

Section A

You must answer Question 1.

THE QUESTION OF MYANMAR IN ASEAN

- 1 Read the sources and then answer the question.

Source A

ASEAN members perhaps can no longer afford to adopt a non-committal stance and avoid passing judgement on events in a member country, simply on the grounds of 'non-interference'. To be sure, ASEAN's respect for sovereignty of 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. Consequently, it is obvious that ASEAN countries have an overriding interest in the internal affairs of its fellow members and may, on occasion, find it necessary to recommend a certain course of action on specific issues that affect us all, directly or indirectly. Or, to be explicit, we may need to make intra-ASEAN relations more dynamic, more engaged, and yes, more 'constructive' than before.

Surin Pitsuwan, Thailand's Foreign Minister, speaking of the need for ASEAN to adopt the concept of 'flexible engagement' at the June 1998 Asia-Pacific roundtable in Kuala Lumpur.

Source B

The failure of the ASEAN Way of private consultation and consensus to bring about change in Burma and the regime's human rights records, which tarnishes the association as a whole, led to Surin's flexible engagement proposal. Flexible engagement challenges the ASEAN Way in that it raises the prospect of members not just intervening in the affairs of others but also publicly criticizing them in order to achieve change. Public criticism of neighboring states over an issue as sensitive as human rights, for example, also helps distance the member and the association from the negative image created by regimes that abuse human rights.

This mattered to ASEAN states, especially in the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis, when they needed to convince the United States and the European Union that they merited financial support because of their democratic credentials. Such thinking led Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysian Prime Minister, to inform his hosts when he visited Burma in March 1998 that "you have to understand that Europe is very important to us."

Extracted from the book Security and Southeast Asia, published 2003 in Singapore.

Source C

It was politically and strategically important for ASEAN to have Myanmar in its fold. Since ASEAN had no criteria for membership other than geographical location, accession to ASEAN agreements and adherence to certain principles governing inter-state relations, there were no grounds for excluding Myanmar indefinitely even if ASEAN countries were so inclined. Beyond the fact of membership, which is important in itself, having Myanmar in ASEAN had enabled the other member-countries to question and seek explanations from Myanmar about developments in the country. Myanmar's participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum has compelled, as well as given an opportunity for, its foreign minister to respond to criticisms aired and questions raised by other ministers; not even North Korea's internal situation has been subjected to such scrutiny in the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Rodolfo C. Severino, in a book where he shared his insights and experiences as former ASEAN Secretary-General, dated 2007.

Source D

1. Myanmar is clearly in the geographic footprint of Southeast Asia.
2. For the first time in its long existence, it has taken a decision to be aligned, in this case, with ASEAN.
3. Myanmar is a relatively large country, bigger than France, with some 52 million people, and very strategically located between China, Thailand, India, Bangladesh and Laos. Its land border with China is 2185 kilometres long; with Thailand, 1800 kilometres; and with India, 1463 kilometres. Its total land border is 5876 kilometres or twice the land border of France, which is 2889 kilometres long. France's land border with Germany is only 451 kilometres long; yet, three major wars were fought between them from 1870 to 1945. It is clear that Myanmar's territorial integrity and political stability are critical to its neighboring countries and to ASEAN.
4. If Myanmar were a member of ASEAN, there would be better opportunities to influence Myanmar to adjust its internal policies and move toward national reconciliation.

Domingo Siazon, Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs, explaining ASEAN's rationale at a conference in Paris in 2004.

Source E

Of all the moves ASEAN has made over the years to make itself stronger, admitting Myanmar has been a decision the association has grown to regret the most. In fact, talk of Myanmar being expelled has become rife since the junta's detention of democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi at the end of May. If Yangon continues to defy world pressure to release her, "in the end it may have to be that way", affirmed Mahathir Mohamad, hitherto a strong supporter of Myanmar's ASEAN membership.

Although Mahathir's remarks were later softened by his foreign minister, Syed Hamid Albar, who explained that "just as the decision to admit Myanmar was reached through consensus, the

expulsion of Myanmar has to be done in a similar manner”, the pressure on Myanmar is clearly growing. And Yangon has tried to ward off the pressure by releasing some 91 democracy activists arrested on May 30.

An article published in Asia Times, an online newspaper with global readership, dated 2003.

Now answer the following question.

How far do Sources A-E support the hypothesis that ‘Myanmar’s admission into ASEAN in 1997 has done more harm than good to the association’s development’?

Section B

Answer any **three** questions.

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

- 2 ‘Nationalist movements in Southeast Asia fared no better during the Japanese Occupation than under colonial rule.’ To what extent do you agree with the statement?
- 3 ‘International developments in the post-WWII period were most crucial in determining the pace and nature of decolonization of Southeast Asian states.’ Discuss.
- 4 How valid is the view that ‘the military had no choice but to become involved in politics’ in independent Southeast Asia?
- 5 ‘Regardless of race, language or religion.’ Is this an accurate reflection of Southeast Asian governments’ policies towards the assimilation of ethnic minorities after independence?
- 6 To what extent were independent Southeast Asian nations able to overcome inter-state disputes to bring about regional cooperation?