

## BOOK REVIEWS

## The 2nd ASEAN Reader

COMPILED BY SHARON SIDDIQUE AND SREE KUMAR

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The first *ASEAN Reader* was published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in 1992: ten years later the Institute's director was convinced that a second reader would be appropriate and timely because of the many events that occurred within Southeast Asia during the decade following the initial reader's publication. Drs. Sharon Siddique, a former Deputy Director of ISEAS and Sree Kumar, a former Institute Fellow, accepted the director's invitation to compile materials to include in a second reader. As a consequence, they were able to gather 105 short essays written by well-known scholars whose expertise covered a broad gamut of disciplinary foci both on The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as an institution *and* on its individual member states: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

The result of Siddique and Kumar's work is a superb collection of information, ideas, and concepts that will assist teachers of courses that include a focus on Southeast Asia. The volume can either stand alone in a course that deals exclusively with Southeast Asia or contribute to a broader classroom experience that includes a focus on the countries that make up the membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The book covers general topics organized and structured on the foundation of introductory chapters that examine the institutional dynamics brought about by substantial changes throughout the region, and in ASEAN's organizational structure, its programmatic initiatives, and the Association's evolution from six to ten member nations. The book's contents focus on the increasing number of participants in the Association, a fact that has caused it to come to grips with a more complex mosaic of member countries. Members now *differ widely* in the stage and level of their economic and political modernization and development as well as their social, cultural, and religious belief systems. However, despite their differences, a number of essays focus on the fact that the ten countries that make up the Southeast Asia region tend to share geopolitical defense and security issues, and the members all opt for multilateral relations that involve multilateral institutions, such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and bilateral agreements. Multilateral initiatives include the ASEAN Dialogue Partnership System that provides ongoing contacts between Association members and a number of their key global partners on economic and commercial issues. The ASEAN Regional Forum was created to minimize conflict and resolve it when it occurs because of political and strategic differences of opinion. In effect, they serve to lessen the likelihood that economic and financial as well as political and strategic conflicts will arise, and will help ensure that if they do emerge, the conflicts can be resolved with a minimum of friction.

With over 100 essays, the book is not an easy one to review because of the magnitude of topical diversity. However, essays are clustered around topic areas. An example is reflected in the compilers' grouping of the rich religious and social principles of Islam and, at the same time, the threats to peace and security posed by Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda-like entities within Southeast Asia. For example, Rohan Gunaratna's essay "Asia: Al Qaeda's New The-

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atre," points out that, until recently, the Asian counterparts of Al Qaeda were not as highly motivated, as well trained, or as well led as their Arab allies. But with indoctrination, training, and leadership they have improved and they now have the capacity to be more dangerous. Barry Desker, in his essay "Islam and Society in Southeast Asia after 11 September," makes the point that emerging regional terrorist networks reflect new security challenges and will pose a major threat to governments. However, identifying and dealing with radical fundamentalist Islam runs the risk of spreading the false perception that Islam is the cause of regional terrorism. In her essay "Islam in Southeast Asia: At the Crossroads," Sharon Siddique cautions that how Southeast Asian Muslims as a broad community respond to the current situation depends upon the United States government response to the September 11 and other attacks on its citizens. The response will be based upon how far it decides to take its "war on terrorism" and how successful radical extremists are able to escalate violence.

The volume's compilers did a good job in terms of linking the three essays thematically to Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia and enjoining the essays *both* with previous essays on ethnicity, regional and social development, and with immediately-following essays that go on to examine broader regional security matters. The Al Qaeda section exemplifies the continuity among the diverse essays that Siddique and Kumar provide to readers. This helps make the book a valuable resource to both general readers and classroom teachers. It will be an equally valuable addition to programmatic libraries, thereby becoming a shared source of information and ideas that can be used by students and faculty members. The essays are generally well written and edited, and without exception compose a content-laden volume that this reviewer recommends enthusiastically and without reservation. ■

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