Vietnam and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC):

Prospects, Challenges and Opportunities

By
Vu Thi Hai Hoa

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Abstract

Although there is a large literature on ASEAN regionalism, comparatively little attention has been devoted to Southeast Asia's efforts to build a shared social and cultural community. This thesis examines how the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) is understood in ASEAN and explores challenges that stand in the way of the Community being realized by its 2015 deadline. The study reviews the origins and response to the ASCC at both the regional level, and at the national level through a case-study of Vietnam's participation. It argues that although the ASCC is an important component of the ASEAN Community building process and member states have proclaimed their determination to realize the ASCC by 2015, the reality in ASEAN with its "unity in diversity" and "ASEAN Way" norms, means there are many obstacles in the way. Divergent national interests and priorities have led to different priorities in designing and implementing the ASCC Blueprint in the period 2009-2015. The thesis concludes by speculating about the likely scenario for ASCC implementation. It argues that in 2015, the most likely scenario for the ASCC is one in which a nascent ASCC will be formed but with only some of its components in place. ASEAN needs a longer journey to realize its aspiration of a shared socio-culture community.

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Abbriviation

AADMER   ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management
           & Emergency Response

ADB   Asian Development Bank

AEC   ASEAN Economic Community

AFTA   ASEAN Free Trade Area

ALMM   ASEAN Labour Ministerial Meetings

AMMSWD   ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare & Development

AMMW   ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women

APA   ASEAN People's Assembly

APEC   Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

APSC   ASEAN Political-Security Community

ASCC   ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

ASEAN   Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CFSP   Common Foreign and Security Policy

EU   European Union

HPA   Hanoi Plan of Action

IAI   Integrated ASEAN Initiative

JHA   Justice and Home Affairs

MOFA   Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MOLISA   Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs

MTR   Mid-Term Review

TOR   Terms of Reference

VAP   Vientiane Action Program

WB   World Bank

Vietnam and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC):

Prospects, Challenges and Opportunities

Introduction

A decade into the 21st century, Southeast Asia continues to be a place of significant and remarkable change. The future direction of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)[1] has been clearly set by the Association's members, including the ambitious goal of accelerating integration in order to create an ASEAN Community by 2015. The Declaration of Bali Concord II, adopted by ASEAN Leaders at the 9th Summit in October 2003, named the development of an ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC) as one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community along with an ASEAN political-security Community (APSC) and the ASEAN economic Community (AEC).[2]

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is supposed to cover the social and cultural dimensions of the ASEAN integration process.[3] The basic aims of this Community are to "contribute to realizing an ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible"[4] with a view to achieving "enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and member states of ASEAN"[5]. It also seeks to "forge a common identity and build a caring and sharing society which inclusive and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the people are enhanced".[6]

In order to realize these aims, ASEAN leaders approved an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint at the ASEAN Summit in Thailand in 2009. Since then,

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[1] ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967. The member states of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

[2] 2003 Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, adopted by the ASEAN Heads of State/Government at the 9th ASEAN Summit, http://aseansec.org/15159.htm.

[3] Joseph Ejercito Estrada. "Opening Remark by H.E. Joseph Ejercito Estrada, President of The Republic of the Philippines During the Opening Ceremony of the 6th ASEAN Summit." ASEAN Secretariat. December 15, 1998. http://www.aseansec.org/13025.htm (accessed April 26, 2010).

[4] ASEAN Secretariat, 2009, "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2009-2015", Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, p.1

[5] ASEAN, 2009, "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2009-2015", Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, p.1.

[6] ASEAN, 2009, "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2009-2015", Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, p.2

ASEAN states have made considerable efforts in cultural and social cooperation with the goal of building a community of peace, economic prosperity, cultural diversity, and social stability.

The ASCC Blueprint seeks to improve the quality of life of people through concrete and effective actions by targeting six key areas. These are: (i) improving human development, (ii) social welfare and protection, (iii) social justice and rights, (iv) ensuring environmental sustainability, (v) building the ASEAN identity, and (vi) narrowing the development gap.[7]

For a region where the member countries are still at different developmental stages, are culturally diverse, and have different strategic goals, achieving the ASEAN community will be a challenging task. It will require ASEAN members to balance human security against other national economic and political security goals. This thesis explores the origins, evolution and prospects for the ASEAN Social and Cultural Community. It examines the challenges to implementation, illustrating these with a focus on the case of Vietnam and efforts by Vietnam's national agencies to advance ASCC objectives.

Vietnam's participation in the ASCC

Since its accession to ASEAN in 1995[8], Vietnam has been an active participant in its integration activities, contributing to collective efforts to build the ASEAN Community. Notably, as ASEAN Chair in 2010, Vietnam pressed several initiatives, seeking to coordinate and advance the objectives of ASCC, among other goals. In the view of Vietnamese Communist Party, the success of building ASEAN Community - including the ASCC pillar - is a national priority.[9] The country claims that Vietnam as being a member in ASEAN Community, and has been doing its best to contribute in a proactive manner to the construction of the ASEAN Community.[10] That notwithstanding, economic difficulties and limited domestic resources mean participation in the ASCC and sectoral cooperation within the ASCC including labour and social cooperation, presents many challenges for Vietnam.

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[7] ASCC Blueprint in Roadmap for an ASEAN Community p. 68.

[8] Vietnam was the 7th members joining the ASEAN since the 27th AMM held in Brunei Darussalam in July 1995.

[9] Vietnamese Communist Party, Official document of 11th Congress, 2011.

[10] Vietnamese Communist Party, Official document of 11th Congress, 2011.

In Vietnam, the Ministry of Labour Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) was assigned by the Government in 2009 to take responsibility as the national focal-point agency for leading and coordinating the ASCC cooperation at the country level. The Ministry is also the focal-point agency for functional cooperation within ASEAN at ministerial level, including the ASEAN Labour Ministerial Meetings (ALMM), the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD), and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW).[11] Aware of the priority attached to ASEAN cooperation, MOLISA has put considerable effort into its coordination role, working with other related ministerial agencies to promote Vietnam's involvement in all ASCC's commitments, and making a contribution to accelerate the ASEAN community building process.

ASEAN is currently completing a mid-term review on the implementation of the ASCC Blueprint[12]. To complete the Blueprint's goals by late 2015, and realize the ASCC in that year will require all 10 members make great efforts and take practical actions in a high consensus and reasonable allocation. Vietnam's experience provides an indication of the challenges and opportunities inherent in advancing social and cultural at the regional level.

Research question

The central question examined in this thesis is "How is the ASCC perceived in ASEAN and what are challenges for its realization by 2015?" To answer this question, the thesis will consider the model of ASCC from both a theoretical and empirical perspective, at both the regional level and the national level, through the Vietnam case. Within this broad framework, the thesis also attempts to examine the following narrower questions:

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[11] Department for International Relations of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs 'Final report of Ministerial Research Project on Direction to develop Vietnam's partnership with ASEAN on Labour, and Social Affairs', Dec 2011, p28.

[12] At the 9th ASCC Council Meeting held in Brunei Darussalam during 20-24 March 2013, the Ministers who in charge of ASCC agreed to implement the Mid-term Review (MTR) of the ASCC Blueprint at both national and regional levels, to prepare a comprehensive assessment report which due to be presented at ASEAN Summit in November this year. The report is expected to present progress and gaps since the adoption of the Blueprint in 2009, as well as recommendations to better implement its targets by   December   2015.

- What are the theoretical and empirical foundations for ASCC construction? What are most challenges and opportunities for ASEAN in seeking to establish the ASCC and implement the ASCC Blueprint from 2009-2015?

- At the national level, how does Vietnam perceive on the ASCC? What has the country done for the ASCC construction?

- What are the prospects for the ASCC to be achieved on schedule by 2015?

Based on the answers to these questions, the paper concludes by making some recommendations for measures Vietnam could take to deepen its participation in the ASCC in the future.

Methodology and study materials

The thesis adopts a qualitative methodology, drawing on both primary and secondary sources of information. The foundation of the thesis is the large secondary literature on ASEAN and ASCC by Vietnamese and international scholars.[13] In addition to these, the author also explored original reports and materials produced by the ASEAN Secretariat and numerous government agencies in Vietnam, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). In addition, the author also referred to the official documents of ASEAN Summits as well as the regular and irregular meetings of the ASCC and the Association. Finally, during the research, especially during the time that Vietnam conducts the self-national assessment of Mid-term Review on ASCC Blueprint, the author carried out interviews and discussions with some key relevant personnel who are in-charge of the ASCC in Vietnam. These people included senior officials from some relevant ministries under the ASCC of Vietnam, including those come from Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, Ministry of Nature Resource, and Vietnam Youth Union, some officers who are focal-point personnel for ASEAN cooperation of MOLISA, MOFA. Some findings of this thesis are drawn from the materials and public discussions in some national meetings and

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[13] Some of this literature includes "Realization of ASPC: Problems and Prospects", "Realization of AEC and implications to Vietnam" by Southeast Asia Research Institution of Vietnam (SARI), published in 2013; "ASEAN linkages in the 1st decade of 21st century" SARI-2006, "150 questions on ASEAN" by MOLISA, "Vietnam in ASEAN Community Building" by Dang Cam Tu - 2011. For the English references, "Explaining ASEAN: Regionalism in Southeast Asia" by Shaun Narine - 2002, "ASEAN in the 21st century: a skeptical review" by Shaun Narine-2009, 'On Culture and Regional Integration" by Dosenrode Soren - 2008, "Community-building in ASEAN? A theoretical Approach to Regional Institutionalization in Southeast Asia" by Alan Bulut, Eduard - 2012.

consultancy seminars held by the ASCC focal-point agency (MOLISA) in the preparation, implementation and completion of the national assessment report during the late of June to early August.[14]

Thesis structure

Following this introduction, the main part of the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first situates the ASEAN case in a wider literature on regionalism in Southeast Asia and examines how the largely Eurocentric literature on regionalism has addressed the issue of social and cultural integration. Chapter two develops this, focusing on the origins and evolution of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community and its construction by ASEAN. Chapter three moves from the regional to the national level, examining Vietnam's participation in the ASCC. It analyzes how the ASCC is perceived and used by Vietnam, and how one ASEAN member state has implemented the ASCC Blueprint in order to maximize its own national interests and priorities. Chapter four then examines some of the factors might affect ASCC realization by 2015, both challenges and opportunities and makes some predictions about the prospects for the ASCC.

The thesis makes the argument that ASEAN has laid down solid foundations for constructing the ASCC, which can play an important role in building a broader ASEAN Community. All ASEAN members value the idea and have shown some effort in realizing ASCC by 2015. But there also are two significant challenges that make the establishment of the ASCC by 2015 very difficult. First, different ASEAN members have different interests that lead them to perceive the ASCC in different terms. Second, the pursuit of national interests and priorities also leads the member countries to have different priorities for and uneven speed in implementing the ASCC Blueprint. For these reasons, the thesis concludes that the most likely prospect for the ASCC is that a Community will be only partially formed in 2015, with only some of its most important aspects in place. It will be a longer journey before ASEAN can realize its aspiration of socio-cultural integration in the region.

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[14] Some of those meetings and seminars, the author has a chance to participate, including the Ministerial Meeting on the MIR of ASCC Blueprint at national level of Vietnam, held in Hanoi, 27 August 2013 by MOLISA, where all the relevant ASCC ministries and agencies share comments and discussion for finalize the national assessment report. The meeting also has pleasure to receive the ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh and the Deputy Secretary -General of ASEAN for ASCC, Ms. Alicia Dela Rosa Bala .

Literature review

ASEAN as an object of study has received attention from lots of regional and international scholars, analysts, and policy makers. Many if not most of the studies and researches, however, focus on political-security aspects of ASEAN regionalism or economic integration issues. There are few studies on the third ASEAN community - the ASCC. This may be understandable because in comparison with the other two pillars (political-security and economic), the ASCC is the newest. Another reason for the lack of literature on ASCC may be the complexity of the social and culture dimensions in regional integration.

That said, there have been some previous studies, such as Julio S. Amador's 2011 work on assessment of ASCC's institutional prospects.[15] His article examined the idea of the ASCC and evaluated the ASCC from an institutional perspective. There are also some relevant articles looking at the connection between socio-cultural integration and regionalism and regionalization in Southeast Asia, for example the series of UNU-CRIS Occasional Papers and UNU-CRIS Working Papers and the CCIS research series Working paper on Culture and role of Culture in regional integration.[16]

In terms of functional cooperation within the ASCC, there are papers writing on education, environment, humanities and social sciences research with emphasis on ASCC Blueprint. But, they do not address all aspects of the ASCC.

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[15] Julio Santiago Amador is a foreign affairs research specialist at the Centre for International Relations and Strategic Studies of the Foreign Service Institute, Philippines. He specializes on the governance and political security of the ASEAN and Philippine foreign policy.

Julio S. Amador, "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community: An assessment on its institutional prospect", Foreign Service Institute, 2011.

[16] Dosenrode, Soren 'On Culture and Regional Integration', http://www.ccis.aau.dk/research/2012439 (Center for Comparative Integration Studies (CCIS) & Institute for History, International and Social Studies, Aalborg University, Working paper No.8 of CCIS, 2008).

Interestingly, the issue of ASEAN identity has received a great deal of attention. Many articles, research papers explore the diversity of culture in ASEAN and give out analyses on the impacts of that characteristic on the possibility of forging an ASEAN Community.[17]

Another group of writing on ASCC comes from the regional analysts who ask if the ASEAN Community can be attained.[18] Some draw on survey work and use these to present the difficulties and obstacles for the project of ASEAN Community to succeed.[19] Some stress how little ordinary people in Southeast Asia know about ASEAN and its three pillars.[20] Some recommend that to help ASEAN leaders successfully realize their aspiration in 2015, people need to be put at the center of all the process rather than just from the official statement by the State leaders.[21]

In Vietnam, ASEAN is a topic that receives considerable attention from the academic and policy community.[22] This was especially true in Vietnam's year as

[17] Preston, Peter (2007) 'Regional linkages, national politics and the role of identity' in Hiro Katsumata and See Seng Tan (eds) People's ASEAN and government's ASEAN RSIS Monograph No.11 (Singapore: S Rajaratnam School of International Studies), pp.76-83; Tran Khanh (2008), 'Impacts of "unity in diversity" to ASEAN Community building process' [Tac dong cua tinh "thong nhat trong da dang" voi xay dung cong dong ASEAN], Southeast Asia Studies [Tap chi nghien cuu Dong Nam A], Volume. 8 (2008) [So 8(2008)]; Ngo Van Doanh (2008), ASEAN Community in the perception of ASEAN 5 [Cong dong ASEAN trong nhan thuc ASEAN 5], Southeast Asia Studies [Tap chi nghien cuu Dong Nam A], Vol. 5(98) [So 5(98)]; Pham Van Ran (2010), 'Advantage and difficulties in ASEAN Community building process' [Nhung thuan loi va kho khan doi voi qua trinh xay dung Cong dong ASEAN], Southeast Asia Studies [Tap chi nghien cu Dong Nam A], Vol. 7(124), 2010 [So 7(124), 2010].

[18] RavichandRan MooRthy and Guido Benny, 'Is an "ASEAN Community" achievable?' - A Public Perception Analysis in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore on the Perceived Obstacles to Regional Community, Asian Survey, Vol. 52, Number 6, pp. 1043–1066. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2012 by the Regents of the University of California.

[19] RavichandRan MooRthy and Guido Benny, 'Is an "ASEAN Community" achievable?' - A Public Perception Analysis in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore on the Perceived Obstacles to Regional Community, Asian Survey, Vol. 52, Number 6, pp. 1043–1066. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2012 by the Regents of the University of California; Beny, Guido and Kamarulnizam Abdullah (2011), "Indonesian Perception and Attitudes toward the ASEAN Community", Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 30, 1, pp. 39-67, ISSN: 1868-4882 (online), ISSN: 1868-1034 (print). The online version of this article can be found at www.currentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org; Thompson, E.C. and C. Thianthai (2008), Attitudes and Awareness towards ASEAN: Findings of a Ten-Nation Survey, Singapore: ISEAS.

[20] RavichandRan MooRthy and Guido Benny, 'Is an "ASEAN Community" achievable?' - A Public Perception Analysis in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore on the Perceived Obstacles to Regional Community, Asian Survey, Vol. 52, Number 6, pp. 1043-1066. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2012 by the Regents of the University of California.

[21] Collin, Alan (2008), A People-Oriented ASEAN: A Door A Jar or closed for Civil Society Organization?, in: Contemporary Southeast Asia, August, 30, 2, 313-331.

[22] Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2010), "150 questions on ASEAN"; Pham Duc Thanh (2006), "ASEAN linkages in the 1st decade of 21st century", Social Science Publish House: Hanoi; Dao, Huy Ngoc., Nguyen, Phuong Binh., Hoang, Anh Tuan. ASEAN and Vietnam-ASEAN Relations [ASEAN và

ASEAN Chair in 2010. But scholars and analysts in Vietnam, like those in the region, have tended to pay more attention on the politico-security and economic cooperation aspects of community-building rather than its socio-culture aspects.[23] This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the literature.

Quan hệ Việt Nam-ASEAN]. (Hanoi: National Politics Publisher [Nhà xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia], 1996) Dao, Huy Ngoc (ed). ASEAN and Vietnam's Integration [ASEAN và sự hội nhập của Việt Nam]. (Hanoi: National Politics Publisher [Nhà xuất bản chính trị quốc gia], 1997); Dang Thi Thu Huong (2008), Examining the Engagement between Civil Society in Southeast Asia and ASEAN in the ASEAN Community Building Process, GRIN Verlag.

[23] One of the most updated researches in Vietnam examines the basic issues to realize the ASEAN Community and its implication to Vietnam, which has been developed in the framework of Ministerial level research by the Southeast Asia Research Institute (SARI). However there have been only the two official materials that have been published in May 2013 on the ASPC and in June 2013 on the AEC. The one on the third pillar of ASCC are still on the process of study.

CHAPTER I

Social and cultural dimensions of regional integration

1. Regional integration and community-building

Following the end of the Cold War, regional organizations once again came to be seen as "attractive remedies for regional problems".[24] Many regional organizations are "community-building" - they directly engage in, and serve as the references for constructing, promoting and sustaining a sense of collective identity among their member states.[25] Examples include the "European" identity of European Union, the "Gulf identity" of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the idea of a "Pacific region" promoted by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the "One Southeast Asia" and "ASEAN Way" of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).[26]

One characteristic of the so-called "new" regionalism is that it is "predicated on a marked increase in regional awareness and consciousness, and community-building practices cultivate this awareness and consciousness to potentially transform regional orders into regional communities".[27] Rumelili does not deny that regional orders are shaped by material conditions, such as power distribution, external threats, and economic conditions, but he argues that the contemporary trend toward regional institutionalization is rooted in a social/ideational context which favors regions as the context within which states conceive and pursue their political and economic interests.[28]

So what is the concept of "Community" and how is regional community built?

"Community" is a rather abstract concept. Scholars seek to define what its concept is and what the key conditions for a "Community" formed in international

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[24] Rumelili, Bahar, 'Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia', p.153.

[25] Rumelili, Bahar, *'Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.1

[26] Rumelili, Bahar, 'Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia', p.1.

[27] Ibid, pp.1-2.

[28] Ibid, p.2.

politics are.[29] In the Vietnamese literature on diplomacy, the term "community" is perceived as a highly-integrated mechanism of some countries with the aims of mutual cooperation and assistance in economic, politics and/or military affairs.[30] Used in a broader sense, the term can refer to "a group of countries sharing some values in common and consenting to come together to create, in some sense, common economic, social and political arrangements for mutual benefits".[31] As Ernst Haas, an American scholar, has pointed out, a community has two main features: i) the set of members of faith, friendship, supporting each other and are responsible for each other; ii) members of the community trust in the community, community respect and self sticking his identity with the community.[32]

For international relation (IR) scholars, the concept of "security community" was initially proposed in the early 1950s by Richard Van Wagenen and then developed Karl Deutsch in 1957.[33] As Deutsch defined it, a security community was "a group of states that had become integrated to the point at which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way".[34] According to Deutsch, there are two varieties of security communities, amalgamated and pluralistic. "While both have dependable expectations of peaceful change, the former exists when states formally unify, whereas, in the latter, states retain their sovereignty".[35] Despite its potential theoretical and practical importance, however, the concept of security community never generated a robust research agenda during the Cold War. In the post-Cold War, in correspondence to the developments in international relations theory that focus on the role of identity, norms, and the social basis of global politics, Adler refined the concept with more emphasis on

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[29] Karl Deutsch et al, (1957), "Political Community and the North Atlantic Area", Princeton: Princeton UP;

[30] Quang, Duong Van, *'Diplomat glossary'* (Hanoi: Diplomatic Academic of Vietnam, 2009), p.32.

[31] Pasuk Phongpaichit, (2006), "Who wants an East Asia Community (and who doesn't)?, Tokyo, 19 Nov, p.1.

[32] Diplomatic Academic of Vietnam, (2012), "Vietnam's efforts in ASEAN Community building process", Master of International Relations Thesis by Nguyen Thi Phuong Dung, Library code: LV(QHQT)(V) No.1277; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010) "150 questions on ASEAN - ASEAN Charter and ASEAN Community", World Publish House: Hanoi, p.140;

[33] Ulusoy, Hasan, 'Revisiting security communities after the Cold War: The Constructivism perspective', http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Hasan-Ulusoy3.pdf (25 May, 2013), p.3.

[34] Karl Deutsch et al, (1957), "Political Community and the North Atlantic Area", Princeton: Princeton UP; Amitav Acharya (2001), Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia – ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order, New York: Routledge; Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael (eds). (1998), Security Communities, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[35] Ulusoy, 'Revisiting security communities after the Cold War: The Constructivism perspective', p.3.

its cognitive dimension, such as shared practices, and identification of common self-images.[36]

There are multiple ways in which regional organizations construct and "build" regional communities. First, they articulate, claim to embody and act on behalf of a community of states. Second, they develop similarities among member states by socializing them into a community's norms and principles. And regional organizations also perform the crucial functions of arbitration and discipline which force the members to comply with.[37] In these ways, community-building can be conceptualized as "a double-sided process such that the production of a sense of collective identity within the community inevitably entails the production of a sense of difference with states outside of the community".[38]

Common culture - a precondition for regional integration and community building?

Concept of "culture"

Since the beginning of the 1990s, with the end of Cold War, culture has been very fashionable variable within the social sciences.[39] To define what culture is, Geert Hofstade, a well known pioneer of Netherlands in cross-cultural groups and organizations made a distinction definition between "Culture one" and "Culture two"[40]. "Culture one" is culture in its classical sense, that is education, refinement, art etc. "Culture two" includes the activities in "Culture one" but is broader including every day work and routines like to greet, to eat, to love etc[41]. As Hofstade explains it, "Culture could be defined as the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment. Culture determines the identity

[36] Adler, E. (1997), Imagined (Security) Communities: Cognitive Regions in International Relations. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol 26, no 2, & Adler, E. & Barnett, M., eds. (1998), *Security Communities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[37] Rumelili, Bahar, 'Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia', pp.2-3.

[38] Rumelili, Bahar, 'Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia', p.6

[39] Dosenrode, Soren 'On Culture and Regional Integration', http://www.ccis.aau.dk/research/2012439 (Center for Comparative Integration Studies (CCIS) & Institute for History, International and Social Studies, Aalborg University, Working paper No.8 of CCIS, 2008), p1.

[40] Dosenrode, Soren "Is a common Culture a prerequisite for regional integration" - the paper presented at the joint CCIS-CSE Workshop, April 27th 2006 in Aalborg, p.1

[41] Dosenrode, Soren "Is a common Culture a prerequisite for regional integration", p.1.

of a human group in the same way as personality determines the identity of an individual".[42]

Hans Gullestrup presented another concept of culture, as "the worldview and the values, rules, moral norms and actual conduct – as well as the material and immaterial products and symbols related thereto – as human being (in a given context and over a given time span) take over from the previous "generation"; which they - eventually in a differentiates them from human beings belonging to another culture"[43]. In this conceptualization, the scholar has constructed a model of two levels, the *basic or* "core-culture" which is the "fundamental world-view" and "manifest culture" which consists of the formalized moral- and rules layer.[44]

Hofstede and Gullestrup include more than one level in their analyses on culture. They both agree that there is the "upper" level which is more or less visible, as well as the "deeper" layer which is core culture. Gullestrup's model has the advantage of identifying the fundamental components of a culture, while leaving space for certain dynamism.[45] Although all cultures have at their core a body of knowledge and values, they also evolve and grow in a process of organic and creative interchange. Thus, culture plays a certain role in building community relations among the peoples.[46] It is therefore useful for thinking about the cases of regional integration and community building.

Culture's role in regional integration

The issue of whether a common culture is a prerequisite for successful regional integration has been explored in theories of regional integration. Culture is mentioned in Haas, Rilker, Whearer and Deutsch's work on integration. However, only Deutsch specifically addressed the issue while Haas did not mention it as an important variable. One of the reasons Haas underappreciated the culture factor in his theory was because

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[42] Dosenrode, 'On Culture and Regional Integration', pp.1-2.

[43] Dosenrode, 'On Culture and Regional Integration', p.2.

[44] Dosenrode, 'On Culture and Regional Integration', p.3.

[45] Dosenrode, 'On Culture and Regional Integration', p.2.

[46] Wun'Gaeo, Surichai 'There will not be an East Asian Community Without Human Solidarity – An agenda for Inter- and Intra-Societal Dialogue' (Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, 2008) (excerpted from "Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity Inter-cultural, Inter-societal, Inter-faith Dialogue", December 10 - 18, 2007, The Japan Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Waseda University Institute of Asia-Paci-c Studies).

his focus was on the EU, which was basically cultural homogenous. But his conclusion about its importance is different to Deutsch's findings.[47]

Haas used functionalism in his approach to European integration. He argued that the foundations for regional integration were that the entities should poses pluralistic social structures, be substantially economic and industrial developed. Thus, there should be common ideological patterns among participating units. The central concept of Haas's integration theory was "spill-over", where an agreement on integration in one economic area would or could over time cause other economic policy-areas to integrate, too, in order to secure the full benefit of the integration in the first policy-area. Culture appears in the Haas original model as a background variable (pluralist social structures, common ideological patterns). Another functionalist scholar – Schmitter, argued that "common ideals and identity" were the result of integration, not the cause of it.[48] Thus, it can be claimed that the role of culture is unclear and ambivalent in the neo-functionalism.[49]

In contrast, Deutsch included culture in the background conditions for a successful integration process.[50] These conditions were: (1) mutual relevance of the units to one another; (2) compatibility of values and some actual joint rewards; (3) mutual responsiveness, and (4) some degree of generalized common identity or loyalty.[51] The first three conditions are fairly clear and in accordance with the neo-functionalist perspective, but the fourth reveals the importance of culture. According to Huntington, Deutsch and his colleagues were working on integration in a time, when culture was accepted in political science as a crucial element in understanding societies, analyzing differences among them, and explaining their economic and political development.[52]

In short, culture obviously "is hard to grips with".[53] Perhaps this is one explanation why, as independent variable, it was only included unsystematically in some of the regional integration theory before 1990s. Research has also tended to show

[47] Dosenrode, Soren 'Is a common Culture a prerequisite for Regional Integration', (CCIS-CSE, 2006), p.11

[48] Dosenrode, 'Is a common Culture a prerequisite for Regional Integration', p.9.

[49] Ibid, pp.9-13.

[50] Dosenrode, 'Is a common Culture a prerequisite for Regional Integration', p.8.

[51] Ibid, p.9.

[52] Ibid, p.11.

[53] Ibid, p.11.

the cultural variable indicates trends, but is not a law and cannot stand alone.[54] A common and manifest culture is no guarantee for successful integration. This means that it is important to look at other variables during exploring the regional integration process. Nevertheless, a common core and manifest culture seem to be important for successful, sustainable regional integration. Therefore, culture ought to be a variable in theories of regional integration. But precisely how important it is remains contested and variable needs further empirical research.

ASEAN is an interesting case for exploring the relationship between culture and regional integration for two reasons. First, when discussing the idea of ASEAN Community, people tend to compare it with the establishment and development of the European Union (EU). However, looking at Europe's historical background, one could argue that it has a fundamental commonality in culture which is a combination of Christian and Greek spirits. It has unified social values as well as economic development at a high level, all which demonstrate a foundation of a shared culture.[55] In contrast ASEAN's enormous diversity - socially, religiously, culturally, historically and even in levels of development means forming the ASEAN Community is an extremely ambitious plan.

Second, as was mentioned above in the discussion of the links between culture and regional integration, it is arguable that culture must be one part of the plan that ASEAN is aiming to 2015 - building an ASEAN Community with "unity in diversity". The project of regional integration in Southeast Asia will not be successful if it just focuses on material aspects of integration. ASEAN state leaders understand that, and they projected their plan with a comprehensive approach, including a socio-cultural pillar to complement security-political and economic community building.[56]

Role of social policy in regionalism

One vital element of the socio-cultural community relates to the social policy dimension in regional cooperation. In fact, many analyses have elaborated the

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[54] Dosenrode, 'On Culture and Regional Integration'.

[55] Kikuchi, Yasushi 'A Vision towards the East Asia Union: Possible or not? - Social Anthropological Aspect' (Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, 2007) excerpted from 'Towards an East Asia Community: Beyond Cross-Cultural Diversity Inter-cultural, Inter-societal, Inter-faith Dialogue', December 10 - 18, 2007, The Japan Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Waseda University Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies.

[56] ASEAN, 'A Roadmap for an ASEAN Community: 2009-2015' (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2009).

advantages of regionalism in the development of a coherent social policy in a globalizing world.[57]. So what is "social policy" and how does it relate to regional integration?

"Social policy" can be defined in a number of ways that complement each other.[58] As Mkandanwire expressed, it refers to "collective interventions directly affecting transformation in social welfare, social institutions and social relations".[59] At one level, "it is about policies and practices that support the means of social participation - typically those service in the domains of health and social care, income maintenance, employment (or livelihoods), housing and education." At another level social policy can be seen as the "mechanisms, policies and procedures used by governments, working with other actors, to alter the distributive and social outcome of economic activity."[60] Yeates and Deacon see these as three strands, involving redistribution, regulation and rights.[61]

There has been growth of the social policy dimensions of regionalism. There are two reasons for this. The first is emerging regional-wide social problems which are stimulating further intergovernmental cooperation. The second is that the regional formations potentially offer both a number of advantages and challenges for social policy.[62] For opportunities, the regional formations often "entail groups of countries with similar (or at least less diverse) cultural, legal and political characteristics and legacies, agreement on the scope and nature of collaboration may be feasible and progress can potentially be made more quickly compared with global multilateral negotiations involving a wide diversity of countries".[63] Economic cooperation enables resources to be generated for national and regional social policy purposes. The social policy can be managed and determined through peer review mechanisms at regional

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[57] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', 2006, p.6 (revised version of the paper presented to the High-level Symposium Social Dimensions of Regionalism held in Motevideo, Uruguay, Feb 21st-23rd 2006 organized as part of the International Forum on the Social Sciences-Policy Nexus), UNU-CRIS Occasional Papers No. 0-2006/6, Comparative Regional Integration Studies (CRIS) of United Nations University).

[58] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.1.

[59] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.1.

[60] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.1.

[61] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.1.

[62] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', pp.4-11

[63] Ibid, p.3.

level, and for smaller and developing countries in particular have more chance to access to and influence over policy development through the regional formations.[64]

At the same time, regional cooperation and integration can also create challenges for social policy, for example the greater regional political involvement and interdependence, a greater need for a coherent, binding and effective regional social policy, and the complicating factors associated with economic and trading competition.[65]

For those reasons, several emerging trading blocks and other regional associations have begun to "confront the question of how to forge an appropriate balance between the economic and social aspects of globalization and regionalization".[66] This could help protect states from global market forces that might erode national social entitlements and also give them to a louder voice in the global and regional arena.[67] Through regionalism, states can make possible the development of regional social redistribution mechanisms, regional social, health and labour regulations, and regional mechanisms that give citizens a voice to challenge their governments in terms of social rights.

In summary, with the trend of globalization and increased regional economic cooperation, there is more and more attention paid to the social dimensions of integrating states. It has become not just a trend, but also an urgent need for elites to consider as part of their efforts to realize their goal of deeper cooperation and integration at the regional level.

In reality, the European Union represents the most advanced form of such regional integration. In terms of supranational social policy, it can be said that the EU has an embryonic social policy in the three fields of social redistribution, social regulations and social rights.[68] In the case of ASEAN, despite being almost fifty years old (since its establishment in 1967), it is only in the initial stages of concretizing and operationalizing a coherent social dimension. One reason for this could be attributed to the mode of governance in ASEAN which is often characterized by its unique 'ASEAN

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[64] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.3 & Yealtes N. and Irving Z. (eds.) (2005) Transnational Social Policy, special themed issue and Social Policy and Society, p.4.

[65] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.4 & Yealtes N. and Irving Z. (eds.) (2005), p.4.

[66] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.4

[67] Yeates, Nicola & Deacon, Bob 'Globalism, Regionalism and Social Policy: framing the debate', p.4

[68] Nicola Yeates and Bob Deacon (2006), p.7

Way'[69], "with consensus (unanimity in decision-making), reflecting the high premium on sovereignty and non-interference"[70]. Other reasons include "weak institutional and financial support from member countries".[71]

In comparison to the approach to social policy discussed above, ASEAN members' emphasis on sovereignty has "precluded the development of contemporary European Union-style supra-nationalism, which would otherwise tie together the different components of social policy at the regional level"[72]. In contrast with the binding agreements and enforceable policies of the EU case, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) has been constructed based on the foundation of multi-faceted functional cooperation which has been established over 40 past years and the leader's statements, declarations that elaborate principles and aspirations, then leave the individual member countries to make operational.[73]

2. The ASEAN case

Background on ASEAN

Over more than forty years, ASEAN has now become a political-economic and social entity with a total area of 4.5 million km2 and a population of over 600 million people. "In a region with great political, economic, and cultural diversity, ASEAN has fostered a collective Southeast Asian identity around the norms of non-interference, mutual respect for sovereignty and consensus-building".[74] ASEAN has raised the profile and standing of Southeast Asia in the international arena, something that has been a foundation for ASEAN gradually changing from an Association to an inter-

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[69] For Acharya, the ASEAN Way is usually described as a decision-making process that favours a high degree of consultation and consensus. It is a claim about the process of regional cooperation and interaction based on discreteness, informality, consensus-building and non-confrontational bargaining styles which are often contrasted with the adversarial posturing, majority vote and other legalistic decision-making procedures in Western multilateral negotiations. (Amitav (2001) Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order (London: Routledge), p.64).

[70] Jenina Joy Chavez (2007), "Social policy in ASEAN: The Prospects for Integrating Migrant Labour Rights and Protection", Global Social Policy Copyright © 2007 1468-0181 vol. 7(3): 358–378; 082239 SAGE Publications (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore), DOI: 10.1177/1468018107082239 http://gsp.sagepub.com, p.360; & Katsumata, H. (2003) 'Reconstruction of Diplomatic Norms in Southeast Asia: The Case for Strict Adherence to the "ASEAN Way"', Contemporary Southeast Asia 25(1): 104–21

[71] Jenina Joy Chavez (2007), "Social policy in ASEAN: The Prospects for Integrating Migrant Labour Rights and Protection", p.362.

[72] Ibid, p.362.

[73] Ibid, pp.363-365.

[74] Rumelili, Bahar, 'Constructing Regional Community and Order in Europe and Southeast Asia', p.126.

governmental regional organization and then forging a Community. In recent decades, ASEAN has been an important factor leading to the maintenance of an environment of peace, security and development in the region and elites have sought deeper levels of cooperation in the political-security, economic and socio-cultural fields.[75]

The process of building ASEAN Community

ASEAN's main purpose, as stated in its founding document of Bangkok Declaration 1967, is to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development among the members.[76] Inspire of the declaration's emphasis on economic and socio-culture cooperation, however, for the first decades of establishment and development, for most ASEAN countries, economic cooperation was a means to achieving political cooperation, or in other words, ASEAN's main activities until the end of the Cold War were directed toward stabilizing the region and enhance the economic-political cooperation.[77] In December 1997, meeting under the cloud of the Asian financial crisis, ASEAN leaders launched the "Vision 2020" plan that stated their determination to pursue the goals set out in the Bangkok Declaration. They sought to create as ASEAN as a harmonious block of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, prosperity, intertwined with relationship partners, in dynamic development and a community of caring societies. A landmark in ASEAN Community building process was in October 2003; ASEAN leaders signed the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (also known as the Bali Concord II) and agreed to set a target of an ASEAN Community by 2020 with three main pillars: a Security Community (ASC), Economic Community (AEC), and Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The successful construction of each pillar is an essential element for successfully building a whole community.[78] In order to implement the proclaimed long-term vision, action plans were immediately drawn in the following years[79]. At the ASEAN Summit 10th in 2004, the ASEAN leaders signed the Vientiane Action Program (VAP) 2004-2010. Having understood the urgent needs to further enhance the regional integration and based on

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[75] Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Vietnam 'Nghien cuu dinh huong phat trien quan he voi cac nuoc ASEAN ve linh vuc lao dong va xa hoi' (Hanoi: International Cooperation Department, 2011).

[76] Kim Min-hyung (2011), 'Theorizing ASEAN Integration', ASEAN Perspective 35.3(2011):407-435.

[77] Kim Min-hyung (2011), 'Theorizing ASEAN Integration', ASEAN Perspective 35.3, p.407

[78] ASEAN website http://asean.org.

[79] Sueo Sudo (2005), 'Forging an ASEAN Community: Its significance, problems and prospects', Nanzan University-Domestic Research Fellow of 2005, p.8.

the positive results gained in implementation of the action plans, in January 2007, the ASEAN leaders resolved to accelerate the process of integration by creating the ASEAN Community by 2015 instead of 2020.[80] With this strong determination, ASEAN'efforts has become even more urgent. At the 13th ASEAN Summit (in November 2007), ASEAN leaders signed the ASEAN Charter to create a legal basis and institutional framework for ASEAN and at the 14th ASEAN Summit in December 2009, they adopted the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community with three comprehensive plans related to the three dimensions of the ASEAN Community and the Integrated ASEAN Initiative Work Plan Phase 2 (2008 - 2015). These are important documents, both as an orientation program and in the way it set out specific implementation steps if ASEAN were to create its Community by 2015. As we will see in the next chapter, one of the most challenging aspects of this process, if also perhaps one of the least studied, has been the goal of forging the Socio-Cultural Community.

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[80] Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015.

CHAPTER II

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

Over more than 45 years of existence and development, ASEAN has become an integrated region of ten regional countries, based on the principle of consensus in its entire decision making. To reach the target of sustainable development, integration between regional countries will not only stop at the areas of economic, political but also extend to the fields of socio-culture. Based on the internal development needs of member countries, the ASEAN states launched the idea of building an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) in their ASEAN Vision 2020 - a document considered as a guide for long-term planning approved in 1997.[81] Since then, the ASEAN has made great efforts to construct the legal documents for the ASCC, of which the most comprehensive is the ASCC Blueprint for period 2009-2015 which was approved in 2009. In implementing the Blueprint, ASEAN, with its unique characteristics, has attempted build itself as an institution which pursues centrality and unity, while at the same time respecting national sovereignty and the diversity of the member states. These characteristics are manifested in all the matters related to the ASCC, from its objectives and characteristics, to design the ASCC main elements, as well as mechanism of implementation and review of the ASCC Blueprint period 2009-2015.

In this chapter, the first section focuses on providing an overview on the origins and history of ASCC construction together with its key legal documents regulating. The second part will review and give some analyses on objectives, characteristics and model of the ASCC as an ASEAN's aspiration. The third and final sections will analyze the ASCC Blueprint together with the implementation of the ASCC by ASEAN from 2009 until now. The chapter argues that establishing an ASCC by 2015 is an ambitious project, because the Community faces the ongoing challenge of member states national interests.

1. History of ASCC construction and key legal documents

The history of the ASCC's development is a long journey marked by many important documents adopted by ASEAN on socio-culture sectoral cooperation and

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[81] ASEAN Vision 2020 approved by ASEAN leaders in Kuala Lumpur on 15 December 1997, http://www.aseanhrmech.org/downloads/Asean-Vision-2020.pdf

integration. There are several key milestones. First is the Bangkok Declaration 1967, which lays the foundations for ASEAN cooperation, including the field of cultural, social, scientific and technical issues. Next is the ASEAN Declaration of Concord I (Bali Declaration I, 1976), which set the specific content of much social and cultural cooperation in ASEAN towards the poor in rural areas, improving conditions for women and children, drug prevention, cultural co-operation, information and education.[82] The ASEAN Vision 2020 launched in 1997 [83]set out the vision and overall objectives of the Socio-cultural cooperation for ASEAN to 2020, including notably the goal to become a "caring and sharing community" in which each country has its own heritage, but the ten members are bound together by a common identity. Next, the Hanoi Plan of Action (HPA)[84] in 1998 assigned a variety of programs and measures to materialize the ASEAN Vision 2020, which set out the general plan for the development of society and addressing the impact of the crisis finance; human resource development; environmental protection and sustainable development. In the ASEAN Declaration of Concord II (Bali Declaration II) approved in the ASEAN Summit in Bali (Indonesia) in October 2003, the ASEAN leaders for the first time to set a target of an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community with specific and clear objectives which beyond the Vientiane Action Programme further concretizes and develops specific programs and/or projects to translate the objectives to a reality. The Bali Declaration II is the first official document to mark the birth of the ASCC. Then, in 2008, with the launch of the ASEAN Charter, the ASCC was reaffirmed as one of the important factors in the process of creating an "ASEAN Community" by 2015.[85] With the Charter, the ASEAN has succeeded in creating a legal basis and firm institutional framework for creation of a three-pillar ASEAN Community. At the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore in November 2007, the leaders agreed to develop a blueprint for the ASCC that will contain concrete plans and programs to ensure that the Socio-Cultural Community takes

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[82] ASEAN Secretary, 1976 Declaration of ASEAN Concord I, adopted by the Heads of State/Government at the 1st ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia on 24 February 1976 [http://www.aseansec.org/5049.htm]

[83] The 2nd ASEAN Informal Summit, held in Kuala Lumpur on 15/12/1997, adopted the ASEAN Vision 2020 which sets out a broad vision for ASEAN in the Year 2020: an ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian Nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.

[84] The Ha Noi Plan of Action (HPA) is the first in a series of plans of action building up to the realization of the goals of the ASEAN Vision 2020. The HPA has a six-year timeframe covering the period from 1999 to 2004.

[85] Bali Declaration 2003 and ASEAN Chapter 2008

root.[86] The ASCC Blueprint then was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 14th ASEAN Summit on 1 March 2009 in Cha-am/Hua Hin – Thailand, and represents the human dimension of ASEAN cooperation. It upholds ASEAN's commitment to address the region's aspiration to lift the quality of life of its peoples. A set of cooperative activities has been developed based on the assumption that the three pillars of the ASEAN Community are interdependent and interrelated and that linkages are imperative to ensure complementarities and unity of purpose.

Origin and key factors for ASCC construction

There are a number of factors, both external and internal, that in the late 1990s and early 2000s influenced ASEAN's decision to upgrade its integration in social-cultural fields. In terms of external factors or from out-side of the ASEAN members, three main influences shaped ASEAN's decision to create an ASCC. The first is the financial and economic crisis at the end of the 1990s.[87] At the 6th ASEAN Summit, held in December 1998, the ASEAN leaders recognized that the financial crisis had a social dimension and that the poor and vulnerable were most affected. These concerns were given prominence in the 6-year "Hanoi plan of Action" (HPA). In addition to an initiative to hasten economic recovery, the HPA included the section of "promote social development and address the social impact of the financial and economic crisis" which comprised the actions to mitigate the social impact of the regional financial and economic crisis; to implement the ASEAN plan on rural development and poverty eradication, and to support activities and social development programmes aimed at addressing issues of unequal economic development, poverty and socio-economic disparities.[88] Its objective was to create a solidarity of peoples, to prevent risks linked to poverty and human under-development, and to face up to the challenges posed by the evolution of contemporary society, such as the consumer society, changes in family structure and growing urbanization.[89]

In addition, entering the twenty-first century, ASEAN faces a lot of non-traditional security problems which no single nation can solve and which require

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[86] ASCC Blueprint in Roadmap for an ASEAN Community p. 67.

[87] Henry, Laurence 'The ASEAN Way and Community Integration: Two Different Models of Regionalism', Journal compilation © 2007 Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA, pp. 873-874

[88] Cho Kah Sin, (2000), "ASEAN cooperation on social recovery and opportunity for collaboration with dialogue partners/international agencies", pp.1-2.

[89] Section 3 of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Plan of Action 2004.

regional cooperation. This realization has led ASEAN to extend the objectives it set to the socio-cultural community to cover other tasks, namely to prevention and handling of natural catastrophes, to the fight against epidemics like HIV/AIDS and flu, education, and the social protection of women and children.[90]

Moreover, one factor that creates a momentum for ASEAN to accelerate their idea of building an ASCC may have come from the influence of the EU model. Since 2003, ASEAN's plan was to create three ASEAN communities (Economic, Security, Socio-Cultural), to some extent "echoing the structure of the EU and the three European communities (Community of Coal and Steel, European Economic Community and Community of Atomic Energy), which became the 'European Community' in 1992"[91]. Also, at the same time, the EU was created by the Maastricht Treaty which encompasses the Community (first pillar) and adds different forms of cooperation policy, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP, second pillar) and cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA, third pillar).[92] Due to the absence of a real community of citizens, the Socio-Cultural Community in ASEAN seems to have been created to better fit with the model of the EU, aiming to create the basis of a 'desire to live together' and of a 'we feeling'[93]. Thus, added to the two above groups of ASCC's objects (address the side-effects of financial crises and economic integration, deal with the non-traditional security problems) one more of its objectives is set "to preserve and promote cultural heritage and regional identity."[94]

In terms of internal drivers or the factors from inside the ASEAN countries, it is the needs from the ASEAN member states themselves to overcome the growing inequality caused as the impacts of globalization and regionalization trends and the fast population growth in the ASEAN region that play an important role in pushing up the ASEAN further enhance their regional integration in socio-cultural, scientific and even environmental technology aspects amongst ASEAN countries.

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[90] Section 16 of the Chairman's Statement of the Eleventh ASEAN Summit 'One Vision, One Identity, One
Community', Kuala Lumpur, 12 December 2005.

[91] Helen Wallance and William Wallance, 2000, "Policy-Making in the European Union", Chapter 1 – The Institutional Setting, Oxford University Press: New York, p.4.

[92] Laurence Henry, (2007), "The ASEAN Way and Community Integration: Two Different Models of Regionalism", European Law Journal, Vol. 13, No. 6, November, p.869.

[93] Laurence Henry, (2007), "The ASEAN Way and Community Integration: Two Different Models of Regionalism", p.874.

[94] Vientiane Programme of Action 2004–2010

Furthermore, the achievements of functional cooperation during over 40 years since its establishment on the areas of social policy and culture among the ASEAN members also help the member countries improve their national condition of social welfare and raise the ASEAN people's awareness on ASEAN's culture and identity. All these create firm foundation for the ASEAN leaders to look forward to ASEAN being a real entity in the international arena, and push ahead with the ASCC process.

In addition, non-governmental factors and organizations have also played a role to promoting the process of realizing the idea of ASEAN community and ASCC into the reality. One that had influence on the formation of the ASCC is ASEAN-ISIS, a track II organization in Southeast Asia, which established the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) in 2000.[95] The significance of APA can be understood by its proclaimed objectives to "promote greater awareness of an ASEAN community; mutual understanding and tolerance for the diversity of culture, religion, ethnicity, social values, political cultures and processes, and other elements of ASEAN diversity"[96].

All these factors played a role, but the most important momentum for ASCC building came from ASEAN member states themselves. Aware of the impacts of the external environment, as well as internal drivers for further cooperation and integration, ASEAN leaders have consistently shown their determination to the course of intra-regional integration. Among active members, the contribution role of the Philippines is especially notable - the ASCC is the primary contribution of the Philippines to regional community building in ASEAN.

In 1962, the Philippines submitted a Working Paper on Cooperation in Social and Cultural Matters to ASA.[97] Then in 1997 during the 10th ASEAN Summit held in Laos, the Philippines once again initiated the ASCC to complement the AEC.[98] Following that, in the 12th ASEAN Summit, the Philippines sought to manage to put the ASCC matter in the working agenda as the central proposition in the Chairperson's statement released during the Summit.[99] The Philippines also crafted a Plan of Action (PoA) to

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[95] Sueo Sudo (2006), p.18.

[96] Noel M. Morada (2007) , "APA and Track 2½ Diplomacy: The Role of the ASEAN People's Assembly in Building an ASEAN Community", http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/singapur/04601/2007-3/morada.pdf, p.3

[97] ASEAN Secretariat, (2009), ASEAN in Documents. www.aseansec.org.

[98] ASEAN Secretariat, (1997), Report on results of 10th ASEAN Summit.

[99] Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. "Chairperson's Statement of the 12th ASEAN Summit: One Caring and Sharing

concretize the commitment of ASEAN to implement the ASCC[100]. This had four core elements including building a community of caring societies to address issues of poverty, equity and human development; managing the social impact of economic integration by building a competitive human resource base and adequate systems of social protection; enhancing environmental sustainability and sound environmental governance; and strengthening the foundations of regional social cohesion towards an ASEAN Community in 2020.[101] These four core elements were then further operationalized under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint into six main elements of the ASCC Blueprint.[102] In the view of Philippines' leaders, the country sought to prove that the ASCC is not just an "afterthought" but rather an equally important aspect in realizing an Integrated, Peaceful and Caring ASEAN in 2015.[103]

2. The ASCC in ASEAN aspiration: objectives, characteristics and key elements

In ASEAN's view, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) is one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community, with the aim of building a community of ASEAN nations in harmony, unity, sharing and caring towards the people, taking care for welfare, better living environment of the people, and to develop a common regional identity. [104]

From an institutional perspective, the concept of ASCC can be understood as building socio-cultural links between ASEAN countries, based on a system of mechanisms and legal institutions.[105] The construction of the socio-culture community is expected to affect all aspects of social life in the ASEAN countries, to help resolve the side-effects of the process of urbanization, industrialization and modernization

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Community." ASEAN Secretariat. January 13, 2007. (Accessed April 26, 2010).

[100] Office of the Press Secretary. Backgrounder: ASEAN in Brief.

[101] See the full plan of action in ASEAN. "The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Plan of Action."

ASEAN Secretariat. http://www.aseansec.org/16832.htm (accessed April 26, 2010).

[102] ASCC Blueprint in Roadmap for an ASEAN Community p. 68.

[103] Adeline T. De Castro, (2009), "The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint: Implementing Labour-Based Concerns at the Country-level", Institute for Labour Studies (ILS) Discussion Paper Series Dec 2009, p.3.

[104] ASCC Blueprint.

[105] Nguyen Duy Dung (2012), 'ASEAN: From An Association to A Community – Emerging Problems and Implication to Vietnam' [ASEAN Tu Hiep hoi den Cong dong: Nhung van de noi bat va tac dong den Viet Nam], Social Science Publisher [NXB Khoa hoc xa hoi]: Hanoi; Nguyen Truong An, 'Issues of regional mechanism building and role of ASEAN' [Van de xay dung cac the che o khu vuc va vai tro cua ASEAN', International Studies [Nghien cuu quoc te], Vol. 1, 2010.

taking place in the countries of Southeast Asia to create a developed society in which the human being is the center, or in other words it is a society for people.

Under the aspiration of ASEAN, some main characteristics of the ASCC that the Association has been seeking for building as followed. First, should be a Community in which people are taken care of. Second, social welfare and security should be guaranteed, by which ASCC will have specific cooperative measures to ensure the security and welfare in accordance with the characteristics of ASEAN. Third, the priority of social justice is concerned, or in other words ASCC will focus on cooperation and ensuring social justice viewed from various aspects of social life. Fourth, the environment is secured to maintain sustainable development that means ASCC will endeavour to increase regional cooperation around environmental protection. Furthermore, ASEAN identity should be enhanced, so the ASCC will build a common ASEAN identity based on the characteristics of each nation and raise awareness of this identity in all societies. And finally, the development gap within ASEAN will be focused on to narrow, allowing more development in ASEAN on the socio-economic and cultural.[106] These characteristics were recognized in the ASCC Blueprint 2009-2015, including (a) Human Development; (b) Welfare and Social Insurance; (c) The right to social equality and ensure the rights of citizens; (d) Ensure environmental sustainability; (e) Construction of ASEAN identity; and (f) Narrow the development gap.[107] Those elements express the six main objectives of the ASCC. Specifically, they are the objectives of taking people-centered (element a), solving the relationship between the man and society (element b and c) and the relationship between the man and nature (element d). At the same time ASCC is also responsible for settling and forging of the main characteristics of ASEAN and ASCC (element e and f). These six elements specified with a total of 339 specific action lines designed in the ASCC Blueprint 2009-2015 provided a detailed roadmap for the implementation of the ASCC by 2015.   Building an ASCC of trust, equality and justice would support economic growth and development in the region, as well as maintain the regional peace and social security. This will assist the AEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) in strengthening social stability and security, alleviating possible conflicts across the region as a whole.

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[106] Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2010), "150 questions on ASEAN", p.120.
[107] "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint", p.1.

ASCC - Role and significance in ASEAN Community building

ASCC plays an important role not only for the overall development of the society in Southeast Asia but it has also ssignificance in ASEAN Community and its inter-relations with two other pillars (APSC and AEC). From the key components of ASCC just discussed, the priorities of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community address a broad range of issues related to social development or identity building in ASEAN, which consist of health, labour, the environment, social welfare, gender, culture, and education. The overarching aim of this Community is to improve and protect the lives of all ASEAN citizens. Thus, the work of the ASCC would help ASEAN people understand the benefits of belong in the ASEAN Community, forging a sense of belonging, identification and further commitment to the region's shared goals. As one group of scholars put it, "only when the citizens of ASEAN are committed to the ideals of shared identity, shared responsibility and shared prosperity, can the region continue to flourish".[108] From the ASCC's objectives, one could claim that the ASCC is a bold attempt at regional community building with a very broad scope of cooperation fields including not just cultural and social aspects, but also other various policy and development areas. Julio calls this social re-engineering at a regional rather than a national level.[109] The six characteristics of the ASCC can be best described as aiming for human security in ASEAN.

There is obviously a relationship among the three pillars building an ASEAN Community. The links are imperative to ensure complementarities and unity of the overcharging goals of the ASEAN Community. As some scholars have noted that the first pillar (APSC) is about Peace, the second (AEC) is for Prosperity, while the third is for People. All these three elements of Peace, Prosperity and People create at the core a strong, connected ASEAN.[110] Some even make a more confident assessment that if the APSC and AEC are means through which ASEAN hopes to secure a brighter future for its younger generation, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community with its focus on people

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[108], The humanities in ASEAN studies and higher education - *Teaching of ASEAN History in Higher Education,* By Roziah Omar, Jariah Mohd Jan, Hamidin Abd Hamid and Azmi Mat Akhir, p.2.

[109] Julio, S.A "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community: An assessment of its institutional prospects", http://ssrn.com/abstract=1803830, p.19.

[110] Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "150 questions on ASEAN", p.121.

is about preparing them to inherit this future.[111] As Rodolfo Senverino notes, "taking a long-term perspective, one would say that the core of the ASEAN Community is the Socio-Cultural Community".[112] The basis for his claim lies in the explanation that the Socio-Cultural Community can be considered as a vehicle for developing a sense of Southeast Asian identity, building a regional awareness and fostering mutual understanding among the people of ASEAN. This would support, indeed would be essential for common norms to be adopted and common values to be shared.

3. With the aims to realization by 2015: ASCC Blueprint period 2009-2015

The ASCC Blueprint was designed as the collection of the proposed actions by the members. During the negotiation of the ASCC Blueprint, the ASEAN Secretariat conducted many consultations and discussion with the members states. According to the ASEAN principles (ASEAN Way), the members have responsibility to raise their proposals of priorities and/or initiatives then they will discuss and consultation for a consensus. The content of document with the 6 above-mentioned elements and 339 lines of action reveal the concerns and priorities of the ASEAN states at the time. The way of designing and building the Blueprint is one of from the bottom up, that is at the national level, the related ministries proposed their respective priorities, then discussion and collection into a set of priorities and action programme of the country, then at regional level, the member states raised their proposals to discuss and come to an agreement (or a set of regional priorities and action programs for the ASCC building). It is such way of designing and constructing the ASCC Blueprint has shows the Blueprint is crystallized priority greatest relevance with the ASEAN member countries in particular and the entire ASEAN Community in general. In the course of the member states involved in the development of the Blueprint, each country must set its priorities towards building a socio-cultural community of ASEAN in 2015. Featured with the ASEAN Way - discussions towards consensus, the members has selected the most appropriate priority common to the whole of ASEAN member countries to put into the overall plan. Therefore, the priority of the member states that has chosen - on the principle of priority and it also coincides with the appropriate priority of all other member states - is the first priority of ASEAN member countries. Accordingly, it is

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[111] Roziah Omar, Jariah Mohd Jan, Hamidin Abd Hamid and Azmi Mat Akhir 'The humanities in ASEAN studies and higher education - *Teaching of ASEAN History in Higher Education',* p.2.
[112] Narine, Shaun 'ASEAN in the 21st century: a skeptical review', p.377.

possible to assert that the Blueprint is the highest legal document to confirm the suitability of the overall plan to prioritize activities and socio-culture of the ASEAN countries, and the commitments made by leaders of ASEAN member countries in the development of an ASCC towards people in the ASEAN Community by 2015. In other words, it is hoped that the ASCC Blueprint will address individual member priorities while contributing to realizing the objectives of an ASEAN Community.

Implementation and review mechanism

The ASCC Blueprint is implemented through a number of methods proposed and agreed by the ASEAN countries. To ensure coordination of activities of the ASCC at both regional and national levels, collaboration/coordination mechanisms have been regulated in the Blueprint.

At regional level, ASEAN Community Councils were established to realize the objectives of each of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. Specifically, these Councils are tasked to: ensure the implementation of the relevant decisions of the ASEAN Summit[113]; coordinate the work of the different sectors under its purview, and on issues, which cut across the other Community Councils; and, submit reports and recommendations to the ASEAN Summit on matters under its purview. Each ASEAN Community Council is required to meet at least twice a year and is chaired by the appropriate Minister from the member state holding the ASEAN chairmanship and supported by the relevant senior officials (SOCA).[114] With this mandate, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council assumes the lead responsibility and accountability for the overall implementation of the ASCC Blueprint and is supposed to coordinate efforts under its purview as well as those which cut across the other Community Councils.[115]

Under the Community Council, there are several specialized ministerial agencies. All the ASEAN ministerial bodies or their equivalent are responsible for ensuring effective implementation of the various elements, actions and commitments in the Blueprint by reflecting and mainstreaming them in their respective work plans, mobilizing resources for them, and undertaking national initiatives in order to meet

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[113] The ASEAN Chapter constitutes the institutions of ASEAN Community and its pillars. The supreme policy-making body of ASEAN is ASEAN Summit which comprises the Heads of State or Government of all the state members is.

[114] ASEAN Chapter, Article 9, pp.12-13.

[115] "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint", p.24

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these commitments, submitting reports and recommendations to their respective Community Council.[116] Each ASEAN sectoral ministerial body has under its purview the relevant senior officials and subsidiary bodies to undertake its functions.[117] Progress in implementing of the ASCC Blueprint is required to be reported by the Secretary-General of ASEAN to relevant ministerial meetings and Councils, and to the ASEAN Summit.[118] As of August 2009, there were 17 ASEAN sectoral bodies[119] involved in the implementation of 339 action lines under the six key elements of the ASCC Blueprint.[120]

At national level, a similar mechanism resembling the regional set-up is supposed to be established. However, due to the diversity of ASEAN members, in parallel with the implementation mechanism at the regional level of the ASCC, each member state can implement a specific mechanism to fit their country's context, to contribute to create an activeness for the members in the implementation of ASCC as well as help the member to success implement the goals of ASCC at national level.[121] The ASEAN Charter requires that member-states should designate a national representative to the ASCC to be supported by relevant senior officials. States are also supposed to designate a lead agency at the national level, depending on how much significance they attribute to the ASCC and the capacity of ministerial bodies.

Looking at the assignment of the governments, it is notable that ASCC Focal Points differ greatly among the member states. For example, for Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore, the national focal-point agency is their Ministry for Social Welfare and Development. For Laos, Malaysia and Myanmar, it is the Ministry of

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[116] Ibid, p.24.

[117] ASEAN Chapter, Article 9, pp.12-13.

[118] Ibid, p.25.

[119] The following is a list of ASEAN sectoral bodies under the purview of ASCC Council: (1) ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information; (2) ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts; (3) ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting; (4) ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management; (5) ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment; (6) Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP); (7) ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting; (8) ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting; (9) ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication; (10) ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development; (11) ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth; (12) ASEAN Conference on Civil Service Matters; (13) ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity; (14) ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management; (15) ASEAN Earthquakes Information Centre; (16) ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre; (17) ASEAN University Network.

[120] ASCC Council, 24 August 2009. Report on the First Meeting of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Council. Bangkok, Thailand.

[121] Ibid, p.25

Culture and Information. Cambodia has given the role to its Ministry for National Development. Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also serves as ASCC Focal point while Brunei has appointed an Ambassador-at-Large. Since 2009, Vietnam, recognizing the importance of the two elements within ASCC cooperation - social welfare and labour - has assigned the task of focal-point and coordination to the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA).[122] We will discuss MOLISA's role in greater detail in chapter three.

Implementation measures

To ensure effective implementation of the ASCC Blueprint, several measures are recommended. First, the ASEAN members are supposed to mainstream the strategies, targets and actions of the ASCC Blueprint, and incorporate them in respective national development plans. Second, the countries should endeavour to ratify relevant ASEAN Agreements with a timeline in accordance with the internal processes of each ASEAN Members States. Members are responsible for engaging the dialogue partners, the private sectors, civil organizations and other relevant stakeholder in ensuring timely implementation of agreed measures, as well as providing training and capacity building for both the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN member states, helping them in implementation of the goals of ASCC.[123]

Besides the implementation mechanism of coordination and collaboration, one of the major tasks for the ASEAN members is to mobilize financial resources, expertise, research and capacity building from various partners, ranging from other ASEAN members, ASEAN's dialogue partners, development agencies, through to the institutions like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (WB). Examples of this partnership include efforts to cooperate with the United States, Japan, Russia, and European Union for the training of human resources, or to enlist the help of the United States (US), Japan in building a regional tsunami warning center[124]. There is also an anticipated role for the private sector.

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[122] Decision No. 142/QD-TTg issued by Vietnamese Government on 31 Jan 2009 on Regulations of working and coordinating between ASEAN participating agencies (Vietnamese version download at http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/vi/mofa/ctc_quocte/un/nr090311103654/nr090311141943/nr090311143551/ns100420101644)

[123] Ibid, p.25

[124] Retrieved from the interviewing Head of ASEAN Cooperation Office, Ministry of Resources and Environment, Vietnam done by the author at the guiding workshop on Mid-term Review of ASCC Blueprint Implementation, 27 Jun 2013.

Aware of the ASCC's significance in ASEAN integration, the ASEAN countries have also developed a communication strategy to raise awareness on the Community and its goals in the Blueprint. Through the setting of methods for this communication programme, ASCC Council showed that it has carefully studied the characteristics of the region with such a multi-area religious, diversity of socio-economic development level, large disparities between countries, a region sensitive to economic and political-security issues. It has sought to get the involvement by all stakeholders with an interest in integration.

Last but importantly, it is the review mechanism. To ensure that all activities in the Blueprint meet the needs and priorities of ASEAN, and taking into account the changing dynamics of the regional environment, the Blueprint regulated a review mechanism which helps to strengthen inspection and monitoring to ensure the effective implementation of the agreements. "The ASEAN Secretariat shall develop and adopt indicators and systems to monitor and assess the progress of implementation if the various elements and actions in the Blueprint. The mid-term review of the implementation of the ASCC Blueprint can be undertaken whenever necessary, taking into account the changing dynamics of the region and the global environment".[125] The implementation of this model aimed to draw on past experience and follow the best pathway to create a solid foundation for ASCC growth in the future.

In short, the ASCC is one of the three pillars, together with AEC and APSC that create an ASEAN community. It is founded on the basic principles of ASEAN, in which the "ASEAN Way" or respect for sovereignty and non-interference, and consultation and consensus are key. But like the other two communities, ASCC has built for itself a set of rules and mechanisms for implementation and review which can advance the Community project and create a unified ASEAN.

This tension between national priorities and regional community has also manifested itself in implementing the Blueprint in reality. The ASCC Blueprint period 2009-2015 was approved as a result of collection the ASEAN state's priorities and compromises they negotiated for reaching the target. The Blueprint has also been advanced during over 4 years (2009-2013) based on the manner of the member states through their setting ASCC's yearly strategic directions and priorities and localization

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[125] ASCC Blueprint, p.25

of the ASCC activities at the national programme. As stipulated in Article 9 of the ASEAN Charter, the ASCC Council has the responsibility of ensuring implementation of the decision of the ASEAN Summit (Paragraph 4 (a)), and shall meet at least twice year (Paragraph 5). In initiating the transition into and succession between ASCC Council Chairmanship, it is common practice for the newly-designated ASCC Chairperson to enjoin the community to formulate, deliberate and formally enunciate new priority areas on which to focus the community's efforts. Since the Blueprint was officially approved in 2009 till present, there have been five member states who took the role of the Chair of the ASCC (Thailand in 2009, Vietnam in 2010, Indonesia in 2011, Cambodia in 2012 and Brunei Darussalam in 2013). A matrix showing the chronology and focus of ASCC priorities from 2009 to present is provided in the attached Annex.

Having examined the experience to date, ASEAN Secretariat, with the purpose of enhancing ASCC discussions on yearly strategic directions, and to facilitate the process of setting the annual priority areas reached through consensus, has proposed some substantial principles which should be considered as guidelines to determine the priority areas.[126] For example, it argues the yearly priorities must underscore ASEAN Centrality, their regional significance, and booster and complement priorities declared and committed to by the ASEAN Summit Leaders. The new annual strategic direction and priority areas should also be fully aligned with the ASCC Blueprint, and engage other pillars in the ASEAN Community. Importantly, ASCC Council can also consider identify priority areas to be implemented across several years within the ASCC Blueprint timeframe. Consultations with successor ASCC Council and SOCA Chairs should be encouraged in activities that have a multi-year timetable.

4. Results of ASCC Blueprint implementation during 2009-2013 and some existing issues

How successful has implementation of the ASCC been? Measured against the content of the Blueprint at least there have been remarkable results. In general, the ASCC Blueprint has been implemented both at the regional and national levels. For the regional activities outlined in the ASCC Blueprint actions, according to the reports of the ASEAN Secretariat, up to September 2012 there have been 293 out of the 339 lines

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[126] ASEAN Secretariat Non-Paper 8th ASCC Council, PhnomPenh, October 2012.

of action in the Blueprint having been carried out (equivalent to 86%)[127]. However, while 595 specific activities were performed, only 465 of those were identified in the level of cooperation. The rest of the action lines in the Blueprint are at the stage of not been resolved or just be addressed at a lower level, which are those of needing the participation of inter-agencies or those of not being well defined as the task of any specialized agency.[128] The reports of ASEAN Secretariat also noted the determination by the ASEAN members in their efforts of gradually legalizing the institutions of the ASCC and improving the effectiveness of the ASCC mechanisms. Among of those must account the proposals of ASCC for the Terms of Reference (or TOR) for SOCA, TOR of the Mid-term review of the ASCC Blueprint implementation, Follow-up to proposal of the foundation of ASCC Fund, Non Paper on Guidance on Priority Areas for ASCC Chair - Key considerations for setting ASCC's Yearly strategic directions and priorities, etc.[129]

Existing issues during the ASCC Blueprint implementation

Although ASCC Council Meetings have noted the progress achieved in the implementation of the ASCC Blueprint, the relevant ministers have also exchanged views on the challenges and underlying causes of the shortcomings in implementation. Challenges include the problem of limited resources, lack of coordination, the spread of so many activities in broad fields, and a lack of priority areas. At the same time, ministers have agreed on the basic solution for the Blueprint and ASCC implementation in the near future, such as further strengthening the coordination mechanisms: mobilizing more resources both financial and human ones from internal and external agencies and private areas or the community; identifying integration issues and intertwining them each other as well as mainstreaming them in the national and regional programmes; identifying more clearly the Community's priority areas, promoting the monitoring and evaluation of programme implementation; promoting the

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[127] Remarks by H. E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary General of ASEAN ASEAN Community Building and the Role of the ASCC Council at the 9th ASCC Council, 23 March 2013, Brunei Darussalam.

[128] Vietnam MOLISA, Information Paper presented at the Preparation Meeting for Mid-term Review of ASCC Blueprint implementation, 27 June 2013, Hanoi.

[129] According to the ASEAN Secretariat Information Paper presented during the 13th Meeting of the Senior Officials' Committee for the ASCC (SOCA) on 26 January 2013, Brunei Darussalam.

strategies to raise awareness and building human resources in ASEAN.[130] Another big challenge for ASCC realization is the problem related to ordinary people's awareness. As the ASEAN Secretary-General Le Luong Minh's remarks, the draft "Survey on ASEAN Community Building Efforts" conducted in 2012 did indicate that, "in reality, the vision of ASEAN Community 2015 is hampered by the low awareness of ASEAN as a regional body. The knowledge and understanding of a significant number of ASEAN citizens in Member States of ASEAN policies and their potential impacts are far from adequate"[131].

ASEAN is facing the fact that there is only 2 years left as the deadline proposed to realize ASCC in 2015. Aware of the progress made and the challenges remaining, ASEAN has decided to bring forward the implementation of the ASCC Mid-Term Review (MTR), which is conducted from June to early October 2013, so that it is able to summit the assessment report to ASCC Council meeting in this October 2013 and then to the ASEAN Summit in late 2013. The mid-term evaluation will assist in better identifying gaps and challenges related to ASCC Blueprint, and finding suitable solutions to improve the action of the member states at both their engagement in the regional level and their deployment at the national level. Designed by the ASEAN Secretariat and based on the consensus of member states, the MTR is done on the basis of the assessment at both regional and national grades. The evaluation focuses on asking questions about effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, efficiency of using resources and impacts of the Blueprint implementation in reaching the ASCC objectives, as well as in contributing to the implementation of the national strategies and programmes on socio-culture of member states. The MTR is expected to assess the progress of implementation of the ASCC Blueprint, and provide recommendations for further enhancing the activities and mechanisms to ensure the effective contribution of the ASCC towards the realization of an ASEAN Community by 2015. Obviously, the activities of ASCC are currently to concentrate on reviewing the Blueprint's implementation and assess progress, but it seems clear the completion of the Blueprint in late 2015 will require practical actions from states, with high consensus and rational

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[130] According to the ASEAN Secretariat Information Paper presented during the SOCA Meeting to prepare for Mid-Term Review of the ASCC Blueprint implementation, on 25-26 June 2013, Brunei Darussalam.

[131] Remarks by H. E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary General of ASEAN ASEAN Community Building and the Role of the ASCC Council at the 9th ASCC Council, 23 March 2013, Brunei Darussalam.

resource allocation, realizing the direction set by high level leaders for the region. This also creates opportunities and challenges for all ASEAN states.

In conclusions, this chapter has provided an overview of the place of social and cultural cooperation in regional integration and introduced the ASEAN Social and Cultural Community (ASCC). Some broad conclusions can be drawn from the ASCC's background and its implementation to date. First, despite having been mentioned in the very early days of ASEAN's establishment in the Bali Declaration of 1967, the notion of a social and cultural dimension in Southeast Asian regionalism has largely been overlooked and it only received attention since the Asian financial crisis in late 1990s. Second, compared with the concept of a community in general and the concept of community in the theories on regional integration, ASCC is not simply a collection of the members in the region in terms of culture but at a higher level it seeks to harmonize of the diverse culture and society of the various peoples in the region, forming a common identity of the region. But as is the case with the other pillars of ASEAN Community (APSC and AEC), the ASCC has a Blueprint designed and implemented under the sharp influence of the "ASEAN way", most notably ideas about consensus, non-interference and respect for "unity in diversity". Third, this pillar consists of a very broad range of cooperation areas. With a total of 339 actions designed for the 6 element groups in a short duration of implementation from 2009-2015, ASCC's Blueprint is one of the most ambitious parts of the ASEAN Community. The content of the ASCC Blueprint also addresses some of the most challenging areas of other two pillars, such as the matter of human right and people's justice and of narrowing the development gap. Clearly, there are a number of challenges for ASEAN if it is to realize its aspiration of ASCC.

The next Chapter will look more closely about how the ASCC has been perceived and implemented at the national level through a case study of a specific member country: Vietnam. An analysis at both the regional and national levels will help us better understand the reality of ASEAN's third community, providing empirical evidence for an assessment of its prospects of being established by 2015.

CHAPTER III

Vietnam's participation in ASCC

The determination to build the ASEAN Community resulted from common and individual interests that member states find in the Community. How to successfully build it and benefit from it depends on their ability in sharing common values, norms, visions and identity. This is especially true for the case of Vietnam.[132] Vietnam's recent behavior and activities in the process of building the ASEAN Community indicate that it is now better integrating itself into the mainstream of the region and becoming more open and active in regional cooperation, not just on political-security and economic issues but also in the socio-cultural field.

This chapter will provide an overall picture of Vietnam's participation in the ASCC. The chapter is in three parts. The first section analyzes Vietnam's key views on the ASEAN Community building process in general and the ASCC in particular. The second part reviews the Vietnam's participation in ASCC, focusing on the process of negotiating the ASCC's key documents and implementation of the ASCC Blueprint implementation up to the present (August 2013), especially during Vietnam's Chairmanship of ASCC in 2010. Finally, the chapter summarizes some findings from the mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint at the national level which was conducted in July 2013 to prepare for the mid-term review at regional level, and examines the main opportunities and challenges for Vietnam to meet its obligations around the ASCC by 2015.

1. Vietnam's views on building ASEAN Community and ASCC

Perspective of Vietnam to join ASEAN

Due to historical factors, Vietnam's relations with ASEAN have gone through many ups and downs, but for almost three decades Vietnam has sought to promote peace, friendship and development with other countries in the region. Political Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam in the Sixth National Congress (1986) stated the Government and people of Viet Nam constantly strive to develop friendly relations and cooperation with Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries. A similar document from the Seventh National Congress (1991) stated that

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[132] Tu, Dang Cam 'Vietnam in ASEAN Community Building', pp.171-195.

"with the Southeast Asian countries, we have to expand relations in many respects the principle of respect independence, sovereignty, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, mutual benefit".[133]

Since the early 1990s, Vietnam has actively taken steps to improve bilateral relations with the ASEAN countries and the ASEAN as a whole. In 1992, Vietnam signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia and become an observer of ASEAN. In October 1993, Vietnam launched four new policies that stated that it was "policy to strengthen multifaceted cooperation with each of its neighbors as well as with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as an organization area, ready to join ASEAN at the appropriate time".[134] Vietnam's relationship with ASEAN changed fundamentally on 28 July 1995, when it was officially admitted as a member at the 28th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Brunei.

Since joining ASEAN, Vietnam has been continuing to "strive to strengthen relations with its neighbors and other countries in the ASEAN"[135] striving to "raise efficiency and quality of cooperation with ASEAN countries"[136], "make the commitment of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and actively participate in the process of for the ASEAN Economic Community"[137], and "being a member in ASEAN Community, doing its best to contribute in a proactive manner to the construction of the ASEAN Community".[138] From the political point of view, it can be said that since joining ASEAN, Vietnam has always consisted to the view to build a relationship of peace, friendship and development with ASEAN countries on the basis of equality, mutual respect and respect for international law. This is also suitable with the national strategic interest that maximizes the interests from regional integration to serve for the national interests of political stability and socio-economic development.

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[133] Vietnamese Communist Party, 7th National Congress Official Document, 1991.

[134] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam (2010), "150 cau hoi ve ASEAN" (150 questions on ASEAN), p279.

[135] Vietnamese Communist Party, Political Report of the 8th National Party Congress, 1996.

[136] Vietnamese Communist Party, Political Report of the 9th National Party Congress, 2001.

[137] Vietnamese Communist Party, Political Report of the 10th National Party Congress, 2006.

[138] Vietnamese Communist Party, Political Report of the 11th National Party Congress, 2011.

Benefits to Vietnam from joining ASEAN

From a Vietnamese perspective, joining ASEAN has brought many benefits to the country in all aspects from political-security, economic, and socio-culture.[139] In terms of political-security interests, joining ASEAN helps reinforce an environment of peace and stability for the region and for the country itself, through increased dialogues, strengthened cooperation between the countries to cope with common challenges, both traditional and non-traditional security problems. ASEAN also helps give Vietnam a favorable environment and atmosphere to promote relations with the countries in the region, solve the problems in bilateral relations. As a member of ASEAN, Vietnam can have a chance to contribute to the development and promotion of the regional cooperation mechanisms and processes in a right direction, consistent with its national interest. In external relations, ASEAN helps to enhance Vietnam's position and voice in the regional and international arena, supporting Vietnam's relationships with key partners, including superpowers such as China, the U.S as well as other important states like Japan, EU, India, and Russia.

Economically, ASEAN is where Vietnam first integrated. It is also Vietnam's primary import-export market and source of foreign direct investment.[140] Integration into ASEAN helps Vietnam harmonize its national system of standards, procedures and that of other countries in the region. Thanks to the successful integration practice in the region, Vietnam has more confidence to deeper integrate into the world. Also thanks to ASEAN, the country can promote its economic relations with key partners through ASEAN negotiating free trade agreements; promote trade and investment with the partners. ASEAN also helps Vietnam to narrow its development gap, to connect better with the more developed economies in the region and beyond.

For socio-cultural areas, ASEAN provides frameworks and mechanisms for cooperation in various fields including education, health, women, youth, children, environment, culture, information, rural development, science and technology and labour. A wide variety of cooperative programs and integration projects bring many benefits for Vietnam. Through efforts to build the ASEAN cooperation and regional

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[139] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam (2010), "150 cau hoi ve ASEAN" (150 questions on ASEAN), p.76.
[140] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam (2010), "150 cau hoi ve ASEAN" (150 questions on ASEAN), p.77.

identity, Vietnam has greater chances to show its national position as well as project its national identity into the region and beyond to the world. The ASCC Blueprint is appropriate and consistent with the priorities, strategies and actions in Vietnam because it is the urgent priority and long-term national strategies of Vietnam. In the period of 2006-2010, the National Assembly and Government of Vietnam approved 10 national target programs and assigned for the relevant ministries to be responsible for implementation. The specific action plans and programs in the Blueprint are developed and approved based on the urgent priorities of the ministries in line with the strategy of socio-economic development of the country. Inheriting the achievement of the national target programs for 2006-2010, in 2011, the National Assembly and the Government of Vietnam continued to issue the national programs for the period 2011-2015 with 16 specific programs and 66 projects of action[141]. Thus, the objectives and directions of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community meet the demand and needs of Vietnam's national priorities. In addition, the ASCC Blueprint is also appropriate with the trends of international and regional integration of Vietnam. All these help Vietnam's further integration in the main stream of the world.

Finally, engaging in deeper ASEAN integration also provides more motivations for domestic reform, human resource development and staff training in foreign affairs, so that Vietnam can build a solid foundation for the steps of national building and widening the country's position in the world.

Vietnam's contrasting views on socio-cultural integration in ASEAN

The above interests notwithstanding, there has been controversy and debate in Vietnam on whether the country should further pursue socio-cultural integration and how the progress of the integration should proceed. There are two main polarized groups of positions.

For the first group who most come from the scholars community and non-governmental organizations having contacts and cooperation activities with regional countries supports integration and sharing regional identity and culture, the similarity of culture and social conditions is one of the forces that can help accelerate the process of

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[141] Document No.1275/VPCP-VX by Vietnamese Government Office dated 10 March 2006 on approving the list of 10 target national programs for period 2006-2010 & Decision No. 2406/QD-TTg issued in 2011 by the Prime Minister of Vietnam on the list of 16 target national programs for period 2011-2015.

cooperation and integration in ASEAN.[142] This group also includes some policy makers from the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, ect[143]. Integrated socio-cultural process, cultural openness and exchanges with other countries; shared cultural values, the norms, to acquire the cultural values of the world and the region can all help supplement and enrich the national culture. Participating in regional organizations and cultural, education and social development, as well as close cooperation with the ASEAN's member states builds a broader socio-cultural community. The construction and shape of a Socio-Culture Community in ASEAN is one of the key conditions for accelerating the process of ASEAN integration. Socio-cultural integration has a great significance in deepening the integration process, making the countries in the region actually linked together by a 'sticky and sustainable glue. This process helps people in the different countries be closer to each other and share more about their values and modes of thought and action, creating an increasingly higher harmony and unity between the social policies of the member states. It also facilitates people from each country better appreciating different cultural values, the diversified social welfare, and strengthening the people's belief to belong to a wider community than their own national (that is consciousness of a regional/global citizen).[144] This perspective has been more and more definitely manifested in the Vietnam's participation in all the ASCC process and activities.

In contrast to the first group, many others who most from the state management show their worries and concerns over the social-cultural integration in ASEAN.[145] Their concerns come from some following reasons. First, in their thinking, social policy, culture and identity are something unique for each country. They see integration in terms of society and culture leading to a change in national identity. National

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[142] Notes from the International Workshop on "ASEAN: 40 years reviewing and looking ahead", held by National University of Hanoi, in July 2007, Hanoi, Vietnam; the International Workshop on "ASEAN Community in the new context", held by Social Science Institute of Vietnam, in August 2012, Hanoi, Vietnam.

[143] Documents by those Ministries responding to the request of MOFA on the possibility of Vietnam participating in ASCC, 2008.

[144] Pham Quoc Tru (2011), "Hoi nhap quoc te: Mot so van de ly luan va thuc tien" (International integration: Some theoretical and practical issues), International Study No. 2(85), June 2011, p.89.

[145] Notes from the International Workshop on "ASEAN: 40 years reviewing and looking ahead", held by National University of Hanoi, in July 2007, Hanoi, Vietnam; the International Workshop on "ASEAN Community in the new context", held by Social Science Institute of Vietnam, in August 2012, Hanoi, Vietnam and response

character might be the subject of being dismissed through the process of connecting into "One ASEAN, One Community". Another point they make, Vietnam is currently at a low developmental level on socio-economics, so it is difficult for Vietnam to adopt the regional standards of social policy. Third, they ask, given the context of current socio-political condition, when the national government is still at the limited capacity, whether Vietnam can overcome all the side-effects of socialization and engage with sensitive issues such as the social rights and social regulation of social policy in the region. Committing to a regional mechanism and projection on socio-cultural integration means that Vietnam will have to make many changes and adapt local standards to meet the regional standards. Their final concern is one of capacity; whether Vietnam has the human and financial resources to meet these obligations.

Those debates occur in parallel with the discussion on general directions of Vietnam for integration in other realms - political-security and economic. The questions posed for the socio-cultural issues share some similarity with those for other fields, but they also have some differences. Unlike the political and economic fields, the socio-culture integration arguably promises more opportunities for the country's development rather than the challenges. For such a limited development country like Vietnam, the need to exchange and learn from the other countries to move ahead is one of the most urgent; otherwise the country will be fall behind. The more cooperation and integration into the region, the more chances for Vietnam to develop and confirm its position in the region. Especially when it comes to urgent security problems such as environment, diseases, labour and job opportunities for the people, Vietnam can not stand alone without the joint efforts of the regional and international community. So at the end of the day, the leaders of Vietnam has chosen to move forward, and pave the way for the socio-cultural integration more into the ASEAN.[146]

Of course, during this process, national interests remain the first and foremost consideration. The country has chosen to focus on sectors which really meet the country's development needs as well as helping Vietnam evolve in the regionalization. In other words, pragmatism in Vietnam's foreign policy and regional integration policy suggests that the significance of ASEAN may vary depending on the specific national interest underlying an individual policy area at any specific point in time. Vietnam is

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[146] The eleventh National Congress of Communist Party of Vietnam emphasized the comprehensive integration rather than economic integration and the priority of national interests.

willing to engage more and more in the ASCC, however, it is also very cautious with any programs or initiatives to make sure it balances national and regional interests, and gets the right balance of the regional speed and domestic speed.

2. Vietnam's contribution in building the ASCC

Vietnam's role in ASCC of 2010

In 2003, just after eight years of ASEAN membership, "Vietnam's status in ASEAN shifted from being a newer member of the Association to a founding member of the ASEAN Community, when its Head of State joined with his counterparts in signing the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II which launched the decision to transform ASEAN into a regional community".[147] Since then, the state has consistently been participating in working out the blueprints, roadmaps and action plans of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. Importantly, Vietnam's participation in drafting and approving the ASEAN Charter[148] marked a milestone in its integration with the Association. On the occasion of Vietnam undertaking ASEAN Chairmanship in the year of 2010, Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Pham Gia Khiem made an announcement that: "'In the role of the ASEAN Chair, we wish to convey to international friends a message about Vietnam as a pro-active, positive and responsible country which is doing its utmost together with other ASEAN member countries to successfully create an ASEAN Community in 2015'.[149] He and many other Vietnamese foreign policy makers asserted that the year 2010 was a critical time for both ASEAN and Vietnam, since it marked the 15th anniversary of the Vietnam's ASEAN membership, the commencement of the first 5-year phase for realization of the ASEAN Community Roadmap including the ASCC Blueprint, as well as the first stage of bringing the ASEAN Charter into reality after the all member states' approval.[150] Under the theme *'Toward the ASEAN Community: From Vision to Action'*, the 16th ASEAN Summit was held in Hanoi in April 2010. As Tu Dang Cam wrote of

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[147] Tu, Dang Cam 'Vietnam in ASEAN Community Building', 2011, p.232.

[148] Vietnam is one of the first members approving the ASEAN Chapter (2009).

[149] Interview granted by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Pham Gia Khiem, on 6 April, 2010 to Vietnam News Agency on the Occasion of the 16th ASEAN Summit in Hanoi, (http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/nr040807105001/ns100407090146#t6w1TIZie4y7), according to Tu, Dang Cam 'Vietnam in ASEAN Community Building', 2011, p.233.

[150] Pham Gia Khiem, 'Vietnam's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2010: ASEAN's Success and Vietnam's Imprints,' [Vai trò chủ tịch ASEAN của Việt Nam năm 2010: Những thành tựu của ASEAN và dấu ấn của Việt Nam], The Communist Review [Tạp chí cộng sản], Vol.1 (217), January 2011, exerpted from Tu, Dang Cam 'Vietnam in ASEAN Community Building', 2011, p.233.

ASEAN's goals "Vietnam explicitly aims to focus ASEAN's efforts on substantially strengthening ASEAN solidarity and intra-grouping cooperation, effectively implementing the ASEAN Charter and the roadmap to the ASEAN Community…The ASEAN Community has also become a strategic priority and critical part of Vietnam's foreign policy of multi-lateralization and regional integration in the twenty-first century".[151] Vietnam was actively involved in all meetings/seminars and initiatives/projects of ASCC organized by ASEAN members from 2009 to the present, including the 1st and 2nd Meetings of ASCC Council in Thailand, the 5th and 6th meetings in Indonesia, the 7th and 8th in Cambodia and the most recently, the 9th meeting in Brunei Darussalam.

Although it was the Philippines that originally pushed the idea of the ASCC[152], Vietnam has also made considerable efforts to establish the ASCC. The year of Vietnam as ASEAN Chair 2010 was an important stage as it was the first year for ASEAN Countries to implement the ASCC Blueprint. During the term of one year as chairperson of the ASCC, Vietnam successfully organized two Meetings of ASCC Council (ASCC 3 and ASCC 4) on April and November of 2013 respectively. The 16th ASEAN Summit in Hanoi had the participation of the Ministerial Agencies under ASCC from the ASEAN countries. At this conference, Vietnam made a contribution in the process of evaluating the implementation of the Blueprint after one year of its approval and provided the valued directions for the ASCC implementing the Blueprint in the following years.

As host, Vietnam shared its experience and reached agreement with other members to identify priority areas for the ASCC in 2010. Under ASEAN norms, the host country takes the lead on the proposing initiatives and raises the proposal on the annual priorities. In 2010, these priorities included: (i) responding to global challenges. The priority area aims to strengthen ASEAN cooperation in dealing with climate change at global and regional levels, to fully implement the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management, Emergency Response (AADMER) and ASEAN to strengthen cooperation on issues of disease. (ii) development of human resources for economic recovery and development. These priority areas seek to reduce the risk of unemployment, poverty and inequality due to the impact of the economic crisis, to

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[151] Tu, Dang Cam 'Vietnam in ASEAN Community Building', 2011, pp. 233-234
[152] As referred in the Chapter two.

strengthen the competitiveness of human resources and the ASEAN countries to strengthen adapt to labour mobility and technological advances; (iii) To promote the development and welfare of women and children ASEAN. This priority is totally in line with what the ASEAN's leaders had committed in the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Road map for the ASEAN Community (2009-2015), Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in 2007, Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons Particularly Women and Children in 2004, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region in 2004. The establishment of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) during the 3th ASCC Council Meeting held in May 2010 in Hanoi is one of the evidence for success of Vietnam in this priority; and (iv) to enhance cultural cooperation towards creating ASEAN awareness and building an ASEAN Community. The year 2010- 1st year of the Blueprint implementation, it marked the important moment for ASEAN to highlight the sense and awareness of the goal to ASEAN Community.

The ASEAN chair also takes the responsibility for coordinating all the events of the ASCC in the Chairmanship year, coordinating the ASEAN Secretariat to hold the meetings and workshop draft the documents of the meetings and propose the working agenda. Vietnam implemented the functions of the agency in charge of coordinating socio-culture activities.

As ASCC Chair in 2010, Vietnam has contributed actively in the ASCC activities through making positive initiatives and commitments in specialized activities such as ASEAN Labour Ministerial Meetings (ALMM), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD), and the launch of the ASEAN Committee on Women and Children (ACWC). The two initiatives raised by Vietnam, one for labour aspect and another for social welfare, were agreed by ASEAN members. Both were then approved by the ASEAN leaders at the 4th ASCC Council Meeting as *ASEAN Leader's Statement on Human Resources and Skills Development for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth,* and *Hanoi the Declaration on Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children,* and included in the Declaration of 17th ASEAN Summit, November 2010.[153]

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[153] MOLISA's report on ASEAN Year Chairmanship 2010.

Another contribution Vietnam made in 2010 is its leading the ASCC meetings to achieve a consensus in making additional comments on the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity[154] with the motto of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community"[155], by which ASCC has gradually become one of the Vietnam's priorities in the ongoing activities of other two communities. The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity on 28 October 2010 at the 17th ASEAN Summit which identified key strategies and actions to facilitate regional integration through the enhancement of physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity. Vietnam's role in ASCC has also seen it try to connect the activities and concerns of the ASCC with that of other two pillars (ASPC and AEC). By the proposal the Master Plan of ASEAN Connectivity, some key contents under the purview of ASCC has been mainstreamed in the Master Plan, connecting with the contents of other two pillars to generate a whole set of strategies to further facilitate regional integration. These contents include the Item 2.3. People-to-people Connectivity[156] and 2.4 narrowing the Development Gaps through the Initiative for ASEAN Integration.[157] Moreover, the priorities identified in the ASCC's meeting has done at the national level not just in 2010 and but has been maintained in the following years.

The activities of the ASCC in 2010 made clear the role of the host country in determining priorities for community activities and develop a roadmap for the implementation of priority associated with benefits and concerns of Vietnam and the ASEAN countries. The implementation of these priorities has made a contribution in the implementation of the Blueprint of ASCC, and in the future, towards building an ASEAN Community by 2015.[158] In other words, Vietnam could manage its national

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[154] Hanoi Declaration on the Adoption of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, adopted by the ASEAN countries' Heads of State/Government on the occasion of the 17th ASEAN Summit, 28 October, 2010, Hanoi, Vietnam, http://www.aseansec.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/MPAC.pdf

[155] The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity is premised on the following key principles: (i) Serve to accelerate, not hinder, existing ASEAN initiatives and complement ASEAN Community building process; (ii) Foster a win-win solution to reflect the interest of all ASEAN Member States; (iii) Ensure synchronization of ongoing sectoral strategies or plans within the frameworks of ASEAN and its sub-regions; (iv) Strive for balance between regional and national interests; (v) Strengthen connectivity between mainland and archipelagic Southeast Asia; (vi) Outward-looking and serve to promote healthy competitive dynamics among external partners and also help preserve ASEAN centrality; and (vii) Feasible in practice with clear financial mobilization models, including the involvement of private sector.

[156] The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, p.27

[157] The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, p.28.

[158] Department for International Relations of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs 'Final report of Ministerial Research Project on Direction to develop Vietnam's partnership with ASEAN on Labour, and Social Affairs', Dec 2011, p75.

interests and priorities to be accommodated with the ASEAN common interests and priorities.

Vietnam in some key issues of the ASCC

To illustrate Vietnam's contribution to the ASCC and understand the connection between national priorities and the common goals of ASCC at the regional level, two key elements of the ASCC have been selected to focus on in detail: labour and social policy. There are three reasons why these two areas are chosen. First, they are priorities in the ASSC Blueprint. Labour and social welfare are considered as the aspects directly related to idea that ASCC can help to minimize the adverse effects from the economic integration and forge an ASEAN with unity in diversity. Second, they are issues of strategic concern to Vietnamese foreign policy makers, which are thought to have important potential implications for the country's national image and development. Third, it is in these areas that the dynamic of Vietnam's participation in the ASEAN Chair Year 2010 can be best manifested. They are also two main fields under the purview of MOLISA-the national focal-point agency of ASCC in Vietnam.

Vietnam with labour cooperation of ASCC

The overall objective of ASEAN cooperation in labour is to improve the quality of people's life, ensure a better job security, enhance productivity, safety and occupational health, as well as promoting better social protection for all citizens through enhancing ASEAN's competitiveness of its human resources, building a harmonious and advanced working environment, and enhance sustainable employment for the ASEAN people.[159] Cooperation in labour in ASEAN involves cooperation within ASEAN countries and with ASEAN's major partners (South Korea, Japan and China). It is implemented through the member participation in labour-related conferences, seminars within the region and with the partners, holding the related events, and implementing the cooperation projects as well as the commitments agreed in the meetings such as the Working program of the ASEAN's Labour Ministers in the period 2010-2015, and the ASEAN Guidelines on experiences of the harmonized labour relations.[160] The forums on labour cooperation in ASEAN under the ASCC

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[159] ASEAN Secretariat (2009), ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, at http://www.asean.org, Jakarta, June, pp.2-23.

[160] These documents were approved by the ASEAN Ministers on Labour at the ALMM 21, 2010 in Hanoi.

include four groups of activities: the ASEAN Labour Minister Meetings, the ASEAN+3 Labour Minister Meetings, Senior Officials Meetings on Labour (SLOM), and the SLOM's working groups, such as SLOM Working Group on advanced experiences working to strengthen competitiveness of ASEAN (SLOM-WG), ASEAN Commission on Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Migrant Workers' right (ACMW), ASEAN Occupational Safety and Health Network (ASEAN-OSHNET), and SLOM Working Group on HIV Prevent and Control at workplace (SLOM-WG-HIV). In the past 16 years since Vietnam's accessing into the ASEAN (1967), a series of successful meeting under the purview of ASEAN labour sectoral cooperation has been held by Vietnam.[161] In 2010, with a concern for human resources and development, Vietnam has proposed the two ASEAN Human Resource Meetings, in which it gave the practical recommendations in the development of human resources and skills, particularly in the context of economic crisis and recovery for ASEAN. This is considered as one of Vietnam's efforts to connect the ASCC issues to the other pillars especially the ones of the ASEAN Economic Community, helping to promote the important role of the third pillar.

One of the other important results was that the Vietnam drafted, consulted and mobilized the ASEAN members to *approve the Statement of ASEAN's leaders on the Human Resources and Skills Development for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth.*[162] The Statement, which recalls the ASEAN Charter which sets out the purposes of ASEAN in particular to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, in science and technology, for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and for strengthening of the ASEAN Community; stated four groups of actions ASEAN focus on, including (i) foster technical cooperation and capacity-building activities in ASEAN, (ii) enhance the quality and skills of workers in all ASEAN member states, (iii) promote tripartite and public-private sector cooperation, (iv) promote lifelong learning. This is a key

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[161] In which the Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs is the executing agency. Some remarkable meetings name here as the 12th ASEAN Labour Minister's unofficial Meeting (1997), the 12th ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (1998), 21st Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Social Development (1999), 5th ASEAN Skills Competition (2004), 5th Conference of Occupational Safety Net (2005). Especially in 2010, as Chairman of the ASEAN's Ministerial Conference of Labour, Vietnam hold many activities to strengthen cooperation in Labour, in particular successfully organized the 21st ALMM and ALMM +3, as well as other professional workshops on Labour.

[162] 2010 ASEAN Leaders' statement on Human Resources and Skills Development for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth, adopted by Head of States, at the 17th ASEAN Summit in Ha Noi, Vietnam, on 28 October 2010, http://www.asean.org/25449.htm

document as the basis for the ASEAN member states to develop their specific cooperation programs and activities in the field of human resource development, meeting the theme that Vietnam proposed for 2010 - "Human resources development for economic recovery and development".[163]

Besides the hosting events as the chair, Vietnam also participated in all the projects of ASEAN, as well as offering some significant initiatives on labour and human resource development. As the executive agency of ASEAN cooperation on labour, MOLISA has so far engaged to contribute to the development and implementation of 12 programs/projects/activities in the framework of the action plan on Human Resource Development under the Initiatives for ASEAN integration (IAI), include some notable projects: the ASEAN-Japan Programmed on labour relations, the Human Resource Development Programme, Research Project on AFTA and the impact of AFTA accession process to labour and employment in ASEAN countries, and the Project to Enhance recognition on vocational skills among ASEAN countries.[164] Currently Vietnam is continuing to make innovative projects in ASEAN activities related to labour inspection, occupational safety, and comparative labour law and strengthening partnership in ASEAN cooperation[165], which is also the area of Vietnam's priorities in labour field.[166]

It is obvious to highlight that Vietnam has successful identified the country's priorities in its national development which focuses on human resources and accommodate those in the common priorities of ASEAN through the labour cooperation of ASCC and its chairmanship in ASCC 2010.

Vietnam with Social welfare Cooperation in ASCC

A second key area in ASCC is social welfare cooperation with the goal of improving the lives and living conditions of the peoples of ASEAN through poverty reduction, ensuring the welfare and social security, social services for vulnerable

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[163] MOLISA report in ASEAN Chairmanship, 2010.

[164] Department for International Relations of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs 'Final report of Ministerial Research Project on Direction to develop Vietnam's partnership with ASEAN on Labour, and Social Affairs', Dec 2011, pp.48-49.

[165] Department for International Relations of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs 'Final report of Ministerial Research Project on Direction to develop Vietnam's partnership with ASEAN on Labour, and Social Affairs', Dec 2011, p49.

[166] Retrieved from the speed by the Vietnamese Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affair at the Ministerial Meeting on Mid-term Review of ASCC Blueprint, Hanoi, 26 July, 2013.

groups. Again, this is advanced by cooperation on social welfare and development within ASEAN and with ASEAN's major external partners. Cooperation between Vietnam and ASEAN countries in the field of social welfare and development is done primarily through the framework: ASEAN Ministers Meeting on social welfare and development (AMMSWD) and ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD), ASEAN Committee to promote and protect women's rights and Children.[167]

In this cooperation, Vietnam has fully participated in the activities of the organization as well as the implementation of polices and programs related to national social policy. Vietnam organized the 21st Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Social Development (COSD) in 1999. December 2007, Vietnam hosted the 6th Ministerial Conference Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD) in which Vietnam has been significantly involved in the formation and launch ASEAN Committee Promoting and protecting the rights of women (ACWC) at the ASCC 4 in Hanoi in May 2010. In that year, based on the domestic experiences on Social Welfare for women and children, together with the well acknowledge of significance of the Social Welfare and Development for Women and children, Vietnam took advantage of its Chairmanship to advance the draft of *the Declaration on the Promotion of Social Welfare and Development for ASEAN Women and Children*, and sought to mobilize other member states to agree on the content of the declaration. At the 17th ASEAN Summit, the Declaration was officially adopted the name "Hanoi Declaration on the Promotion of Social Welfare and Development for ASEAN Women and Children".[168] The Declaration recalls the ASEAN Vision 2020, which envisioned ASEAN as a socially cohesive and caring ASEAN where hunger, malnutrition, deprivation and poverty are no longer basic problems, where strong families as the basic units of society nurture their members particularly the children, youth, women and elderly; and recognizes that women and children account for more than half of ASEAN population and the need to continue to tap on the strength of these groups as well as to empower those who are in vulnerable situations. With adoption of this Declaration, the ASEAN leaders of states

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[167] Department for International Relations of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs 'Final report of Ministerial Research Project on Direction to develop Vietnam's partnership with ASEAN on Labour, and Social Affairs', Dec 2011, pp.51-53.

[168] 2010 Hanoi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children, adopted by Heads of States at the 17th ASEAN Summit in Ha Noi, Vietnam on 28 October 2010, http://www.asean.org/25445.htm

and governments pledged their commitment to promote a people-oriented ASEAN where women and children participate in and benefit fully from the process of ASEAN integration and community building through a series of specific and strategic action and measures to foster concerted efforts for the enhancement of the welfare and development of women and children in ASEAN. For example, "to strengthen existing institutional mechanisms and technical capacity of ASEAN Member States' relevant agencies to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming and child-centered approach in planning, programming and budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes at all levels in the region"; "to undertake concrete actions to end violence against women and children by strengthening gender sensitive legislations and plans of action to prevent and address violence through intensifying training for policy-makers, programme developers, implementers and service providers"; "to address maternal and child mortality, poor reproductive health; to enable access to safe contraception, safe family planning methods and emergency maternal obstetrical care facilities; and to promote education and information activities to reduce the prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS among women and children and facilitate their access to HIV and AIDS treatment and care"; "to improve the proportion of children and women with access to housing, improved sources of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities and hygiene, education and other basic necessities".[169] This lay an important foundation for promoting the rights of women and children in ASEAN.

Moreover, Vietnam has also participated in the implementation as well as providing collaborative initiatives in other cooperation programmes on the social welfare, for example the ASEAN cooperation program on social welfare, family and population. It participated in the Vientiane Action Program Members to enhance the role of the family, to create conditions for marginalized groups in society to access to education; and enhance the system to help the elderly people; addressing the needs of health care for the elderly as well as enhancing the capacity of the health workforce. At the same time, the country has acted as an active member in the launching the ASEAN's intervention programs to promote HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care, as well as comprehensive support to people living with HIV/AIDS. Many other

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[169] 2010 Hanoi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children, p.2.

works have also been done on policy research, building regional networks, coaching and training capacity building, information dissemination. Cooperation with the ASEAN+3 countries on social welfare and development under the ASCC purview, which is well established since 2003, has contributed actively to the implementation of priority activities in ASCC.

3. Key findings from the Mid-term Review on the ASCC Blueprint implementation at national level of Vietnam

At the 9th ASCC Council meeting held in Brunei Darussalam from 20th to 24th March 2013, the ASCC Ministers agreed to conduct a Mid-term review of the ASCC Blueprint implementation at regional and national levels. Deploying the ASCC plan, Vietnam has implemented the mid-term review with the support of experts from the Institute of Foreign Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs, based on reviewing the documents and self assessment reports of the relevant the ministries/sectors under the ASCC in Vietnam and information shared in the orientation meetings, as well as consultancy discussions with MOLISA – the leading and coordination of the ASCC in Vietnam and 12 other participating agencies of this Community in July and August 2013. The draft of mid-term review report was formally shared at the ministerial meeting held by MOLISA on 28 July 2013 in Hanoi, with the presence of the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Mr. Le Luong Minh and the Deputy Secretary -General of ASEAN for ASCC, Ms. Alicia Dela Rosa Bala in Hanoi.

The report summarizes the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the review at the national level of Vietnam. In terms of the suitability of the Blueprint, the report highlighted that the purpose, objectives and actions of the ASCC Blueprint were basically designed and implemented in accordance with the national priorities of Vietnam concerning the field of socio-culture, technology and environment. The goal of the Master Plan has shown the desire and aspiration of Vietnam, in accordance with requirements and the economic development of the country and society will continue to be priorities for future implementation. Regarding the effectiveness of the implementation of the Blueprint, the report shows that the majority of activity in the Blueprint has been implemented through various methods, particularly the incorporated in implementation of the national target programmes and national action programs. However, the implementation of this Blueprint is still facing many challenges related to

financial and personnel resources, and the low level of awareness and priorities of the country and each ministry in each particular period of time. In terms of efficiency of using resources, the ASCC Blueprint has been reported as efficiently incorporated into the national program goals and action programs of each ministry at the national level. The resources for implementing the projects and action line of the Blueprint are used from the state budget itself or mobilized from the national donors and/or international partners, as well as sources of socialization. However, because Blueprint's action lines are mainstreamed activities into the national programmes, so they usually have not any their own resources. Or in other words, there is not a separate budget allocated for the implementation of the Blueprint. Moreover, at the regional level, there are no specific funds to implement the activities in the ASCC Blueprint. This is even more difficult for the activities of inter-section or inter-pillar, and trans-national which require a closed coordination and connection between the member states. In addition, the activities and action lines designed in the Blueprint did not give an output with specific criteria for evaluation; they have no clearly fixed time schedule, so not to create a pressure for the member states to achieve in a specified time frame.[170]

Regard to the mechanisms for coordination and implementation of the Blueprint in Vietnam, despite of existing a coordination mechanism in each ASCC ministries and between ministries with the focal-point agency of MOLISA, these mechanisms have been only towards the collection and transmission of information related to the implementation of ASCC activities at the regional level to the relevant ministries, whereas the implementation of sectored cooperation activities remains in the autonomy of each relevant ministries/ agencies. The collaboration and coordination among the actions of ministries at the national level needs to be enhanced.

The way that Vietnam implements the ASCC Blueprint demonstrate its efficiency. The integration of the regional action lines in the policies available in the national program objectives, action programs of Vietnam helps save time and resources, helping the Blueprint can be implemented immediately and quickly. In addition, through integrated activities, the action lines of the Blueprint Plan have been implemented uniformly, at the same time, ensuring the comprehensive implementation

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[170] Exerted from the final report on Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint at national level, presented by the Director of Diplomatic Academic of Vietnam, as representative for National Assessment Team, at the Ministerial Meeting on Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint held by MOLISA, 27 August, 2013, Hanoi, Vietnam.

of the Blueprint. Vietnam took advantage of the 10 existing national target programs for period 2006-2010, 16 others national target programs for period 2011-2015, and numerous action of the ministries/sectors to implement most of the content in the Blueprint. However, due to the operational integration of the Blueprint is not implemented independently, the results of operations and therefore can not consider and evaluate the effectiveness separately. The effectiveness of the Blueprint is considered primarily through the achievement of national targets.

The effectiveness of the implementation of the Master Plan in Vietnam ASCC also depends heavily on proactive, positive and responsible ministries. The fact proves that the ministries that focus on putting more priority to the national level in their respective fields in the Blueprint is also the ministries who proactive initiative in the implementation the plan and well integrate the content of the Blueprint in the areas of national activity. For example, Hanoi National University is one of the many agencies give priority to activities higher education and graduate in the field of component (A)-Human Development in the ASCC Blueprint. In fact, the agency has developed and implemented many government programs. Corresponding field (C) of the Blueprint, the Faculty of Law under the National University of Hanoi has also constructed a new Masters program in human rights in which students have a practice time in other countries in the region. Hanoi National University also has many initiatives in mobilizing and finding resources to maintain and support the development of training activities related to human rights and gender.[171]

Evaluation of the impact of the Master Plan for the implementation of the objectives and national priorities, it can be said that the integration of the ASCC's task in the national programs has helped to accelerate the realization of targets and national programs and general quality of life of the people of Vietnam through the completion of national socio-cultural policies, promoting the implementation of the related national programs. However, the actual impact of changing people's perception about Community ASCC has not great. The report also provides an assessment of the verse-impact of the ASCC Blueprint implementation in Vietnam on the ASCC at regional level. It is noted that the level of this kind of impact is still at a very limited. The

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[171] Exerted from the final report on Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint at national level, presented by the Director of Diplomatic Academic of Vietnam, as representative for National Assessment Team, at the Ministerial Meeting on Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint held by MOLISA, 27 August, 2013, Hanoi, Vietnam, p.12

participation of Vietnam has just demonstrated impacts mainly in some areas such as education, human resource training, employment, social welfare, and culture. In other areas, Vietnam needs to invest more resources and to further enhance its national capacity, requiring a participation of the community in a higher level. Among the action lines and activities outlined in the Blueprint, it is apparent that those which are in line with national priorities have been implemented fully and effectively. Because they have attracted the attention of the responsible agencies and got support from the state budget for the financial allocation. Vietnam has shown its activeness and pro-activeness for participation in all the meetings, projects and programs of the agencies / specialized committee of ASEAN, however, due to the financial constraints, this is mainly thanks to the sponsors and partners. Vietnam has actively organized and invited the participating countries only in a number of its national priority areas.[172]

Another significant finding from the national report, it is related to the problem of the people's awareness. Despite the propaganda efforts of the ASEAN Community has been deployed in both regional and national levels, but people's awareness on ASEAN Community in general and ASCC in particular is limited. Self-assessment report of the ministries show that the awareness of officers of the ministries, except those directly participating in ASEAN cooperation activities, is not as the same. Therefore, the national integration and involvement still exists a certain number of gaps. The political and mass organizations did not have much social knowledge and shared understanding about the ASCC as well as the ASEAN's efforts being made at the regional level. The perception of the ordinary people on ASEAN is still in a limited. To increase the public awareness, Vietnam has currently developed a Government action plan for propaganda and communication on ASEAN to the year 2015 and after 2015. The content of the programme focuses on enhancing the status and role of ASEAN, the achievements that ASEAN gained in its formation and development, and clarifying the functions of the ASEAN Community, the significance of the building ASEAN Community, benefits that an ASEAN Community might give people of the member states and the chance it might make, introducing the history, culture and life of the people in the member

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[172] Exerted from the final report on Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint at national level, presented by the Director of Diplomatic Academic of Vietnam, as representative for National Assessment Team, at the Ministerial Meeting on Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint held by MOLISA, 27 August, 2013, Hanoi, Vietnam, p.38

countries of the ASEAN Community, as well as stating the contributions that Vietnam has made in the ASEAN construction process.

In summary, despite domestic debate and controversy, the policy of being pro-active and committed to the ASEAN Community, is evidence of the Vietnamese leadership's awareness of this opportunity presented by regional integration. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pham Binh Minh said on the occasion of 45 years of ASEAN establishment, Vietnam should

> "promote common commitments and actions aimed to complete fully and on schedule the remaining work of the roadmap for ASEAN Community building as well as strengthening ASEAN connectivity and equitable, sustainable development of the whole Association; join other member countries in taking necessary preparatory steps for the realization of the ASEAN Community on time by 2015 with special attention paid to communication, information and awareness raising in terms of the sense of community and solidarity among the people of ASEAN countries"[173].

It is also a manifestation of Vietnam's confidence that the integration with ASEAN continues to be an effective foreign policy option for the pursuit of national interests. Such awareness and confidence may not only be driven by calculation of Vietnam's strategic interests in a cohesive ASEAN, but also due to the fact that more than one decade of living and working together with other ASEAN countries has provided Vietnam with a greater sense of belonging to the region and better skills of regional coordination.

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[173] Excerpt from the article "Towards a united, strong and open ASEAN Community", written by Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Pham Binh on the occasion of the 45th foudning anniversary of the ASEAN on August 8th 2012, http://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/228412/foreign-minister-towards-a-united-strong-and-open-asean-community.html

CHAPTER IV

Challenges and prospects for ASCC to 2015

This chapter seeks to build on the theoretical discussion related to ASEAN's model of socio-culture integration in chapters one and two, and the review of the way of ASCC Blueprint was developed and implemented through the case study of Vietnam in chapter three, by looking at the major challenges that the Community faces. It concludes with some predictions about the prospects for the ASCC in 2015.

1. Challenges for ASCC realization to 2015

The most important goal of the ASCC is to promote social progress in the region and build an ASEAN identity. But until now the content of that ASEAN identity has not been clear. The areas under the ASCC purview are broad, involving multiple sectors, including many sensitive issues which need careful research and therefore involve the interests of many sectoral bodies. These factors, on the one hand show the diversity of ASCC, but on the other hand cause a great challenge to achieve success in the process of building ASCC. The more complexity in the cooperation areas, the more difficulties the ASEAN countries have to face in their reaching a consensus of defining the Community's priorities and implementing the monitoring mechanism at the regional level.

Looking at the content of the ASCC Blueprint, it is possible to argue that the ASCC is nothing less than an ambitious drive by ASEAN member-states towards a region where full human potential is a vision targeted for achievement. As Batoon-Garcia puts it, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community would focus on two broad objectives: "a stronger regional identity" and "a better regional quality of life".[174] To reach these goals, the ASCC needs to address the region's aspiration to lift the quality of its peoples through cooperative activities that are people-oriented and geared towards the promotion of sustainable development. If these are realized, they would contribute to building a strong foundation for greater understanding, good neighbourliness, and a shared sense of responsibility. For these aims, the ASCC shall be characterized by a culture of regional resilience, adherence to agreed principle, spirit of cooperation,

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[174] Jocelyn Batoon-Garcia. Cultural Identity Developments and Transcending Cultural Boundaries. Statement at the Fifth Annual Meeting of Deans and Directors of Diplomatic Training Institutes of ASEAN + 3, Pasay: Foreign Service Institute, 2008.

collective responsibility, to promote human and social development, respect for fundamental freedoms, gender quality, the promotion and protection of human rights and the promotion of social justice. Besides upgrading the region's social development, the ASCC set the requirements for its members to respect the different cultures, languages, and religions of the peoples of ASEAN, to emphasize their common values in the spirit of unity in diversity and adapt them to present realities, opportunities and challenges.[175] This is really hard for the member countries to overcome.

Second, due to uneven levels of socio-economic development and differences in political systems among ASEAN members, this could create political polarization or inhibit the development of closer ASEAN social links. The diversity of culture, customs, religion and between countries also makes building a cultural community a challenge. In Southeast Asia, many major religions exist and have influence in different countries. If as Huntington has argued, future conflicts will be between civilizations[176], it would be a big challenge for Socio-Cultural Cooperation of ASEAN. Cultural diversity may also shape peoples perceptions on the issues on social justice, human rights, even relationship between the individual and collective interests, as well as national and regional or community benefits. Some countries in the Southeast Asia have to face with the internal problems such as the political instability of states, partly due to the ethnic and religious conflicts. It is those facts that have a negative impact to the construction of Southeast Asia as a common Community. Therefore, "gluing" the countries together in the field of social and culture is certainly one that faces huge challenges.

The gap in the level of development in ASEAN also shapes value differences. In poor countries and poor areas, the maintenance of basic living conditions such as food and clean water is still a top priority for the people, while in the more developed areas, people oriented to enjoy higher value. The absence of a leadership role by any country in Southeast Asia who could drive the others to follow to a common orientation could also generate difficulties for the ASEAN in its building a common socio-cultural community. There is little evidence that the common interests of the community and region are strong enough to overcome the differentiated national interests.

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[175] "ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint", p.1.
[176] Huntington, Samuel P. (1997), "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order", 2nd edition, Simon & Schuster: London.

Third, ASEAN countries have been facing with lots of the internal problems emerged in the socio-culture fields, such as the disparity in development gap between the countries expressed in disparity in GDP, education, labour standards, employment, quality of human resources, etc, the increase in social diseases and the burden of gender equality issues. There are also different views about education, environment, etc. These represent severe obstacles for the countries to forge a socio-cultural community in a short period.

ASEAN member states, where the nationalism is high and there is sensitivity to the issue of national sovereignty, always pursue their respective national interests. Thus, during their process of identifying and implementing the ASCC Blueprint, regional interests were sometimes not given sufficient attention. As a result, the ASCC Blueprint period 2009-2015 is based on a compromise of different members' priorities. In terms of its implementation, each country has its own priorities and concerns. For examples, in 2009 – the first year of the ASCC Blueprint implementation, when the 1st and 2nd ASCC Council Meetings held in Thailand, the priorities focused on education, right of women and children, and social impact of the global financial crisis, where as in this year 2013 with the 9th and 10th ASCC Council Meetings in Brunei, the host country raised the priories including youth, culture& religious, education, and sport. These can be seen clearly through the setting the Yearly Priorities of the respective ASEAN Chairs, who influence the outputs of the ASCC activities in each year.

The interests and priority states pursue also drive the way they have localized the ASCC work plan at the national level. The case of Vietnam clearly illustrates this point, with its focus on the projects and programmes which is in line with the strength of the country and under the framework of the national target programmes or where there have more national resources (both finance and human) to implement.

That is not to discount the other challenges which come from the limitation in the budget and human resources. The building of the ASEAN Community requires huge resources, while most ASEAN countries are developing countries. The socio-cultural projects outlined and aspirated in the ASCC Blueprint are usually quite expensive, especially if ASEAN programs and projects that actually reach to people. Many projects in the ASCC Blueprint have not been implemented or are still pending, largely

because of the financial reasons.[177] The ASCC has no separate funds allocated members. At the 8th ASCC Council Meeting in Brunei this year, such a fund was proposed by Cambodia, and ASEAN is considering the possibility. According to officials, however, the limitation in the resources is one of the biggest obstacles for the implementation of ASCC, at least in a short-term from now to 2015.[178]

Another problem that is frequently cited in many meetings is the need to improve the coordination mechanism for the ASCC. With such broad issues of cooperation involved, ASEAN needs to enhance the effectiveness of the inter-sector coordination mechanisms and inter-state cooperation. In the reports and reviews of the ASEAN Secretariat and member states, the cooperative activities associated socio-cultural areas have been characterized by superficial comment, not substance. Despite its existing, the coordination mechanisms in socio-culture fields remain inefficient.

Another obstacle for the ASCC realization by 2015 is related to the lack of awareness of the people and governments of ASEAN on the goals of the Community. Despite the fact that an entire element of the Blueprint was devoted to building ASEAN identity (number 6) and it also had a section on a community strategy, the results of those actions have been extremely modest. Promoting a sense of regional identity among the ASEAN's people should be a fundamentally important issue but it is one that has not received the resources that it merits.[179] ASEAN's communications, especially in raising community awareness on the sectors for ASEAN people are not focused properly, both at national and regional level. Many of ASEAN documents and outcomes are not disseminated in a timely fashion or distributed via the mass media. In addition, the general media awareness about the ASEAN Community and the ASCC particular is not properly focused. Many people, including officials of ASEAN countries do not understand what ASEAN is doing.[180]

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[177] ASEAN Secretariat narrative report on ASCC Blueprint implementation and Scorecards for ASCC activities, September 2012.

[178] Interviewed the focal-point official of ASEAN Cooperation, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, done by the authors at the preparatory meeting for Mid-term Review of ASCC Blueprint implementation at national level, 27 June 2013, Hanoi.

[179] Ibid, p.377.

[180] RavichandRan MooRthy and Guido Benny, 'Is an "ASEAN Community" achievable?' - A Public Perception Analysis in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore on the Perceived Obstacles to Regional Community, Asian Survey, Vol. 52, Number 6, pp. 1043–1066. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2012 by the Regents of the University of California.

Another challenge is that ASEAN member states have to balance human security with national economic and political goals. The multi-faceted cooperation of the region (political, security, economic, socio-cultural) has lead to more interdependence. In the coming time, ASEAN must strengthen unity and make more commitments towards 'a caring community of societies".[181] Every member in the Association must hold a sense of responsibility and commitment. The complexity created by this situation will require solid statesmanship and crafty and effective administration if the ASEAN Community project is to be realized beyond 2015. This is really a challenge for many countries in the region including Vietnam. Because, as analyses in the Chapter 1, all the ASEAN countries are the small or medium states who are at the developmental stages (only an exception of Singapore).

Legally, ASEAN lacks the legal documents, which provide the binding mechanism or punishment for a member state who does not comply with certain commitments. Along with the principles of consensus and the "ASEAN Ways", the lack of mechanisms to handle violations in ASEAN is one of the major challenges for it on the path to a substantive community. Some suggestions made related to reforming the "ASEAN Ways" and principles of consensus and consultancy. But the researches and analyses of the regional and international scholars predict that there is not likely much chances for changing these principles and norms, at least in a short or event medium period.

To achieve the goal of realizing the ASCC in 2015, it is more urgent than ever that ASEAN look seriously at the shortcomings in the nature of corporation and implementation of the Blueprint, finding the ways to put in place effective measures to strengthen the solidarity and consensus in ASEAN. Perhaps this is the real key, most important for ASEAN to overcome the most difficult period of two years coming, toward a community in the region actually realized in 2015.

2. Opportunities for the ASCC realization

The above analysis might make any person who expects the realization of ASCC in 2015 deeply pessimistic. But alongside these challenges, there are many opportunities for ASEAN take make this aspiration a reality. It may take a long

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[181] Luan Thuy Duong, (2008), "ASEAN-40 Years of cooperation and the road ahead", International Studies No.21 December 2008, p.53.

journey, but there are possibilities for progress. These opportunities relate internally to ASEAN itself and also affect the wider regional and global environment.

First, ASEAN member countries have consistently showed their determination at the highest political levels to build the ASEAN Community, including the Socio-Cultural Community. The image of an ASEAN Community is now becoming more pronounced with the on-going process of implementing concrete programs and action plans to put in place the APSC, the AEC and the ASCC. ASEAN has already enjoyed a number of advantages to turn this dream into reality. The 45-year cooperation has offered a lot of opportunities as well as a sound foundation for ASEAN to advance towards a "full-fledged community".[182]

ASEAN also do share some common cultural values and history and have social similarities which help to facilitate the sharing and mutual understanding. Most ASEAN countries have common historical background gained independence from colonialism, shared Asian cultural values such as respect for the collective values, attach importance to the development and stability of the community the, towards harmonious life. These could be foundations for building an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

For 45 years, ASEAN member countries have become closer, understanding one another, forming the institutional frameworks to promote socio-cultural cooperation such as ASEAN Cultural Week, ASEAN Youth Camp and Exchange Program Communications ASEAN, ASEAN Foundation Culture and Communication, ASEAN University Network and the ASEAN student exchange program.[183] ASEAN also received the cooperation and assistance from its partners in building the ASEAN Community, and the ASCC in particular. All ASEAN partners were supportive of the goal of building the ASEAN Community as well as measures to ASEAN cooperation and assistance.[184]

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[182] Luan Thuy Duong, (2008), "ASEAN-40 Years of cooperation and the road ahead", International Studies No.21 December 2008, p.49.

[183] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam (2010), "150 cau hoi ve ASEAN" (150 questions on ASEAN), p.246.

[184] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam (2010), "150 cau hoi ve ASEAN" (150 questions on ASEAN), p.246.

From a legal perspective, the ASCC is based on the direction of the ASEAN Charter and ASCC Blue Print with a political basis that is higher than before. Unlike previous documents such as TAC, and the ASCC Plan of Action, a system of legal institutions for ASCC construction in the future has been clearly defined with clear objectives, guiding principles, direction and content of each element. The ASCC Blueprint, besides the specific lines of actions, also offers a timetable and specific measures to implement, including the renewal of an implementation mechanism. The development of new institutional arrangements has contributed to a stronger model that ASEAN is aiming for with the ASCC.

And most notably from a positive perspective, ASEAN is currently focusing on the mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint implementation. This is really an opportunity for the organization and its member states to look back what they have done in the journey of realizing the ASCC goals. The mid-term review also could help ASEAN make a more substantive assessment of the achievements and problems in implementing the ASCC. It could identify weakness and give valuable recommendations for adjustments. ASEAN could make in clarifying priorities, ensuring the resources are in place, and improving coordination. It is expected that the mid-term review will be completed during in September 2013, and after the self-assessment process at national level, it will submit its recommendations to the ASCC Council and ASEAN Summit in November 2013.

3. ASCC 2015 Prospects: some possible scenarios

So with an assessment of challenges and obstacles, what does the future hold for the ASCC? I believe there are three possible scenarios for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural (ASCC) Community in 2015:

Scenario 1: ASCC will be formed in 2015 as committed to all the contents and objectives which have been set.

Scenario 2: ASCC will be formed in 2015, but only stop at more modest goals and some of the content may be shelved.

Scenario 3: ASCC Community will have collapsed and been halted on the way to the end of 2015.

Based on the discussion of the difficulties as well as the theoretical and practical foundations of the ASCC presented in the first three chapters of the thesis, I argue the

there is little chance the ASCC will achieve all the objectives as set out in the ASCC Blueprint. However, it is also extremely unlikely collapse totally. Because in addition to the opportunities ASEAN has now as analyzed above, in reality, up to present, at least about 2/3 out of the total planned action lines in the ASCC Blueprint has been implementing or completed. The scenario that is most likely to occur is that in 2015, ASCC will achieve certain goals, but some of the contents and objectives might not be achievable. For example, some goals is impossible to attain in 2015 (i.e. an ASEAN free drug in 2015), or some action lines and programmes which have been pending for many years due to lack of resources or coordination mechanisms (i.e. the matter of social responsibility of entrepreneurs, building capacity for public-servants). Then after 2015, ASCC will continue to improve, although building a successful ASCC will need more time. How long is needed to fulfill all the goals will depend on many factors, of which the shaping national policies and action programs of each member country will be the most important factor. Talking about the prospects of the ASCC in 2015, while interviewing some senior officials of Vietnam on the occasion of launching the national report of Mid-term review on ASCC Blueprint implementation, most of the interviewees believed that drawing from the experiences of ASEAN in dealing the complex and sensitive problems, it seems likely that in 2015 - the time of deadline for the ASEAN Community and ASCC to be created, ASEAN leaders will release a joint statement restating the basic contents of the ASCC as they have already outlined in the ASCC Blueprint 2009-2015, but at the same time offering an extra master plan for the ASCC in the next period with new measures and priorities to improve the community. These predictions might be more likely reasonable when the ASEAN Secretariat and ASCC Council has also recently mentioned the construction of a new master plan for pushing up ASCC after the deadline of 2015.[185] It is obviously, the ASCC building by 2015 may be only the end of the startup phase in a longer-term process.

4. ASCC to 2015: Some policy implications for Vietnam

Whichever of the three possible scenarios of the ASCC eventuates, Vietnam will face many opportunities as well as challenges. If the ASCC were accelerated and all aspects were completed on time this would put strain on Vietnam, both in terms of

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[185] According to the information shared by the focal-point officers of ASEAN Cooperation of MOLISA after their participation in the preparatory meetings and workshop for the Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint implementation, 24-25 June in Brunei.

human and financial resources to implement all the commitments made in the ASCC Blueprint. The predicted outcome (scenario 2 above) is the scenario which many would consider as preferable for Vietnam. It suits for the specific conditions of Vietnam in the short term due as it will not create too much pressure on the country's limited resources, but it will help the Vietnamese people and government have more time to manage the commitments and the projects, activities of the ASCC. Action Plan of the Government of Vietnam to join ASEAN cooperation in 2015 gives some great directions in cooperation with ASEAN including contents on socio-culture. Accordingly, a large number of orientations in Vietnam's ASEAN cooperation, including actively promoting the formation of the ASEAN Community in accordance with the interests of Vietnam and on the basis of the ASEAN Charter; gradually improving the quality of "unity in diversity" of the Association, bringing the friendship and comprehensive cooperation with ASEAN countries, both multilaterally and bilaterally into a new higher stage and more comprehensive level. In terms of the socio-cultural integration, Vietnam should make the fullest regional and international cooperation and support to implement the goals of national socio-cultural development especially on poverty reduction, narrowing the development gap, human resource development, enhancement of national capacity, as well as addressing efficiently the trans-national issues.

Measures to implement those main orientations to participate in ASEAN cooperation are implemented uniformly and comprehensively in all three areas of political-security, economic, socio- cultural. For socio-cultural cooperation in particular, some specific measures including: First, actively participating in the implementation of the ASCC Blueprint, pushing up the 4 goals of ASEAN cooperation, including: (1) building a social security system to ensure strong economic growth coupled with equity and social justice, (2) ensuring the sustainability of the environment and sustainable management of natural resources, (3) controlling the impact of economic integration on the society; (4) preserving and promoting the heritage and cultural identity of the region. In this process, Vietnam should actively promote those areas where the country has advantages and strengths, to enlist maximum support of international cooperation, especially in human resources training, strengthening national capacity and mobilizing financial, technical resources. Second, developing appropriate plans and schedules for implementing synchronously

the measures to implement the goals of human resource development, social welfare and social security, social equality, environmentally sustainable protection, building ASEAN identity; and narrowing the development gap within ASEAN. Third, actively enforcing the agreements, cooperation programme committed within ASEAN framework and between ASEAN and its external partners in the socio-cultural fields, improving the efficiency of ASEAN cooperation, especially pro-actively propose the initiatives to the fullest international cooperation and assistance in the areas that the nation have direct benefits. Fourth, on the sensitive issues such as migrant workers, rights of women and children, etc, Vietnam needs to flexibly handle in the right direction of national law at the same time ensuring the interests of the country's fundamental stance, while promoting its active role in the ASEAN.

Implementation Action Plan of the Government on ASEAN cooperation to 2015, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs issued the Ministry's Action Plan to identify the major tasks to further improve the quality and efficiency of ASEAN cooperation in the new stage as well as to take further active and positive role as the national coordination body for the ASCC, creating a cohesion between MOLISA and the other ministries involved in the implementation of ASCC in Vietnam.

To ensure the ASCC does move forward and does not collapse, Vietnam needs to be active and to maximize the opportunities for the country, identify the ASCC objectives and ensure the legitimate interests of Vietnam and ASEAN. During this year, what the country need to focus on is to comprehensively and objectively doing the reviews and self-assessment on its implementation of ASCC Blueprint at the national level and the country's participation in the ASCC activities at the regional level, in order to find the methods to further enhance the efficiency of Vietnam's participation in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural in the coming years. In addition, it is necessary for the country to invest some certain resources on researching and forecasting about the future impact of the ASEAN Community in general and ASEAN Socio-Cultural particular after 2015 so that appropriate responses can be developed. At the same time, Vietnam also needs to actively propose some solutions and additional initiatives to improve the ASCC model. The national report on Mid-term review of ASCC Blueprint implementation recently worked out some recommendations in which focuses on some areas, activities need to further enhanced in the ASCC including education, human development, sustainable and decent work, promotion and protection for the right of the

migrant and vulnerable groups, coordination with other countries in ASEAN to explore and develop the project of culture industry development in the region. Enhancement of the implementation of commitments made or agreements signed by the leaders, together with sharing the best practices and experiences in coordination for Blueprint implementation are also some of those proposed by the MOLISA and relevant agencies of ASCC in Vietnam. During these processes, Vietnam needs to identify its own priority areas for the participation. Obvious candidates in natural disaster response, health or protection for the women and children rights. Vietnam also needs to ensure closer collaboration between its own agencies and ministries. A lack of information and a closed collaboration between the focal-point agency (MOLISA and National ASEAN Secretariat under MOFA) with other relevant ministries and agencies, as well as between the agencies at national level and the ones of regional level need to be urgently addressed.

CONCLUSION

ASEAN is only two years away from the deadline to form an ASEAN Community in 2015. The work still needing to be completed to that end remains huge, including the completion of one third of the total 800 action lines in the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community.[186] The evolving regional and international context also confronts ASEAN with major questions, such as how to firmly maintain ASEAN's central role in the region, how to harmonize and balance the intertwining interests of its members, and how to respond more effectively to emerging challenges and problems.

By providing an analysis of the ASCC model and Vietnam's participation in it, this thesis has attempted to examine one key dimension of this community-building project: on socio-culture integration. It has looked at the processes involved and current issues and challenges, with a particular focus on the Vietnamese experience. Some main findings have been presented, including:

First, the ASEAN countries launched the project of ASEAN Community to 2015, which bases on neither constructivist position nor realist view but a complex of strategic calculation of the national interests in the regional and global context. The regional integration process places the ASEAN's members in the position of how to balance between their national interests and the regional interests to build a Community "unity of diversity".

ASEAN set the goals of a socio-culture community in an effort to fulfill its idea of an ASEAN Community by 2015. Despite some references in the very early days of ASEAN's existence, the conception of a socio-culture community in Southeast Asia has been largely overlooked by scholars. It is only since the Asian financial crisis in late 1990s that it has come back into prominence. But like the AEC and the APSC, the road map for realizing the ASCC (set down in ASCC Blueprint 2009-2015) has been shaped by ASEAN's characteristics, most notably the ASEAN Way and respect for the unity in the diversity. These principles cause many challenges for ASEAN including Vietnam. The analysis of ASCC implementation both at the regional and national level provided here seeks to increase knowledge about the theory and practice of ASEAN's third pillar, providing empirical evidence for an assessment of the ASCC's prospects.

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[186] ASEAN Secretariate report, 2012.

After examining the ASCC's origins and evolution and providing an assessment of the current opportunities and challenges, the research reflects on possible scenarios for the ASCC in 2015. Whichever happens will certainly affect Vietnam in some different ways. With the first one, ASCC is likely to be accelerated to include all the contents of the proposed work schedule as outlined in the ASCC Blueprint. This is unlikely to happen, but if it did, it would put pressure on Vietnam, but would not fundamentally affect the country's security interests. In a second scenario, ASCC is likely to be formed in 2015 but some of the contents may be put aside. This scenario is considered as the one most likely to occur. This is relatively consistent with the conditions and capabilities ahead of Vietnam. And the third scenario, ASCC might be collapsed. This is unlikely to happen and if it happens it will detrimental to the member countries including Vietnam.

No matter which scenario happens, there will be a direct impact on Vietnam. For that reason, Vietnam needs to work together with the other member states of ASEAN to make greater efforts to accelerate the process of ASCC realization. To do this task, Vietnam should actively implement the self-assessment and launch initiatives to complement and complete the model to 2015. After the 2015 deadline, it should also look to move things forward based on maximizing the national interests but still ensure the common benefits for the region. In addition, Vietnam also needs to continue to innovate, improve the organization and personnel to implement the work of the ASCC in particular and ASEAN co-operation in general.

In short, Vietnam needs to make a greater effort with other ASEAN countries to push forward the ASCC process. A strong sense of ASEAN solidarity, mutual assistance, and a people-centered community would enhance the role and position of ASEAN in the international arena. This would in turn also help the member states and advance their legitimate interests as they seek to develop in an increasingly integrated world.

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Annex: Matrix of ASCC Priorities 2009-2013[187]

Year	Chairmanship Country	ASCC Council Meeting	Priorities Established
2009	Thailand	1st ASCC Council, 24 August 2009, Bangkok, Thailand 2nd ASCC Council, 22 October 2009, Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand	a. Role of education in building the political security, economic and socio-cultural pillars of the ASEAN Community. b. Promotion and protection of the rights of women and children; and c. Addressing social impact of the global financial crisis
2010	Vietnam	3rd ASCC Council, 7 April 2010, Hanoi, Vietnam 4th ASCC Council, August 2010, Danang, Vietnam	a. Coping with global challenges; b. Human resources development for economic recovery. c. Enhancement of social welfare and development of ASEAN women and children; and d. Enhancement of cultural cooperation towards creating ASEAN awareness and building and ASEAN Community.
2011	Indonesia	5th ASCC Council, 29 April 2011, Jakarta, Indonesia 6th ASCC Council, 10-11 October 2011, Semarrang, Indonesia	a. Environmental Issues b. Advancing and Prioritizing Education c. Capacity to Control Communicable of t Diseases (HIV/AIDS) d. Enhancement of the Participation of Persons with Disabilities e. ASEAN Declaration on Cultural Diversity
2012	Cambodia	7th ASCC Council, 2 April 2012, Phnom penh, Cambodia 8th ASCC Council, August, Phnom Penh, Cambodia	a. Culture b. Climate change c. Education d. Disaster management; and e. Women and Children
2013	Brunei Darussalam	9th ASCC Council, March 2013, Brunei Darussalam 10th ASCC Council, Sep 2013, Brunei Darussalam	a. Youth b. Culture& religious c. Education d. Sport

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[187] According to the ASEAN Secretariat Information Paper presented during the 13th Meeting of the Senior Officials' Committee for the ASCC (SOCA) on 26 January 2013, Brunei Darussalam.