

ASEAN Economic Community - Why, For What, and By Whom

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On TV, upon the magazine rack, in schools, and on billboards around the country, the coming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is being heralded everywhere across Southeast Asia.

Upon ASEAN's official website, the AEC is described as:

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) shall be the goal of regional economic integration by 2015. AEC envisages the following key characteristics: (a) a single market and production base, (b) a highly competitive economic region, (c) a region of equitable economic development, and (d) a region fully integrated into the global economy.

The AEC is an unquestionable inevitability – and more alarmingly – an inevitability absolutely none of the many hundreds of millions of Southeast Asian citizens have asked for, voted for, or have any direct say in regards to. So inevitable is AEC's unfurling in 2015, that few have even bothered to ask “why?” “for what?” and “by whom?”

A Cheap EU Knock-Off Destined for Catastrophic Failure

If AEC's premise as described by ASEAN itself sounds suspiciously similar to the European Union (EU), that's because it is. It is not only driven by the same immense global spanning corporate-financier special interests that consolidated Europe's economies, currencies, and institutions, but for the very same goal of collectively looting the region if and when it is successfully consolidated.

The EU now writhes in debt, endless proxy wars fought on behalf of Wall Street and London, and socioeconomic strife caused by EU regulations forced upon various populations against their will. While it was always difficult for citizens of respective European nations to have their voice truly represented within the halls of their own respective national governments, it is more difficult still for the EU's ruling elite assembled in Brussels to be held accountable and made to actually work for the European people.

Instead, the EU serves the immense corporate-financier interests that cobbled this supranational consolidation together in the first place. The European people were not allowed to vote on entering into the EU, and those that did repeatedly voted against it until threats, economic extortion, and propaganda finally succeeded in overcoming resistance. In Southeast Asia, nothing of the sort has even been proposed, and most Southeast Asians are oblivious to what ASEAN and the AEC even represent. Like the International Monetary Fund's

(IMF) incursion into Asia during the late 1990's, it won't be until catastrophic failure has already swallowed the whole of Southeast Asia that people begin to realize what has been foisted upon them.

Already, many across Southeast Asia are being effected by bilateral free-trade agreements (FTAs) that allow local markets to be flooded by cheap foreign goods. Socioeconomic disparity, even across Southeast Asia and greater Asia itself can devastate communities and industries already just barely making do. Special interests driven to ink FTAs generally make no provisions to prepare local markets about to be devastated, and no provisions after FTAs take demonstrable tolls. [FTAs inked by ousted Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra with China](#), for example, devastated Thai farmers when cheaper Chinese produce flooded Thai markets. Some farmers including those who grew garlic, were driven almost entirely out of business.

The AEC will multiply this by creating similar conditions across all industries and between all of ASEAN's members. Additionally, the AEC then seeks to integrate ASEAN into the greater "global economy," or in other words, FTAs with the US and EU. Industries just emerging in each respective ASEAN member state will be utterly crushed, bought out, or overrun by foreign corporate-financier monopolies. For local tycoons laboring under the delusions that somehow there is a place around the "global elite's" table for them, the current state of the EU should serve as a cautionary reminder that indeed, no there is not.

Why, For What, and By Whom?



In addition to buying out and monopolizing all that resides within Southeast Asia, Wall Street and London desire to use Southeast Asia as a bulwark against China's rising power. These special interests may have even used the rise of China as a means to extort cooperation from respective ASEAN member states in the creation of the AEC.

Again, those ruling political orders across Southeast Asia need only look at NATO and how each member within that alleged "alliance" is strong-armed into one undesirable, highly destructive, and costly conflict after another – not only in direct opposition of each respective NATO member's own population, but in opposition of international law and norms.

An ASEAN AEC fleeced by the West and driven as a proxy into the maw of neighboring China would cost everyone – from the general population to the ruling elite of each of ASEAN's respective member states – just as is seen across the EU.

The dream of consolidating and exploiting Southeast Asia as a single geopolitical bloc against China is a long documented conspiracy the United States and its partners in the United Kingdom have worked on for decades.

As early as the Vietnam War, with the so-called "Pentagon Papers" released in 1969, it was revealed that the conflict was simply one part of a greater strategy aimed at containing and controlling China.

[Among many important quotes](#), is one that outlines the immense regional theater the US was engaged in against China at the time, stating:

“there are three fronts to a long-run effort to contain China (realizing that the USSR “contains” China on the north and northwest): (a) the Japan-Korea front; (b) the India-Pakistan front; and (c) the Southeast Asia front.”

While the US would ultimately lose the Vietnam War and any chance of using the Vietnamese as a proxy force against Beijing, the long war against Beijing would continue elsewhere. The use of Southeast Asia as a consolidated front against China would continue on up to and including until today.

[This containment strategy](#) would be updated and detailed in the 2006 Strategic Studies Institute report “[String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China’s Rising Power across the Asian Littoral](#)” where it outlines China’s efforts to secure its oil lifeline from the Middle East to its shores in the South China Sea as well as means by which the US can maintain American hegemony throughout the Indian and Pacific Ocean. The premise is that, should Western foreign policy fail to entice China into participating in Wall Street and London’s “international system” as responsible stakeholders, an increasingly confrontational posture must be taken to contain the rising nation. The use of nations in Southeast Asia to check China’s regional power plays chief among this posture.

Other US policymakers have articulated the use of Southeast Asia as a proxy against China in more direct terms. Neo-Conservative, pro-war policymaker Robert Kagan in his 1997 piece titled “[What China Knows That We Don’t: The Case for a New Strategy of Containment](#),” noted:

Chinese leaders worry that they will “play Gulliver to Southeast Asia’s Lilliputians, with the United States supplying the rope and stakes.

Kagan would later serve as an adviser to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who would herself declare a campaign to do just that – supply Southeast Asia with “rope and stakes.” Called the “pivot to Asia,” Clinton would make a hegemonic declaration in Foreign Policy magazine titled, “[America’s Pacific Century](#),” stating that:

...the United States has moved to fully engage the region’s multilateral institutions, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, mindful that our work with regional institutions supplements and does not supplant our bilateral ties. There is a demand from the region that America play an active role in the agenda-setting of these institutions — and it is in our interests as well that they be effective and responsive.

Clinton’s reference to America playing “an active role in the agenda-setting of these institutions,” referring to ASEAN and APEC, and the rest of her very lengthy editorial reflect a nearly verbatim update of Kagan’s 1997 piece – if only stated a bit more diplomatically than Kagan’s very straight forward “containment of China” proposal. One must wonder how anyone could learn of America’s desire to set the agenda of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and not immediately identify overt aspirations of extraterritorial neo-imperialism.

As part of this desire to set the agenda for Southeast Asia, the US has worked hard through its various NGOs to manipulate, influence, and outright overthrow the political orders in

place across the region in order to install compliant regimes that reflect America's goal of consolidating and commandeering these nations both to wholesale loot them economically, and in pursuit of its containment strategy versus China.

There's a Reason the AEC is not up for Debate

Clearly, if the AEC's implementation is merely the consolidation and exploitation of the peoples and resources of Southeast Asia, the process of its implementation will neither be up for debate, nor put to a vote. While the United States and the many overly optimistic proponents of the AEC ceaselessly harp upon the tenants of "democracy" and "human rights," these most basic concepts have been utterly absent in the creation of this new supranational bloc.

The people of Southeast Asia did not ask for ASEAN nor the AEC. Much of what both represent are in fact openly opposed by many grassroots movements across the region – not to mention by many around the world. There is a reason the AEC is not up for debate and an endless torrent of full spectrum propaganda is undulating the media in efforts to market the AEC to the general public – no one would buy it otherwise.

In a democratic society, the people are to vote and in return are to be represented by those they voted for. These representatives are to take the needs and desires of the people and turn them into local, national, and international policy. Instead, the AEC represents a conspiracy cobbled together by special interests and then dishonestly marketed toward the general public to accept. In other words, it represents democracy in reverse – it is the supposed representatives telling the people what they "want" rather than the people telling their representatives what to do. Democracy in reverse could also be defined as "dictatorship" – and in that regard, ASEAN and its AEC would not be a national dictatorship, but rather a supranational one magnifying the abuses and ramifications of such abuses accordingly.

For this reason, whether one is a conservative nationalist or a liberal democrat, the idea of an AEC forced upon the people without their input, consent, or even expressed desire for such a system should be appalling and surely protested against. However, many must already know that such protests would be futile. But this futility itself only further exposes the unwarranted influence and power that truly drives the AEC's undemocratic and intolerable implementation.

Instead, it will be up to groups within each respective ASEAN member, and up to each community within to expose, boycott, [and replace with local alternatives](#) both the national and multinational special interests involved. While such a campaign will be difficult, the only other choice is to do nothing and suffer the same indignation, socioeconomic decay, and perpetual war the EU now suffers. The people of Southeast Asia have many advantages including the advantage of time on their side to mitigate a repeat of the EU's slow-motion collapse – but it is only an advantage if people begin acting now.

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