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Indonesian Perceptions and Attitudes toward the ASEAN Community

Guido Benny and Kamarulnizam Abdullah

Abstract: The major criticism of the ASEAN Community idea is its elitist approaches. It lacks the most crucial components that have brought about the success of other similar regional organizations such as the European Union (EU): the involvement of the general public in the formation process. This study, therefore, analyses to what extent the Indonesian public understands and perceives the proposed regional community idea. By using statistical tests, the study accesses several interlinked factors such as knowledge about the ASEAN Community concept, perception of the process of establishment of the regional community, and perceived achievement of ASEAN as a regional organization to understand the Indonesian public's attitude. The study found that despite Indonesian respondents' relative lack of knowledge on the proposed formation of the ASEAN Community, they are indeed supportive of the idea. They also show some support for the proposed creation of the regional community under its three core pillars, namely the Security Community, Economic Community, and Socio-Cultural Community. Furthermore, the Indonesian respondents also perceive that the formation of the community would be beneficial not only to their country, but also to the society and economy.

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Keywords: Indonesia, ASEAN Community, regional integration

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Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), established in 1967, is a manifestation of an effort by member countries who sought to strengthen their regional cooperative mechanism economically, culturally and socially amid heightened tension between the two superpowers during the Cold War period.¹ The organization has subsequently grown not only in terms of the number of member countries but also in its focus and agenda. Yet maintaining peace and stability are the cornerstone of ASEAN diplomacy. This core objective has been translated into various regional sectoral programmes in agriculture, forestry, energy, and environment to accelerate the economic growth of the region. In fact, the organization continues to be actively involved in the socio-economic collaboration and cooperation both intra- and inter-regionally. In an attempt to forge further economic integration among member countries, ASEAN embarked upon the ambitious project of creating an ASEAN Community. The plan was officially announced at the Ninth ASEAN Summit in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. The ASEAN Community would be based on three core pillars, relating to issues of security, economics and culture and is important to strengthen further regional integration, amid global challenges and the imminent rise of China and India as world economic powers (Jones 2008).²

It can be argued that almost all ASEAN leaders have shown their optimism for the creation of the ASEAN Community. However, the ASEAN Community idea lacks one of the most crucial components that have brought about the success of other similar regional organizations such as the European Union (EU): the involvement of the general public, or, a people-to-people orientation. It seems that people within individual ASEAN coun-

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- 1 The association consists of ten countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. The land area is estimated to cover 4,435,830.3 square kilometres, or approximately 2.9 per cent of the land territory of the world, but its population was approximately 591,841,374 people in 2009, or about 8.72 per cent of the world's population (ASEAN Secretariat 2010).
 - 2 The idea was explicitly enunciated in the Bali Concord II 2003, by outlining three core pillars of the community, namely the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Security Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. It was envisaged that the community would be formed in 2020. However, it was decided in December 2005 that the implementation of ASEAN Community as "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" would be brought up to 2015. The idea of the ASEAN Community was finalized in the new ASEAN Charter at the 13th ASEAN Summit in November 2007, when all the heads of the member governments signed the charter. One year later, the new charter was accepted by the parliaments of all ten member countries.

tries have not yet fully grasped or been involved in the process of the building of the ASEAN Community. The larger issue is that the public in each ASEAN country may have its own perception, opinion and aspiration for the regional integration. The existence of the EU as what it is today and its success in economic, political and social integration has been obviously supported by the consensus and involvement of its general public.³ The idea of European community, furthermore, took years to materialize since the process involved not only policymakers but also the public's positive perception, acceptance and understanding (Handley 1981). Even prior to the formation and formalization of the EU, extensive studies were conducted by policymakers and academicians alike to ascertain the public's understanding and acceptance of the regional community idea (Laffan 1992: 123).

Public sentiments are therefore important to understand. How the people perceive the idea of regional integration and whether they support it should be assessed since the public is of course a key actor in the regionalization processes and would be directly affected by the process. Literature on regional integration theories has shown that the opinion of the general public may determine the success of the vision and mission of regional community building. The three major theories on regional integration, the transactionalist, neo-functionalist and democratic theories, though they argue differently about what kind of attitude and support are needed for the success of regional integration, share the position that the general public is an integral part of the regional integration process (Collins 2008; Deutsch 1957; Lindberg and Scheingold 1970; Hewstone 1986; Ortuoste 2008).

However, there were very few comprehensive analyses on how the involvement of the public should be dealt with in the Southeast Asian regional integration process, even though the process, like the proposed formation of ASEAN Community, would involve supra-national-level approaches encompassing the economic, political security, and socio-cultural fields.⁴ It seems that there were no systematic explanations to whether the

3 Public opinion towards the European Community and integration has been well documented since the European Commission conducted a series of extensive public opinion surveys known as *Eurobarometers* in all the member states to monitor attitudes toward the EC (Laffan 1992: 123). The results were published by the Public Opinion Analysis sector of the European Commission – Directorate General Communication.

4 Studies on ASEAN have been numerous, yet the focus of the studies has been more on the elite involvement and approach of the organization's establishment processes, the international political economic relations of the region, ASEAN as a regional institution, and ASEAN's socio-economic challenges (Acharya 2003; Hew, Wah, and Lee 2004; Hew 2007, 2005; Guerrero 2008). However, studies on public

vision and mission of the idea of ASEAN Community building would be supported or consented to by the general public.

Hence, the major purpose of this article is to discuss, evaluate, and analyse Indonesian public opinions and attitudes toward the regional community building in ASEAN particularly on the proposed creation of ASEAN Community. This article⁵ focuses on the perceptions and attitudes of the Indonesians on the ASEAN Community. The study is intended to contribute to the body of knowledge of regional integration, especially on the role that perceptions and attitudes play in the Southeast Asian case. Indonesia was chosen because among the ten members of ASEAN, the republic is the largest country in terms of territory,⁶ population,⁷ and economy.⁸ Indonesia, furthermore, has always been considered an important member of ASEAN. The former ASEAN Secretary General Rodolfo Severino (2006) has outlined four reasons Indonesia was important to the development of ASEAN. Firstly, he argues that ASEAN was created only after Indonesia changed its foreign policy approaches in the aftermath of the downfall of the Sukarno regime. Jakarta subsequently agreed to join four other founding regional nations – Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – to form ASEAN in 1967.⁹ Secondly, throughout ASEAN history, Indonesia has played a leadership role in the organization. The country was also the

opinion of ASEAN is quite rare. There has been only one study so far on the subject, conducted by Thompson and Thianthai (2008).

- 5 This article is made possible by a two-year research grant funded by the Malaysia's Ministry of Higher Education Research University Grant (GUP), reference no. UKM-GUP-TKS-07-10-96.
- 6 The territory of Indonesia, which is 1,860,360 sq km, covers about 49 per cent of the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2010).
- 7 The statistics from the ASEAN Secretariat (2010) show that the population of the country – the fourth most populated nation in the world after China, India and the US – was estimated at 231 million in 2009, or about 39 per cent of the whole population of Southeast Asia.
- 8 Indonesia's size of economy measured by GDP (gross domestic product) in 2009 was 546 billion USD or about 37 per cent of the GDP of the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2010). The GDP is the biggest in the region. However, the GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP) is 4,365 USD, lagging behind Singapore (51,392 USD), Brunei Darussalam (45,817 USD), Malaysia (12,258 USD) and Thailand (7,941 USD).
- 9 Severino (2006: 27) contends that ASEAN would not have been formed if Suharto did not decide to end the Sukarno regime's confrontational stance in foreign affairs. He instead sought good relations with the rest of the world, including the West, and particularly with Indonesia's neighbours. Indonesia's political transformation in 1967 changed not only its domestic political landscape but also its foreign policy and relations with ASEAN neighbours.

forerunner for the ASEAN's 2003 Political Security Community initiatives and took a leadership role in the drafting of the Plan of Action for the ASEAN Security Community in 2004 (Severino 2006: 27-32). Moreover, its role and contribution to the organization encompass political as well as economic dimensions. Severino (2006) argues that ASEAN's efforts at economic cooperation and integration would not have gotten off the ground had Indonesia not made its economy more open.

This article firstly discusses the methodology and samples used in the study. Subsequently, the article discusses and analyses the findings of the survey conducted on the subject. The discussion is divided into three sections. The first section discusses public awareness of, understanding of and perceived achievement of ASEAN. The second section focuses on public knowledge and perception about the formation process of the ASEAN Community, and the final section discusses the Indonesian public attitude toward the ASEAN Community.

Methodology and Samples

The article is based on surveys that were conducted to assess Indonesian public opinion on the subject in five major cities; Jakarta, Makassar, Medan, Pontianak and Surabaya, between June and December 2009. The five major Indonesian cities were chosen for several reasons. Jakarta was chosen due to its status as Indonesia's nerve centre for economic, social, cultural and political activities. It is also the capital city of the country and the largest city in Southeast Asia. Surabaya is the second-largest city in Indonesia and its influence on the economy of the country, especially the eastern part of Java Island, is undeniable. Makassar is the largest city in the eastern part of Indonesia and has strong economic and political influences on the islands of Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua, whereas Medan is the largest city in Sumatra in terms of population and economic activities, and it strongly influences Sumatera Island. Pontianak is not the largest city in Kalimantan Island, but its closeness to the border of Malaysia along with its economic activities with that country makes it an important enough city to be included in this study.

The survey involved 399 survey-respondents by using the quota purposive sampling method. Since this survey requires respondents' basic knowledge on the region, the respondents were purposely selected from those who have tertiary education or at least diploma-level qualifications. The quota of the samples was based on gender and occupation (50 per cent students, and 50 per cent non-students).

The background of respondents is shown in Table 1. The respondents consist of 45 per cent male and 55 per cent female. The majority are under

18 to 34 years old, single (75 per cent), and from lower income families (47 per cent of them have a monthly income of 1 million IDR (approximately 111 USD) or less). Furthermore, in the non-student category, those self-identified as being from the private sector are the largest occupational group represented in this survey (29 per cent).

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

		Indonesian Respondents		
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan
Number of Respondents		80	80	80
Gender	Male	51%	55%	41%
	Female	49%	45%	59%
Age category	18 to 34 years old	83%	79%	86%
	35 to 49 years old	11%	18%	14%
	50 years or more	6%	4%	0%
Marriage status	Single	75%	65%	81%
	Married	25%	35%	19%
	Widow/ Widower	0%	0%	0%
Family income level (Indonesia)	IDR 1,000,000 or less	65%	45%	41%
	IDR 1,000,001 to 2,000,000	22%	39%	31%
	IDR 2,000,001 to 3,000,000	11%	6%	15%
	IDR 3,000,001 to 4,000,000	1%	6%	10%
	IDR 4,000,001 or more	1%	3%	0%
Occupation	Lecturer	6%	10%	3%
	Civil servant	16%	11%	0%
	Private sector	24%	23%	44%
	Self-employed/ business/ entrepreneur	0%	4%	0%
	Housewife	0%	0%	6%
	Student	50%	50%	48%
	Unemployed	3%	3%	0%
	Others	1%	0%	0%

		Indonesian Respondents		
		Pontianak	Surabaya	Overall
Number of Respondents		79	80	399
Gender	Male	39%	48%	45%
	Female	61%	53%	55%
Age category	18 to 34 years old	78%	95%	84%
	35 to 49 years old	19%	4%	13%
	50 years or more	3%	1%	3%
Marriage status	Single	67%	85%	75%
	Married	32%	15%	25%
	Widow/ Widower	1%	0%	0%
Family income level (Indonesia)	IDR 1,000,000 or less	35%	46%	47%
	IDR 1,000,001 to 2,000,000	25%	31%	29%
	IDR 2,000,001 to 3,000,000	23%	14%	14%
	IDR 3,000,001 to 4,000,000	9%	4%	6%
	IDR 4,000,001 or more	4%	1%	2%
Occupation	Lecturer	14%	4%	7%
	Civil servant	8%	6%	8%
	Private sector	19%	38%	29%
	Self-employed/ business/ entrepreneur	9%	1%	3%
	Housewife	1%	0%	2%
	Student	49%	50%	49%
	Unemployed	0%	1%	1%
	Others	0%	0%	0%

Source: Authors' own compilation.

The survey employed a strictly structured close-ended questionnaire due to the complexity of the subject among the general public and limited resources available in the field. The use of words and language was simplified to ensure that respondents could understand the questions. The approach may limit the analysis, but the structured close-ended and simplified questions actually have helped this study get respondents to willingly take part in the project. Respondents may have refused to be involved in this study if they had had to answer long and complicated questions.¹⁰

10 The choice of the strictly structured close-ended questionnaire may increase the willingness for respondents to answer the questions because the ease and practicality of these questions require fewer efforts from the respondents to answer. For example, to discover whether the respondents aware of the year of the founding of

Awareness, Understanding, and Perception of the Achievements of ASEAN

A set of four yes-or-no questions indicate respondents' awareness on the current ASEAN: the year of its establishment, its objectives, and its organizational structure (Table 2). In general, the awareness of Indonesian respondents of ASEAN was relatively high, but their awareness did not necessarily reflect their thorough understanding of the organization. About 96 per cent of Indonesian respondents answered that they knew about ASEAN. However, only 65 per cent of them claimed that they knew that ASEAN was founded in 1967; and 67 per cent claimed that they understood ASEAN's purposes and objectives. Moreover, only 21 per cent of them claimed to know about ASEAN's organizational structure.¹¹

The level of awareness appears to be different from one city to another. By using Pearson's chi-square test of significant difference procedures,¹² respondents in Jakarta, Pontianak and Surabaya showed that they knew ASEAN better than those in Medan and Makassar. However, respondents' understandings of ASEAN's purposes and objectives are significantly higher in Makassar, Pontianak and Jakarta compare to Medan and Surabaya. There are several reasons that could explain these findings. It can be argued that the general public in Jakarta, students and non-students alike, are more exposed to ASEAN due to the city's metropolitan and international character as the capital city. Not only is the ASEAN Secretariat situated in Jakarta, but more important is that news on regional or ASEAN issues is easily accessible. The high level of awareness for those in Pontianak may be attributed to its people's mobility and closeness to Malaysia and Brunei.

To further ascertain the level of understanding of respondents, two subsequent questions are raised (see Table 2). To the question "Is ASEAN a

ASEAN, this study just asked, "Do you know that ASEAN was established in 1967?" instead of asking the respondents directly, "When was ASEAN founded?" However, the choice of the strictly structured close-ended questions may be the limitation of this study as the choices of answers are more restricted.

- 11 According to the ASEAN Charter, the organizational structure of ASEAN consists of the ASEAN Summits, the ASEAN Coordinating Council, the ASEAN Community Council, ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies, the Secretary-General of ASEAN and ASEAN Secretariat, the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, the ASEAN National Secretariats, the ASEAN Human Rights Body, and the ASEAN Foundation.
- 12 For the test of difference, the explanation of whether responses in the five cities are different is based on the two-sided asymptotic significance of the chi-square statistic. If it is smaller than 0.10, it is safe to say the different is significant. If it is greater than 0.10, it implies that the response is the same in each city.

security community with special security forces?”, the majority of respondents (82 per cent) answered correctly. Respondents were also asked whether ASEAN resembles the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the majority of them (85 per cent) answered correctly. By using Pearson’s chi-square test of differences, the study found that there were significant differences in the respondents’ understanding of ASEAN. The level of understanding in Jakarta, Medan and Surabaya was significantly higher than that in Makassar and Pontianak. The result again shows that, except Makassar, respondents in major cities in Indonesia are well exposed to the issues of regional development, particularly security issues.

Table 2: Respondent’s Awareness and Understanding of ASEAN

		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Pontianak	Surabaya	
AWARENESS ON ASEAN							
Do you know about ASEAN?	Yes	99%	95%	90%	99%	98%	96%
	No	1%	1%	8%	0%	3%	3%
Do you know that ASEAN was established in 1967?	Yes	64%	71%	53%	70%	68%	65%
	No	36%	29%	47%	30%	33%	35%
Do you understand the objectives of ASEAN?	Yes	68%	72%	60%	79%	55%	67%
	No	33%	28%	40%	21%	45%	33%
Do you know about the organizational structure of ASEAN?	Yes	14%	29%	17%	35%	13%	21%
	No	86%	71%	83%	65%	87%	79%
UNDERSTANDING OF ASEAN							
Is ASEAN a security community with special security forces?	Yes	18%	26%	13%	23%	11%	18%
	No	82%	74%	87%	77%	89%	82%
Does ASEAN resemble NATO in Europe?	Yes	14%	15%	11%	14%	20%	15%
	No	86%	85%	89%	86%	80%	85%

		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
AWARENESS ON ASEAN					
Do you know about ASEAN?	Yes	11.395	4	0.022	Yes
	No				
Do you know that ASEAN was established in 1967?	Yes	7.355	4	0.118	No
	No				
Do you understand the objectives of ASEAN?	Yes	13.277	4	0.010	Yes
	No				
Do you know about the organizational structure of ASEAN?	Yes	18.196	4	0.001	Yes
	No				
UNDERSTANDING OF ASEAN					
Is ASEAN a security community with special security forces?	Yes	8.275	4	0.082	Yes
	No				
Does ASEAN resemble NATO in Europe?	Yes	2.869	4	0.580	No
	No				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

On the question of whether this 44-year-old regional club could be considered a successful organization, it is interesting to note that most of the respondents (about 56 per cent) perceived that ASEAN in general as being neither successful nor unsuccessful (see Table 3). Only 37 per cent of them considered ASEAN in general to be successful. The result may challenge the claims made by some regional leaders and regional political observers that the organization is indeed a successful organization.¹³ Only 13 per cent of respondents perceived ASEAN as a regional organization.

13 Please see speeches or comments made by some regional leaders such as Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of Vietnam (*VOV News Online* 2010); Prime Minister Najib Tun Abdul Razak of Malaysia (Najib 2010).

Table 3: Respondent's Perceptions on the Achievements of ASEAN

		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Pontianak	Surabaya	
Perception of ASEAN's success.	Unsuccessful	9%	15%	14%	6%	20%	13%
	Neither successful nor unsuccessful	55%	56%	41%	40%	59%	50%
	Successful	36%	29%	46%	54%	20%	37%
The importance of ASEAN for you and the country.	Unimportant	1%	6%	1%	5%	6%	4%
	Neither important or unimportant	19%	16%	19%	12%	24%	18%
	Important	80%	79%	80%	83%	71%	79%
Do you think that if there was no ASEAN, there would be no problems for your country?	Yes	19%	18%	25%	18%	16%	19%
	No	81%	82%	75%	82%	84%	81%

		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
Perception of ASEAN's success.	Unsuccessful	37.403	16	0.002	Yes
	Neither successful nor unsuccessful				
	Successful				
The importance of ASEAN for you and the country.	Unimportant	14.254	16	0.580	No
	Neither important or unimportant				
	Important				
Do you think that if there was no ASEAN, there would be no problems for your country?	Yes	1.862	4	0.761	No
	No				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

The perception of whether ASEAN is a successful regional organization seems to be different from one city to another. According to the results of Pearson's chi-square test of significant difference procedures,¹⁴ the percentage of respondents in Jakarta, Medan and Pontianak showed higher agreement than that in Surabaya and Makassar regarding the success of ASEAN. There may be several explanations for this finding. The people in Jakarta are more exposed to ASEAN due to the city's metropolitan and international exposure as a capital city. Jakarta, in fact, is the first city in Indonesia that would receive benefits from the regional economic and social initiatives. For Medan (near the Malaysian peninsular) and Pontianak (near the border of Malaysia's Sarawak), their closeness in terms of social, economic and cultural activities with their prosperous neighbours may explain respondents' positive responses to ASEAN.

To further ascertain the Indonesian general public's perception of ASEAN's success, additional questions of "ASEAN's importance" and "the problem without ASEAN" are asked. On the importance of ASEAN, the majority of respondents (79 per cent) regarded ASEAN as still being important to their country. This response is consistent with the subsequent question of whether the existence of ASEAN is relevant or not. Only 19 per cent of them perceive that there would be no problems in the country if there was no ASEAN. These results show that the Indonesian respondents opined that ASEAN is quite successful, important, and still relevant to the region.

Knowledge and Perception of the Formation Process of the ASEAN Community

On 7 October 2003, ASEAN countries leaders signed the Declaration of Bali Concord II (ASEAN Secretariat 2003). The concord confirms member countries' strive for the formation of the ASEAN Community, which will come into effect in 2015. The concord also describes the ASEAN Community as a socio-political concert of Southeast Asian nations, linked through partnership and dynamic development. The creation of a community of caring societies, committed to upholding cultural diversity and social harmony has been envisaged. The idea of the ASEAN Community would comprise three core pillars – namely, security cooperation, economic coopera-

14 For the test of difference, the explanation of whether responses in the five cities are different is based on the two-sided asymptotic significance of the chi-square statistic. If it is smaller than 0.10, it is safe to say that the difference is significant. If it is greater than 0.10, it implies that the response is the same in each city.

tion, and socio-cultural cooperation, which are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing, to ensure durable peace, sustainable stability, and shared prosperity in the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2003). It appears that the ideas and objectives of the ASEAN Community are quite impressive. It shows political commitment of member countries to pursue an EU-like style of a regional community. However, the following question remains: Does the general public understand the idea? It can be argued that the top-down approaches of the ASEAN Community idea may leave the general public in the dark over the proposed idea.

The survey shows that only 42 per cent of the Indonesian respondents claimed that they have heard of or read about the ASEAN Community idea. Even in Jakarta, 71 per cent of the respondents claimed that they have not heard or read about the proposed idea (see Table 4). The numbers of respondents who claimed to have read or heard about the Bali Concord II was even less: only 16 per cent. Meanwhile, a majority of respondents also claimed that they have not yet heard about the ASEAN Charter. Therefore, it can be concluded that only a small percentage of Indonesians have ever heard about the ASEAN Community's idea and concept.

Table 4: Respondents' Knowledge on the ASEAN Community

		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Pontianak	Surabaya	
Have you ever heard/ read about the ASEAN Community?	Yes	29%	49%	51%	41%	43%	42%
	No	71%	51%	49%	59%	58%	58%
Have you ever heard/ read about the Bali Concord II?	Yes	14%	15%	9%	22%	20%	16%
	No	86%	85%	91%	78%	80%	84%
Have you ever heard about the ASEAN Charter?	Yes	42%	44%	42%	53%	41%	44%
	No	58%	56%	58%	47%	59%	56%

		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
Have you ever heard/read about the ASEAN Community?	Yes	9.151	4	0.057	Yes
	No				
Have you ever heard/read about the Bali Concord II?	Yes	5.754	4	0.218	No
	No				
Have you ever heard about the ASEAN Charter?	Yes	2.900	4	0.575	No
	No				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

How could we explain the lack of information received by the Indonesian general public regarding the proposed formation of the ASEAN Community? From the respondents who admitted that they have not heard about the ASEAN Community, several questions were asked to ascertain the source of this problem. It seems that respondents' lack of knowledge about the ASEAN Community was partly due to the government's failure to relay the information to the public. Only a small percentage of respondents (12 per cent) confirmed that they have heard an explanation from the government about the ASEAN Community. However, the majority of them denied that they have indifferent attitude toward the development of the regional organization. The majority of them (55 per cent) asserted that ASEAN should not be an affair exclusive to the country's leaders. Furthermore, a big percentage (77 per cent) of respondents also rejected the idea that any developments within ASEAN are not important. Only 22 per cent of respondents thought that they would not be influenced by the developments in ASEAN (see Table 5).

Table 5: Respondents' Opinions of and Attitudes toward the ASEAN Community

Do you agree with the statements?		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Pontianak	Surabaya	
I think that whatever is happening in ASEAN is not important.	Disagree	91%	75%	70%	74%	69%	77%
	Neither agree nor disagree	6%	11%	19%	21%	24%	16%
	Agree	4%	14%	11%	5%	7%	7%
I think I would not be influenced by the developments of ASEAN.	Disagree	50%	31%	50%	59%	47%	48%
	Neither agree nor disagree	31%	36%	29%	30%	27%	30%
	Agree	19%	33%	21%	11%	27%	22%
I think that ASEAN is the business of only the regional country leaders.	Disagree	70%	41%	62%	61%	38%	55%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13%	21%	8%	14%	29%	17%
	Agree	17%	38%	30%	25%	33%	28%
I have not heard an explanation from the government about the ASEAN Community idea.	Disagree	17%	13%	8%	18%	4%	12%
	Neither agree nor disagree	24%	20%	11%	32%	22%	22%
	Agree	59%	68%	82%	50%	73%	66%

Do you agree with the statements?		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
I think that whatever is happening in ASEAN is not important.	Disagree	19.319	16	0.252	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I think I would not be influenced by the developments of ASEAN.	Disagree	30.380	16	0.016	Yes
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I think that ASEAN is the business of only the regional country leaders.	Disagree	34.107	16	0.005	Yes
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I have not heard an explanation from the government about the ASEAN Community idea.	Disagree	20.532	16	0.197	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

The survey also tests respondents' level of knowledge on the concept of the ASEAN Community. We invited respondents who claimed that they have heard about the ASEAN Community to answer additional questions on the subject. The majority of those respondents (52 per cent) said that they knew that the ASEAN Community would be created; and 67 per cent of them said that they knew that the ASEAN Community would consist of three pillars (economic, security-related, and socio-cultural). However, the number of respondents who knew about the proposed creation year of the ASEAN Community (2015) was only 39 per cent. Interestingly, only 19 per cent of them claimed that they have enough knowledge or information about the ASEAN Community (see Table 6 for details). Hence, it can be concluded that the knowledge of respondents who claim that they have heard about the ASEAN Community was still low.

The formation process of the ASEAN Community was highly criticized by several scholars (Ortuoste 2008; Felker 2004; Pelksman 2009). It has been argued that the process involves only political, high-level policymakers, and the business community of member countries, thus forgetting the general public as another important base in the ASEAN Community process. This then tends to confirm the general arguments that ASEAN is indeed an elitist and state-centric association (Acharya 2003 and 2009; Caballero-Anthony 2009; Dickens and Wilson-Roberts 2000; Dupont 1999; Ganesan 1995; Sung 2010; Thi 2008; Tow 2003).

Table 6: Knowledge of Respondents: Who Claimed to Have Heard about the ASEAN Community

Do you agree with the statements?		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Ponti-anak	Sura-baya	
I knew that the ASEAN Community will be created.	Disagree	27%	8%	22%	6%	24%	17%
	Neither agree nor disagree	18%	38%	42%	26%	24%	31%
	Agree	55%	54%	36%	68%	53%	52%
I knew that it will comprise the Economic Community, the Security Community, and the Socio-Cultural Community.	Disagree	5%	3%	11%	0%	15%	7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	23%	33%	33%	16%	24%	27%
	Agree	73%	64%	56%	84%	62%	67%
I knew that the ASEAN Community will be created in 2015.	Disagree	23%	13%	19%	10%	29%	19%
	Neither agree nor disagree	41%	41%	50%	55%	26%	43%
	Agree	36%	46%	31%	35%	44%	39%
I think I have enough knowledge on the ASEAN Community idea.	Disagree	50%	23%	42%	26%	38%	35%
	Neither agree nor disagree	36%	54%	47%	52%	38%	46%
	Agree	14%	23%	11%	23%	24%	19%

Do you agree with the statements?		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
I knew that the ASEAN Community will be created.	Disagree	28.810	16	0.025	Yes
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I knew that it will comprise the Economic Community, the Security Community, and the Socio-Cultural Community.	Disagree	25.289	16	0.065	Yes
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I knew that the ASEAN Community will be created in 2015.	Disagree	22.327	16	0.133	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I think I have enough knowledge on the ASEAN Community idea.	Disagree	12.136	16	0.735	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

In contrast, the European Union's success to date has been attributed to the political elites' understanding of the general public's opinions and needs, and more importantly, to the involvement of the general public in the regional formation processes (Commission of the European Communities 2002). There was an argument that ASEAN should follow EU by having a referendum before the idea of ASEAN community is implemented. Nonetheless, the formation process was done without any referendum. In addition, the process of creating an ASEAN Community lacks public opinion surveys like those that have been conducted by the European Commission since 1973.

Hence, the majority of respondents in Indonesia (52 per cent) concurred that the creation of the ASEAN Community was indeed an initiative of elite leaders of ASEAN countries and did not involve the general public. However, this perception did not undermine the benefit of the initiatives, as majority of respondents (82 per cent) denied that the ideas would not benefit the people in general. Hence, it can be concluded that while the formation process of the ASEAN Community was perceived to be elitist, Indonesian respondents still approve of the formation since it benefits the people.

Table 7: Respondents' Opinion on the Process of ASEAN Community Building

Do you agree with the statements?		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Pontianak	Surabaya	
The creation of the ASEAN Community was the initiative of elite leaders of ASEAN countries and did not involve the general public.	Yes	46%	56%	49%	48%	59%	52%
	No	54%	44%	51%	52%	41%	48%
The creation of the ASEAN Community is only one of many declarations by ASEAN leaders which would not benefit general public.	Yes	14%	20%	13%	22%	23%	18%
	No	86%	80%	87%	78%	78%	82%

Do you agree with the statements?		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	Df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
The creation of the ASEAN Community was the initiative of elite leaders of ASEAN countries and did not involve the general public.	Yes	4.126	4	0.389	No
	No				
The creation of the ASEAN Community is only one of many declarations by ASEAN leaders which would not benefit general public.	Yes	4.088	4	0.394	No
	No				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Attitude toward the ASEAN Community

In this survey, attitudes are measured by the supports for and the perceived benefits of the ASEAN Community. This section attempts to analyse the opinions and attitudes of respondents toward the idea of the ASEAN Community.

In general, the Indonesian respondents were highly supportive of the proposed creation of the ASEAN Community (see Table 8 for details). A majority of them (93 per cent) supported the formation of ASEAN Com-

munity. The supports for each pillar of the community idea were also high: 88 per cent of them supported the creation of ASEAN Security Community; 83 per cent, the ASEAN Economic Community, and 80 per cent, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Furthermore, by using Pearson’s chi-square test of difference, it can be concluded that the respondents in the five cities shared the same levels of support.

The respondents also showed positive attitudes toward perceived benefits of the ASEAN Community. As shown in Table 9, the majority of the respondents in Jakarta (90 per cent), Medan (96 per cent), and Pontianak (92 per cent) perceived that the creation of the ASEAN Community would be good for Indonesia and its people, while 84 per cent in Makassar and 81 per cent in Surabaya agreed to the statement. On average, 89 per cent of Indonesian respondents have a positive attitude toward the perceived benefits of the creation of ASEAN Community. Although there are slight but significant differences between the responses in the five cities, data in general shows that the level of their perceived benefits of the ASEAN Community idea could be considered quite high because the level of agreement is above 80 per cent in each city.

Table 8: Attitude of Respondents toward the ASEAN Community

Do you agree with the statements?		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Pontianak	Surabaya	
I support the creation of the ASEAN Community.	Disagree	3%	0%	0%	1%	3%	1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	4%	9%	6%	4%	8%	6%
	Agree	94%	91%	94%	95%	90%	93%
I support the creation of the ASEAN Security Community.	Disagree	0%	1%	1%	3%	4%	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8%	13%	9%	9%	15%	11%
	Agree	92%	86%	90%	89%	81%	88%
I support the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community.	Disagree	3%	5%	1%	4%	6%	4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	17%	9%	13%	10%	16%	13%
	Agree	81%	86%	86%	86%	78%	83%
I support the creation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.	Disagree	1%	1%	5%	3%	5%	3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	17%	13%	17%	18%	20%	17%
	Agree	82%	86%	78%	80%	75%	80%

Do you agree with the statements?		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	Df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
I support the creation of the ASEAN Community.	Disagree	19.943	16	0.223	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I support the creation of the ASEAN Security Community.	Disagree	18.493	16	0.296	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I support the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community.	Disagree	23.504	16	0.101	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I support the creation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.	Disagree	9.678	16	0.883	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Moreover, most respondents in the five cities shared the opinion that their country would benefit from membership in the ASEAN Community (around 84 per cent). Most of them (around 77 per cent) also agreed on the statement that the ASEAN Community would be able to meet its objectives and goals based on the Bali Concord II. Respondents also agreed that the creation of the ASEAN Community would be able to create dynamic developments and caring societies with diverse cultural and social backgrounds. In general, more than half of respondents (around 58 per cent) was optimistic about the success of the ASEAN Community.

Table 9: Perceived Benefits of the ASEAN Community

Do you agree with the statements?		Cities					Overall
		Jakarta	Makassar	Medan	Pontianak	Surabaya	
The creation of the ASEAN Community is good for my country and its people.	Disagree	1%	1%	0%	1%	6%	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9%	15%	4%	6%	13%	9%
	Agree	90%	84%	96%	92%	81%	89%
My country would benefit from the membership of the ASEAN Community.	Disagree	0%	0%	1%	1%	6%	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	11%	18%	13%	13%	19%	15%
	Agree	89%	82%	86%	86%	75%	84%
I believe that the ASEAN Community would be able to create dynamic developments and caring societies with diverse cultural and social backgrounds.	Disagree	4%	0%	1%	3%	4%	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	15%	18%	19%	20%	31%	21%
	Agree	81%	82%	80%	77%	65%	77%
I am optimistic about the success of the ASEAN Community.	Disagree	3%	6%	1%	3%	6%	4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	33%	44%	43%	33%	36%	38%
	Agree	65%	50%	56%	64%	58%	58%
The creation of the ASEAN Security Community is positive to my country and society.	Disagree	0%	1%	1%	3%	4%	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9%	14%	4%	5%	19%	10%
	Agree	91%	85%	95%	92%	78%	88%
The creation of the ASEAN Economic Community is good/positive for the people in my country.	Disagree	3%	3%	1%	3%	5%	3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	18%	13%	6%	11%	19%	13%
	Agree	79%	85%	93%	86%	76%	84%
The formation of ASEAN Economic Community is good/positive for the businesses in my country.	Disagree	4%	4%	1%	3%	4%	3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16%	16%	14%	24%	24%	19%
	Agree	81%	80%	85%	73%	73%	78%
The creation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is good for the social and cultural development of my country.	Disagree	1%	3%	5%	4%	6%	4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	15%	20%	18%	16%	23%	19%
	Agree	83%	77%	77%	80%	71%	78%

Do you agree with the statements?		Test of difference of the responses in five cities			
		Pearson's chi-square value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	Significantly different?
The creation of the ASEAN Community is good for my country and its people.	Disagree	28.132	16	0.030	Yes
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
My country would benefit from the membership of the ASEAN Community.	Disagree	20.148	16	0.214	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I believe that the ASEAN Community would be able to create dynamic developments and caring societies with diverse cultural and social backgrounds.	Disagree	20.630	16	0.193	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
I am optimistic about the success of the ASEAN Community.	Disagree	16.189	16	0.440	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
The creation of the ASEAN Security Community is positive to my country and society.	Disagree	20.859	16	0.184	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
The creation of the ASEAN Economic Community is good/positive for the people in my country.	Disagree	20.260	16	0.209	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
The formation of ASEAN Economic Community is good/positive for the businesses in my country.	Disagree	13.658	16	0.624	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				
The creation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is good for the social and cultural development of my country.	Disagree	20.433	16	0.201	No
	Neither agree nor disagree				
	Agree				

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Respondents' opinions toward the three core pillars of the ASEAN Community were also positive. In all the Indonesian cities surveyed, an average of 88 per cent had a positive attitude toward the formation of the ASEAN

Economic Community. The majority of respondents (84 per cent) opined that it was good/ positive for the people in the country. Furthermore, 78 per cent of them also agree the ASEAN Economic Community would benefit Indonesian businesses, whereas 78 per cent believe that the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is good for the social and cultural development of the country. The results indicate that respondents' attitudes toward the ASEAN Community have been encouraging. In general, it can be concluded that the majority of the Indonesians surveyed were optimistic about the future success of the ASEAN Community idea.

We argued earlier in this article that the development and process of the ASEAN Community appears to be elitist and state-centric (Acharya 2003 and 2009; Caballero-Anthony 2009; Sung 2010; Thi 2008). It has been leaders, bureaucrats, and businesspeople deciding the course of the ASEAN Community creation. Until now, there has been no study relating the perception of elite-centric regionalism with the attitude toward regional integration.¹⁵ Hence, this study assesses the relationship between the perception of an elite-centric ASEAN and attitude toward the ASEAN Community formation process. The study uses the Cramer's V procedures to ascertain the findings.

Table 10: Relationships between Perception and Attitude toward the ASEAN Community Formation Process

The perception that the ASEAN Community process does not involve the general public:	Value of Cramer's V Test	Approximate Significance of Cramer's V Test	Explanation
Supportive of the formation of ASEAN Community	0.226	0.000	Weak significant relationship
Supportive of the formation of ASEAN Security Community	0.198	0.004	Weak significant relationship
Supportive of the formation of ASEAN Economic Community	0.255	0.000	Weak significant relationship
Supportive of the formation of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community	0.203	0.003	Weak significant relationship

15 The psychological theory of self perception, however, shows that there are causal relations between the influence of perception and attitude toward an object; that individuals may often infer their own internal states, including attitudes, from the same external visible cues they would use to perceive their internal states (Albaracin, Johnson, and Zanna 2005).

The perception that the ASEAN Community process does not involve the general public:	Value of Cramer's V Test	Approximate Significance of Cramer's V Test	Explanation
Optimistic about the success of the ASEAN Community	0.262	0.000	Weak significant relationship
Perceived that the creation of the ASEAN Community is good for Indonesia and its people	0.291	0.000	Weak significant relationship
Perceived Indonesia will benefit from membership in the ASEAN Community	0.288	0.000	Weak significant relationship
Perceived that the formation of the ASEAN Security Community is a positive development for Indonesia and its people	0.227	0.000	Weak significant relationship
Perceived that the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community is a positive development for Indonesia	0.285	0.000	Weak significant relationship
Perceived that the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community is good for Indonesian businesses	0.219	0.001	Weak significant relationship
Perceived that the formation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community is good for the social and cultural development of Indonesia	0.207	0.002	Weak significant relationship

Note: Independent variable here is “the formation of the ASEAN Community was the initiative of elite leaders of ASEAN countries and did not involve society at large in its creation”. Please also note that firstly, the value of the Cramer's V test reveals the strength of the relationship. The value of nearly 1.00 shows a strong relationship, while a value of nearly 0.00 shows a weak relationship. Secondly, the significance of Cramer's V test reveals the test of the relationship. If the approximate significance is lower than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between two variables.

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Interestingly, the findings show that there were weak significant relationships between the perception and all indicators of attitudes toward the ASEAN Community (as shown in Table 10). There were also weak significant relationships between the perception and the supports for formation of

the ASEAN Community in general and the support for the formation of each pillar of the ASEAN Community in particular. Respondents' opinions were influenced by their perception that the process of the building of the ASEAN Community was elite-centric. As a consequence, the support for the ASEAN Community might have been higher had it not been perceived as such.

The study also found that there were weak significant relationships between the perception and perceived benefits of the ASEAN Community in general and of each of the pillars of ASEAN Community in particular. It can be concluded that had the respondents not perceived the formation process as elite-centric, the perceived benefits might have been higher. However, if the respondents had perceived the formation process as an initiative of elite leaders of ASEAN countries, their perceived benefits would have been lower.

Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that there was a high level of awareness and understanding of ASEAN on the part of the Indonesian public. Most respondents claimed that they aware of ASEAN, of the formation year of ASEAN, and of the objectives of ASEAN. Moreover, they could differentiate between ASEAN and another type of security arrangement with special security forces such as NATO. Interestingly, however, their claims of awareness were not fully translated into an understanding of the technical aspects of ASEAN, such as the historical set-up, structure and mode of operations of ASEAN as a regional organization.

While critics argue that ASEAN has not been effective or relevant for the peace and development of the region, the study shows that the Indonesian public has a different view. Although respondents have expressed doubts over ASEAN's report cards – especially in achieving its objectives – they still thought of ASEAN as quite successful, important and still relevant to the region.

On the proposed formation of the ASEAN Community, Indonesian respondents appear to have little knowledge about the idea. Surprisingly, not many of the respondents were aware of the proposed formation of the ASEAN Community in 2015. Most of the respondents had not even heard or read about the ASEAN Community and its founding document. The respondents described that their lack of knowledge could be due to the government's failure to publicize and explain it to the general public.

It can be inferred from the findings that the formation process of the ASEAN Community has not yet involved the people of the region. How-

ever, the study also found that despite their lack of knowledge on the ASEAN Community, Indonesian respondents were supportive of the idea. What is important to them is that the three core pillars under the ASEAN Community have to be beneficial to their country, people, society and economy. Finally, the study also concludes that the elite-centric approach towards the formation of ASEAN Community does affect the attitude of the Indonesian respondents. The statistical tests show that when the respondents perceived the formation process as elite-centric, their perception of benefits is lower.

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