

# Reporting the ASEAN

An Assessment of the ASEAN Media  
and the ASEAN as a News Topic

# ASEAN situation

- Diverse in terms of
  - History
  - Culture
  - Economy
- State of ASEAN press also varies
- What they have in common as focus of discussion
  - **Adherence to globalization**

# Challenge to ASEAN journalists

- Looking at common situation despite diversity of culture
- Analyzing positive and negative effects of ASEAN policies and programs
- Relating ASEAN to the globalization paradigm

# ASEAN member-countries

- Brunei Darussalam
- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Laos (also Lao PDR)
- Malaysia
- Burma (also Myanmar)
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Vietnam (also Viet Nam)

# SEAPA 2008 study

- Positive developments in ASEAN media
- Fight to uphold press freedom “far from won”
- Passage of national security laws familiar theme in 2007
  - Philippines: Human Security Act enacted on March 6, 2007

# SEAPA's media assessment

- Burma – repressed and suppressed
- Cambodia – restrictive laws against press freedom
- Indonesia – efforts by interest groups to undermine media's independence and plurality
- Laos – all publications still need government approval

# SEAPA's media assessment

- Malaysia – parliament can impose restrictions for security reasons
- Philippines – killings; vulnerable to laws and policies set by hostile government
- Singapore – still unblinking and unapologetic in its restrictive rules and policies

# SEAPA's media assessment

- Thailand – unstable as free expression hinged on military's benevolence, patience
- Vietnam – Press Law puts admin aspects of the press under government hands



# Freedom House 2008 study

Brunei	Not Free	Myanmar	Not Free
Cambodia	Partly Free	Philippines	Partly Free
Indonesia	Partly Free	Singapore	Not Free
Laos	Not Free	Thailand	Partly Free
Malaysia	Not Free	Vietnam	Not Free
<b>ASEAN (Ave.)</b>		<b>NOT FREE</b>	

# Global Press Freedom Ranking

Brunei	165	Myanmar	194
Cambodia	128	Philippines	97
Indonesia	114	Singapore	153
Laos	179	Thailand	119
Malaysia	141	Vietnam	178

# Freedom House says...

- World's "worst-rated countries" include Burma, Cuba, Libya, North Korea and Turkmenistan
- Crackdown in Burma worsened its already repressive media environment

# Freedom House says...

- Threats apparent in countries with established record of media freedom
- Violence against journalists seen in Mexico, Russia and the Philippines

# CPJ: Journalists killed 1992-2008

	<b>Number</b>	<b>% Share</b>
Brunei	0	---
Cambodia	8	14.55%
Indonesia	5	9.09%
Laos	0	---
Malaysia	0	---
Myanmar	3	5.45%
Philippines	34	61.82%
Singapore	0	---
Thailand	5	9.09%
Vietnam	0	---
<b>ASEAN (Total)</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# Philippines “freest” press?

- Philippines accounts for more than three-fifths of journalists killed in ASEAN from January 1, 1992 to October 14, 2008
- Philippines is FIFTH in terms of incidences of killing of journalists globally
  - After Iraq (135), Algeria (60), Russia (49) and Colombia (40)

# Overall media situation

- Media not always “independent, vigilant and defiant of authority as it should be – more so in Southeast Asia when state and business elites control the press and there exists legislation to jail journalists and editors if they ‘step out of line’.”  
(Sonny Inbaraj, *The Nation*, Bangkok)

# ASEAN media: Anything common?

- Direct or indirect threats to freedom of the press
- Seemingly harmless policies introduced by governments
- Existing laws interpreted even at the expense of press freedom
- Private ownership not indicator of vibrant press; monopoly ownership, government control must be considered



# ASEAN media: Anything common?

- More media organizations not necessarily good; quality of content must be considered
- Media suppressed in the guise of protecting the State, but suppression is done to protect officials' interests
- Gains in upholding press freedom products of journalists' and the people's assertion of their rights

# Professionalism in ASEAN press

- Learn, relearn, unlearn basic concepts of journalism, role in social change
- Uphold highest professional, ethical standards of journalism
- Information sharing, networking with ASEAN journalists

# Professionalism in ASEAN press

- Encourage other ASEAN journalists to help in demanding that a government stop media repression
- Participate in people's assertion of basic rights
- Report about situation in ASEAN member-countries and the ASEAN as an organization

# ASEAN as news topic

- Very newsworthy
- Not just limited to annual ministerial meetings
- Global importance of ASEAN
  - Population: 575 million
  - Land area: 4.5 million square kilometers
  - Total trade: \$1.4 billion

# Top 3 (land area, sq. km.)

Indonesia	1,890,754
Burma	676,577
Thailand	513,120
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>4,464,322</b>

# Top 3 (population, in thousand)

Indonesia	224,905
Philippines	88,875
Vietnam	85,205
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>575,525</b>

# Top 3 (pop. density, persons/sq km)

Singapore	6,518
Philippines	296
Vietnam	259
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>129</b>

# Top 3 (population growth, in %)

Thailand	4.6
Brunei	3.5
Laos	2.8
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>1.9</b>



# Top 3 (GDP, in thousand US\$)

Indonesia	431,717.7
Thailand	245,701.9
Malaysia	186,960.7
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>1,281,853.9</b>

# Top 3 (exports, in thousand US\$)

Singapore	271,607.9
Malaysia	157,226.9
Thailand	121,579.5
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>750,708.0</b>

# Top 3 (FDI, in thousand US\$)

Singapore	24,055.4
Thailand	10,756.1
Malaysia	6,059.7
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>52,379.5</b>

# Context of ASEAN

- Established August 8, 1967
- Child of “Cold War”
- Born amidst turmoil and conflict in the region
- Five founding members faced common threat from communists

# Through the years

- Principles of mutual respect and non-interference could be compromised by some agreements
- ASEAN Vision 2020 – shared vision of ASEAN as outward-looking
- AIA 1998 – opening up of all industries for investment to ASEAN and beyond

# ASEAN and financial crisis

- Effects of proposed Asian Currency Unit (ACU)
- Effects of devaluation on people, especially marginalized sectors
- Use and misuse of any financial assistance
- Speculative attacks on currency in 1997 and beyond
- Portfolio and direct equity investments (ASEAN level)

# Writing about ASEAN, remember...

- Diversity not just cultural but also economic in nature
- Whether or not national treatment under AIA can benefit ASEAN member-countries
- Several angles can still be explored regarding economic implications of ASEAN
- Remember the **CONTEXT**

Thank you!

Prof. Danilo A. Arao  
University of the Philippines (UP)