

## Section A

You must answer Question 1.

### ASEAN AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

1 Read the sources and answer the questions which follow.

#### Source A

How effective has ASEAN been in promoting regional cooperation and integration? The Association has a few constraints; narrow nationalism has been a stumbling block which has seriously impeded regional cooperation because national interests have been jealously guarded. Beneath the ploy of regional solidarity and unity, differences in perception as to how regional cooperation should be improved could be detected in the fields of political, economic, and security cooperation as well as in the structural aspects of ASEAN per se.

But perhaps ASEAN has been fortunate. These differences have been toned down to some extent since the Indochina debacle because it made the ASEAN leaders think more in terms of regional than national interests. In this sense, the Communist victory over Indochina was a blessing in disguise. Some important constraints, however, still exist within the economic, social, and political systems of the member states, which hamper regional cooperation. The major impediment lies within their economic structures because all of the ASEAN countries – with the exception of Singapore – have basically competitive rather than complementary agrarian economies.

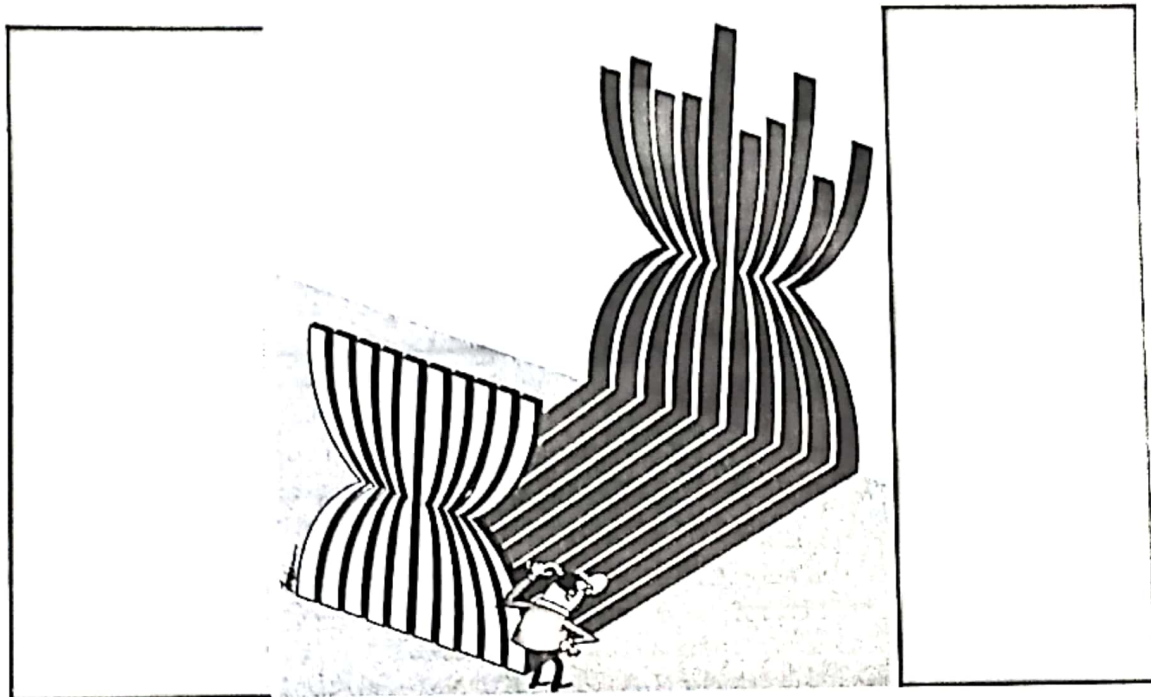
*From a commentary by a Singaporean academic, 1977.*

#### Source B

In a region largely bereft of regional organizations and long divided by the Cold War, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been the most significant multilateral group for the past forty-five years. Since the end of the Cold War, ASEAN has grown increasingly influential. Perhaps most importantly, ASEAN has helped prevent interstate conflicts in Southeast Asia, despite several brewing territorial disputes in the region. Yet ASEAN lags far behind its full potential. Most Western leaders and even many of Southeast Asia's own top officials do not consider the organisation capable of handling any serious economic or security challenges, including the ongoing dispute in the South China Sea. In previous times of severe economic downturn, ASEAN members have looked to lenders outside the group for assistance. Because it lacks unity and high-profile leadership, ASEAN's members have resorted to addressing disputes either bilaterally or with major power involvement.

*An excerpt from a paper on ASEAN's future by a US think-tank, 2012.*

**Source C**



*A cartoon published in the Straits Times, in accompaniment to an article titled 'ASEAN integration remains an illusion', 2015.*

**Source D**

As a leader that had at first observed with great interest, and later on participated, in ASEAN's meetings and activities, I have had the pleasure of witnessing first-hand the remarkable geopolitical and economic transformation of Southeast Asia, which in my view has largely been aided by ASEAN's work.

It is remarkable to conceive that only half a century ago the region was blighted with ideological conflicts, hostile confrontations and a palpable atmosphere of suspicion. But now these circumstances have completely changed. Our part of the world is a stable and economically vibrant community, in which our dialogue partners have placed their trust and confidence in us to lead the way in furthering and facilitating East Asian cooperation.

However, I also acknowledge that it has not entirely been smooth sailing for ASEAN over the years. Whether it is managing territorial disputes, convening talks to reduce tensions brought about by regional flash points, or coordinating a response to transnational problems such as financial crises and haze, ASEAN has faced, and continues to face, its fair share of challenges. But when my colleagues and I sought to address these problems collectively by leveraging on our respective strengths, we came to realize that our countries were able to grow stronger together.

*Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah, in commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of ASEAN in 2017.*

### Source E

The shaping of the organization itself developed in a Southeast Asian way. What worked best was best. ASEAN had no preconceived constitution; no rules; nothing. It is something like the British Commonwealth. It is based on the goodwill, tolerance and the relaxed style of the six members. And to this day, this is what keeps ASEAN alive. True, we have differences, acrimonious debates at times but there is no breaching of rules, simply because there are no rules. That is why we are not unduly perturbed when people say that ASEAN has no organization, no ideology, no dramatic achievements. Many regional organizations which started off with elaborate organization, rules and grand concepts have disappeared. What has ASEAN achieved? Well for one thing, we still exist and are active after nearly twenty years. We are respected internationally. We meet regularly.

*From the published recollections of former Singapore Foreign Minister, S Rajaratnam, 1987.*

### Source F

ASEAN members perhaps no longer can afford to adopt a non-committal stance and avoid passing judgment on events in a member country, simply on the grounds of "non-interference". To be sure, ASEAN's respect for the sovereignty of its fellow members is one reason why the grouping has come this far and enjoyed such longevity. However, if domestic events in one member's territory impact adversely on another member's internal affairs, not to mention regional peace and prosperity, much can be said in favour of ASEAN members playing a more proactive role. Asia's economic crisis has diminished the influence of ASEAN, the cornerstone of regional stability and security, and it must drop its foundation policy of non-interference.

Constructive engagement has been seen as a negative approach, a passive policy. Thailand is now suggesting flexible engagement on issues that have negative impact on others in the region, be it economic or political. Southeast Asian nations needed to work together to achieve regional economic recovery, not merely seek to save their own national economies.

*An excerpt from a speech by Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan at a business seminar and news conference in Sydney, July 1998.*

Now answer the following questions:

- (a) Compare and contrast the evidence provided by Sources E and F on ASEAN members' views of the ASEAN Way. [10]
- (b) How far do Sources A-F support the view that ASEAN has been largely unsuccessful at fostering regional cooperation? [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** How far do you agree with the view that political stability in independent Southeast Asia could only be assured through coercion? [30]

### **OR**

- 3** 'The success of national unity was dependent on the minorities rather than the government.' How far do you agree with this assessment of national unity efforts in independent Southeast Asia? [30]

### **AND EITHER**

- 4** To what extent did government intervention in the economies of the independent Southeast Asian states bring about positive outcomes? [30]

### **OR**

- 5** How far were Southeast Asian governments to blame for the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997? [30]