

Where Next? Priorities for the ASEAN Economic Community Post-2025

Edited by

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Foreword

ASEAN has garnered significant global attention in recent years due to its consistent economic performance, maintaining growth rates above the global average – even amidst challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, energy crises, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. In an era marked by trade tensions and weakening multilateralism, ASEAN remains a pillar of regional co-operation and a model for peace and stability. Its success lies in a steadfast commitment to dialogue, mutual understanding, and consensus-driven decision-making. As major economies reassess their supply chains and economic dependencies, ASEAN stands to benefit from the global reconfiguration – provided it strengthens its institutions and upholds the principles of rules-based multilateralism.

The publication of *Where Next? Priorities for the ASEAN Economic Community Post-2025* comes at a timely and pivotal moment. As ASEAN leaders convene in Malaysia to chart the course for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) beyond 2025, they stand at a critical juncture. The region's long-standing vision of becoming a cohesive single market and deeply integrated into the global economy, calls for a forward-looking and inclusive agenda. With the AEC Blueprint 2025 nearing completion, ASEAN must now adopt a broader strategic approach – one that not only accelerates economic integration but also embraces digital transformation, harnesses emerging technologies, and aligns with global sustainability and inclusion goals.

This book explores the key issues that will shape ASEAN's post-2025 priorities, including narrowing the development gap, strengthening institutional frameworks, and deepening economic integration. Whilst trade policy remains central, ASEAN's focus is expanding beyond traditional economic issues to encompass emerging areas such as gender inclusivity, resilience, energy security, disaster management, data governance, sustainability, climate change, and competition policy.

The insights presented in this volume highlight both ASEAN's remarkable achievements over the past decade and the challenges that lie ahead. Each chapter offers concrete, actionable policy recommendations to support policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in navigating the evolving landscape of regional integration and economic development.

As ASEAN looks to the future, it must reaffirm its commitment to deeper integration, whilst ensuring its efforts remain inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to new realities. Though the path forward is complex and uncertain, a bold and forward-thinking agenda will allow ASEAN to continue thriving in a rapidly changing global environment.



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