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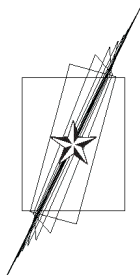
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From the Editor

This 2017, the Philippines has been playing host to a series of meetings as well as some celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In addition to the 10 member-states, the ASEAN gatherings have included the key dialogue partners, such as Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, and the USA. North Korea, the South China Sea, climate change, terrorism, and transnational crimes are the agenda at top-level discussions. Regional integration and regional unity—in the way of feeling, thinking, and acting not as unconnected countries but as one region—have been tabled and discoursed as well, among others, at lower-tiered meetings. Note that many of these long-standing and emerging topics, even after years of discussions, are not immediately actionable; regionally, there are just too many influences related to leaderships, structures, cultures, and peoples that are stifling the initiation and implementation, let alone the total completion, of the action component. Even the regional actions on import and export duty taxes, which are really about material and inanimate products and could have been a straightforward task, did not come swiftly; in fact, tariff reduction or elimination has remained a big work in progress at present—and the discourse continues. To reiterate, as much as we want the ASEAN Regional Meetings to have tangible outcomes, discourses—even if conducted ad nauseam and across the years—are not readily translatable into actions, because of attendant and emerging issues and challenges present out there in the real world. Generating more research information, and updating and publishing this on a regular basis, is key to knowing and discussing more about these age-old and emerging topics, including their respective issues and challenges. These processes are expected to redound to greater actions on the part of the ASEAN as well as on our part—the public.

The *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* (Scopus) consistently publishes research manuscripts on long-standing and novel topics. It features confirmatory, similar, parallel, and in-depth sets of information to help deepen the discourse on and knowledge of “old” and deep-seated topics. As well, the *Review* provides benchmark information to help identify the ramifications of emerging issues for the ASEAN and its member-states. This December 2017 edition of the *Review* covers research information on both long- and newly-debated topics, such as juvenile delinquency, climate adaptation, India–Pakistan war, China–Japan’s island dispute, Japanese comfort women, non-formal education, low-cost carrier, skin beauty and hormonal replacement therapy, and information and communication technology.

Juvenile delinquency is undoubtedly an age-old phenomenon, but we in the ASEAN still have so much to know about it—for instance, as to who is more predisposed to commit it and as to what we do with those who commit it. The global North’s research literature, of which much has been published on juvenile delinquency, may not give justice to our regional experiences because of cross-cultural differences. For one, our region’s juveniles—in contrast to those in the industrialized world—are not really accorded as much freedom and independence by their families. Essentially, they breathe, live, and mature in environments where broad networks of relatives and their influences are perpetually present. In this respect, the families would be a social system of interest if we pursue our further inquiries into juvenile delinquency in our region. In their article, Tan Bee Piang and colleagues, from

the Sultan Idris Education University in Malaysia, underscore the centrality of family influences on juvenile delinquency, but through their research, they distinguish between two sources of influence. The finding—of whether it is a familial structure or familial relationships that is at work—is a rather surprising commentary on the adequacy of group membership as a force against delinquency. Overall, we need to learn and find more ways of enhancing the roles of families, especially parents, in reducing the commission of delinquent behavior and improving the reformation of offenders.

Active territorial conflict between and among countries is another age-old phenomenon. Since humans had learned about concepts regarding properties, resources, and ownership (or could it be that we humans are inherently territorial and greedy?), the world—the ASEAN included—has been hounded by cases of territorial conflict after conflict. We respond to territorial claims by going to war and by invading and occupying the territory in question. Alternatively, we negotiate or submit ourselves to mediation and legal ruling. As part of our movement towards owning a territory, we organize and disseminate a narrative in support of our claim, and oftentimes and objectively speaking, our narrative is usually convoluted and laden with facts that are too frail to withstand any legal and empirical scrutiny. At times, our narrative could be very creative. Take the case of Japan's conflict with China over an island in East China Sea. Michal Kolmaš of Metropolitan University Prague writes that "Japan's narrative on the dispute has managed to depict China as a 'coercive,' 'immoral,' and 'abnormal' state that bullies subsequently 'weak,' 'coerced,' but 'moral and lawful' Japan." Michal Kolmaš further states: "By writing Japan as a 'coerced,' yet 'lawful' state protecting the status quo, Tokyo succeeded in persuading the United States to subdue the disputed territory under its nuclear umbrella." The next chapter of China–Japan's conflict over the island is unclear as either party is resolute of its claim. Will they go to war? If the recent pronouncements from its leader could be relied on, Japan would not go to war. I do not know about China since it appears bent in asserting its territorial claim by hook or by crook. We must use diplomatic and legal means to resolve territorial conflicts. Armed warfare must be avoided at all cost because it has no winners. Historically, the world never runs out of stories of wars being waged to settle territoriality. In his article, Shafiqur Rahman of the University of Oregon describes some accounts of the India–Pakistan war, which is very informative for many of us in the ASEAN region. He highlights the violent relationships between the two countries as continuing and implies that both are using their respective narratives to pursue their goals, but he notes that neither would want to own to their central roles in using violence to settle differences.

Relative to juvenile delinquency and territorial conflict, the phenomenon of low-cost carriers is very recent. As the new kids on the block or the young David, low-cost carriers have been giving older and giant airlines, such as Cathay Pacific Airways and Singapore Airlines, a run for their money. Low-cost carriers have helped liberalize commercial flights. Before, we had limited choices as to the cost of our flights. With their no-frills and affordable flights, low-cost carriers have provided us with a range of very competitive choices! Published data suggest that some considerable fractions of airline passengers within the ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific as a whole—one of the world's strongest passenger growth areas—have been patronizing low-cost carriers, which are pursuing, as we speak, more aggressive expansions in terms of their fleets, routes, and services. Beyond the numbers related to the plans of these low-cost carriers and to passenger growth, we have the paucity of social sciences perspectives on the phenomenon. Sujira Vuthisophon and Chalita Srinuan, from King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang in Thailand, provide some relevant information, particularly on customer satisfaction and repurchase intention among low-cost carrier passengers. Overall, the authors point to a need for low-cost carriers to improve some of their services to satisfy customers and improve repurchase intention. I was once a passenger of giant airlines who shifted to low-cost airlines when the latter became available in the early 2000s. Unfortunately, I got tired of the quality level of the services of low-cost carriers—for instance, on many occasions, we were asked to run from one boarding gate to another, forced to share one toilet for the entire set of passengers for a 4-hour flight, and made to wait for an hour before we could disembark. Now I had returned to mostly reliable giant airlines—for example, Thai Airways—and I am quite happy with my decision, especially now that their

tickets had also become less expensive due to the cut-throat competition. We need to do more systematic social sciences investigations on low-cost carriers and passengers to improve the industry.

Beyond the information offered by the authors in their articles, there is more to examine and know about these other long-standing and new phenomena featured in this edition. Why are we in the ASEAN, that have the most serious climate change risks in the world such as rising sea levels and natural calamities, not responding too swiftly? Why is climate adaptation not progressing as expected—what are the constraints? What could be the most amicable settlement to the abuses suffered by comfort women at the hands of Japanese occupiers in World War II? How could non-formal education be strengthened so that it becomes more socially and politically acceptable to various sectors? Do modern beauty treatments and hormonal replacement therapy sustainably foster greater well-being and better social relationships? What are the most effective approaches to human trafficking? How can digital technologies improve local government performance? These are too many questions which even if we answer them with systematic evidence are likely to spawn further queries. Indeed, we are in this never-ending quest for knowledge and eventual action in the ASEAN.

Please access the *Review*'s online edition at goo.gl/my363J and its Facebook account at goo.gl/qFfFMt.

In 2018, apart from its June and December editions, the *Review* will have one Special Issue in April and one supplementary issue in August.

Keep on sending your submissions.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

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