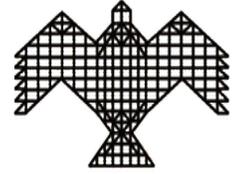




**SOUTHEAST ASIA RESEARCH GROUP**  
Department of Political Science, University of Delhi

**&**  
**INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC AND SECURITY STUDIES PROGRAMME**  
National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru



*Presents*

**Regional Conclave**

on

## **ASEAN@50 AND INDIA-ASEAN RELATIONS**

7-8 December 2017

Venue: National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bengaluru

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### **CONCEPT NOTE**

Fifty years is usually not a long time in the lifetime of a nation-state. But for ASEAN, a regional conglomeration of ten separate nation-states in Southeast Asia, fifty years has spelled a transformational experience for the region as indeed also the world. In this Golden Jubilee year of the establishment of ASEAN and also celebrating Silver Jubilee year of its dialogue partnership with India, the Southeast Asia Research Group at Delhi University endeavours to host a Regional Conclave to venture into the multi-dimensional nature of ASEAN and its multi-faceted relationship with India at large. The Conclave would hold Symposium, parallel academic sessions, exhibition and cultural programme to commemorate the occasion.

Ever since its founding, the regional grouping apart from driving the regional conversations forward around multiple regional and global subjects in an more orderly and well-defined fashion, has injected a sense of predictability and pattern to the way regional multilateralism is conducted in this part of the world. In fact in time, it has evolved as the most institutionalised regional association in Asia. As a collective identity, the ASEAN has not only addressed a welter of issues within the grouping but projected a more potent force for action and bargaining when dealing with players and institutions exogenous to the region. In some ways, it may well be argued that the enduring and lasting success of ASEAN as a regional institution has been the primary reason why other regional entities (read APEC) have not quite proved to be as promising and as fulfilling as the Southeast Asian grouping, notwithstanding the different contexts and purposes for which they were founded in the first place. Perhaps it has something to do with the characteristic resilience of ASEAN as an organisation. When it started out, the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 chiefly had 'economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields' in mind apparently even as the underlying motive and the context may have been altogether different. Then the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971 had reflected the shifting great power balance in wider Asia. Hallmark of a cautious and thinking institution, it had taken no less than almost a decade for ASEAN to meet at a summit level in 1976 when it accomplished the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) with the latter formalising the core principle of non-interference as underpinning the terms of engagement among member states. Buoyed by their individual

economic successes in the 1970s and 1980s, the ASEAN 6 had taken their economic agenda to a new level when they decided to establish ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1992.

As Cold War eventually wound up, the ASEAN's more formal initiative on regional security fructifying in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) had once more been clearly demonstrative of the organisation's innate ability to reinvent itself and retain its leadership role as the foremost ideologue of regional multilateralism. When the 1997 Asian financial crisis had scarred virtually all of ASEAN economies, the overtures to the three East Asian nations and shaping up of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) was an exercise emblematic of making virtue out of adversity. From shaping the contours of ASEAN Plus 3 to being at the core of the East Asian Summit, ASEAN has not only retained the reins of regionalism in its own hands, it has expanded its diplomatic weight and footprints from Southeast Asia to the broader East Asia and Asia Pacific. The 2007 Charter besides bestowing on the institution a legal personality, also sets it well on course to truly become an Economic (AEC), Political-Security (APSC) and Socio-cultural (ASCC) community.

Without doubt, ASEAN's normative benchmarks as constituting renunciation of use of force, non-interference and peaceful settlement of disputes have served the region well for nearly five decades now. Southeast Asia once speculated as the 'Balkans of the Orient' has refused to fall apart simply not living up to its borrowed name, and thankfully so – unlike what befell the original Balkans in Europe unfortunately. Boasting of the world's third largest market on the back of a population of 625 million people and with a combined GDP of US\$ 2.6 trillion, ASEAN is already the 7<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world projected to be the fourth largest by 2050. No wonder, in a glorious run over 50 years since 1967, the iconic grouping has transformed the region from one of battlefields to marketplaces! As EU increasingly gets weighed down by the post-BREXIT tremors and globalisation pushes back in the reverse, what better time than now to re-examine ASEAN and how it could perhaps carry the flag of regional multilateralism.

Given this background, India as a close friend and partner is equally affected by the developments in its extended neighbourhood. Rooted in deeper historical and civilisational ties, augmenting India-ASEAN relations have been the primary focus of our 'Act East Policy'. In fact, India places ASEAN at the heart of its 'Act East Policy' and centre of its dream of an 'Asian Century'. As ASEAN celebrates fifty years of its existence, India also celebrates twenty-five years of India-ASEAN Dialogue Partnership. In this relationship, we have graduated from just a Dialogue Partner to Summit level interactions and finally to Strategic Partnership in recent times thereby learning lessons of deeper economic integration and comprehensive engagement with Southeast Asian neighbours.

Under this context, the Conclave seeks to deliberate upon the internal political dynamics of ASEAN and forces shaping its external linkages with the region and India in particular. On this commemorative occasion Symposium, brainstorming parallel academic sessions, exhibitions could be laid out followed by cultural Programme to celebrate the theme and vision of '*Shared Values, Common Destiny*' as outlined by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Various sub-themes for discussion during the Conclave may be summarised as per the themes below:

- 1. ASEAN Today: Introspection and Prospects**
- 2. ASEAN and the Changing Geopolitical Dynamics in Indo-Pacific**
  - Dynamics on South China Sea
  - DPRK's Nuclear Challenge
  - Contest for Natural Resources
  - Traditional and Non-traditional Security Issues
- 3. ASEAN and the Emerging Regional Architecture**
  - Role of External Actors
  - Maritime Cooperation
- 4. ASEAN-India Relationship**
  - India's Look East-Act East Policy and ASEAN
  - North-East and the ASEAN
  - The South China Sea Disputes and Indian Policy
  - Political and Strategic engagements
  - Commerce, Culture and Connectivity links and Concerns
  - Science and Technology and Defense Cooperation
  - Future Directions

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