

## RESEARCH NOTE

### The ASEAN Economic Community and New Regionalism: A Neorealist Analysis

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#### Abstract

The ASEAN Charter proposed by the Eminent Persons Group in 2006 and drafted by the High-Level Task Force is seen as a progressive step forward in the deepening and evolution of ASEAN regional integration. With its signing and ratification, ASEAN will attempt to transform its character to be a regional institution in form and function both within the region and internationally. The purpose of this paper is to assess the development of the ASEAN Economic Community ("AEC") to see if it intends to build a community or is a neorealist extension of traditional practice by ASEAN's member states by assessing the AEC from a "new regionalism" perspective. It is the view of this writer that the ASEAN Economic Community as currently structured is used to keep and/or increase national order and interests in the face of destabilizing forces of globalization. This critique will assess the ASEAN Economic Pillar as a component of New Regionalism from a theoretical neorealist perspective, thereby attempting to identify components which have contributed to an economic community forming in ASEAN in the post-Cold War period and to possibly identify some critical factors indicating where ASEAN regionalism will lead.

Manuscript received on 2010-09-18, accepted on 2011-02-01  
Keywords: New Regionalism, AFTA, ASEAN Charter, regional integration, neorealism, ASEAN Economic Community

#### Introduction

ASEAN is considered to be the most successful regional organization of the contemporary period for the "third world." As a consequence of its longevity, it is perhaps unfairly juxtaposed, compared and measured against the world's most successful regional organization, the European Union (Guangsheng 2006, p. 62, Plummer 2006). Debate surrounding the newly ratified ASEAN Charter, which came into effect with the full ratification of its ten member states and was completed in October 2008 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008), ranges from constructivist optimism stressing path-oriented norms and value-creation to critical realist assaults. Current arguments, while being relevant and enriching to the debate about ASEAN as a relevant regional institution, are simply part of a larger question. Exactly what was created with the ASEAN Charter and the impetus for institutional change that led to