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22 July 2019

*Essay One ~ Monday*

On Monday, Ms. Prewprae Chumrum, a guest speaker from the Ministry of Commerce, discussed the various CLMVT strategies in regards to the challenges and benefits they receive from cooperation. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand are all very popular countries when it comes to foreign direct investment especially with countries in ASEAN, China, South Korea, and Japan. There are several initiatives and summits that have become key forums for CLMV in promoting connectivity, such as GMS and ACMECS. The problems that stem from this cooperation, however, include security issues, sustainable plausibility, and other various social issues. In the future, CLMVT connectivity will continue to face several challenges, which include other regional relationships, new business models, and the changes in demographics. Ms. Prewprae also highlighted the concept of Industry 4.0 and its core capabilities of digital and analytics. Thailand, for instance, has a very secure strategy when it comes to Thailand 4.0 due to its geographical centrality of ASEAN, its political stability, and the more advanced infrastructure and labor skills. This then led to the discussion of China and its Belt and Road Initiative. This proposal is meant to connect China's economy with about sixty other countries. The connectivity and cooperation associated with President Xi Jinping's plan would focus on policy coordination, infrastructure construction, investment and trade cooperation, and financial cooperation. That being said, as China becomes a bigger global power, its economy will impact the countries that it has heavily invested in, such as CLMVT. An example of this would be the trade war between China and the United States. This trade war deeply impacts countries that are really integrated

with China's economy. Considering this integration and cooperation of the countries in this region, the guest speaker alluded to the master plan of ASEAN to become a digital one, which would include having a digital single market, digital ecosystem, and digital access.

In my opinion, this guest speaker was a little difficult to follow along with. Often times, she would jump from idea to idea without having a consistent flow of thought. There were also too many acronyms on the slides, which made it difficult to understand exactly what it was we were talking about. I also feel like most of the material she discussed has been talked about by previous lecturers. That being said, I would have loved to dive deeper into the material, especially in regards to the trade war between the United States and China and its effects on other countries like Thailand. The lecturer assumed that we all had some understanding of the effects since it is on the news, but I personally do not read or watch Thai news channels and am thus not privy to that kind of knowledge. Moreover, another aspect of the lecture worth mentioning was the digital master plan of ASEAN connectivity; I found this to be relatively interesting, especially after attending the Fintech Fair. I think this digitalization of ASEAN could truly integrate the countries with one another in a way that is convenient, easy, and efficient. Even still, I only ever hear talk about this kind of digital connectivity, but I never hear about the progress of actually making such connectivity happen. I wonder if the difficulty of progress comes from trying to unite a majority of the businesses to use the same e-commerce in order to make it effective on a regional scale. I suppose that I am curious about how this digital single market will eventually occur in the future.

23 July 2019

*Essay Two ~ Tuesday*

On Tuesday, we learned about contemporary Myanmar/Burma in terms of its politics, society, and culture. Looking at the historical background, Myanmar was colonized by the British in 1824 in which there were three major wars between the British and Burmese. Due to the efforts of the nationalist group Thakin and the intervention of the Japanese, Burma was able to gain independence and adopt a parliamentary system in 1948. The first prime minister asked for assistance from the military in order to establish political stability, but the military leaders staged a coup which altered the country from democracy to an authoritarian government in 1962. Even today, the military is still the legitimate 'stabilizer' of the country due to its strength and the institutionalization process. In 1974, the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) established a socialist constitution that was adopted with a new political ideology; they used Buddhism as a political tool to hold up certain sectors of society. In 1988, there was a lot of political turmoil and an uprising led to the formation of the National League for Democracy as well as the leadership rise of Aung San Suu Kyi. Eventually, Myanmar had a massive reform in the 1990s and approved a constitution by referendum in 2008.

In regards to democratization, Myanmar has a parliamentary government that is broken up into territories based off of ethnic majorities and minorities. Its political system is largely influenced and made-up of people from the military. Out of the bicameral system of the legislative branch, the military has nearly 166 seats appointed to them in the Lower and Upper House. When looking at the constitution, you can notice the bias, controversial issues that arise in regards to military power. Nonetheless, Myanmar's elected government has attempted various

reforms in regards to the political, economic, and social aspects. This includes the implementation of anti-corruption laws, the abolition of censorship, and elected government. In the end, democratization has brought to Myanmar many good things, but it has also brought many bad things as well.

As a politics and economics major, this lecture was super interesting for me. It was enlightening to understand the historical aspects of Burma and how it has affected its current political state, especially because I am not as knowledgeable on the country. One issue that I found to be particularly compelling was the Rohingya crisis. It is crazy to see the impact of colonization and how it still affects Myanmar today. During colonization, the British only created seven ethnic identities, which meant that Rohingya, the Muslim minority, did not necessarily exist ethnically speaking. Even today, Rohingya are largely discriminated against, and this has caused one of the fastest growing refugee crises ever. Officially, the Rohingya ethnic group have been rendered stateless and stripped of their citizenship. In 1982, there was even a Citizenship Law that did not allow Rohingya people to receive health care, identification cards, and other social services. Another crazy aspect of this is that nothing is being done for the Rohingya people, which is due to the fact that the international community does not want to jeopardize their own aspirations and economic investments. Personally, I find this to be so incredibly absurd to allow the unhumanistic treatment of an entire ethnic group, and it would be refreshing to see some action being taken to help relieve this crisis.

25 July 2019

*Essay Three ~ Thursday*

In the beginning of the class on Thursday, we discussed ASEAN integration and border trade. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is essentially a work in progress that is known for having loose and flexible integration due to the diversity embodied within it. ASEAN is one of the most diverse economic groups in the world in terms of population, markets, and development stages. That being said, there are five areas of ASEAN integration: goods, services, investment, labor, and capital. These areas focus on what the border flows hope to one day achieve, such as having a common currency amongst ASEAN. In terms of the real-life integration that occurs through cross-border activities, we considered trade facilitation, the movements of people and the movements of capital. This lecture was particularly interesting, because it focused on not just their aspirations, but the reality of progress when it comes to integration and connectivity within ASEAN.

In the second half of the class, we discussed the relations between China and CLMVT countries. There were two major events that pushed individuals from China into Southeast Asia: the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Modern China has experienced extreme economic success since 1978 due to an increase of openness and a demographic change in the labor market. We also discussed the relations between the U.S. government and China, especially in regards to the trade war. The U.S. government despises China because there has been a shift in power despite the fact that Chinese firms are still facing challenges of increasing their value. This led to the discussion of what economy will drive technology of the future, which included industries like the third party payment and e-commerce. The Chinese

government has a lot of power when it comes to technology, such as the household registration system, the social credit system, and the media censorship that occurs. Essentially, China is everywhere and is going to be everywhere with the “One Belt One Road” initiative. This economic path will link China with nearly half of the world’s population. This initiative, the geographical proximity, and the increasing market tensions has led China to become one of the biggest trade partners in the ASEAN region. Southeast Asia is an excellent choice when it comes to investing and partnering because of the opportunity to develop infrastructure and utilize natural resources.

I particularly appreciated the discussion on China and its impact on ASEAN countries. As being a citizen of the United States, I hear a lot about the trade war with China, but it was interesting to witness another perspective that was not so nationalistic in regards to the United States. I think the lecture would be more enlightening if it included more on the specific effects the trade war has on other countries and on China. I am also curious on how other perspectives view the trade war, so it would have been interesting to review the popular opinion of ASEAN. Furthermore, another aspect that I found to be quite terrifying was the technological power the government has on the people of China. For instance, the social credit system moves up and down based off an individual’s behavior, which appears to be rather constraining and dominating in a sense. I believe that this grants too much power to the Chinese government - more power than they already have - and personally, I do not think I agree with the methods that are being implemented within the society of China by the government.

26 July 2018

*Essay Four ~ Friday*

On Friday, we focused on the challenges and opportunities of urbanization in CLMV. Given the historical and socio-economic context, we see that the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is one of the least urbanized areas in the world but is urbanizing at a rate that is accelerating even more so. Some drivers of urban growth include government policies and strategies, regional cooperation, infrastructure, foreign investment, and rural-urban migration. These each include indicators and implications. For instance, when it comes to regional cooperation, some indicators include agreements, joint activities, and the volume of investments, while some implications are connectivity, trade flows and tourism. By focusing more specifically on CLMV and their urbanization, we are able to recognize that even though they share a history of relationships, colonial conquest, and social conflict, they are now moving towards development but at different paces. Out of CLMV, Vietnam is the most advanced and the most heavily invested in when it comes to infrastructure. Myanmar, on the other hand, is the least developed. Even though they all are embracing various policy reforms, the pace of reform is extremely slow. When GMS was established, however, there was massive cooperative achievements being made. One challenge with this initiation is the rural-urban migration that has occurred due to the rapid urbanization of particular areas. As we move forward into the future, we can recognize that the development of CLMV is extremely rapid but it is uneven when compared to one another. Now and in the future, we will also recognize an ever-increasing

interconnectivity that exists within CLMV and GMS countries. That being said, we need to consider the importance of promoting sustainable growth in order to achieve better means.

This lecture was relatively short; I would have appreciated a deeper dive into urbanization and what that means for CLMV countries. I think it is interesting that despite their similarities in culture, religion, space, etc., CLMV countries are each developing at different rates. It is interesting to consider what triggered such drastic changes in their development. Like for Laos, the low human resource capacity limited the country when it came to developing, economically and socially. My understanding and knowledge of CLMV countries has expanded not only from this lecture, but from the entirety of the class as well. Being able to study and understand some of the highest growing economies in the world has furthered my understanding of economics in the general sense. That being said, there is so much potential and opportunity when it comes to the countries of CLMV that I am thrilled to see how the economies of these countries alter within the next couple decades. Their economic expansion and growth will be something that I will be able to witness and analyze within my own lifetime, which is pretty extraordinary.