

# เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ในศตวรรษที่ 21 : ระยะเวลาเปลี่ยนผ่าน ความต่อเนื่อง และการเปลี่ยนแปลง

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## บทคัดย่อ

การเปลี่ยนแปลงที่เกิดขึ้นในประเทศเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้เป็นวิกฤตการณ์ทางสังคม ซึ่งมาจากสาเหตุ 2 ประการ คือ การคุกคามจากปัจจัยภายนอกซึ่งเกิดจากกระแสโลกาภิวัตน์ของระบบเศรษฐกิจการเงิน และปัจจัยภายในอันเนื่องมาจากสถาบันหลักทางสังคมของประเทศอ่อนแอและไม่สามารถแก้ปัญหาใหม่ๆ ที่ซับซ้อนซึ่งเกิดขึ้นในยุคนี้ได้ กลยุทธ์ที่สามารถนำมาใช้ในการจัดการภาวะวิกฤตดังกล่าวได้คือ การสร้างความแข็งแกร่ง โดยการมีระบบการเมืองการปกครองที่ดีหรือธรรมรัฐ การพัฒนาทางวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยี วัฒนธรรมและการพัฒนาโดยคำนึงถึงรากฐานทางวัฒนธรรม เศรษฐกิจแบบพอเพียง และประชาสังคม กลยุทธ์อีกประการคือการก้าวล่วงจากกระบวนทัศน์แบบดั้งเดิม พลังสังคมอันเกิดจากการระดมกำลังของกลุ่มผ่านกระบวนการเรียนรู้ทางสังคมจะเป็นพลังสำคัญที่ผลักดันให้เกิดการปฏิรูปสังคม

คำสำคัญ : เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้, ระยะเวลาเปลี่ยนผ่าน, สังคมศาสตร์

## South East Asia into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century : Critical Transition, Continuity and Change

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*The critical transition in South East Asian countries is a social crisis that consists of two major causes : firstly, the threats from outside which occur from the globalized economic system focusing on money, and secondly, the weakness within, since all the existing social institutions are not strong and capable enough to deal with the complex and new problems brought about by this type of globalization. Coping and transcending are two strategies to deal with the above critical transition. Coping strategies consist of good governance, science and technology development, culture and culture-based development, sufficient economy and civil society whereas transcending strategies involve strategies to transcend the old paradigm. The social energy created by social mobilization through social learning is the only force strong enough for the great reform.*

**Keywords :** South East Asia, critical transition, social science

### South East Asia as a continent

During the last glacial era when the ocean tide was low all of South East Asian area was a continuous piece of land, a continent as large as the United States. The combined population of 10 ASEAN countries are now over 512 millions, almost double that of America. We share the same climate and more or less similar cultures. All fell victims to Western colonialism, although Thailand was able to escape being directly colonized, but indirectly not. Post World War II, after painful struggles, all South East Asians are now politically independent. But economically not, since the globalized economy interconnects national economies into one complex world system. In such a system the countries which have amassed

tremendous capitals can influence the world economy in their favour at the cost of others. And, since most of the money circulating in the market now is not for economic production but for speculation, economic crisis can occur all of a sudden in any countries. Acute economic turbulation is a new phenomenon, accompanying the new economic system with money as its center. In such an inter-connected complex system the phenomena of the so-called "self organized criticality" and "chaos", havoc is abound.

Thus, in the "modern era" what happens in South East Asian countries does not depend on what we do or don't alone, but very much, through the inter-connected system, on behaviour of

others. Colonialism and the money oriented world economic system have greatly disturbed South East Asian countries to the root-our culture.

### **The Social Crisis**

The critical transition is the social crisis. This is a global phenomenon that most countries in the world are going through. The social crisis consists of widened income gaps between the rich and the poor, social disintegration, environmental crisis and cultural disruption. Symptoms of social illness are many such as crimes and violence, drug addiction, prostitution, spreading of HIV/AIDS, stress, frustration, exhaustion, the feeling of hopelessness, for examples. These symptoms are not readily or impossible to be cured because their cause is structural.

The two major causes of the social crisis are :

- 1) The threats from outside
- 2) The weakness within

The threats from outside occur from globalization of the money economic system. The West which has amassed very large capital, better information and better skill will suck the money away from countries with less capital, less information and less skill. Hooked with this type of monetary global system, operated by big greed, all the less developed countries will be forced to squeeze every thing - labor, environmental resources, culture, social integrity, into the money to feed the hungry giant. The threat to countries integrity from the modern economic system is larger and more thoroughly than any threats these countries ever encountered in the past.

Confronted with outside tremendous and complex threats the weakness from inside is more prominent. All the old social institutions become malaise, not able to cope with the new problems-be it the political, the bureaucratic, the educational or the religious institutions. They are not strong enough to deal with the very complex and very difficult problems brought about by this type of globalization.

The interplay of the outside threats and the inside weakness is responsible for the disaster encountered in most ASEAN and other similar countries throughout the world. The problems are not readily amenable to solution. But in an attempt to cope with this critical transition the root cause must be understood.

### **Strategies for South East Asia**

#### **1. Coping strategies**

Coping strategies are strategies to cope with the present crises as they are. These are designs to strengthen ourselves to be able to cope with the problems or to lessen them as much as possible. These strategies should consist of the following :

1.1 Good Governance. To be strong and efficient, countries must operate decently at every level-honesty, fairness, efficiency, transparency and accountability are the major characters of good governance. For this it might be necessary, as appropriate, to do social reform in many aspects such as political reform, bureaucratic reform, education reform, media reform, law reform and civil society development.

1.2 Science and technology development. Basic science and necessary technology development should be carried out to strengthen national coping capability.

1.3 Culture and development. If we think of capital in terms of money only we will fall victims to the capitalists. Culture is a great capital. Actually, culture is a tool for fighting crisis. Culture promotes group integration and group fighting against external threats. Culture is encompassing, while economic development may be sectoral. Any sectoral or compartmentalized development always leads to crisis. Development should be culture-based, because culture is an integrating factor. To be able to cope with the present crisis, ASEAN countries should give serious consideration to culture and development.

1.4 Sufficient economy and community strengthening. To fend off outside threats,

the body must have an immune system. Without the immune system, the body will succumb to invading dangers. A country should have an immune system to protect itself from outside threats. These are sufficient economy and community strengthening. Sufficient economy is an economic system which is characterized by self-reliance, building strong base and growing from the strong base. Produce for sufficient consumption first and sell the rest to guarantee sufficiency, and reduce the risks and exploitation from the unfair trade. Community strengthening is important for integrated development. Integrated development reduces exploitation, leading to sustainable development.

Good Governance, science and technology development, culture-based development, sufficient economy and community strengthening will help South East Asian countries to develop capacity to cope with the present crises.

## 2. Transcending strategies

It is not enough just to cope with the crisis. For the world system operating now is crisis bound. Crisis will occur repeatedly until we change the paradigm. One major conflict exists. That is, globalization without global mind. Our body is greatly diverse in its physical components, but integration is extremely vital. Because it implies one mind. Integration in a system is necessary for its healthy existence and sustainability. Actually, the whole world is one. Globalization in the prevailing thought is physical only, operated not by a global mind but by big greed, particularly by those who can acquire wealth at the expense of others. The so called developed countries are actually not developed in the moral sense. Just very recently in history they used forces to rob other countries around the world, and now are using a new 'globalized' system for the same purpose. In the inter-connected complex world system, operated by big greed, the phenomena called "self-organized criticality" and "chaos" repeatedly happen causing devastation here and there and finally to the entire system. The old paradigm has stretched to its limits, leading to crisis. To get out of crisis we need to transcend

the old paradigm. We have to go beyond Western civilization thinking.

ASEAN countries should develop transcending strategies. Development should be re-defined. New indices for development should be used. GDH is more important than GDP. While GDP (Gross Domestic Product) measures material progress, GDH (Gross Domestic Happiness) measures a more integrated and desirable result. For happiness occurs through an integration of several factors such as adequate necessary material, good family, good community, good environment and spiritual development.

New human development that strengthens cohesiveness between people and with environment is needed. For this new consciousness is needed--the consciousness that we belong to the same oneness. Only with new consciousness can mankind build a new world of peaceful co-existence. In practice, community building and spiritual development will form a basis that can be gradually expanded to a larger system of togetherness. For this new education and information to promote new consciousness and new skill for togetherness are necessary. South East Asia should work together for this new transcending development.

## Social Energy : Marriage Between Social Movement and Research

To transcend the present crisis to peace and sustainability in the complex, multidimensional and dynamic world system is extremely difficult, next to impossible. No existing social institutions are strong and capable enough to do it. The only force which is strong enough is the social energy. The social energy is created by social mobilization through social learning. And for social learning, research to create relevant knowledges is necessary. Without knowledge or with irrelevant knowledges social mobilization cannot move very far or moves off course. Relevant knowledges empower society. Thus research is greatly needed to create social energy, but it must be relevant to the social movement. Research isolated from social movement, although not always, very often

fails to be relevant. Thus, marriage between social movement and research is crucial for the great reform.

There is one humble experience in Thailand recently, i.e. the writing of new constitution for political reform. It was carried out amidst disagreement of politicians and conservative forces. Generally, it was not possible to rewrite constitution by peaceful means. However, this was accomplished through wide social participation supported by research.

Thus, for South East Asia to be able to transcend the present crisis to create peace and

sustainability, there is a need for new thinking which goes beyond the presently dominating paradigm. And to connect the new vision to action for a great reform, South East Asia should work together through culture-based development, social mobilization and relevant research. The ASEAN Inter-University Seminar on Social Development could be a good spring board for a new vision and new movement for peace and sustainability in this region and in the world. But it must encompass both social mobilization and research.