



HISTORY

Paper 2 Developments in Southeast Asia (Independence-2000)

9174/02

Tuesday, 2 September 2025
3 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet will be provided with this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer booklet, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Section A

Answer **Question 1**.

Section B

Answer **two** questions.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of the each question or part question.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

Section A

You **must** answer Question 1.

EXPANSION OF ASEAN MEMBERSHIP

1 Read the sources and answer the questions which follow.

Source A

Myanmar's admission to ASEAN marks a new chapter in regional harmony. Our aspiration is to contribute to ASEAN's goal of unity through peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. We believe that Myanmar's integration will promote regional economic development and cultural exchange, while reinforcing peace and stability. Our history has taught us that isolation is not a viable path forward. ASEAN offers a platform where sovereign nations can pursue cooperation without compromising independence. We are confident that our participation will strengthen the bonds of Southeast Asia and foster shared prosperity. Myanmar will engage constructively, honour ASEAN principles, and advance the region's long-term goals.

*From the opening statement at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting by
Myanmar Foreign Minister, July 1997.*

Source B

Some ask why we would admit a country like Myanmar under military rule. But ASEAN is not a club of perfect democracies—it is a forum for regional solidarity. Isolation will not change Myanmar; engagement might. By including Myanmar, we close the Cold War chapter and unite Southeast Asia under one regional roof. This is a pragmatic step: economically, Myanmar is rich in resources and offers untapped potential for trade and connectivity. Politically, it is better to bring them into the tent than to leave them out where instability festers. ASEAN gains strength not by exclusion but by managing diversity with wisdom.

*Remarks by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad at the
ASEAN Summit Press Briefing, 1997.*

Source C

The admission of Laos and Myanmar to ASEAN in July 1997 marked a turning point—ASEAN was no longer just a club of market-oriented, diplomatically-aligned states. Critics argued that ASEAN's 'big tent' policy diluted its coherence, especially given Myanmar's military regime and Laos's one-party system. However, ASEAN leaders defended the move, claiming engagement was a better strategy than exclusion. By bringing these countries into the fold, ASEAN hoped to moderate their behaviour and align them with regional norms. Yet in practice, the decision exposed internal fault lines. Consensus was harder to achieve, and ASEAN's credibility suffered when it struggled to respond to human rights concerns in Myanmar. The expansion brought diversity, but at the cost of decisiveness and diplomatic leverage.

*Excerpt from a 1997 article in The Far Eastern Economic Review analysing
ASEAN's expansion to include Laos and Myanmar.*

Source D



A political cartoon from a publication by Burmese exiles, 2007.

Source E

The post-enlargement ASEAN has faced persistent internal fragmentation. While the inclusion of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) enhanced ASEAN's regional completeness, it also entrenched divisions in foreign policy orientation, especially in relation to China. The South China Sea dispute exemplifies how ASEAN's unity is undermined by divergent national interests. Cambodia's repeated blocking of joint communiqués critical of Chinese actions revealed how external powers exploit internal cleavages. Moreover, development disparities and governance differences have hindered regional policy implementation—from infrastructure connectivity to human rights frameworks. ASEAN's principle of non-interference, once a shield against colonial domination, has become a barrier to resolving internal crises. As enlargement stretched ASEAN's geographical boundaries, it also stretched its normative coherence, weakening the organisation's collective effectiveness.

From an article by a Thai academic who specializes in Security and International Studies, 2020.

Source F

ASEAN's expansion to include all ten Southeast Asian countries by the late 1990s was a historic achievement, symbolising the triumph of regionalism over Cold War fragmentation. It enhanced ASEAN's geopolitical legitimacy and allowed for more inclusive dialogue on shared challenges such as migration, environmental degradation, and economic integration. However, enlargement also complicated the consensus model. The developmental and governance disparities between original and newer members have made it difficult to align on key issues like democracy promotion or security cooperation. ASEAN's strength has always been its ability to accommodate diversity without imposing uniformity. Yet, as the regional agenda becomes more complex—especially with the rise of China and transnational threats—the limits of 'lowest common denominator' diplomacy are becoming more visible. Enlargement has not weakened ASEAN per se, but it has made cooperation slower and more difficult to sustain without institutional innovation.

From an article written by a former Indonesian Deputy Secretary for Political Affairs, 2014.

Now answer the following questions:

- (a) Compare and contrast the evidence provided in Sources A and B on the reasons for Myanmar's membership into ASEAN in 1997. [10]
- (b) How far do Sources A-F support the view that the expansion of ASEAN's membership in the 1990s undermined ASEAN's strength as a regional organisation? [30]

Section B

You must answer **two** questions from this section.

EITHER

- 2** 'The superpowers had the greatest influence in shaping the forms of government in Southeast Asian states after independence.' How far do you agree with this statement? [30]

OR

- 3** Assess the view that multiculturalism was the most suitable approach to foster national unity in independent Southeast Asia. [30]

AND EITHER

- 4** To what extent was economic change in independent Southeast Asia due to external developments rather than domestic factors? [30]

OR

- 5** 'Independent Southeast Asian governments had often prioritised economic growth over other economic goals.' How far do you agree with this statement? [30]

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