

Daily reaction essay

Many ideas about ASEAN have circulated in my head since I was in my school. When I was in grade six studying social study subject, I heard about ASEAN for the first time that it was the combination of many countries in South East Asian region. As I grew up, preparing the university interview, I discovered that ASEAN was much more than that. It was designed to improve the economy of all countries which were the member of ASEAN. At this moment, enrolling in EE551 and EE561 courses, my ideas about ASEAN are growing bigger and faster than I have ever had.

At day 1 of these courses, ASEAN: ORIGIN, EVOLUTION, AND ECONOMY is the topic of the day. It was the first time that I considered the formal name of ASEAN, Association of South East Asian Nations, and AEC, Asian Economic Community. I studied the origin of ASEAN, which was surprising, that the creation of ASEAN was originated from Cold War. Another interesting part is AFTA, 1992-2002, and AEC, 2003-2015. ASEAN6 was a sign of expansion of ASEAN economy to other countries apart from South East Asian region. The increase in GDP per capita by 76% from 2007 – 2014 is very impressive. The last part I want to talk in the reaction essay for day 1 is about GDP share by main economic sectors.

While sitting in the lecture table, I found ASEAN as the crucial decision of the leader of that era to prevent the domino effect i.e. the spread of communism ideology from Soviet Union

down to China, Vietnam and other countries in South East Asian region such as Cambodia suffering a huge loss in civil war. The significantly increase in GDP per capita by 76% in less than a decade is a good sign of the improvement in well-being of ASEAN population.

However, I still disagreed and saw the flaws in ASEAN according to the lecture. The first thing was the objective of AFTA that it was not designed to increase intra ASEAN trade, but to attract more of FDI. It still did not perform well such that AEC was created to cover the weakened ability of ASEAN countries to attract more of FDI. This showed that ASEAN still relied on foreign technology via FDI rather than developed its own technology. Promoting intra trade and joint venture for the unique product such as rice would be more beneficial to monopolize the certain product in the world economy. Despite having ASEAN6, New Zealand and Australia shared only a little in term of trade partners in both exports and imports, while China was the biggest trade partner from ASEAN6. This make me rethink that ASEAN6 might not be as effective as I thought before. It was not strange that services sector shared the most of GDP for all ASEAN countries, but I felt disappointed when I googled that the largest sector in many ASEAN countries excluding Singapore and Brunei was agriculture which was the least productivity in term of GDP contribution which may lead to conclusion of the well-being of ASEAN population that it shared to only a small group of people and the usage of growth GDP per capita was irrelevant. ASEAN existed 52 years according to Bangkok Declaration 1967, but it still could not shift the main labor force to services sector like developed countries.

At day 2, the lecturer was the guest from Cambodia who worked in diplomatic field. The topic was CAMBODIA-THAILAND Bilateral Relationships, so this lecture covered all aspects in relationships between the two countries. I felt that my view towards Cambodia was changed after this lecture. At the early part of the lecture, I studied about the profile of Cambodia and diplomatic relations with Thailand. Next, the topics were about what happens in the border of Thailand and Cambodia and economy and investment. Eventually, this lecture ended with the topics of CLMV and ACMES.

The profile of Cambodia was not as bad as I thought. It had a very good in median age population at 26.2 years old which was the working age, but its population was quite small, 16 million people. To be worse, 12 million of population lived in rural area. Only one-fourth of total population lived in urban area. Cambodia's GDP growth was quite impressive, about 7% in three consecutive years and the GDP per capita kept increasing. There were many official visits in all levels between two countries, from the highest level like royal visits, HRH Sirindhorn and HRH Chulabhorn, and top leaders' visits, Prime ministers, to people along the borders. The borders were not in chaos and fear, but they cooperate in education and labor. International Checkpoints and Bilateral Checkpoints were the two types of checkpoints along border. There were 7 for each type, combining to 14 of all checkpoints. For economy and investment, Cambodia signed the agreement on investment promotion and protection with 29 countries. To Thailand, the bilateral trade and Thai investment in Cambodia showed the increasing trend. Bridge in Stung Bot-Ban Nong Ian was created to connect border trade to

push border trade volume. Cambodia could get many benefits from CLMV and ACMES which had the objective to close economic gap amongst the members.

The lecture is quite impressive for me. The most interesting part was the economic growth of Cambodia which might be the foundation of the following events. 7% growth in three consecutive years was like the developed countries regardless of steady stage of Cambodia. Furthermore, the lecturer also mentioned that Makro and 7-11 would open in Cambodia soon. This implied that Cambodia people had not much different purchasing power from Thai people since businesses operating in Thailand considered to operate in Cambodia. Bridge in Stung Bot-Ban Nong Ian was an interesting project as it can benefit for both Thailand and Cambodia in the future.

Cambodia still had flaws in my point of view, given information from the lecturer. The 14 checkpoints were too many to keep an eye on them such that none of illegal stuffs could not pass through. Moreover, Bilateral checkpoints had a nickname as unofficial checkpoints that Cambodia government wants to change all of them to international checkpoints. In my opinion, the lecturer should talk more about the education policy since it was the main factors boosting economy in the long term and narrowing the inequality. Cambodia also had an unfixable democracy issue according to the election that the prime minister, Hun Sen, never stepped down from his position. Moreover, He also eliminated the enemies using brute force.