

Section A

You must answer Question 1.

ASEAN'S VALUE IN A POST-COLD WAR WORLD

1. Read the sources and answer the questions which follow.

Source A

Since the regional impact of the Asian Financial Crisis is so pronounced, it would be logical to expect ASEAN to be in the forefront of regional and international responses to the crisis. The public (however) has been largely disappointed with ASEAN. Its perception is that of a helpless ASEAN, an ASEAN that cannot move decisively... and an ASEAN that fails to respond to real, current problems and challenges such as the crisis.

Perhaps this public perception has been influenced mainly by ASEAN's failure in 1996 and 1997. The expansion of ASEAN membership to include a problem country such as Myanmar, and the difficulties ASEAN has encountered in bringing in Cambodia, are regarded as hampering ASEAN's ability to act swiftly. They are also seen as weakening the diplomatic clout that ASEAN would need to effectively mobilise international support in resolving the financial crisis.

An article written by an Indonesian, published in December 1998.

Source B

ASEAN member states have been criticized for responding to the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 on their own without region-wide policy coordination. We have been blamed for not intervening to affect domestic policymaking, and as an organisation seem to have winded up paralysed and ineffective. Yet the key concept in ASEAN's approach to regional security is the ASEAN way, which constitutes the Southeast Asian pattern of diplomacy. Respect for the principle of non-intervention and of state sovereignty is the fundamental premise on which the organization is based.

Excerpt from an interview with an ASEAN Diplomat, January 2008.

Source C

The financial crisis of 1997 began with a fall in value of the Thai baht. Eventually currency problems affected all ASEAN currencies. The failure of ASEAN to support Thailand in the defence of their currency's value marked a complete failure to foresee the wider implications of the crisis. This was the result of a lack of coordinated response by ASEAN as individual members attempted to protect their own interests. Once again, divisions within ASEAN proved an obstacle to solving the financial crisis.

An excerpt from an interview with a top Thai economic official in a Thai newspaper, August 1997.

Source D

ASEAN has proven that regional cooperation among developing countries is possible and can produce results. The members seem to learn from each other on how to administer and develop their countries. ASEAN countries have all been poor but are today among the most dynamic economies of the world.

The world should conclude that ASEAN membership would have a steadying influence on domestic politics which would help the progress of member countries. It is regrettable that there are those who would not see the obvious. ASEAN has been urged to pass judgment, deny membership and apply pressure so as to force a potential candidate to remain poor and unstable. ASEAN must resist and reject such attempts at coercion. They are not a part of the ASEAN way. No one should assume that only they know the solutions to all problems.

Now together with our new members, we can cooperate and help each other to prosper economically. That way we will become internally stable and less susceptible to outside pressures.

*From a keynote address by Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamed
at an Annual Ministerial Meeting, July 1997.*

Source E

The economic crisis and ASEAN's enlargement... are both contributing to the group's tarnished image and current weakness.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong warned... that ASEAN had lost much of its stature in the Asian Financial crisis. "ASEAN... is being seen as helpless and, worse, disunited," "...we failed to convince the outside world that ASEAN was tackling the crisis with determination and decisiveness to regain its high growth."

Thai and Filipino officials said the tradition of non-interference in internal affairs had precluded any effective monitoring of financial and economic danger signs in member states before the crisis struck. As a result, there was no early warning and possible prevention of the financial turmoil that spread from Thailand in July 1997 to other countries in the region.

A Japanese Foreign Ministry official wrote, "Enlargement has increased ASEAN's political and economic diversity. Given the organization's principle of consensus, this will make it hard to reach decisions." ASEAN countries vary greatly in size, systems of government and levels of economic development, significantly inhibiting regional integration.

Citing widespread criticism of human rights abuses in Burma, and territorial disputes between members that needed to be resolved urgently, she said that the time had come for ASEAN to consider "creating a real and effective crisis-management centre through which the countries in the region may seek solutions to the problems" confronting them.

An article published in the New York Times, 14th June 1999.

Source F



A Burmese activist's depiction of an ASEAN meeting with Myanmar in 1996.

Answer the following questions:

- (a) Compare and contrast the evidence provided in Sources A and B on ASEAN's responses to the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. [10]
- (b) How far do Sources A – F support the view that ASEAN has failed to prove its worth as a regional organisation in the post-Cold War era? [30]

Section B

You must answer **two** questions from this section.

You must support each answer with examples drawn from **at least three** countries.

EITHER

2. Evaluate the impact of communism on the political development of independent Southeast Asia.

[30]

OR

3. How far do you agree that some Southeast Asian governments proved more effective than others in the fostering of national unity?

[30]

AND EITHER

4. 'It was domestic, rather than international forces, which contributed to the economic development of independent Southeast Asia states.' Discuss.

[30]

OR

5. To what extent did the Asian Financial Crisis result in catastrophic consequences on Southeast Asian economic development?

[30]

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