



# Southeast Asia in a New Era

Ten Countries, One Region in ASEAN

EDITED BY

**RODOLFO C. SEVERINO, ELSPETH THOMSON AND MARK HONG**



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### ASEAN Member Countries

- Brunei Darussalam
- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Vietnam





# Southeast Asia in a New Era



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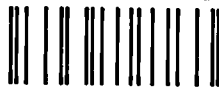
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PUSTAKA PERDANA



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# Foreword

Unlike most of the existing publications on ASEAN, this volume focuses not on ASEAN as a regional entity but on the ten countries that compose the whole. It is this approach that makes this an interesting and useful volume, and which complements well the recently published *Know Your ASEAN* (ISEAS, 2007) as up-to-date, informative and accessible resource materials suitable for students and the general public. With ten in-depth studies of the states that make up ASEAN, this volume offers the reader a useful ground-level view of the different and distinct parts that constitute the region and the regional grouping.

The country studies deal with historical evolution, development strategies, political systems and national characteristics (accompanied by useful statistical data and chronologies) of the member states of ASEAN. They reveal the similarities of regional environment and experience, as well as the commonness of purpose and challenges, that underpin the desirability of and, indeed, the need for tighter and deeper regional co-operation. At the same time, specific national interests and varying domestic priorities of the different states are the very factors that often come in the way of collective regional objectives.

ASEAN has indeed come a long way since its establishment in 1967. At forty years, it is on the threshold of a new era. An ASEAN Charter has entered into effect, reflecting a greater sense of common purpose and belonging among its member states, and there is high expectation for Southeast Asia to collectively become an essential part of Asia's inevitable economic and political ascendancy this century. Has ASEAN consolidated and defined Southeast Asia as one unified region? The answer lies not in the rhetorical expression for "ASEAN-ness" based on an imagined identity but in the realities embedded in the individual countries that make up ASEAN. Different levels of economic development, pace of liberalization and the state of governance of its members are challenges to the forging of a truly cohesive and effective ASEAN community. The fulfilment of effective regionalism will depend ultimately on finding congruence and complementarities among a range of sometimes incompatible economic and political structures, interests and priorities. To understand ASEAN and how it functions, one needs, therefore, to know its constituent parts. Herein lies the value of this compilation.