

Asean: Formation and Enlargement

***Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha**

Abstract

In International politics one of the major problems is the creation of conditions under which a stable cordial and peaceful relations should be possible among the nations. The increasing complex problem of modern nations such as social, technical, economic and defence are increasing day by day which led the nations to adopt multilateral co-operation.

In recent decades, global perspectives on politics have influenced almost every aspect of international relations studies and regional integration processes have been analyzed through new lenses in the post-cold war era of globalisation.¹

Today, the world has indeed become more sharply demarcated in regional terms. The tendency for regionalism is evident both in developed as well as developing countries. The three distinct dimensions of regional space for the tendency to regionalism are:

- (i) Area (commonly known as territory)
- (ii) Contiguity (parts are proximate to other on remote)
- (iii) Size (the extent of its scope)²

Background of Regionalism

The Phenomenon of regionalism in international politics increasingly assuming greater significance, both as a concept as well as trend, after the end of the world war second. Regionalism has become an inescapable international political reality and an acceptable alternative to unilateral action and undependable United Nation intervention. Europe was merely as a starting point for a further set of comparable experiments in integration. And, on the heels of European experience, there duly came attempts to create common markets and free trade association in the world. The UN charter, under article 51, 52 and 53 recognized the significance of regional arrangements for maintaining peace and security.³

Regional co-operation has developed all over the world after the math of Second World War as a major phenomenon. This era of post-world war brought a rapid growth of independent nation-states.

Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha

These states strove for national struggle to achieve a complete independence from assimilation and subordination. After Independence a strong awareness grew among these nation states for regional co-operation so they can deal with common political and Scio-economic problems.

Regional co-operation is not only an economic aspiration and nationally designed state action, but an outcome of a number of complex and mutually compatible political strategic and diplomatic initiatives, responses and interests amongst states and their managers in a given region.⁴

Regional Organization

The Regional Organization are created by states through which the members pursue their common goals and without a member's consent, no regional action or decision can be taken. Here the negotiations and diplomatic relations are major determinants that characterize the approach of the states in achieving regional co-operation and development. Since the decision-making is an outcome of the combined efforts of the regional actors, modern diplomacy offers to defend the interests of the states in various issues of economic co-operation. Thus, regional trade is an effective platform to further trade interests and provides an open access to prosperous business and flourishing markets, facilitating further liberalization and investment etc. on a much larger scale.⁵

It also facilitates multilateral rule making or rule changing, creating a favourable political setting or legal framework at a bilateral or regional level, resolution of disputes, and creation of innovatory agreements, conventions and treaties. Precisely regional organisation are trade blocs and they are for the developing countries. They are the easiest way to development, while at the same time offering solutions to their longstanding regional peace and security problems. Regionalism is thus characterized by politico-economic objectives.⁶

Regional Organizations are organizations of several countries of a region. They are international, as more than two nations are member of such organizations. They are regional, because they pertain to one region. These organizations are based on formal agreement or treaty signed by the concerned governments. It is concerned with political, economic or military co-operation among these states of organisation.⁷

What is a region?

Normally, region is defined in geographical terms. Thus, we talk of Latin America, North Africa, Eastern Europe, Near East, Far East and West Asia. Central Asia, East Asia, South East Asia. But, certain regional Organisation in contemporary world defy this definition, e.g. NATO includes, besides the countries of North Atlantic region, countries like Greece & Turkey who could not be placed in the concerned geographical region. But, they agreed with the objective of NATO and adopted the same strategy. Another arrangement that is not regional in nature but is often described as a regional international organisation is the Commonwealth of Nations which has members from different continents.⁸ Organisation is the act of organising or the state of being organized.

Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha

Definition of Regional Organization

Joseph Nye Says, "The term 'regional' will be used for organizations which restrict the membership, in principle and in practice on the basis of the geographical principle". He further says that a regional organisation is based on:

- (1) Formal agreement among Governments,
- (2) Possessing diplomatic forums and
- (3) Assisted by associated international bureaucracy.

Palmer and Perkins say that, "In international relations, region is primarily an area embracing the territories of three or more states. These states are bound together by ties of common interest as well as of geography. They are not necessarily contiguous or even in the same continent." **According to Padelford** a regional organisation is group of states in geographical proximity for promotion of the member states and terms are decided by treaties.⁹

Types of Regional Organisation

Lynn and H. Miller have categorized regional organizations into three types: -

1. Cooperative Organizations: Arab league, Organisation of African Unity, Organisation of American States etc.
2. Alliances: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Warsaw pact etc.
3. Functional: European Economic Community, council for mutual economic Association, Association of South East Asian States, Organisation for Economic cooperation and Development etc.¹⁰

Theories of Regional Integration

Theory is essential for every discipline to help in research and these theories provides the basis for explanation and prediction although it is the fact that no theory is permanent means one can't say that particular theory is true forever. But still theories are essential part in international politics as for broader generalization, explanation and prediction they are needed.

Alex Warleigh-Lack has rightly stated that theory building doesn't took place in space. Theories which are already present, their insights helps and act as initiation point for further theory formulation. Different theories are build regarding it. These can be broadly classified into:

(1) Political Theories

- (a) Functionalism
- (b) Neofunctionalism
- (c) Inter-Governmentalism
- (d) Liberal Inter-Governmentalism.

Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha

(2) Economic Theories

- (a) Free Trade Area
- (b) Custom Union
- (c) Common Market
- (d) Economic Union
- (e) Complete Economic Integration.¹¹

(1) Different Political Theories of Regional Organisation**(a) Functionalism**

Functionalism arose as an operative philosophy, which visualised a gradual evolution of a peaceful, unified and cooperative world. The earliest and influential exponent of functionalism was David Mitrany. His celebrated work "A Working Peace System" gives a clear exposition of his vision of building peace in the international system. Other proponents were Leonard Woolf, Norman Angell, Robert Cecil and G.D.H. Cole. The functionalists do not aim at creating a world federal structure rather, they seek to build "peace by pieces", through transnationals that emphasize the 'sharing of sovereignty', instead of its total surrender. It is a 'bottom up' approach for building cooperative links among states. Functionalists opine that governments will not surrender their national interests and will not dismantle easily. Therefore, they prescribe a realistic means of attaining idealistic ends. They propose a gradual approach towards regional or global unity, which will aim to isolate and, at the end, will render obsolete the stubborn institutional structures of international system, the nation-states. Functionalists lay emphasis on the socio-economic and welfare needs rather than on political needs.¹²

(b) Neo-Functionalism

Ernst B. Haas then expounded the, "neo-functionalism" approach with its concept of "spillover". Unlike David Mitrany, Ernst B. Haas stated that it was difficult to separate technical and political issues. Neo-functionalists like Leon N Lindberg and Stuart A Scheingold, supported this view. According to the spillover concept, the process of integration in one sector such as economic may spread integration in other fields and ultimately lead to the submergence of governments by larger communities as more decision-making is transferred to supranational institutions. Ernst B. Haas described the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) as a "new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states". Skeptics however stated that although the theory was ahead of its time in computing the integration processes carried out by regional organizations it omitted ideational factors, social factors and exogenous factors.¹³

(c) Inter-governmentalism

The Inter-governmentalism emerged contrary to the neo-functionalism. They stressed on concept of sovereignty. sovereignty still exist after becoming part of association. Further they focus on the fact

Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha

that there is proportional relationship between national interest and national power. The basic point is that while integrating bargaining is an important aspect. Cause behind is enhancement of power and welfare of the people.¹⁴

(d) Liberal Inter-Governmentalism

Andrew Moravesik in 1990's developed One of the important political theories of regional organizations, that is liberal Inter-governmentalism. This theory is combination of various theories. As per this theory sovereignty is pooled by member countries in international institutions. The main motive is the economic interests. The key actors are nation states rather than institutions.¹⁵

(2) Economic Theories of Regional Organisation

In this member states allows free movement of goods and services. Trade barriers disappears and the market size become huge. The large market size gears up the investments. It is a kind of trade supportive integration and the main motive is welfare of people by the means of trade liberalization. According to Béla Alexander Balassa, a Hungarian economist and professor at Johns Hopkins University depending on the degree of integration Economic integration can be of different types. These are:

- (a) Free Trade Area
- (b) Custom Union
- (c) Common Market
- (d) Economic Union
- (e) Complete economic integration.¹⁶

Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

There are many regional organizations which includes the organisation of American States (OAS), the Arab league, Organisation of African Unity (OAU), European Union (EU), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are generally for regional economic cooperation.¹⁷

On 8th August 1967, representatives of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand had a meeting in Bangkok (Thailand) adopted a declaration announcing the establishment of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The purpose of the organization is to accelerate economic growth, social and cultural development in the region. Along with this to assure collaboration so that peace and stability should retain in the region.¹⁸

ASEAN as a Regional Organisation

Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organisation

Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha

formed by the South-East Asian nations to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development and to promote peace and security in the South-East Asian region. Headquarters is in Jakarta, Indonesia. Member countries of ASEAN Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Dialogue partners in ASEAN are Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia and the US. Official Language in ASEAN is English.¹⁹ Motto is “one vision, one identity, one community”.

Enlargement

Many unsuccessful attempts for the regional co-operation during 1959-1965 at South East Asian countries has been made but all failed. In 1959 organisation of an association of South East Asia was formed by Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines, but it broke up within two years because Philippines was claiming Northern Borneo which was part of Thailand. In 1963 another regional arrangement was proposed by the Foreign Ministers of Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia to be known as Maphilindo. But Indonesian President Sukarno's Policy of 'crush Malaysia' led to the dropping of the project. Once Sukarno was out of power and Indonesia gave up hostility towards Malaysia, it became possible to establish ASEAN on 8th August 1967.²⁰

Finally, ASEAN, a regional organisation was established on 8th August 1967 by Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, at the height of US involvement in Vietnam, to promote regional security and economic development. External threats played a prominent role in ASEAN's creation and survived since the founding states wanted to minimize manipulation and domination by major powers, most notably the US and china. They were also concerned about Chinese – supported communist insurgencies and about separatist movements, but deliberately choose not to create a military alliance, ASEAN's founders were well aware of the profound historical, cultural and economic circumstances that divided them, but also recognized the advantages of regular consultation and cohesion.²¹

As soon as Brunei become independent in January 1984, it became a member of the ASEAN, Vietnam joined ASEAN in July 1995. Three other countries, Myanmar and Laos joined at 1997 and Cambodia in 1999 were also invited to join, but by the end of 1995 they had not joined though their heads of government attended fifth ASEAN Summit as invitees in December 1995. ASEAN was established to speed up the economic development, social progress and cultural activities, social progress and cultural activities in South East Asia.²²

For the most of its 20th years, ASEAN's primary focus was regional peace and stability. The communist victory in Vietnam and US withdrawal in 1975 prompted the first summit meeting and the Treaty of Amity and concord. This made political co-operation a formal part of the ASEAN agenda and codified rules of conduct, including the non-use of force, peaceful settlement (or deferral) of disputes, and regional solutions for regional problems. The 1989 Manila Declaration marked a significant change by setting up the ASEAN plan for Action for economic cooperation. Moving forward with this plan in 1992, member countries agreed to create the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) within fifteen years, a

Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha

time table that was shortened in 1994 to 2003. In 1994, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was established to promote multilateral security dialogue. The 1995 Bangkok Treaty created the South East Asian nuclear weapons Free zone. In addition, following its decision to participate in Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiated a series of dialogue programmes with outside powers, including the European Union (EU) member countries, South Korea, China, India and Japan. This was an ambitious set of new challenges that over time would raise questions about whether ASEAN's informal structures were adequate to support them.²³

It was announced by the Malaysian P.M Abdul Razak that ASEAN was not committed to any political ideology, was a non-military and non-confrontationist organisation. It is not a military alliance but, the Soviet Bloc treated it as an ally of western Bloc. The communist countries Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were initially not invited to join ASEAN. The ASEAN was bitterly criticized by the former Soviet Union. It was welcomed by the US who maintained very cordial relations with the Association. ASEAN was charged with the policy of military confrontation by the neighboring communist countries.²⁴

In this manner the enlargement of regional inter-governmental organisation took place to accelerate the growth of economic, social and cultural dimensions with established mechanism.

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Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha

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Asean: Formation and Enlargement

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sinha