

Blanquerna – Ramón Llull University, School of Communications and
International Relations

BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

*Comparative Analysis of Regional Integration Mechanisms
in the EU and ASEAN: A Study of EU and ASEAN's
Pathways towards Regional Integration*

Final Degree Project

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Abstract

This research undertakes a longitudinal comparison between the EU and ASEAN, investigating the political, economic, and social policies that shape their respective regional integration. The EU is commonly perceived as a paradigm of regional integration, whereas ASEAN is frequently scrutinized through the lens of cooperation theories due to its reliance on informal structures. Therefore, the aim of this investigation is to ascertain how the EU's mechanisms of integration either converge or diverge from those of ASEAN. Subsequently, the research reveals that the EU's advanced integration stems from its fundamental principles, solid institutions, and continuous policy assessment. In contrast, ASEAN's more modest integration is largely due to its non-interference norm and MS' preference for sovereignty, impacting its institutional design and policy implementation pace. Lastly, it concludes that the EU's regional integration mechanisms do not match ASEAN's, considering political, economic, and social policies, suggesting the need for a distinct model to comprehend and steer ASEAN's integration trajectory.

List of Acronyms

- **AEC** ASEAN Economic Community
- **AFTA** ASEAN Free Trade Agreement
- **AICHR** ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
- **ARF** ASEAN Regional Forum
- **ASC** ASEAN Security Community
- **ASCC** ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
- **ASEAN** Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- **CEPT** Common Effective Preferential Tariff
- **CFSP** Common Foreign and Security Policy
- **EC** European Community
- **ECJ** European Court of Justice
- **ECSC** European Coal and Steel Community
- **EEA** European Economic Area
- **EEC** European Economic Community
- **EFTA** Economic Free Trade Agreement
- **EMU** European Monetary Union
- **EP** European Parliament
- **ERDF** European Regional Development Fund
- **ESF** European Social Fund
- **ESP** European Social Policy
- **EU** European Union
- **IGC** Intergovernmental Conference
- **MS** Member States
- **QMV** Qualified Majority Voting
- **OCM** Open Coordination Method
- **SAP** Social Action Plan
- **SEA** Single European Act
- **SEM** Single European Market
- **SM** Single Market
- **TEU** Treaty of the European Union
- **TFEU** Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
- **ZOPFAN** Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality

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1. Introduction

Intriguingly, this research critically analyzes and compares the regional integration processes within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU), two markedly influential regional organizations. Established in 1967, ASEAN prioritizes fostering regional economic and security cooperation among its ten Southeast Asian Member States (MS). Conversely, the EU, a collective entity comprising 27 members, underscores the importance of advocating for peace, enabling free trade, and formulating policies that foster mutual benefits among its members.

Moreover, adopting a socio-constructivist perspective, this study views regional integration as a conceptual structure fundamentally shaped by ideas, norms, identities, and discourses. It underscores the pivotal role of these factors in the maturation and establishment of these organizations. As for the methodology, it leans towards the qualitative side, employing both primary and secondary sources alongside expert interviews, thereby engendering a nuanced understanding of these organizations.

Henceforth, the research will employ a comprehensive approach, combining cross-case and comparative longitudinal analysis, to investigate the adaptability of the EU's strategies to ASEAN's regional integration model. By examining multiple cases over an extended period, this research aims to uncover operational similarities and differences between the EU and ASEAN while shedding light on each organization's evolutionary changes. Therefore, the analysis will focus on key policy realms, including social, economic, and political aspects, exploring their purpose of creation, institutional design, competences, and historical trajectories. This multifaceted approach will provide a deeper understanding of how the EU and ASEAN navigate their integration processes and if the EU mechanism adequately adapts to the ones of ASEAN.

1.1. Motivations

The current global landscape is experiencing a significant rise in regionalism, necessitating an examination of two regional organizations with distinct characteristics and varying degrees of formality in their respective regions, as is the case of the EU and ASEAN. While traditional scholars and regional international relations theorists have primarily focused on the EU as a model for institution-building and support, it is crucial to recognize that alternative regional institutions utilizing unique approaches should not be deemed less legitimate. The primary motivation of this research is to determine the extent to which EU mechanisms can effectively conform to ASEAN characteristics.

1.2. Relevance in International Relations

Regional integration assists nations in overcoming barriers to the free flow of products, services, capital, people, and ideas (The World Bank, 2019). Nevertheless, regionalism and its degree of integration vary among existing institutions. Narrowing the focus on the EU and ASEAN, both organizations have an actual weight in the international system, regardless of their different approaches, level of formality, mechanisms and characteristics. In addition, the diffusion between the degree of integration among both regions has become a debate among many scholars and experts in regional studies. Therefore, considering its global impact on international economic and political policies and the importance given by mainstream authors, the degree of regional integration in the measurement of formality can be considered a relevant topic in the field of International Relations.

1.3. Methodology

This study focuses on regional integration and considers it an ideational construct shaped by ideas, norms, identities, and discourses. In order to examine the mechanisms and operation of both regional organizations, a constructivist approach is adopted. In addition, the study utilizes a qualitative methodology, drawing on: 1) existing primary and secondary sources, such as reports, books, and articles, that have previously addressed the topic, and 2) expert interviews. Overall, constructivism provides a more comprehensive

explanation of the functioning of organizations, highlighting the influence of ideational factors.

1.4. Objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to find out if the regional integration mechanisms of the EU can be adequately adapted to the functioning and characteristics of ASEAN. Hence, to respond to the question raised, one of the objectives is to challenge the broad understanding by scholars and experts in the area that the EU has become the model of the discipline, particularly when comparing it to forms of regionalism outside Europe. Therefore, the goal is to bring plurality within IR regional integration theories by studying and analyzing the integration process of ASEAN compared to the EU while intending to avoid falling into the trap of the Western perspective.

Moreover, another objective is to study the main features and characteristics of ASEAN, such as the ASEAN Way based on non-interference, the maintenance of sovereignty in the domestic affairs of its MS, and non-commitment to a legal base. However, the association's purpose of creation will remain essential in this part of the analysis. This way, the purpose of creation of both organizations can be compared to drawing conclusions on how divergence mechanisms are aligned concerning their founding objectives.

Consequently, once the information is gathered, the analysis will consider three main variables: political, economic, and social, in different fields such as institutional design, organization's competences, and historical evolution. Thus, the third objective will be to demonstrate if the EU regional integration mechanisms can function within ASEAN and, if not, the reasons behind it, on the basis of the carried out analysis.

2. Literature Review

The argument presented here is that regional integration studies should encompass the various realities of integration worldwide. In that sense, a series of authors, including (Acharya, 1997; Börzel and Risse 2016; Caballero, 1998; Dosch 2008; Jetschke and Murray, 2012; Jones and Smith, 2002; Kuhonta 2006; Leifer 2013; Lombaerde et al., 2010; Moravcsik, 1995; Murray, 2010; Severino, 2006; Suzuki, 2019) have analyzed ASEAN's

regionalism since its inception. However, many scholars perceive a setback in the development of regional integration when analyzing ASEAN's informal mechanisms, given that the EU case is widely acknowledged as a model in the field. On the one hand, according to Börzel and Risse (2016), the study of regionalism has been separated into two categories (cooperation and integration) which have generated distinct findings. Regional cooperation can be defined as the collaborative use of state-based political power in international organizations to address collective response challenges, including economic, political, or security concerns. On the contrary, regional integration entails the establishment of supranational organizations to which political authority is assigned to make collectively binding decisions (Börzel and Risse, 2016). Consequently, theories tackling integration have been broadly used to define European regionalism, whereas cooperation theories have remained the subject of non-European regionalism.

The very first debates on regionalism took place in the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, neo-functionalism emerged as the dominant school of thought in the study of regionalism. Neo-functionalists argue that supranational actors play a crucial role in driving regional institution-building by minimizing the influence of nation-states and promoting alliances in regionalism (Börzel and Risse, 2016). While neo-functionalists also engaged in regional comparative analysis, their interest declined due to the perceived lack of integration outside of European regions (Lombaerde et al., 2010).

In contrast to neo-functionalism, scholars of liberal intergovernmentalism, such as Andrew Moravcsik, contend that both MS and their national governments should be considered the primary agents of regional integration. According to this perspective, regional institutions' policies should align with the geopolitical and economic interests of the MS (Moravcsik, 1995). However, the focus remained Euro-centric, with the EU integration process continuing to be the primary subject of study.

Accordingly, Euro-centrism persists even when considering the two most relevant schools of thought in regional integration. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and how mainstream authors approach regionalism in Southeast Asia, the

ASEAN Way will be examined from the perspectives of socio-constructivist, liberalist, and realist scholars.

In this regard, the ASEAN Way is considered the most suitable alternative for the Southeast Asian region, taking into account its historical roots, key characteristics, ideas, and values (Suzuki, 2019). Central to this approach is the principle of non-interference, which has safeguarded the sovereignty of MS in internal affairs since the association's establishment in 1967. The principle of non-interference has remained a fundamental tenet and a core element within the organization and among its MS (ASEAN, 2015).

Numerous authors have explored the concept of the ASEAN Way, resulting in the emergence of different perspectives. Some authors (Acharya, 1997; Acharya, 2004; Caballero, 1998; Börzel and Risse, 2016) adopt a socio-constructivist perspective when analyzing the level of integration achieved through the ASEAN Way.

On the one hand, Acharya, although considered mainly a post-colonialist author, in the analysis of regionalism in Southeast Asia, tackles the topic from a socio-constructivist approach. Thus, he perceives the ASEAN Way as a strong emphasis on discretion, informality, pragmatism, efficiency, consensus-building, and a preference for non-confrontational approaches to bargaining (Acharya, 1997). In other words, he emphasizes that such a model frequently diverges from Western multilateral discussions' belligerent attitudes and legal decision-making processes (since ASEAN does not count with a permanent, centralized bureaucracy with authority to adopt/take decisions). Nevertheless, Acharya argues that more factors besides culture are relevant to create such bureaucratic and consultation mechanisms. Therefore, he argues that contrary to supranational organizations such as the EU, ASEAN's format is built under flexible institutions that permit coordination and cooperation between national governments. Hence, according to the author, principles of inter-state relations such as non-intervention and non-use of force are legal-rational norms not exclusive to ASEAN. However, what sets ASEAN apart as a unique form of regionalism are its socio-cultural practices of informality, consensus-building, and non-adversarial and non-hegemonic approaches, which are not found in other regional powers (Archaya, 2014).

In line with Acharya's perspective, Caballero conceives the ASEAN Way as a conflict management framework. In this regard, the author agrees that ASEAN's method of action consists of a series of procedures emphasizing moderation and conciliation of opposing interests in handling disagreements by accepting the cultural practices of “*musyawarah* and *muafakat*” (consultation and consensus), recognizing differences of opinion without forgoing the need to resolve them (Caballero, 1998).

Moreover, in accordance with Acharya (2014) and Caballero (1998), Börzel and Risse (2016) agree that the ASEAN Way is based on a loose agreement, minimal structure, and limited institutionalization, which makes it different from Western models. Therefore, they all believe the organization has a soft structure and is not highly institutionalized. However, Börzel and Risse (2016) point out that ASEAN has made progress in institutionalizing by creating a dispute settlement system under the Asian Free Trade Area (AFTA), which represents a departure from its previous approach of being an informal and consensus-based organization (Börzel and Risse, 2016).

From a socio-constructivist viewpoint, ASEAN is viewed as an entity founded on shared norms and identities, with a historical basis and a goal of achieving peace. However, according to realist scholars such as (Jones and Smith, 2002), the notion of a collective identity is disregarded within the framework of the ASEAN Way. In that sense, Jones and Smith (2002) challenge the socio-constructivist perspective by examining the level of integration within the Southeast territory. Both argue that the different MS of the association hold divergent views on the established norms and that a collective identity has yet to be formed. In essence, the authors posit that each ASEAN MS solely pursues its interests. Thus, norms and identities play a minor role in ASEAN's international relations (Jones and Smith, 2002).

Furthermore, in delving deeper into the defining characteristics of the ASEAN Way, it is crucial to examine the non-intrusive nature that the association has adopted since its inception. The non-interference principle has become a fundamental tenet and a cornerstone of the *modus operandi* of both the organization and its MS.

Therefore, some authors and experts in the field including (Dosch, 2008; Kuhonta, 2006; Leifer, 2013; Suzuki, 2019) have tackled the association's informal character, relating it to the non-interference principle. From a realist perspective, scholars like Leifer (2013) view ASEAN as an association with limited material interests shared by its MS. Despite acknowledging the non-interference principle, Leifer is skeptical about MS' willingness to relinquish part of their sovereignty to the association. Realist institutionalist authors argue that ASEAN faces criticism when intensifying regional integration, as governments voluntarily give up some of their sovereignty due to the emphasis placed on relative power and preserving state sovereignty. Leifer (2013) concurs with this view, arguing that ASEAN lacks supranational tendencies and is barely an intergovernmental organization striving to achieve a balance of power within an institutional structure (Leifer, 2013).

Incongruously, according to liberal scholars, including Kuhonta (2006), ASEAN faces a challenge when it comes to promoting democratic values due to the absence of democratic governments and the inclusion of problematic democracies within the organization. Kuhonta (2006) suggests that ASEAN's decision not to interfere in bolstering democratic forces is the central issue, as this denies democratic groups moral support and political legitimacy. Many liberal scholars contend that promoting democracy within ASEAN is difficult, given that the organization consists of states primarily composed of soft authoritarian regimes. Despite ASEAN's efforts to promote democratic principles, individual sovereign states may not support democratic currents if they do not view liberal democracy as the best alternative or the most feasible form of governance for their respective countries (Kuhonta, 2006).

In addition, some socio-constructivist authors including (Suzuki, 2019; Dosch, 2008) disagree with liberalist arguments that connect ASEAN's alleged incapacity to promote democracy with increased authoritarianism in the region. They argue that ASEAN MS may not fully embrace pro-democracy objectives and initiatives, but this does not imply an anti-democratic consensus.

On the one hand, Suzuki (2016) argues that regional organizations typically intervene in the internal affairs of their members to maintain or establish democracy, particularly in

organizations with a higher percentage of democratically elected governments. However, this view primarily pertains to supranational organizations like the EU. In contrast, Suzuki (2016) highlights that ASEAN's lack of interference is not due to the political orientation of its members but to their capacity to solve domestic issues without affecting others. In this context, she highlights that some of ASEAN's under-democratic MS are among the most vocal critics of other MS domestic affairs and the most passionate advocates of a more intrusive ASEAN. Thus, Suzuki (2016) contends that ASEAN's non-interference principle cannot be explained in terms of democracy. Instead, it is a consequence of the organization's emphasis on preventing spillover effects and the belief that each member should resolve its domestic issues independently (Suzuki, 2016).

Moreover, in conformity with Suzuki (2016), Dosch (2008) argues that ASEAN's slower approach towards democratization does not necessarily imply that the organization is unwilling to promote democratic values in the long run. According to Dosch (2008), democratization is a gradual process, and ASEAN's transformation into a democracy champion cannot be expected to happen promptly. Nonetheless, ASEAN has started to engage in discussions on liberal standards and ideals, but it has not yet produced a specific democracy promotion policy. However, the organization has reconsidered its reluctance to address such concerns by launching various initiatives, such as creating a Southeast Asian community by 2020 to form an integrated economic, security, and socio-cultural community (Dosch, 2008).

2.1. State of the art: Comparison between EU and ASEAN Regional Integration

Several scholars, including (Murray, 2010; Severino, 2006; Jetschke and Murray, 2012) have examined the level of integration and distinctive norms and mechanisms of the EU and ASEAN regional organizations. However, before delving deeper into this debate, it is essential to understand the challenges of comparative regionalism studies. Lombaerde (2010) argues that many scholars view regional theories from a Eurocentric perspective and use European integration as a reference point, even when studying regions outside of Europe. As a result, other forms of regionalism, particularly those in Asia, are often considered weak, informal, and ineffective compared to the EU (Lombaerde et al., 2010).

Telò (2020) similarly argued for the necessity to examine external variables in EU integration to move away from the previously Eurocentric focus of regional studies and provide new perspectives in IR regional theories. As a result, a more diverse approach is required for comparative regional analysis (Telò, 2020).

Therefore, in light of the above it is clear that a more pluralistic approach is needed when carrying comparative regional analysis. Likewise, the chosen authors for this section (Murray, 2010; Severino, 2006; Jetschke and Murray, 2012) bring to the debate a non-western perspective when comparing regional integration between ASEAN and the EU.

Firstly, Murray (2010) draws attention to the similarities and differences between the EU and ASEAN concerning their institutional structures, the role of state and sovereignty, and their approaches to globalization. However, the author emphasizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to integration, and the EU should not be regarded as the sole benchmark for regional integration. Murray (2010) also stresses that integration is not a zero-sum game, and the two regions have different characteristics. The EU's integration is based on inter-state cooperation with a political focus, while economic considerations with limited political involvement predominantly drive Southeast Asia's integration. Developing integration in both regions is linked to national interests, policies, and their extent and volume. Southeast Asia needs more effective, cohesive policies for a Single Market (SM) comprising goods, services, labor, and capital. At the same time, the EU has established a SM and currency, achieving full economic integration and developing intra-regional trade.

Moreover, in line with Murray (2010), Severino (2006), former ASEAN Secretary General, considers that the association members have decided not to follow the European characteristics of integration since they instead opt for more informal mechanisms that neglect to adopt a legal character such as not committing to legally binding forces and as well rejecting the foundation of supranational institutions. According to Southeast leaders, this method is the most effective way to handle variety and lack of capability in the

territory, allowing for variances while advancing slowly toward the objective of forming a regional community (Severino, 2006).

Finally, attaining the ASEAN Charter has brought about noticeable institutional changes in ASEAN in the past decade. However, according to Murray and Jetschke (2012), ASEAN has selectively embraced specific mechanisms and policies aligned with EU-style institutions. Despite evaluating EU-style institutions, the authors argue that ASEAN has not comprehensively and systematically adopted European institutions. In addition, they contend that ASEAN's initial concern about its status and continuity as a relevant international actor has driven ASEAN and its MS to create institutional changes through the 2007 Charter. Nevertheless, the ASEAN Secretariat's inadequate institutional capacity has hindered the adoption of EU-style practices to address political issues despite the eagerness of ASEAN members to embrace specific European integration approaches. According to the authors, ASEAN chose the EU due to the "power symmetry" between the two institutions. The causal links between EU and ASEAN institutional changes are established by additional intrinsic factors arising from ASEAN's alternative form of regional cooperation (Jetschke and Murray, 2012).

In conclusion, the debate on the level of integration and distinctive norms and mechanisms of regional organizations such as the EU and ASEAN requires a more pluralistic approach that goes beyond a Eurocentric perspective. Scholars including (Murray, 2010; Severino, 2006; and Jetschke and Murray, 2012) have offered non-western perspectives on comparing regional integration between ASEAN and the EU. While the two regions have different characteristics and approach to integration, the ASEAN Charter has brought about noticeable institutional changes in ASEAN. However, the ASEAN Secretariat's inadequate institutional capacity has hindered the adoption of EU-style practices. Therefore, a more diverse approach is required for comparative regional analysis, which considers the external variables in regional integration and provides new perspectives in IR regional theories.

3. Research Question

Could the European Union regional integration characteristics effectively adjust to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations mechanism? If they do not, what are the reasons?

4. Statement

The compatibility between the regional integration characteristics of the EU and the mechanism utilized by the ASEAN presents a complex matter that requires a thorough assessment of the social, economic, and political factors influencing both integration models. Although there are certain resemblances, such as a mutual focus on economic collaboration and progressive removal of trade obstacles, it is argued that substantial disparities exist concerning institutional framework, governance structure, and policy objectives, rendering the application of the EU model inappropriate for evaluating the ASEAN integration model.

5. Empirical Part

This study aims to investigate whether the EU strategies can serve as a positive model for enhancing regional integration in ASEAN. To this end, a comparative longitudinal analysis will be implemented, concentrating on three variables: social, economic, and political policies -specifically regarding the purpose of creation, institutional design and competences, and historical trajectory-. Through an examination of the evolution of these policies, the study will evaluate their influence on the progression of regional integration within each organization.

The research design will be underpinned by a combination of cross-case and longitudinal analyses, offering a robust mechanism for understanding the internal developments within the EU and ASEAN over time and enabling a comparative study of the two entities. Such a dual-dimensional approach provides a nuanced appreciation of both entities (Bennett and Elman, 2007). Cross-case comparisons facilitate insight into the operational similarities and differences between the EU and ASEAN, while longitudinal comparisons illuminate the alterations and evolution within each entity (Ibid). Critically, this dual-faceted approach enables the examination of the intricate interplay and mutual influences between time and the cases under investigation, facilitating a more profound understanding of regional integration dynamics within the EU and ASEAN.

Furthermore, the empirical research plan for gauging the level of regional integration in both the EU and ASEAN will primarily leverage secondary sources such as reports, journals, treaties, articles, declarations, and books. However, primary data will be sourced from expert interviews familiar with both entities to augment this analysis. Thus, qualitative research methods will be deployed.

Post-data presentation, the investigation will interpret findings in line with the research question and objectives. Specifically, the research plan will juxtapose ASEAN and EU regional integration in social, political, and economic domains. Hence, conclusions predicated on findings and interpretations will be drawn, providing a robust response to the research question.

6. Purpose of Creation

6.1. EU:

The formation of the contemporary EU has its roots in the aftermath of WWII, beginning with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The coal and steel industries were crucial for military power at the time (Nugent, 2017), and the creation of the ECSC aimed to make any war between France and Germany "not just unthinkable, but materially impossible", as Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, declared (Schuman, 1950). This was a monumental step taken only five years after the end of a war that inflicted immense suffering across Europe.

The historical context of France and Germany, having been at war three times in the preceding eighty years, underscored the importance of establishing a lasting peace. Therefore, this necessity became the political impetus behind the new European Economic Community (EEC) design. Similarly, the other four founding states -Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands- also perceived the nascent organization as a tool to ensure peace by integrating Germany into robust European institutions. Hence, promoting peace and security within a democratic structure was a foundational motive behind the EU foundation (Usherwood & Pinder, 2007).

However, achieving lasting peace, an important political motive, would not have been sufficient for the success of the Union without the corresponding economic achievements.

In fact, the ECSC also responded to an economic rationale. The borders between France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg created obstacles to sound production due to their positions between steel plants and the mines supplying their coal. Thus, eliminating these barriers and instituting shared governance over the ensuing common market resulted in economic success (Usherwood & Pinder, 2007). On that account, the accomplishment of peace and reconciliation among MS, along with the economic and political achievements of the EEC, paved the way for the EU we know today, highlighting the significant role of these elements in regional integration.

6.2.ASEAN:

ASEAN, founded in 1967, emerged during a period of heightened global tension, with the USA and the former USSR engaged in the Vietnam War as part of the broader Cold War context. ASEAN's creation aimed to foster stability in an unstable political climate, both domestically and abroad, assuming that cooperation among non-communist states could resist the regional spread of communism (Löffelholz and Arao, 2011). Thus, key ASEAN foundational drivers included a pressing need for regional political stability, peace, conflict resolution, security assurance, economic development, and inter-country cooperation, particularly concerning regional issues (Keling et al., 2011).

Consequently, in 1967, foreign ministers from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand signed the ASEAN Declaration, giving birth to this Southeast Asian regional organization (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020). ASEAN was designed to fulfill three main objectives: (1) mitigate intra-ASEAN conflicts, such as the Philippine-Malaysia dispute over Sabah; (2) reduce the regional influence of external actors, as demonstrated by concerns over the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and potential Soviet, Chinese, and American intervention; (3) promote socio-economic development among MS (Narine, 2008). In this respect, ASEAN's objectives mirrored those of the EU, primarily aiming to transform a conflict-ridden area into a peaceful one and promote regional stability.

However, the strategies adopted by ASEAN and the EU towards peace and stability significantly diverged. Both entities aimed to foster economic development, but the EU pursued this goal more comprehensively. Meanwhile, ASEAN prioritized the establishment of a code of conduct for interstate behavior and a decision-making process grounded in consultations and consensus (Lee and Lee, 2020). Fundamental principles

such as non-interference in each other's domestic affairs, non-use of force, peaceful dispute resolution, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity have underpinned ASEAN since its inception (Hussey, 1991). While these principles have arguably impeded ASEAN's full regional integration, favoring regional cooperation instead, they are rooted in a complex historical context, including a history of colonial intervention in Southeast Asia, military interventions by great powers during the Cold War, and the emergence of post-colonial states in Southeast Asia grappling with both interstate disputes and internal conflicts indifferent to territorial boundaries (Ramcharan, 2000).

7. Institutional Design

7.1.EU

The EU has meticulously established an intricate institutional framework specifically designed to prioritize collective interests over individual national concerns. This approach is achieved through the strategic formulation of common policies that offer mutual benefits, thereby creating a ripple effect that fosters further cooperation (Croci, 2005). Given the absence of a supranational state or federal government, the EU has come to rely on a robust system of laws and rules, which its key institutions diligently enforce: the Commission, the Council, the Parliament, and the Court of Justice (Ibid). Despite the absence of a strict separation of powers, these institutions operate under an elaborate system of checks and balances purposefully designed to facilitate consensus-based decision-making (Croci, 2005).

EU Political Institutional Design

Regarding political and institutional design, the EU employs diverse institutions to formulate and implement policies:

1. The European Council, composed of heads of state or government, sets the strategic direction and priorities of the EU.
2. The Council of the EU, composed of national ministers, assumes responsibility for policy coordination and legislation development.
3. The European Parliament (EP), directly elected by EU citizens, represents their interests and actively shapes and passes legislation.

4. The European Commission, acting as the executive branch, proposes legislation and vigilantly oversees the enforcement of EU laws.
5. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy must represent the EU globally and coordinate its foreign and security policies (European Commission, 2022).

EU Economic Institutional Design

Within the context of the EU's economic and institutional structure, a harmonious ensemble of institutions operate collectively to foster economic stability, prosperity, and integration. The process commences with the European Commission, the body entrusted with both the initiation and implementation of economic policies. Following the Commission's endeavors, the Council of the EU steps in, functioning as a coordinating body to streamline these policies (El-Agraa, 2020).

Subsequently, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) further refines this coordination, specifically focusing on the intricacies of economic policy. These sequential procedures ensure a well-coordinated and effective implementation of policies, integral to the EU's economic agenda (Ibid). Simultaneously, the European Central Bank (ECB), detached from political institutions and maintaining its independence, shoulders the responsibility of safeguarding price stability and conducting the monetary policy (El-Agraa, 2020).

Lastly, to ensure adherence to EU economic legislation, the ECJ plays a pivotal role in interpreting and enforcing these laws. This legal oversight ensures the uniformity and legality of economic actions within the EU (Ibid). The interconnected functions of these institutions epitomize the intricate and balanced economic institutional design of the EU.

EU Social Institutional Design

Regarding the social institutional design of the EU, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent limitations of the EU's influence on national social policies. The EU operates based on the principle of subsidiarity, which assigns primary responsibility for social policy decisions to individual MS. Consequently, the EU assumes a

supportive and coordinating role, rather than engaging in direct legislative intervention in social policy matters.

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) serves as a prime example of this approach. Through the OMC, the EU promotes cooperation and facilitates the exchange of best practices among MS. However, it is crucial to recognize that the OMC lacks legally binding mechanisms (Zeitlin, Egidijus Barcevičius and J. Timo Weishaupt, 2014). Its effectiveness depends on voluntary participation and peer pressure, resulting in varying levels of commitment and implementation across MS. Consequently, the OMC's potential to harmonize national social policies is inherently constrained (Ibid).

Despite inherent limitations, the European Commission, the Council of the EU, and the EP significantly shape social policies by engaging in proposal-making, deliberation, and collaborative processes. Their involvement reflects the EU's commitment to addressing shared social challenges and promoting social cohesion (Dodo, 2014). The ECJ also plays a crucial role by interpreting and enforcing EU law, including social legislation, to ensure MS' compliance (Ibid).

Figure 1

| Institution | Function |
|----------------------------------|---|
| European Council | Sets the political direction and priorities of the EU. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoints the High Representative • Negotiating/Agreeing on EU legislation • Setting political agenda • Providing guidance and direction to the EU institutions |
| European Parliament | Directly elected body with legislative power and budgetary authority. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of: President of the European Commission and members of the European Court of Auditors, approves the High Representative. • Responsible of approving the EU Budget • 705 members |
| European Commission | Proposes and implements EU policies and laws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Branch • President & Vice-President (High Representative) • Power to initiate legislation (economic governance, environmental protection, and social policy) • One representative from each MS |
| Council of the EU | Composed of ministers from each MS, negotiates and adopts EU laws and policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and Adopting EU legislation • Coordinating National Policies • COREPER I & II (<i>preparatory body</i>) → Prepares the work and facilitates negotiations between the MS |
| Court of Justice of the EU | Highest court in the EU, interprets EU law and settles disputes between MS and EU institutions |
| European External Action Service | Responsible for Foreign and Security Policy |
| European Central Bank | Responsible for Monetary Policy |
| European Investment Bank | Provides financing for investment projects in the EU and beyond |

Source by the Author, based on the European Union's official website.

In Figure 1, it can be seen the different EU institutions and their primary functions

7.2. ASEAN

Since its conception, ASEAN has been guided by gradual, voluntary, and informal arrangements towards binding and institutionalized agreements, as outlined in the Bangkok Declaration (Caballero, 2022). This ethos has yielded a less formalized institutional structure than entities like the EU. Despite its modest start, ASEAN has evolved to establish several vital institutional bodies, such as the ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC), ASEAN Secretariat, and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), each playing crucial roles in the political, economic, and social dimensions.

ASEAN Political Institutional Design

In the political realm, the ASEAN Summit and Secretariat, ACC, and ARF have been pivotal in shaping, supporting, and promoting political policies. As the highest policy-making body, the Summit sets the strategic direction, while the Secretariat provides the necessary administrative support. Moreover, the ACC and ARF facilitate policy coordination and conflict resolution, contributing to regional stability (Cockerham, 2010).

ASEAN Economic Institutional Design

Economically, mechanisms like the AFTA and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) have become paramount. Nonetheless, other institutions/bodies also interplay, such as the ASEAN Summit setting economic priorities and integration efforts, the Secretariat ensuring policy implementation and progress monitoring, the ACC harmonizing economic policies and managing crises, and the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting formulating and coordinating economic policies, promoting regional integration (Jetschke, 2017).

ASEAN Social Institutional Design

Socially, bodies such as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) have become critical players, advocating for human rights and fostering social development. However, other institutions/bodies, such as the ASEAN Summit ensuring the prioritization of social policies, the Secretariat facilitating coordination research, and the ACC promoting collaboration and effective implementation of social policies, have also become essential in ASEAN's Social Institutional Design (Rattanaseevee, 2014).

Figure 2

| Body/Institution | Function |
|--|---|
| ASEAN Summit | The highest decision-making body , composed of the heads of state/government. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets annually to discuss regional issues and set priorities for the organization • Address regional issues • Setting priorities and policies • Strengthening ties with external partners |
| ASEAN Coordinating Council | Oversees the implementation of the ASEAN Community Blueprint |
| ASEAN Secretariat | The administrative arm of ASEAN, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates communication and coordination among MS • Provides support to other ASEAN bodies |
| ASEAN Ministerial Meetings | Meetings of foreign ministers from ASEAN MS, held regularly to discuss regional issues and coordinate policy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting • ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting • ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting, among others |
| ASEAN Regional Forum | A platform for dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAN MS and other major powers |
| ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights | Independent body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in ASEAN MS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights Charter |
| Committee of Permanent Representatives | Main channel for communication between the ASEAN Secretariat and the MS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the agenda for the meetings • Monitors the implementation of the agreements • Provides Advice and guidance to other ASEAN bodies |

Source by the Author, based on the Association of Southeast Asia Nations' official website

In Figure 2, it can be seen the different ASEAN institutions/bodies and their primary functions.

8. Competences EU and ASEAN

EU:

Outlined in the Lisbon Treaty, which comprises the Treaty on the EU (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), are the EU's competences. These are classified in Articles 3, 4, and 6 of the TFEU as exclusive, shared, or supporting. That being said, the Union alone holds legislative authority with exclusive competences, while shared competences permit both the EU and MS to legislate. Meanwhile, supporting competences involve the Union aiding, coordinating, or supplementing MS actions without imposing uniform rules (European Union, 2022).

Figure 3

| Variables | Exclusive | Shared | Supporting |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Political Dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Trade Policy • Common Commercial Trade Policy • Concluding International Agreements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial Cohesion • Energy • Area of freedom, security, and justice • Consumer Protection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Cooperation • Foreign and Defense Policy |
| Economic Dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custom Unions • Monetary Policy • External Trade Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Market • Economic Cohesion | |
| Social Dimension | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Cohesion • Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid • Common Safety Concerns in Public Health Matters • Social Policy (limited to aspects defined in the TFEU) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection and Improvement of Human Health • Education, Vocational Training, Youth and Sport • Civil Protection • Culture |

Source by the Author, based on: European Union official website.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the competences distribution spans political, economic and social dimensions. Where exclusive competences are prominent, signifies a high integration level, with sovereignty vested mainly in the Union rather than within the MS.

EU Competences in the Political Field

Focusing on the political domain, the EU exhibits substantial integration in external trade policy, standard policy, and the ability to conclude international agreements. Nonetheless, shared competences in areas like territorial cohesion, energy, and consumer protection, coupled with supporting competences in administrative

cooperation, foreign and defense policy (special competence)¹ imply that the process towards total political integration is still evolving (European Union, 2022).

EU Competences in the Economic Field

In the economic dimension, the EU has exclusive competences in critical areas such as monetary policy, establishing a customs union, and negotiating international trade agreements. However, it counts with shared competences in areas like the internal market and economic cohesion, suggesting that the journey towards full integration is still underway (European Union, 2022).

EU Competences in the Social Field

Regarding the social dimension, the EU exhibits minor integration. The Union only holds shared and supporting cultural, educational, social cohesion, and public health competences. Despite the strides made in fostering social integration, the goal of achieving full integration in the social dimension remains on the horizon (European Union, 2022).

ASEAN

ASEAN exercises limited exclusive competences across political, economic, and social dimensions. In politics, it works towards regional peace via the ASC. Economically, it fosters integration through mechanisms like the AFTA and AEC. Socially, it promotes cooperation via the ASCC. The former director of ADB, as mentioned in the interview, suggests that the current mechanisms in place within ASEAN are suitable for its current business model and agenda. However, these mechanisms may prove inadequate if ASEAN were to pursue more ambitious goals and targets in political, financial, and security matters (Interview with Miranda, 2023). Consequently, there are existing implementation challenges that need to be addressed in order to advance integration within ASEAN, as highlighted by the ASEAN Secretariat (2012a).

¹Foreign and defense policy in the EU is classified as a special competence, wherein the European Council and the Council of the EU play implementing roles. The MS retain substantial decision-making authority, while the European Commission and the EP have restricted involvement and are excluded from legislative activities within this domain. As a result, foreign and defense policy can be seen as a supporting competence, with ultimate decision-making power resting with the MS.

Figure 4

| Dimension | Competences/Aims | Examples | Integration Degree |
|------------------|---|---|---------------------------|
| <i>Political</i> | Promoting regional peace and security | ASEAN Security Community | Low |
| <i>Economic</i> | Fostering economic integration | ASEAN Free Trade Area, ASEAN Economic Community | Medium |
| <i>Social</i> | Promoting social and cultural cooperation | ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community | Low |

Source by the Author, based on the Association of Southeast Asia Nations official website.

Figure 4 presents an overview of ASEAN competences across three dimensions: political, economic, and social, along with examples and the degree of integration in each area.

ASEAN Competences in the Political Field

In the political dimension, ASEAN's competences focus on promoting regional peace and security, as exemplified by establishing the ASC. Despite these efforts, the degree of integration in this dimension remains low, mainly due to the adherence to non-interference policies and respect for state sovereignty (Cockerham, 2010).

ASEAN Competences in the Economic Field

ASEAN has been trying to foster economic integration among its MS. Examples of such efforts include the AFTA and the AEC. However, the degree of integration in the economic dimension is medium, reflecting the organization's achievements in lowering tariffs, removing non-tariff obstacles, harmonizing standards and regulations, and easing investment laws. Nevertheless, challenges remain in reducing wealth gaps, upgrading infrastructure, and addressing non-tariff trade barriers (Jetschke, 2017).

ASEAN Competences in the Social Field

Lastly, in the social dimension, ASEAN's competences lie in promoting social and cultural cooperation, as demonstrated by the creation of the ASCC. However, similar to the political dimension, the degree of integration in the social sphere is low. This is due to the continued emphasis on state sovereignty and

non-interference, even though some measures have been taken, such as establishing AICHR or the Human Rights Charter (Chavez, 2007).

9. Time Evolution

9.1. EU

EU Political Integration

Tracing the EU's political integration begins with the establishment of the ECSC in 1951 and forming key institutions via the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Growth was accelerated with the Merger Treaty of 1965, culminating in significant economic and institutional expansion until 1972 (Nugent, 2017). As the Union's scope widened, the Single European Act (SEA) and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 were introduced to address emerging complexities. However, some issues persisted, prompting the Amsterdam Treaty to resolve these gaps, while the Treaty of Nice prepared for substantial enlargement. Even though the proposed European Constitution did not materialize, it shaped the path for the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, introducing institutional reforms and new policy sectors (Ali El-Agraa, 2011). For additional information consult Annex 1.

EU Economic Integration

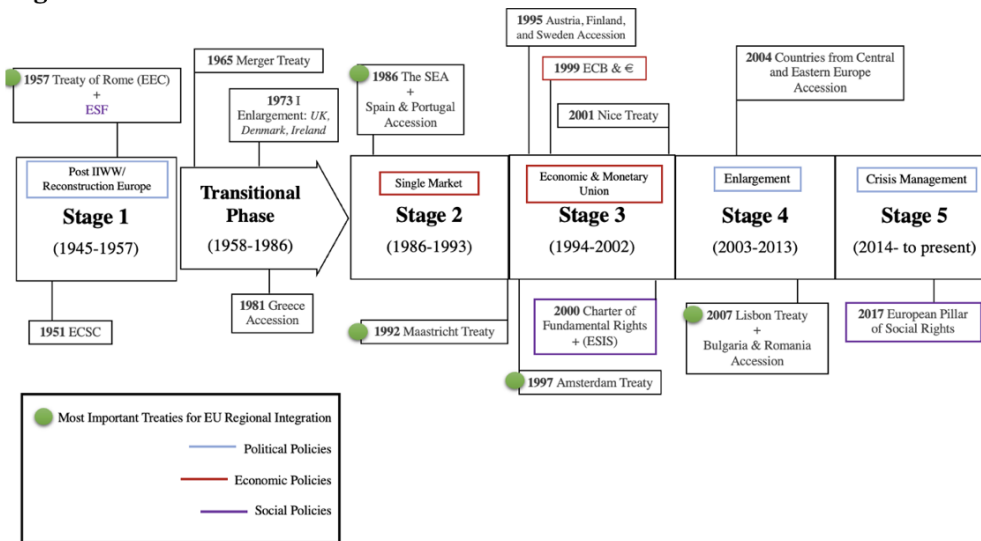
Starting with the establishment of the ECSC in 1951, the EU embarked on its journey toward economic integration, creating a common market for coal and steel (El-Agraa, 2011). This effort was subsequently boosted by the advent of the EEC in 1957, which aimed squarely at eliminating trade barriers, thereby facilitating the free movement of goods, services, and people. Complementing this endeavor, the SEA, enacted in 1986, ambitiously set its sights on completing the SM (Ibid). Progressively, the economic integration moved into another phase with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, notably introducing the Euro as a unified currency (Nugent, 2017). Further enhancing this trajectory, a series of subsequent milestones were achieved with the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, followed by the Nice Treaty in 2001, and culminating with the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 (El-Agraa, 2011). Each of these legislative milestones played a crucial role in steadily advancing the economic integration of the Union (Nugent, 2017). For further treaty details, refer to Annex1.

EU Social Policies

The evolution of European Social Policy is pivotal to European integration. Rooted in Art.2 of the TEU, early social policies emerged with the Treaty of Rome's establishment of the European Social Fund (ESF) (Dodo, 2014). This early period (1958-1986) saw legislation on social security and unrestricted mobility, yet tensions arose over the balance between market-oriented policies and a "Social Europe" (European Commission, 2007). Consequently, MS retained control over social policies, leading to disparities in health and safety standards and hindering the alignment of economic growth and life quality (Dodo, 2014). In response to this disparity, the Social Action Plan (SAPs) was introduced in 1974, significantly improving worker conditions. As the EU moved forward, additional noteworthy milestones followed suit. These encompassed the establishment of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the ratification of the Social Charter under the auspices of the Maastricht Treaty, the implementation of the Protocol of Social Policy during the Amsterdam Treaty period, and the Lisbon Treaty's pivotal role in giving full legal recognition to the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Hatton, 2011).

Building upon these advancements, the EU took another step towards enhanced social justice, equal opportunities, and a robust social market economy by introducing the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights (European Union, 2021). However, it is important to note that healthcare and education still fall under national jurisdiction. As mentioned by the interviewed communications executive from Politico, achieving a change in treaties to address this issue seems unlikely due to the unanimity and veto vote required in the European Council (Interview with Espin, 2023). For further information refer to Annex 1.

Figure 5



Source by the Author, based on: European Union official website.

Figure 5 illustrates the time evolution of EU regional integration, highlighting key treaties in green circles, which have significantly contributed to the integration process. Furthermore, the progression towards regional integration has been demarcated into five distinct stages and one transitional phase, each bearing varying degrees of political or economic implications on the organization's integrative process. In addition, political, economic, and social policies, illustrated in blue, red, and purple, played critical roles in the integration process. Ultimately, it is crucial to highlight that the EU has an average of a 9.5-year interval between treaty conclusions, underscoring the EU's ongoing commitment to reassess and refine its policies to enhance regional integration.

9.2. ASEAN

ASEAN Political Integration

ASEAN was initiated by signing the Bangkok Declaration in 1967, signifying the inception of a collaborative alliance focused on cultivating regional peace and prosperity. Subsequently, in 1971, the establishment of the Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) articulated the region's dedication to non-violence and autonomy, which was later underscored by the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) treaty in 1995 (Caballero, 2022).

Moreover, 1976 was a landmark year for ASEAN, marked by the creation of the ASEAN Secretariat, the endorsement of the Bali Declaration to fortify unity, and the implementation of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), underlining mutual respect for sovereignty and non-interference (Ibid). In addition, ASEAN

expanded its membership, with Brunei Darussalam joining in 1984, followed by Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam in the 1990s. Furthermore, the initiation of the ARF in 1994 facilitated regional dialogue and collaboration. Subsequently, the Bali Concord II in 2003 defined ASEAN's three pillars - ASC, the AEC, and the ASCC, and laid the groundwork for deeper integration (Ibid).

Furthermore, 2008 heralded the introduction of the ASEAN Charter, providing ASEAN with legal intergovernmental status. Lastly, the strategic 2020 Vision, ratified in 2007, and the subsequent 2025 Vision in 2015, aspired to establish a cohesive and integrated market, reinforcing the drive towards deeper regional integration (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020). For additional information consult Annex 2.

ASEAN Economic Integration

ASEAN's economic integration began with the 1969 establishment of the ASEAN Fund² to provide funding for collaborative projects (Ibid). Moreover, the next step came with the AFTA and the CEPT (1993), aiming to establish a regional market free of trade barriers. Subsequently, with the enlargement in 1995, the ASEAN Services Framework Agreement liberalized the service sector trade (Severino, 2007). Further, by 2015, the AEC aimed for full economic integration, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was signed in 2020 (Ibid). The ASEAN community has achieved significant economic success, as highlighted by the former managing director of ADB in the interview. With a combined GDP of nearly \$3 trillion and a population exceeding 600 million, the MS collectively hold the position of the world's 7th largest economy and have experienced rapid growth. However, it is important to acknowledge that ASEAN's governing framework relies

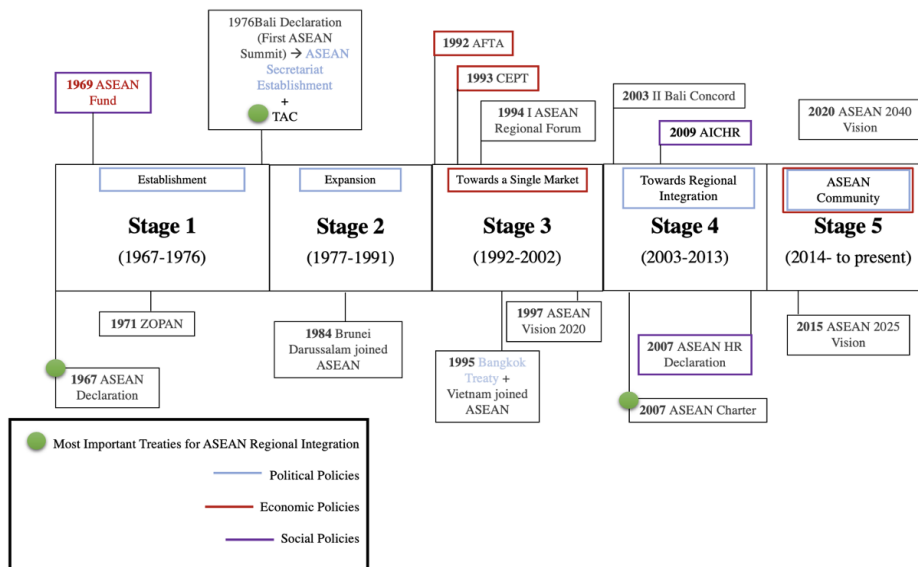
² The primary objective of the ASEAN Fund was to stimulate economic growth and development in the region by financing projects promoting economic integration and cooperation. However, this economic focus indirectly contributed to the social dimension. By promoting economic growth and development, the ASEAN Fund could indirectly facilitate improvements in social conditions. These improvements include poverty reduction, the creation of employment opportunities, and an overall enhancement of living standards (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012b).

on broad agreements rather than specific treaties (Interview with Miranda, 2023). This adherence to sovereignty and non-interference has led to the persistence of non-tariff measures and limitations on labor and capital movement, making full economic integration an ongoing process (Severino, 2007). For further details, refer to Annex 2.

ASEAN Social Integration

In the social dimension, ASEAN's progress started with the establishment of the ASCC in 2003. Notable accomplishments include the adoption of significant declarations, such as the 2007 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children, the implementation of the ASEAN Charter in 2007, and the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in 2009 (Caballero, 2008). However, despite these initiatives aimed at addressing social issues, the lack of binding provisions and the emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference hinder the advancement of social integration within ASEAN (Ibid). Additional information can be found in Annex 2.

Figure 6



Source by the Author, based on: Association of Southeast Asia Nations official website.

Figure 6 delineates the chronological development of ASEAN regional integration, emphasizing pivotal treaties in green circles that have substantially facilitated the process. Additionally, the advancement towards regional integration is divided into five distinct phases, each carrying varying political or economic consequences for the organization's integrative trajectory. Finally, political, economic, and social policies, represented in blue, red, and purple, respectively.

10. Findings

A comparative longitudinal study of the EU and ASEAN, accompanied by rigorous data analysis, has yielded noteworthy general and principal contributions to the field. The contributions can be classified into two categories: general contributions, supported by confirmatory findings, and principal contributions, presented as innovative findings. These contributions examine how the EU regional integration characteristics can effectively align with the ASEAN mechanisms and the underlying reasons for any inadequacies in such adjustments.

Confirmatory Findings

Starting with the confirmatory findings, comparable conclusions can be drawn to previous literature by analyzing the differences and similarities between both organizations in relation to the three chosen variables (political, economic, and social policies). First, regarding the institutional design of both organizations, ASEAN's structure turns out to be more flexible, resembling a more network style rather than the EU's formal institutionalization and bureaucratization, which is something that some authors (Caballero 1998; Börzel and Risse, 2016) depict in previous studies. However, the adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2007 adjusted some of the organization's previous institutional design, impacting the three variables and the oncoming incorporation of similar EU mechanisms. Several modifications were introduced, including adopting a Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) tasked with overseeing the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Ministerial Councils, establishing the three ASEAN Communities (Economic, Security, and Socio-Cultural), and the ratification of a Human Rights Charter. These novel mechanisms invite comparisons with the EU COREPER, the Union's three pillars, and its Fundamental Rights Charter; such resemblances is a notion previously proposed by Jetschke and Murray (2012) in their earlier studies, which has now been reaffirmed. Nevertheless, ASEAN's innovative mechanisms remain intergovernmental and lack legal force, which stands in contrast to the EU, where only decisions taken within the JHA and CFSP pillars have an intergovernmental character, while those adopted by the COREPER, the Fundamental Rights Charter, and the EC pillar are legally binding. Thus, the regional integration characteristics of the EU are not adequately aligned with the ones of ASEAN in institutional design, political objectives, and social policies due to differences in the structural power that each possesses, despite their use of similar mechanisms.

Second, the pursuit of establishing a unified economic market is another comparable phenomenon between the EU and ASEAN. ASEAN's efforts to achieve a SM can be demonstrated by the inception of the AFTA and the implementation of the CEPT scheme in 1992, which aimed to eliminate non-tariff barriers. However, in practical terms, these initiatives remained largely theoretical. Nonetheless, forming the AEC facilitates significant strides towards a harmonized market with a production base (Severino, 2006). Nevertheless, ASEAN's economic prospect is characterized by bounded political involvement due to its non-interference and sovereignty preferences of its MS.

In contrast, the EU is highly integrated economically, with full competences in the monetary and customs union, and external trade policies. Although the internal market of the EU remains a shared competence between the EU and its MS, the Union has achieved the formation of a SM that enables the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people. Therefore, despite ASEAN's willingness to create a SM, its rejection of supranational institutions and more formal mechanisms means that EU characteristics do not align with ASEAN's. This has been noted by scholars including (Caballero, 1998; Jetschke and Murray, 2012), who highlight the obstacles posed by the ASEAN Way that prioritizes non-interference and the sovereignty preferences of MS, thus impeding the achievement of more integrated economic policies. Nevertheless, Severino (2006) stands for the possibility of ASEAN's further future economic integration through the AEC.

Innovative Findings

Pertaining to innovative findings, the principal conclusions drawn center around two key elements: the purpose of creation and time evolution.

Commencing with the purpose of creation, it is evident that the two organizations contrast in their foundational objectives. The EU began in 1951 by establishing the ECSC, intending to quell the antagonism and constant threat of conflict between France and Germany. The ECSC sought to create a unified market for coal and steel, which was projected to render the possibility of war infeasible. Therefore, the EU prioritized strengthening economic integration to advance regional development, particularly in the aftermath of the two world wars. Ultimately, this led to the progression towards supranational institutions, resulting in the attainment of a peaceful environment and substantial economic, political, and social integration across the region.

In contrast, as outlined in the 1967 Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN's primary objective was to foster peace, progress, and prosperity in Southeast Asia. This aspiration stemmed from the region's history of colonization and internal strife, which prompted ASEAN to advocate non-violent principles and discourage external interference. Differing from the EU's approach, ASEAN implemented non-binding policies, institutions, and strategies that reinforced the sovereignty of its MS, driving the organization towards less regional integration.

Consequently, although the EU and ASEAN shared common aspirations of attaining peace, development, and prosperity, they adopted different means of achieving these objectives. On the one hand, the EU prioritized economic integration as the primary mechanism of regional integration, which resulted in a more extensive and formalized integration process. On the other hand, ASEAN emphasized non-violent principles and voluntary policy adoption, resulting in a regional structure with fewer formal characteristics and greater informality. Therefore, given these contrasting approaches, the EU's regional integration characteristics do not adequately align with ASEAN's mechanisms when examining the origins and pathways taken towards regional integration.

Lastly, the remaining innovative finding pertains to the temporal gap between implementing policies or strategies and decision-making aimed at fostering integration and the extent to which such gaps have contributed to divergences between the EU and the ASEAN.

In the case of the EU, since its inception, the organization has taken progressive steps towards establishing supranational institutions such as the EP, the EU Council, and the Commission. Moreover, considering the temporal dimension of the treaty-making process, it is notable that the EU has an average gap of 9.5 years between the conclusion of successive treaties. This suggests that the EU is engaged in a continual policy assessment and refinement process to further regional integration objectives. In addition, the EU is grounded in legal and constitutional frameworks. It also encompasses numerous policy areas in which decisions are made either by QMV or through co-decision-making between the EP and the Council of Ministers. These mechanisms, although implemented gradually, have been subject to continuous evaluation, refinement, and improvement since the EU's

inception. The previous observation suggests that the ongoing evaluation and endorsement of treaties, with an average renewal period of 9.5 years between their antecedents and successors, constitutes a highly impactful factor in promoting regional integration in the EU.

On the other hand, ASEAN's path towards regional integration has been comparatively slower than the EU's. It took four decades for ASEAN to commence its integration process with the ratification of the ASEAN Charter in 2008, which constituted the first legal foundation for the organization and involved some institutional design modifications. This progress was furthered with the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. However, despite some strides made by ASEAN in this direction, more significant advancements are necessary to attain a level of integration that rivals that of the EU. Currently, ASEAN remains in the early stages of integration, and further progress is required. As a result, this factor further elucidates the disparity in regional integration characteristics between the EU and ASEAN. ASEAN has demonstrated a slower pace in formulating regional integration policies due to its emphasis on territorial integrity, respect for sovereignty, and promotion of cooperation. Consequently, the EU's regional integration mechanisms do not align effectively with ASEAN's considering time evolution, as the latter requires more time to establish comprehensive regional integration policies.

Figure 7

| Confirmatory/innovative Findings | EU | ASEAN |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Institutional Design | Formal institutionalization and bureaucratization COREPER; Fundamental Rights Charter; EU three pillars Mechanisms: legally binding except JHA and CFSP pillars (intergovernmental) | Flexible, informal, network style ASEAN Charter 2008 (CPR; ASEAN Communities; Human Rights Charter) Mechanisms: (intergovernmental) Lack legal force |
| Single Market | Single Market; Custom Unions; Single Currency: highly economically integrated <i>Free movement of people, goods, capital and services among MS</i> | AFTA; CEPT (1992) : eliminate non-tariff barriers Problem: remain in practical terms AEC: first steps towards harmonized market and production base <i>non-interference and sovereignty preferences</i> |
| Purpose of Creation | SM for coal and steel: to make war materially impossible Led to: supranational institutions <i>peace through political, economic and social integration</i> | Peace, progress, and prosperity in Southeast Asia Non-violent principles and discourage external interference <i>non-binding policies retaining MS sovereignty</i> |
| Time Evolution | 9.5 years between the conclusion of successive treaties Continual policy assessment and refinement process | 40 years for the ASEAN Charter (ASEAN legal personality) TAC (1976); Bangkok Treaty (Weapon Free-Zone Treaty) (1995) Slower pace in formulating regional integration policies |

Figure 7 presents a classification of the obtained findings, distinguishing between confirmatory and innovative findings. The confirmatory findings, represented by dark blue, focus on the institutional design and the Single Market (SM). These findings are summarized within the corresponding blocks, highlighting the main ideas derived from the analysis. On the other hand, the innovative findings, depicted in light blue, center on the purpose of creation and the time evolution of the organizations. The main ideas derived from these findings are also summarized within the respective blocks.

11. Conclusions

Based on the comparative longitudinal analysis between the EU and ASEAN, it can be concluded that the regional integration mechanisms of the EU do not effectively align with the characteristics of ASEAN. This misalignment is reflected in the confirmatory and innovative findings obtained in this research.

On the one hand, the confirmatory results reaffirm that the EU, from its inception, has opted for formal mechanisms and supranational institutions to achieve regional integration. In contrast, ASEAN has prioritized informal mechanisms focused on cooperation rather than integration. Thus, although ASEAN has reformed its institutional design with mechanisms similar to those of the EU, such as the CPR and the ASEAN Community, they still differ in terms of the binding force and sovereignty retained by their MS, demonstrating that EU mechanisms cannot effectively adequate to those of ASEAN in terms of institutional design and consequently political, economic and social policies.

On the other hand, the innovative findings also imply that the mechanisms of the EU do not align with those of ASEAN concerning their foundational objectives and the time gap between policy implementation and decision-making. The EU's primary goal has been to prioritize economic integration for regional development and achieving peace, while ASEAN has emphasized the promotion of peace, progress, and prosperity in Southeast Asia through the voluntary adoption of non-violent policies and principles. Consequently, the two organizations have taken different directions in their regional integration policies, and the mechanisms applied are not congruent. Furthermore, the time lag between policy implementation and decision-making highlights that the EU mechanisms are unsuitable for ASEAN's policy-making towards regional integration, as ASEAN requires more time to formulate regional integration policies.

Based on the findings presented, it is recommended that ASEAN undertake specific measures to achieve greater regional integration and effectively adhere to EU mechanisms.

- Firstly, to enhance the effectiveness of policies and agreements within ASEAN, it is recommended that the organization consider adjusting its mechanisms to provide greater legal enforceability. This aligns with SDG 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and build effective,

accountable, inclusive institutions at all levels. Therefore by adopting such recommendations, ASEAN can promote greater accountability and transparency, thereby improving its international credibility and reputation.

- Secondly, ASEAN should limit state sovereignty in certain areas, starting with economic policies. This will enable ASEAN to create a SM and give the organization a more meaningful power structure. Furthermore, it will also align with SDG 10, which seeks to reduce inequalities within and among countries. Therefore, adopting this recommendation can enable ASEAN to create a SM, providing more significant economic opportunities and benefits for all MS, promoting regional equality and reducing economic disparities.
- Thirdly, as suggested by Suzuki (2019), to achieve greater regional integration and effectively adhere to EU mechanisms, ASEAN may need to suspend its principle of non-interference temporarily. Currently, ASEAN MS share a common understanding that domestic issues should be resolved internally, which can make the organization less inclined to address domestic problems and adopt collective binding policies (Suzuki, 2019).

In light of the above, this study has effectively addressed the research question and objectives. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations concerning its scope and depth. A comparative analysis of regional integration between ASEAN and the EU can encompass a diverse range of aspects beyond the purview of this study. Hence, future research could potentially investigate external factors such as globalization, technological advancements, and geopolitical shifts that may impact the configuration of regional integration policies of both organizations. Additionally, future research could also explore the contributions of individual MS to the regional integration policies and mechanisms of ASEAN and the EU through case studies. Lastly, studying public opinion within both organizations could also be pertinent for future research since it can contribute to determining the gap between public perception and policy implementation concerning regional integration policies and mechanisms.

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13. ANNEX 1: EU Treaties Clarification

1. The Treaty of Rome (1957)

The Treaty of Rome, officially the Treaty establishing the EEC, marked a seminal milestone in European integration, aspiring to eliminate all trade impediments amongst MS. This encompassed tariffs, import quotas, export subsidies, and other similar measures, reflecting a commitment to constructing a seamless internal market (Nugent, 2017).

In essence, the Treaty's core objective was to engender a free trade zone, providing a platform for the evolution of shared competition and industrial policies. Such policies aimed to ensure the equitable operation of markets, prevent anti-competitive practices and promote industrial development across MS (Ibid).

Moreover, the Treaty sought to secure conditions necessary for factor mobility. It addressed multiple dimensions of the European economy, including fiscal measures like taxes and subsidies and the flow of capital, labor, and enterprises across national borders. This was pivotal in promoting economic integration by ensuring the seamless movement of goods, services, and factors of production, thereby fostering economic cohesion among the MS (Ibid).

Furthermore, the Treaty facilitated the creation of the European Investment Bank, a crucial instrument intended to catalyze economic expansion within the EEC. The bank's role was to provide access to supplementary resources and finance investment projects, fostering economic growth and integration across the region (Ibid).

Lastly, the Treaty laid the groundwork for an international standard commercial policy. This policy aimed to consolidate the EEC's external trading relations, coordinating the community's approach towards third countries and international organizations, contributing to the broader objective of regional economic integration (Nugent, 2017).

In summary, the Treaty of Rome marked a pivotal leap forward in the history of European integration, laying down the foundational principles and structures necessary to create a cohesive economic community. It successfully addressed various dimensions of economic integration, ranging from removing trade barriers to promoting factor mobility, establishing the cornerstones of what would later evolve into the EU's SM.

2. The Merger Treaty (1965)

The Merger Treaty, officially known as the Treaty Establishing a Single Council and a Single Commission of the European Communities, was instrumental in simplifying and consolidating the institutional architecture of the European Communities. In 1967, this Treaty was designed to eliminate duplication and promote coherence across the ECSC, the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and the EEC (Ali El-Agraa, 2001).

An essential tenet of the Merger Treaty was its creation of a single institutional structure, which enabled the shared management of the three Communities. The implementation of this structure involved the dissolution of the separate High Authority of the ECSC and the Commissions of Euratom and the EEC. The powers and competencies of these bodies were transferred to a new, unified Commission that would serve all three Communities, marking a significant step toward more comprehensive integration (Ibid).

This institutional reconfiguration culminated in renaming the EEC as the EC, reflecting the evolving nature of the Union from primarily economic objectives towards a broader community encompassing political, social, and cultural dimensions. The Merger Treaty thus represented a shift in the trajectory of European integration, setting the stage for a more cohesive and comprehensive European entity. Moreover, the consolidation also provided a platform for more efficient decision-making, as the Treaty established a single Council, replacing the individual councils of the ECSC, Euratom, and EEC. This reorganization enabled the Council to coordinate policies and resolve disagreements more effectively across the three Communities, improving the efficacy and coherence of European integration (Ali El-Agraa, 2011).

In conclusion, the Merger Treaty played a fundamental role in advancing European integration. By streamlining the institutional structure of the European Communities and promoting unified decision-making, the Treaty represented a significant leap forward in the journey towards a more holistic and integrated EU.

3. The Treaty of Maastricht - TEU (1992)

The Treaty of Maastricht, enacted in 1992, propelled significant enhancements across numerous sectors of the EC, culminating in the formation of the EU. This constituted a

pivotal event in the annals of European integration, characterized by significant expansions in EU competencies and institutional changes (Nugent, 2017).

Regarding political integration, the Treaty was foundational in constructing the EU as a new and evolved organization. It broadened the competencies of the EU, transitioning from primarily economic cooperation to more broad policy areas, including foreign and security policy, justice, and home affairs. This broadening of competencies illustrated a significant deepening of European integration (Nugent, 2017).

From an institutional perspective, the Treaty introduced fundamental changes that fundamentally altered the legislative dynamics within the EU. Notably, it introduced the 'co-decision' legislative procedure, strengthening the role of the EP by enabling it to veto legislative proposals in case of disagreements with the Council. Moreover, it augmented the ECJ judicial power by giving it the authority to impose penalties (Nugent, 2017).

At a policy level, the Treaty marked the inception of a comprehensive plan to develop a monetary union. It delineated the essential characteristics of the EMU, with crucial provisions such as the irrevocable fixing of exchange rates and the eventual introduction of a single currency. It also led to the creation of the ECB operating within the European System of Central Banks (ESCB). The implementation of the EMU was strategically divided into three stages, with the final stage beginning on January 1, 1999, subject to MS' adherence to prescribed convergence criteria (Nugent, 2017).

Beyond these notable advancements, the Treaty of Maastricht also highlighted the importance of social policy. It included provisions for a social chapter that sought to establish EU-wide standards across various social domains such as health and safety, gender equality, collective bargaining, social welfare, and addressing social exclusion. This represented a significant leap towards standardizing social policies across the EU. The Treaty further endorsed workers' participation in company decision-making processes, a significant step towards democratizing workplaces (Hatton, 2011). However, these progressive reforms met resistance from the United Kingdom, which viewed these proposed changes as exceeding its existing legislation.

In conclusion, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 is a monumental milestone in European integration history. By establishing the EU as a novel organization and introducing transformative political, institutional, and policy reforms, the Treaty continues to shape the contours of European integration.

4. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997)

The Treaty of Amsterdam, signed in 1997 and ratified three years later, represented a pivotal advancement in the EU's history, offering strategic amendments that catered to the EU's expansion and introduced essential institutional reforms (Nugent, 2017).

The Treaty was a foundational element in facilitating the EU's enlargement process and creating the necessary institutional and policy frameworks to integrate new MS into the Union. The move represented a crucial step in expanding the EU's geographic and political reach, paving the way for an era of unprecedented expansion in its membership (Ibid).

In terms of institutional changes, the Amsterdam Treaty introduced significant modifications aimed at increasing the democratic legitimacy of the Union. It broadened the scope of the co-decision-making procedure, encompassing over 23 new areas, and significantly strengthened the role of the EP. For instance, the Parliament was vested with the power to approve the nomination of the Commission President, thus increasing its influence over the appointment process (Nugent, 2017).

Furthermore, the Treaty advanced the cooperation among MS in justice and home affairs, culminating in creating an area of freedom, security, and justice. This crucial development facilitated unrestricted movement within the Union's internal borders while maintaining shared external border control, marking a significant step towards a more integrated Europe (Ibid).

In the external policy context, the Amsterdam Treaty introduced innovative mechanisms to streamline decision-making and representation in foreign and security policy. It introduced the QMV norm for joint actions and common positions, facilitating more efficient decision-making. It also adopted the "constructive abstention" mechanism, allowing MS to abstain from a decision without obstructing its implementation. A significant institutional

development was the creation of the High Representative for CFSP, which ensured a stronger and more unified representation of the EU on the global stage (Nugent, 2017).

Moreover, the Amsterdam Treaty broadened the EU's policy domain, incorporating new responsibilities such as humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management. Expanding the EU's mandate underscored its evolving role in international peace and security (Ibid).

To summarize, the Treaty of Amsterdam was a landmark development in the trajectory of European integration, fostering EU enlargement, deepening institutional reforms, enhancing cooperation among MS, and expanding the Union's policy remit. Its lasting impacts continue to shape the character and functioning of the EU today.

5. The Treaty of Nice (2001)

The Treaty of Nice, signed in 2001, represented a crucial juncture in the development of the EU, characterized by two main dimensions: accommodating a significant enlargement of the Union and liberalizing trade in response to the accession of 10 new MS (Nugent, 2017).

One salient aspect of the Treaty of Nice was its institutional reform, designed to adapt to the upcoming large-scale enlargement of the EU. This expansion, bringing ten new MS into the fold, necessitated recalibration of the Union's existing institutional structures to maintain its effectiveness and efficiency. The resulting institutional modifications involved multiple critical areas, including augmenting the authority of both the European Parliament and the ECJ. Another critical institutional development was establishing a permanent President of the European Council, which aimed at providing continuity and enhancing the efficiency of the European Council's operations (Ibid).

Secondly, the Treaty facilitated trade liberalization within the EU, a necessary response to integrating the new MS and expanding the EU's internal market. This move was designed to ensure the seamless incorporation of these countries into the EU's economic system and enhance the overall economic integration within the Union (Nugent, 2017).

In addition, adjustments to the QMV system also represented an essential feature of the Treaty. Hence, the redistribution of voting weights among MS adjusted the balance of power within the Council of the EU. While this redistribution favoured significant MS more, it nonetheless ensured that smaller states remained significantly overrepresented, preserving the principle of 'degressive proportionality' and maintaining a fair balance of power within the Union (Ibid).

Furthermore, the Nice Treaty addressed the "Flexibility Clause," which enabled the EU to extend its policy remit in areas such as justice and home affairs. This move signalled an acknowledgement of the EU's evolving role and the need for more flexible policy mechanisms to adapt to changing circumstances (Nugent, 2017).

Finally, to reinforce the EU's foreign policy capabilities, the Treaty created the position of a High Representative for the CFSP. This addition helped to consolidate the Union's external representation and facilitated a more coordinated and effective foreign policy approach (Ibid).

In summary, the Treaty of Nice facilitated the EU's most considerable enlargement and instituted necessary institutional and policy adaptations. These developments underscore the dynamism of the European integration process and the EU's ability to evolve and adapt to new circumstances.

6. The Treaty of Lisbon

The Lisbon Treaty, signed in 2007, came into effect in 2009, becoming a landmark in the EU's historical progression, encapsulating significant reforms to the Union's institutional configuration and policy scope (Nugent, 2017). Notably, the Treaty led to the amendment and renaming of the previous EU treaties: the TEU and the TEC, which was subsequently renamed TFEU.

Starting with the institutional reforms, the Lisbon Treaty amended the TEU to establish the positions of a permanent President of the European Council and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Ibid). The creation of these roles intended to enhance continuity and coherence in EU governance and external representation, marking a significant step in the EU's institutional development. In addition, it also amended the

TFEU to extend the legislative capabilities of the EP, providing it with access to the EU budget and broadening its policy reach through the renamed 'ordinary legislative procedure'. This democratization of the Union's legislative process epitomizes the Union's commitment to enhancing democratic legitimacy within its institutions (Nugent, 2017).

Regarding representation, the Lisbon Treaty made strategic adjustments to enhance the democratic balance within the EU's key institutions. It increased representation from smaller MS in the EP and introduced a rotational system for the Commission's membership, reinforcing equitable participation from all MS. The Treaty also introduced a new "double majority" voting procedure in the Council of the EU, requiring support from at least 15 MS representing 65% of the EU's population for decisions to be approved (Ibid). This system increased the decision-making efficiency and representativeness of the Council. Furthermore, it as well amended the TEU to enhance the democratic accountability of the EU by empowering national parliaments to scrutinize EU legislation, ensuring compliance with the principle of subsidiarity (Nugent, 2017).

Moving to policy innovations, the Lisbon Treaty expanded the scope of QMV in the Council, removing national vetoes in some policy areas while maintaining them in more sensitive ones such as tax, defence, foreign policy, and EU budget expenditure. The Treaty also incorporated the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights into EU law, reaffirming the Union's commitment to human rights protection (Dodo, 2014).

Lastly, the Lisbon Treaty, through amendments to the TEU and TFEU, represents the EU's capacity for continuous evolution and adaptation. By introducing critical institutional reforms, extending the Union's policy reach, and recommitting to social justice and economic prosperity, the Lisbon Treaty stands as a testament to the aspirations and potential of the EU.

14. ANNEX 2: ASEAN Treaties/Bodies Clarification

1. The ASEAN/Bangkok Declaration (1967)

The Bangkok Declaration, officially known as the ASEAN Declaration, was a seminal document that set forth the principles and foundations for ASEAN, which has since evolved into an important regional institution. Enacted on 8th August 1967, the declaration was a concise, two-page document comprising five critical articles that outlined ASEAN's functional and organizational modalities (ASEAN, 1967).

The first article articulated the fundamental aim of ASEAN to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law, both in the interrelations among countries in the region and their international dealings. It also stated the desire to create a community that stands on its strength, laying the groundwork for ASEAN's emphasis on regional autonomy (Ibid).

The second article outlined the principles to govern the behaviour of ASEAN members. It called for mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity. Moreover, it emphasized the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, upholding the peaceful settlement of disputes and renouncing the threat or use of force (ASEAN, 1967).

The third and fourth articles established the means of cooperation. They identified areas where ASEAN members could and should work together, including economic, social, cultural, technical, educational and other fields. They also proposed collaborating more effectively to utilize their agriculture and industries better (Ibid).

Finally, the fifth article clarified the organizational structure of ASEAN. It provided for a standing committee, composed of Foreign Ministers, to carry out coordination and implementation tasks and proposed annual meetings (ASEAN, 1967).

Thus, while being brief, the Bangkok Declaration was instrumental in establishing a robust legal and operational framework for ASEAN. Its principles and guidelines have helped shape ASEAN's evolution and continue to guide the organization's functioning and cooperation in the region.

2. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (1976)

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) is a peace treaty among Southeast Asian countries established by the founding members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a political and economic organization aimed at promoting regional stability. Signed in Bali, Indonesia, on 24 February 1976, the TAC was established to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity, and cooperation among their peoples, contributing to their strength, solidarity, and closer relationship (ASEAN Secretariat, 1976).

The fundamental principles of the TAC include mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations, the right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion, non-interference in the internal affairs of one another, settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means, renunciation of the threat or use of force, and practical cooperation among themselves (ASEAN Secretariat, 1976).

3. ASEAN Regional Forum

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is vital to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) approach to security dialogue and cooperation. , the ARF's first meeting took place in 1994, with the primary purpose being to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern. It operates on the principles of decision-making through consensus, the non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts (ASEAN, 2023).

The ARF has encouraged preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, and confidence-building among its participants. It provides a platform for ASEAN and its dialogue partners to discuss and coordinate responses to regional security issues in certain circumstances. This includes traditional security matters, such as territorial disputes and arms proliferation, as well as non-traditional security issues, such as human trafficking, maritime security, and disaster relief (Ibid).

As an inclusive and open forum, the ARF encourages all its participants to respect the views and contributions of others and is committed to creating a sense of community throughout the region. It underlines ASEAN's centrality in the regional security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region (ASEAN, 2023).

4. The Bangkok Treaty (1995)

The Bangkok Treaty of 1995, officially known as the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), is a landmark agreement among countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that reinforces the region's commitment to maintaining a nuclear-free environment (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012).

In the Treaty, the signatories - all ten members of ASEAN - pledge to abstain from developing, manufacturing, or otherwise acquiring, possessing, or having control over nuclear weapons. They also agree not to allow the stationing or transportation of nuclear weapons through their territories (Ibid). The Bangkok Treaty bolsters the global non-proliferation regime, strengthening regional peace and stability. It is a testament to ASEAN's commitment to creating a safe and secure region free from the threat of nuclear weapons (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012).

5. The ASEAN Charter

The ASEAN Charter, adopted and signed by all ten ASEAN MS in 2007, formally established ASEAN as an intergovernmental organization. The Charter sets out the legal status and institutional framework for ASEAN, reaffirming the members' commitment to sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, and consensus-based decision-making (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020).

In addition, the Charter lays down the aspirations of ASEAN to maintain a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region through enhancing regional integration and cohesion, promoting economic growth and social progress, developing human resources through capacity building, and ensuring the protection of human rights and social justice (Ibid). The ASEAN Charter is a critical document that seeks to promote ASEAN's centrality in regional affairs and reinforces the commitment of its members to shared values and norms, the rule of law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020).

6. ASEAN Communities

The ASEAN Community is a concept that was officially launched on 31st December 2015. It comprises three key pillars reflecting the broad scope of ASEAN's activities: the APSC, the AEC, and the ASCC (ASEAN, 2015).

ASEAN Political-Security Community

The APSC aims to ensure that countries live at peace with one another and the world in a just, democratic, and harmonious environment. The APSC blueprint is guided by principles including a shared responsibility toward comprehensive security, adherence to the rule of law and constitutional government and upholding ASEAN centrality in regional cooperation (Ibid).

ASEAN Economic Community

The AEC aims to create a SM and production base, making ASEAN more dynamic and competitive. The AEC's initiatives include creating a free flow of goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and a more unrestricted flow of capital (ASEAN, 2015).

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

The ASCC aims to forge a common identity and build a caring and shared society. The ASCC blueprint includes human development, social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, environmental sustainability, building the ASEAN identity, and narrowing the development gap. These communities are designed to reinforce each other in strengthening the ASEAN community. They represent a forward-looking strategy towards achieving integration, mutual assistance, and regional cohesion among the MS (Ibid).

15. ANNEX 3 Interview Mariona Espin - Communications Executive of Politico

1. While the European Union has made progress in the area of social policy, such policies continue to fall within the exclusive competence of individual Member States. Given this current state of affairs, is it possible that social policy could become a shared or exclusive competence of the EU in the foreseeable future?

A binding European framework of social rights would be a first step towards a European welfare state and as an essential element of an integrated European labor market, given that integrated economies and increased labor mobility also call for coordinated forms of social protection. To achieve that the EU would need to change its treaties, and that is unlikely to happen due to the unanimity and the veto vote in the European Council..

However, there are somethings the EU could do to harmonize social policies within the Member states moving forward a common European social policy able to lead to a common economic plan for sustainable development and social welfare in Europe:

- European social policy needs to be financed through a larger European budget raised through genuine own resources rather than national contributions
- Reinforce attention to the social European Pillar of Social Rights (proper resources, democratic instruments, and concrete tools for its implementation) and the non binding resolutions of the European Social and Economic Committee.
- Harmonization of working standards throughout the Union, + Europe-wide trade union, full mandate for the European Labour Authority
- Enhance MS cooperation on social issues or social compacts, following the example of the Schengen agreements
- European Commission and the MS to recognise the limits of the current system and to set binding laws and sanctions for the States that are not fulfilling their responsibilities in terms of social protection

2. What do you see as the future of economic integration within the EU, and what challenges and opportunities lie ahead?

The EU urgently needs to be strengthened to cope with the ongoing Russian war of aggression on Ukraine, continuing economic and energy crisis, increasing social tensions, strong migration flows and alarming human rights violations around the world. The

economic crisis and the current challenges in foreign policy have created a historical momentum that has to be used to strengthen the internal and external abilities of the EU.

The EU and in particular the Eurozone need to deepen integration in the fields of economic, and fiscal policy:

- Healthy national economies are the basis of a strong economic union and that it is thus of individual and common interest to the member states that they strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of their national economies by implementing structural reforms.
- Coordinate and increase MS investments to stimulate the European economy, emphasizing that investment policy should not only focus on profitability but also on a sustainable European added value and enhance cohesion within the EU, particularly by supporting currently less competitive MS.
- *Reform Proposal for EU Fiscal framework* proposed by the IMF.
- More powers to the European Parliament: EU economic and fiscal governance, particularly the monitoring of national budgets, being a very sensitive issue, merits an increased democratic control by the European Parliament. The European Parliament should also be involved in the debate on European investment policy and structural reforms for social-ecological wellbeing. The European Commission and the Council to conclude an interinstitutional agreement with the European Parliament to closer involve the latter in the EU economic governance procedures.

3. How have EU policies aimed at reducing economic disparities among member states evolved over time, and what has been their impact?

Since 2007 (Lisbon Treaty) the EU has been reducing the economic disparities with the European Structural and Investment Funds, financial tools to implement the regional policy of the European Union, as well as the structural policy pillars of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy. They aim to reduce regional disparities in income, wealth and opportunities. Europe's poorer regions receive most of the support, but all European regions are eligible for funding under the policy's various funds and programmes.

The EU budget combines resources at European level. As well as funding the EU's priorities, it also finances big infrastructure and research projects. It also helps fund responses to challenges that go beyond its borders, such as the coronavirus pandemic, climate change and the threat of terrorism.

4. How can the EU balance the need to reduce economic disparities among member states with the principle of subsidiarity, which emphasizes that decisions should be made at the most appropriate level of government?

The EU shouldn't take action (except in the areas that fall within its exclusive jurisdiction), unless it is more effective than action taken at the national, regional or local level.

5. How has the EU's political integration affected the sovereignty of its member states, and what are the implications of this for the future of the EU?

Sovereignty is at the heart of conflicts over membership, as Brexit has shown. While in the past the 'ever closer union' was the only way forward and taking sovereignty back was unthinkable and legally impossible, the Lisbon Treaty allows member states to withdraw from the Union in accordance with their constitutional requirements.

The principle of voluntary membership is a central value of the EU project, but it is also a source of many of its problems. It is in the interest of all member states to have an effectively functioning Union, which will be able to deliver European public goods to their citizens. Therefore, the member states should be ready to repair the EU's architecture even at the cost of sharing more sovereignty.

16. ANNEX 4 Interview Juan Miranda - Former Managing Director of ADB

1. Is it plausible that ASEAN may evolve its fundamental principles to more closely align with the EU's model in the foreseeable future?

None of the recently approved strategic frameworks and action plans on cooperation and integration represent a significant shift in ASEAN's original "business model" and/or operating principles, at least not in the direction that would suggest in any shape or form an alignment with the European Union's own integration model and approach.

ASEAN has always followed a step-by-step consultation and consensus-based method to doing business, and this is unlikely to change much in the foreseeable future. The so-called 'ASEAN Way' based on the traditional Malay practice of *mushawarah* (consultation) and *mufakat* (consensus), seems to be working quite well. The downside with this approach is often a "lengthy and protracted" decision making process, one that first requires all parties to reach a common position on key issues well before elevating them to the main decision-making body – the ASEAN Summit. Slowness and bureaucracy are also an EU feature. But in the EU's case the integration agenda is much broader, long-standing, far more complex, and certainly very ambitious. In ASEAN's case, the list of issues is narrow, most split around the themes of security, economics, and culture, in each case with targets generally more mundane in nature than the ones associated today with the EU.

ASEAN's main business thrust (and perhaps also its principal achievement) is economics. But even here the most important endeavor is on the removal or reduction of trade tariffs. At a much broader level, in recent years the association did set up a recovery program to counter the effects of the economic crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. It also established a strategic framework called Vision 2025. The recovery program itself includes country and regional level measures, with special focus on improved health systems, digital transformation, long-term conservation of natural resources and implicitly also adherence to environmental and social standards. Vision Strategy 2025 calls for a "highly integrated and cohesive regional economy that supports sustained high economic growth by increasing trade, investment, and job creation". Although well-intentioned, the economic agenda falls well short of integration specifics, but then again, ASEAN has never had a pool of money sufficiently large to make things happen. ASEAN does call for actions to counter global challenges and mega trends, as well as for the concept of a single

market. However, the latter involves only “enhanced commitments” around trade in goods, and reforms related to non-tariff barriers, while the former (global challenges and mega trends) represent just a declaration of intentions. Vision 2025 hopes to pave the way for deeper integration, as well as for the smooth movement of skilled labor and capital, but the initiative as a whole lacks significant or effective time-bound actions to make it a reality.

On security, ASEAN has outlined several aspirational rather than concrete time-bound actions. Its core message is on regional peace and stability, but the means to achieve this is based entirely on “abiding respect for justice and the rule of law”. Such justice and rule of law differs considerably between countries, an area where ASEAN is unlikely to bring about significant changes. An approved ASEAN Security Community framework is in place but lacks effective institutional support arrangements. The so-called *Bali Concord II* developed under this framework attempts to “up the game” a bit, but in the end the targets include general pronouncements on non-alignment, non-nuclear activities, peaceful resolution of conflicts, democracy and non-interference. Again, a pragmatic approach, but not a radical pathway towards integration. Despite an Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights, the same picture is also prevalent in the case of cultural and social interventions.

From the above it follows that ASEAN differs radically from the EU, and that its format and program are unlikely to change much for a long time to come. Notwithstanding, member countries seem to accept that the focus and work method more than serves the purpose. The membership is not homogenous (some countries are much more advanced than others). This makes further integration very difficult.

2. Do you consider ASEAN's existing mechanisms sufficiently robust to drive an effective regional integration process?

The existing ASEAN mechanisms are probably good enough for the purposes of its current business model and agenda. But such mechanisms would certainly not be sufficient were the goals and targets on political, financial and security matters to become more ambitious. In any case, the term “mechanisms” in relation to ASEAN is perhaps misleading and more akin to “arrangements”. Certainly, a number of these do address recent technological advances, the demographic transition, and the commitment to promote a greener economy. After all, these are areas that represent challenges, but also real change and opportunities.

One example where common action is being attempted is on climate change, an area where ASEAN has already asked countries to align with the Paris Agreement. However, unlike the EU, the association itself lacks the financial resources to embark on flagship common initiatives. At the institutional and governance level, the current arrangements are practical, and serve the general consensus-based approach. The association reaches “big picture” strategic decisions through its Summit. The agenda is developed by senior officials attached to a Coordinating Council. This Council is then supported by the three separate Community Councils (security, economics and culture). Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the ASEAN Secretariat. All operations are governed by an ASEAN Charter. This lays out the association’s legal status, as well as its norms, rules, values, target setting, accountability and compliance.

3. In your perspective, which ASEAN treaties have had the most significant impact on propelling regional integration?

Apart from its Charter, ASEAN does not function through any specific treaties. Instead, it has signed various agreements, of which the most important are as follows:

- ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA)
- ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS)
- ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA)
- ASEAN Agreements on the Movement of Natural Persons
- ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Services
- ASEAN Investment Facilitation Framework

ASEAN as a community has been doing rather well, especially on the economic front. The region has a combined GDP of nearly \$3 trillion and more than 600 million people. The member countries together rank as the 7th largest economy in the world, and one of the fastest growing. But its work is not governed by any special treaties. It is governed by what could be defined as fairly general agreements. In addition to the ones outlined above, the association has also set up variations on the theme. For instance, on tariffs, ASEAN functions under the Free Trade Area but also through a cooperative-based arrangement- the Common Effective Preferential Tariff System (CEPT). The association has also experienced significant progress in terms of financial and currency initiatives, with regional payment connectivity, and the promotion of local currency for cross-border

settlements underpinned by a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for Financial Integration (2016–2025). These arrangements fall under the Payment Connectivity Initiative, and the Guideline on Local Currency Settlement Cooperation Framework (LCSF). The latter is now embedded in a Memorandum of Understanding of Cooperation on Regional Payment Connectivity signed by Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Institutionally, has approved an Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights. ASEAN's business falls under the remit of its Charter.

4. Given ASEAN's historical commitment to the principle of non-interference, do you envisage a future scenario where this principle might be abandoned?

Given the consensus and consultation-based approach related to all its activities, it is difficult to envisage a significant shift away from the principle of non-interference. However, geopolitics in the region, and further afield, is changing rapidly and it may not be far-fetched to assume that at some point in the future the region will end up taking sides with one or the other of the super-powers, especially in relation to current US-China tensions. Taiwan is another hot spot in the making, as witnessed in recent months. This now directly involves the US, Japan, South Korea and several countries in Europe. At the membership level, the Philippines, which under the Duterte administration veered towards accommodating China, now seems once again in the US political and security fold. Indonesia may follow suit. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict could murk the waters further. So far, the association has maintained a neutral stance, but if “push came to shove”, then some countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR could be on China's side, while Indonesia, Vietnam and Brunei already have territorial disputes with China. Singapore has a US navy base, and it is not difficult to work out on which side it will be. Thailand and Malaysia are slightly more difficult to predict.

5. How likely do you think it is that ASEAN member states would consent to relinquish some aspects of their sovereignty for the sake of deeper regional integration?

The ASEAN set up is unlikely to move away from the current consensus and consultation approach. Its central theme is mainly on economics. Giving up sovereignty in favor of a tighter and more integrated region is for the moment out of the question. The political set up of the countries differs too much for that to happen, as it does their economic base and performance. ASEAN as it is may be seen as being good enough.

6. What recommendations or strategic directions might you suggest for ASEAN to foster a higher degree of regional integration?

Infrastructure, climate change and disaster risk management are three critical issues for the region to continue to prosper. Infrastructure impacts on growth, connectivity and competitiveness and is perhaps the most important strategic matter to be considered. The infrastructure gap is high and growing in some cases, especially regarding energy, water, logistics and ICT. A continued move towards greater connectivity, especially in the Mekong area, would create better conditions for investment, trade, jobs, and supply chains. Climate change is here to stay, and South-East Asia is vulnerable on many fronts. Aligning with Paris and developing investments around mitigation and adaptation are likely to be a must. ASEAN will also need to come up with a common response to natural disasters. The region is highly vulnerable to them, and concerted action on this is essential to reduce vulnerability. Lastly, the region may also need to think hard and longer on financial sector integration, as well as on the monitoring of macro and monetary conditions.