The Pacific Review ›

Volume 23, 2010 - Issue 4

5,939 Views | 71 CrossRef citations to date | 15 Altmetric

Original Articles

ASEAN's unchanged melody? The theory and practice of ‘non-interference’ in Southeast Asia

Lee Jones

Pages 479-502 | Published online: 11 Aug 2010

Cite this article https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2010.495996

Sample our Politics & International Relations Journals

>> Sign in here to start your access to the latest two volumes for 14 days

Abstract

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is widely supposed by theorists and commentators of many persuasions to have elevated the principle of absolute non-interference in the internal affairs of states into a central pillar of Southeast Asian regionalism. Non-interference is also criticised for retarding ASEAN from taking meaningful action over economic crises, problematic members like Myanmar, and transnational security threats. This article critiques this consensus, arguing that the norm has never been absolute, but has rather been upheld or ignored in line with the interests of the region's dominant social forces. While the principle formally remains in place despite such challenges and serious instances of violation, it is now subject to competing demands and contestation.

Keywords:

ASEAN non-interference intervention international relations theory

Previous article View issue table of contents Next article

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Christopher Bickerton, Katja Freistein, Emily Paddon, Carolyn Haggis and two anonymous reviewers for extremely helpful comments on earlier drafts.

Lee Jones is a lecturer in International Politics at Queen Mary, University of London. His research focuses on questions of state-society relations, governance, political economy, sovereignty and intervention, particularly in post-colonial countries. He has recently completed a book manuscript on sovereignty regimes in Southeast Asia.

Notes

1. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand joined in 1967; Brunei Darussalam, in 1983; Laos and Myanmar, in 1997; and Cambodia, in 1999.

2. B. Kausikan, interview with the author, Singapore, February 2008.

3. B. Desker, interview with the author, Singapore, February 2008.

4. Kraisak Choonhavan, interview with the author, Bangkok, January 2008.

5. Ali Alatas, interview with the author, Jakarta, February 2008.

6. J. Asda, interview with the author, Bangkok, January 2008.

7. B. Kausikan, interview with the author, Singapore, February 2008.

8. ASEAN Secretariat Official, interview with the author, Jakarta, February 2008.

Related Research Data

The English School and ASEAN

Source: The Pacific Review

12 Myanmar: Preoccupation with Regime Survival, National Unity, and Stability

Source: Unknown Repository

ASEAN and East Asian International Relations

Source: Unknown Repository

The Dual Narrative of “Good Governance”: Lessons for Understanding Political and Cultural Change in Malaysia and Singapore

Source: Contemporary Southeast Asia

Cambodia and Burma: The ASEAN Way Ends Here

Source: Asian Survey

East Timor and Asian security

Source: Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars

The politics of ‘Asian values’

Related research

People also read | Recommended articles | Cited by 71

Information for

Authors

R&D professionals

Editors

Librarians

Societies

Open access

Overview

Open journals

Open Select

Dove Medical Press

F1000Research

Opportunities

Reprints and e-prints

Advertising solutions

Accelerated publication

Corporate access solutions

Help and information

Help and contact

Newsroom

All journals

Books

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email

Sign me up

Copyright © 2026 Informa UK Limited Privacy policy

Cookies Terms & conditions Accessibility

Registered in England & Wales No. 01072954
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG

Taylor & Francis by informa