

Christy Tak
Week 1

(10) - interesting opinion
- well structured.

20/6/19

Today's lecture focused on providing a brief overview of the ASEAN economy. One major turning point for the economic state of these ten countries was the beginning of AFTA (ASEAN Free Trade Area) in 1992. This initiated a slow process of gradual economic reforms headed towards free trade. ASEAN decided to instill changes in economic policy in order to stay competitive in the world market. In order to maintain competitiveness in the world market, it is wise for a country to attempt to attract FDIs (foreign direct investments). The way that FDIs help promote economic growth is that they allow for businesses to have enough money in the beginning to take off. With new businesses creates more jobs, which leads to higher GDP, higher disposable income, and there is now more money for consumers to spend, which in turn improves the market as a whole. The ASEAN economy is quickly growing and has great potential to become a powerful force in the global market. Some indicators of this include the low government debt ($>50\%$), the large amounts of exports produced, the active efforts being made to boost intra-regional trade, and the relatively low inflation rate. Something that stood out to me was the breakdown of the economic sectors. Since the ASEAN agricultural sector accounts for only 10% of the GDP but 40% of the population are in this sector, the inequality of income is quite significant. I am interested in learning and discussing about this issue and the policy reforms that could be put in place to improve many peoples' quality of life.

We went over in lecture that in order to make profit, production costs must be cut down. One way to do this is to use

labor that is cheaper from other countries. This gives a great advantage to the ASEAN countries, which currently have cheap costs of labor in comparison to the rest of the world. However, Thailand is at a slight disadvantage in this aspect, as the country is at the point of also relying on neighboring countries as a source of cheaper labor. Despite this, I think some of the economic advantages for Thailand include the skill level of the laborers. The elevated education and ability of the Thai population gives the country an edge to move towards quicker development and progress. In terms of overall economic cooperation in ASEAN, some problems that may arise could be differences in culture and difficulties in defining boundaries between forced assimilation versus beneficial partnership. Because each country is so unique in culture, proceeding with caution as to preserve cultural traditions cannot be something that is overlooked.

9.5 - need to provide more relevant information

21/6/19

It was such an honor to be able to receive knowledge from Mrs Lay Chanrasmeay about the diplomatic relations between Cambodia and Thailand. I definitely did not know how closely Cambodia and Thailand work with each other and how much they collaborate together in many in discussing what steps to take to maintain harmonious relations. It was interesting to learn about the bilateral relations between the two countries and the mechanisms in which they operate. The two countries promote economic, social, cultural, and educational cooperation with one another through the Joint Commission, which is a meeting that has taken place every year since the formation of the new Thai government.

The speaker really did stress that the countries live very well together, both benefitting from the other, but I wonder if that is actually true. I think that although our guest lecturer is a very respectable and credible source of information, I am wary to accept everything that she says about Cambodia at face value.

There is a high possibility that she can be very biased in the way that she answers question and concerns about the country. For example, she seemed to address all the positive relations between Thailand and Cambodia, but what about the issues that they face? Surely it is not perfect on both sides, as we can see in the issues that were discussed in group work, especially in the concerns regarding the treatment of Cambodian workers in Thailand.

The presentations today were very engaging and intriguing. I can definitely say that I know more about Cambodia than before. The topic that my group presented on was Cambodian workers in Thailand. Some of the things that we discussed were the issues that the workers currently face, which include lack of access to health care and education, inability to properly get paid due to language barriers, and exploitation of the workers in general. I thought it was interesting to see that in many of the articles that I read, the figures involving Cambodian workers in Thailand were much higher than what our guest speaker said. She said that only 500,000 workers were recorded in the last census, while the articles claimed well over one million workers when taking undocumented immigrants into account. She was able to explain the discrepancy in numbers by reminding us that there are hidden numbers behind every statistic, but I would have liked for her to touch upon this fact a little bit more. After all, those half a million or more people are very important in this matter and should not simply be forgotten about because of lack of paperwork.