

# ASEAN and the Evolving Regional Architecture

AEI Occasional Paper 9

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### ***“ASEAN and the Evolving Regional Architecture”***

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## Welcoming remarks by Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Dr. Ghauth bin Jasmon

Before I get into reading the text of my speech here, I must say that the half an hour I spent with Dr. Pitsuwan and the other distinguished politicians inside the holding room was truly an educational experience. The reason I say that is because, being an academician and a Vice-Chancellor, I rarely get the opportunity to meet very distinguished politicians. And when I was sitting there, I learnt the true story about them. I learnt how Islam came to this region. I learnt how the people converted to Islam and interestingly enough—though it may be a taboo subject, and I must admit that I was surprised by what I heard—it was because of polygamy. I also learnt how this region was a flourishing trading area and how this is going to continue into the future. As such, I believe that the Asia-Europe Institute of University of Malaya must organise more events like these and invite more politicians so that you too can hear the other side of the story, the truth behind the tales. Allow me to say thank you to our very distinguished guest, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan for taking time out of his busy schedule to give this distinguished lecture series. As I discovered from being with him in the holding room just now, he really is a very down-to-earth person and I can see how ASEAN must be in really good hands with the approach he takes in dealing with issues in this region. Thank you again, we are really honoured by your presence and I am also very happy to hear that two of your nieces are studying at the University of Malaya. On behalf of the Asia-Europe Institute of University of Malaya, it is with great pleasure that I extend a very warm welcome to His Excellency, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan. His presence today is a special day for the university as this is the first time that we are having him as a special guest. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank him for so generously accepting the Asia-Europe Institute's invitation to deliver a special public lecture under the Eminent Persons Lecture Series. I would like to say a very big thank you to all of you for being with us this morning. Your presence and participation is invaluable and encourages us to move forward in promoting good will, understanding and academic investment in this region.

The 19th ASEAN Summit has generated wide interest in the development of ASEAN, notwithstanding the views of some critics that ASEAN could do with more speed in certain areas. It has gained maturity and strength based on the commitments of its

members to enhancing regional peace and security. The 19th Summit has shown the value-adding that ASEAN has achieved, as exemplified by the back-to-back extended East Asia Summit between ASEAN leaders and the heads of state from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, United States and the Russian Federation. The Summit was a success and, for that, I would like to express my congratulations to Dr. Surin. Of course, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan will surely have a lot to tell us later regarding the challenges as well as the exciting plans for the future for countries in this region. Before that, I would like to say that the Asia-Europe Institute not only follows developments in ASEAN, but also conducts an academic programme called the International Master's in ASEAN Studies. The establishment of the programme was very much inspired and guided by the good officers of the past ASEAN Secretariat, as well as by Dr. Surin himself. Accordingly, ASEAN established a grouping of its leading universities in ASEAN member countries known as the ASEAN University Network or AUN in 1995. It currently consists of 26 member countries/universities. The International Master's in ASEAN Studies is itself an AUN programme. We wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of ASEAN for his support for the academic programme, which is why we wish to extend him the honour of being the Eminent Speaker today. As education is key to long-term security and peace in ASEAN, particularly in ensuring that ASEAN member states are well-educated and knowledgeable for the continued growth of the region, we urge that AUN be further enhanced and supported with more activities across all disciplines of learning. We wish to stress the fact that higher education is highly competitive and a major source of income for many countries, with most major centres of learning across the world setting themselves high targets to attract the best and brightest students. The top universities in most developed countries are all gearing to achieve the highest ranking positions possible in the university ranking table. As such, so much is at stake in terms of intellectual property, sources of revenue and technological development. In fact, the best and brightest brains are becoming valuable commodities that could fetch high prices in the global higher education market. Thus, it is important that ASEAN should arise and meet this new challenge in global education to ensure that we are not left out because losing this race could prove costly in the long term.

Please allow me to give a short introduction of His Excellency, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, the ASEAN Secretary-General. Dr. Surin was born on the 28th of October, 1949, which means that he has many more years to contribute to overseeing the growth of ASEAN. He was educated at Thammasat University and Claremont Men's College, California. He graduated with a B.A (cum laude) in 1972. He was then awarded the Winston Churchill Association and Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship for him to obtain his

MA and Ph.D from Harvard University, specialising in the area of Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies in 1982. He was an active columnist for “The Nation” and “Bangkok Post” from 1975 – 1992. From 1978 to 1989 he coupled this with lecturing at Thammasat University. From there, he entered Thai politics, where he established his forte, and first stood for general election in Nakorn Sri Thammarat in 1986 and had since returned to Parliament. As a politician, he was appointed *inter alia* to be Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, before being appointed Foreign Minister from 1997 to 2001. Upon leaving the Foreign Affairs portfolio in 2001, he was appointed Member of the Commission on Human Security of the United Nations and Member of the ILO, World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation, and by my count, nine other international commissions and advisory bodies. It is also interesting to note that he has just completed his assignment as a Member of the Islamic Development Banks Vision Commission under the chairmanship of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. In short, Dr. Surin has been a very dynamic advocate for the future of international peace, understanding and cooperation. Your Excellency, it is my great pleasure to now invite you to deliver your keynote address.

### **Special Lecture by H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan**

Thank you very much, Professor Ghauth Jasmon, Your Excellencies, Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, Tan Sri Abu Hassan, Tan Sri Syed Hamid, Dr. Affifuddin, members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is my privilege to be with you this morning and I would like to begin this lecture series with *Doa* and *Surah al-Fatihah*. Essentially I am a kampong boy (*budak pondok*) born in a madrasah in my hometown, Nakorn Sri Thammarat. But I was blessed with the opportunity to walk away from the walls of the pondok and let myself roam free so that I could follow Muhammad s.a.w.’s *hadith* that said, “Seek knowledge even though it may be as far as China”. So my hope and my contribution is more towards inspiring the younger generation, rather than actually contributing to the works of ASEAN because the ministers would not want me to be too involved.

At present, ASEAN has become more important to the region than it was, say, five or ten years ago. Because of what is happening in North America and Europe, the most dynamic engine of economic growth is in East Asia. And ASEAN is sitting right in the middle of the region. Together, we were able to absorb the shocks of the global financial crisis. Together, we were able to get out of the crisis faster than others. Together, we were able to grow at an average of 7 per cent last year while the rest of the world was

struggling to get 1 to 2 per cent economic growth. So precisely because we have become more important to the global community, ten of us, ASEAN +3 (China, Japan and South Korea) and later, sixteen of the original members of the First East Asian Summit (EAS) 2005 members—ASEAN+3, India, Australia and New Zealand—held in this capital, Kuala Lumpur. The leaders agreed that there will be a leader-led mechanism which will discuss five non-controversial issues, namely, education, finance, disaster relief, energy and the avian flu (currently classified as a pandemic disease). In 2008, the world faced the financial crisis and East Asia quickly emerged as the locomotive of growth despite the setbacks of the economic slowdown. This, in turn, attracted the attention of those countries, including the US, who are besieged with long-term economic depression, to come to this part of the globe. As President Obama's said, "If America is to recover from the economic troubles, we have to sell more, export more". So, I look around and there will be no place other than East Asia and ASEAN. It is was a very pragmatic approach indeed from Mr. Obama.

ASEAN, which was established more than 44 years ago in Bangkok, has always been the vehicle for small countries of Southeast Asia to have a pact for ourselves, so that we will not be eclipsed and overshadowed by the giants of the third or developing world coming to the world stage in the 1960s. The need for such a mechanism was more pronounced with the limitations of the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, comprising of too big a stage for Southeast Asian leaders to have their voices heard. The leaders of this sub-region decided to establish a smaller stage so that our identities, interests and agenda could be advanced and so that together, we can engage the world with a stronger foundation (starting with five founding members, then increasing to six and eventually, today's ten).

Ever since, ASEAN has evolved to become a fulcrum of power in the region. A fulcrum of what Hillary Clinton called "a fulcrum of regional emerging, emerging regional architecture." The fact that this particular role has fallen on the shoulders of ASEAN is because we are different from the European and North Atlantic community. We are very diverse and we have big giants in the region that could not get along with each other. We also have no systems, mechanisms and institutions to help us resolve any conflicts that could occur between us and there are many problems, including the potential ones, between China and Japan, Japan and Korea, China and India and amongst ourselves here in ASEAN. The only one that exists belonged to ASEAN as the bloc did not threaten anyone but accommodated all. So, when these giants came to our forums, conferences and meetings, they felt welcome and accommodated by the hospitality of ASEAN states. They could speak, talk, articulate and advance their interests as well as defend their

agenda free from any pressure. They even found out that in the corridors of power, they have more opportunities to talk to potential enemies.

So, ASEAN became a vehicle of convenience for all the states in the region. That is why when the world got into trouble, the two giants of Asia, China and India, became interested in us because through ASEAN, they could also be connected with the international community, which is why we have the term ‘open regionalism’. When China and India joined us, we gained influence, recognition and legitimacy. Just think back to the last two months, to the G20 Summit in Cannes, France. There were 11 full G20 members coming from the EAS and ASEAN was also there as an observer of this important meeting. Even Singapore, despite not being a member of the G20, was there for its involvement in the financial commission. Even in the APEC Summit two weeks ago, 14 of the 18 EAS members were there. Therefore, ASEAN, through holding membership and hosting talk shops and providing fora, have attracted attention and elevated ourselves up to that level.

The 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Bali achieved many milestones. First, the leaders have decided, after many deliberations, that it is time for Myanmar to take the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. A very difficult and deliberative decision because of the nature of the state and society of Myanmar itself. But ASEAN has been encouraging, by constantly supporting, advising and sometimes, even pressuring the country when it comes to its involvement in the Southeast bloc. When the Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) delta in May 2008, claiming about 144,000 lives and displacing and affecting 4 million people, the world wanted to go in and offer humanitarian aid, only to find themselves rejected by Naypyidaw. This was when the ASEAN ministers met in Singapore and successfully pressured Myanmar to accept international and ASEAN aid. So, in contrary to the prevalent belief that ASEAN is too soft in its approach, in some cases, we do exert pressure, advise and criticise. The success of ASEAN’s role in the event demonstrated its efforts of involving Myanmar, instead of isolating it in the sub-regional group.

If we didn’t include it in ASEAN, encourage it and recognise the positive developments in the country since the elections last November, the risks for the reversal of that momentum cost far more than giving the chairmanship to Myanmar. In fact, we may expect reciprocal action and reactions along the way by Myanmar for the next two years. Immediately after the news, Mr. Obama announced of his intention to send his Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton on December 1. I am sure that the EU, Australia, Japan, the UN, the World Bank and others will make adjustments in their relations with Myanmar



in the foreseeable future. We are definitely working towards positive encouragement forward, instead of sanctions which will not lead to a further opening of the country. If you read the first draft of the chair statement of this very issue, such development shall contribute to a decision of the Myanmar chair and we may expect no reversal. In the backroom diplomacy, many phone calls and discussions were made and the collective decision among the leaders was that Myanmar should be the ASEAN chair in 2014 and that there should be no turnaround in Myanmar's commitment to the bloc. At this point, one of the contentious issue expected in the Bali Summit was resolved. We expect positive evolution forward and our dialogue partners, institutions and financial players will make the necessary adjustments in their policies towards Myanmar.

The second one is a bit more complicated. All five nuclear weapon states, the US, China, France, the UK and Russia, after a long, very difficult process of negotiations, finally agreed to sign our Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ). Back in the mid-1970s in Kuala Lumpur, we agreed on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) declaration. Soon after that, we agreed that we did not want to be involved in weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and came up with our own treaty. In this treaty, it stipulated that territory, continental shelves and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) are excluded from any forms of nuclear weapons. We have been able to reach an agreement with the five nuclear powers and banned them from using and storing nuclear weapons in our zone. Now, these five powers are waiting for the signing or accession of the treaty itself. It is definitely an achievement with far-reaching consequences.

And then, we have the ASEAN Plus 1 and Plus 3 frameworks and finally, the EAS. Earlier on, Australia came up with an 'Asian Pacific Community' (APC or APc) proposal, arguing that this 'house' is bigger than 16 and that it must bring all the 'giants and elephants' outside of the tent and into the room so that they will behave under the norms of the house. We, ASEAN, thought that if we allow Australia to go on with that architecture, we would lose control, our centrality and finally, the driving seat that we have for the architecture produced so far. So, together, we sent out signals that any new architecture in this region shall build upon what we have already built, not new ones. The case was the same for the then Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yukio Hatoyama, who proposed the East Asian Community (EAC or EAc) during his premiership of the country. Nevertheless, these new proposals served as a wakeup call for ASEAN, as we realised that we could lose our centrality and leadership here in the region.

A year ago in Danang when our foreign ministers met, they decided that we look at these two proposals and selected one or two elements concerning the inclusion of major powers which could help contribute to the peace and stability of our region. As such, we decided to invite the US and Russia into the EAS. And the five nations I mentioned earlier were all included in the previous summits. Now, in the recent 6<sup>th</sup> East Asian Summit held in Indonesia, the leaders would like to discuss maritime security issues. In this case, there are two divergent opinions. First, the Chinese Premier, Mr. Wen Jiabao said that he does not think that an issue of that nature should be included in the multilateral forum and that any tension, differences, conflict of territorial claims should be dealt at the bilateral level. Despite such a statement, ASEAN and China have had the Declaration of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea back in 2002 and the guidelines to implement the CoC last July during the 18<sup>th</sup> ARF meeting in Bali. Currently, we are working for the actual CoC which will be legally binding. On the other hand, Mr. Obama and some other leaders insisted that open seas are global commons, belonging to all nations which trade along the shipping lanes.

Well, I think what ASEAN have been able to do is somewhere in the middle. First of all, it is extremely difficult to tell the 18 leaders what to say and what not to say. Secondly, they can only talk about issues of this nature in generalities and in a detailed manner. So, ASEAN provided a forum where its members could discuss and exchange views on their interests and ideas. While the maritime security issue remained a sensitive one, what ASEAN has achieved so far is its ability to provide a platform for talks on the generalities and principals of the territorial sea disputes. To discuss the details and possible settlements, the institutions and channels on which ASEAN has presently been building its frameworks will have to be used. For instance, the customary law and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is already in existence, are some of the channels through which the South China Sea disputants can refer their disputes to.

In the area of economic cooperation, Mr. Obama came from Honolulu with a strong tail wind after his success in pushing the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) during the APEC Summit. Even before the summit convened, Japan decided to join in the discussions, making the countries willing to join the framework to ten. Strategy-wise, I think the US administration is trying to get around the stalled Doha Round Multilateral Free Trade Agreement, creating a state-of-the-art or 21<sup>st</sup> century free trade arrangement. Such an idea should encourage us to work harder to integrate among and between ourselves. With

a population of about 3 million, over half of the GDP, world trade and global foreign reserves are in this region. As such, we want to explore even more effective ways to open our economies, strengthen our corporate management and mobilise resources and capital among us and within us for investments here in this landscape. Also, we have to enhance integration in trade, services and investments among ourselves. With China, we have US\$300 billion a year (about US\$ 30 billion in the country's favour) and the growth is 30 percent a year. So the Chinese premier predicted that by the end of 2015, the trade volume between us shall be US\$500 billion. Having said that, investments from China are only about US\$2 billion a year in the ASEAN region. This is why that we are asking them to invest more, to create more jobs in our landscape so that the dictum that says, "when China grows, we will grow with it" will become a reality.

Japan is in trouble, and has been for a while. The tsunami, earthquake and the Fukushima incident have compounded the problems of Japan. With its ageing population and shrinking domestic market, Japan can only depend on economic growth outside the country. Where can it go? ASEAN. As such, Japan has to grow outside the nation. At this point, I am glad to say that Malaysia has been at the forefront in getting all the Japanese chambers of commerce, a total of 1,449 companies, here in Kuala Lumpur last July and agreed with each other for a 10 year-strategic investment plan in Southeast Asia. The production networks that worked well within time constraints, with all parts delivered to the assembly line for car-making, were called into question when the 3/11 tsunami struck the country. This was also the case with the floods in Thailand that disrupted the production networks of the Japanese carmakers in the region. Even the automobile production in Indonesia was affected because the car parts came from Thailand. You see, in confronting these inter-related problems, we have to come together more and be innovative or creative in economic integration. With Korea, more investments, trade and definitely, videos and music, will be coming to Southeast Asia. We need to talk about transfer of technology, innovative or creative economy and intellectual property. Only by coming together, can we compete with the world and by extension, can we help the world. In the summit between the UN and ASEAN's ten leaders, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon said that it is not only important that you grow faster than the others, it is not only important that you accumulate more than the others, it is not only important that you consume more than others, but it is also important about to the world's expectations by making more positive contributions to global institutions and to be more active in global governance. So, the measurement of success for us in East Asia is how much we can contribute to the global community. That is the challenge for all of us in East Asia and therefore, us in ASEAN.

In the socio-cultural pillar, we have heard of the Malaysian proposal for ASEAN to host the FIFA World Cup in 2013 and currently your government is working on a concept paper for the deliberations of this issue. And I am looking forward in paying a courtesy call to the Sultan of Pahang, the current chair of ASEAN Football Federation (AFF). I can assure you that, among all the decisions made by the ASEAN leaders so far, nothing stirred more public excitement than the decision to host the World Cup. In fact, our decision generated 35,000 articles online in a week, with some offering enthusiastic support while others dismissed the idea as being impractical. For us, there are two issues. One is strategic, that is—how much can the ASEAN community benefit from this decision? For me, it is important to inform to announce the fact that ASEAN is ready for such an event. It is definitely a good gimmick for us to create an ASEAN identity amongst the younger generation. The other is procedural, which sparked the debate that national governments cannot host the World Cup. It is the federations of those countries and regions that will be hosting this event. So, in procedural terms, that will be carried out by the AFF with the support of national governments.

In terms of education, we are talking about credit transfers. You can take courses from the University of Malaya at the Asia-Europe Institute and you will be given credits at Chulalongkorn University. And vice versa. Also included are other universities in Thailand, Indonesia (such as Gajah Mada University), the Philippines and so on. Altogether, there are 26 higher education institutions that participated in the ASEAN Universities Network (AUN). There is also another issue that I would like the youth to be aware of. Based on Mutual Recognition Arrangements, we have agreed on eight professions—engineers, architects, doctors, dentists, nurses, hospitality professionals, accountants and surveyors—which will be encouraged to move across the region and seek employment in each other's economy.

The last issue I would like to share with you is the fact that all ten ASEAN countries have a cumulative GDP of about US\$2 trillion. The amount that we trade with each other and with other non-ASEAN countries is more than US\$ 2 trillion a year. But the interesting figure that we need to improve is the fact that among the ten ASEAN members, our mutual trade comprises only 25 per cent (or about US\$ 500 billion) of all the trade composition. And that is low. The mutual trade among the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) members, the US, Canada and Mexico, is about 48 per cent of their whole trade composition while the 27-member EU has about 68 per cent. Only by having more trade with each other in ASEAN, can we consider ourselves an economic community. Otherwise, it is still a rather low one.

How do we get there? The key lies on the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). So, when the Malaysian prime minister and other leaders talked about the SMEs, I hope that these will contribute to a more enhanced mutual trade among us. With more SMEs crossing each other's borders to invest in each other's economy and grow outside our traditional home market, perhaps we can have 30 per cent by 2015 or even 40 per cent of mutual trade by 2020. I can tell you that of all the liberalisation plans in ASEAN, the multinational corporations (MNCs), with networks across ten ASEAN countries, large capitals and research arms to look into these new rules and regulations, are taking advantage of this landscape even more than the ASEAN companies are. For instance, the certificate of origin itself is very complicated. I was told that I would be taxed if I carried two hundred batik shirts into Thailand. But if I order 2 tonnes (2 containers) of batik shirts into Thailand with government-issued CO (or COO) with only 40 per cent ASEAN content, it will be tax-free. These rules, that were made to protect ourselves, have unfortunately given a better advantage to the MNCs.

Last year, about US\$78 billion FDI came into ASEAN, a two-fold growth from the year before, 2009. Interestingly, 68 per cent of that figure went into the service sectors—health, banking, education, telecommunication and transport. What does that mean? It means a growing middle-class, rising purchasing power and that more and more people in ASEAN are looking for a better quality of life. So, we are truly attractive to the global community. We are seeing major international companies moving in, setting up shop in ASEAN and back home in their headquarters in London, Tokyo, New York and Los Angeles, there is an ASEAN department to look at this particular market. We hope ASEAN companies will do the same and all of you will wake up to these opportunities and prospects. This house is built for all of us, the ASEAN community and since we are in an open regionalism, we cannot exclude the MNCs from it. But it is just for us, the ASEAN stakeholders, to come in and participate in the journey to the future. So, one last observation from me. The existence of forums in the G20, APEC and EAS is truly a summary of humanity. “We create from one soul, one pair (man and woman) and we expand into races, nations, tribes, and nationalities...so that though shall be no each other and learn from each other”. In the end, it is the ultimate aim of all humanity — peace, security and prosperity for all. And that is the perspective from a budak pondok sitting as a house manager for such major forum and fora of humanity. I was inspired and I hope that by listening, you all will also share in this inspiration.

## Question & Answer Session

Q1: There are concerns by some scholars on one of the ASEAN Ways of consensus decision-making in dealing with the bloc members. I would like to have your view on this.

A1: Because of the diversity among us in governance, in economic development, in religion, in language, in ideologies, we are different from the European Union. In Europe, you have to measure up to certain qualifications before you are admitted into the Union. For us, community and association are more important. The only requirement for us here is, if you are here, you are qualified. There's the consensus and you come in. All decision-making is based on consensus. We cannot vote and cannot have a majority because it's difficult to keep a group together, and we can only move at the speed of the slowest member. The least common denominator. That's how we have survived for the past 44 years. Because we accommodate each other. Also, the ASEAN way, which emphasises non-interference, is not foreign to ASEAN. Non-interference is in the Charter of the UN. Any grouping must respect the sovereignty of the member or you can't get along or work together. But precisely because it is integrated, ASEAN is becoming more and more of something that we would like to share with each member state and with others.

In my office, we have just set up a macroeconomic surveillance office. Think about sovereignty, think about who in the world would come in and see the way I manage my finances, my budget, inflation and so on. In the past you could do that but because of integration, you can be dragged down by one member. ASEAN + 3, ASEAN plus Japan, China and Korea set up an initiative, USD\$120 billion facility so that any member of the 13 in trouble with your current account, with your management, foreign reserves, with economic, can withdraw from these USD\$120 billion. We had a problem with Japan and China because all the ASEAN countries pay about 20%. I believe Korea paid 20%. 60% was given to China and Japan. They could not decide between themselves. One would want to give more than the other. But because Japan and China gave us 60%, we would like to know how you manage your economies so that when you are in trouble, you can draw from this fund, it's our money. They set up the monitoring office in Singapore called AMRO, ASEAN+3 Research Office. Non-interference is not absolute. Integration and globalisation would not allow you to be absolutely cut off from each other. We survived and we

keep on attracting many others. We must have done something right for the last 40 plus years. Otherwise, those giants would not have wanted to come.

Q2: What is ASEAN's position in terms of the involvement of the United States in the East Asian region? What is ASEAN's position on responsibility to protect?

A2: We don't want the region to be an ocean of conflict and contention, instability and insecurity. Movement by any party must contribute to the highest stability and security. Because the region is so attractive and so important, different partners react to this region's open space differently. The US has been in the region for some time. The phrase used by the US was that we are a "Pacific Nation" meaning we are here, we have been here, and we are going to stay. That is the attitude. None of you have seen some movement, the opening up of the marine base in Darwin. The agreement to use the core of Perth as a core for the US navy raised concerns that it might be a region of power play for the military. This is a challenge for ASEAN. ASEAN will have to be very alert and affective in managing the relationship of the others. That's why we believe what the document coming out of the EAS in Bali is the document that set out the norms that governs the conduct among the 18 nations. In that, we took TAC with Malaysia in drawing up that said we "shall not resort to force to settle any differences". What we think we have done is rather than TAC among ourselves is give the same norms to the rest of members of EAS, meaning that China and India will also respect this norm. We are expecting that China and Japan will also respect this norm. We are building the norms. We are building the regimes of agreements in the region. I think it's a period adjustment, I know this issue has generated about 500 articles around the world. Some are worried and are some comments and suggestions of the way forward. I think it's a challenge for ASEAN. I think the collective wisdom of ASEAN will certainly serve in trying to maneuver this particular area of potential conflict.

"Responsibility to protect" sounds a bit aggressive and provocative. State sovereignty and protection. This means that if a government cannot protect its citizens, two tribes killing each other, the rest will have the right to intervene, as is said in the phrase "it is not the right to intervene, it's the responsibility to protect". Together, as members of the human race, we have the responsibility to protect all other human beings. A commission was set up regarding state sovereignty and intervention, and after 2-3 years of liberation, they came up with a report, that stated that it's not the right to intervene, it the responsibility to protect. It's working its way through the

international mechanism of gaining more recognition but not quite there yet. There's a committee in the UN hoping that even if it's not part of the international tool of the nations, at least it will become a norm that will guide us. Countries and states that don't yet have confidence in themselves and haven't completed their state-building are slightly allergic to this phrase. Countries that have already finished their state-building have confidence in themselves. It's a long way to go. For ASEAN, it's rather sensitive, and I'm not going to propose this to anybody yet but I am trying to propagate the idea in the circle.

Q3: My concern is on regional security and the energy architecture of ASEAN.

A3: I think the issue of energy is enormously important for us here. Before Fukushima, I think four of five of us were ready to go, including Thailand. After Fukushima, they slowed down. I think Vietnam is still active, with the first one being built by the Russians but the rest are slowing down. Japan is now saying that they want to share their experience, their successes, their failures, their mistakes. Indonesia is a yes, I think, and for the Philippines and those within the Ring of Fire but I guess it's the technology. We need to beef up a great deal in order to do that. Nuclear energy is available on a commercial basis from various countries around the world. It might be a futile effort. These are the things that they have to consider and think for themselves. What we have agreed on is to exchange information of who is doing what, who is going to acquire what, and liaise with other nuclear powers to help us to understand the risks. In Brunei in early October, there was the Minister of Energy conference, there was the Director of IAEA and we signed an agreement that the ASEAN Secretariat will work in order to exchange and learn more from you. Nuclear safety. We are preparing the ground. Some countries are going to go ahead because of the physical need for the energy and again, they are free to do that, but I guess we are creating an environment where we are more careful with each other. Your problem could be my problem tomorrow because you're next to me and my food will be contaminated and your air, your water, it's my water too. ASEAN is a central community.

Q4: What do you think of East Timor wanting to be a part of the ASEAN organisation?

A4: The ministers discussed very extensively on this. Essentially, ASEAN countries have helped East Timor become a nation state. Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei. In 1999, I was the Chair of ASEAN so I remember very well



trying to get Malaysia to contribute to East Timor but some of the members still feel that it is perhaps too early. We need a little bit more time to really feel the readiness of Timor Leste. Next year, ASEAN is going to have 1,200 meetings. Attending the meetings alone, counting the bodies attending the meetings alone are going to be difficult. Indonesia is very much behind East Timor, which is to their credit. Some member states say we should wait a little bit longer, be more careful, be more thorough. I have advised East Timor to establish their seat as an ASEAN member state and try to create economic linkages with all member states. In other words, if you find gas, if you find oil, don't give everything to Australia. Fishery, minerals, you have to create the linkages in order to sustain and rationalise the membership. I have to wait until all the member states are ready. As Chair of ASEAN for 1999, I have a place in my heart for East Timor but some member states are quite reluctant to go that far. East Timor has thus far been invited to some sectoral meetings but not full membership.

Q5: Do you think ASEAN is capable of being main super power in this region?

A5: Can ASEAN be a power on the global stage? I think militarily we can't. But we have to look into ourselves to see what kind of soft power we have, to use that soft power intelligently. I think for the last 44 or 45 years, we have demonstrated that we do have diplomatic skills and political finesse in order to help each other here in the region and also those important adjacent to us. Remember Tun Mahathir's phrase, "Important economies adjacent to us, China, Japan, Korea". We have been able to help and work together and move into the future and avoid the differences to try and identify common areas, and I think we have been doing very well. In a sense, that's why the UN has been asking for our help, our contribution is why the global community is looking to us and this is why they believe that we can help. That's why ASEAN, as an organisation, is invited to the D20 every time they meet. Not because we are militarily strong, not because of our economic wealth and prosperity, but because whatever wealth and prosperity we have, we manage it well. Because we don't just dig up whatever is in the ground and sell it but because we also dig into the brains and educate our people and generate wealth from intelligence. They want to know how we manage our economies, our integration, and in that sense, yes, and 600 million people is not small. It's sizeable, one of the largest, bigger than the EU, bigger than the US, but smaller than China, smaller than India, certainly. Each of us is a unique kind of economy.

Q6: Is ASEAN prepared to face the challenges?

A6: We have challenges. We have the challenge of adjustment. We have to improve our competitiveness, our efficiency, our corporate governance, our technology, our production system. In order to compete, in order to improve, our major dialogue partners, our major FTA partners, like Australia, China, agree that you cannot implement everything. You cannot move too fast. You need to allow time for adjustments. But I think it has to be the collective decision of all of ASEAN, at least the ASEAN business community, that you cannot always be protected. You have to open up, be better prepared, if ASEAN doesn't open you up, WTO would, if WTO doesn't, the globalisation will pressure you because production will go where the cost of production is less and where the efficiency of the system is improved, the productivity of the people is improved, then you can do business, you have to speak the language of the market.

Q7: Australia is concerned with human refugees, what are your thoughts on this matter?

A7: Australia, yes, we have that problem, the problem of human trafficking, from around the world, finding their ways into the open space of Australia where there are many opportunities and where the generous hospitality of the Australians becomes a magnet. A magnetic pool. Anybody who runs away from anything, including those from Iraq, those from Iran, those from Kosovo, those from Eastern Europe, would like to find their way through Thailand, through Malaysia, through the waters of Indonesia and into the waters of Australia. It's a big issue. There are about 3 million cases a year, and there sure must be more victims than that. Most of it happens here in Southeast Asia. Human trafficking, modern slavery, is a stigma that we don't want the world to attach to us. This perception that we don't care about our fellow human beings, our brothers and sisters being dragged, being lured, drawn into slavery because it's against basic human values and against humanity. We have something called the Bali Process, which is co-chaired by Australia and Indonesia, where countries around the world meet once a year, talking about ways and means to improve our cooperation, and our coordination on how to reduce cases of human trafficking. In the end, you have to solve the problem at the source. In the end, you have to help settle problems back home. In the end, you have to improve employment opportunities back home. It's not just one answer that can be applied to all cases. We have to work and cooperate together. It's very difficult, very complicated.

Q8: Tobacco is one of the major killers and causes of many illnesses. How committed are the ASEAN countries in curbing tobacco?

A8: Tobacco is a very big issue. I'm a campaigner against cigarette smoking, I lost my father because of cigarette smoking. Cigarette smoking is a habit that affects the poor more than the rich. In some countries, most of the monthly income is being used to buy cigarettes rather than to improve on housing and education for children. Just imagine that the father has an income of USD100. If he smokes two packets a day, that money will be almost gone and thus the cycle of poverty and health or lack of health is perpetuated because of that habit of the father. The ASEAN Secretariat now is a smoke-free office. We agreed amongst ourselves to work on this campaign. Are there any multinational tobacco companies here? We have to work against them. It is very difficult because they have the money. Not all of us belong to that convention that is against tobacco but we have very strong NGOs working on it. Some of our governments are addicted to the income from cigarette taxes. Many forget that they spend most of their budget to cure diseases caused by cigarettes. But they want this money because it comes in so easily. We have to educate even the government, but who am I to say, I am just a secretariat.

## **Conclusion**

Let me just end this by invoking what I've learned since I was five or six years old. At the feet of my grandfather, when he went through the Kitab Tafsir (the translated Quran) with his students under the kerosene lamp at the end after the last prayer in the evening before he closed the book, the Kitab Kuning (the yellow Quran), his last words were "Wallahu alam" (He knows best, He knows better). What I have told you for the last hour and a half may be perhaps half truth, half untruth. Perhaps only 75% is true representation of what happened in Bali and 25% is just garbage. Such is the nature of being human.

## **About the author**

Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, born on 28th October 1949, had his education at Thammasat University and Claremont Men's College, California. He graduated with a B.A in Political Science (cum laude) in 1972. He was then awarded the Winston Churchill Association and Rockefeller Foundation Fellowships for him to do and obtain his MA and PhD from Harvard in Political Science and Mid Eastern Studies in 1982.

He was an active columnist for "The Nation" and "Bangkok Post" 1975 – 1992 which from 1978 to 1986 was coupled with lecturing at Thammasat. From there, he entered Thai politics where he created his forte; he first stood for general election in Nakorn Sri Thammarat, his hometown in 1986 and was returned eight times to Parliament. As a politician, he had been appointed interalia as Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs before being appointed Foreign Minister from 1997 to 2001. He then served in a number of advisory boards of UNO especially on Human Rights and Human Security and is a member of the "Wise Men Group" for restoration of peace in Aceh. He is the ASEAN Secretary-General for 2008 to 2012.





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