neglect the rationale for ASEAN's light institutionalisation by positioning institutional evolution as a solution to ASEAN's problems. The thesis, therefore, attempts to demystify the western theorisation of ASEAN. It shows that ASEAN is a functioning, legitimate and hybrid intergovernmental organisation with NG at the heart of its policymaking and tiered structures at the front with a different trajectory toward regional integration. Qualitative analysis was undertaken through structured interviews and surveys to examine one case study from each of the three ASEAN communities. Policy network theories were used for the analysis and evaluation. A significant finding of the thesis is that ASEAN operates as a NG at its centre when it mainly involves the region's strategic, political and security interests. The primary purposes are to safeguard ASEAN's centrality, regional resilience and the role of ASEAN as an honest broker in regional and international affairs. Similarly, in the economic and socio cultural

communities, the objectives extend beyond wealth creation and meeting society's needs respectively to protect the primary purposes and foster mutual interdependence among member states. They enable ASEAN's relevance as a pivot in the Asia Pacific to the major powers and neighbouring countries. Regarding the role of non-state actors (NSAs) in regional integration, it is more prominent in the economic and social cultural communities and less in the political security community, where the state actors' position is dominant. Despite this, NSAs can still play a role in specific political and security areas. However, the limited role accorded to NSAs by ASEAN impedes their potential contribution to regional integration. There are prospects for dynamic policy outcomes if NSAs participate more, provided there is a convergence in the agendas and a narrowing of mutual distrust between state and non-state actors. The thesis concludes that the hybrid nature, underpinnings (norms and principles) and patterned relations among all actors must be considered when assessing ASEAN's policymaking for a more nuanced and objective evaluation of the Association's performance.



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**หัวข้อคุณนิพนธ์** งานศึกษาศมาคมประชาชาติแห่งเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ในรูปแบบการบริหารจัดการองค์การเชิงเครือข่าย

**ผู้เขียน** นายพูนพนาธาน ชันคราม

**ปรัชญา** ปรัชญาคุณิบัณฑิต (นโยบายสาธารณะ)

**คณะกรรมการที่ปรึกษา** ผศ.ดร.อรอร ภูเจริญ อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาหลัก  
ผศ.ดร.ปฐมาวดี จงรักษ์ อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาร่วม  
Dr. Andreas Obser อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาร่วม

### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสร้างทางเลือกโครงสร้างการบริหารจัดการในรูปแบบของเครือข่าย ในการพิจารณาบรรทัดฐานและหลักการ (ปัจจัยสนับสนุน) ของสมาคมประชาชาติแห่งเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ (อาเซียน) และประเมินการกำหนดนโยบายและผลการปฏิบัติงาน ทฤษฎีความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศกระแสหลักและทฤษฎีตะวันตกได้มองข้ามปัจจัยสนับสนุนเหล่านี้ไปบางส่วน และระบุว่าอาเซียนล้มเหลว ทฤษฎีเหล่านี้ซึ่งขับเคลื่อนโดยสหภาพยุโรปในฐานะต้นแบบการบูรณาการในระดับภูมิภาค มักจะละเลยเหตุผลสำหรับการจัดตั้งสถาบันแบบหลวม ๆ ของอาเซียน โดยกำหนดให้วิวัฒนาการของสถาบันเป็นแนวทางการแก้ไขปัญหาของอาเซียน ดังนั้น วิทยานิพนธ์นี้จึงพยายามทำให้ทฤษฎีตะวันตกเกี่ยวกับอาเซียนกระจ่างขึ้น ซึ่งได้แสดงให้เห็นว่าอาเซียนเป็นองค์กรระหว่างรัฐบาลที่มีความผสมผสาน ใช้งานได้และชอบด้วยกฎหมาย โดยมีการบริหารจัดการในรูปแบบของเครือข่ายเป็นหัวใจสำคัญของการกำหนดนโยบายและโครงสร้างระดับชั้นส่วนหน้าด้วยวิถีทางที่แตกต่างสำหรับการบูรณาการในระดับภูมิภาค การวิเคราะห์เชิงคุณภาพถูกดำเนินการผ่านการสัมภาษณ์และแบบสอบถามที่มีโครงสร้าง เพื่อตรวจสอบกรณีศึกษาหนึ่งกรณีจากแต่ละด้านของประชาคมอาเซียนทั้งสามด้าน ทฤษฎีเครือข่ายนโยบายถูกใช้ในการวิเคราะห์และประเมินผล โดยข้อค้นพบที่สำคัญของวิทยานิพนธ์นี้ คือ ศูนย์กลางการดำเนินงานของอาเซียนมีการบริหารจัดการในรูปแบบของเครือข่าย ในขณะที่อาเซียนส่วนใหญ่เกี่ยวข้องกับผลประโยชน์ทางยุทธศาสตร์ การเมืองและความมั่นคงของภูมิภาค ซึ่งจุดประสงค์หลัก คือ เพื่อปกป้องความเป็นศูนย์กลางของอาเซียน ความ

ยึดหยุ่นของภูมิภาค และบทบาทของอาเซียนในฐานะตัวแทนที่ซื่อสัตย์ในกิจการระดับภูมิภาคและระหว่างประเทศ ในทำนองเดียวกัน ในประชาคมเศรษฐกิจและวัฒนธรรม วัตถุประสงค์ขยายออกไปนอกเหนือจากการสร้างความมั่นคงและตอบสนองความต้องการของสังคมตามลำดับ เพื่อปกป้องวัตถุประสงค์หลักและส่งเสริมการพึ่งพาซึ่งกันและกันระหว่างรัฐสมาชิก สิ่งเหล่านี้ทำให้อาเซียนมีความสำคัญในฐานะจุดศูนย์กลางของเอเชียแปซิฟิกสำหรับเหล่ามหาอำนาจและประเทศเพื่อนบ้าน ในส่วนของบทบาทที่ตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐมีในการบูรณาการระดับภูมิภาคนั้น บทบาทของตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐมีความโดดเด่นมากขึ้นในประชาคมเศรษฐกิจและสังคมวัฒนธรรม และมีบทบาทน้อยกว่าในประชาคมการเมืองความมั่นคงซึ่งตัวแสดงที่เป็นรัฐมีบทบาทสำคัญ อย่างไรก็ตาม ตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐยังคงสามารถมีบทบาทในด้านการเมืองและความมั่นคงที่เฉพาะเจาะจงได้ แต่ทว่า บทบาทของตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐที่ถูกจำกัดโดยอาเซียน ทำให้ขีดความสามารถมีส่วนร่วมในการบูรณาการระดับภูมิภาคของตัวแสดงเหล่านี้ หากตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐเข้ามามีส่วนร่วมมากขึ้นจะเป็นการเปิดโอกาสสำหรับผลลัพธ์เชิงนโยบายที่มีพลวัต โดยมีเงื่อนไขว่ามีการบรรจบกันในวาระการประชุมและลดความไม่ไว้วางใจซึ่งกันและกันระหว่างตัวแสดงที่เป็นรัฐและไม่ใช่รัฐ วิทยานิพนธ์นี้สรุปได้ว่า ลักษณะแบบผสมผสาน ปัจจัยสนับสนุน (บรรทัดฐานและหลักการ) และรูปแบบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างตัวแสดงทั้งหมด จำเป็นต้องได้รับการพิจารณาเมื่อประเมินการกำหนดนโยบายของอาเซียนเพื่อการประเมินผลการปฏิบัติงานของสมาคมที่เหมาะสมและมีวัตถุประสงค์มากขึ้น

**คำสำคัญ:** อาเซียน, การบริหารจัดการในรูปแบบของเครือข่าย, ตัวแสดงที่เป็นรัฐ, ตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐ, การบูรณาการในระดับภูมิภาค

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## GLOSSARY

ABVC	ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre
ACCWG-PHE	ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies
ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
ACIA	ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement
ACRF	ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework
ACTC	ASEAN Centre for Combating Transnational Crime
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADSSR	ASEAN Drug Security and Self-reliance
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AEPS	ASEAN Economic Policy Subsystem
AFAS	ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Agreement
AGRAI	ASEAN Guidelines on Responsible Agriculture Investments
AHMM	ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting
AICO	ASEAN Industrial Cooperation
AMS	ASEAN member states
AMMTC	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APHDA	ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda
APSC	ASEAN Political Security Community
APSS	ASEAN Political Security Policy Subsystem
APT	ASEAN Plus Three
ARARC	ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASCC	ASEAN Socio Cultural Community



ASCCO	Coordinating Conference for ASEAN Political Security Community
ASCS	ASEAN Socio Cultural Policy Subsystem
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN-BAC	ASEAN Business Advisory Council
ASEAN-CCI	ASEAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ASEAN EOC	ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre
AVSSR	ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self-Reliance
Asia DHRRA	Asia Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Asia
ATIGA	ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement
CEPT	Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme
CLMV	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EAS	East Asian Summit
EC	European Community
ECSC	European Community Security Council
EEC	European Economic Community
ERIA	Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia
EU	European Union
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
IPEF	Indo-Pacific Economic Framework
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
ISI	International Students Inc
ISM	Inter-Sessional Meeting
MFN	Most-Favoured Nation
MSMEs	Micro, small, and medium enterprises
NG	Network Governance
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations

NSAs	Non-state actors
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PNT	Policy Network Theory
PRC	People's Republic of China
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RDPE	Rural Development Poverty Eradication
RDT	Resource Dependency Theory
RPHL	Regional Public Health Laboratories Network
RSIS	Rajaratnam School of International Studies
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCS	South China Sea
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEAFET	Southeast Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
SOMHD	Senior Officials Meeting on Health and Development
SOMRDPE	Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
THPA	ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

1. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research, is free of plagiarised materials, and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.
2. The thesis adds to the current literature on international relations about regional integration in Southeast Asia on the importance of norms and values as an integral part of ASEAN's structure and processes. It displays the substantive weight of these norms and values in policymaking within the three ASEAN communities. It also augments the literature on "new regionalism", showing that it is multifaceted and that there are multitudes of reasons and motivations for embarking on regional integration. As such, it does not always conform to the realists and neo-realists or purely the constructivists' perspectives of regional integration.
3. The thesis frames ASEAN as network governance using the Policy Network Theory (PNT) of Michael Howlett. It provides an alternative understanding of the soft institutionalisation and workings of ASEAN using the interplay among actors' interests, will, patterned relations and resource dependence in policy networks, thereby providing a new lens and fresh perspective to understanding ASEAN's actions, behaviour and performance.
4. The thesis proposes an alternative to structuring the ASEAN institutions to emulate the EU's bureaucratic and hierarchical institutions as western scholars advocate. It suggests establishing open policy networks involving non-state actors, which could provide the necessary expertise, technical knowledge and resources to improve ASEAN's performance and efficiency, where possible. It recommends developing structured mechanisms within ASEAN policymaking processes to allow for the germination of such open policy networks as opposed to the static networks in ASEAN, resulting in little progress in ASEAN community building efforts.
5. The thesis posits a new definition of performance within ASEAN using Michael Howlett's the five stages of the policymaking phases of agenda-setting, formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Any progress from one phase to another (e.g. decision-making to implementation) of the policy phases could be considered an actionable outcome (and, as such, performance), whereas any status quo and stagnant situation indicate non-performance. Similarly, a step back from one phase to another (e.g. the implementation to decision-making) could be considered an actionable

outcome since understanding performance as a linear progression neglects internal differences and external factors of geopolitics to which regional organisations in the developing world, including ASEAN, was vulnerable.

6. The thesis adds a fourth order of network configuration termed "network self-leadership" to Bok-Tae Kim's "three-order network governance and public network development" development to ascertain the governance level in a policy network. This order focuses on the key actors' leadership in coordinating specific issue areas with agreed rules of engagement among the network members. It would require each state actor to push the rest of the group to achieve something more by showing the way through peer learning and pressure. Here, network members might find the motivation to play a leadership role in further consolidating the structure and driving it with content and methods. It would free up the finite resources and time of a central coordinating body (or secretariat) to undertake other substantive and essential roles, thereby improving the performance of the policy networks and implementation of activities and initiatives. Since the secretariats of regional organisations in the developing world are small, such a network configuration order will help to move the organisation's agenda, provided the actors who volunteer have the interest, will and resources to advance the policymaking process.



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## ข้อความแห่งการริเริ่ม

1. ข้าพเจ้าขอรับรองว่าผลงานในคุษฎีนิพนธ์นี้เป็นผลงานวิจัยต้นฉบับ ปราศจากการคัดลอกผลงาน และไม่เคยส่งผลงานนี้ในระดับอุดมศึกษาในมหาวิทยาลัยหรือสถาบันใดมาก่อน
2. คุษฎีนิพนธ์นี้เป็นการเพิ่มเติมวรรณกรรมปัจจุบันเกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศด้านการบูรณาการระดับภูมิภาคในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ โดยคำนึงถึงความสำคัญของบรรทัดฐานและค่านิยมในฐานะที่เป็นส่วนสำคัญของโครงสร้างและกระบวนการของอาเซียน แสดงให้เห็นถึงน้ำหนักที่สำคัญของบรรทัดฐานและค่านิยมในการกำหนดนโยบายภายในประชาคมทั้งสามของอาเซียน นอกจากนี้ยังเพิ่มวรรณกรรมเกี่ยวกับ "ภูมิภาคนิยมใหม่" ซึ่งแสดงให้เห็นว่ามีหลากหลายแง่มุม เหตุผล และแรงจูงใจมากมายในการเริ่มต้นการบูรณาการระดับภูมิภาค ด้วยเหตุนี้ ผลงานนี้จึงไม่สอดคล้องมุมมองของนักวิชาการสายสังคมนิยม (realists) และ นีโอ-สังคมนิยม (neo-realists) หรือมุมมองของคอนสตรัคติวิสต์ (constructivist) เกี่ยวกับการบูรณาการในระดับภูมิภาค
3. คุษฎีนิพนธ์นี้วางกรอบอาเซียนในฐานะการกำกับดูแลเครือข่ายโดยใช้ทฤษฎีเครือข่ายนโยบาย (Policy Network Theory: PNT) ของ Michael Howlett ซึ่งให้ความเข้าใจทางเลือกเกี่ยวกับการจัดตั้งสถาบันและการดำเนินงานที่นุ่มนวลของอาเซียน โดยใช้ผลประโยชน์ร่วมกันระหว่างตัวแสดง เจตจำนง รูปแบบความสัมพันธ์ และการพึ่งพาทรัพยากรในเครือข่ายนโยบาย อันเป็นการฉายภาพใหม่และเปิดมุมมองใหม่ในการทำความเข้าใจการแสดง พฤติกรรม และผลการดำเนินงานของอาเซียน
4. คุษฎีนิพนธ์นี้เสนอทางเลือกในการจัดโครงสร้างสถาบันอาเซียนให้สอดคล้องกับการทำงานของสหภาพยุโรปที่มีความเป็นระบบราชการและมีลำดับชั้นในสถาบันตามที่นักวิชาการตะวันตกสนับสนุน ผลงานนี้เสนอแนะให้จัดตั้งเครือข่ายนโยบายแบบเปิดที่เกี่ยวข้องกับตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐ ซึ่งสามารถให้ความเชี่ยวชาญ ความรู้ด้านเทคนิค และทรัพยากรที่จำเป็นในการปรับปรุงประสิทธิภาพและผลการดำเนินงานของอาเซียนได้ อีกทั้งเสนอแนะให้พัฒนาโครงสร้างของกลไกที่มีภายในกระบวนการกำหนดนโยบายของอาเซียน เพื่อให้เกิดเครือข่ายนโยบายแบบเปิดในอาเซียนดังที่กล่าวมาข้างต้น แทนที่จะเป็นเครือข่ายแบบคงที่ซึ่งทำให้ความพยายามในการสร้างประชาคมอาเซียนนั้นมีความคืบหน้าแต่เพียงเล็กน้อย

5. คฤษฎีนิพนธ์นี้กำหนดคณิยามใหม่ของการปฏิบัติงานภายในอาเซียน โดยใช้แนวทาง 5 ขั้นตอนของ Michael Howlett ในการกำหนดนโยบาย ได้แก่ การกำหนดนโยบาย (agenda-setting) การก่อรูปนโยบาย (formulation) กระบวนการตัดสินใจ (decision-making) การนำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติ (implementation) และการประเมินผล (evaluation) อนึ่งความก้าวหน้าของการดำเนินนโยบายจากระยะหนึ่งไปยังอีกระยะหนึ่ง (เช่น การตัดสินใจเพื่อดำเนินการ) ของนโยบายต่างๆ อาจถือเป็นผลลัพธ์ที่ยังสามารถดำเนินการได้ (และ/เช่น ประสิทธิภาพของผลการดำเนินงาน) ในขณะที่สถานการณ์ดำเนินงานคงที่และสถานการณ์ดูหุยดหนึ่งไม่มีความคืบหน้าใดๆ บ่งชี้ถึงการดำเนินนั้นไม่มีประสิทธิภาพ ในทำนองเดียวกัน การถอยหลังจากระยะหนึ่งไปสู่อีกระยะหนึ่ง (เช่น การนำไปปฏิบัติเพื่อตัดสินใจออกแบนโยบาย) อาจถือเป็นผลลัพธ์ที่สามารถดำเนินการได้ เนื่องจากการทำความเข้าใจประสิทธิภาพเป็นความก้าวหน้าเชิงเส้นนั้นไม่สนใจความแตกต่างภายในและปัจจัยภายนอกในบริบทของภูมิรัฐศาสตร์ ซึ่งองค์กรระดับภูมิภาคในประเทศกำลังพัฒนารวมทั้งอาเซียนจึงนับว่ามีความเสี่ยง
6. คฤษฎีนิพนธ์นี้ได้เพิ่มการกำหนดค่าเครือข่ายลำดับที่ 4 เรียกว่า "การเป็นผู้นำเครือข่ายด้วยตนเอง" ใ้กับการพัฒนา "การบริการจัดการเครือข่ายสามลำดับและการพัฒนาเครือข่ายสาธารณะ" ของ Bok-Tae Kim เพื่อยืนยันระดับการบริหารจัดการในเครือข่ายนโยบาย ลำดับนี้มุ่งเน้นไปที่ความเป็นผู้นำของตัวแสดงหลักในการประสานงานประเด็นที่เป็นปัญหาเฉพาะกับกฎของการมีส่วนร่วมซึ่งเป็นที่ตกลงร่วมกันระหว่างสมาชิกในเครือข่าย ข้อเสนอนี้ต้องการให้ตัวแสดงที่เป็นภาครัฐในแต่ละภาคส่วนผลักดันสมาชิกในกลุ่มให้บรรลุเป้าหมายบางอย่างมากขึ้น โดยแสดงวิธีการผ่านการเรียนรู้และแรงกดดันจากสมาชิก ซึ่งสมาชิกในเครือข่ายอาจพบแรงจูงใจบางอย่างที่อยากจะเล่นบทบาทเป็นผู้นำในการเสริมสร้างความมั่นคงในระดับโครงสร้างและขับเคลื่อนประเด็นต่างๆ ตลอดจนวิธีการอื่นๆ เพิ่มเติม วิธีการนี้จะทำให้ทรัพยากรและเวลาที่มีอยู่จำกัดของหน่วยงานประสานงานกลาง (หรือสำนักเลขาธิการ) วางลงสำหรับการมีบทบาทในประเด็นที่จำเป็นหรือสำคัญอื่นๆ ซึ่งจะเป็นการปรับปรุงประสิทธิภาพของเครือข่ายนโยบายและการดำเนินกิจกรรม ตลอดจนความถี่ริเริ่มต่างๆ ให้มีประสิทธิภาพมากขึ้น เนื่องจากสำนักเลขาธิการขององค์กรระดับภูมิภาคในประเทศกำลังพัฒนานั้นมีขนาดเล็ก ดังนั้นลำดับการกำหนดค่าเครือข่ายดังกล่าวจึงจะช่วยขับเคลื่อนระเบียบวาระกำหนดนโยบายขององค์กรได้มากขึ้น หากผู้แสดงที่เป็นอาสาสมัครนั้นมีความสนใจ มีเจตจำนง และมีทรัพยากรในการพัฒนากระบวนการกำหนดนโยบาย

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional grouping in Southeast Asia founded on 8 August 1967 that aims to promote security, economic, social and cultural cooperation among its ten members: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. It is the most populous region in the world after China and India and is home to hundreds of different ethnic groups, each with its own distinct cultures and traditions. Southeast Asia is a region of enormous diversity in terms of political systems, socio-economic development, ethnic groups, languages spoken, and religions practised.

ASEAN has made progress toward economic integration and free trade since 1992. According to the latest ASEAN figures (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021), ASEAN has a population of 661.8 million. Its combined GDP is USD 3.0 trillion, making it the fifth largest economy in the world after the United States, China, Japan and Germany. Its merchandise trade has reached US\$2.6 trillion, with intra-ASEAN trade accounting for 21.3% (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). ASEAN embarked on building an ASEAN Community comprising the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Social Cultural Community (ASCC) in 2009.

ASEAN has been primarily recognised for maintaining the peace and security of Southeast Asia (SEA) and promoting economic and socio-cultural cooperation among its members. ASEAN's progress in the last half-century has led to regional solidarity, trade liberalisation, capital market harmonisation, narrowing development gaps among its member states, and strengthening ASEAN's relations with other countries. However, for a regional organisation composed of member states with diverse identities, cultures, religions, languages, and economic development levels, reconciling differences poses challenges that impact regionalism. A rules-based ASEAN, bound by the fundamental principles of non-interference and sovereignty with respect for shared values and norms,

have paved the path of tolerance for differences while highlighting the importance of keeping the region peaceful, secure, and stable (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015).

Notwithstanding this, the principle of non-interference and the lack of legally binding institutions in ASEAN underscore the "ASEAN Way" and invite disapproval from critics and sceptics who regard it as an informal regional organisation incapable of achieving its goals and implementing its agenda in the absence of a central authority. ASEAN is often criticised for lacking meaningful progress in its regional integration. Furthermore, the Association is viewed as an institutional arrangement for member states to advance their individual economic interests without pursuing collective regional interests. Many conservatives perceive ASEAN's progress more positively and are prone to making comparisons with the European Union (EU). They are encouraged that ASEAN is adopting EU institutions to evolve better. As such, a more nuanced framework is necessary to examine ASEAN's progress and functioning, taking into account its status as an intergovernmental and regional organisation with its unique history and trajectory towards regional integration.

### **1.1 Thesis Rationale**

ASEAN has been dissected by western scholars from various perspectives that primarily identify the Association's norms and principles as impediments to its progressive development. Moreover, they show the discrepancies between the rhetorical goals and outcomes of ASEAN integration and the inconsistent adoption rate of several vital agreements that form part of ASEAN's community building. The APSC faces the bulk of criticism for the lack of progress and inaction. While ASEAN's intentions and agendas are results-oriented, the implementation of decisions and agreements is seen to be met with half-hearted actions or inactions. In this light, ASEAN's implementation gaps promote a sense of overall weaknesses and shortcomings of the Association.

The perceived weaknesses in implementation undermine much of the work that goes into initiating, planning and coordinating ASEAN policies and agreements in the policymaking process. Acknowledging progress and performance entails understanding



the extent of the policymaking processes undertaken before the implementation phase of said policies and agreements. As such, the rationale of the thesis is to develop another framework to follow the policymaking process of the Association as it embarks on a goal or agenda. It raises the main research question: *How can ASEAN's progress be decisively assessed?* In this regard, ASEAN's weak track record may not immediately mean implementation failure or a lack of progress. Instead, the context of establishing policies and agreements needs to be considered alongside the norms and principles that bind the member states and the Association.

In examining the framework of NG, it reflects ASEAN's light or soft institutionalisation in a nuanced manner. However, understanding it from the perspective of member states' agreed-upon values, the ASEAN's shared norms and principles can be viewed as native to ASEAN and the region due to historical incidents. Thus, they are integral to ASEAN's policymaking process and performance.

The thesis utilises a "network" approach to understand the governance structure of ASEAN, with policy networks as the basis of the analysis. In this connection, the process involved in developing policies and agreements for the intended goals and agendas of ASEAN will be considered. It will be viewed from the perspective of the policymaking phases segmented into five stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation (Howlett, 2002). Policy networks allow the assessment of ASEAN's performance in each phase, highlighting any inactions or progress.

Finally, policy networks will be used to gather insights into the actors' dynamics within the networks. Such dynamics would reflect the actors' interests and resolve to move the policy issue towards the next phase of policymaking or maintain the status quo. In other words, policy networks could reflect the miniature structure of a power struggle among the actors if the policy issue is contentious. However, if the policy issue constitutes a shared interest among all actors involved, the research suggests the possibility for the policymaking process to progress more rapidly and smoothly.

While referring to actors involved in the policy networks, the research recognises the dominant influence state actors or ASEAN member states wield regarding decision-making in the Association. However, for ASEAN to achieve more significant policy outcomes and progress, the scope of policymaking and implementation may need to expand beyond the member states and their respective state actors to include non-state actors (NSAs). It could lead to more dynamic policy outcomes and mitigate the need for more significant institutional evolution proposed by scholars favouring the EU structure. Additionally, it aligns with the goals of ASEAN in achieving a more "People-Orientated" ASEAN Community by providing a platform for the active participation of NSAs.

Most importantly, the research is concerned with understanding ASEAN and its underpinnings from a nuanced perspective that considers its history and values. For this, there will be a need to re-evaluate how ASEAN's performance or progress has been defined thus far. As such, an alternative framework of NG would assist in assessing ASEAN without prejudice to its shared norms and principles.

## **1.2 Theoretical Background**

In order to examine the policymaking process and performance of ASEAN, NG is adopted as the focal theory together with Policy Network Theory (PNT) of Michael Howlett in the thesis. The NG framework specifically focuses on the ways in which networks are managed to achieve certain network goals (Poocharoen and Sovacool, 2012). Furthermore, to reflect the complexities of the preference and autonomy of member states, network governance, an alternative to 'hierarchy' explanations (Williamson, 1985; Scharpf, 1993; Deyo, Doner and Hershberg, 2001), provides a viable framework to theorise ASEAN without deemphasising the self-interests of ASEAN members. Initially limited to economic governance in East Asia (Katzenstein and Shiraishi, 1997; Aggarwal and Morrison, 1998; Hemmer and Katzenstein, 2002; Pempel, 2005), 'network governance' as a concept has seen growing relevance in Asian studies. However, as argued by Anja Jetschke (2009), the term has an "idiosyncratic theoretical status" in the literature on ASEAN but is still rarely adopted as a heuristic tool or concept for considering ASEAN as an organisational entity.

Network governance has more prominence in its own field of study in the literature on policy networks. Networks indicate non-hierarchical and knowledge-based forms of policymaking that enable the progression of ideas, communication and consensus-building processes for specific policies (Mayntz, 1993; Rhodes, 2003). These characteristics are aligned with the policy networks of ASEAN that focus on networks as communication devices. At the fundamental level, the policy network theory proposes a framework detailing how different subsystem setups relate to specific paradigmatic processes of policy change, suggesting that some are linked to propensities for particular types of policy change (Howlett, 2002). Michael Howlett developed the approach substantively and theorised that policy networks are characterised by interdependence, coordination and pluralism. Policy networks are interdependent as networks are mutually reliant on each other's resources (Bevir, 2011) and are also referred to as "mutual resource dependence" (Bevir, 2009). Klijn (1997) suggests that interdependencies engender interactions between actors and sustain relation patterns in policy networks. Extant work applying the theory sees the examination of network structures, the effectiveness of numerous types of networks and particularly in deconstructing the impact of network characteristics and network processes on policy-making. The 'network' approach is thus pivotal in this study as it provides the theoretical framework for linking the subsystem structure, policy process and, ultimately, policy outcomes.

Scholars have recognised the pertinence of network governance and management for intergovernmental organisations like ASEAN (Mayntz, 1993; Rhodes, 2003). Some have proposed that "inter-organizational networks centralized around a primary coordinating agency – a network administrative organization – produce better outcomes" (Berry et. al, 2004). More notably, Jordan and Schout (2006) contend that the "network administrative organization", or "network manager", serves as a "secretary" whose role is to ensure higher levels of efficiency in decision-making by consolidating and circulating information. Alternatively, the network manager can act as a coordinator in the network system, arranging and facilitating the interaction process within networks in a way that interests are propagated and addressed in an "open, transparent and balanced manner" (Jordan and Schout, 2006).

The gap in the extant literature is particularly stark as ASEAN has adopted a network governance model in its regional cooperation efforts since its beginning in 1967. The understanding of the loose nature of ASEAN has conventionally overemphasised the concern of protecting state sovereignty and underplayed the fact that it affords the participation and contribution of non-state actors in the process. Jetschke (2009) posits that ASEAN's light institutionalisation is derived from the lack of demand for a formalised institution as member states believed that the organisation requires flexibility to succeed, and not due to their incapability or their resistance. In this light, Powell's (1990) definition of network governance is relevant. It refers to the practice of relying on informal relationships and trust compared to rule-like routines. The practice is also grounded in reciprocity in which actors are interdependent and the network itself affords more flexibility than traditional hierarchies (Powell, 1990).

Extant literature thus provides scholarly support to view ASEAN as network governance in its policy-making and implementation processes whereby both member states and non-state actors are involved. Yet, they are similar in terms of their semi-formal nature and limited scope of power (Poocharoen and Sovacool, 2012). Beyond those networks, many ASEAN member-states consult local stakeholders before deciding at the ASEAN level, while implementation initiatives see the joint effort between the government and their respective stakeholders. As such, there is a good basis to adopt a network governance model to assess ASEAN. Therefore, it is crucial that the study utilises these scholarly works as the building blocks of the thesis.

In this light, an empirical analysis of ASEAN and its policy networks would provide a crucial operationalisation of the 'network' approach in studying regional organisations. Specifically, ASEAN provides a valid case study given its engagement with non-state actors, such as civil society organisations, since the early 1970s. Therefore, the theory provides a crucial theoretical grounding for analysing the numerous networks available in ASEAN. In return, the research findings would contribute to the empirical testing of the theory.

### 1.3 Research Focus

The thesis approaches the research from the angle of public policy and international relations. The critical components of the research include establishing the NG framework, interviews, and surveys regarding the ASEAN Community and an analysis of one case study from each ASEAN Community (AEC, APSC and ASCC), detailing the performance of each community. An assumption in the research is how the analysis of one case study per pillar would reflect the whole pillar's performance.

Concerning the scope of the research, this thesis has raised four questions. Firstly, the relationship between the framework of NG and regional integration. The question is as follows:

*Based on ASEAN's performance in community building since 2009, supported by the three Community Blueprints and Scorecards, is ASEAN a hybrid regional organisation with NG as its core and formal hierarchical structure as its front to promote regional integration?*

Within this context, the various perspectives on ASEAN's performance, especially from critics and sceptics, will be studied in depth. It will lead to a discussion of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. Specifically, understanding the performance of the respective pillars, comparing the relative performance of each pillar, and examining the reasons for progress and/or inaction within a particular pillar. The thesis will redefine ASEAN's performance in relation to its actions and behaviours. The performance will be evaluated using policy networks established within the framework of NG.

As such, the framework of NG will be a key component of the research, and the framework will be established in the literature review. It aims to encapsulate ASEAN's soft institutional design from a nuanced perspective and show that the norms and principles of ASEAN are variables that account for the degree of institutionalisation of the Association. The thesis views ASEAN as a hybrid regional organisation with NG as its core and a formal hierarchical structure as its front. The "new regionalism" concept

will be discussed in the thesis to explain regionalism is multifaceted and that there are multitudes of reasons and motivations for embarking on regional integration. It helps to provide a more explicit rationale for ASEAN's actions and performance.

The framework of NG facilitates ASEAN and its member states to better understand themselves, in contrast to the unbalanced western perspectives of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. Hence, theories of neo-realism and neo-liberalism will be presented in depth, focusing on how they understand ASEAN as a regional organisation while detailing the limits of material power from the neo-realist perspective to comprehend performance and progress. Furthermore, since ASEAN comprises relatively weaker and smaller states in the international community, it will be essential to consider other strengths that help consolidate material power. Therefore, the NG framework would be strategic in providing a rationale for the performance and progress of each ASEAN Community pillar. In this regard, the relevant research question posed is:

*Does the NG set-up at the core promote or impede ASEAN's community building agenda? Is this visible across all three ASEAN communities or specific to a particular community pillar? Can this account for ASEAN's performance (non-performance)?*

The research intends to underscore NG's capacity to align with ASEAN's goals and agendas, promoting community building. The research would also reflect on the respective case studies from each community pillar, highlighting the reasons for performance and progress (or inaction). It will go hand in hand with the thesis's interpretation and redefinition of performance.

The research will examine the role of different actors, such as state actors, including ASEAN member states, dialogue partners, and involved parties in specific 'networks' and NSAs. Stressing the goal of community building, the discussion of actors and how they impact ASEAN community building becomes pertinent. The relevant research question posed is:

*As the community building process requires the participation of multi-stakeholders, could network governance and policy network theories be leveraged for regional integration? What are the challenges and limitations of NG and policy networks in the ASEAN's community building context?*

The research would highlight the difficulties within certain community pillars, notably the APSC, where state actors remain prevalent, and NSAs often find themselves excluded from networks in this community. As such, the thesis will bring out the challenges and limitations specific networks face due to the unwillingness of the state actors or ASEAN member states to engage the other stakeholders. Besides, how NSAs can help bridge ASEAN's implementation gaps better through the NG framework will be discussed. Finally, the thesis postulates the benefits of NSAs participation by putting across the question:

*How could the benefits of NG with NSAs participation be realised by ASEAN to meet its community building goals?*

This relates to the last section of the thesis, where it hypothesises that a less politically sensitive community pillar can better adopt the framework of NG using the case study of the ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. There can be a "trickle-down effect" where ASEAN member states become more open to NSAs as a whole by understanding and recognising the benefits brought by them to those community pillars that are less politically sensitive.

#### **1.4 Research Methodology**

In order to address the research objectives, the thesis employs a case study approach (Yin, 2003) and uses a qualitative research method. The qualitative method will consist of semi-structured interviews primarily with state actors and surveys with NSAs. The data obtained from the interviews will be transcribed and analysed using the research questions. The responses received through the surveys will be used to gauge the sentiments of NSAs on their participation in the three ASEAN communities.

## 1.5 Limitation of Research

While the research attempts to ensure high comprehensibility in its analysis, limitations need to be addressed. First, the framework of NG is suitable for regional organisations like ASEAN, where Western narratives or Euro-centric theories cannot account fully for ASEAN's performance and actions. However, as emphasised, regionalism takes on a multitude of trajectories. As such, the framework may ultimately apply to organisations like ASEAN, predominantly defined by principles and norms with some degree of institutionalisation. Despite this, the thesis puts forward that the framework of NG could be used to assess the performance of similar regional organisations with appropriate tweaks, depending on their particular traits and the environment in which they operate.

Due to the region's volatility in geopolitics and the changing environment, case studies and examples utilised in the research may be factually outdated at the time of publishing. Hence, while the study aims to include the latest updates, some cases might no longer be relevant. In addition, the study of ASEAN will be limited to only publicly disclosed information. Therefore, sensitive information that might be crucial to understanding the processes and functions of the different aspects of the organisation would not be taken into account due to its confidential nature. Despite this, the research could motivate ASEAN and scholars to utilise NG as a framework to study ASEAN regionalism, its policymaking and performance.

Owing to time constraints and the scope of the research, a pertinent limitation of the study is the lack of a large-N analysis, as it employs a small-N analysis and, to some extent, anecdotal information from ASEAN officials. Despite that, the external analysis made in the thesis could be beneficial in alerting ASEAN to the academic efforts taken in studying its institutional design and processes related to its performance. In addition, it could promote ASEAN undertaking further internal studies on the application of NG to ASEAN cooperation.



## 1.6 Contribution of Research

The thesis mainly contributes to the existing literature on the regional integration of ASEAN, network governance, international relations and comparative politics. It will be the first detailed study on ASEAN as network governance. It adds to a greater understanding of ASEAN's actions and performance using the alternative framework, given the complexities in policymaking in ASEAN underpinned by its norms and values and the autonomy of its member states.

In this regard, network governance provides a practical framework to theorise ASEAN's actions without deemphasising the self-interests of ASEAN members. It establishes another framework to assess the performance of ASEAN and similar regional organisations characterised by light institutionalisation and more through the organisation's underpinning norms and values shaped by the regional context and history. It also provides a fresh perspective on ASEAN's accomplishments and shortcomings and draws attention to the dynamics and interplay between the actors' will and policymaking in regional organisations. It highlights the potential of NSAs in enhancing ASEAN's performance and for more dynamic policy outcomes if policy networks are open to their active participation.

Furthermore, the thesis will add to the existing literature on regionalism, underscoring that it is fluid and no one integration model will fit a particular regional organisation. Instead, the history, values and relations among states in the region will dictate how regional integration, policymaking and implementation structures are formalised. It will also show that policymaking in ASEAN and similar regional organisations are not straightforward from agenda-setting stage formulation, coordination, decision making, implementation and evaluation and hence not a linear progression. The NG framework will acknowledge the intrinsic factors that go into policymaking and the interplay of actors' interests, will and patterned relations among them.

In terms of international relations, the NG framework can help nation-states connect to local, regional and global governance networks to address the increasing complexities of globalisation and assess their responses and actions. It can also be used for comparative studies of policy networks across countries in ASEAN and other regions and analyse the similarities and differences between the political units or in policy responses to issues and understanding performance.

### **1.7 Organisation of the Thesis**

The body of this thesis of five chapters is as follows:

Chapter One introduces the research rationale, followed by the thesis focus, theoretical background and aims and objectives. The significance and potential contributions of the research are also discussed.

Chapter Two examines how international and western theorists view ASEAN, especially its norms and principles that guide the Association. It highlights the connection between ASEAN's norms and history, which offers insights into how and why ASEAN was established and how it functions and acts. The chapter begins by examining ASEAN's history and values, followed by a discussion of its performance to show the tendency for the Association to be compared with the EU. Finally, the set-up of the alternative framework of NG will conclude the chapter.

Chapter Three presents the research framework and questions based on the literature review in the previous chapter. It clarifies the methodological approaches used in the research, including case study selection, case study methods, data collection methods, analytical processes and research validity and reliability.

Chapter Four reports on the analysis and discussions of the three case studies utilising the NG framework to examine the performance of the three ASEAN communities. The three case studies selected from each pillar of the ASEAN Community were the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) in AEC, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in APSC, and the

ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) in ASCC. The framework of NG will be used to conceive of ASEAN as a policy universe, while policy subsystems will represent the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. The three case studies selected present three distinct sets of policy networks in their respective policy subsystems – each with its unique interplay and dynamics, which will be closely examined. In addition, the interplay between ASEAN norms and the individual pillars of the ASEAN Community will be studied. Each case study is distinct and offers a useful comparison of the dynamics between each policy network, which would facilitate a discussion of how the framework of NG can be utilised and why ASEAN requires another framework of understanding.

Chapter Five, the final chapter, discusses the analysis and case study findings derived from the qualitative approaches and their implication for ASEAN's regionalism, policymaking and performance. It will highlight the need for an alternative framework that can adequately recognise ASEAN's norms and principles if the performance and functioning of ASEAN be assessed in the most objective manner. It will also show how the will or interests of member states and the patterned interactions in the NG framework are instrumental in driving the ASEAN policymaking process. Finally, the thesis underscores the growing importance of making way for "new regionalism" theories by emphasising the different trajectories regional organisations like ASEAN and the EU have taken in their integration efforts.

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## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Brief Background of ASEAN

In August 1967, ASEAN was established when the region's geopolitical landscape was complex. Most Southeast Asian (SEA) states found themselves 'threatened by subversive communist movements (Kefale, 2015) in addition to a series of territorial and border disputes. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the SEA region was made all the more unsettled as 'extra-regional powers – the US, the former USSR, and China – involved themselves in the conflicts then raging in the three Indo-Chinese countries of the region, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia' (Kefale, 2015). There was the fear that SEA states might gradually fall under the influence of communism, in particular Vietnam and Cambodia. ASEAN was founded with the ambition to help bring peace and stability to the region, counter the fear of the domino effect, and eliminate sources of instability (Kefale, 2015).

The five founding members of ASEAN – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand – held the vision of promoting and maintaining security and peace in the region. It is pertinent to recall that most of the founding member states historically have a colonial past and were occupied with the task of state consolidation during the establishment of ASEAN (Kefale, 2015). Before the establishment of ASEAN, Indonesia followed a policy called Konfrontasi (or Confrontation) from 1963 to 1966. Then-President Sukarno opposed the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, which he considered a 'British imperial project' (Kefale, 2015). 'The Indonesians carried out armed incursions and acts of subversion and sabotage, including bombings, to destabilise the federation' (National Library Board, 2014). It was only when President Sukarno had been removed from office in 1966 and relinquished his power to General Suharto (National Library Board, 2014) that the way could be paved for regional cooperation, which allowed for the signing of a peace treaty with Malaysia in the March of 1966

(Kefale, 2015). Konfrontasi paints a clear picture of the then-faltering dynamics between Indonesia and other SEA states and Indonesia's ambition to project its foreign policy goals overseas through armed conflicts. In this way, it would be unsurprising to find distrust as a recurring theme that undermines establishing regional cooperation and multilateral ties among SEA states. As a result, ASEAN would instil little confidence within the international community, viewed as a particular regional cooperation led by weak states. ASEAN's continued presence through the 1990s (Nesadurai, 2009) and beyond is due to the Association's ability to manage the issues in the geopolitical landscape, which posed a threat (s) to the stability of the SEA region and in successfully mitigating issues that arose from proxy conflicts rather than being engulfed by the then-ongoing 'geopolitical and ideological schisms in the region' (Lin & Grundy-Warr, 2012). ASEAN's durability thereby accords itself the reputation as 'one of the most successful regional organisations in the Third World' in its effort to maintain regional security (Kefale, 2015; Lin & Grundy-Warr, 2012).

The post-Cold War era was a trying time for ASEAN as the organisation found its relevance consistently challenged. The Association aimed to maintain a peaceful region by uniting within Southeast Asia, through the admission of 'former foes and strangers' (Lin & Grundy-Warr, 2012) such as Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia and working towards the 'development of shared, socio-culturally rooted norms' (Kefale, 2015) within ASEAN.

The main variable that sparked the birth of ASEAN was the threat of communist forces, escalating and rising in the region in the 1960s (L. Jones & Hameiri, 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider what the future of the organisation was after the end of the Cold War and the resolution of the Cambodian crisis (Nesadurai, 2009). Nesadurai explained that the Cambodian crisis had 'dominated the Association throughout the 1980s'. After which, ASEAN sought to instil its international legitimacy in a (once again) changed environment underpinned by new power configurations. Affirming its legitimacy in international society invites comparison between the regionalism trajectory adopted by ASEAN and the western hemisphere – notably, the EU integration project. As such, the

thesis finds that the Association often discovers itself construed from a western perspective.

Before addressing the issue of ASEAN's relevance, it is necessary to understand the notion of regionalism outside of Europe. Otherwise, ASEAN's "success" and legitimacy would be continually placed in the hands of the western perspective that could possibly deny ASEAN's progress and its role in the region. ASEAN's success is (largely) depicted by 'the absence of open confrontations and war amongst its members' (Nesadurai, 2009). As for maintaining peace in the region, ASEAN's sceptics claim, from a realist position, that 'ASEAN should not be credited with bringing peace and stability to SEA' (Stubbs, 2019). Stubbs indicated that they see 'extra-regional power balances as the main contributors to regional peace'. ASEAN is measured by the organisation's capability to diffuse any unequal power balances in the region. While the stance is arguably fair, considering that ASEAN is made up of relatively weak states, it is rather impractical to expect ASEAN to undertake the task itself with the goal of consolidating material power that would be sufficient in the eyes of the realists, neo-realists, and sceptics as a "capable" organisation. Utilising a materialistic perspective on ASEAN would only stress the lacking attributes of member states, not what the organisation should work towards. Instead, an emphasis is needed on the highly diverse cultural and ethnic make-up of the regional organisation and member states' socio-economic and political differences. It makes pursuing common goals even more challenging since the underlying considerations for each member state will differ extensively.

For ASEAN, a prominent concern that overarches decision-making would be promoting coordinated actions and practised norms. The long-presupposed assumptions and conditions of regional organisations will colour the measurement of success for regional organisations, especially those outside of Europe, making them inconceivable if they do not follow a mould. The thesis finds that regionalism needs to be examined outside the realist/neo-realist and western perspectives to understand ASEAN. It argues that there is a need to acknowledge and make room for regionalism in the SEA context if one is to understand the underpinnings of ASEAN further.

## 2.2 Regionalism in Southeast Asia

First, to identify the “Southeast Asia context” in the case of regional integration is to understand and acknowledge that the process of regionalism is not unilateral. The EU is recognised to be a “model of integration”. The EU ‘perceives itself as a model for effective and legitimate governance to be emulated by other countries and regions’ (Börzel & Risse, 2009). The thesis argues that adopting the European model to other regional organisations based solely on its international legitimacy and accomplishments may not add much value to regionalism.

In this regard, the thesis would like to recognise the proliferation of regional organisations over the years that have paved the way for increasing academic discourse about the functions they may serve, the values and goals they embody, and the relevance they hold within their specific region and the international system as a whole. An increasing body of research on regional entities and organisations demonstrates attempts by scholars to theorise and understand the respective characteristics of these regional organisations. As different regions undertake the task of regional integration, the characteristics of each regional organisation are traced and mapped from its inception. While it provides good insights, the thesis finds that the traditional international relations theories conclude on a disappointing note, citing only poor relevance and limited scope in the arrangement and achievement of those regional organisations outside the Western hemisphere.

Norms of the (current) international order can be traced or ‘harked back to the era of European dominance’ (Acharya, 2011). Therefore, it is first important to argue against the notion that regionalism is a ‘distinct European idea’ (Börzel & Risse, 2009). Where the idea of regionalism continues to reflect norms from a Eurocentric perspective, the thesis finds that states outside the Western hemisphere, and especially states from the developing region with a colonial history, ‘would question, and wherever possible reject, these norms of European dominance and seek to replace or modify them with ones consistent with their interests and identities’ (Acharya, 2011). Therefore, the thesis argues that there is a need to consider and include a non-western perspective when evaluating regional organisations outside the Western sphere.

While both Southeast Asian and European regional architectures have been playing a central role in preserving peace and promoting prosperity in their regions and beyond, the practice of regionalism seems to be predominantly articulated via the EU model (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016). It is to be argued that when regionalism is understood as ‘the practice of institutionalising cooperation among states and providing structures for policy coordination’ (Elliott, 2012), it hints that regionalism would require the task of developing and formalising a bureaucratic and hierarchical institutional structure. This enables it to facilitate and complement states’ policy cooperation in areas that cross the economic, political, and social realms. For example, the European Coal and Steel Community had a dispute-resolution mechanism – the High Court and the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (later the European Community) – that was staffed with independent professional experts (Jetschke, 2009). The European institutions, respectively, exhibited strong bureaucratic or hierarchical elements. Thus, as Jetschke pinpointed, many have come to recognise the region of Europe for its substantial progress in regionalism.

If regionalism is to be understood just instrumentally, that which promotes the task of policy coordination and execution by institutionalising cooperation among states (Elliott, 2012), then progress and evolvement of the European integration projection from three distinct European institutions – the Euratom, the ECSC and the EEC – to integrate and form the European Community (EC) in July 1967 would be a distinguished success of regionalism (Jetschke, 2009). It attempts to unify the previous three institutions in establishing a single commission for efficiency and better coordination (Laursen, 2019). It presents the European model as a template for any integration project and the purpose of regionalism.

However, the success of the European model does not dictate that it needs to be replicated in other regions. There is more to regionalism than ‘just the practice of institutionalising cooperation among states and providing structures for policy coordination’ (Elliott, 2012). The European model was able to formalise legally binding institutions on member states and therefore considered effective in policy implementation. However, the thesis argues that a replica of the European institutions within other regional organisations as a way



forward might not necessarily produce the intended results. It is because the former neglects the values and norms that come to ‘shape agendas and define the policy context’ for member states in a regional organisation (Elliott, 2012). This is especially crucial when the region is highly diverse in terms of identity, culture, and even the economic development level of each state in that region. In such a case, institutionalising cooperation between states in that region is contingent upon establishing a common identity, the norms important to each state, the norms to uphold in that region, and the interests of each state. Only when states (in that region) recognise that their state interests are ‘best met and protected through collective action and compliance with the norms that reflect and sustain regional community’ will states (in that region) be more open to cooperating on a regional scale (Elliott, 2012). Therefore, as Elliott mentioned, it will be fundamental to recognise ‘identity-based accounts of regional cooperation’ where they focus on states’ perceptions and willingness to cooperate on a regional level. It will make room for the analysis of regionalism in Southeast Asia, where norms and values play a significant role in mitigating differences and challenges in terms of great power interests, the lack of common grounds on a particular issue, and conflict management.

The chapter aims to enquire about the extent to which the West and traditional international relations theories have eroded interpretations of the elements fundamental to regional organisations, such as hierarchy, institutional designs, and norms. As the recognition of European integration has spurred the inclination towards adopting its formal structures, it could shift one’s perspective on the efficacy and future of a regional organisation. The thesis seeks to examine ASEAN in this light. It aims to provide another framework better able to capture ASEAN as a regional organisation by understanding the rationale behind its institutional design and its stronghold on its values.

### **2.3 Understanding ASEAN**

While the concept of anarchy from the neo-realist and neo-liberal schools of thought argues that states are engulfed in a sea of uncertainties (in the international system) and, as such, would be motivated to pursue means to ensure and protect their own survival, theories of international relations do little to examine and elaborate on the context of these

uncertainties that these respective states and regions face that would be uniquely different despite their going along with the grand concern for security. From a realist perspective, the need to compete for power and influence in an anarchic international system makes ‘conflict inevitable and cooperation rare and superficial’ (Acharya, 2008). In this view, international institutions such as international organisations and regional organisations ‘operate on the margins of great power whims and caprice’, according to Acharya. It means that “weaker” regional organisations would find themselves undermined in the international system since they are less able to participate in the “zero-sum game” realists would term it and emerge victorious. It also puts forward that members of an international organisation would find themselves at the mercy of the stronger and more powerful members (Mearsheimer, 1994). Thus, an international organisation is merely a tool for the great powers within it. On the other hand, the neo-liberal perspective argues that the anarchic international system provides a *strong* impetus for states to establish rules of interaction through regional and international organisations. However, it does not reveal much about the underpinnings of those organisations, and in this case, the culture and norms that predominantly define the interaction and engagement in ASEAN and the EU.

An analysis that begins from a “structural” lens establishes and underlines how the current international system is anarchic. This would insinuate that a strong and effective regional organisation should command sufficient material power and possess the capability to either balance or challenge extra-regional powers (Caballero-Anthony, 2014; Stubbs, 2019). In utilising such a power-balance view, regional organisations are seen more as “tools” to be sharpened for the purpose of gaining material power. Regional organisations are no more than a reflection of power interests. Therefore, the notion of material power seems to garner support for a regional organisation such as the EU, which was ‘awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 for being a key force that has guaranteed peace and stability in Europe since the end of World War II’ (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016).

Competency in the realm of regional security is often attributed to the Union’s formal legal ratification of a comprehensive framework of treaties, rules and procedures (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016). It instilled a high degree of institutionalisation in the EU that aided the organisation’s pursuit of its goals and the course of policy implementation

(ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016). In the same issue by ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, it was also highlighted that, by contrast, ASEAN has often been criticised for lack of consensus and common ground (among member states) and a heavy disposition towards intergovernmental cooperation. Increasingly, the relevance of ASEAN is placed on the potential of the Association to evolve enough to take on the EU's structures and arrangements. There is an overemphasis on the neo-realist perspective in utilising the notion of power balance to measure the "effectiveness" of regional organisations and on "gaps" in other regional organisations that invite the EU model to be recommended as a way forward to attain respective regional goals. It means regional organisations like ASEAN are constantly placed on the weighing scale with the EU. Therefore, anarchy and uncertainty are factors that inform the decision to establish rules of interaction. Understanding why states would be inclined to establish rules of interaction is important but would not adequately constitute a measurement of the effectiveness of a regional organisation. Understanding the underpinnings of a regional organisation such as ASEAN will be crucial without referring to the EU's perceived success in the shadows of ASEAN's progress. Since the SEA region is heterogenous, Stephen Haggard, in the chapter on the Liberal View of the International Relations of Asia, articulated that cooperation is important in the face of risk of conflict and war (Pekkanen et al., 2014). However, against this background, Haggard further highlighted that both institutions and economic interdependence remain important 'offsetting tendencies against the risks associated with the region's diversity'. Hence, while ASEAN lacks a central authority and legally binding mechanisms, the survival of the Association offers strong reasons to study how it functions in the face of diversity and drives its relevance and performance.

#### **2.4 Role of ASEAN**

Before investigating the underpinnings of ASEAN, it is pertinent to provide background by delving into the role of ASEAN and the historical context of its foundation. ASEAN was founded in the Cold War era, with the focus of the Association being to curb the communist forces escalating and rising in the region (L. Jones & Hameiri, 2020). In order to explain that ASEAN was established for a purpose that 'had to do mainly with regional

peace and security’, there is a need to substantiate why ASEAN founders believed cooperation to be extremely vital for the region (Severino, 2003).

First, Severino noted that ‘with the withdrawal of the colonial powers, there would have been a power vacuum which could have attracted outsiders to step in for political gains’. Second, before ASEAN, there were attempts to create an international organisation to establish peace and security in the SEA region. One such attempt was the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). The organisation was mostly filled with member states that were not from the SEA region, and it was ultimately dissolved due to a loss of interest by the member states. From experience, ASEAN founders learnt that ‘co-operation among disparate members located in distant lands could be ineffective’ since there was a lack of ‘shared common interests’ and different vested interests (Severino, 2003).

Finally, it was becoming more critical that SEA states stay coordinated with the changing geopolitical landscape. Increasingly, the tensions between the U.S. and China have, in part placed some pressure on the Association with member states such as Cambodia and Laos wielding clear support for China, and sharing similar sentiments are Brunei, Myanmar and Thailand (Thitinan, 2022). On the other hand, it would be noteworthy to highlight that member state such as Vietnam has been critical of China on political-security matters, according to Thitinan. The different political stances of ASEAN member states would potentially become a hindrance for the Association, working against ‘the motivation for [ASEAN] efforts to band together’ (Severino, 2003). Yet, in the face of such a volatile geopolitical situation, ASEAN’s survival is contingent on its strength to showcase a unified position and shield themselves against Big Power rivalry (Severino, 2003). It shows that the inauguration of ASEAN was a step forward in countering the region's vulnerability and that the role of ASEAN was crucial for member states to garner a stake in the international system. ASEAN sought to establish ‘regional norms for interstate relations in the region’ by laying down those norms in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) (Severino, 2003). They are norms and principles of ‘mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity’ and include ‘the right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion, or coercion and ‘non-interference in the internal affairs of one

another' (Weatherbee, 2009). These were first introduced and adopted as normative principles in the Bandung Principles in April 1955 at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. Particularly those that defined the 'ASEAN Way' – notably the principle of non-interference and 'respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations' (Severino, 2003) – it underscored its role not only in the SEA region but also outside the region.

While ASEAN marks its significance by consolidating cohesion in the region through admitting new members of Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar during the post-Cold War period, the organisation was often criticised for lack of legal-binding mechanisms and formal institutionalisation (Koh et al., 2009). It should be acknowledged that ASEAN did recognise that its institutional framework 'was political rather than legal' (Koh et al., 2009). Thus, on the subject of ASEAN's institutional structure, the ASEAN Charter was created with the aim to 'institutionalise the function and structure of ASEAN' (Koh et al., 2009). Despite the ASEAN Charter, which sought to 'codify, clarify and make more definitive ASEAN's basic purposes' (Koh et al., 2009), the ASEAN Charter was seen merely as a tool, for it relies upon the discretion of member states to be compliant to it, as well as to 'use it well' (Koh et al., 2009). The ASEAN Charter's dependence on member states' willingness to comply and coordinate through ASEAN reflects the realist position that a regional organisation is subjugated to its member states' interest and a tool of these member states. Since the Charter was drafted with the purpose of increasing coordination in ASEAN, the Charter still places emphasis on the principle of non-interference and a preference for consensus in decision-making (Koh et al., 2009). In addition, the fact that 'there was no provision for suspension or expulsion of members for non-compliance' seems to be a reiteration of the "ASEAN Way" and a political reflection of the characteristics of member states, which are considerable impediments to coordination in ASEAN (Koh et al., 2009).

However, while the Charter remains "insufficient" to some, it is a reflection of how distrust, suspicion and solidarity were managed and curbed through the years as ASEAN sought to unify the SEA region and export the ASEAN ideal (Koh et al., 2009). The ASEAN Charter is an important, defining document because the Charter 'is emblematic

of the trust that had been built among the ten member states, the brewing solidarity among each other for a future united in peace and prosperity’ (Koh et al., 2009). It shows how far the organisation has come despite differences between member states, through codifying the norms and practices in the Charter and reaffirming the ‘objectives, goals and principles of the ASEAN Community’ (Koh et al., 2009). The Charter signals the unorthodox structure of ASEAN, not conforming to the EU model and only adopting what is suitable for its own norms and practices.

## **2.5 Limitation of ASEAN**

In the previous section, the thesis has argued against the adoption of a power-balance outlook on regional organisations as it builds on the idea that the relevance of regional organisations is contingent on their competency in delivering regional goals and that these goals are highly packaged in terms of what the EU has achieved and expects of other regional organisations. Nonetheless, it is vital to acknowledge the neo-realist position to understand some limitations of ASEAN. First, the sceptics’ view is that ‘ASEAN should not be credited with bringing peace and stability to SEA’ as they see ‘extra-regional power balances as the main contributors to regional peace’ (Stubbs, 2019). Second, sceptics argue that ASEAN fails to ‘deal effectively with the major powers that operate in the region’, especially ASEAN’s ineffectiveness when confronting China (Stubbs, 2019). Third, it is argued that ‘ASEAN contributes to a “noodle bowl” of different tariff regimes’ and is ‘driven more by geographic considerations than economic factors and does little to advance economic development’ (Stubbs, 2019). Though the thesis aims to provide a defence for ASEAN, like any other regional organisation, the Association has limitations and shortcomings. As such, it is paramount to acknowledge some key arguments from ASEAN sceptics.

The ASEAN sceptics begin from a western realist and neo-realist position and place a strong emphasis on military and economic factors, which means they only see ASEAN ‘as strong as the great power interests behind them’ (Stubbs, 2019). ASEAN’s limited military capability and inability to balance China and its influence on some ASEAN member states, notably Cambodia, is seen as ASEAN’s downfall. Hence critics are

sceptical about ASEAN's role in the region (Stubbs, 2019). For every regional organisation, the realist would ascribe band-wagoning against great power interests in the region as the main priority to prevent the regional organisation from becoming a tool of the great powers. The failure of a regional organisation to do so implies that the capacity of the regional organisation would be limited. However, when one approaches regional organisations from a neo-realist position, the stress on power balance neglects the function of regional organisations in 'institutionalising norms' and socialising member states in accepting certain ideas and norms (Stubbs, 2019). In the case of ASEAN, a highly diverse organisation itself, it becomes all the more important to emphasise the importance of practising common norms and accommodation accordingly. Thus, the thesis draws upon a constructivist approach to evaluating ASEAN. By elaborating on the limitations of ASEAN, the thesis hopes to show and reinforce the narrow scope of the neo-realist position in understanding regional organisations, especially since ASEAN sceptics adopt this position (Stubbs, 2019).

On another note, it is crucial to recognise the view of ASEAN's proponents. They highlight how the power configuration of ASEAN provides an alternative outlook of ASEAN's role in the region (Stubbs, 2019). Then, the notion that 'ASEAN's aim is not so much to confront major powers directly as to give themselves as much autonomy as possible in their domestic and international affairs' (Stubbs, 2019) is more than reasonable, seeing that ASEAN's member states come from a history of colonialism. Concerning its relative position in the international system, the aim of consolidating control and wielding authority over its domestic and regional affairs may well take precedence. Hence, the thesis finds that a constructivist approach would be better suited for evaluating ASEAN, where 'subjective and inter-subjective factors, including ideas, norms, history, culture and identity' (Acharya, 2008) are legitimate forces used to understand historical contexts and differences and it can be applied to ASEAN itself .

With this, regionalism in SEA would be understood as a 'product of ideational forces, such as shared norms, and socialisation in search of a common identity' according to Acharya. It also brings out the former debate that 'ASEAN has had a positive role to play in institutionalising norms that have helped to bring neighbours and competing states

together and lessen the tensions between them' (Stubbs, 2019). The constructivist approach to shaping and orientating ASEAN towards establishing a concrete voice of its own, capable of mitigating disputes and challenges, is aligned with ASEAN norms and practices. The view holds an appreciation for the influence of shared norms that ASEAN had adopted such as the principle of non-intervention and sovereignty and recognises the 'non-institutionalised form of regionalism' of ASEAN (Acharya, 2008).

The thesis would like to elaborate on the approach to understanding the importance of socialising and institutionalising norms, given that ASEAN comprises different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. By developing subsidiary norms that redefine the meaning and scope of pre-existing European-derived global norms to reflect conditions (Acharya, 2011) outside the Western hemisphere, these states have been able to (1) challenge their exclusion or marginalisation from global norm-making processes and (2) stand up against great power hypocrisy. Following point (1), a realist would argue that the regional organisation is as powerful as the great powers' interests and that 'institutions dominated by great powers do not always reflect the ideas, interests, and identities of weaker states' (Acharya, 2011). Therefore, there would be a need for ASEAN member states to maintain their power agency by protecting their autonomy (Stubbs, 2019). If understood from the perspective, ASEAN holds an important role in socialising member states to accept certain norms and principles that would guide the cooperation, coordination, and execution of decisions. Thus, 'ASEAN's successes in security governance could be explained by the development of shared, socio-culturally rooted norms based on consultation, consensus building and quiet diplomacy, and adherence to international norms like non-interference and non-intervention' (Kefale, 2015).

Moving forward, the thesis stresses the importance of understanding ASEAN relative to itself. It emphasises the need to confront and evaluate ASEAN's performance by comprehending how the Association's norms and principles shape its workings, especially the decision-making process and even the challenges that plague the region and affect the organisation. Otherwise, there would be a failure to recognise where ASEAN succeeds and what remains a work in progress. It leads to the next part of the thesis that seeks to elaborate on ASEAN's institutional design, seemingly understood as the opposite



of the more formalised EU model. Yet the thesis would like to refrain from such a view that strikes both ASEAN and the EU as polar opposites. Instead, it aims to develop a perspective on ASEAN that emphasises how the organisation is actively shaped and defined by its own regional principles and norms as opposed to a narrative that sustains a sceptical view of ASEAN through a comparison with the EU model.

In articulating the constructivist approach, a regional organisation is not limited to consolidating power to maintain a regional strategic power structure. It includes helping institutionalise common norms to establish better coordination and cooperation over regional issues, which is important in a multicultural ASEAN. Therefore, it is pertinent to elucidate how the norms and principles are upheld by ASEAN member states.

## **2.6 ASEAN from the EU Perspective**

Since its establishment, ASEAN has ‘functioned only on the basis of a “founding document”, through the Bangkok or ASEAN Declaration of 1967 and other agreed declarations, concords, and communiques’ (Koh et al., 2009). As these documents did not require any formal ratification or were legal binding in nature, they paved the way for the beginnings of soft institutionalisation in ASEAN (Koh et al., 2009). The thesis will refer to ASEAN’s institutional design as one characterised by less formalisation or light (soft) institutionalisation. ASEAN cooperation has been loose and informal, relying on political persuasion rather than legal enforcement while basing itself on “musyawarah” (consultation) and “mufakat” (consensus). The cooperation style has often been called ‘the ASEAN Way’ (Koh et al., 2009). Jetschke attributed ASEAN’s light institutional form to be very much influenced by the “ASEAN Way” and further argues that without Europe’s effects on ASEAN’s formalisation, ASEAN may not have embraced some form of hierarchy (Jetschke, 2009).

Structurally, ASEAN’s soft institutionalisation is a stark distinction from the EU’s institutions, which have a strong bureaucratic character. In addition to its legal framework backed by the publicity of exchanges that ensured compliance, the European Commission had significant authority and was able to implement a European domestic market

(Jetschke, 2009). ASEAN, on the other hand, ‘lack(ed) a centralised and autonomous secretariat’ and did not have legally binding rules and norms (Jetschke, 2009). It has undoubtedly affected the efficiency of ASEAN as a whole in delivering the goals they have set up to achieve and further emphasises what Jetschke refers to as “implementation gap(s)” between ASEAN’s rhetorical goals and its actual achievements (Jetschke, 2009). In her article on ‘Institutionalising ASEAN’, Jetschke positions the European integration project as integral to the development of ASEAN institutions, where Southeast Asian governments had embarked on mimicking European integration process in the course of establishing ASEAN (Jetschke, 2009).

In that ‘ASEAN was founded only a month after the EC was established’, Jetschke explains that the Helsinki Accords of August 1975 ‘established important rules of conduct between the European powers and the two superpowers’ (Jetschke, 2009). While the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) as a key document, laid the foundation for the ASEAN Way of Cooperation and shared principles such as ‘sovereign equality, refraining from the threat or use of force, the territorial integrity of states and non-intervention in international affairs’ (Jetschke, 2009). The TAC mirrors the Accords shows ASEAN’s attempts at following the European Community’s institutional process (Jetschke, 2009).

Jetschke contends that ‘by the end of the Cold War, ASEAN was firmly locked into path-dependent copying based on members’ strong identification with the EC and the benefits of being rewarded with international legitimacy’ (Jetschke, 2009). It would be noteworthy to include a quote from former Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato’ Seri Syed Hamid Albar that ‘ASEAN changed in the direction of the EU, because it gave the organisation “respectability” (Jetschke, 2009).

Jetschke continues to provide evidence of mimicking, such as the establishment of the ASEAN Troika in July of 2000. This followed a foreign policy crisis in Myanmar and later East Timor in 1999 ‘just two months after EU decision and the US, over the accession of Myanmar’ (Jetschke, 2009). Although ASEAN member states fervently deny any process of mimicking and association with the European integration model,

Jetschke argues that during the Asian financial crisis, ASEAN further assumed more EU institutions and that ‘the Bali Concord II of 2003 envisioned an ASEAN Community that would be implemented until 2020 and consist of “three pillars”: an Economic Community, a Security Community and a Cultural and Social Community’ (Jetschke, 2009).

She further argues that by mimicking a legitimate model, ASEAN was able to attain the international legitimacy it had required as an organisation for ‘political survival’ (Jetschke, 2009) as well as (international) recognition for both its member states and the Southeast Asia region. However, as far as the mimicking process goes, ASEAN had little success in replicating the progress of the European integration project. The latter made significant achievements through the ratification of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which set up the European Economic Community (EEC) and provided the impetus for the Single European Act with the objective of creating a single market, while the former did attempt to engage with a proposal for a Southeast Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty (SEAFET) that would formalise ‘a cultural and economic pact between Southeast Asian nations who were at that time deeply enmeshed in territorial conflicts’ (Jetschke, 2009). However, the SEAFET failed to take root, signalling ASEAN member states’ reluctance towards a more bureaucratic organisation. From this perspective, it could be understood that ASEAN as a regional organisation not only failed to replicate the success of the European integration project but it also highlights how successful the European member states were at evolving the Economic Community Security Council (ECSC) through ‘functional commissions on culture, social development, science and technology and drugs that carried the hope of a slow integration through spill-over effects’ (Jetschke, 2009).

Here it would be reasonable to argue that where ASEAN fails, it is with a direct comparison to the EU’s accomplishments. Yet by this sole comparison, the concerns surrounding ASEAN are limited to a Eurocentric perspective that presumes the European model as the *only* way forward. After all, there is a need to acknowledge that the ASEAN member states recognise that importing the institutional configuration of the EU integration project such as its supranational form of integration is not the way forward (Rattanaseevee, 2014). It underscores the unlikelihood of adopting a “copy and paste” approach of the successful EU model to the context of the Association.

ASEAN's light institutionalisation is characterised by the concept of "consultation" and "consensus", as reflected in the ASEAN Charter. There exists 'a formula for flexible participation in the implementation of economic commitments' (Koh et al., 2009) with the ASEAN Minus X formula to facilitate implementation (if not all member states are able to comply with the necessary obligations). The final decision was to subscribe to a decision-making process 'based on consultation and consensus' (Koh et al., 2009) rather than opting for a voting process. It should be understood that "consensus" is an important working norm that colours the decision-making in ASEAN (Koh et al., 2009). Furthermore, where flexible participation in the form of ASEAN Minus X only exists in the economic realm, it is a tell-tale sign of how far the principles codified in the ASEAN Charter only reflect the hard-line stance that ASEAN member states have about the principle of non-interference. Concerning Jetschke's consistent emphasis on the importance of the 'autonomy of member states' (Jetschke, 2009) and how it paves the institutional direction of ASEAN, the result of light institutionalisation in ASEAN was more than an 'institutional mimicry' (Jetschke, 2009). Finally, the thesis stresses that ASEAN's soft institutionalisation can be better embodied and understood as a deliberate design to acknowledge the experience of ASEAN and its member states in managing their conduct in the task of regional integration. This is so where the process of regionalism is not unilateral, and the experience of the EU integration project may not be a model fully applicable in the Southeast Asian context.

## **2.7 Norms of Engagement and Institutionalisation**

Where a paradigm favouring the EU model may determine ASEAN's light institutionalisation as the organisation's eventual and ultimate undoing, it is apt to discuss the differences between ASEAN and the EU due to diverging underlying norms. Understanding the norms that ASEAN member states regard with the utmost importance – and thereby the norms that are respected formally and tacitly in ASEAN – they provide a clear overview of the norms that ground ASEAN, without which the inauguration and inception of ASEAN would have been impossible. Rather than focusing on how successful the European integration project is/was (It is not the intention and purpose of the thesis to deliberate on the success of the European integration project and the EU)

through an emphasis on ASEAN's soft institutionalisation and recommending a European model, the thesis seeks to shift the discussion to understand the reasons and rationale behind a lesser degree of institutionalisation in ASEAN. This could be achieved by examining the norms that form the roots of ASEAN.

The European integration project had seen the EU adopting some degree of supranational character through the 'pooling and delegation of national sovereignty' (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016) of member states. In this regard, the EU is able to drive 'deeper integration not only in economic but also political terms' (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016). The previous section investigated the claim of ASEAN's light institutionalisation as a result of the ASEAN Way and found that proponents of the EU model and sceptics of ASEAN's soft institutionalisation tend to expect an evolvement of the ASEAN Way to promote more formalisation and cooperation, especially in issues and areas that weigh on the sovereignty of member states. Since the Association functions via consensus and not through legally binding mechanisms, member states are able to withdraw from issues and policies they are not keen on. Understandably, this "norm of engagement" in ASEAN can be unhealthy. However, there is a need to understand why consensus and consultation are the chosen means of engagement in ASEAN and why light institutionalisation does not necessarily signify the end of ASEAN or an ingredient for its downfall.

The thesis argues that ASEAN's light institutionalisation is an institutional structure aligned with the norms and principles upheld by member states. As such, it needs to be acknowledged as an institutional feature of ASEAN. If modified to reflect the EU model to some extent, it would challenge member states' beliefs and risk the withdrawal of member states from the Association. Hence, the thesis wishes to show the norms that form the roots of ASEAN and argue that ASEAN's light institutionalisation need not be viewed as a failure to capture and execute what the European integration project has done. In addition, ASEAN's light institutionalisation is not a failure to mimic the quality of the EU's institutionalisation but is a chosen structure and the preferred mechanism for engagement in ASEAN. It is aligned with member states' rationale of being in ASEAN and upholds the ASEAN's principles and norms.

First, it would be important to recognise that the very reason for the preference for ‘decentralised modes of governance’ (Nesadurai, 2008) in ASEAN is attributed to the emphasis on the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. To illustrate this tight rein on sovereignty, one need only compare the structural character of the EU with that of ASEAN, where the EU takes on a more supranational and formalised structure than ASEAN (Spandler, 2019). The supranational character would indicate that the member states in the EU ‘have voluntarily agreed to give up part of their sovereignty’ and are able to accept that the European Commission will exercise the pooled sovereignty on behalf of them (in specific areas such as trade) (T. Koh, 2017). However, member states in ASEAN remain vigilant and cautious about their sovereignty. Since the SEA countries ‘still emphasise the traditional understanding of sovereignty and non-interference as a regional principle’ (Chetchaiwong, n.d.), the principles of sovereignty and non-interference needs to be recognised as “norms” of the region. To recommend an alternative structure to light institutionalisation could violate such norms, threatening SEA countries' most basic regional principle. As such, there is a tendency for the proponents of the EU model and the sceptics of ASEAN to point to the Westphalian notion of sovereignty that SEA countries hold onto. In this way, understanding ASEAN’s light institutionalisation as a failure to mimic the (high) quality of institutionalisation held by the EU truly showcases a lack of understanding and recognition of the norms that define the engagement among ASEAN countries. Hence, there is some degree of “Eurocentric-ness” and ‘a penetration of Western values’ (Chetchaiwong, n.d.) when ASEAN’s light institutionalisation is understood as a shortcoming of the Association.

Here, the thesis wants to show that the institutional features of ASEAN are actively deliberated, drafted, and codified in the ASEAN Charter, with the then-drafters bearing in mind the principles and norms that member states are concerned about. From the start, it was understood that ASEAN ‘will not become a supra-national organisation like the EU’ (T. T. B. Koh et al., 2009). Hence when Jetschke argues that ‘ASEAN’s light design is an outcome of institutional mimicry and therefore reflects a cultural and social process of diffusion’ (Jetschke, 2009), ASEAN becomes a narrative and, to some extent, a proof of how the European integration project is well-diffused to regions outside Europe, and

that there is a desire for regional organisations like ASEAN to imitate the European model to achieve international legitimacy.

While ASEAN has established soft institutionalisation to complement its underlying norms and principles, it does not indicate a functional crisis or a set of institutional problems in need of solving (Jetschke, 2009). Moreover, maintaining its current design does not mean a total compromise in securing its aim of managing regional peace and stability. Here, the thesis seeks to elaborate on another essential principle of ASEAN – the principle of conflict management. By understanding ASEAN’s norm of conflict avoidance, the thesis hopes to (1) acknowledge and establish that ASEAN has its particular means of conflict management and diplomacy, incorporating both formal and informal methods to achieve regional order, and (2) despite changing geopolitical landscape, intervening in the affairs of member states remains on a “speech-surface” and that the principle of non-interference remains as crucial as before (Askandar et al., 2002).

Most fundamentally, the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 (the founding document of ASEAN), the ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia (TAC) disclose ASEAN’s position toward conflict management. For instance, the TAC established the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of one another and the settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means made up of the specific principles and policies of conflict management (Askandar et al., 2002). While these principles clearly express the manner of conflict management, the thesis would like to bring out the intergovernmental approach that ASEAN takes in managing potential conflicts or issues of security. For example, the respect for the principle of non-interference in ASEAN, coupled with the close bilateral cooperation that ASEAN countries have with each other, has helped with the issues of security (Askandar et al., 2002). Furthermore, the bilateral agreements between member states in ASEAN and their willingness to cooperate in security issues, ‘especially against insurgencies among ASEAN countries’ for the fear of insecurity and instability in the region emphasise the importance of support within ASEAN countries (Askandar et al., 2002). As such, the principle of conflict management not only showcases the devotion to the principle of non-interference in ASEAN, but that conflict management is contingent upon amicable

bilateral relations and ties between ASEAN countries in supplying “support” and “co-operation” in the realm of security.

In this respect, ASEAN practices quiet diplomacy and opts for a softer approach while working towards its regional goals. On the other hand, the Association is subject to its ability to establish “networks” in terms of building strong ties within member states to cooperate on more significant issues that would make consensus difficult such as issues concerning the political and security realm. By elaborating on the norms of conflict management, the thesis seeks to illustrate the Association’s non-passive attitude toward its survival. It will also consider the active strides ASEAN takes to manage its relations and the networks pertinent to its perceived relevance in the international system.

To truly reflect the underpinnings of ASEAN, such as its institutional features and norms, the thesis believes that ASEAN’s light institutionalisation can be better understood through an alternative theoretical framework of network governance provided by Jetschke. The framework aims to provide a ‘viable approach for theorising questions of order while not downplaying the extent of egoism among ASEAN members’ (Jetschke, 2009).

Jetschke utilised the theoretical framework of network governance to contrast the difference in the degree of formalisation and hierarchy in ASEAN institutional arrangements. She also underscored the structure that ASEAN conceived of during its inauguration and even after the ratification of the ASEAN Charter. Jetschke believes that network governance is a compromised structure and concludes that a change of institutional design is needed if ASEAN hopes to achieve its rhetorical goals. However, the thesis intends to seek a different trajectory and maintains that ASEAN’s soft institutionalisation is not a compromise or a “second-best” structure that infects the organisation. Instead, its institutional design is much more deliberated and influenced by the norms of engagement by SEA states. Therefore, the thesis seeks to work with Jetschke’s theoretical framework of understanding ASEAN as network governance but differs where it posits that if ASEAN could recognise its organisation as a network governance model, it would be better able to maximise policy outcomes.



## 2.8 Theoretical Understanding of Network Governance in ASEAN

To better utilise and further ASEAN's potential as an organisation, there is a need for another framework that would reflect the core of ASEAN, which is made up of the norms and principles upheld by ASEAN and its respective member states. In addition, the adopted framework is aimed at providing a nuanced account of the organisational workings of ASEAN. The direction recommended for ASEAN is that it should undergo institutional evolution to overcome the lack of consensus over issues and policies by moving along the pathway of the European integration project. However, the approach lacks an understanding of ASEAN, as a regional organisation, with its ubiquitous principles, values, and norms. It is not expressed enough that ASEAN's performance and efficiency are relative to the norms that define ASEAN's engagement and consultation process. Therefore, proposing a theoretical framework to simultaneously reflect ASEAN's underpinnings and unique hierarchical structure would be necessary.

At this juncture, it would be apt to recall some critical components in Jetschke's paper that she supposes are reasons that have resulted in the gaps between ASEAN's rhetoric goals and its actual performance (Jetschke, 2009). First, she points to an informal policy style characterising ASEAN according to 'its reliance on socially rather than legally binding rules and norms and its lack of centralised and autonomous secretariat' (Jetschke, 2009). This depicts a somewhat different hierarchical structure compared to the more well-known EU model, which holds a high degree of formalisation. This alternative operates in contrast to the more traditional sense of hierarchical structure, such as that of the EU model that has been reasoned to be behind the Association's inability to command compliance from its respective member states.

Second, 'the continuing autonomy of member states', signalling the strong regard for the principle of non-interference and the tight rein on the Westphalian notion of sovereignty, are norms that reinforce the preference for an informal policy style and a non-binding set of rules and principles (Jetschke, 2009). In this way, the thesis traces the origin of ASEAN's light institutionalisation to those characteristics that Jetschke argues resulted

in the organisation's production of network forms of governance (Jetschke, 2009). Most importantly, Jetschke posits that 'if one subtracts Europe's effects on the organisation, ASEAN's formalization since 1967 might well amount to pure network governance' (Jetschke, 2009). Following this perspective, the influence of the European integration project (on ASEAN) set the tone for some degree of formalisation of ASEAN structures. Furthermore, the obstinate inclination towards the "ASEAN Way" gave impetus to a weak institutional form since it grants a high degree of autonomy to national governments in determining domestic policy (Jetschke, 2009). Thereby affecting the unanimity on policy issues, decision outcomes, and the rate of implementation or adoption of a policy in a member state since the Association would not command any authority over member states' decisions.

That ASEAN exhibits the aforementioned institutional features reiterates member states' high regard for their autonomy and their unyielding attitude toward the principle of non-interference. However, these norms and principles may be non-negotiable at this point in time and in the foreseeable future. Thus, it would do well moving forward to provide an alternative framework that can embody the hard-line stance over those norms of engagement. Hence, the thesis plans to work with Jetschke's proposal of how ASEAN produces network forms of governance (Jetschke, 2009) but concludes on a note which proposes that through the theoretical framework of NG, ASEAN's achievements, as well as its shortcomings, can be better understood.

In this regard, it would be necessary first to establish an understanding of "network governance" (NG). For the thesis, the concept of "governance" would constitute not only the organisation's structure and actions or decisions, but also the shared meanings and contexts within which those actions or decisions were passed, and the recognition of the members and processes which were involved in those contexts (Colebatch, 2014). Hence, in theorising that ASEAN is a "network governance", the thesis pinpoints a network form of exchange in the Association's authoritative choice, structured interaction, and social construction, respectively understood as structures and practices of legitimate authority, interplay between relevant stakeholders (e.g., state and non-state actors), and the make-up of ASEAN in terms of its shared values, practices and norms (Colebatch, 2014).

On the other hand, the thesis establishes the idea of “networks” from Powell’s study on network forms of organisation which was conceptualised as an alternative to market or hierarchical forms of exchange a firm or organisation wield. These various forms of exchange would give insight into the organisation’s structure and management, such as the means of communication (within the organisation), degree of flexibility, amount of commitment among members, independence of members, and even methods of conflict resolution (Powell et al., 1990). From this point, indications of networks or network organisation would represent some form or presence of “network governance”. With this, the thesis will begin to consider NG with respect to the structure of ASEAN.

The idea of networks became prominent during the 1980s and 1990s, when governments introduced managerialism in the public sector and began outsourcing various tasks to the private sector (Kjaer, 2011). It paved the way for a new dynamic within public policymaking and implementation in pursuing public goals with the addition of new actors, other than the government itself. This was referred to by Rhodes (1994, 1996, 1997) as a ‘hollowing out of the state’ and a transition to a decentralised government – one which wields less autonomy (Kjaer, 2011). Rhodes pinpointed the traditional Westminster model of the British political system as an example of such a government. It propelled his work on policy networks which he described as ‘sets of formal and informal institutional linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared interests in public policymaking and implementation’ (Rhodes, 2007). Rhodes further described that the institutions (or actors) within the policy networks are interdependent and ‘policies emerged from the bargaining between the networks’ members’. As such, ‘exchange theory lies at the heart of policy network theory’ (Rhodes, 2007) since network members are to exchange resources if they desire to achieve their goals. While the initial idea of networks came by fragmentation whereby Rhodes (2007) highlighted how the government of Margaret Thatcher sought to undermine private organisations by subjugating existing “private” networks through financial or management controls, networks had notably become defining characteristic of governance with the creation of new networks in place of the networks not supported or aligned with the government. To this, ‘shared values and norms are the glue which holds the complex set of relationships together; trust is essential for cooperative behaviour and,

therefore, the existence of the network' (Rhodes, 2007). These "network" workings resemble the core of ASEAN and provide an understanding of how a non-traditionally conforming organisation structure has its own functioning held by network members' interdependence, which can be a significant force or steer. In this view, an organisation does not necessarily need to harbour a centralised authority to make a move, albeit the performance or outcomes of the organisation can be stunted due to the different polity of actors, which adds a layer of difficulty to cooperation.

Moreover, NG can be understood along two different dimensions whereby 'at one extreme, networks may be governed completely by the organisations that comprise the network', and 'at the other extreme, the network may be highly brokered, with few direct organisation-to-organisation interactions' (Provan & Kenis, 2007). The former would be what Provan and Kenis described to be a "shared governance" with a dense and highly decentralised form. They argued that what informs the adoption of a particular form of governance is 'based on four key structural and relational contingencies: trust, size (number of participants), goal consensus, and the nature of the task'. Additionally, it is underscored by Provan and Kenis that 'as trust becomes less densely distributed throughout the network, as the number of participants gets larger, as network goal consensus declines, and as the need for network-level competencies increases, more centralised forms of NG are likely to become more effective than shared-governance networks'. Notwithstanding the above, the thesis finds that the key factors indicated by Provan and Kenis provide a good starting point for studying the performance of ASEAN via NG since it holds a fixed membership bound by shared norms, values, and principles shaped by its historical context. Moreover, it allows the thesis to study the networks in the Association and provides an analysis of their relative performance, which differs from the derivation of performance from pure accounts of international relations theories.

On the other hand, to Powell, 'networks are "lighter on their feet than hierarchies"' and any exchanges are carried out only by the members of the network(s) through 'reciprocal, preferential, mutually supportive actions' (Powell et al., 1990). In the work of Jones, Hesterly, and Borgati, they proposed a similar definition which looks at NG as a select, persistent, and structured set of autonomous organisations engaged in non-legally binding

contracts to adapt to environmental contingencies and to coordinate and safeguard exchanges (Jones et al., 1997). While the definitions of network governance put forward placed more emphasis on economic organisations or firms, the tenets of the network form of exchange and resulting organisational behaviour offer a starting point to consider network form of exchange in institutional contexts where Powell describes would be ‘combinations of legal, political, and economic factors’ (Powell et al., 1990). It allows for the mapping of the structure of ASEAN to NG.

Where a hierarchical structure or a traditional bureaucracy is contrasted with NG, ASEAN’s soft institutionalisation can be accessed via the understanding of a “network” structure which focuses on reciprocity as a main theme of exchange when it comes to network forms of organisation (Powell et. al., 1990). A reminiscent of ASEAN’s core which expects member states to uphold shared values, norms, and principles such as non-interference and sovereignty in any process. A conscious decision on the part of ASEAN’s founders to agree upon non-legally binding mechanisms due to the strong tendencies of most ASEAN states to preserve their sovereignty. However, these mechanisms are constantly pressured by the need to establish a regional organisation recognised by the international community to coordinate and work against foreign and external threats (previously covered in sections 2.1 and 2.4). The interaction between member states against looming geopolitics in a loosely arranged regional organisation resembles a network form of exchange.

Reflecting on Jetschke’s perspective, which views NG as an apt framework for ASEAN since it is ‘an alternative to hierarchy and a viable approach for theorising questions of order while not downplaying the extent of egoism among ASEAN members’ (Jetschke, 2009), NG does present itself as a useful framework for its emphasis on actors and how actors’ interaction makes up a network (structure) itself (J. Kim, 2006). Furthermore, it emphasises the importance and precedence of states (states’ autonomy) before the organisation, a principle at the heart of ASEAN and does not point to a bureaucratic structure like the EU, yet not completely disregarding the form and structure of the “network organisation” but rather approaching it as an alternative to hierarchy. In this regard, it reflects the intergovernmental nature of ASEAN. It suggests that ASEAN’s light

institutionalisation is not a compromised design or a “middle ground” that the Association is stuck with due to the supposed failure of mimicking the European integration project.

In addition, it would be noteworthy to consider how Powell indicated that in a “network organisation”, the method of conflict resolution would be heavily dependent on the norm of reciprocity agreed among members and as such, subject members to an interdependent relationship (Powell et. al., 1990). It means that the adoption of NG for ASEAN would allow for the examination of ASEAN’s norms of engagement and means of conflict management as part of the structure and consideration of how those norms and the interests and/or decisions of actors affect the performance of the organisation. This is what the thesis hopes for when it comes to analysing the Association’s performance since the norms and principles of ASEAN can sometimes be neglected as integral components which drive ASEAN.

Moreover, where networks are characterised as complex where some members are dependent on resources controlled by another within the organisation, yet the benefits brought by the pooling of resources (Powell et. al., 1990) may outweigh these unequal power dynamics. This will be further explored in the subsequent section utilising the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT). The main point here is that with “network organisations”, there is a shift of focus from the formal, bureaucratic hierarchies, which seems as a more stable choice of governance. Yet, the thesis believes that a network form of governance which centres more on an ‘interactionist focus’ (Kim, 2006) and opens up to the ‘involvement of non-state actors from the private and third sector as stakeholders and partners in policy management and implementation’ (Lim, 2011) can be a powerful tool and enlightenment for ASEAN. Here, enlightenment means that by recognising itself as NG, ASEAN can learn that working with non-state stakeholders has benefits, as building an ASEAN Community becomes overwhelming when constantly perceived as solely a state affair. Therefore, refocusing on actors in ASEAN is a central issue and offers a critical lens to ASEAN in evaluating its functioning, processes and performance since it is predominantly state-centric.

Notably, the thesis aims to account for the shortcoming(s) of ASEAN via the concepts of vertical and horizontal networks in ASEAN. From Kim, the difference between horizontal and vertical networks 'is that the latter relies more on central agencies to coordinate activities between upstream and downstream participants while the former requires partners to pool resources and make decisions jointly' (Kim, 2006). Utilising this understanding, the thesis refers to vertical networks in ASEAN as how decisions flow in a top-down manner or how implementations follow a bottom-up process, taking place at the national or country levels before full implementation at the ASEAN level. On the other hand, horizontal network arrangement looks at the coordination process between ASEAN member states and relevant stakeholders of the network. With this, it can be pinpointed that the horizontal network arrangement of ASEAN may face a standstill or several difficulties due to the tight rein of the member states' sovereignty and the reluctance to work with non-state stakeholders due to political concerns or differences in interests or opinions. Therefore, it slows down the implementation process occurring at the national level. Without a seamless alignment between the horizontal and vertical policy networks, ASEAN would see unequal implementation phases among member states, making the Association less integrated and less committed to its set policies or goals.

Regarding vertical or horizontal networks, it allows us to examine the areas of weakness of ASEAN through the highlighting of the patterns of interaction which drive NG (differing from hierarchical governance) (Kim, 2006). Where ASEAN is often criticised for lacking implementation initiatives due to the absence of legally binding mechanisms, NG provides another perspective by examining the difficulties faced by the horizontal networks working with member states.

Here, it will be advantageous to add that by recognition of ASEAN as a NG, it places authority and power in the hands of ASEAN member states (Coen & Thatcher, 2008). Members take the lead roles when engaging or enacting specific policies. They are the "gate-keepers" to non-ASEAN members who may be industry players, NSAs and other relevant actors who wish to be involved with ASEAN. It also means that ASEAN member states would have to recognise the potential the NSAs hold to enhance their horizontal

networks further. Thus, the thesis wishes to put forward a critical recommendation, whereby ASEAN can see better performance, notably at the implementation phase of the policymaking process, with the participation of the NSAs.

By recognising ASEAN as NG, it validates ASEAN's structure by emphasising 'consultation, negotiation and soft law' (Coen & Thatcher, 2008), as well as the need to capitalise on the fluidity of networks in engaging relevant actors in different pillars of the ASEAN Community to boost its functioning. With this, NG helps to establish that ASEAN's lack of institutional evolution is not the Association's demise. Instead, adopting a more formalised bureaucratic design like the EU model may not be compatible with ASEAN's core which values the shared norms established since its inauguration. It strengthens the idea that soft institutionalisation is the only institutional structure that ASEAN member states can accept.

In utilising the theoretical framework of network governance, the thesis hopes to shift the debate on ASEAN's future direction to one that focuses on how ASEAN as a whole can come to an understanding that will manage and mitigate the challenges ASEAN faces. As Powell signalled, a key to network forms of organisation is that 'expectations (within the organisation) are not frozen but change as circumstance dictate' (Powell et al., 1990). Hence, as Powell stipulates, complementarity and accommodation are pertinent features to hone for a network organisation to succeed. This is also where the thesis holds ASEAN's challenges to be.

While the Association could find itself in a deadlock as the policies in place are not backed up by legally binding rules and regulations (Stubbs, 2019) and therefore be pressured into adopting a more formalised structure to maintain its international legitimacy and relevance, the thesis argues that if ASEAN can recognise itself as a NG, it could further hone its success in areas of policy formulation, coordination, and implementation, such that the positions, as well as the light institutionalisation of ASEAN, would be better represented in a nuanced manner through the idea of policy networks supported by NG. (This will be addressed in subsequent sections).



As the concept of network governance (NG) is greatly influenced by the works of Jetschke, there would be a need to understand how NG not only reflects ASEAN's heart and institutional structure reasonably well but also exemplifies how ASEAN is capable of driving its regional goals and actively pursuing them through its own capacity. So far, the thesis has sought to provide a defence against Jetschke's contention that ASEAN's ineffectiveness has to do with (1) ASEAN's limited success in mimicking the process of European integration and (2) taking on an organisational structure of network governance (Jetschke, 2009) – a far cry from the structure of the European Union (EU) – and the maintenance of light institutionalisation in ASEAN. In the following chapters, the thesis will posit that the Association will be able to manoeuvre its strength and capability through the acceptance and understanding of ASEAN as NG.

The framework of NG was chosen as it pertains to its definitive aspect, and it opens the door for the justification of a less formalised institutional structure that fits ASEAN's strategic needs. Here, the framework of NG introduces the idea of 'networked regionalism' (Elliott, 2011), which opens up the discussion of another form of regional integration and an alternative institutional structure that facilitates regional integration altogether. In some way, networked regionalism is 'assumed to be "inclusive" and more effective than institutional structures in enhancing intra-regional engagement' (Elliott, 2011). Where an alternative to formal institutionalisation can foster intra-regional engagement, the thesis finds it crucial to elaborate on "ASEAN's core" (or heart) and how it defines and ultimately shapes the norms of engagement in ASEAN. It is repetitively mentioned that the autonomy of ASEAN member states is an important aspect that drives what ASEAN member states can accept when it comes to the institutional structure of the Association. While the aim was to argue for the principle of non-interference and the trait of autonomy to be understood as uncompromisable in all regards, it would also be critical to recognise that member states play a very significant role in ASEAN. Apart from the norms, characteristics, and principles of individual member states making up the core of ASEAN as an Association, state leaders' perceptions about how they perceive policies, other member states' responses, and the weight of issues on their country would dictate member states' behaviour and actions.

Since the beliefs and perceptions of member states form the core of ASEAN, it could be repetitive for sceptics to argue against the notion of according states a highly autonomous status in a regional organisation. The fact that sceptics, realists and neo-realists often believe ASEAN to be ‘an organization in which style trumps substance and an organization in which process, especially the ASEAN Way, is emphasized over progress’ (Stubbs, 2019) stresses how inefficient ASEAN is perceived in their view. Yet, to expect a change of the ASEAN Way to a more legalistic approach, less focused on the values, beliefs and norms that are imbued since the beginning and defined by colonial past and history for a more effective organisation could just be an ideal. From a divisive region (during the Cold War era) to a region that can now boast about more amicable diplomatic ties among member states, the importance of identity, values, and norms is not stressed sufficiently.

While sceptics have argued against according to states high autonomous status in a regional organisation, it would be more helpful to shift the focus to the extent to which the high autonomy accorded to member states is reflective of how its member states ultimately shape ASEAN. It would mean that member states’ preferences and interests would shape and facilitate the policy outcomes. To illustrate this, the thesis will provide a brief comparison between the economic and political realms to showcase the degree of the interests of the member states. In matters of economic pursuits, ASEAN member states are keen to pursue and establish free trade areas (FTAs) and the lowering of tariffs and non-tariff barriers. It is evident in the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) agreement signed in 1992, the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) in 2009 and ASEAN member states’ interest and willingness to be a part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) concluded in 2020.

On the other hand, issues in the political realm tend to be at a standstill, with member states seemingly “handicapped” despite an expressed interest in resolving them. For example, the territorial dispute in the South China Sea (SCS) has stretched over twenty years, with consultations in place to establish a code of conduct in the SCS, but to date, it has not been successful. In the recent Myanmar coup, the response by ASEAN member states expressed some form of condemnation against the coup. While there were calls for

dialogues to support talks to reinstate peace and recover stability in Myanmar, a collective voice against the country's military regime is the stronger force at the current juncture. Since April 2021, the ASEAN member states and Myanmar's military leader, Min Aung Hlaing, have agreed on the Five-Point Consensus calling for the "immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021) and "constructive dialogue among all parties concerned to seek a peaceful solution" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021b). While the consensus is a step forward in ratifying some form of action towards the brutish military junta who had executed four political prisoners without fair trial since August 2022 (Piromva, 2022), inaction and an attitude of neutrality plague progress due to the reserved nature of ASEAN. It stemmed from ASEAN's norms, where issues concerning the domestic realm of an ASEAN member state are subjected to the principle of non-interference. Since Myanmar remains an ASEAN member, any actions taken toward the military junta have the potential to change and redefine how sovereignty is perceived in the ASEAN region. As such, it takes more than a committed interest to see any forms of concrete actions in the political realm. In this way, ASEAN sees more success and results in the areas of economic cooperation as compared to issues tied to the political realm that tread on national sovereignty. Here, successful outcomes mean actionable outcomes, where we see ASEAN member states backing up their "expressed" interests through ratified actions such as being a signatory to an FTA.

Through an examination of the rationale behind ASEAN's institutional design, the principle of non-interference thunders through the Association, justifying the autonomy of member states. It also affects the policy-making processes since member states' interests easily precede any intention of achieving a common regional will. Therefore, it will be essential for ASEAN to develop an appreciation for the nature of its institutional design, alongside the inception and integration of regionalism in the context of SEA, to truly gain a nuanced perspective of its achievements, specifically the policy outcomes that emerge. In the face of a state-centric ASEAN, assessing the implications of the highly autonomous member states is significant to answering questions of coordination, impediment, and implementation in ASEAN's policy processes. In this regard, the thesis refers to Min-hyung Kim's study that introduces the concept of "strategic preference theory". Kim postulates that ASEAN's protracted integration can be attributed to the

member states' strategic preferences and is affected by two key variables – domestic politics and the level of economic interdependence. Kim's study underlines the importance of member states in driving integration.

Most importantly, Kim points toward ASEAN member states' lack of political will to deepen integration and their reluctance to pool sovereignty over specific policy areas and delegate it to the regional organisation. The latter is the main factor of stunted integration progress. The study is important in reflecting ASEAN member states' unwillingness to forgo their sovereignty to an independent body, resulting in a lack of progress on regional integration. However, it does not embody a framework, allowing for the assessment of ASEAN in terms of variables such as key actors.

The thesis adopts a specific definition of the framework provided by Ostrom, which identifies it as 'a set of general variables and relationships that could be studied to understand a particular phenomenon but assigns no values to the variables and does not specify the direction of relationships between them' (Araral et al., 2015). A framework is important to (1) capture the essence of ASEAN and (2) identify the interactions between actors that dominate and participate in the policy processes of ASEAN. Since member states often take the central stage in policy processes and affect policy outcomes. A theoretical framework of network governance can study the underpinnings of ASEAN as a regional organisation without compromising the agency of ASEAN and devaluing the norms and principles that ASEAN member states perceive as integral to the unity (Koh et al., 2009) and continuance of ASEAN as a functioning regional organisation in SEA. Moreover, it points to 'an alternative to hierarchy' (Jetschke, 2009), developing a nuanced account of ASEAN's institutional design and making room for ASEAN to leverage its institutional arrangements better to see more compelling progress in producing actionable outcomes in the policy processes. With this, the progress of ASEAN can be analysed through the ASEAN Community comprising the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), and ASEAN Socio Cultural Community (ASCC), alongside the proposed framework.

### 2.8.1 Framework of Network Governance (NG) for ASEAN

The thesis establishes the framework of network governance first and foremost through the approach of policy network theory (PNT) by Michael Howlett. It gives impetus to ‘thinking about policy making as involving more-or-less fluid sets of state and societal actors linked together by specific interest’ (Howlett, 2002). Through the PNT approach, the thesis organises ‘actors and institutions into identifiable sets of policy-relevant interactions’ following Howlett. It looks beyond structure (institutional mode of analysis) or agency (behavioural mode of analysis) when assessing a policy-making process. The approach highlights the interaction between the role of actors, ideas, and interests in the policy-making process and provides ‘a model of the structure and operation of policy processes’ (Howlett, 2002). In this respect, the PNT approach is highly applicable to assessing ASEAN policy processes since they are significantly driven by the will and interests of the member states. That the underpinning of ASEAN is shaped by the norms, characteristics, and principles held by the member states, the assessment of policy processes and policy outcomes in ASEAN would have to be evaluated from the behavioural undertones of ASEAN member states and moving beyond the criticism of the degree of ASEAN institutionalisation.

PNT will clarify how we can conceive of ASEAN policy processes and outcomes. Making out not only the interplay and dynamic, especially between the role of actors and interests in ASEAN but offers a fresh perspective on evaluating policy outcomes – whether they are/were “successful” or “failed” outcomes. It also holds the key to answering concerns regarding the effectiveness of ASEAN in the short and long term since PNT provides a model of the structure of a policy process that can help policy actors to ‘better design and affect outcomes’ (Howlett, 2002). Here, the thesis refers to two essential concepts that will be key to mapping the applicability of PNT to ASEAN. They are the concepts of a policy universe or system and a policy subsystem.

First, the concept of a policy universe ‘can be thought of as an all-encompassing aggregation of all possible state, private and social actors at various levels (local, regional, national, international) working within the institutions that directly or indirectly affect a

specific policy area' (Howlett et al., 2017). The idea of a policy universe is a nuanced meaning of conceptualising the institutional arrangement of ASEAN. In driving the autonomy of ASEAN member states, a stubborn characteristic plagues the agenda and outcome of the organisation. It underscores how the institutional arrangement of ASEAN reflects the will of member states. In the context of ASEAN, the institutional arrangement goes beyond the notion of institutional design. At the same time, it includes the relationship and dynamic between ASEAN member states and the actors and stakeholders outside of ASEAN. The thesis wishes to conceive a policy universe within ASEAN's institutional arrangements.

With ASEAN coloured by its vulnerability and susceptibility to changes in the geopolitical landscape within the region shaped by great power, regional interests and transnational issues, the organisation's capacity and capability to handle a myriad of issues will be heavily assessed by the international society. ASEAN's relevance is subject to its performance. It implies that ASEAN's performance is often evaluated against the perceived relevance or importance of the organisation. One of the essential roles of ASEAN is to manage its centrality in regional geo-political arrangements.

ASEAN's centrality relates to how ASEAN is able to assert its shared norms and values as an organisation. The more ASEAN can assert itself, the better it can drive centrality in the networks it belongs to. Centrality provides another perspective of the notion of power, working against the traditional understanding of power. Here, a relevant concept relates to Michael Leifer's idea on diplomatic centrality, which ASEAN has been able to establish via the ARF, that highlights ASEAN's diplomatic role in brokering the ARF and leading it based on 'the Association's norms and practices made by consensus and without voting after careful and extensive consultation (Leifer, 1998).

Where ASEAN's centrality does not simply refer to its identity in the region, it stresses and signals the capacity, in terms of its influence and power, the organisation wields in the region. It would be apt to refer to how 'centrality is seen to indicate the social power of an actor based on how extensively it is connected to the entire network' (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). Hence, the thesis argues that if appropriately understood, ASEAN's

centrality is key to challenging the realists' perception that ASEAN is subjected and susceptible to great power/regional interests. For ASEAN to maintain its centrality in the clusters of networks, the organisation must mitigate and manage great power and/or regional interests that touch ASEAN's networks. To further make sense of the gravity of ASEAN's centrality to the organisation, the thesis turns to the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) to underscore how the relevance and the continued survival of the Association can be argued to be as critically connected to the *survival* of the Association's member states. From a RDT's perspective, which refers to the (regional) organisation as a 'critical resource' that members belonging to that regional organisation depend upon, and thus, understood as 'important resource providers' (Drees & Heugens, 2013). As such, the thesis believes that, to a large extent, driving ASEAN's centrality is an important task of the organisation. ASEAN's survival is dependent on how it engages with its cluster of networks to facilitate interdependencies and solidify its legitimacy (Drees & Heugens, 2013).

Here, the thesis finds that the act of driving ASEAN's centrality could be understood as a 'legitimacy seeking strategy' (Drees & Heugens, 2013). Since ASEAN's centrality is as important to the organisation as it is to the member states for survival reasons, the task of driving ASEAN's centrality within its networks and externally would fall into the hands of the member states. The thesis views ASEAN's centrality as an active goal of the Association, but that how it is driven and augmented by ASEAN's member states would depict member states' interest, or the extent of their egoism, which is often demonstrated through the 'exercise of leadership' in the cluster of networks the organisation has established and an expression of ASEAN's power in a constructivist sense (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). It supports the rationale of establishing the framework of NG to understand the functioning and institutional design of ASEAN, where the Association's goals are acknowledged without reducing them to purely member states' self-interest, mirrored as the organisation's interest. Understanding it becomes crucial to conceive of the dynamics and relationships in ASEAN as a policy universe. Following this, it will be necessary for the thesis to identify the management of ASEAN's centrality as the specific area of focus in ASEAN's policy universe.

Second, a policy subsystem refers to ‘the actors active in each sector or issue area’ and are ‘forms of networks which encompass the interrelationships existing between elements of the policy universe active in specific knowledge and political spaces’ (Howlett et al., 2017). It was first developed to illustrate the rigid cooperation between American government agencies, federal interest groups and the congressional committees dubbed as “iron triangles” (Howlett, 2002). Due to the iron-clad control over policy processes, the concept was initially perceived as undermining the principles of democracy as it captures the policy process to reflect the interests of the triangle members vis-a-vis those of the general public (Cater, 1964 and Lowi, 1969).

From a policy network approach, the thesis seeks to illustrate the networks with which ASEAN actively participates, allowing the appreciation of ASEAN’s structural position relative to other institutions and organisations. It informs how ASEAN approaches the management of its centrality and the maintenance of its own structural importance. ASEAN’s structural position can be seen as a dense web of networks made up of not only ASEAN-led institutions (ARF, APT, EAS) but APEC, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). New Zealand, for instance, is a dialogue partner, a member of the ARF, and a participating member of the EAS. Rather than institutional evolution, ASEAN ‘develops more ties and creates denser clusters of networks’ (Caballero-Anthony, 2014) to instil the organisation’s relevance by allowing itself to occupy a more central position in the cluster of networks. Founded in 1994, the ARF is an example of how ASEAN attempts to configure its relevance by probing itself as a significant “bridging player” by initiating and convening the regional forum. From major to small powers in the forum – a myriad of actors brought together – it is how ASEAN enforces its significance among those actors as a “bridging node” and being ‘the driver of, and a fulcrum for, other regional institutions in Asia’ (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). That ARF is able to attract the major powers to convene shows that the ASEAN-led institution is significantly perceived. The perspective allows us to consider how ASEAN becomes acquainted with different state actors (outside of ASEAN) through various policy networks. Some of these state actors are observed to engage in more than one policy network in which ASEAN partakes. In this way, these policy networks are akin to rigid subsystems closely associated with stable, routine, policymaking that tends



to advance the interests of subsystem members (Bernstein, 1955; Huntington, 1952). It reveals the approach in which ASEAN manoeuvre its relevance and legitimacy through the management of its perceived centrality via the “closed” policy network.

If there is an appreciation of how ASEAN ties its relevance to positioning and re-orientating its structural position as a bridge player among external state actors, ASEAN stands to be a link between major powers and small powers. This establishes its central position among the multitudes of networks it has found through various institutions with overlapping membership. Thus, the organisation is not as tactless and directionless as once assumed, albeit it lacks central institutions and legal mechanisms to enforce member states' compliance. By recognising ASEAN's goal to drive its centrality within its established networks, NG allows us to witness how ASEAN manages and “manipulates” its relevance in the international environment.

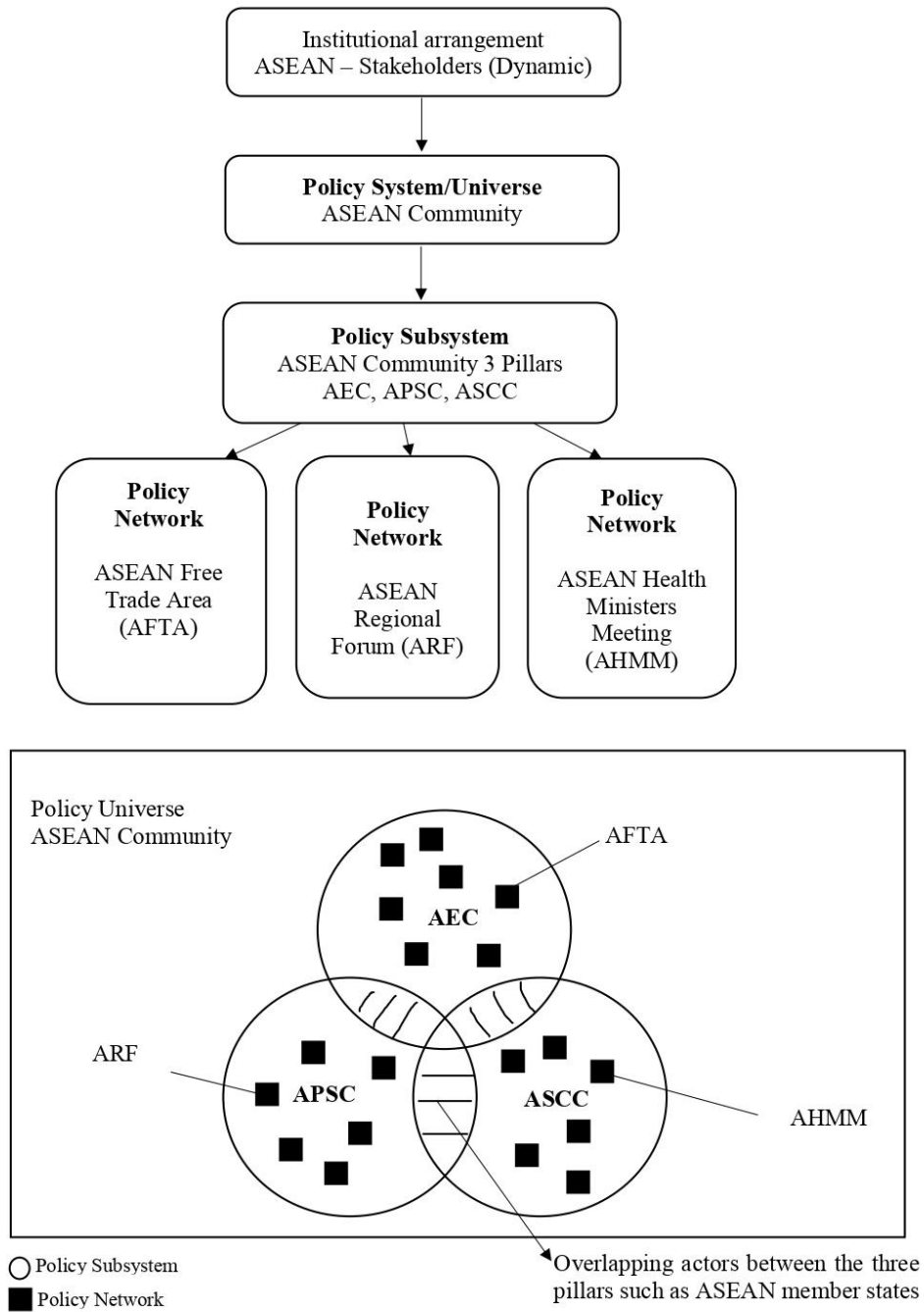
In utilising the policy network approach, the thesis hopes to illustrate how ASEAN approaches regionalism differently from the EU integration project, as ASEAN prioritises the building of strategic networks and partnerships (Elliot, 2011). In addition, the fact that ASEAN member states focus their efforts on driving those networks by holding the role of a bridge player, it shows that ASEAN member states *believe* there would be advantages to maintaining and driving its network arrangements (Elliot, 2011). Following the perspective, perhaps the tasks of regionalism and regional integration are subject to much fluidity, where the mark of success can be characterised and understood alternatively. Where ASEAN is not characterised by a structured hierarchy that accelerates formalising policy-making by commandeering consensus in issue areas that illuminate different standpoints, ASEAN seemingly less prominent vertical modes of governance coupled with ‘admittedly slow and often uneven trajectory of institutionalisation’ (Elliot, 2011) can suggest how state-centric the Association is. But it does not immediately point to ineffectiveness as an organisation.

From another perspective, a varying interest of ASEAN member states in different issue areas would determine the passivity one could witness within member states in moving or slowing those network arrangements. Here, the emphasis is placed on how ASEAN

recognises the issue areas pertinent to the region and its member states' interests. How ASEAN mitigates differences and pursues its centrality within networks is paramount to its relevance and survival. With the framework of network governance, the thesis is able to establish the central role of ASEAN member states in driving those network arrangements. It reconfirms that a comparison with the EU model is not necessarily a viable means of establishing the weaknesses or shortcomings of the Association.

In the thesis, however, “policy network” will be the basis of the analysis. This is because the research takes a specific interest in the ASEAN Community, where the three pillars (AEC, APSC and ASCC) that make up the ASEAN Community have various stakeholders. Each pillar has varying degrees of penetration into the policy-making process, depending upon the pillar of interest and the actors' bargaining ability. The thesis would like to conceptualise the three pillars of ASEAN, each as an individual policy subsystem with a distinct yet overlapping set of actors. For instance, ASEAN member states are common in all three policy subsystems. Under each pillar of the community, the thesis will conceptualise an agreement or a policy issue that falls under that pillar in the form of a policy network. The idea of a policy network presents ‘a group of various stakeholders (people) who are connected or are held together by common interests for certain policy problems’ (Poocharoen & Sovacool, 2012). For example, under the AEC, issue areas of AFTA and the ASEAN free trade agreements will be categorised as two policy networks under the Economic Community subsystem. Under the APSC, transnational crime and South China Sea (SCS) issue areas will be understood as respective policy networks of the Political-Security Community subsystem. Similarly, under the ASCC, issue areas such as transboundary health security and disaster management will be separate policy networks under the Socio Cultural Community subsystem. The diagram below presents an understanding of how ASEAN is conceived as a policy universe focusing on the selected case studies for the thesis.

**Network Governance and ASEAN**



**Figure 2.1** Network Governance and ASEAN

Recognising that member states in ASEAN are the primary agents that drive the organisation's activity, there is a need to account for the exceptional influence of ASEAN member states. It is especially so when the 'general pattern of ASEAN leadership' is practised through 'sectorial leadership' (Mohamed Pero, 2012). The thesis would like to reiterate the RDT, which was previously utilised to make sense of how ASEAN and its member states have common objectives about survival on their own terms. Thus, it is in the interest of the organisation and member states to drive ASEAN's centrality for reasons of legitimacy and survival. In retrospect, the organisation is viewed as a 'critical resource' by member states, and members belonging to that regional organisation would come to depend on the organisation itself (Drees & Heugens, 2013). Understanding the perspective would lead us to examine how member states would choose to drive the organisation's centrality. The thesis finds that demonstrating leadership in various issues is one such means. Here, it emphasises member states' active role in leading the organisation, albeit to some extent of egoism at play. Yet, it needs to be highlighted that egoism does not immediately imply that the organisation is reduced to a tool. The thesis hopes to establish an account that considers the interest of member states but does not conflate it with self-interest, which it believes disregards the organisation's growth and future.

The thesis finds that 'leadership is exhibited through issue area specifications' (Mohamed Pero, 2012). This is demonstrated in how 'Singapore concentrates on economic integration with its enormous initiatives introduced from time to time specifically since 1992 with the launching of the ASEAN Free Trade Area' and how 'the Philippines is often praised as the champion in promoting socio-cultural cooperation' (Mohamed Pero, 2012). These are clear examples of how leadership in ASEAN runs on 'issue area specifications' (Mohamed Pero, 2012). Furthermore, the thesis believes that 'issue area specifications' can be exceptionally portrayed by networks in that a network represents one issue area that the Association has established. Hence the multiplicity of networks representing a myriad of issue areas would make up NG, a representation of ASEAN.

The agenda of ASEAN can be highly interest-motivated, and policy implications are dependent upon the member states. Varying degrees of interest, considering how the more resourceful member states will be better able to drive their interest and substantiate specific policies, result in certain policy subsystems being driven, or dominated by particular member states. When we utilised the RDT to examine the relationship of member states, the thesis learns that there runs a risk where the more resourceful or stronger member states would wield more control as one that drives or have the resources to drive a particular policy process (Drees & Heugens, 2013). Given that ASEAN is a diverse organisation, with member states of varying material and economic power, it easily gives rise to a game of cooperation, where one group of states wield extensive control, and turns ASEAN into an unequal playing ground (Nienhüser, 2008). It shows how the policy universe of ASEAN is no doubt affected by a power imbalance, meaning that the policy-making process and the policy subsystem would be bounded by ‘functional relevance and structural embeddedness’ (Araral et al., 2015), which can be understood as how ASEAN member states perceive the importance and relevance of a specific policy issue, and the norms and principles upheld by member states at any time, respectively.

The thesis conceives of the policy-making process or exchange in ASEAN as policy networks by adopting a “policy network analysis” that understands ‘how relationships between actors involved in policy-making determine the outcomes of collective policy decisions’ (Araral et al., 2015). This is defined ‘as a set of public and private corporate actors linked by communication ties for exchanging information, expertise, trust, and other political resources’ (Araral et al., 2015) and sees the overarching framework of ASEAN as network governance. While ‘initially limited to economic governance in East Asia’, the concept of network governance has seen growing relevance in Asian studies (Jetschke, 2009). Still, it is rarely adopted as a heuristic tool or concept to understand ASEAN as a regional organisation. Following Jetschke’s utilisation of the concept of network governance to explain ASEAN light institutionalisation, the thesis takes on the ‘idiosyncratic theoretical status’ that Jetschke argues network governance has in the literature on ASEAN (Jetschke, 2009).

Central to the aim of the research is for ASEAN 1) to recognise its institutional structure as a model of network governance and 2) tap its strengths as network governance to better its performance. Therefore, it is essential to establish the importance of the organisation recognising itself as network governance and its positive prospects to regional organisations like ASEAN by elaborating on the characteristics of network governance.

Some scholars have proposed that ‘inter-organisational networks centralised around a primary coordinating agency – a network administrative organisation – produce better outcomes’ (Berry et al., 2004). Notably, scholars like Jordan and Schout argue that the “network administrative organisation” or “network manager” serves as a “secretary” whose role is to ensure higher levels of efficiency in decision-making by consolidating and circulating information. The network manager can also act as a coordinator in the network system, arranging and facilitating the interaction process within networks in such a way that interests are propagated and addressed in an ‘open, transparent and balanced manner (Jordan & Schout, 2006). In addition, Herranz lists four archetypes of the “network manager”: 1) reactive facilitator, 2) contingent coordinator, 3) active coordinator, and 4) hierarchical-based network administration. A reactive facilitator sees effective network governance as a “relatively passive stewardly facilitation of collective solutions”. At the same time, a contingent coordinator exerts some coordinating influence on networks, but the scope of managerial behaviour is limited and contingent upon network interests, resources, and opportunities” (Herranz, 2006). An active coordinator acts as a network ‘integrator’ who establishes communication channels and coordinates activities between network participants so they may share knowledge, align values and incentives, overcome cultural differences, and build trusting relationships. Herranz asserts that ‘network leadership requires honest brokering, stabilizing coordination, and structural management’ (Herranz, 2006).

These characteristics of network governance seem to reflect the role of the ASEAN Secretariat in terms of how the Secretariat manages and coordinates the activities of ASEAN, where the ASEAN Secretariat can be conceived as a “network manager”. ASEAN, as a regional organisation, aligns closely with the characteristics of an organisation that operates within networks with the establishment of the ASEAN

Secretariat at the centre of the initiation, coordination, and implementation of ASEAN activities (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). As such, it provides a compelling premise for the adoption of the framework of network governance to understand ASEAN.

To add, Kim's work on the "three-order network governance" envisions ASEAN's level of governance via a network model and the current phase ASEAN is at, thereby providing a systematic development path for ASEAN. Where the utilisation of a network model or approach placed further emphasis on the agency of member states and how they manage the organisation's resources and collaborate to achieve ASEAN's goals, the order of network governance helps to envision the current stage of ASEAN's governance and its further development (Kim, 2009). Currently, ASEAN stands at the second order of "network coordination", which is characterised by some degree of control or coordination (Kim, 2009). While ASEAN may not hold a formal bureaucratic structure due to the lack of a legally-binding mechanism, there exists a system of rule made up of shared norms, values, and principles and the presence of coordinated rules which member states follow as part of the organisation, thus resembling the second order of network configuration (Kim, 2009). In the case of ASEAN, while there are clear processes for the functioning of the (policy) networks and organisational structure, some challenges impede the network's performance, such as varying levels of interest of each member state in some issue areas. They include the non-executive role of the ASEAN Secretariat in implementing decisions and the lack of leadership at the member state and ASEAN levels to drive the networks due to the limits of the degree of control or coordination the Association holds. However, with a greater understanding of network governance, ASEAN can progress to the third order of "network self-regulation" where members interact attentively within their network, fostering a strong sense of commonality among members (within the same network) through the 'creation of mutual respect, reciprocity and communality that facilitate the flow of information and consensus, and acknowledge social credentials, and reinforce identity and recognition' (Kim, 2009). It allows the adoption of a more substantial coordination role for the ASEAN Secretariat to address the challenges impeding the performance of the various networks.

Yet, this would mean the desire to build on its leadership role. As such, the thesis conceptualised a fourth order of network configuration focusing on the actors' leadership, an order of “network self-leadership” that would free up ASEAN and ASEAN Secretariat resources to undertake other substantive roles. Understanding the fourth stage of network self-leadership seeks to showcase the degree or level of ASEAN’s governance through a network model and provide a means to underscore the agency member states wield in leading ASEAN. It aligns with how the adoption of NG seeks to further improve ASEAN as a network governance model and emphasises the potential for the ASEAN Secretariat - in Jordan and Schout’s term “network manager” - to develop further.

Finally, by incorporating the applicability of PNT to building the framework of network governance to understand ASEAN, there would also be a need to assess ASEAN's effectiveness in the long run. It can be evaluated by the stage or phase that ASEAN as a regional organisation is at, or should be at, to complement its community building measures. This would be fundamental to ASEAN’s acknowledgement and recognition of its network governance structure, which the thesis believes has been at ASEAN’s core since the beginning.

Most importantly, PNT and the idea of policy networks place heavier implications on the need to assess ASEAN policy-making processes. It can be done by understanding the interplay between the variables of the role of actors, interests, and ideas, resembling a “policy network”. It reflects the complexities of the preference and autonomy of the member states in ASEAN and provides an alternative understanding of hierarchy, which differs from the EU model.

All in all, light institutionalisation – the lack of central institutions and a legal framework in ASEAN (Koh et al., 2009) – is reasoned by two causal factors: the failure to encapsulate Europe’s effects on the organisation and the ‘commitment’ to ASEAN Way. The ASEAN Way can be understood as a strong regard for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member countries and the preferred choice for consensus in decision-making (Khong & Nesadurai, 2001). Simply put, ASEAN’s soft institutionalisation is understood as a compromise structure. It pinpoints the hesitation and refusal of ASEAN



towards a more formalised organisational structure, such as the EU, due to ASEAN's member states' position on their autonomy.

At ASEAN's core is a strong regard for the principle of non-interference, which impedes recommendations to make way for more formalisation in the organisation or imposing legally binding mechanisms. Moreover, ASEAN comprises member states with differential development levels; even if the coordination over specific policies receives unanimous consensus, the implementation rate will be inconsistent. Hence, pursuing rhetorical goals and accomplishments for ASEAN is insufficient for survival. The organisation's relevance is not placed on its ability to coordinate and implement but on how it continuously maintains and drives its centrality in the cluster of networks. Therefore, it is essential to adopt a framework that understands ASEAN's survival concerning its established relevance stemming from the centrality it drives and maintains through its networks. The framework needs to be aligned with ASEAN's core ultimately.

The thesis finds that since NG 'focuses on how networks can be managed to achieve certain network goals' (Poocharoen & Sovacool, 2012), it gives space to examine how ASEAN manages and drives its centrality in the web of networks without immediate reference to institutional structure. The framework of NG eliminates ASEAN as a passive organisation and allows the thesis to showcase ASEAN's survival contingent on the ability to extend its centrality.

Therefore, the rationale behind adopting an alternative framework to understand ASEAN is as follows:

- (1) Rejecting the notion of comparisons between ASEAN and the EU often concludes with ASEAN as an inefficient organisation.
- (2) Recognising that ASEAN is more than what realists, neo-realists, and ASEAN sceptics make of it. So often, they see ASEAN and its regional initiatives and institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as 'only as strong as the great power interests behind them' (Stubbs, 2019).

- (3) Understanding that the principle of non-interference is a constant feature (Khong & Nesadurai, 2001) in ASEAN and that the states in the region will not concede. Thus, it is an accepted norm of engagement in ASEAN rather than a characteristic or feature to be “worked on”.
- (4) Finally, it signals the need for another framework of NG that considers the norms both explicitly and tacitly expressed and even institutionalised in ASEAN. The thesis argues that this is central to ASEAN’s survival since its inauguration, despite the supposed “compromised” design of ASEAN sceptics who believe that this would be ASEAN’s downfall.

## **2.9 Non-State Actors (NSAs)**

The thesis presents the framework of NG to conceive of ASEAN in a fashion that demonstrates an alternative to hierarchy and how ASEAN member states consolidate the organisation’s legitimacy or perceived legitimacy through maintaining ASEAN's centrality. It also depicts an organisation whose policy universe is highly influenced by the role of ASEAN state actors. However, in striving toward building an ASEAN Community, ASEAN will need to recognise the significant role NSAs play. At this juncture, it is apt to refer to the ASEAN Charter, which expresses the goal ‘to promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building’ (Koh et al., 2009). Hence, there is a need for ASEAN to 1) recognise the role of NSAs, 2) acknowledge the potential NSAs to support ASEAN’s effectiveness better, and 3) be an esteemed partner moving forward, holding relevant technical knowledge in the various policy networks of ASEAN.

To establish how the involvement of NSAs may be understood, the thesis looks into the set of actors in a policy subsystem regulated by a set of belief systems (Araral et al., 2015). These belief systems could consist of ‘normative deep core beliefs, subsystem specific policy core beliefs, and narrow secondary beliefs’ (Araral et al., 2015). Most importantly, these belief systems ‘are used as heuristics to filter and interpret stimuli’ (Araral et al., 2015), which means that while they may be a biased system formed by actors’ upheld

norms, values and principles, they guide and shape the policy-making process. A key to diffusing the policy process of ASEAN to be less state-centric would be for 1) ASEAN member states to recognise the benefits that NSAs can bring to the policy-making process and 2) NSAs will need to socialise themselves with the belief system of the respective ASEAN Community policy subsystems. In other words, NSAs will need to show themselves to be relevant to the policy-making process by ASEAN member states. The idea of a belief system functioning as an overarching policy subsystem and hence the actor in that subsystem comes from the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), which the thesis finds will be a good supplement to the network governance framework as presented here. It is because this follows the underlying state-centric notion of ASEAN and discusses how the role of NSAs can be increased if they can adapt and learn ‘practices in line with regional normative contexts and interests’ (Qiao-Franco, 2022). It will better their chances of being included in the policy networks of ASEAN. The thesis believes that with the framework of NG, not only can ASEAN member states better understand the needs of ASEAN, but ASEAN can better rein in to ensure the stability of its organisation. NSAs also benefit by understanding better that the relevance of proposed policies in ASEAN ‘largely depends on its links to policy-shapers’ (Mohamed Pero, 2012); thus, it will be necessary for NSAs to understand the importance of the belief system affecting the policy process.

It should be noted, however, that ASEAN engagement with NSAs is not new; there have been numerous such interactions between ASEAN officials and NSAs ‘taking place on a rather ad hoc, informal basis, [as well as] many other forms of interactions carried out in a more institutionalised manner’ (Chandra et al., 2017). Here, the thesis would like to introduce the concept of an “ASEAN Security Community”, which was first conceived by Dr. Rizal Sukma, a member of the ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies, a non-state actor. It was featured at the 18<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Roundtable held in Kuala Lumpur (30 May to 2 June 2004) prior to the formation of the APSC (Kuah, 2004). In Dr. Sukma’s concept paper on ASC, he touched on “issues such as norm-setting, conflict resolution and prevention, and making the non-intervention principle flexible” as mentioned by Kuah. While ultimately the non-intervention principle was retained in the Bali Concord II due to its vitality in keeping ASEAN stable by avoiding alarming some

of the newer members (Kuah, 2004), this highlights some form of engagement ASEAN has with NSAs, including think tanks, albeit limited.

Yet, while there exist engagements between ASEAN and NSAs, ‘the relative effectiveness of such ASEAN-NSA engagements remains hazy’ (Chandra et al., 2017). The persistence of policymakers in keeping with the ASEAN Way has made it difficult for NSAs to enact a difference (Chandra et al., 2017). ASEAN should, however, still be acknowledged for being open to NSA, notably in the private sector, especially ‘engaging in mutually beneficial collaborative engagements who demonstrate responsible citizenship by supporting ASEAN’s core purposes and principles and its causes as reflected in the ASEAN Charter’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). The thesis turns to the example of the ASEAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI), that ‘serves as a platform in which the region’s private sector could channel their aspirations to relevant ASEAN decision-making bodies’ (Chandra et al., 2017). To help ‘intensify economic relations with Western industrialised countries’, the ASEAN-CCI ‘played a key role in introducing the implementation of the ASEAN Industrial Cooperation (AICO) scheme in the late 1970s and the formation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area in 1993 (Chandra et al., 2017). Yet, with growing economic ties in the region, the ASEAN-CCI saw their influence wane (Chandra et al., 2017). It is also important to recognise that ASEAN did not see the ASEAN-CCI as ‘a partner in policy formulation’ (Chandra et al., 2017); instead, it had hope for it ‘to drum up support for the Association’s economic policies amongst economic actors and deflect criticisms from groups that might be adversely affected by ASEAN Free Trade Area’ (Chandra et al., 2017). That the ASEAN-CCI had weak relations with ASEAN and its member states shows that ASEAN’s true interest did not lie in engaging with NSAs as a partner but only to exploit their technical expertise (Chandra et al., 2017).

The thesis noted that the ‘ASEAN Secretariat and its sectoral bodies have a total of 49 engagements with fifteen ASEAN+1 or ASEAN+3 Business Councils operating in ASEAN, 44 engagements with ASEAN Business Advisory Councils (ASEAN-BAC) and other ASEAN- indigenous Business Associations, 12 engagements with the Joint Business Councils (JBCs) and 10 engagements with other private sector entities’

(ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). The ASEAN-BAC, which replaced the ASEAN-CCI, is recognised by ASEAN as a leading NSA representing the business entities in the region. ASEAN-BAC was established in 2003 as a ‘result of an agreement between ASEAN leaders regarding the importance of a business representation organisation’ (Karim & Heryanto, 2022). While it holds an official status with ASEAN, Karim and Heryanto highlighted that the role of ASEAN-BAC in ASEAN’s regional integration is limited. However, some of the Council’s engagement at the regional and national fronts are noteworthy. First, ASEAN-BAC acts as an advisory body and has a role in the ASEAN policymaking process since it is ‘mandated to engage with the ASEAN Economic Ministers and leaders of ASEAN member states to report on the state of the business sector throughout the year’, meeting twice a year with the economic ministers and once with leaders of the ASEAN member states (Karim & Heryanto, 2022).

On the other hand, it also works with regional level government such as the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (ACCMSME) and cooperates with an international initiative called the Joint Business Councils (JBC) initiative, involving the members of more than 20 ASEAN+1 business councils and associations (Karim & Heryanto, 2022). As such, while the ASEAN-BAC practices mostly an advisory role with ASEAN, it is still a rather significant actor as it highlights ASEAN member states willingness to engage and even work with an NSA. Other NSAs include those from civil society organisations ‘often referred to as Track 3 or people-to-people diplomacy, are probably the most dynamic one amongst NSAs’ (Chandra et al., 2017).

While the modes of engagement between the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Sectoral Bodies with the private sector are mainly consultation, webinar and public dialogue, and workshop, the ASEAN Community, such as the AEC, recognises the role that the private sector plays in increasing accessibility to official information on the implementation of AEC, and enhancing the involvement of private sector for the benefit of ASEAN, and have underscored those roles in the AEC Blueprint 2025 to support increase engagement with the private sector (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). Some examples of ASEAN’s private sector engagement initiatives are the ASEAN Business Sentiment Study 2020/2021,

which ‘consisted of a survey across 1,115 ASEAN Indigenous Enterprises (IE), 106 key informant interviews with ASEAN business leaders, and 29 workshops with 238 representatives of ASEAN IE’ and ASEAN Access, ‘a one-stop business information gateway for international-oriented businesses to expand their market outreach in ASEAN and beyond’ which helps to promote intra-ASEAN trade by providing SMEs with trade and market information and linking them with the relevant service providers (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021).

The Advance Coalition Framework (ACF) shows the inevitability of a policy process being shaped by a belief system that perpetuates biased output. Moving forward, the role of NSAs is more critical than the ASEAN member states perceive at the current time in terms of how NSAs can play a role in keeping policy-making decisions nuanced and aligned with the ASEAN community by offering scientific and technical information important for policy subsystem to operate at an intricate level of understanding (Araral et al., 2015). Alongside the framework of NG, the thesis would like to elaborate on the idea of ‘an epistemic community as defined by Haas, [which] is a “network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” (Mohamed Pero, 2012). In this regard, the research and intellectual interpretation that underpins the conceptualisation of regional cooperation is treated as expert input from an epistemic community (Ruland, 2002) or a unilateral diffusion of concepts into a policy debate. For example, the members of the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), a network of think tanks, debate policies and issues as individuals who come together at forums to brainstorm and contribute ideas that transcend the ASEAN member states. This idea of an epistemic community ‘complements first track diplomacy’ which is carried out by the governments of ASEAN+3 countries since it involves the progress of East Asian cooperation (Sinaga et al., 2013). Therefore, acknowledging the contributions of these epistemic communities both in ASEAN and East Asia cooperation driven by ASEAN could augur well for the future development, functioning and trajectory of ASEAN's regionalism.

## 2.10 Criteria of Policy Outcomes

Finally, a need arises to assess how effective implementation can be understood or how policy outcomes can be conceived. There are two policy implementation theories that the thesis believes will help understand how “successful” implementation can be recognised. First, the Policy Implementation Process Model by van Meter and van Horn holds that two key variables are pertinent before attempting to implement policies. First, standards and objectives must be established to clarify further requirements for evaluating performance. However, not all cases feature clearly delineated objectives. Some have intentionally remained ambiguous to assure a favourable response by actors tasked to implement the policy at other levels of the organisation. Second, resources such as funds or other incentives are required to promote the effective implementation of policy. It means that the parameters set before the implementation of policies are the criteria that define the “success” or failure” of the implementation. Yet often, when we find these parameters ambiguously defined, or in the context of a regional organisation like ASEAN, parameters can be difficult to establish because they can be understood differently by different audiences (ASEAN stakeholders versus international audiences). For example, in the case of economic barriers or tariffs, results expected from economic agreements are quantifiable, while outcomes from a territorial or political issue are tricky to conclude. Thus, policy outcomes are not as straightforward as a stamp of “success” or “failure”.

On the other hand, the communications model of intergovernmental policy implementation proposed by Goggin et al. theorises state implementation as a dependent outcome, with three other independent variables defining the ultimate implementation state. Goggin et al. argue that the ‘first element is the process or iterations of state choices and initiatives that build up to establishing a national mandate. Second, the model incorporates outputs such as the goals fulfilled and outcomes, e.g., substantive outcomes’ (Goggin, 1990). Third, it incorporates the implementation style as ‘a function of behaviour having to do with both the timing of implementation and the nature and direction of change in the program objectives and the tools and instruments adopted to achieve them’ (Goggin, 1990). It, in turn, shows how the implementation process is constrained by the directives applied by the actors involved.

While the thesis holds that the concept of policy implementation theories can be influential in guiding the assessment of the specific pillars under the threshold of the ASEAN Community, in the end, a nuanced, all-around means of understanding the policy outcomes of ASEAN can adopt Howlett's understanding of a policy subsystem (Howlett, 2002). Where an "open subsystem" is one that is permeable by actors or stakeholders outside the institutional members as 'associated with dynamic and innovative policy outcomes' (Howlett, 2002), while a "closed subsystem", better understood in the context of ASEAN, is highly state-centric and impermeable by outside actors or stakeholders, and to be producing status quo orientated policy outcomes (Howlett, 2002). It means that if ASEAN finds its current performance or policy outcomes in certain pillars of the ASEAN Community to be unsatisfactory, there will be a need for ASEAN itself to reconsider the permeability of its policy subsystem; if not, there will not be any significant developments.

As such, the thesis finds the framework of NG to be a pathway for ASEAN to leverage better and understand its own organisation, as well as to utilise it as a framework for international audiences unfamiliar with the context of ASEAN to perceive and understand ASEAN's actions and performance.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

In establishing an alternative framework of network governance (NG) to understand better the functioning and performance (non-performance) of ASEAN, it will be essential to focus on the framework's applicability by selecting appropriate variables. In this chapter, methods of research, including the collection and utilisation of primary and secondary data to substantiate the NG framework, will be discussed. In addition, the framework will be used to investigate the policymaking process, as discussed in the literature review. Finally, views expressed by scholars about the various pillars of the ASEAN Community will be studied to understand ASEAN and its performance better, as well as its member states' motivations and objectives.

#### **3.1 Qualitative Research Methodology**

The thesis utilised a qualitative research methodology, selecting three respective case studies from individual pillars of the ASEAN Community and a qualitative content analysis of various secondary data. In addition, semi-structured interviews and surveys were conducted to support the secondary data analysis. By questioning how realists, neo-realists and western-centric individuals assess ASEAN's achievements and shortfalls, the thesis arrived at the motivations of this research to present an alternative framework of NG that takes into account the principles and norms that ASEAN upholds, provides a nuanced perspective of ASEAN's performance, and establish the rationale behind adopting the framework of NG in ASEAN.

#### **3.2 Case Studies Selection and Research**

The case study research method is often utilised for the purpose of contributing to our knowledge of the individual, group, organisational, social, political, and related phenomena, and arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin,

2014). Additionally, the case study research method offers a linear but iterative process that allows the researcher to reflect and evaluate the type of information the study requires to support the aim of the thesis.

Since the research focused on developing another framework to understand the underpinnings of ASEAN, including examining the value and potential of NSAs to ASEAN, it will be necessary for the case studies selected to contain relevant components for cross-examination or to emphasise certain issue areas. It means the research would require a systematic planning process (to select case studies) and a method flexible enough to reflect on various phases of consideration. The consideration is as follows: to plan, design, prepare, collect, analyse, and finally share the findings from the selected case studies. As such, adopting an iterative process facilitates refinement throughout the research.

Cognisant of the above, three case studies were identified within the ASEAN Community, whose organisational structure is shown in the figure below:



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## Organisational Structure of ASEAN Post ASEAN Charter

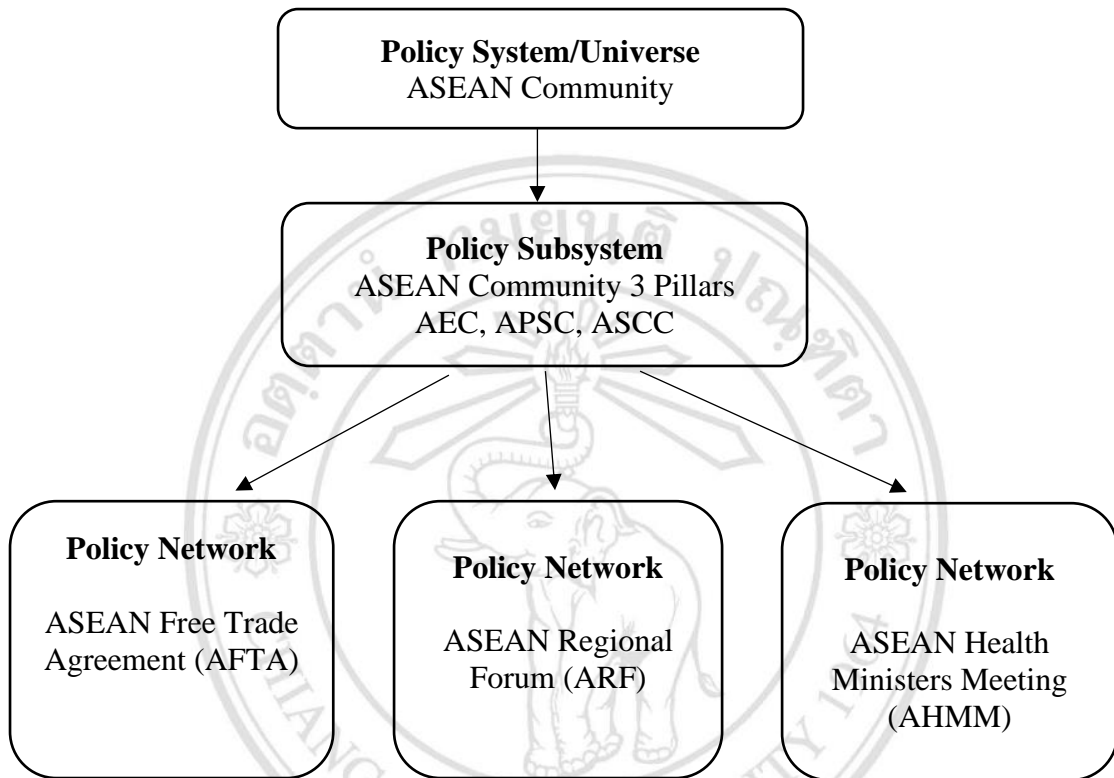
ASEAN's Basic Structure		
ASEAN Summit		
ASEAN Coordinating Council		
ASEAN Community Councils		
<i>Political-Security Council</i>	<i>Economic Council</i>	<i>Socio-Cultural Council</i>
ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM)	ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting (AEM)	ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI)
Commission on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANWFZ)	ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) Council	ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA)
ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM)	ASEAN Investment Area (AIA) Council	ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASED)
ASEAN Law Ministers Meeting (ALAWMM)	ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting (AFMM)	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM)
ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC)	ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF)	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME)
ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)	ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting (AMEM)	Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP)
	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Minerals (AMMin)	ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM)
	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology (AMMST)	ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM)
	ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting (TELMIN)	ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE)
	ASEAN Transport Ministers Meeting (ATM)	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD)
	Meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers (M-ATM)	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY)
	ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC)	ASEAN Conference on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM)
ASEAN Secretary-General		
Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN		
ASEAN National Secretariats		

**Figure 3.1** Organisational Structure of ASEAN Post ASEAN Charter  
(Source: Weatherbee, 2009)

The thesis analysed one distinct policy network based on an issue area from each pillar of the Community pillars. The case studies are as follows: the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), and the ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) in the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community (ASCC).

The literature review established that each pillar of the ASEAN Community is understood as a policy subsystem, where the AEC is referred to as the "ASEAN Economic Policy Subsystem". It utilises the work of Howlett et al. where a policy subsystem is defined as 'forms of social networks which encompass the interrelationships existing between elements of the policy universe active in specific knowledge and political spaces' (Howlett et al., 2017). The case study research method will enable examination and comparisons of the characteristics and dynamics of policy networks in each ASEAN

policy subsystem, which helps explain and understand the varying performances in the ASEAN Community. The following figure illustrates the various policy networks selected as the case studies for each policy subsystem:



**Figure 1.2** Policy Universe of ASEAN

The thesis aims to present an alternative framework of NG that engages with the principles and norms of ASEAN without purely attaching realist, materialistic or western conceptions to its performance. Thus, it is critical to identify how the Association can be assessed using the NG framework that would result in a nuanced perspective. The case studies were carefully chosen to show the interplay of principles and norms of ASEAN alongside the goals of each ASEAN Policy Subsystem in a policy network setting. They contain a rich history of ASEAN and tackle strategic and critical issues plaguing the ASEAN Community.

It is not to dismiss those policy networks not selected for the research. Instead, due to time constraints, data collection and analysis, and dissertation length, it will be necessary for the thesis to present case studies that approach the research questions more efficiently and beneficially. In this respect, the number of case studies to be adopted may result in a lack of variations. However, it would still provide a concise analysis of the relevant ASEAN policy subsystems. After all, the primary intent is to explain (Yin, 2014) the performance of each ASEAN policy subsystem, and of ASEAN itself, through the lens of (policy) networks and the NG framework.

### **3.3 The Framework of Data Analysis**

In this section, the rationale behind how the case studies will be examined in Chapter 4 will be explained. In utilising the NG framework and the concept of policy networks to understand ASEAN, the thesis intends to investigate each ASEAN policy subsystem by identifying where and which policy networks are well-established or work-in-progress. By establishing the nature and dynamics of these policy networks, the level of participation and trust that ASEAN member states or other stakeholders have within the policy network can be understood more fully. In addition, it provides insights into the challenges or obstacles that hinder the work of that policy network.

Contrary to establishing performance by noting idle or dissatisfactory outcomes in the policy networks in ASEAN, the research analyses them from the interplay among actors, the norms and values embedded in the networks, and the challenges arising from the policy subsystem or the community. An analysis of ASEAN's performance in this way would better reflect the underpinnings of ASEAN and illustrate a policy process that captures actors' participation in various phases, such as decision-making, implementation or evaluation. Moreover, it would offer insights into how the performance of ASEAN can be alternatively conceived, especially through a policy network approach.

The thesis recognises that the performance of ASEAN is a complex issue and one often convoluted by the notion of success as influenced by the performance of the EU. In addition, it is pertinent that the underpinnings of ASEAN are understood and considered

when reflecting upon its governance and structure. In this way, establishing another framework to understand ASEAN seeks to engage with the principles, norms and values embedded in the Association and any implications on its governance. By employing the NG framework, the research aims of assessing ASEAN's governance and performance with its inherent limitations can be explained and justified.

In establishing the performance of ASEAN, the thesis used the notion of centrality and how the selected policy network drives it. As documented in the literature review, ASEAN's centrality is key to understanding how ASEAN establishes its pertinence and power within the international system. While power is commonly understood from a materialistic or realist perspective, the constructivist notion of power holds vast potential for a regional organisation like ASEAN, whose identity is ubiquitous, with norms gradually spanning to its partners. By highlighting the constructivist notion of power, the thesis uses the concept of social power to exemplify the importance of consolidating the "node-to-node" relationship and the reason why ASEAN desires to be the fulcrum or driver of a policy network. Here, the concept of centrality becomes relevant to how ASEAN asserts its shared norms and values as an organisation. ASEAN's centrality refers to the capacity of the influence and power the organisation wields in the region. Following the focus of the research, "centrality" is understood to indicate the social power of an actor based on how extensively it is connected to its own social networks (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). Therefore, the framework of data analysis utilised will follow that of identifying the role of ASEAN first and foremost, and as mentioned, it is mainly connected to the pursuit of ASEAN's centrality and regional resilience. By showing that the more ASEAN can assert its centrality within its own social networks, the better it can drive its centrality and maintain relevance in the international system. Through the case studies chosen, the performance of ASEAN can be more closely examined based on its goals and objectives rather than how Association is perceived externally. Hence, the constructivist concept of power is pertinent to the Association's survival and an important component of the thesis.

After establishing the role of ASEAN in the chosen case studies (respective policy networks), an analysis of the performance of the policy network will be conducted by tracking progress through the policymaking progress. Howlett's understanding of closed or opened policy networks will be key to deriving that policy network's current and future performance and its respective policy subsystems. It showcases the value of NG when adopted to view ASEAN's organisational structure and how it highlights the potential contribution of NSA and even the state's role in facilitating better performance in ASEAN. This makes up the data analysis framework and how it supports the provision of insights to ASEAN as NG.

### **3.4 ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA)**

The AEC or ASEAN Economic Policy Subsystem (AEPS) embodies the goal of economic integration. To examine the performance of AEPS, I have selected the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) as a representative case study. Created in 1992 through the signing of the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme for AFTA (CEPT-AFTA), AFTA is a milestone for ASEAN. The CEPT scheme is a 'cooperative arrangement among ASEAN Member States that would reduce intra- regional tariffs and remove non-tariff barriers over a 15-year period that commenced since January 1993' (Questions and Answers on the CEPT, n.d.). The objective of the AFTA lies in increasing ASEAN's competitive edge as a production base geared for the world market (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). In addition, AFTA aims to liberalise trade in the region via the elimination of intra-regional tariffs and non-tariff barriers (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). It covers the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) and the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA). The AFTA Council comprising the ASEAN Economic Ministers, drive the trade liberalisation and facilitation efforts, supported by the AFTA Unit in the ASEAN Secretariat. With its long and substantive history, AFTA is a significant policy network of AEPS.

Before the AFTA, there were initiatives and plans targeted at economic growth, such as the Industrial Projects Plan (1976), Preferential Trading Agreement (PTA-1977), Industrial Complementation Scheme (1981), Industrial Joint-Ventures Scheme (1983) and enhanced PTA (1987). However, in comparison, the AFTA is a more ambitious economic initiative. ASEAN member states first agreed upon a PTA in 1977 due to the concern about economic development gap and felt that it was too early to participate in the global economy (Pangetsu, 2009). Subsequent pressures brought by the newly developed trading blocs of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the EU made ASEAN reconsider trade liberalisation and the shift from import substitution strategies as they were concerned about their exports to these larger markets (Pangetsu, 2009). Alongside the establishment of the AFTA in 1992, signalling ASEAN leaders' desire to take trade liberalisation efforts to a higher level, Pangetsu also indicated that the Association concluded the supplementary ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) in 1995, and the ASEAN economic ministers established the ASEAN Investment Area (AIA) in 1998. Here, it is clear that AFTA, AIA and AFAS acted as building blocks for AEC and ASEAN FTAs and later the initiation of the RCEP at the 2011 ASEAN Summit in Bali. It exemplified how member states' view of trade liberalisation has to do with external pressures and the need to drive and maintain ASEAN resilience and centrality as a bloc in Southeast and East Asia.

AEPS is generally a policy subsystem that witnesses ASEAN member states' continued interest and attention, which is why ASEAN is often identified as an organisation that supports economic integration but struggles with political integration. Yet, where AEPS sees success, it is attributed to ASEAN member states' interest in economic gains. While acknowledging the member states' interest, actionable outcomes in AEPS do not simply centre on realist and western-realist notions of states' participation for economic gains. Therefore, it will be essential to understand how the underpinnings of ASEAN promote the pursuit of economic goals in AEPS. Since AFTA boasts a substantive history, ASEAN's principles, values, and norms would be embedded in it. It makes AFTA an apt case study as the analysis of the network's performance will show the interplay between the underpinnings of ASEAN and the member states' attitude(s) and why the particular policy subsystem may be more susceptible to the involvement of NSAs.



In utilising an alternative NG framework, the thesis differs from the approach of measuring the performance of AEPS by traditional indicators of trade integration' such as intra-regional trade (Menon, 2021). Instead, the lens of the (policy) network and the framework of NG shows that AFTA has brought the region closer through economic ties. ASEAN member states can be recognised for playing an active role in establishing the AFTA policy network. AFTA strengthened ASEAN's centrality in the economic sphere and led to the development of a network of bilateral FTAs between ASEAN and its partners, such as China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. It also plugs ASEAN into the multilateral trading system governed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

### **3.5 Case Study: ASEAN Regional Forum: Non Traditional Security Issue - Transnational Crime**

In APSC, or the ASEAN Political Security Policy Subsystem (APSS), ARF is selected as the case study for analysis under the framework of NG since it contains policy networks that depict the nature, characteristics, and reservations (of ASEAN member states) often found in the subsystem. The APSS finds its pursuit met with the struggle of finding common ground among ASEAN member states. The performance of APSS has been seen as limited, essentially restricted by ASEAN's principle of non-interference safeguarding member states' national sovereignty.

#### **3.5.1 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**

The establishment of the ARF was agreed upon at the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post Ministerial Conference held in Singapore on 23-25 July 1993. The inaugural meeting of the ARF was held in Bangkok on 25 July 1994. The objectives of ARF are outlined in the First ARF Chairman's Statement issued at the meeting. It aims to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concerns and make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). The participants of ARF are the ASEAN member states and Australia, Bangladesh, Canada,

China, India, the EU, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, and the US, represented by their foreign ministers. It means that the social network of ARF is vast and strategically indicates a form of success where an ASEAN-led initiative enjoys such diversified participation. Furthermore, the case study of ARF helps to understand the role of ASEAN in maintaining and driving its centrality and strategic interests within and outside Southeast Asia.

Next, recognising that ARF is a 'venue for multilateral and bilateral dialogue and consultations and the establishment of effective principles for dialogue and cooperation' (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.), a myriad of political and security issues is discussed. For this reason, the thesis chose to pursue an analysis of the policy network of ARF by examining an area under its purview. I find the issue area of non-traditional security is apt as a case study, considering how non-traditional security has been increasingly securitised over the years and 'rightly recognised by the ASEAN states' to be of concern to national security (Rolls, 2010). In addition, with the scope and range of non-traditional security issues, ASEAN member states understand that it is 'beyond the capacity of any individual state to respond to' (Rolls, 2010), and as such, would require collective action from ASEAN member states, local authorities, and NSAs. It allows for the examining the dynamics, willingness, and extent (of ASEAN member states) to engage NSAs in the political and security community process.

### **3.6 Case Study: ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting: Transboundary Health Security – COVID-19 Pandemic**

There are many policy networks in the ASEAN Socio Cultural Policy Subsystem (ASCS), such as the transboundary haze issue, natural disasters issue-areas etc. Notably, ASEAN significantly supported disaster management and humanitarian assistance during Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008. As an organisation that prides itself on non-interference, ASEAN convinced the Myanmar government to cooperate with the international community to mitigate the impact of the natural disaster. ASEAN established the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force (AHTF) consisting of twenty-two members: two from the

ASEAN Secretariat, including the ASEAN Secretary-General as chair, and two officials (one senior diplomat and one technical expert) from each of the ten ASEAN countries to supervise and advise the Yangon-based Tripartite Core Group (TCG) making up ASEAN, the Myanmar government and the UN (Myanmar, n.d.). The Cyclone Nargis policy network highlights ASEAN's regional capacity to provide humanitarian assistance and lead in building relationships with NGOs and the UN in the face of a crisis.

While these are notable policy networks, the ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) case study on transboundary health security – COVID-19 pandemic was chosen instead due to the ongoing attention, relevance, and coordinated efforts at the regional scale to mitigate the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. It would investigate and analyse the policy network of the AHMM, an *ongoing* effort and one highly crucial to the health, safety, and well-being of the ASEAN Community. Given the volatile nature of the pandemic, the study of the policy network offers insight into the adaptability of ASEAN and its member states and how their interest reinforces performance. It supports the view that greater interdependence between member states in a policy network can be a strong force towards (actionable) performance.

### 3.6.1 ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM)

The AHMM held its first meeting in 1980. It is represented by the Health Ministers of the ten countries of ASEAN and meets biennially to set the direction for regional health cooperation and chart the future course of the ASEAN health sector. It guides the overall implementation of the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda (APHDA), which encapsulates the shared goals, strategies, priorities and programmes of the health sector between 2021-2025 comprising 4 clusters on promoting a healthy lifestyle, responding to all hazards and emerging threats, strengthening the health system and access to care, and ensuring food safety (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.-f). According to the Joint Statement of the 15th ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting issued on 15 May 2022, the current focus of the AHMM is building a regional health system that is resilient and accelerating COVID-19 recovery by preparing, detecting, preventing public health emergencies; enhancing mitigation measures to address current and future public health emergencies;

strengthening access to vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics; supporting vaccine security and self-reliance; and exploring public-private partnership network on pharmaceutical products and other medical supplies to enhance manufacturing capacity and sufficiency.

In overcoming the effects of COVID-19, ASEAN recognises that addressing the crisis requires coordinated actions within the region and cooperation with its partners (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). Given this, the analysis of the particular policy network would depict how ASEAN is involved within and outside the region in the efforts against the pandemic. In addition, given that the impact of COVID-19 is multidimensional and expansive, we can examine how ASEAN works with other stakeholders and groups, such as the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies (ACCWG-PHE) and NSAs from the business sector. It provides information about medical advances and best practices on pandemic issues (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). In this regard, analysing the AHMM network through the NG framework and the lens of a policy network helps to understand why ASEAN member states could work alongside NSAs, thereby allowing for more active participation and involvement of NSAs, as compared to those policy networks in the APSC subsystem.

### **3.7 Key Instruments**

The research proposed several instruments to assess ASEAN as NG and investigate the organisation through the NG lens. However, to determine and establish that an alternative NG framework can be utilised to evaluate ASEAN, it would be essential to examine (1) the degree of institutionalisation in ASEAN and (2) the type of participation of stakeholders in an issue area by studying the interplay between the will/interests of member states (in that issue-area) and dynamics of ASEAN member states from both primary and secondary data. In addition, the thesis seeks to maintain an account of ASEAN that reflects the precedence of states and their autonomy by assessing how ASEAN's norms and principles can be a limiting factor in specific issue areas. In this respect, the norms and principles of ASEAN are regarded as nuanced traits of the Association that can affect the type of participation of (ASEAN) stakeholders.

After identifying the reasons and establishing NG as another framework for ASEAN, there is a need to pinpoint the "unit" of analysis and how NG makes sense of ASEAN's Community. For example, it may be understood by examining types of stakeholder participation and where the idea of networks, and thereafter social and policy networks, become central to understanding participation in various issue areas. In addition, it would allow for an in-depth examination of the relationship and dynamics between stakeholders in an issue area.

This leads to the investigation of the organisation through the NG lens. In this context, the research proposes assessing the variables of (1) the will or interest of member states, (2) patterned interactions, and (3) the exchange of information to examine the selected case studies in the research. These are important to understanding the functioning of ASEAN, questions about its performance, and finally, the involvement of NSAs, which the research believes to be a significant proposal for ASEAN to consider and recognise as the organisation strives towards building a people-oriented Association (Koh et al., 2009).

### **3.8 Primary Data Analysis**

Semi-structured interviews and surveys were conducted and formed part of the primary data source for the research. The discussions focused primarily on the state actors, while the surveys separately covered the sentiments of wide-ranging NSAs and their involvement in the three communities of ASEAN. They were conducted to learn about the perceptions of ASEAN and the role of NSAs. The interviews and surveys assisted in a greater understanding of ASEAN. They provided a platform for the research to improve knowledge of the relevance of NG and policy networks to ASEAN and the role that NSAs may wield in the Association.

### **3.9 Semi-Structured Interviews**

#### **3.9.1 Aim of the Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to determine how interviewees view ASEAN as an institution and its processes. The interviews serve as a form of primary data to provide additional support to the research's findings. The researcher aimed to understand how ASEAN's organisational structure is conceived and if that structure is compatible with the NG framework, then subsequently, their views of policy networks within ASEAN. The researcher also finds that understanding the perceptions of individual interviewees could aid in establishing the relevance of NG and policy networks in ASEAN, thereby serving as a form of primary data.

#### **3.9.2 Choice of Interviewees**

As noted, the interviews aimed to inquire about ASEAN's perceptions and the relevance of NG to the Association. As such, the researcher required the interviewees to be well-acquainted with the workings of ASEAN and the Association itself. The questions of NG relevance, the adoption of NG in ASEAN, and what NG can offer were relevant, as the researcher had introduced and established in the literature review. Furthermore, it required interviewees to have deep knowledge and years of experience working or studying the culture of ASEAN. Hence, interview subjects were selected purposefully: 1) current and former ASEAN secretariat officials, 2) ASEAN member states senior officials, and 3) NSAs from think tanks, business councils, and academia. In understanding the diverse nature of ASEAN in terms of ethnic and cultural differences and the differential development levels of each member state, the researcher could select ten state actors for the interviews, each state actor representing the respective ASEAN member state. However, due to the unavailability of some state actors, the researcher could only interview seven of the ten member states. Interviewing most ASEAN member states covering the more and less developed countries ensured that the interview findings were not lopsided or biased toward a particular group. Besides, interviewing the key ASEAN

secretariat officials from the three communities that are also state actors in terms of categorisation helped provide an objective perspective of these state actors.

By conducting semi-structured interviews primarily with state actors, the researcher understood how each group perceived ASEAN regarding its functions, processes, and organisation and then could compare their perceptions. As the research advances an alternative NG framework to reflect the underpinnings of ASEAN better, another vital component is underscoring the potential NSAs hold and the advantage they may provide to ASEAN if the policy process of the Association is more open or inclusive. Therefore, the researcher needed to understand how state and non-state actors regard the role of NSAs in ASEAN. This facilitated the subsequent qualitative analysis of the extent to which NSAs play a transformative role – inviting questions on how the NSAs can better align themselves with ASEAN through socialisation with the principles and norms of ASEAN and for member states to see NSAs' potential.

Twenty-three interviews were conducted, primarily comprising State Actors and a selected few NSAs, to compare and contrast the findings from the qualitative interviews (See Appendix 1 for the interviews conducted). All interviews were voluntary, and interviewees were asked to sign an ethical form before the interviews (see Appendix 2: Sample Ethical Form). Most interviewees agreed that the thesis could quote them upon seeking permission, which was accordingly done. However, a few interviewees requested that their interviews not be recorded or included as part of the thesis submission.

### 3.9.3 Preparation and Conduct of Interviews

A standard email was sent to all interviewees to enquire whether they would participate in the interviews. Only after the interviewees agree to be interviewed could the scheduling of interviews take place. Due to the COVID-19 situation, interviews were done by video conferencing through Zoom. Before the interviews, an information sheet and questionnaire were emailed to assist in their preparation for the interviews. The information sheet detailed the purpose of the research, the estimated duration of an interview, and the importance of privacy and confidentiality.

In preparing the semi-structured interview questionnaire, the researcher ensured that interviewees would have as much autonomy as the interviewer in raising concerns or relevant enquiries throughout the process. Towards the end of the interview, the researcher planned to leave sufficient room for the interviewees to add any additional points. The questionnaire detailed the questions to be asked in the interview (see Appendix 3: Sample Questionnaire for Semi-Structured Interviews).

Before the interviews, permission was sought from the interviewees to sign an ethical form that permits video or audio recording. The recording facilitated the data collection and subsequent transcript preparation for analysis upon the interviewees approving the transcript.

During the interviews, an overview of the study and research questions was provided, putting into perspective what the interview hoped to explore in line with the research's aim to understand the role of NSAs in ASEAN's regional integration activities and possibly strengthen ASEAN's effectiveness. The research questions were also orally explained to the interviewees. A definition of NSAs based on the ASEAN Charter was provided to ensure they were on the same page as the researcher in understanding the definition of NSAs and the context used. The ASEAN Charter clarified that NSAs in ASEAN refer to business organisations, think tanks, academic institutions, accredited civil society organisations, and other non-governmental entities associated with ASEAN. The interviews opted to ask the interviewees if there were other non-state actors they wished to recommend for the research. The reasons were to ensure that the interviewees were comfortable with the definition and could recommend those NSAs the study might not have included. Some interviewees directed the researcher to interview other NSAs in the three communities with which the study was unfamiliar.

#### 3.9.4 Reliability and Validity of the Research

Reliability and validity are important components that define the quality of the research. Reliability is concerned with the consistency of the methodological process and addresses the consistency and clarity associated with the actual conduct of the research (Rose &



Johnson, 2020). In particular, concerns may arise about the reliability of the data due to the researcher's former position in the ASEAN secretariat. However, it should be elaborated that a substantial number of years have passed since the researcher was with the ASEAN secretariat. Many of the interviewees the researcher had known previously held even more senior positions today (at the time of writing). Therefore, interviews were conducted on equal grounds, where any prior relationships only served to improve rapport during the interview. All interviewees were asked all the questions in the interview questionnaire. This consistent documentation helped to enhance the reliability of the thesis, demonstrating the 'systematised nature' of the semi-structured interviews conducted (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Due to the requirement by the researcher for interviewees who are well-affiliated with ASEAN, as mentioned earlier, in this case, the researcher's prior knowledge of individuals working in ASEAN-affiliated organisations helped to locate appropriate interview subjects affiliated with ASEAN or with working knowledge of ASEAN. Recordings and transcripts of the interviews were also taken with the permission of the interviewees to 'inspect for possible mistakes' to ensure consistency. Additionally, the use of a qualitative software program, Nvivo (see Chapter 3.10 Data Collection), ensures data collection can become more dependable information through refining and checks of consistency (Thyer, 2010).

Validity refers to the accuracy of the research findings (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Since there are multiple specified types of validity, it would be apt to identify at least two for the thesis. Trustworthiness in data collection can be sought by making use of triangulation and in the thesis, data triangulation involving the use of multiple data collection methods was exercised (Thyer, 2010). The researcher conducted primary data analysis via semi-structured interviews and surveys, alongside secondary data analysis, supported by qualitative content analysis of secondary data sources (see Chapter 3.13 Secondary Data Analysis). They helped to ensure information collected for the thesis is convergent which increases the validity of the researcher's observations and study conclusions (Thyer, 2010).

### 3.9.5 Researcher's Notes

A fresh perspective related to NSAs was gained after conducting the interviews and assessing the interview findings. While not influencing the results of the research directly, the observations made allowed the researcher to re-evaluate the role of non-state actors in ASEAN. In this connection, by observing the state actors' attitudes and perceptions of non-state actors, the researcher understood their reservations about non-state actors. Again, by observing the reactions of the state actors involved in the regional developments pre-and-post the ASEAN Charter, the researcher was able to assess a change of attitude in both state and non-state actors towards each other. Thus, in a way, it became a mapping of what was theoretically suggested and argued by scholars and research presented in the literature review. The researcher's observations opened additional dimensions of consideration for the study and lent strong support to secondary data analysis.

### 3.10 Data Collection

In the research, otter.ai software was utilised to transcribe the interviews via Zoom. The researcher noted about 75% accuracy in transcribing, as some ASEAN terms used proved to be a challenge for the software. Another issue was the difficulty faced by the software regarding Asian pronunciation. Due to this limitation, the researcher had to review and correct each transcript to ensure it matched what each interviewee had expressed in their interview. Furthermore, each transcript was sent to the individual subjects for approval after completing the transcripts. The researcher found it paramount that interviewees take ownership of what they had expressed about ASEAN as an organisation. Amendments were made as appropriate based on inputs and feedback from the interviewees until they were satisfied. All interviewees had to sign their approval of the transcripts before the researcher could use them.

Additionally, Nvivo was utilised to codify all interviews based on keywords and phrases. Individually created "codes" under the headings and sub-headings of relevant keywords and phrases related to the research, making accessing information more convenient and

user-friendly. Nvivo was used to "store" information and as a tool for analysis. For example, the researcher utilised Nvivo to identify the number of times key phrases such as "NG", "intergovernmental organisation", and "NSA" were used by state actors. The researcher found that this helped establish the interviewees' familiarity with the concept of NG and the role of NSAs. As the research is concerned with utilising an alternative framework of NG, the researcher wanted to find out how the interviewees understood or categorised ASEAN as an organisation. Hence, Nvivo helped the researcher process data and assisted with data collection, interpreting the data, analysing the information, and identifying essential information critical to the research.

### **3.11 Surveys**

Surveys were explicitly conducted with NSAs in mind to gauge their sentiments on participation in ASEAN community building. It was used to explore and understand the perspectives of their role and involvement in ASEAN policymaking and the implementation and their perceived effectiveness pre-and-post ASEAN Community periods. In addition, the researcher hoped to assess the contributions of NSAs to ASEAN integration efforts and the challenges facing their active involvement and contribution to the community building efforts specifically related to the three case studies – trade integration, addressing transnational crimes, and tackling COVID-19. The surveys were conducted with 66 participants from various organisations affiliated with ASEAN (see Appendix 4 and 5: List of Organisations and Survey Questionnaire).

The participants were selected intentionally. Thus, the survey displayed purposeful sampling. The researcher wanted to survey participants who were well-acquainted and had good knowledge of ASEAN as an organisation and its processes. Only then would the researcher be able to understand the challenges faced by NSAs.

The survey asked questions about ASEAN and the three pillars of the ASEAN community (AEC, APSC, and ASCC), the critical components of the research. The researcher wanted to understand how the survey respondents found the effectiveness of ASEAN in achieving its aims and the effectiveness of the respective pillars of the ASEAN Community.

It helped the researcher understand how ASEAN's capabilities are perceived. As these respondents were well-acquainted with ASEAN, the survey responses aided the analysis of the research's aim of exploring an alternative NG framework to reflect the performance of ASEAN more accurately. In addition, questions about the role of NSAs in ASEAN and the respective pillars of the ASEAN Community were also posed. This was necessary to understand the extent and limits NSAs faced in engaging ASEAN and the potential the respondents recognised in NSAs in supporting ASEAN community building.

### 3.11.1 Conduct of Surveys

As the questions posed in the survey may limit respondents when voicing their opinions through the options given, the researcher left sufficient room at the end for the respondents to write and support their answers should they feel so inclined. The survey was conducted via Google forms. Similar to the interviews, a standard email was sent to all selected survey respondents to enquire whether they would be agreeable to participating. Only if a selected survey respondent agreed to participate would a follow-up email be sent with an information sheet detailing the purpose of the research, the estimated duration required to complete the survey, and information about the importance of privacy and confidentiality. A link to the Google form was included in the email.

### 3.12 Pretesting Interviews and Surveys

Before conducting the interviews and surveys with the selected subjects, the researcher felt it best to perform two sets of pre-test interviews with identified state actors. There were two rounds of pre-test surveys for a group of five respondents. Pretesting is a valuable means of detecting word ambiguity and discovering possible flaws in survey measurement variables (Hurst et al., 2015). In addition, it provides an opportunity to revise study materials and data collection procedures to ensure that appropriate questions are being asked and that questions do not make respondents uncomfortable and/or confused (Hurst et al., 2015).

### 3.12.1 Timeline

Data collection from interviews and surveys was conducted concurrently. The researcher completed 23 interviews and had 66 survey respondents for the research. The first interview was conducted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, with the last carried out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2020. On the other hand, the collection of survey responses began on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2020 and concluded on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2020. The researcher was well aware that the selected interview subjects and survey respondents were individuals with little time to spare due to the nature of their jobs. Thus, managing a timeline and keeping in touch with these respondents required conscientious efforts. The researcher was able to set up the interviews accordingly. Some interview subjects declined the invitation to participate as they felt they were not inclined to share sensitive or privileged information about ASEAN, given the nature of their work. However, a few respondents sent emails sharing briefly some information related to the interview questionnaires.

Special attention was given to the collection of survey responses. As the research required survey respondents with a good working knowledge of ASEAN, the researcher had to ensure that the respondents selected were appropriate and keen to participate in the survey. Since the survey was conducted through Google forms, survey respondents could exercise their own discretion when filling out the form. The researcher made consistent follow-ups and email reminders every three weeks to ensure the surveys were completed within the stipulated time. The researcher sought to ensure that the survey respondents who had not responded were aware of the deadline, which was revised a few times to get the targeted number of at least 50 participants. Some survey respondents declined after looking through the questions as they felt they did not have the relevant knowledge to help the research. In the end, the researcher received 66 responses from individuals who were well-acquainted with or had a good working understanding of ASEAN.

### 3.13 Secondary Data Analysis

The research conducted a qualitative content analysis of secondary data sources related to the relevance of NG and policy networks in ASEAN. It helped the researcher distinguish and analyse critical information that supports the case study research method and verify the research's findings and research questions. The secondary data the researcher utilised were: (1) ASEAN reports and documents and (2) research articles from various stakeholders such as state officials, think tanks, and academia. In addition, the researcher had to analyse studies and research papers on NG and policy networks, not forgetting the policy process, which is of substantial interest to the performance of ASEAN. Understanding the policy process phases had varying degrees of success, taking into account ASEAN member states' will and interest and the complexity and dynamics of the respective policy networks. Finally, the researcher interpreted the necessary information and essential variables in support of the analysis of selected case studies and ascertained that they were relevant to the purpose of the research.

As the research focuses on the underpinnings of ASEAN, it was essential to showcase information from the ASEAN Charter and important documents or treaties such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty and other relevant ASEAN agreements. Furthermore, while most ASEAN documents and reports carried optimistic connotations of the organisation's performance and future trajectory, the researcher had to ensure that a thorough analysis of these ASEAN documents and reports was conducted. Of note, the research is more concerned about the facts surrounding what had been accomplished, and the documents and reports were utilised more as factual sources than "opinion pieces". Hence, the researcher carefully distinguished between factual statements and the sentiments expressed in the reports. As a result, the researcher found the outlook on ASEAN documents and reports was juxtaposed to critics and sceptics of ASEAN; both had good reasons and different underlying notions of what a regional organisation should entail. Finally, the research employed relevant articles from open depositories, such as ResearchGate. The increased utilisation of pertinent research articles helps verify and improve the quality of the analysis and the case study research approach.

### 3.14 Issues Addressed in Research

In establishing an alternative NG framework to understand ASEAN, the research needed to engage with the current literature on NG and materials containing some link between ASEAN and NG. Yet, it should be noted that the latter is somewhat limited and primarily focused on how the light institutionalisation of ASEAN is similar to the less hierarchical structure of NG. Moreover, as NG is a concept that originates from the organisational network and is seen mainly in the fields of public policy and public administration (Poocharoen and Sovacool, 2012), the research has primarily gone toward identifying how NG can be adopted to understand regional organisations such as ASEAN. Therefore, establishing the framework of NG would help build the necessary analysis framework for the subsequent chapter that reflects on the analysis and case studies discussion.

As the research reflects on the performance of the ASEAN policy subsystem or community, the researcher assessed performance by following the policy process of the respective policy network. The researcher then drew on the phase of the policy process where ASEAN member states and individual partners in the policy network(s) experience challenges or deadlocks. Each stage of the policy process corresponds to and makes up the conclusive summary of the performance of that policy subsystem.

Since the concept of "performance" can be prejudiced in a way that promotes and express certain expectations or conformations, the researcher expressed it in terms of "actionable" outcomes. Thus, if a policy network sees movement from one phase to another of the policy process, it is deemed an "actionable" outcome. On the other hand, if the policy process sees a deadlock or standstill, it would not be considered an "actionable" outcome. Here, "actionable" outcomes refer to some form of *expressed* action about an issue area or a specific policy network with which member states of ASEAN are involved. It can be as formal as member states backing up their expressed interests through signing agreements like an FTA or consent to move an issue area towards the next phase of the policy process, as long as it does not result in a deadlock or the status quo. Thus, this research acknowledges the challenges that ASEAN member states face and the extent of the actors' efforts to manage the policy network, even if the policy process remains at a

standstill. As such, performance is understood from a more nuanced perspective and overlooks the entire policy process. The researcher found that there would be at least some form of "actionable" outcomes in each phase of the policy process, especially at the initiation phase, and it ought to be taken into account as part of the performance (of the policy network) as well.

Finally, in utilising a concept of public policy, the research would identify the plausible involvement and role of NSAs in each ASEAN policy subsystem by analysing how "open" or "close" these subsystems are (Howlett, 2002). The evolution of ASEAN would be aligned with ASEAN community building, which means coordinating and cooperating better with NSAs over the common issues plaguing the region, given their expertise, experience and resource contributions.



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## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis and Discussion of Case Studies

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of network governance (NG) will be grounded by mapping the concept of NG to ASEAN. The applicability of the framework was covered in the literature review. It will be essential to recall how the framework of NG allows for the consideration of norms and principles upheld in ASEAN and the maintenance of some form of hierarchy without downplaying its functions. In this regard, NG is not only a narrative for the functions and structure of ASEAN but holds the potential to evaluate ASEAN's performance, and actions due to the respect and consideration the NG's framework has for the Association's underpinnings (norms and principles).

ASEAN's non-performance and deadlocks are mainly attributed to its norms and principles or ASEAN's Way, notably the principle of non-interference and the Association's weak institutional arrangement(s), lacking a legally binding mechanism to hold member states accountable for their decisions. Therefore, for every indecision or non-performance, these norms and principles are indicated as the contributing factor to its shortcoming(s). Yet, suppose the principles, norms, values, and embedded practices in ASEAN be continually pinpointed as weaknesses. In that case, a narrative awaits to "remove" these perceived weaknesses as they only fuel an endorsement of the European integration project or deem the Association a "talk-shop".

It stresses the importance of rationalising an alternative form of hierarchy (ASEAN's institutional arrangement) and viewing ASEAN's norms and principles as essentially a set of 'patterned relations' (Jones et al., 1997). By understanding these norms and principles as a set of patterned relations, we will cease looking at them as separate from the Association itself. Significant norms include the notable "ASEAN Way" that

dominates the consultations and dialogues within the Association and among member states with strong regard for the principle of sovereignty and non-interference. Where certain norms and principles are stressed as the “hallmark” of ASEAN, their recognition goes beyond defining the limits of its functioning. It will be crucial to view them as intrinsic features or characteristics without a preconceived notion of their positive or negative effect on ASEAN functioning.

These norms and principles are pathway-dependent and, thus, a reflection of ASEAN’s history. In this regard, to expect change(s) in its norms and principles would be akin to rewriting the history of the Association. Therefore, a shift in perspective to one that offers a nuanced account of both ASEAN’s norms and principles and its institutional arrangement (due to the presence of these norms and principles) leaves more room for examining performance according to the actions and interests of stakeholders. It will include ASEAN member states and actors involved in a selected or specific issue area.

It is essential to understand that NG’s framework is a “two-way approach” that affords the capacity to assess ASEAN and for ASEAN to evaluate itself. First, the researcher sought to investigate if the concepts of NG are consistently observed across ASEAN by examining the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. Second, it aimed to derive an understanding of their significance and how they can account for the performance or non-performance of ASEAN. Third, the researcher identified areas that can be improved and how ASEAN member states can approach performance from the NG lens to achieve ASEAN’s goals. Finally, since norms and principles are the products of actors, the researcher hoped to account for performance or non-performance by how these stakeholders in ASEAN conduct an issue.

Hence, the researcher aimed to bring more clarity to views that express how ‘[norms, principles, and values] has impeded ASEAN’ (I. Karuppanan, personal communication, 2020) in its ultimate goal of community building, which to some, articulates the sentiment of status quo, placing the regional organisation at a standstill. Thus, those norms and principles are assumed to have little practical value. However, the view may hold some truth due to the influence of those norms, principles, and values on decisions made by

ASEAN member states and how it further complicates the policymaking process. Hence, this chapter aims to utilise the NG's framework to show how the underpinnings of ASEAN interact with the policymaking process. But first, it will be essential to explain how NG's framework can show an interplay between the interests and dynamics of ASEAN's stakeholders in the various pillars of the ASEAN Community and, therefore, able to show areas of non-performance and performance.

#### 4.1.1 The Framework of Network Governance (NG)

The NG's framework is based on the policy network theory (PNT) established by Howlett to highlight the idea of "interest". It brings together relevant stakeholders – such as state actors and partners – to partake in the round table of policy making. With this, PNT envisions ASEAN as a policy universe containing three subsystems, each consisting of networks relevant to the subsystem. Utilising policy network(s) as the basis of analysis underscores the significance of member states' interests or will as critical drivers of policymaking and/or decision-making. This is important as the rationale of establishing a framework of NG is to understand more fully the functioning of ASEAN as consciously and actively shaped by ASEAN (member states) with the purpose directed at the maintenance, relevance, and survival of the Association.

The policy network perspective will support NG's framework by identifying the networks in each pillar of the ASEAN Community or policy subsystems. Utilising NA and the lens of policy networks, we can conceive of the structural position of ASEAN and other actors involved (such as dialogue partners and/or relevant stakeholders) in the web of networks that ASEAN have so far built or established. It will help determine if ASEAN's objective of maintaining centrality is met in the respective policy subsystems. Finally, it leads to the chapter's final agenda, where the understanding of performance and/or non-performance will be re-evaluated by studying the three policy subsystems.

By applying PNT and establishing the centrality of ASEAN through NA, the interaction between the interests of member states and ASEAN's objectives/interests would show the extent to which member states and the Association are interdependent. It re-establishes

focus on the performance of ASEAN, looking at how member states respond and drive the policymaking process to capture goals instead of judging shortcomings based on the inability or failure to produce the intended results within an expected timeframe. It also explains the rationale of emphasising the role of NSAs in thrusting the policymaking decision forward and its viability while seeing diverse attendance and participation in a policy network. An open policy network could yield change (Howlett, 2002 was referring to open policy subsystems, however, the thesis believes that this can be applied to policy networks), as opposed to a closed policy network, where state actors – notably, member states of ASEAN, carrying similar attitudes towards the principle of non-interference and sovereignty are more likely to be more conservative in politically sensitive issues or decisions, and hence result in the preservation of the status quo.

Additionally, the chapter examines prevailing notions and conceptions of ASEAN, which conceal and undermine the Association's goals and aspirations. This, in turn, affects how ASEAN's functioning and performance are perceived. Through NG's framework, the researcher offers a more nuanced perspective to better understand ASEAN through the policy networks and how the actors' interests are vital in driving their interests and vice versa. By understanding the above relationship or dynamics, the norms and principles of ASEAN can be better appreciated and understood as a character of the region, not akin to shortcomings to be overcome.

## **4.2 Case Study: ASEAN Free Trade Area**

### **4.2.1 Background of AEC/ASEAN Economic Policy Sub-System (AEPS)**

The AEC embodies the ASEAN economic goals, which are outlined in the ASEAN Vision 2020, where the Association seeks to advance economic integration and cooperation by undertaking the following general strategies:

‘...fully implement the ASEAN FTA and accelerate liberalization of trade in services, realise the ASEAN Investment Area by 2010 and free flow of investments by 2020; intensify and expand sub-regional cooperation in existing and new sub-regional growth areas; further consolidate and expand extra-regional linkages for mutual benefit cooperate to strengthen the multilateral trading system, and reinforce the role of the business sector as the engine of growth’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012).

This aims to create a stable, prosperous, and highly competitive ASEAN Economic region in which the free flow of goods, services, and investments, a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities. With the desire to transform ASEAN into a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and freer flow of capital came the idea to establish the AEC by the year 2015 (Amante, 2009).

#### **4.3 ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA)**

The selection of the AFTA as a case study for the AEC, or ASEAN Economic Policy Sub-System (AEPS), is a deliberate choice as the AFTA was established before the AEC itself. Its significance is pertinent because AFTA’s framework-agreement approach was used to launch negotiations for the ASEAN Economic Community and establish other regional economic arrangements. For example, the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area signed in 2002 came into force for the leading ASEAN economies in 2010. The fact that the AFTA framework set a precedence for future free trade agreements would allow for the examination and investigation of the agenda behind the economic integration initiative through the lens of NG to capture a more accurate picture of the functioning and workings of the AEPS itself and better represent ASEAN as a regional organisation.

##### **4.3.1 The Limits of Mainstream Theories of Regionalism**

As expressed, NG’s framework identifies regional resilience or the maintenance of ASEAN’s centrality in SEA and beyond as ASEAN’s objective and driving force. However, mainstream theories of regionalism are often rooted in the perspective of the

EU integration project and hence focus heavily on shaping regional organisations in the image of EU institutions and processes. In this way, economic integration and initiatives are fulfilled by liberalisation for trade and wealth creation and even more integrated initiatives such as the common market and currency, which no doubt connects the region even more cohesively. While the perspective contributes some important ideas, it outshines economic initiatives in ASEAN and is often seen as the “hallmark” of how economic integration should look. It means that the performances of policy networks such as AFTA will be checked against metrics centred around the likes of the EU and the WTO.

As Acharya points out, ‘it is limiting and ethnocentric to apply integration theories, which reflected a distinctive set of political and economic conditions’ (Acharya, 2016). The regional character needs to be considered when ASEAN is a regional organisation comprised of developing and comparatively weaker states (globally speaking). As such, the performance indicators belonging to traditional quantitative metrics would do an injustice to our understanding of what AFTA set out to do. Using the NG lens, the focus of regional resilience will be underlined, setting the role of the AFTA as a project to solidify relationships in ASEAN while withstanding the criticism that it is intra-regional looking. The researcher also sought to establish an alternative understanding of AFTA as a policy network for the broader goals of ASEAN, given the region’s political and economic conditions.

From the perspective of global regionalism, the formation of the AFTA in 1993 was a significant move by the six ASEAN member states: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand to further integration – in particular, an economic integration that creates a free trade area of some 330 million people in the ASEAN region (Bowles & MacLean, 1996). For an Association whose member states share an understanding of the threats faced by each state within the region than the usual notion of a common (regional) identity, the vision to promote and maintain security in the region has been held together by the nature of a political association, wherein the geopolitical climate gives impetus and strong reasons for states to come together and form a regional arrangement.

Theories of regional economic integration would see the formation of the AFTA as one that encourages trade creation within the ASEAN bloc and would propel intra-regional trade flows and boost member states' economies. It would result in greater integration as member states' economies become increasingly interdependent. As such, the performance or non-performance of the economic integration is assessed through quantitative indicators such as 'changes in the share of intra-regional trade and investment' since these are closely involved with 'indicators of interdependence'. However, when these traditional quantitative indicators are applied to ASEAN, it paints a disappointing outlook where 'the share of intra-regional trade has remained low and relatively unchanged at around 20-25% for almost two decades (1990-2016)' (Bowles & MacLean, 1996).

Hence, mainstream theories of regional economic integration coupled with traditional metrics tend to reduce ASEAN's ambitions and objectives to a linear project of wealth creation. However, as Menon has described, different motivations stem from respective regional bloc(s) (Menon, 2021). The Association's move towards AFTA has more to do with the self-preservation of its name regionally and internationally, while the EU integration project was embarking on a full-fledged economic and political integration. For the former, regionally, it creates FTA between member states for economic benefits; but most importantly, internationally, it establishes a footing for all ASEAN member states, especially since ASEAN comprises developing and smaller economies compared to other regions. Here, it is apt to stress how the increasing shift to flexible production methods and functionally-integrated production chains meant that businesses, apart from looking for large markets, were also looking for regional spaces in which to set up regional production networks' (Nesadurai, 2003), offering impetus for the ASEAN region. By liberalising trade, ASEAN joins the global economy and can be known to the international society to form networks and propel its structural position for maintaining ASEAN's centrality. As such, while AFTA commits to trade liberalisation, the reasons why ASEAN member states established AFTA differ from the European integration project. Therefore, the limits of the West or mainstream theories of regionalism are exemplified.

Since subscription to the cause of the European integration project will be different due to ASEAN's move towards economic integration, the task of identifying AFTA's role in ASEAN should be defined before any further evaluation of its significance and performance can be made. Therefore, the thesis's rationale seeks to understand AFTA's role with respect to what ASEAN makes of it, directing performance or non-performance to be assessed vis-à-vis the role and function(s) that ASEAN accords to it. To illustrate the importance of establishing what the role of AFTA entails, reference is made to Stubbs's take on Bowles' conundrum (Stubbs, 2019) and contrast how different interpretations of the goal(s) of economic integration by ASEAN promote the derivation of various views on the subject of performance in the economic realm.

#### 4.3.2 Role of ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA)

Bowles argued that the role of AFTA was to bring 'global capital to the ASEAN region' by adopting liberalisation in ASEAN and moving towards a 'rules-based, fully liberalised global economic system' (Stubbs, 2019). Through Bowles, we understand that the establishment of AFTA by ASEAN is a mark of open regionalism and a characteristic of the new regionalism, allowing members of AFTA to actively participate in the global economy and receive economic benefits by establishing economic benefits ties within a global network. When the role of AFTA is understood as such, an innocent inspection will highlight the desire of ASEAN to be a part of the 'liberalised global economic order' as well as AFTA as a 'stepping-stone' to reaching it (Stubbs, 2019).

Yet this narrative places AFTA in a tricky position in suggesting that its primary purpose is to increase regional integration outcomes (Menon, 2021), thereby inviting scrutiny from a perspective lacking in understanding of the ASEAN context: A one-sided assessment based on the traditional integration measures takes no consideration of the significance of AFTA.

In addition, while the AFTA may be perceived as an initiative encouraged by new regionalism (Stubbs, 2019), the supposed benefits of participating in the global economy subsume what should be achieved for the AEC to be deemed successful. It neglects what



was shared in the literature review, where the task of regionalism is more than instrumental in effective integration to secure increased trade shares within and between regions.

ASEAN member states are consistently adamant about propelling greater regional integration due to their principles of non-interference and their stronghold over sovereignty. It indicates that by seeing AFTA as an initiative to pursue global capital, it not only places it as a subset of the economic integration project(s) from the Western hemisphere but easily masks any inclination of agency on the part of ASEAN, reducing AFTA to be a mimicked economic project of the West (this would be in line with Anja Jetschke's view about how ASEAN mimicked the institutions of EU). Furthermore, it reveals the assumption that ASEAN is not strategic but merely following the pathway of the EU/West to reap the supposed benefits they now enjoy.

Based on ASEAN literature, the member states are strategic about the goals of their policies and agreements. If AFTA is found merely to increase trade creation and remove trade barriers to facilitate an exchange for economic gains, the traditional metrics from the West could help evaluate ASEAN's results from the AFTA. However, the thesis finds that ASEAN had deeper intentions of superseding economic-related agendas. In the ASEAN context, the western perspective missed the underlying notion of ASEAN. It will be fundamental to recall that a pertinent driving force of the Association since its inauguration in 1967 has consistently been maintaining peace and security in the ASEAN region and the independence of its member states to resist external or foreign power interferences. In other words, ASEAN's concern was the resilience of the organisation. This is where NG's framework becomes helpful in identifying the motivations of ASEAN.

From the perspective of the policy network, it is known that ASEAN member states agreed to establish the AFTA policy network even though agreeing to participate in FTA signals the loss of some "sovereignty" as member states' economies become closely tied. Therefore, the interests that once moved the policymaking process can be understood through the resource dependency theory (RDT), which links back to the importance of ASEAN's centrality. With ASEAN made up of new states, having only economic

motivations for countries' gain would be myopic as the entire region would need to become economically competitive to maintain its survival. As such, it would be necessary for ASEAN to demonstrate its relevance to international society by joining the global economic order. Where ASEAN is a critical resource to its member states, and member states are to the Association, the policy network of AFTA becomes all the more pertinent and connected to each other's survival.

Here, it would also be constructive to consider what Menon has articulated in his article on ASEAN's regionalism, where 'an outsider observing these outcomes would have declared the program (AFTA) a failure while an insider would have understood that they achieved exactly what they were designed to achieve: very little' (Menon, 2021). This is not to say that ASEAN had little ambition or was not sincere in the efforts to move towards the goal of economic integration, but that the purpose of economic integration served ASEAN on a different note, one that pertains to the continued relevance and survival of the Association and hence, its very own centrality in the face of an international system. Only by guaranteeing its centrality can ASEAN ensure its resilience in the face of international society.

In this way, economic integration can be understood as the mean by which ASEAN member states extend their economic relations beyond (and within) the Association, but most importantly, how ASEAN maintains its presence globally and ensures the global economy does not exclude it. Hence, embarking on a project of economic integration to align oneself with the global economy could be seen as the way ASEAN reinforces the sovereignty and independence of member states and protects the norms we know are highly regarded in ASEAN.

Through NG's framework, the AFTA policy network can be understood as a means to further ASEAN's relations with the international society by participating in the global economic order and, therefore, forms part of the strategy for the Association to further its goal of solidifying its structural position at the centre of the many policy networks in the form of free trade agreements (FTAs) so that it can continue expanding its international presence and relevance. The ability to (further) drive and maintain ASEAN's centrality

within its own networks demonstrates its capability - in other words, a constructivist notion of power itself. Where NA allows centrality to be understood via the measurement of the social power of an actor, 'based on how well it connects, or how extensively it is connected, to the entire network' (Caballero-Anthony, 2014), we will understand that the goals and agendas of ASEAN would become more intra-influenced than externally influenced. As such, integration initiatives executed by ASEAN are grounded and moved by the aspiration to increase its social power more than the need to be aligned with the global economy.

Social power here indicates how well an actor connects to other actors in the international society or how extensively it is connected to those actors and the entire network that the actor (or ASEAN) participated in (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). Thus, the thesis finds that in the case of economic integration, AFTA is an economic project that ASEAN believes will solidify its centrality.

Using policy network analysis introduced in the literature review as a means to conceive of the relationships between actors involved in policy-making within a policy network, the thesis conceives of ASEAN as a "node" itself, connecting or interacting with involved dialogue and/or strategic partners. How well the "node-to-node" connection is indicative of the degree of centrality and therefore the social power of the node as it tightens its 'betweenness, closeness and degree' (Caballero-Anthony, 2014) with other participating nodes – notably those outside it. Respectively, "betweenness" refers to the node's ability to invite or bring in other nodes to participate in the social network, thereby driving or bridging a cluster of other participating nodes (Caballero-Anthony, 2014), especially notable or significant nodes. "Closeness" refers to the 'ability (of the node) to access information through the 'grapevine' of network members' (Caballero-Anthony, 2014); it looks at how "intimate" the "node-to-node" relationship(s) are. Finally, "degree" refers to 'the count of the number of ties to other actors in the network' (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). As such, ASEAN aspires not to be excluded as an organisation in any infrastructure or relevant regional architecture since this would indicate a low measure of social power and hence a lack of centrality.

On the other end of Bowles' conundrum, the prevalence of regional blocs signalled the "strong regional tendencies" of multinational corporations' (Stubbs, 2019). While the role of the AFTA here is still a gateway to a liberalised global regional order, Stubbs emphasises a critical consideration of Bowles: 'there will be a perpetuation of some of the defensive aspects of the pre-AFTA regional blocs' (Stubbs, 2019) that will present as an opposition in the face of a globalised economy. If so, this perspective proposes the limits of AFTA as an economic integration initiative that would propel the ASEAN region and, most importantly, ASEAN member states to participate significantly in the global economy.

Instead, the alternative perspective takes on the role of the AFTA to promote 'the very idea of inward-looking regional blocs' (Stubbs, 2019), where member states of ASEAN only prioritise their regional bloc and may take a nonchalant attitude towards the global economy. Following the norms and values embedded in the ASEAN Charter that strictly state the fundamental importance of principles of sovereignty and non-interference 'to ensure independence within ASEAN' (Koh et al., 2009), it makes sense that ASEAN member states would seek to be shielded from the global economy. Hence, this perspective provides a scenario for developing a region that can practice self-help, wherein member states of ASEAN are self-reliant but have limited interdependence within the Association.

#### **4.4 Understanding the Rationale of ASEAN for AFTA**

Identifying the role of the AFTA as one intending to develop economic self-reliance within the region insinuates that AFTA is an economic initiative that seeks to promote intra-trade. It encourages measuring FTA's performance via traditional indicators such as changes in intra-share trade. As discussed, such indicators are troubling for ASEAN since the performance of economic initiatives or integration is both highly contextual, utilising a metric well-used in the western hemisphere, which further masks the goal of the economic initiative(s) itself. Moreover, in the case of AFTA, it neglects the concept of new regionalism, which recognises the different means or trajectories regional organisations can take to embark on economic, political, or socio-cultural integration.

In the interview conducted with Dr. Jayant Menon, a senior fellow with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)-Yusof Ishak Institute, he highlighted the perceived failures of ASEAN and that its free trade agreements (FTA) should not use the traditional indicators of 'intra-regional trade, intra-regional investment (J. Menon, personal communication, 2020). Where an unchanged share of intra-regional trade would indicate non-performance, Dr. Jayant Menon continued to explain in his opinion, 'that's actually a sign of its success', and 'that the intra ASEAN trade hasn't grown, is a sign of its success' (J. Menon, personal communication, 2020). Elaborating on Dr. Jayant Menon's view, it is pertinent to note that ASEAN's tariff liberalisation and economic integration initiatives have 'avoided looking inwards by keeping the margin of preference on its tariff lines, either low or zero. Most of the tariff lines have zero margins of preference' (J. Menon, personal communication, 2020).

In addition, 70% of intra-ASEAN trade travels at zero tariff rates for Most-Favoured Nations (MFN), and more than 90% of tariff lines have zero rates under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) (J. Menon, personal communication, 2020). ASEAN has used economic integration initiatives to pursue globalisation (J. Menon, personal communication, 2020). Given this, it would be fatal to conflate the goal of pursuing regional resilience with that of an inward-focused task unreceptive to open regionalism (Stubbs, 2019). While some may find that strengthening the regional bloc by promoting intra-trade encourages AFTA's performance via traditional quantitative indicators, we would do well to remember that ASEAN was never meant to be WTO (Stubbs, 2019).

#### 4.4.1 Implementation of ASEAN Economic Integration Initiatives

The very fact that the Association pursued economic integration through tariff liberalisation via the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme (CEPT) and had made 'significant progress since 1992' after the Agreement was signed (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.) illustrates some degree of acceptance towards features stemming from the global economy, such as trade liberalisation. Yet, establishing and implementing economic

integration initiatives such as the AFTA did not come easy and was arduous at times. The thesis has reason to believe that it continues to be the case. The table below shows that 51% of the respondents to the thesis survey agreed that implementing ASEAN economic integration initiatives remains a considerable challenge for their country. On the other hand, 17% disagreed that implementation remains a huge challenge, and 32% were neutral about it.

**Table 4.1** Implementing ASEAN economic integration initiatives remains a huge challenge for my country

<i>Implementing ASEAN economic integration initiatives remains a huge challenge for my country</i>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
0%	17%	32%	42%	9%

This gives room to consider where the implementation challenges stem from and reflects some form of similarity where negotiations over the implementation of the AFTA at the time of making were ‘difficult and hotly contested’ (Stubbs, 2019). This is where the NG’s framework can help us understand the policymaking process of economic integration initiatives such as the AFTA through the lens of the policy network, further examining the variables closely at play in the implementation phase of the policymaking process.

#### 4.5 Value of NG

##### 4.5.1 Regional Resilience

Here, regional resilience not only refers to the political and socio-economic security of the region and the ability to withstand financial crises or external political threats but is closely related to the concept of ‘resource dependency’. It is a crucial element of NG, where the dependency of ASEAN member states upon the Association would affect their involvement and participation in the different policy networks. In this case, in one of the

policy networks under the purview of AEPS. It should be noted that the ASEAN member states depend on the Association and that the Association relies on its members to maintain relevance in the global economy, the international system, and its survival. In such a reciprocal relationship, there would be a “reinforcing effect” where member states' dependence on ASEAN and vice versa would bring positive outcomes to the Association and its member states. Stronger member states can assist weaker member states through the Association, such as easing trade liberalisation for member states new to the concept or previously closed economies. With new and robust economies, the region can/will become attractive to foreign investors. The region can only become more important with time, making ASEAN a significant player in the Asia Pacific, and bigger powers would be more encouraged to recognise it. Hence, regional resilience is established through the reinforcing effects of being resource-dependent.

This is not to say that resource dependency tends to produce a healthy reinforcing effect. There is a negative aspect to consider, where ASEAN would be in the hands of the elites or member states with a geographical/material advantage. But the negative aspect is not dominant due to opportunities to wield a leadership role in different areas. Through the NG framework, it recognises the constructivist notion of power and policy networks/social networks, allowing us to shift away from the rationale of how AEPS is a relatively more successful policy subsystem due to attributing a large credit to economic gains. After all, an organisation emphasising the principle of sovereignty and non-interference naturally translates to a type of self-help architecture within the region. As such, purely economic gains could not be the reason for AFTA's establishment. Instead, there must be a stronger underscoring of how AFTA came to be and why ASEAN member states accepted it.

#### **4.6 Performance of ASEAN**

Instead of an inward-looking arrangement, the thesis infers that the AFTA is an economic initiative formed to mitigate external economic shocks, enhancing the resilience of ASEAN. Just like how the AEC displays the need for ASEAN to be an outlooking region, it will be crucial to understand that an economic initiative such as AFTA is necessary to

help ASEAN member states fully integrate into the global economy. Not for reasons of mimicking the larger liberalised economies but to ensure ASEAN is deemed (by other economies) as a relevant component of the international society/system while developing its region, evident in ASEAN's strengthening its node-to-node relationship in the policy networks established for AFTA. It forms the rationale behind AFTA understood via the NG framework.

#### 4.6.1 Monitoring Mechanism: AEC Scorecard

A discussion of the functioning, performance, and non-performance of AEPS would warrant acknowledgement of the manner or means that ASEAN had established to monitor the implementation of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) initiatives (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012b). The AEC Scorecard is a monitoring mechanism and acts as a compliance tool to report on the 'progress of implementing the various AEC measures, identifies implementation gaps and challenges, and tracks the realisation of the AEC by 2015' (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012b). In the years 2008-2009, the AEC Scorecard reported on progress achieved to date (ASEAN Secretariat, 2010) via the following chart:

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## ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY



**Figure 4.1** Snapshot of Progress from 2008-2009 of the AEC/AEPS  
Source: ASEAN Secretariat, 2010

From the above figure, the progress chart illustrated by the AEC Scorecard provides qualitative and quantitative indications of ratification' (ASEAN Secretariat, 2010) and an overview of the essential elements towards realising the AEC from political will, coordination and resource mobilisation, implementation of commitments, capacity building and institutional development to public-private consultations and engagement (ASEAN Secretariat, 2010). The AEC Scorecard indicates ASEAN's commitment to its economic integration initiatives while tracking its progress depicting the Association's urgency to complete the ratification process and increase implementation progress. It signifies the interest of the organisation and its member states.

In recent years, ASEAN has moved away from AEC Scorecard to a progress report that documents performance qualitatively, highlighting what has been done well and where gaps continue to lie. While performance is notably articulated by showing the progress of implementation, it is more of a tool to review ASEAN’s timelines and prospective projects and initiatives. Our surveys indicate that ASEAN’s non-performance is often inconsequential, and non-performance is met by pushing the missed timeline backwards. Instead, it has been recommended by survey respondents that ASEAN performance be improved by tracking ASEAN member states’ progress via a scorecard for various working groups with consequences for missing agreed timelines.

While AEPS is relatively successful, further supported by more than half of the survey respondents (64.6%), who concur that initiatives under the AEC have been implemented in their country to a moderate or large extent (as shown in the table below). The implementation of ASEAN still leaves room for improvement.

**Table 4.2** To what extent have the initiatives under the ASEAN Economic Community been implemented in your country?

<i>To what extent have the initiatives under the ASEAN Economic Community been implemented in your country?</i>				
Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
0%	6.2%	29.2%	49.2%	15.4%

#### **4.7 Evaluating Performance of AFTA from a Policy Network Perspective**

When we look at the implementation of AFTA, success may simply be attributed to necessity and how ultimately, it is an economic initiative for ASEAN to promote increased economic integration through trade. Yet it is known that since ASEAN lacks a legally binding mechanism, its implementation would depend on the will of the member states and their continuous interest to cooperate and participate in AFTA. Moreover, where strongholds over norms and principles of sovereignty and non-interference have to

be overcome to participate in any integrative initiative, utilising another framework (perspective) to witness the behaviour of ASEAN member states in the AFTA policy network would further show ASEAN's performance in AEPS.

The thesis associates performance with actionable outcomes, where the emphasis is on the policymaking process. Actionable outcomes are tagged to any progress by moving from one phase to another. For example, moving from the decision-making to the policy evaluation phase is deemed an actionable outcome for any issues or policies. In contrast, the status quo or a stagnant situation at a particular phase makes for inaction and non-performance. The rationale behind such a “metric” is to shift away from quantitative indicators and make room for more qualitative contexts. In this context, Dr. Aladdin Rillo, a senior economic advisor for the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and former Deputy Secretary-General for the AEC (2018-2021), signalled that implementation depends on how strong the coordination process is at the local level. ASEAN decisions require implementation at the domestic level, and there needs to be close coordination between the member states' representatives in ASEAN and the local officials. When the link is weak, coupled with the differential economic level of development, implementing ASEAN initiatives at the member states' level becomes challenging (Rillo, personal communication, 2020).

It becomes crucial to examine the Association's policymaking process by focusing on the progress made at the regional organisational level. In particular, how member states ensure progress from one phase to another, from the policy initiation to the implementation stages and subsequent follow-up actions. Since the AFTA policy network has reached the final step of the policymaking process, the thesis looked at how other engagements within AEPS continue to facilitate implementation and performance.

In the AEPS, NSAs' participation has been quite forthcoming. In the survey, slightly more than half of the respondents (58.4%), as shown in the table below, believe that NSAs have been actively engaged in the AEC/AEPS.

**Table 4.3** Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Economic Community

<i>Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Economic Community</i>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree
0%	10.8%	30.8%	49.2%	9.2%

Currently, the ASEAN BAC is the ‘apex private sector body of ASEAN’ (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.) and ‘is mandated by the ASEAN leaders as the official ASEAN linkage to provide private sector feedback and guidance to boost ASEAN’s effort towards economic integration, identify priority areas for consideration by the ASEAN leaders, and provide policy recommendations to ASEAN leaders’ (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). In addition, from 2020 on, the ASEAN BAC promoted its theme of “Digital ASEAN for Sustainable Development” under the chairmanship of ASEAN BAC (Vietnam), helping represent the private business community, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to ‘promote innovation, creativity, and a sense of responsibility for the region’s inclusiveness and sustainable development’ (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). With this network, AEPS is considered an active subsystem that engages with the private sector through a mandated body (ABAC) by ASEAN.

In AEPS, NSAs engagement has provided visibility for the subsystem (Alexander. C. Chandra, personal communication, 2020). According to Mr Chris Humphrey, the Executive Director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council, ‘the ASEAN BAC has been extremely good at being very inclusive, involving business councils from various dialogue partners and interested bodies’. For example, they would call sector champions, like Food Industry Asia, to support food issues (C. Humphrey, personal communication, 2020). By virtue of making it very inclusive, ASEAN BAC successfully gets people into privileged meetings – touching points with ASEAN (which, without the ASEAN BAC, they previously would not be able to do)– even though the engagement is one-sided where NSAs do not get a chance to speak’, and they walk out knowing more about what is going on (C. Humphrey, personal communication, 2020).

As it will be necessary for NSAs to understand the working norms of ASEAN to effectively engage and increase their chance of being heard, the engagement provided by ASEAN BAC benefits NSAs in an intergovernmental setting. The influence of NSAs - in this case, the business councils - are strongly connected to the influence they wield. Considering the status of several council members, they 'should have a lot more influence than they really do' (C. Humphrey, personal communication, 2020). Yet, 'not all council members have the degree of passion and determination' (C. Humphrey, personal communication, 2020). While they support their own business interests, they may be too preoccupied to propel the work of ASEAN BAC further.

It mirrors what the thesis had explained about the will or interest of member states in a particular issue that is a crucial factor in the interaction within this policy network. Hence, in establishing the policy network for a specific issue or supporting the engagement in a subsystem, time commitment, drive, and determination (C. Humphrey, personal communication, 2020) play an essential part in ensuring the exchange of information and the continuity of efforts placed into that policy network. Moreover, since the policy network depends on the nodes (actors), it will be contingent on the actor's interest. Thus, the policy network will be driven by that prescribed interest.

#### **4.8 Case Study: The ASEAN Regional Forum**

##### **4.8.1 Background of APSC/ASEAN Political Security Policy Sub-System (APSS)**

As part of the ASEAN Community, the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC) oversees political and security cooperation to preserve and safeguard peace and security in the ASEAN region. Building on what has been constructed in the previous chapter, it is now referred to as the ASEAN Political Security Sub-System (APSS) in the NG's framework. The APSC was adopted in 2003 by the ASEAN Leaders in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II), which aimed to establish an ASEAN Community by 2020 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009).

Since ASEAN's inauguration, maintaining the region's peace and security has always been of utmost concern to ASEAN member states. As such, it will be essential to view the APSC to be built 'on what has been constructed over the years in the field of political and security cooperation' ASEAN Secretariat. (n.d.). Therefore, first and foremost, it becomes apt to begin the section with a look at how survey respondents in the respective ASEAN countries regard maintaining peace and security in the region since this is what ASEAN was established for.

Table 4.4 ASEAN is effective in maintaining peace and security in the region

<i>ASEAN is effective in maintaining peace and security in the region</i>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree
0%	4.6%	15.4%	53.8%	26.2%

From the table above, we can see that while most respondents (80%) view ASEAN as an effective organisation in maintaining peace and security in the region, some still believe it is ineffective. It is because the work of APSC can be particularly state-driven. For example, Ambassador Songkane Luangmuninthone of the Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in the Philippines and former Lao ASEAN Deputy Director General, in the interview, mentioned that any involvement of non-state actors is mostly not encouraged (S. Luangmuninthone, personal communication, 2020).

However, in an interview with Dr. Mely Caballero-Anthony, a Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, it was found that there can be exceptions. As she articulated, 'when things are urgent that we have to deal with, we actually do away with norms'. In this case, while ASEAN condemns interference and intervention in member states' domestic affairs, ASEAN member states do express opinions over pressing matters such as concerns over protecting human rights (Caballero-Anthony, personal communication, 2020). The fact that ASEAN addressed the Rohingya refugees issue in ASEAN points to violating the principle of non-interference, a norm taken seriously by ASEAN member states.

In certain cases, as the need arises, these principles and norms are actually calibrated by ASEAN to safeguard ASEAN's image and legitimacy. For example, in addressing matters of urgency, 'we (ASEAN) don't violate, but we calibrate them to respond to these issues' (Caballero-Anthony, personal communication, 2020). Following this line of thought, the point of inspection is the governance of ASEAN, where we can incorporate the involvement of NSAs, which will be perceived as a form of "calibration", especially since peace and security issues are related to the people most fundamentally. In this regard, the NG framework and the utilisation of policy networks are undertaken in the research since it is an alternative means of looking at ASEAN's functioning.

#### 4.8.2 Norms and Practices in the APSC/APSS

The norms and practices of ASEAN are seen at play in APSC due to the more sensitive and politicised nature of the events this community would have to face and resolve. However, ASEAN is made up of mostly developing economies (Buendia, 2016); thus, 'most ASEAN countries continue to be challenged not only by traditional political and security issues' (Buendia, 2016), but they also struggle with non-traditional issues, such as corruption, development gap, terrorism, and other forms of transnational organised crimes (Buendia, 2016). All in all, ASEAN member states recognised that alone, they would not be able to cope via state policies (Buendia, 2016). Thus, they require a regional approach, given the transnational nature of political and security challenges (Buendia, 2016). Therefore, while we know that ASEAN member states hold a strong attitude towards any issue(s) of sovereignty and interference(s) with domestic affairs and are 'relatively sensitive towards international affairs' (Buendia, 2016), the APSC Blueprint was nonetheless implemented.

#### 4.8.3 Implementation of the APSC Blueprint

The section elaborates on the implementation of the APSC Blueprint to recognise the efforts of ASEAN heads/governments in not only establishing but also ratifying a community aimed at overlooking matters of security and peace, thereby furthering the process of some form of political integration. To ensure the overall implementation of

the Blueprint, the APSC Council has been created and mandated to coordinate regional efforts towards accomplishing pre-determined tasks and targets in accordance with the Blueprint's timetable (Buendia, 2016). The Council is also supported by the Coordinating Conference for the ASEAN Political Security Community Plan of Action (ASCCO), which serves as a platform for harmonising the efforts of various sectoral bodies through exchanges of information, best practices, and lessons learned in the implementation of the APSC Blueprint (Buendia, 2016). In addition, an appraisal mechanism has been set up to review the performance of the APSC in terms of its tasks and action plans (Buendia, 2016). To review the performance of the APSC, evaluations and assessments of the Blueprint's accomplishment are conducted by the ASCCO in co-ordination with the ASEAN Secretariat on a biennial basis (Buendia, 2016).

**Table 4.5** To what extent have the initiatives under the ASEAN Political Security Community been implemented in your country

<i>To what extent have the initiatives under the ASEAN Political-Security Community has been implemented in your country</i>				
Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
4.6%	10.8%	33.8%	41.5%	9.2%

The table above shows a difference in how the implementation is noted from the respondents' perspectives on the APSC initiatives in their countries. It can be explained by understanding the differential levels of development of countries in ASEAN and the fact that implementation is state-driven rather than organisation-driven, meaning that each member state will implement the APSC initiatives as they see fit. It puts the performance assessment of implementation on a slightly more convoluted spectrum and further compounds the complexity when referring to ASEAN's performance since member states have differential levels of implementation.



#### 4.9 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

In assessing ARF, the thesis sought to utilise the concept of “patterns of interaction” to underscore its significance as part of APSS while providing another perspective on how ASEAN manages its goal that promotes its community building agenda. ARF includes ASEAN member states, its dialogue and strategic partners and other states important to the region. Based on their participation, the thesis identified a set of fixed members in the network that holds repeated interactions with each other over time through annual ministerial meetings (Jones et al., 1997). This aligns with the concept of NG as involving a ‘select, persistent, and structured set of autonomous entities [firms] based on implicit contracts to adapt to environmental contingencies and to coordinate and safeguard exchanges’ (Jones et al., 1997).

The willingness to participate in ARF also pertains to ASEAN’s interests and dialogue partners. With ASEAN as one of the world’s most dynamic centres of economic growth, New Zealand’s interests in ASEAN are indisputable, as much as ASEAN likewise has important interests in New Zealand as an attractive trading partner (Lim, 2015). Such reciprocal interest reinforces mutual trust, a component paramount to the strength of the network. To explain the drive, interest and willingness of ASEAN member states, the standpoint of policy network analysis (NA) on ASEAN’s centrality will be crucial as it touches on what the thesis had earlier expressed via the RDT and how regional resilience informs much of ASEAN’s decisions and goals.

##### 4.9.1 Policy Network Approach: ASEAN's Centrality

The policy network approach allows the encapsulation of the idea of structural position represented by the position of an actor (node) in a network. In addition, social power will be employed to explain how regional organisations like ASEAN perceive power and capability. The consolidation of social power is a pragmatic way to understand how ASEAN manages the power configuration. Most of us are familiar with the concept of power that pertains to the realist and/or neo-realist understanding of power. Often, ASEAN is referred to as an organisation – a regional organisation made up of new or

relatively weaker states in the international society, particularly concerned about foreign or external power interferences in domestic and regional affairs. Thus, naturally, ASEAN is bound to be lacking in consolidating materialistic power. Here, an alternative perspective on power will help conceive how ASEAN wields the capability to achieve its goal through the NA.

First, the NA would recommend ASEAN empowers its presence by evoking “centrality” or a centred position, structurally speaking, in a network to wield sufficient social power. In this way, forming a network through establishing a community or forum directed by ASEAN is the most efficient mean of bringing in actors who are non-members and, if possible esteemed actors in the international society – possibly the great powers in the region or the international system. Social power confers actors with a high degree of centrality to practice control over social benefits such as membership and grants them authority to set the agenda (Caballero-Anthony, personal communication, 2020).

The objectives of ARF are fostering constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues and contributing to confidence-building and preventive diplomacy. Thus, it attracts state actors or those with a regional stake in the ARF. It connects to patterns of interactions, where a persistent and consistent group of actors are gradually established over time as the ARF touches on issues of interest to them. ARF's closed network, with only ASEAN member states and its dialogue partners having access to the forum, is an example of interaction patterns due to ARF's specific interests.

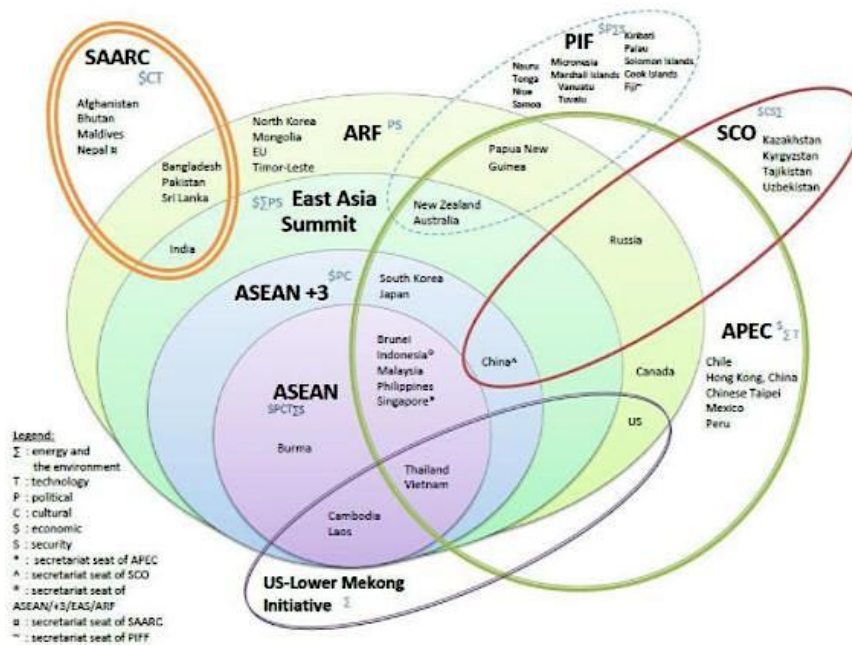
However, there is more to having dialogue and regional partners or state actors within ARF and establishing a consistent pattern of interaction to push ASEAN interests. This was shared by Mr Tan See Seng, President/CEO of International Students Inc (ISI), in a publication on ASEAN's centrality in the face of the U.S. and a rising China. What underlies ASEAN's centrality and the objective of pursuing it for the survival of ASEAN in the international society has much to do with how the Association seeks to engage those dialogue partners and relevant stakeholders deeply with ASEAN, to the extent that it is regarded as a ‘regional actor of consequence’ (Tan, 2021). It means that the desire to bolster patterns of interactions between ASEAN and its partners will be a prominent task

for ASEAN member states to undertake. This is where the challenge of gaining social power will be seen.

The thesis stresses the Association's innate fear and the main driving force that saw the inauguration of ASEAN: the desire for peace, security, and stability in the region. Adding to how ASEAN has recognised itself as a cluster of new states, it understands the importance of the Association to prevail to ensure member states' survival. As such, the RDT, alongside the concept of social power, would point to the following: 1) the survival of ASEAN is almost equivalent to the survival of member states, and 2) the consolidation of social power to ensure a high level of actors-to-actors (node-to-node) interactions will be necessary to keep the former going.

With this, the notion of centrality is approached, and NA can be further utilised to elaborate on ARF's interaction patterns. These are important when assessing the actions and performance of ASEAN. Where the Association is far from passive, they have continuously worked to exercise centrality as presented in the network of ARF. As the literature review explains, understanding how ASEAN maintains its structural position is key to appreciating how it attains and increases its power. This can be seen in ARF itself. The following figure refers to NA.

ลิขสิทธิ์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่  
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**Figure 4.2** ASEAN's Centrality (Visual Representation)

Source: Caballero-Anthony, 2014

Dr. Mely Caballero-Anthony explains that ‘ASEAN’s structural position in the dense web of networks, i.e., its being at the centre and as a bridging node, can explain why ASEAN is seen as the driver of and a fulcrum for other regional institutions in Asia’ (Caballero-Anthony, 2014). In this connection, it is essential to distinguish between leading and dominating the network in showing the significance that ARF holds for ASEAN and how the ARF acts as a “middle platform” for world leaders to congregate and provide opportunities in two areas. One, dialogue partners to meet others to promote their interests; and two, dialogue partners to extend, promote or strengthen their presence in the Asia Pacific region, including with ASEAN. The Association prides itself and strives to continue playing its role as an honest broker facilitating the ARF network, which adds to ASEAN being relevant to the security and peace of Asia Pacific.

#### 4.9.2 The Role of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

The South China Sea (SCS) dispute has increasingly renewed interest in ARF. Notably, through the ARF, India had expressed concerns over existing threats to maritime security over the Indo-Pacific and the importance of upholding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Singh, 2021). In 2021, India co-chaired an ARF workshop on implementing UNCLOS, including co-chairing the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on maritime security, along with Indonesia and the U.S. (Singh, 2021). For India, ARF provides a platform to initiate and act on its most urgent security agendas. At the same time, for ASEAN, India's engagement in ARF highlights how the ASEAN-led institution is trusted to express or move its interests in issues of maritime security exacerbated by the SCS dispute.

It is essential to recognise that in facilitating ARF as a network for dialogue partners and relevant stakeholders to address their concerns and agendas, ARF implies the significance of ASEAN as a driving force for the former's goals and concerns and, thus, the necessity for its existence. As such, the value of ARF is a two-sided coin, where dialogue partners and relevant stakeholders view it as an honest broker to pursue their security interests, while for ASEAN, it helps signal the Association's relevance to the region and beyond. While this depends on how well ASEAN manages ARF or the network where the performance or functioning of the ARF will determine how well-equipped ASEAN is at driving its centrality, ARF's role and value serve the interests of ASEAN in consolidating social power. Through the ARF, ASEAN's goal is focused on being seen as a key organisation for the Asia-Pacific region, which other actors would seek to be involved with through 'institutional solidarity' (Tan, 2021), especially for the major regional powers that desire or seek to be part of ASEAN's established network.

## **4.10 Evaluating Performance of ASEAN Political Security Policy Sub-System (APSS)**

### **4.10.1 Combatting Transnational Crime**

As we look within APSS, well-known issues such as the territorial dispute in the South China Sea (SCS), the 2021 Myanmar coup d'état, and the Rohingya refugee crisis have seen a lack of action from ASEAN, where the norms of non-interference and sovereignty bounded responses from member states. While sceptics of ASEAN continue to support the shift and adoption of an EU institutional model to improve ASEAN's performance, especially in the political and security field, the research emphasises the existing plethora of policy networks that exist in APSS and that ASEAN's performance or non-performance in APSS can be better understood via an examination of various policy networks in APSS. Moreover, apart from concerns and threats arising from traditional security, ASEAN has also been paying close attention to non-traditional security since, in an increasingly interconnected world, the convenience of committing transnational crime raises the threat level against the ASEAN region.

ASEAN's development of a coordinated approach towards cooperation on transnational crime stemmed from the abuse of narcotics and trafficking in illegal drugs. On 24 February 1976, ASEAN member states signed the Declaration of ASEAN Concord, tightening the resolve to fight transnational crime and intensifying cooperation among member states, including relevant international bodies, in the prevention and eradication of the abuse of narcotics and the illegal trafficking of drugs (Sundram, 1999; Parameswaran, 2000). Some critical milestones include the 1<sup>st</sup> Informal ASEAN Summit in November 1996 in Jakarta, where the study of possible regional cooperation on criminal matters and the approach to extradition took place (Sundram, 1999). ASEAN member states also resolved to take firm and stern measures to combat transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, trafficking in women and children, and other transnational crime at their 2nd Informal ASEAN Summit in 1997 by adopting the ASEAN Vision 2020 document whose main objective is the 'creation of a drug-free Southeast Asia and

a region of agreed rules of behaviour and cooperative measures to deal with problems that can only be met on a regional scale (Parameswaran, 2000).

This shows that transnational crime remains a significant concern for the Association, especially with the ‘diversification of transnational crime to include terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundering, illegal migration, and piracy’, and more notably, cyber security crimes, which are becoming highly organised in nature (Sundram, 1999). Moreover, the transnational crime policy networks involved cooperation from many areas, such as law enforcement, regional body and local authorities’ cooperation. With this, we will see that the transnational crime policy networks involved more than just state actors. This is verified by the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Combating Transnational Crime (ACTC), ‘a regional initiative of ASEAN against transnational crime, which is envisioned to promote data resource sharing, assist in the implementation of programme activities outlined in the proposed action plan, and be a repository of information on national legislation, regulatory measures and jurisprudence of individual member countries’ (Parameswaran, 2000). Imbued with research capabilities to conduct in-depth analysis of transnational crime activities to recommend appropriate regional strategies, this is part of ASEAN efforts to combat transnational crime (Sundram, 1999).

Externally, ‘prevention education and information, various workshops on drug education for teachers and curriculum designers and comparative research on preventive education have been conducted’ (Parameswaran, 2000). ‘Cooperative activities include the exchange of law enforcement officers/personnel, the conduct of training programmes with the assistance of international agencies and the sharing of information concerning trends, modus operandi and routes of narcotics trafficking’ (Parameswaran, 2000). It shows how the transnational crime policy network relied upon both ASEAN member states and NSAs and, as such, can be understood to be an inclusive policy network where the roles of any parties within the policy network are not undermined. It returns to the concept of RDT, where the thesis looks at the Association as an important critical resource for members and is concerned about the imbalance within the policy network, where certain member states would overpower or dominate the policymaking process or discourse. However, with the participation of the NSA and the transnational nature of the

policy network that would require ASEAN member states to rely on local authorities and NSA capacity, the dynamic nature of the transnational crime policy network highlights the significance of NSAs in fostering a healthy balanced policy network.

The transnational crime policy networks have exemplified how issues under APSS seek to operationalise a strong policy network of information and resource exchange by highlighting the proactive role that ASEAN can play in reinforcing an open, transparent and inclusive regional architecture while maintaining its centrality through its centred role in driving initiatives and mechanisms to combat transnational crime (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). With this, we can further understand how networks established to cooperate over transnational crime issues boost transnational crime policy networks by strengthening policymaking's decision-making and implementation phase.

Using policy network analysis, the idea of node-to-node interaction (actors-to-actors interaction) and how it encapsulates ASEAN's centrality, the structural position of ASEAN in the network is exemplified through ARF. It is an important (working) concept for APSS and the transnational crime policy network(s). The interview with Dr. Mely Caballero-Anthony also highlights the role of state actors outside the ASEAN region, emphasising the relationship between ASEAN and its partners, especially ASEAN's dialogue partners. NA also helps illustrate and depict the relationship between ASEAN and its member states, with them acting as a "bridging node", facilitating information exchange and the flow of resources on transnational crime. The illustration of social networks here can be expanded to include NSAs, especially international organisations, including the United Nations (UN) and its specialised agencies, Colombo Plan Bureau, and the ICPO-INTERPOL (Sundram, 1999).

Since transnational crime is expanding in scope and becoming more organised, the need to establish agreed rules of behaviour and cooperative measures is highly pertinent as the tackling of transnational crime would see cross-boundary activities that may involve overlapping jurisdictions and the cooperation between different national authorities to organise regional cooperation on criminal matters, including extradition and avoid any infringement of ASEAN norms and principles, notably, the principle of non-interference



in the domestic affairs of member states involved. Moreover, without a more coordinated approach to ensure the timely flow of information, it will be difficult to deal with the regional scale of transnational crime (Sundram, 1999).

Yet, unlike its policy network counterparts delving into territorial disputes and refugee crises, the transnational crime area has achieved significant results. It would be apt to reflect here on the recent milestones and positive results shared in the past year at the 15<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC). In a speech by Mr Desmond Tan, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs, he stated that international cooperation, the sharing of intelligence and active participation in social/policy networks to deliberate on legislation and preventive measures are helpful to the process of curbing transnational crime (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2021). A distinct difference between transnational crime and policy networks concerning territorial disputes and more traditional security-related issues is the openness underlying the patterns of interactions and flow of resources.

The thesis had previously discussed “open” and “closed” policy networks in AEPS. It stems from Michael Howlett’s work on policy networks and is utilised to connote the tendency for “opened” policy networks to arrive at dynamic outcomes and “closed” policy networks to arrive at status quo outcomes. The premise of ASEAN’s performance is dependent on this idea, such that performance will be better understood through change. Perhaps a question at this juncture has to do with states or member states’ actors being *open* to deliberation and cooperation in the area of transnational crime while shying away from other political and security issues, although they supposedly fall under the purview of APSS.

The research considered the openness or willingness of states or member states to be involved in an issue depending upon the extent to which they are affected. While the 2021 Myanmar coup d’état could be considered a domestic issue within Myanmar and does not directly affect neighbouring ASEAN countries, it may be short-sighted to “quantify” member states’ openness or willingness to engage in an issue based on the probability of a domestic issue spill-over. Instead, those factors that drive the transnational crime policy

network(s) need to be considered. Here, a strong interplay between member states and the co-existence of ‘agreed rules of behaviour and cooperative measures’ (Sundram, 1999) vis-à-vis ASEAN’s shared norms and principles were witnessed. In this regard, patterned interactions, a high level of actors’ participation and the flow of information and resource sharing in the transnational crime policy network(s) allowed for actionable outcomes and facilitated performance.

#### 4.10.2 Potential of NSAs in ASEAN Political Security Policy Sub-System (APSS)

The thesis examined how susceptible policy networks are to the participation from NSAs (outside the ASEAN member states’ circle). The surveys showed that most respondents remain on the fence about NSAs' engagement in APSS compared to the AEPS response. For example, in the table below, a slight majority took on a “neutral” view when responding to the proposed question of whether NSAs have been actively engaged in APSC.

**Table 4.6** Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Political Security Community

<i>Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Political Security Community</i>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree
0%	26.2%	49.2%	21.5%	3.1%

This dimension is particularly important to the thesis as involving NSAs in policy networks can further propel ASEAN’s goals towards establishing a people-centred community. The participation of NSAs in policy networks within AEPS showed active collaboration of NSAs in assisting ASEAN with technical knowledge. Yet the role of NSAs in AEPS remained consultative and advisory. In APSS, NSAs had even lesser access to participation in most policy networks.

In an interview with Ambassador Songkane Luangmuninthone, he noted that a purposeful restriction imposed on the participation of NSAs in the political and security realm is due to the sensitive nature of the issues and how states would less likely welcome the involvement of NSAs since NSAs are citizens (S. Luangmuninthone, personal communication, 2020). The participation of citizens in the “security apparatus” of the state, like ASEAN, would be tricky since citizens are seen as a “sub-set” of the state, as shared by Ambassador Luangmuninthone (S. Luangmuninthone, personal communication, 2020). A similar notion is shared by Dato Dr. Illango Karuppanan, former High Commissioner of the Malaysian High Commission in Singapore, who believes states are often seen as the primary actors against political and security issues. With such an embedded mindset, Dr. Illango Karuppanan believes that it will be difficult to conceive more participation and involvement of NSAs. From this perspective, it is assessed that the limited participation of NSAs in policy networks, whether in APSS or other subsystems, may be attributed to ASEAN member states’ unfamiliarity with NSAs and working with individuals at a non-state level. The unfamiliarity breeds a certain lack of trust and confidence within ASEAN member states.

However, it seems that in non-traditional security areas, the involvement of NSAs is much accepted. For example, in the interview with Ambassador Ade Padmo Sarwono, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN, he mentioned that there is some engagement with NSAs on the counterterrorism side to implement plans (A. P. Sarwono, personal communication, 2020). In addition, Ambassador Luangmuninthone shared the sentiment that NSAs could have a role to play in the “political security areas of community building” and that involvement in issues stemming from non-traditional security would warrant more and more participation of NSAs (A. P. Sarwono, personal communication, 2020). In this regard, the nature of transnational crime dictates the importance of maintaining transparent and open communications between member states of ASEAN and NSAs involved in the area, both at the national and regional levels, to address the issues effectively. It revealed a highly dynamic policy network in non-traditional security operating in ASEAN and showed the inclusion of NSAs as non-obstructive to the policymaking process.

In the transnational crime policy networks, extra-regional cooperation includes ‘enhancing information exchange with ASEAN Dialogue Partners, regional organisations, relevant specialised agencies of the United Nations and other international organisations, particularly towards the sharing of critical information on the identities, movements and activities of known transnational criminal organisations’ (Sundram, 1999). It is apt to mention the growing threat of cybersecurity and that today's changing nature of transnational crime puts cybersecurity in the spotlight, as shared by Ambassador Noel Servigon, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to ASEAN, in his interview with the researcher (N. Servigon, personal communication, 2020). A recent example is how NSAs support the operations of transnational crime policy networks, or in this case, the cyber security policy network in “Operation HAECHI-I” (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2021):

*A transnational joint operation supported by the Republic of Korea and coordinated by INTERPOL between September 2020 to March this year. It involved investigators and law enforcement agencies from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, China, and Korea. More than 500 arrests were made and US\$ 83 million intercepted across Asia-Pacific (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2021).*

This example clearly shows the role of NSAs, particularly in the implementation phase of the policy network, leading to actionable outcomes crucial to performance.

As discussed, due to ASEAN norms of non-interference and sovereignty, it would have been natural to harbour the assumption that NSAs might find themselves excluded from the issues in APSS. However, a reference to policy networks in transnational crime paints a different picture. The transnational crime policy networks exemplify the importance of APSC/APSS to ‘maintain the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN in a regional architecture that is open, transparent and inclusive (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). The policy network(s) can reap the rewards if the four concepts or variables of NG (patterns of interaction, willingness to participate in issues, information and resource exchange, and the participation of NSAs) support a more “open” policy network, especially where

ASEAN member states can be more receptive to NSAs participation. It would align with the rationale for developing another framework of NG to understand ASEAN better and work with existing norms and principles. Therefore, through APSS, the thesis hopes the intention for an alternative framework to comprehend ASEAN's actions and performance will be better understood. It would also be helpful to view performance according to an individual policy network and assess the actionable outcome(s).

#### 4.11 Case Study: ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting

##### 4.11.1 Background of ASCC/ASEAN Socio Cultural Sub-System

The ASEAN Socio Cultural Sub-System (ASCS) is part of an endeavour by ASEAN to provide greater support for the ASEAN Community by addressing environmental, social, and other issues concerning the lives of its members. The ASCS addresses problems of human capital development, social protection, pandemic response, humanitarian assistance, green jobs and circular economy (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). The ASCS wields a people-centred sword and contains policy networks targeted at ‘realising the full potential of ASEAN citizens’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2017).

Due to the ASEAN region’s diverse races, religions, and ethnicities, the Association needs to promote diversity, inclusivity, and a dynamically-inclined community for the people of ASEAN to live in peace and harmony and achieve their best. The table below shows the survey results of how respondents perceive the effectiveness of ASEAN in fostering a people-centred community in the region.

**Table 4.7** ASEAN is effective in fostering a people-centred community in the region

<i>ASEAN is effective in fostering a people-centred community in the region</i>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree
0%	10.8%	46,2%	40%	3.1%

While a majority agree with the effectiveness of ASEAN in fostering a people-centred community in the region, a large proportion, at 46.2%, is “neutral” about ASEAN’s effectiveness at fostering a people-centred community and views it as still a work in progress. As such, the commitment of the ASCS to ‘lift the quality of life of its peoples through cooperative activities that are people-oriented, people-centred, environmentally friendly, and geared towards the promotion of sustainable development to face new and emerging challenges in ASEAN’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2017) becomes an important promise for the realisation of a people-centred Community.

#### **4.12 ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM)**

The AHMM determines the policies of the issue area of ASEAN health and endorses decisions and reports of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD), which is responsible for strategic management, and provides guidance on the overall implementation of the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda (APHDA) ensuring that all goals and targets are achieved (ASEAN Secretariat, n.d.). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AHMM have been coming up with initiatives to help ASEAN member states strengthen their health systems and ensure member states will be equipped to better respond to future outbreaks and pandemics (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). In this regard, the thesis focused on studying the AHMM through its involvement in the COVID-19 pandemic for this case study.

The AHMM makes for an interesting case study due to the race against time to establish coordinated actions between ASEAN member states, its affiliates and respective partners to address the crisis (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021) and protect the people of ASEAN. As member states of ASEAN are swarmed with ‘tough decisions to further contain transmission while mitigating the pandemic’s socio-economic impact’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021), any inaction or myopic strategies can lead to unfavourable consequences for any country. In this case, there is no doubt that member states' interest (or willingness) to partake and escalate the issue will be at a peak. Therefore, member states would create and establish “open” policy networks that facilitate frequent patterns of interactions within ASEAN and a strategic, open flow of information and resources to

support the AHMM. Perhaps in the case of this policy network, we would witness the will of member states dominating the policy process and, therefore, setting a fast pace as compared to the policy networks in the APSS.

#### 4.12.1 Initiatives of AHMM to Address COVID-19 Pandemic

As the impact on member states' health systems differs for each country, the challenge is to address the relevant gaps and improve member states' health systems in line with APHDA. Initiatives and mechanisms under the AHMM include ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre (ASEAN EOC), Network for Public Health Emergencies, ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network (ASEAN+3), ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre (ABVC) for Big Data Analytics, ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication (ARARC), the Regional Public Health Laboratories Network (RPHL), Human and Animal Health Collaboration, ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self-Reliance (AVSSR), Regional Collaborative Strategy on ASEAN Drug Security and Self-reliance (ADSSR), Biosafety and Biosecurity training and networks. Here, it can be identified that those mechanisms relied on 'conducting rapid information sharing and technical exchanges, risk assessment, risk communication, contact tracing, exchange of laboratory readiness and response action, and capacity strengthening' (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020) with partners from the health industry.

The subsequent establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED), a partnership with Japan enhancing ASEAN preparedness, response and resilience to public health emergencies (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020), also see potential collaborative efforts with dialogue partners or stakeholders involved with ASEAN highlighting the extensiveness of the AHMM policy network. Additionally, the development of the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System further collaborates with the U.S. to provide support for ACPHEED (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020). It offers dynamic and active examples of ongoing efforts under the AHMM in working towards securing ASEAN's health together with NSAs and partners outside of ASEAN and how the interest and will of ASEAN member states in curbing ongoing and future pandemics can draw 'regional cooperation and adopting approaches

designed to adapt to the cross-border and cross-sectoral nature of the pandemic’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020) – a positive example of an actionable policy network.

To support the combat against the COVID-19 pandemic, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan were adopted by the 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit on 12 November 2020 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). Also, as part of the initiative led by ACRF, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) launched a series of webinars on the region’s COVID-19 response with titles such as 1) “Enhancing Health Systems and Resilience in the Context of the ACRF”, 2) “Digital Technology for the Enhancement of Healthcare Delivery” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021) and 3) “Safe Reopening of Economies and Communities in the New Normal Era”. The first title explained the importance of ensuring a health system able to cater to and serve the masses, thus strengthening health systems, the implementation of universal health coverage, access to vaccinations, as well as interventions to curb COVID-19, all vital to the resilience of the initiative (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021).

This is further supported by Dr. Eduardo Banzon, an Asian Development Bank (ADB) Principal Health Specialist, who emphasised that the ADB would provide support programs as part of the initiative (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). The second title corresponds to the use of digital technology in contact tracing as part of the containment measure of the COVID-19 virus (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). It would be noteworthy to acknowledge how Singapore first brought up the idea of digital contact tracing through Bluetooth technology’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021), which would later be a technology incorporated into ASEAN. Finally, the third title from Dr. Masaya Kato of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office in the SEA Region reassured the public of ‘guidelines for implementing and adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19’ (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021).

The AHMM makes for an open policy network with the participation and involvement of NSAs in the policy network, further establishing a vibrant and dynamic network. It is closely related to the research’s perspective on performance since it views progress in the policymaking process as a mark of an actionable outcome. It is crucial to fully understand



NG's framework, as NSAs are seen as a complement to the Association and one that can fill in the coordination gaps, a significant problem for ASEAN.

#### 4.12.2 Active Participation of Non-state Actors (NSAs)

The introduction of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) is not without support from various stakeholders, notably NSAs, with sound technical knowledge of healthcare and the COVID-19 virus. The active participation of NSAs is shown in the survey conducted on whether or not NSAs have been actively engaged in ASCC/ASSS. In the table below, 58.5% agree that NSAs have been actively involved in ASCC/ASSS.

**Table 4.8** Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community

<i>Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community</i>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree
0%	3.1%	24.6%	58.5%	13.8%

The survey looked at how respondents feel about NSAs' participation in supporting pandemic-related policy networks, and the results show positive views on NSAs' engagement. For example, in the figure below, a strong majority agree or strongly agree with how NSAs have been actively engaged in ASEAN's response towards communicable diseases and global pandemic preparedness.

**Table 4.9** Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN's response toward communicable diseases and global pandemic preparedness

<i>Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN's response toward communicable diseases and global pandemic preparedness</i>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree
1.5%	9.2%	33.8%	47.7%	7.7%

It would be worthwhile to consider what engagement or active engagement could entail and if only being involved in certain phases of the policymaking, such as implementation, counts toward 'active implementation'. The thesis adopted a more inclusive paradigm, where the involvement of NSAs in any phase of policymaking would constitute participation, and the extent of activeness is understood respectively by the respondents. While NSAs are largely subject to the role of advisory and information provider, it plays a vital role in giving credibility to the initiatives and plans of ASEAN.

A platform for expert panel members from ASEAN member states and distinguished resource persons from various international organisations is available to deliberate the priorities ASEAN states should focus on during the fight against the pandemic (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). ASEAN's collaboration with NSAs established an epistemic community as defined by Haas, containing 'a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area (Mohamed Pero, 2012).

#### **4.13 The Role of Actors**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of actors, particularly state actors, was critical. For example, in early April 2020, 'the Indonesian Foreign Minister called for cooperation to cope with the shortage of critical medical supplies' (Gong & Nanthini, 2020). This was due to a lack of medical equipment in the face of the pandemic, causing many deaths in the country's health workforce' (Gong & Nanthini, 2020). On the other hand, at the ASEAN Summit on COVID-19 in April 2020, President Duterte noted the shortage of vital medicines and medical equipment in the Philippines and called for intra-ASEAN cooperation in meeting the challenge (Gong & Nanthini, 2020).

Apart from concerns over the lack of medical equipment, as COVID-19 vaccines became vital to the fight against the pandemic, vaccine nationalism became a problem, where developing countries were not able to procure vaccines as they lost out in their bids against the wealthier countries in the ASEAN region (Gong & Nanthini, 2020). To this end, at the 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in November 2020, Singapore Prime Minister, Mr Lee

Hsien Loong, stressed the importance of ‘vaccine multilateralism’ as part of the efforts to mitigate the pandemic’s long-term impact (Gong & Nanthini, 2020). At the conclusion of the Summit, ASEAN also issued a Chairman’s Statement that mentioned ‘vaccine security and self-reliance’ as a priority of the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda’ (Gong & Nanthini, 2020). Furthermore, by quoting the concerns expressed by the Heads of State (of ASEAN member states), the role of state actors in driving concrete action toward cooperation and leading the issue at hand can be recognised. For instance, by virtue of ASEAN’s emphasis on vaccine security, it frames vaccines as a security issue, spearheading the intention and focusing the spotlight to turn on a ‘more active approach to regional cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines’ (Gong & Nanthini, 2020).

Other than spearheading various COVID-19 initiatives, state actors have the authority to direct public resources to curb the pandemic. For instance, ‘Indonesia proposed the establishment of ASEAN-China Ad-Hoc Health Ministers Joint Task Force during the Special Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of ASEAN and People’s Republic of China (PRC) in February 2020’ (Djalante et al., 2020). The task force's function would be to facilitate the exchange of information and data, especially in handling the COVID-19 outbreak, organising expert team meetings, and encouraging joint research and production for virus detection and vaccine (Djalante et al., 2020). In addition, Indonesia proposed the establishment of an ASEAN Plus Three (APT) country special task force in the face of future pandemics considering ASEAN’s disparity in terms of capacity (Djalante et al., 2020). Acknowledging the disparity, the responsibility lies in the Association to ensure equity among member states in terms of access to scientific and technical experts, medicines and vaccines, and various other support required by ASEAN member states in the course of the fight against COVID-19. It opened the room for NSAs and showcased their potential to fill the gaps in the policy networks by offering technical and ground support for member states.

#### 4.13.1 Room for Non-state Actors (NSAs) in ASEAN

Where ASEAN leaders have a ‘significant influence in shaping the direction of ASEAN’s community building process’ (Djalante et al., 2020), little emphasis has been placed on the role of political leadership, especially when ASEAN holds a reputation for being state-centric. As such, there is the risk that in protecting their own interests, ASEAN member states would not be keen on NSAs’ participation since they will be more interested in ensuring that these interests are met than looking for ASEAN-level agreements or seeking concrete improvements in performance based on the survey conducted for the thesis. In this way, NSAs are kept out of the loop when it comes to updated policies since agendas or hidden agendas vested by self-interest would not be aired.

At other times, NSAs are not always privy to critical information for state-confidential reasons, allowing them to participate appropriately or contribute more constructively. Other challenges NSAs face are a lack of funding and resources to support or partake in ASEAN activities and a lack of trust in NSAs. Here, how ASEAN member states drive interaction in the policy-making process through their approval over objectives or decisions needs to be highlighted, as shared in the interview with Mr Looi Teck Kheong, Assistant Director Competition, Consumer Protection and IPR Division of the ASEAN Secretariat (T. K. Looi, personal communication, 2020). This is without dubbing ASEAN leaders as ‘an exclusive club of elites’ (Gong & Nanthini, 2020), underpinned by the dominance of state actors in the policy-making process. Instead, the research exemplifies where and how NSAs fit in since the role of ASEAN member states is domineering in the Association.

A significant feature of ASEAN is the loosely binding mechanisms (compared to the EU integration project). It subjects much of the policy-making process to the ‘principle of consensus decision-making through lengthy dialogue and consultation’ (Gong & Nanthini, 2020). As a result, it can be driven by personal relations among ASEAN leaders rather than formal processes and legally binding institutions (Gong & Nanthini, 2020). In the interview with Dr. Alexandra Chandra, Head of Analysis and Monitoring on Trade, Investment, and Emerging Issues Division of the ASEAN Secretariat, the policy-making

process can be argued to be fluid, yet fluidity allows ASEAN to encapsulate any proposed structure that would benefit the Association. He opined that ‘what remains is for ASEAN member states to recognise and understand ASEAN to be a NG’ (Alexander. C. Chandra, personal communication, 2020). As such, it is vital to understand how ‘ASEAN leadership is practised through issue-area specifications’ (Gong & Nanthini, 2020), where member states can influence and enact their interests while adopting the NG framework. It depends on how member states perceive NG is aligned with their interests and that of ASEAN. As highlighted in the literature review, the practice of issue-area specifications is seen in Singapore’s focus on ‘economic integration with its enormous initiatives that had been introduced from time to time since 1992’ (Gong & Nanthini, 2020) and the Philippines’ and Thailand’s advocacy of the ‘socio-cultural cooperation and the integration of Asian people due to their active national civil society movements and democracies’ (Gong & Nanthini, 2020).

Political leadership is critical in driving and accelerating specific changes or directions in this context. Since the role of ASEAN member states is essential to adopting NG, they would first have to understand its workings and adopt it as a framework to forge cooperation and assess performance. Besides, member states will have to evaluate using the framework where NSAs could play a contributory role. For example, the respondents in our survey found that NSAs' contributions to political-security measures, public policy, regulatory standards, and institutional building are ineffective. NSAs' contribution would be more significant in specific subsystems or the community. It also explains why more NSAs participation is seen in the AEC/AEPS than in APSC/APSS. An interesting outcome of the survey was how 'ASEAN has too many (involvement of) non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from the West whose agenda may not be aligned with the region'. In this case, the proposed suggestion was to develop ASEAN-funded Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The survey also learnt about the politicised nature of NSAs' involvement:

*‘ASEAN sectoral bodies tend to engage only carefully-selected non-state actors that they are already accustomed with. Sometimes the consensus to engage and who to engage is required. At the same time (backed by very limited observation), certain non-state actors already in the ASEAN circle also try to monopolize the opportunity and block others from the same opportunity. NSAs that have regional representation may not necessarily represent the diversities at the national level’.*

Thus, there is a need for the structured participation of NSAs and openness of ASEAN to involve NSAs. Ultimately, a shift in paradigm where NSAs can be more than consultative partners is needed. NSA participation through dialogue and exchange of views would not suffice to bring about meaningful and beneficial outcomes for ASEAN community building

So far, the thesis has discussed how each ASEAN Community pillar contains specific networks and how an alternative understanding of ASEAN performance could be derived. It highlighted the current policy networks and how ASEAN displays the traits of NG. Yet, the recognition or acknowledgement of it remains minimal in the Association. The case studies, so far, have focused more on the interactions between ASEAN member states and other state actors (strategic and dialogue partners) to identify the interplay of each specific subsystem. Therefore it would be an incomplete picture of ASEAN as NG without examining the interaction between ASEAN member states and NSAs.

Based on the interviews, analysis and case studies, the thesis assessed that the role of NSAs is, in fact, well-regarded, and the importance of NSAs is not denied. In the interview with Mr Thomas Thomas, CEO of the ASEAN CSR Network, he shared the view that ‘governments alone cannot solve problems’ and called for more participation of civil society organisations in ASEAN. The same sentiment was expressed in the interview with Ambassador Michael Michalak, Senior Vice President and Regional Managing Director of the US-ASEAN Business Council. He said that “a lot of what is happening in ASEAN or some of the reasons things go so slowly in ASEAN is because the relationship between NSAs and the state actors is not very smooth’ (M. Michalak,

personal communication, 2020). However, it would not be easy to extrapolate the relationship between NSAs and the state actors since different ASEAN member states have varying degrees of relationships. It may also be dependent on the level of democracy and openness (M. Michalak, personal communication, 2020). Ambassador Michalak gave an example of Indonesia, where there are more discussions about political security issues than the AEC. As such, while ASEAN engages with NSAs as a regional organisation, how each ASEAN member states perceive NSAs may be different (M. Michalak, personal communication, 2020).

#### 4.13.2 Role of the State

As noted in this chapter, the interests or will of the member states, an overarching variable, is seen as a significant force in moving the policymaking process and deciding the outcome of policy networks in ASEAN. ASEAN is considered an intergovernmental where the state's role is prominent. However, this does not mean that the Association is doomed to make little progress in regional cooperation on issues affecting ASEAN. In an interview, Ambassador Kamsiah Kamaruddin, former Permanent Representative of Malaysia, said, 'should a member state be passionate about a particular issue, they will introduce it to ASEAN' (K. Kamaruddin, personal communication, 2020). She shared examples of how Thailand is passionate about sustainable development, a topic supported by Vietnam. With this, sustainable development has become part of the ASEAN agenda, where agendas that relate to women, peace and security have a place (K. Kamaruddin, personal communication, 2020). In this regard, the will or interest of member states, patterned interactions between member states and external actors, and the flow of information within a subsystem or policy network(s) become defining factors that determine the outcome or performance of a policy network.

NG's framework was established on the PNT to elaborate on how the will or interest of member states is instrumental in driving the policymaking process of ASEAN. It is state-driven due to the principles and norms member states uphold for historical reasons and the capacity of member states, materialistically speaking. If appropriately understood, the reasons why ASEAN remains a loosely-arranged regional organisation become

straightforward. What has often been termed the “ASEAN Way” to emphasise a firm rein on the principle of sovereignty and non-interference is connotated as the Association’s shortcomings. Yet it is the rationale of the research to argue that in doing so, it disregards ASEAN’s history.

#### **4.14 Summary**

To provide an understanding of ASEAN’s governance of community building and performance, including non-performance, the concept of NG was chosen to conceptualise the interplay between the interests and dynamics of ASEAN member states and stakeholders in the policy subsystems of the AEC, APSC, and ASCC.

The thesis has brought out the idea of ASEAN’s centrality in the selected case studies. The case studies on AFTA and ARF were utilised to establish why ASEAN’s centrality is crucial to the Association’s survival. As a regional organisation, ASEAN comprises new and relatively weak states that would easily be neglected in international society. Therefore, it is relevant to show that ASEAN can resist threats and maintain peace and security to ensure regional stability and resilience. As such, more than economic gains or dominating security cooperation, ASEAN looks toward being treated as an actor of significance, one very much needed in important issues that the international community is interested in, such as counterterrorism, transnational crime, maritime security, disaster relief, and non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons (Singh, 2021). Furthermore, it could explain ASEAN’s role as an honest broker in the ARF for its participants.

The case studies have been viewed through the lens of the policy network as each ASEAN Community pillar is filled with issue areas or policies that can be individually considered to understand the rationale behind them. In particular, how the issue/policymaking process appears can offer insights into understanding where the standstill or challenges lie and in which phase(s) of the policymaking process those difficulties are present. In addition, it enables the focus to be directed at the interaction of member states since they are the ones that initiated the issue/policy and move them through the policy process.



The case study on AFTA was compared within the global economy, where the role of the AFTA in propelling ASEAN member states towards a liberalised economy and establishing international trade relations is recognised. Yet, more than economic gains, a vital essence that has followed ASEAN since its inauguration is the concern for regional resilience. The studies on AFTA and ARF established how resilience is understood through the NA and the consolidation of social power to preserve ASEAN's centrality. In the ASCC, the researcher utilised the AHMM case study to show how performance and continuous actionable outcomes are all member states' directed efforts. In times of need and crisis, especially one threatening member states' peace and security, the will to move the policymaking process is high. At the same time, the research attributed a degree of success in the AHMM to NSAs for their assistance in the implementation phase. Similar to the success found in the policy networks of transnational crime in the APSC, the implementation phase was one where the support of NSAs greatly facilitated the policy network. It suggested how NSAs' participation can supplement ASEAN to achieve its community building goals.

In examining the selected policy networks (case studies) of each community, the objective was to show how: 1) ASEAN's objectives relate more closely to regional resilience than the reasons inspired by western narratives, realists, or neo-realists that prioritise the consolidation of materialistic power to counter regional and external threats; 2) norms and principles needs to be regarded as a constant of the Association, rather than a shortcoming; and 3) the call to implement legally-binding mechanisms and stronger institutionalisation can be seen ignorant and lacking understanding of the character of the region. It would help re-establish a focus on the performance of ASEAN to look at how member states respond and drive the policymaking process to capture ASEAN's goals instead of judging shortcomings based on the inability or failure to produce the intended results within an expected timeframe.

Most importantly, the emphasis on ASEAN's shortcomings, highlighted by its soft institutionalisation, is concerning as it affects how the performance (non-performance) and functioning of ASEAN are perceived. The NG framework recognises ASEAN's soft

institutional design and functioning from a place of reason and that the unique nature of ASEAN's regionalism is impacted by its history and norms.

With NA, the respective policy network was pictured as a social network where the structural position of ASEAN and its member states was examined. The denser the network, the more pertinent for us to identify where ASEAN is. It would allow an understanding of how significant ASEAN is as a player in driving an issue or policy. After all, the will or interests of member states can only be effective within ASEAN. Beyond ASEAN, the ability to cultivate its social power will be tested. It is where the performance of ASEAN should be further evaluated. The thesis defines performance as the "actionable" outcome of a subsystem or policy network(s). It is identified by examining the progress of the policymaking process consisting of five phases: agenda-setting, formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Any progress from one phase to another is considered an actionable outcome (and, as such, performance), whereas any status quo and stagnant situation indicate non-performance. It will explain the rationale for NSAs' participation in supporting the policymaking process, where the degree of involvement varies depending on the openness of the state actors and the interest of the NSAs.

Hence, the discourse on performance is complex and is attributed to specific dynamics in a subsystem or policy network caused by the interplay of the following three variables: will or interest of member states, patterned interactions, and the exchange of information within a subsystem or policy network(s). While it is easy to conflate the three variables to the behind-the-scenes workings of the norms and principles of ASEAN, the selected case studies have shown that each respective subsystem holds multitudes of policy networks concerning different issues defined by different dynamics.

The framework conceives of performance in a manner where an opened policy network that yields change (Howlett, 2002), such as the acceptance of NSAs, would be understood as a dynamic, vibrant policy network where ideas can be deliberated, as illustrated by Ambassador Kamsiah (K. Kamaruddin, personal communication, 2020), and hence the tendency for more innovation and liberal changes. In contrast, a closed policy network

where member states witness the usual pattern of interactions would result in status quo outcomes.

Finally, the NSAs' potential to contribute significantly to ASEAN's policymaking process is emphasised in this chapter. Examining the interaction between NSAs and ASEAN member states seeks to paint a picture of ASEAN as NG and the potential of NSAs to help bridge the gaps in policy implementation. As our survey highlighted, 'governments alone cannot do everything', and therefore a meaningful engagement with other actors in the implementation (i.e., beyond a mere dialogue) is necessary' (Howlett, 2002). While principles of non-interference and consensus decision-making may be deemed as factors that impede action in ASEAN's policy networks, especially in APSC/APSS, they must still be acknowledged for 'helping AMS to build confidence among one another' (Howlett, 2002) as mentioned by our survey respondents. While questions of revisiting the norms and principles of ASEAN are valid, the research intends to highlight that if these norms and principles are the culprits behind inaction in terms of performance outcome, then the dynamics of all the policy networks in a particular subsystem should be the same. For example, we may expect APSS to contain "closed" policy networks across the different issues under APSS. However, it is not the case. As such, the role of state actors, especially in ASEAN, is pertinent to many aspects of the Association. Therefore, it would be beneficial to study actors' motivation concerning a chosen policy network before making policy recommendations.

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## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

In establishing a framework of NG, the thesis provided an alternative to better approach and understand ASEAN's regionalism, behaviour and performance considering its principles, norms and soft institutionalisation. The institutional design of ASEAN reflected the unique history, values and bilateral relations between countries in Southeast Asia with tremendous diversities. The founders of ASEAN in 1967 understood this, and the leaders of ASEAN today acknowledged this to preserve regionalism with some changes to reflect the changing times and geopolitics. It is aligned with theories of "new regionalism" that took onboard the ubiquitous nature of regionalism and how the history and geopolitics of the region affected the regional organisations' structures and processes. It allowed a more nuanced approach to evaluating the behaviour and performance of ASEAN.

While mainstream theories, like realism and neo-realism, pinpointed the institutional shortcomings of ASEAN, the thesis showed that through an alternative framework that considered how norms and principles intervened or promoted specific policies or issues, a more objective understanding of ASEAN's performance could be achieved. It is not to downplay any of ASEAN's shortcomings but to understand the makeup of ASEAN to comprehend better the Association's goals which would differ from other regional organisations. It acknowledged the significant effect of those beliefs in ASEAN, which assured member states that their sovereign rights would not be infringed upon. The thesis also introduced the role NSAs could play in the policymaking process for regional integration, particularly in effectively supporting the implementation of ASEAN policies and initiatives.

With the application of NG, ASEAN member states would have another lens to measure their actions and implementation and assess the value NSAs could bring to ASEAN community building efforts. It would aid their policymaking process and address the

weaknesses in implementing their policies and programs. It would also help to improve the vertical and horizontal coordination within ASEAN structures to bring about a more significant impact across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community.

### **5.1 Alternative Paradigm on ASEAN's Structure**

The three pillars of the ASEAN Community (AEC, APSC and ASCC) were studied utilising NG established by works such as Powell's network forms of organisation and Howlett's policy network structure. They consisted of the concepts of policy universe and policy subsystems to conceptualise ASEAN's structure and core. The different interplay and dynamics witnessed in each community pillar were tell-tale signs that ASEAN saw more success in specific policy networks. It meant that in certain policy subsystems, the interests of member states far exceeded the strong inclination towards holding on to principles of non-interference and/or sovereignty. In this way, the thesis showed that through the NG framework, we could better comprehend that in an intergovernmental organisation like ASEAN, agency and actors' consciousness were the main determinants of performance or non-performance of a policy network.

This could be the focal area for ASEAN when it examines better "structuring" of the Association for improved performance. For example, looking back at the transnational crime policy network, it produced results even though it was under the APSS. Therefore, contrary to the view that the more politicised area of ASEAN cooperation might face inaction, the transnational crime policy network showed dynamic outcomes working with NSAs that helped to bridge the implementation gaps. Hence, in providing another framework to approach ASEAN, the thesis highlighted that different policy networks, even under the same policy subsystem, had their own dynamics and performance. It leads us to examine ASEAN's performance through individual policy networks. While achieving a more predictive performance by opting for a higher degree of institutionalisation might be a means to accelerate implementation, the thesis established a practical solution of an alternative paradigm that aligns with ASEAN's norms and principles (underpinnings). It adopted the understanding that ASEAN is a hybrid regional organisation with NG as its core and a hierarchical structure as its front. It argued that the

role of ASEAN within the region and beyond is tied to its core of attaining regional resilience to maintain its sovereignty and strategic interests.

While the organisational structure at the front does not hold a supranational authority, it enabled ASEAN to gain international recognition and legitimacy. At the core, the policymaking process aligned with the norms and principles of ASEAN had guided the Association through many challenges for over half a century. It enabled regionalism to survive in Southeast Asia. It is especially so when attempts in the past at regionalism in a diverse Southeast Asia had failed several times before ASEAN was established. It answers the first research question regarding how ASEAN's structure is perceived and supports ASEAN's legitimacy as an intergovernmental organisation promoting regional integration.

## **5.2 ASEAN's Goals**

By understanding ASEAN as a hybrid regional organisation with NG as its core and formal hierarchical structure as its front, the actions and performance of ASEAN could be better assessed without being compared to the EU integration project. As articulated in the thesis, ASEAN is a regional organisation composed of new and relatively weaker states in a region where the major foreign powers are actively engaged in geopolitics. In addition, ASEAN is a diverse organisation with member states of different political systems, economic development levels, cultures, languages, and religions. It meant that the challenges faced by ASEAN would differ from other regional organisations, including the EU. Hence, NG as an alternative framework allowed for a better accounting of ASEAN's unique history, challenges and dynamics that impacted its performance.

The pursuit of peace and security within the region spurred the establishment of the Association in 1967, and it continues to be the top priority of ASEAN today. Therefore, the alternative framework proposed could better depict ASEAN's motivations for responding to specific issues. Moreover, it allowed for an understanding of ASEAN's actions without reference to other regional organisations. It emphasised that regionalism is unique to each region and that no "right" trajectory exists for regionalism to thrive.

### 5.3 Motivation for the Research

In developing another framework or hierarchy to understand the structure and underpinnings of ASEAN, the thesis sought to present an alternative approach to evaluating ASEAN's action, behaviour, and performance. This alternative framework did not seek to undermine regional organisations like the EU with supranational characteristics implementing binding decisions on its member states. On the contrary, it provided a more nuanced means of perceiving ASEAN's performance given its institutional design, values and mandate of the member states within the regional organisation in the policymaking process vis-a-vis the structures of the Association. The thesis finding was that the lack of legally binding institutions in the Association did not signify a failed entity. Instead, the failures were co-related to the degree of patterned interactions among member states on a specific issue and if the issue directly impacted the regional and national resilience and the central role of ASEAN in Southeast Asia.

In addition, the thesis reflected on the pursuit of institutional evolution often presented to ASEAN by western scholars to resolve its inefficiency. The main concern was the absence of legally binding institutions due to its norms, such as the principle of non-interference, which might block any attempt to build formal institutions and ensure that member states' sovereignty prevails. It was said to hinder ASEAN's performance and progress. While it might be a reasonable proposition, it would be essential to acknowledge that the current institutional arrangement and processes were the "best compromise" forged by the member states due to the complicated history of regionalism in Southeast Asia and the past tense bilateral relations between the member states. Besides, ASEAN required flexibility in policymaking to succeed, given the enormous diversity among countries. As such, by providing another framework, the thesis sought to reconcile the current literature with the norms and principles that guide the Association in its policymaking.

Furthermore, it helped to discern the fundamental role of ASEAN for member states accounting for its performance and/or non-performance through studying ASEAN's core using policy networks. An analysis of the networks across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community revealed the interplay between the interests of member states and the norms

and principles of the Association. When the issue or initiative fell within the norms, values and principles of ASEAN, there was general performance and support, particularly if it aligned with the economic development of member states and safeguarded regional resilience. In essence, they helped to show NG was a valuable framework for understanding ASEAN's motivation, behaviour and action.

#### **5.4 Recognising Network Governance (NG) in ASEAN**

Based on how entrenched the norms, principles, and values of ASEAN are, it might not be realistic to expect their transition or replacement any time soon. The sovereignty and independence of ASEAN member states were only regained after the second world war, and considering past animosities, the principles of non-interference and sovereignty are regarded as sacrosanct. Thus the thesis found that it might be beneficial to use another paradigm to view the policymaking and performance of the Association. The continuous stress on how the norms and principles of ASEAN were roots of ineffectiveness became a vicious cycle of contemplating the benefits behind an organisation crippled by its norms and principles yet considering the significance of those norms and principles for ASEAN's survival.

In assessing ASEAN's institutional design, the thesis sought to show the presence of a hierarchy. However, Jetschke (2009) depicted ASEAN's light institutionalisation as a result of mimicking EU institutions as a failure due to the deep-seated assumptions that looked at the norms and principles of ASEAN as obstacles in further formalising its organisational structures. Therefore, one of the main research questions provided another understanding of ASEAN's institutionalisation, especially reaffirming that the norms and principles of ASEAN are not stumbling blocks to its performance. Instead, they were essential elements acknowledged as early as the inception of ASEAN. Thus, the Association still wielded its own hierarchical design even if the institutionalisation degree was lesser than the EU. Nevertheless, the fact that ASEAN codified some important treaties and a Charter to reflect the conduct and goals of the member states indicated some form of hierarchical structure.



The challenge for the thesis was to establish a framework that could view the underpinnings of ASEAN as the core of the making and functioning of the Association. Questions about ASEAN viability often centre around ASEAN's norms, principles, and performance. It signalled a need to understand ASEAN from within and away from an EU lens, which most critics and/or sceptics adopted when making sense of ASEAN.

Therefore, in adopting the idea of a "policy network" spurred by the policy network theory (PNT) by Michael Howlett, the thesis developed an alternative framework of network governance (NG) to showcase how ASEAN was an organisation with much agency, capable of driving its regional goals and actively pursuing them through its own capacity. Since PNT organised 'actors and institutions into identifiable sets of policy-relevant interactions' (Howlett, 2002) and looked beyond structure (institutional mode of analysis) or agency (behavioural mode of analysis) when assessing a policy-making process, it was highly applicable to ASEAN.

It allowed a deep dive via policy networks to understand how the norms and principles embedded in its policy-making process affect ASEAN's performance. The thesis found that ASEAN could be understood as a hybrid regional organisation with NG as its core and a formal hierarchical structure as its front. It also offered more room to examine ASEAN without immediate backlashes against the embedded norms, principles, and values within the Association. A perspective that tied ASEAN's performance to the degree of institutionalisation would view ASEAN's light structures as a limiting factor of the Association.

Hence, the framework of NG provided a different way to assess ASEAN's performance or non-performance without institutional comparisons. It moved the narrative beyond what realists, neo-realists, and ASEAN sceptics held that the Association was merely a tool for the major powers in the region to promote their interests. Instead, it highlighted the commitment and determination of ASEAN member states to pave their own direction in the international community while promoting regional integration unique to Southeast Asia to maintain peace, security, and economic growth.

During the research, ASEAN's centrality and regional resilience were assessed as the key motivations for ASEAN integration and performance. However, their importance varied according to the pillars, even though their influence was seen across the three pillars. Moreover, the degree of prominence of certain norms and principles differed among the three pillars. For instance, the principle of non-interference was more pronounced in the APSC than in the ASCC, which aims to narrow the social and cultural divide and focus on people-to-people cooperation.

In terms of the three case studies, the interplay of the norms and actors could be seen vividly. The ARF was about ensuring the region's security and addressing regional tensions with the support of major powers. The AFTA boosted intra-ASEAN trade and connected ASEAN to the multilateral trading system governed by the WTO. Finally, the AHMM addressed the pandemic issue using a regional approach since the spread of the disease within Southeast Asia directly and profoundly impacted each member state's welfare and economy. Besides, the region needed to stay connected with the global economy and gain access to much-needed COVID-19 vaccines. In all three case studies, the role of the state actors, the intensive patterns of interaction and the considerable interest in taking a regional approach to the issue areas showed the NG in operation. The member states were the primary actors in all three case studies, taking proactive roles in moving the agenda.

### **5.5 Key Findings**

The thesis utilised three variables to examine the case studies. They were the will or interest of member states, patterned interactions, and exchange of information within the networks. The case studies were chosen as they showed the type of stakeholder participation in a policy network, allowing for an examination of the interplay between the will and interests of member states and the dynamics among them. ASEAN's performance was evaluated by studying the particular interplay or dynamics identified.

In the case studies on AFTA and ARF, ASEAN's centrality was showcased as the main objective of those policy networks as they worked with various stakeholders on the international front, which offered the Association a platform to reinforce ASEAN's centrality in Southeast Asia and beyond. By establishing the role of the policy networks, the motivations that drove the networks were understood better than assuming that ASEAN aimed to garner economic gains, attain dominance or consolidate material power that theories had proposed. Instead, ASEAN aspired to be treated as a significant actor on the international stage, one that could not be excluded from global or transnational issues such as counterterrorism, transnational crime, maritime security, disaster relief, and non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons, etc. Hence, via the NG framework, we could uncover the objectives of ASEAN and the role each policy network played in driving that objective.

Through this, we can understand why ASEAN desired to maintain its position as an honest broker in the network of ARF comprising 27 countries, including significant powers such as the US, China and Russia. By studying the interests of ASEAN member states via the policy network, more significance could be attributed to the ARF and its role in ensuring regional security, including the APSS. Similarly, AFTA was more than about increasing intra-ASEAN trade and encompassed ASEAN's regional resilience agenda. On the other hand, AFTA served as a fallback and buffer in times of global economic or financial crisis, which was beyond member states' control. It also promoted economic ties among members and connected ASEAN to the multilateral trading system, thereby creating interdependence and making wars costly. Besides, it served as a precursor for member states to forge free trade agreements with their trade partners, further supporting regional resilience and ASEAN's relevance to the global community. In this policy network, member states were generally aligned and motivated to pursue the economic agenda with less inhibition from the norms and principles.

As for the AHMM study in the ASCC, the contributions of NSAs in providing medical and technical knowledge to the ASEAN Community made the policy outcomes richer and more effective. Hence, in the COVID-19 pandemic case study, the NSAs, as a group of stakeholders, helped to bridge the implementation gap ASEAN faced when advancing

specific policies in an uncertain and evolving policy environment. As a result, it strengthened ASEAN's performance and enabled it to meet the needs of its people. Therefore, the NG set-up at the core of ASEAN operations helped sustainably promote ASEAN's community-building agenda by leveraging the fundamentals of the norms, principles, and values of the Association, which acted as a gel for cooperation when issues were urgent and had a regional impact.

The thesis found that policy networks under the same subsystem did not necessarily produce similar outcomes. For instance, while ASEAN's norms and principles were heavily regarded in the political realm, policy networks on transnational crime had achieved positive results, unlike those concerning more traditional security-related issues. The former witnessed active deliberation between member states and relevant non-state actors, prompting two-way information sharing within the network and assistance from NSAs to cooperate in addressing criminal matters, including extradition, trafficking in person etc.

It led to examining policy networks as "opened" or "closed", as referenced from Howlett's work on policy networks. "Opened" policy networks tended to arrive at dynamic outcomes, while "closed" policy networks would arrive at status quo outcomes. Thus, it was necessary to consolidate the three variables utilised to assess the three selected case studies. Furthermore, since the variables used in the thesis were chosen to highlight the interplay between member states and the underpinnings of ASEAN at the core, progress in a policy network was underscored by the will or interest of member states (towards the network). Hence, it was an important determinant affecting the degree of patterned interactions and exchange of information within the network. As such, an "opened" policy network was likely to yield new perspectives, innovative ideas, and changes to how issues were viewed and solutions to address them. Thus, NSAs' participation could be valuable for ASEAN integration as long as the agenda of the state actors and NSAs are aligned.

It is associated with the concept of "actionable outcomes", where the emphasis was on the will of member states and how it interfered with policymaking. It would reveal the influence of ASEAN's norms and principles in that policy network. Actionable outcomes

were understood as any progress moving from one phase of a policy-making process to another. For example, moving from the decision-making to the policy evaluation phase was deemed an actionable outcome for any issues or policies. In contrast, the status quo or a stagnant situation in a particular phase was seen as inaction and non-performance. A step back from the implementation to the initiation phase was considered an actionable outcome since understanding performance as a linear progression neglected internal differences and external factors of geopolitics to which the ASEAN region was vulnerable.

On the other hand, opting for this understanding of performance brought out issues where non-performance was identified chiefly and not witnessed across all ASEAN communities. In addition, NG respected and regarded intrinsic factors like norms and values as part of the "structure" of ASEAN. In this way, utilising the framework of NG yielded a tacit understanding of its functioning and the performance of ASEAN.

With a renewed perspective on performance, it would be necessary to establish the fundamental objectives and goals of ASEAN to ensure the critique was relevant to its set agenda. For instance, the case study on AFTA sought to account for the critical role of ASEAN in that the choice to participate in global liberalisation was strongly connected to the goal of regional resilience and more than just pure economic or material gains. To understand this, it was essential to adopt another paradigm that departed from traditional theories that looked at economic integration and liberalisation as a gateway to economic connectivity and concrete trade relations. The thesis highlighted that staking a role in the global economy allowed ASEAN member states to stay relevant and become an integral part of the multilateral trading system. Trade and services liberalisation and attracting foreign direct investments, technology, and know-how to ASEAN were some of the motivations under the AEC. Thus, examining the AFTA policy network underscored the broader and strategic intentions of ASEAN beyond tariff liberalisation, intra-ASEAN trade and wealth creation.

## 5.6 Contribution of the Thesis

### 5.6.1 Regional Integration

An overarching theme of the thesis was underscoring regional integration in the "Southeast Asia context". Even though theoretical discourses on comparative regionalism provided a comprehensive guideline for equating regions, they did not possess the total conceptual capacity to assess the success and failures of regional organisations. As such, the thesis endeavoured to add to the current literature regarding the dominance of the Western-centric perspective in examining alternative regional integration processes. While an increasing body of research on regional international societies had demonstrated attempts by scholars to theorise and understand their respective characteristics, the thesis found that there was still a significant gap in comprehending how the norms and principles of ASEAN were critical to its functioning and survival. Hence, while notions of sovereignty and statehood implicated the process of regional integration, they remained essential to the working of ASEAN.

Indeed, it raised concerns and questions about the institutional design of ASEAN and the lack of legally binding mechanisms that prompted various scholarly interpretations of ASEAN as a 'security community' (Dosch, 2008), a 'security regime' (Collins, 2007), a network or an 'institution' (Rüland & Jetschke, 2008). This research filled the gap by providing another framework to theorise and assess ASEAN as a regional organisation.

### 5.6.2 Network Governance (NG)

The adoption of NG encapsulated the intergovernmental nature of ASEAN while depicting an alternative to 'hierarchy' explanations (Williamson, 1985; Scharpf, 1993; Deyo, Doner and Hershberg, 2001). In utilising the framework of NG, the thesis referred to the work of Herranz and Bok-Tae Kim. To recapitulate, the work of Kim on the "three-order network governance and public network development" helped to envision ASEAN's level of governance via a policy network model and provided a systematic institutional development path for ASEAN. Accordingly, ASEAN was presently in the "network

coordination" phase characterised by some degree of control or coordination (Kim, 2009). With a greater understanding of NG, ASEAN could progress to the third order of "network self-regulation", where member states would be more aware of each other differences, which would help to build mutual respect and reciprocity, aiding information flow and consensus building, reinforcing the shared norms and values of the Association have always highlighted since inauguration (Kim, 2009). This form of governance respected the core of ASEAN and placed member states in a position to put on their best conduct for the interests of the Association (and their own interests). It would potentially see more coordination within ASEAN and the opportunity to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat to address the challenges impeding the network's performance. It aligned with how the adoption of NG sought to further improve ASEAN as a network governance model and emphasised the potential for the ASEAN Secretariat - in Jordan and Schout's term "network manager" - to develop further.

The fourth stage of "network self-leadership" proposed by the thesis would require each state actor to push the rest of the group to achieve something more by showing the way through peer learning and pressure. Here, member states might find the aspiration to play a leadership role in further consolidating the structure and driving it with content and methods, as ASEAN's history has shown at different stages of the Association's development. At the same time, it would free up the finite ASEAN Secretariat resources for it to develop into a "nerve centre" critical for ASEAN's next stage of community building. The Secretariat could become the information repository and statistical source of policy, undertaking implementation compliance while playing a more substantial legal role in managing legal and trade disputes within the Association. It would further consolidate the strength of a network approach and the adoption of NG framework resulting in better implementation of community building measures and aiding ASEAN's performance.

### 5.6.3 Role of State Actors

Since political leadership rested on ASEAN's leaders (ASEAN Summit), it would be essential for them to view ASEAN's performance from another perspective, where norms and principles remained essential in shaping institutional behaviour and processes. The interviews and research surveys conducted noted that ASEAN blueprints were political documents. Therefore, they required political will and commitment (including normative commitment and resources) from ASEAN's top leadership to secure implementation. Moreover, to effectively strengthen the ASEAN Community and its performance, there was a need for multi-sectoral and government partnerships at the horizontal and vertical levels of the policy networks in ASEAN.

Being an intergovernmental organisation where decisions were driven from the top down and implementation from the bottom up, ASEAN leaders would need to provide the political will and financial and human resources to ensure integration objectives were timely achieved at the regional level supported by the national level. The national-level implementation of ASEAN initiatives would be essential to achieve regional integration in an intergovernmental setting. Thus, the role of actors overseeing the implementation at both levels would be necessary, especially if they differ in their understanding and manage any conflicts between national and regional interests.

Hence, the level of participation and, notably, the pattern of interactions in policy networks was discerned to form the basis of the study as it would ultimately affect performance. In this regard, alongside PNT and using "policy networks" for performance evaluation, any viable framework would need to factor in ASEAN's soft institutional design and underpinnings in assessing performance across the three ASEAN communities.

### 5.6.4 Susceptibility of Non-state Actors (NSAs)

The thesis highlighted the need for ASEAN to recognise further the role NSAs could play in the Association. ASEAN could identify how NSAs could contribute to ASEAN cooperation and acknowledge their potential to improve the Association's effectiveness.



The NSAs could become valuable knowledge partners with their relevant technical expertise and funding capabilities to support the various policy networks in ASEAN. The thesis drew attention to the cooperation in addressing transnational crime in APSC, which showed the numerous instances where NSAs had a strong reinforcing effect in the ASEAN policy-making process, notably in the implementation phase.

Across different interviewees and survey respondents for the thesis, a common concern was the varying socio-economic level of ASEAN member states, which made the pace of implementation uneven. This would be an entry point for NSAs to assist with the implementation phase within the domestic realm. Yet, NSAs were only involved in consultative and feedback dialogues at the current juncture. As such, ASEAN member states would increasingly need to recognise NSAs' benefits to the policy-making process and develop structured mechanisms to involve them in ASEAN community-building efforts.

At the same time, the research served as a reference point for NSAs to understand better the norms, values, and principles of ASEAN. The more NSAs become accustomed to the workings of ASEAN, the more it would be seen as relevant to the policy-making process by the member states. In other words, the greater the alignment between ASEAN policies and NSAs' agenda, the more likely ASEAN would engage them. As such, NSAs would need to examine their agenda, approach, and parameters for collaboration with ASEAN before they engage the Association in a constructive and lasting manner.

The susceptibility of NSAs across the three pillars of ASEAN communities formed the thesis contribution to existing literature that only highlighted institutional evolution for ASEAN to better itself. Increasing the involvement of NSAs in ASEAN's policy networks would complement the goal established in the ASEAN Charter, which looked to promote a people-oriented ASEAN Community in which all sectors of society were encouraged to participate in and benefit from the process of its integration and community building (Koh et al., 2009). Therefore, the recommendation to view NSAs significantly and seriously on the part of ASEAN would prompt institutionalising the non-state actors' role in the policy networks. That should go beyond recognising NSAs in the ASEAN Charter as "Entities

Associated with ASEAN" and having a rules of procedures for private sector engagement to providing space for their structured involvement in the ASEAN policy process where they could add significant value, including the implementation phase. It would boost ASEAN's performance while ensuring NSAs remained aligned with the Association's commitment.

NG could formally institutionalise the involvement of NSAs, such as think tanks, business councils and academia, in their institutional arrangements to support the policymaking process, including the implementation. In addition, NSAs, such as the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ABAC), could be allowed to play a more prominent role by forming committees to work on crucial AEC initiatives with the relevant ASEAN committees while evaluating the AEC policy outcomes from a business perspective to serve as inputs to the AEC. The ABAC's role currently was limited to providing feedback on ASEAN economic policies and initiatives. The same applied to business councils under various dialogue partnerships, such as the EU-ASEAN Business Council and the US-ASEAN Business Council. They did not partake in implementing ASEAN or dialogue partners' policies, initiatives, and assessments to enhance the performance of the AEC.

#### 5.6.5 NG in International Relations Studies

At the broadest level, the research aimed to spur further work in applying NG to international relations and the context of intergovernmental organisations. Such organisations have proliferated in the developing world in the last fifty years but suffered from ineffective policymaking and implementation arrangements. If the concept of NG were better understood as a model for governance in these intergovernmental organisations, perhaps they would benefit more from regional cooperation. First, however, individual studies could be undertaken to assess the relevance of the NG framework for these organisations. Understanding their history, objectives, vision, values, and network processes here would be critical to determine how NG could work for them. In that case, finite resources could be better utilised, and NSAs' expertise and resources could be tapped for the programmes and projects they implemented.

## 5.7 Final Words

In conclusion, the thesis is the first to study ASEAN as NG concerning its regionalism, action and performance, taking into account its institutional design and processes. It exhibited the significance of the norms and principles of ASEAN and their substantive weight in policymaking within the three ASEAN communities. It highlighted that the interplay between the interests/will of the member states and the dynamics of stakeholders in a policy network offered a means to assess the functioning of both policy networks and policy subsystems in ASEAN. By establishing another framework of NG, ASEAN could recognise the value that the utilisation of NG could offer in assessing its performance or non-performance and use it as a tool to plan future policies and initiatives. The NG framework would also provide a channel to engage NSAs and evaluate their value in specific regional integration initiatives. It would help bridge the expertise and resource gaps within ASEAN to implement the blueprints of the three ASEAN communities. Since many NSAs are involved at regional and country levels, their contribution could be transformational for an intergovernmental and regional organisation such as ASEAN.

Significantly, the thesis could contribute to ASEAN understanding its own regionalism, policymaking process and institutional structures to bridge implementation gaps to support its ASEAN Community 2025 agenda and beyond. It would also provide ASEAN officials, the ASEAN Secretariat, scholars and future research into ASEAN regionalism another framework to assess ASEAN and similar regional and intergovernmental organisations.

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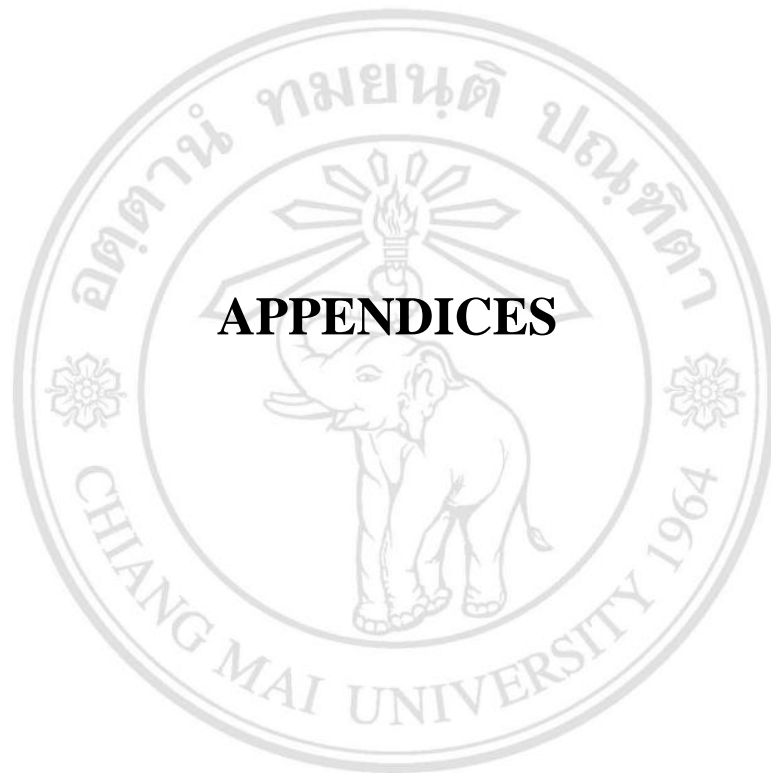
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## APPENDIX A

### Number of Semi-Structured Interviews Conducted

<b>Number of State and Non State Actors Interviewed</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>	<b>Number of Recorded Interviews</b>
State Actors	ASEAN Member States	14	11
	ASEAN Secretariat	3	2
Non State Actors	ASEAN Affiliated/Recognised Entities (Business Councils, Think Tanks and NGOs) from the three ASEAN communities	6	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>

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## APPENDIX B

### Sample Ethical Form

I hereby acknowledge that

1. I have agreed to take part in the above research.
2. I have received a copy of the information sheet that explains the use of my data in this research. I understand its contents and agree to the collection of data for use in this research.
3. I can withdraw from the research at any point in time by informing the Research Investigator and all my data will be discarded.
4. I will not have any financial benefits that result from the commercial development of this research.
5. I agree to the audio-recording/ video-recording of my participation in the research.
6. I understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

	I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly.
	I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published, and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.
	I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.

7. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality.
8. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.
9. I *agree/ do not agree\** for the following personal data to be disclosed in any publication or presentation relating to this research, if any. Please initial next to any of the personal data that you agree to disclose:

	Surname
	First Name
	Organisation Name
	Position/Designation
	Disagree (I wish to remain anonymous and only agree to be known as <u>          </u> .)

## APPENDIX C

### Questionnaire for Semi-Structured Interviews

<p><b><i>I. General Overview</i></b></p> <p><b><u>Perspectives on ASEAN and Its Institutional Arrangements</u></b></p>
<p>1. How would you classify ASEAN as an organisation?</p> <p>a. Is it an international organisation, intergovernmental organisation or a loosely formed Association driven by ASEAN member states?</p>
<p>2. How is ASEAN governance set up in terms of policymaking and policy implementation at the regional level?</p> <p>a. How has this governance model evolved over the last 50 years?</p> <p>b. What were the key defining changes in the ASEAN governance model over the years? Are more stakeholders involved now?</p>
<p>3. How have ASEAN norms, principles, and values played a role in policymaking and implementation and is it still relevant?</p>
<p><b><u>Perspectives on the Roles and Relationships of Various Actors in ASEAN</u></b></p>
<p>4. What is the role of the ASEAN institutions (AMM, AEM, SOM, ASEAN PRs etc.) and the ASEAN Secretariat in the agenda setting, formulation, decision making, implementation, and evaluation processes of policymaking in ASEAN?</p> <p>a. How are the roles between the ASEAN institutions and ASEAN Secretariat different?</p> <p>b. Does the role of the ASEAN Secretariat stop at coordinating the implementation of regional measures with member states?*</p>
<p>5. What is the role of the member states in the policymaking processes of ASEAN?</p> <p>a. Where do the member states come in when it comes to policymaking and policy implementation?</p>
<p>6. Where do the non-state actors come into the picture when it comes to policymaking processes in ASEAN?</p> <p>a. How are they engaged at the national and regional levels?</p> <p>b. Is there a meaningful role for NSAs in ASEAN community building?</p> <p>c. Is there a strong interest from non-state actors to be engaged and involved in ASEAN integration?</p>
<p>7. How is the regional policy implementation managed at the national level and how important is this for ASEAN community building efforts?</p> <p>a. Who are the key players at the national level for the three communities?</p> <p>b. What is the link between national and regional implementation? Who are the overall coordinator at the national level and regional levels?</p>
<p>8. What are some of the challenges faced when implementing regional policies at the national level?</p>
<p><b><i>II. Non-state Actors</i></b></p> <p><b><u>Perspectives on the Contributions of Non-state Actors in ASEAN</u></b></p>
<p>9. How are the non-state actors involved in the three communities of ASEAN, and what value is there for them to be involved? Where is this cooperation more visible, and why?</p>
<p>10. Can you cite some examples of the non-state actors who are important for ASEAN and what their contributions have been so far?</p>

<p>11. How are non-state actors' feedback and inputs factored into ASEAN cooperation, policymaking and implementation?</p> <p>a. Is there a structure for this, or is it ad-hoc?</p> <p>b. Is the engagement at the committee levels, ministerial and leaders' levels or a combination of all levels?</p> <p>c. How useful are their feedback and inputs?</p> <p>d. Are there good examples to emulate?</p>
<p><i>APSC</i></p> <p>12. In the area of combating transnational crime, what has been the role of the non-state actors, including think tanks, academia, businesses, NGOs, parliamentarians, etc.?</p> <p>a. Cite some examples, if any</p> <p>b. What has been the role of ASEAN institutions, ASEAN Secretariat, and member states in engaging NSAs?</p>
<p><i>AEC</i></p> <p>1. In the area of trade integration, what has been the role of NSAs?</p> <p>a. Cite some examples, if any</p> <p>b. What has been the role of ASEAN institutions, ASEAN Secretariat, and member states in engaging NSAs?</p>
<p><i>ASCC</i></p> <p>1 In the area of combating emerging infectious diseases, what has been the role of NSAs?</p> <p>a. Cite some examples, if any</p> <p>b. What has been the role of ASEAN institutions, ASEAN Secretariat, and member states in engaging NSAs?</p>
<p><b><u>Perspectives on the Participation of Non-state Actors in ASEAN</u></b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the limitations and/or challenges that NSAs face in participating in ASEAN?</li> </ul>
<p>16. How comfortable are member states with NSAs' participation?</p> <p>a. Do NSAs participate freely, or they have to be authorised by the member state's government to be involved in ASEAN activities?</p> <p>b. What are the disadvantages of allowing NSAs who are interested in participating freely in ASEAN activities?</p> <p>c. What platforms are available for this?</p>
<p>17. How has the ASEAN structure after the ASEAN Charter aided the participation of NSAs in ASEAN processes?</p> <p>a. Is there a more definitive structure for the involvement of NSAs now than before the ASEAN Charter?</p> <p>b. Cite some examples, if any</p>
<p>18. Do you find a greater need now for non-state actors to be involved in ASEAN community building? If so, how and why?</p> <p>a. Is there a conflict of interest in their participation? How can this be overcome?</p>
<p>19. How can NSAs be more involved in achieving the implementation goals outlined by the ASEAN Community Blueprints (2015-2025)?</p>
<p><b><u>Perspectives on ASEAN and Network Governance</u></b></p>
<p>20. Do you think that the concept of network governance is useful to look at in terms of ASEAN's way of cooperating with NSAs and involving them in policy development and implementation?</p> <p>a. Do you think that network governance model and policy networks, if mainstreamed into ASEAN as a model for the involvement of Non-state Actors, will help ASEAN to implement its community building blueprints and scorecards better?</p> <p>b. Will Network Governance and Policy Networks co-exist with the current ASEAN institutional framework?</p> <p>c. Will greater engagement of NSAs drain the resources of ASEAN from focusing on its community building agenda?</p>

## APPENDIX D

### List of Survey Participants

<b>ASEAN Affiliated/Recognised Non State Actors</b>	
Parliamentarians	1. ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Association (AIPA)
Business Organisations	2. ASEAN Airlines Meeting 3. ASEAN Alliance of Health Supplement Association 4. ASEAN Automotive Federation 5. ASEAN Bankers Association 6. ASEAN Business Advisory Council 7. ASEAN Iron and Steel Industry Federation 8. ASEAN Tourism Association 9. China-ASEAN Business Alliance 10. EU-ASEAN Business Council 11. US-ASEAN Business Council
Think Tanks and Academic Institutions	<b>ASEAN-ISIS Network:</b> 12. Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace 13. Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia 14. Lao PDR Institute of Foreign Affairs 15. Institute of Strategic Studies (ISIS)-Malaysia 16. Singapore Institute of International Affairs 17. Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University 18. Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam
Civil Society Organisations	19. ASEAN Foundation 20. ASEAN Business Youth Association 21. ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network 22. ASEAN Corporate Social Responsibility Network 23. ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation 24. ASEAN Freight Forwarders Association 25. ASEAN Ports Association 26. ASEAN Law Association 27. Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation 28. Medical Association of Southeast Asian Nations Committee 29. Asian Partnership for Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia 30. Passage to ASEAN Secretariat Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre

<p>Other ASEAN Stakeholders</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31. ASEAN Studies Centre, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (</li> <li>32. Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia</li> <li>33. Rajaretnam School of International Studies, NTU</li> <li>34. Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS</li> <li>35. Institute of Policy Studies</li> <li>36. Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS</li> <li>37. Centre for Public Policy Studies</li> <li>38. CIMB Research Institute</li> <li>39. Asian Strategy &amp; Leadership Institute</li> <li>40. Mekong Institute</li> <li>41. Grow Asia</li> <li>42. CropLife Asia</li> <li>43. Food Industry Asia</li> <li>44. UN Office for Drugs and Crime</li> <li>45. World Food Programme</li> <li>46. Food and Agriculture Organisation</li> <li>47. UNESCAP</li> <li>48. Asian Development Bank</li> <li>49. The Asia Foundation</li> <li>50. GIZ</li> </ol>
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*(Note: Some entities submitted two survey questionnaires.)*

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**APPENDIX E**  
**Survey Questionnaire**

**Survey Template**

**I. Respondent Information**

1. Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Affiliation
  - a. Business
  - b. CSO (Civil Society Organization) / NGO (Non-Governmental Organization)
  - c. Academe/Think Tank
  - d. Government
  - e. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Country
  - a. Brunei Darussalam
  - b. Cambodia
  - c. Indonesia
  - d. Lao PDR
  - e. Malaysia
  - f. Myanmar
  - g. Philippines
  - h. Singapore
  - i. Thailand
  - j. Vietnam
4. Age
  - a. 21-30
  - b. 31-49
  - c. 50+
5. Gender:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to indicate

## **II. Perspectives on ASEAN Community-Building Efforts**

**Description:** The ASEAN Community was established in 2015 and comprises three pillars: ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community (ASCC). The APSC highlights the organisation's commitment to promote and maintain peace in the Southeast Asia region through fostering trust and cooperation on defence issues, transnational crimes and terrorism. The AEC aims to enhance economic cooperation through increasing free trade and flow of goods. The ASCC strives to foster a regional identity that is people-oriented and socially responsible.

6. Generally speaking, how effective do you think ASEAN is in achieving its aims and purposes as the regional association in Southeast Asia?
  - a. Very effective
  - b. Moderately effective
  - c. Somewhat effective
  - d. Slightly effective
  - e. Not effective at all
7. Generally speaking, how effective are the policy-making and implementation processes in ASEAN?
  - a. Very effective
  - b. Moderately effective
  - c. Somewhat effective
  - d. Slightly effective
  - e. Not effective at all
8. To what extent has ASEAN facilitated the progress of development of your country?
  - a. To a large extent
  - b. To a moderate extent
  - c. To some extent
  - d. To a small extent
  - e. Not at all
9. [APSC] ASEAN is effective in maintaining peace and security in the region.
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

10. [APSC] To what extent have the initiatives under the ASEAN Political Security Community been implemented in your country?
- To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To some extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all
11. [APSC] How prominent are the effects of ASEAN's political-security initiatives in your country?
- Very prominent
  - Moderately prominent
  - Somewhat prominent
  - Slightly prominent
  - Not prominent at all
12. [APSC] Implementing ASEAN political security initiatives remains a huge challenge for my country.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
13. [AEC] ASEAN is effective in promoting trade and economic integration in the region.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
14. [AEC] To what extent have the initiatives under the ASEAN Economic Community been implemented in your country?
- To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To some extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all



15. [AEC] How prominent are the effects of ASEAN's economic integration initiatives in your country?
- Very prominent
  - Moderately prominent
  - Somewhat prominent
  - Slightly prominent
  - Not prominent at all
16. [AEC] Implementing ASEAN's economic integration initiatives remains a huge challenge for my country.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
17. [ASCC] ASEAN is effective in fostering a people-centred community in the region.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
18. [ASCC] To what extent have the initiatives under the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community been implemented in your country?
- To a large extent
  - To a moderate extent
  - To some extent
  - To a small extent
  - Not at all
19. [ASCC] How prominent are the effects of ASEAN's socio-cultural initiatives in your country?
- Very prominent
  - Moderately prominent
  - Somewhat prominent
  - Slightly prominent
  - Not prominent at all

20. [ASCC] Implementing ASEAN's socio-cultural initiatives remains a huge challenge for my country.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
21. ASEAN's implementation initiatives under the ASEAN Community Blueprints are achievable.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
22. Would you agree or disagree on the need for gradually upgrading the implementation and monitoring capabilities of ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges?
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
23. Other ways to improve implementation deficiencies in ASEAN: \_\_\_\_\_

### **III. Perspectives on Non-State Actors in ASEAN**

**Description:** Non-state actors in ASEAN refer to the business organisations, think tanks and academic institutions, accredited civil society organisations, and other non-governmental entities that are associated with ASEAN, as explicated in the ASEAN Charter.

24. Non-state actors play a crucial role in ASEAN and its regional integration efforts.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
25. Generally speaking, non-state actors have been actively engaged in ASEAN **before** the establishment of the ASEAN Community.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

26. Generally speaking, non-state actors have been actively engaged in ASEAN after the establishment of the ASEAN Community.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
27. Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Political Security Community (e.g., combating transnational crimes, managing the conflicts in the South China Sea).
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
28. Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Economic Community (e.g., free trade agreements negotiations and implementation, Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity development and implementation).
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
29. Non-state actors have been actively engaged in the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community (e.g., poverty reduction, education, environment).
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
30. Non-state actors have been actively engaged in ASEAN's response towards communicable diseases and global pandemic preparedness.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

31. At the national level, the local government engages with my organization in formulating and implementing ASEAN initiatives.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

32. At the national level, the local government engages with my organization in formulating and implementing non-ASEAN initiatives.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

33. Contributions by non-state actors have been considered seriously by ASEAN.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

34. Non-state actors' participation and contributions are **effective** in these areas of ASEAN:

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35. Non-state actors' participation and contributions are **ineffective** in these areas of ASEAN:

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36. Non-state actors' face challenges when participating in ASEAN processes:

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

37. If you have chosen 'strongly agree', 'agree' or 'neutral' for question 37, please list down the challenges faced by non-state actors in participating and contributing to ASEAN:

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38. If you have chosen 'neutral', 'disagree', or 'strongly disagree' for question 37, please list down aspects that contribute to the ease of participation by non-state actors in ASEAN:

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39. To your knowledge, list down any initiatives that have been proposed by non-state actors and implemented by ASEAN:

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40. How can non-state actors be more involved in achieving the implementation goals outlined by the ASEAN Community Blueprints and the ASEAN Scorecard process (2015-2025):

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

- Name** Mr. Pushpanathan Sundram
- Education** 1994 Master of Public Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.  
1988 Bachelor of Arts (Economics & Political Science), National University of Singapore.
- Publication(s)** Sundram, Pushpanathan, COVID-19: Another Chance for ASEAN to Deliver on its Promise, Unravel, June 2020.  
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