

12-30-2014

From the Editor

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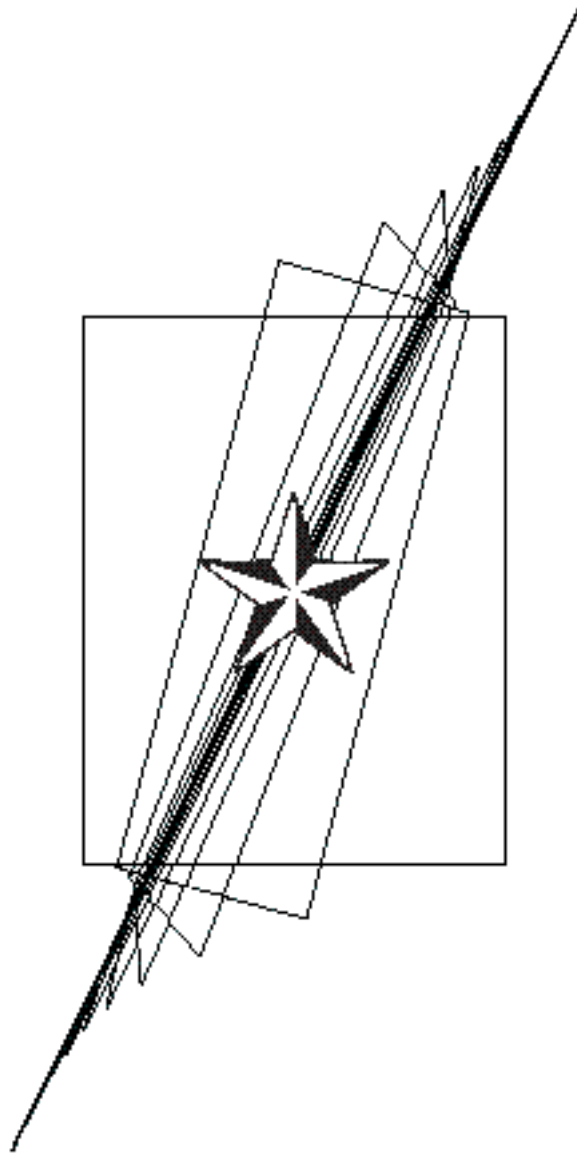
Recommended Citation

Lee, Romeo B. (2014) "From the Editor," *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*. Vol. 14: Iss. 2, Article 1.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59588/2350-8329.1027>

Available at: <https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/apssr/vol14/iss2/1>

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ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Volume 14 Number 2
DECEMBER 2014

The *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review (APSSR)* is an internationally refereed journal published biannually by the De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines and is abstracted by the online research database EBSCO. It aims to introduce a venue for the discussion of contemporary issues related to economics, politics, development, society, and international relations. Subject matter should be on topics that concern the Asia-Pacific region, or that which provides a perspective from within the region. The APSSR encourages theoretical and methodological papers with an emphasis on comparative study and empirical research addressing development problems in Asia and Pacific contexts. It seeks to publish research arising from a broad variety of methodological traditions and those with multi- and inter-disciplinary focus. The APSSR is officially endorsed by the Asian Political and International Studies Association (APISA).

Annual Subscription Rates: Foreign libraries and institutions: US\$40 (surface mail), US\$50 (airmail). Individuals: US\$25 (surface mail), US\$35 (airmail). Philippine domestic subscription rates for libraries and institutions: Php1,500, individuals: Php1,300. Please contact *Ms. Joanne Castañares* for subscription details: telefax: (632) 523-4281, e-mail: dlsupublishinghouse@dlsu.edu.ph

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ISSN 0119-8386

Published by De La Salle University Publishing House
2401 Taft Avenue, Manila 1004 Philippines
Telephone: (63 2) 523-4281 / 524-2611 loc 271
Fax: (63 2) 523-4281
Emails: dlsupublishinghouse@dlsu.edu.ph
dlsupublishinghouse@gmail.com
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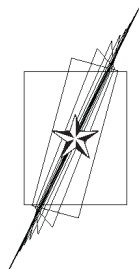
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From the Editor

The ASEAN integration, which will involve Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, is set for launching in 2015. Economics is the centerpiece of the integration, but culture—in the broadest sense of the word—will also be a compelling element, as it will help define the processes and outcomes of the regional bloc. In this respect, social scientists will become even more important as a vital source of data and perspectives on the economic and cultural facets of the integrated ASEAN. Our research-based articles in this edition offer rich information that can help spur discourses on topics relevant to regional integration.

Anthony Lawrence Borja discusses elite competition and market-oriented reforms in the restructuring socialist countries of Cuba and Vietnam. Anthony contends that, since each of both reforms was entangled with economic crisis, on the one hand; and with the legacy of revolution, on the other, the consistency and outcome of such reform was determined, to a great degree, by the distribution of power. He adds that such power manifests itself through policy legitimization. In the soon-to-be-integrated ASEAN, market reforms will be a contested issue particularly that, the market mechanisms of some member-countries are still unprimed for the requirements of a single and unified regional economy. How shall these “closed” economies respond, for example, to foreign direct investments in the contexts of their political and social ideologies and of the rigors of the regional economy?

In her own effort perhaps to foster corporate accountability, a trait that she discovered is sorely lacking among financial executives when economic crises struck the world and our region, Aliza Racelis investigates a cultural element called ‘virtues’. Her question is—what virtues do employees consider as desirable traits of managers? Her findings suggest that honesty, competence, kindness, integrity, and humility are the virtues that respondents (n=141 Filipino managers) wish to see in their superiors. Aliza concludes: “This paper adds evidence to the claim that an appeal to ethics and to virtue theory can add clarity and sharpness to the financial crisis debate.” There is little doubt that these virtues would resonate well with parallel respondents from other countries in the ASEAN. As a responsible regional community, the ASEAN has to institute effective mechanisms to normalize and enforce these virtues among its financial executives. These measures are expected to mitigate the catastrophic impact should a financial slowdown bear upon its large regional population (currently 0.7 billion people and is growing at 1.08% annually).

Niels Mulder compares and evaluates the contents of social studies subjects in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines in his article. Using the Philippine curriculum as the basis, Niels identifies the principles underlying the broad perception of things social. His findings suggest that, whereas “Thailand and Indonesia lay on conformity with encompassing groups—from family and community to nation—Filipinos were advised to follow the voice of their trained conscience.” The role of national ideology, or lack thereof, is highlighted in this case. In particular, Niels points out that “in the Philippines, the social imagination remains locked in the experience of everyday life and personal patron-client networks”, while “in both Thailand and Indonesia, the teaching of social science subjects and the humanities is held hostage to the mandatory indoctrination of the national ideology.” Because Thais, Indonesians, and Filipinos will be key participants in the regional community, it would be interesting

to see how their respective sociological imaginations would direct the ways in which they perform their economic and cultural roles in the community. Furthermore, it would be important to know which imagination—that rooted in either everyday life or national ideology—would be economically and/or culturally valued in regional integration, in both the immediate and distant future.

In this issue, we also have three articles from Taiwan. One is written by Shih-Hsiung Liu on educational news stories and beliefs, while the other is by Shou-Lu Lee on comparing child-rearing goals between local and immigrant women in Taiwan. The third is a submission from Raymond L.S. Wang, Ambassador of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in the Philippines, on climate change and national security. Our book review focuses on migration and multicultural society in Japan. Without doubt, the topics in these four pieces are going to be relevant for the ASEAN integration. The borderless region means broader influence of mass media, heavier migration flows across national boundaries, and greater security risks. These topics need to be pursued as regional research issues, because of their potential to weigh down the benefits of integration.

We hope to feature articles that are directly related to the economic and cultural aspects of the ASEAN integration in the coming years.

Romeo B. Lee

Editor