

# THE EU-ASEAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ON ENERGY SECURITY BUILDING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE UNDER THE REGIME OF MULTILATERALISM

A Case Study of the EU and ASEAN Engagement  
in Regional Cooperation towards Green Transition

## **MASTER'S THESIS**

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1 June 2023

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Number of Characters:160, 068

## Abstract

This Case Study thesis analyzes the EU – ASEAN Strategic Partnership launched at the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit in Brussels, Belgium. This enhanced partnership aims to have a solid region-to-region free trade agreement in energy security through the “Just Energy Transition” scheme. The recent global energy crisis brought about by the war between Russia and Ukraine constitutes an indication that a strong regional cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is necessary and urgent in order to address the global energy security issue. This thesis highlights the perplexities of the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership in energy security. In this context, this thesis debates the actual intention of the EU in forging a partnership with the ASEAN. The EU’s motivation for a “block-to-block” cooperation seems to be complex due to the two regions’ unparalleled organizational structures and values. In addition, ASEAN’s energy security have a different situation compared to the EU. Furthermore, the EU’s intention for an ASEAN partnership is not only focused on an economic agenda but is also geared towards a political alliance against Russia. Therefore, given the EU’s self-defined aim to lure the ASEAN as a strong economic and political ally, this thesis employs the International Political Economy (IPE) in order to understand the exigencies of global economic and political debate on energy security. In addition, under the lens of Neo-liberalism, the complexity of regional cooperation in the world of interdependency is analyzed. Moreover, under the regime of multilateralism, the emergence of multipolarity is unravelled.

### **Keywords:**

*Neo-liberalism, Multilateralism, Multipolarity, Regionalism, Interdependence, International Political Economy, Democracy Promotion, Energy Security, Green Transition, EU and ASEAN Regional Actors*

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## Abbreviations

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
APEC	Asia -Pacific Economic Cooperation
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
ARF	Asian Regional Forum
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia -Europe Meeting
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CoC	Code of Conduct
DOE	Department of Energy
DOJ	Department of Justice
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDU	Exploration, Development and Utilization
EEC	European Economic Community
EGD	European Green Deal
EMU	European Monetary Union
EU	European Union
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GATT	General Agreement on Tariff and Trades
GSPP	Generalized Scheme Preference Plus
IEA	International Energy Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRR	Implementing Rules and Regulations
JETP	Just Energy Transition Plan
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MFA	Multifibre Agreement
NAFTA	North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement
NAS	New Asia Strategy
NLD	National League for Democracy

NREP	National Renewable Energy Program
OBOR	One Belt One Road
PPP	Public- Private Partnership
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
RE	Renewable Energy
REPA	Renewable Energy Payment Agreements
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
TPP	Trans- Pacific Partnership
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
USD	United States Dollar
VERs	Voluntary Export Restraints
WTO	World Trade Organization

## **Acknowledgement**

*For my Father and Mother (†)*

*To my Family and Friends*

*My inspirations*

*To Life...*

*Daghang Salamat!*

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Hedelyn Colon Reyes, hereby declare that this Master's Thesis in International Politics and Governance, of the Roskilde University, Denmark is entirely my original work. I confirm that this thesis has explicitly acknowledged other authors' works that were used as points of reference and were quoted and paraphrased correctly. Further, I certify that this thesis has not been submitted to any institution substantially to obtain a degree.

Copenhagen, 1 June 2023

# Chapter I. Setting the Scene

## Introduction

The recent geopolitical crisis brought on by the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has aggravated the energy markets into turmoil. This global energy supply crisis has severely affected many regions, mainly the European Union (EU) and developing regions like Southeast Asia. The rapid exponential rise of energy prices is not the only woe of the consumer as soaring high prices of global commodities and shortages of products and services have been heavily affected, resulting in high inflation levels not seen since the global financial crisis in 2008 (Colon Reyes, 2022; Chen et al., 2019). Thus, the energy crisis has escalated into a wicked problem that has eventually impacted many areas of socio-economic and security-political development, which have disrupted the flow of operations in many industries and socio-political activities of every society (Jakimowicz, 2022). Moreover, due to the global energy crisis, many new phenomena have been emerging spontaneously, and often unpredictably, particularly in energy markets. The main contemporary challenge is in energy sector transformation that aims to prevent climate change and will ensure energy security while having sustainable development in a carbon free global economy (ibid). To emphasize, energy sufficiency is a significant driver of economic growth, “energy is an indispensable factor in human development and economic growth since it fuels all economic activity and supports the potential for social, environmental and technological progress” (doe.gov.ph/2022). Therefore, “energy, as a strategic commodity, is a vital element of human life” (Esakova, 2012:20).

As the world lives through the impact of an ever-rising demand for energy, including the global economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea of strong regional cooperation has been recognized as the best solution to combat the global crisis. Therefore, the states (public sector) and firms (private sector) believe that the recent energy crisis could be a perfect setup to accelerate the green energy transition, the European Union (EU) aims to hasten more free trade agreements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through a regional or block- to- block cooperation, a “Strategic Partnership” under the “ Just Energy Transition” scheme. Therefore, the EU’s priority is to renew cooperation with the ASEAN with a much stronger “Strategic Partnership” in addressing the severe circumstances brought by the Russia-Ukraine war, that have led to an energy crisis and supply chain disruption.

Since the establishment of EU-ASEAN relations in 1977, the connection between the two regions has evolved in cooperation in trade, economic and socio-political activities. On 14 December 2022, the ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit in Brussels, Belgium, commemorated the 45<sup>th</sup> year of diplomatic relations between the two regions. The Summit was spearheaded by the EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the EU Council President Charles Michel. While the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, led the ASEAN delegation as Chairperson for this year's ASEAN-EU forum.

The summit reaffirmed the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership agenda, which was first initiated in 2021. Moreover, the summit has resulted in a significant cooperation area for the years 2023 to 2027. The Strategic Partnership covered several crucial commitment areas, which have been highlighted in the summit's Joint Leaders' Statement or the "Joint Declaration" namely, in (1) peace and security, (2) economic cooperation and trade, (3) connectivity and digital transition, (4) sustainable development, environment, climate change and energy, (5) COVID- 19 pandemic recovery, and (6) regional and international issues.

These underlined areas of cooperation were observed to be correlated to the EU's green transition agenda, with policies aligned from the EU Green Deal (EGD), RePowerEU and the recent EU Global Gateway. During the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit, the concept of region-to-region cooperation was introduced, highlighting the significance of regional partnership of the EU with the ASEAN, based on the EU Global Gateway program, which offered a 10 billion euro investment package for the ASEAN until the year 2027. The Global Gateway 10 billion euro budget will be used to support several strands of work to reinforce the ASEAN- EU Strategic Partnership programs under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) operation.

*First*, projects include accelerating the clean energy revolution by launching the free trade under the "Just Energy Transition" scheme with a few ASEAN members, Vietnam and Indonesia and aiming for more free trade agreements with the rest of the ASEAN countries. *Second*, the EU- ASEAN closer cooperation centers on more free trade on diverse products, especially on carbon- free products. The value of EU-ASEAN trade goods in 2020 amounted to 190 billion euro, which is 70 billion euro in EU exports and 120 billion euro in imports (Wnukowski, 2021). Accounting for about 12.5% of the ASEAN's trade, the EU stands as the ASEAN's second-largest trading partner. Likewise, with a commanding share of 6.1% of the EU's total trade, the ASEAN is the EU's third largest trading partner (Devadason & Mubarik,



2020). *Third*, is building a high-level digital infrastructure which can help reach the full potential of the renewable energy generation and enable a flawless interconnectivity of free trade in energy security. Therefore, this regional partnership aims to pursue a more extensive region-to-region free trade agreement.

The abovementioned renewed and upgraded commitment between the EU and ASEAN is contoured based on both regions' recent global challenges. Furthermore, this commitment has presented a level of economic and security- politico perspective, as global challenges have created multifaceted issues that need strategic solutions. Moreover, the EU's approach to the ASEAN as a partner for energy security has been presented not only for economic partnership, *per* the December 2022 EU- ASEAN Summit's Joint Statement, but also with a notion of the EU's plea to the ASEAN for political alliance against Russia. "*The European Union pleads for closer cooperation between the EU and ASEAN partners... as Russia has unleashed its war of aggression against Ukraine*" (EU Commission President/ EU- ASEAN Commemorative Summit press conference 22/12/2022).

### **Aim of Study and Research Area**

The research area of this thesis will focus on the socio-economic and security- politico dimensions of the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership in energy security by bolstering free trade agreements under the "Just Energy Transition" program. This thesis is confronted with the complex nature of this "Strategic Partnership". As such, the topic revolves around understanding the EU's motivations behind this regional "Strategic Partnership" against the backdrop of the global energy crisis brought about by the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Therefore, the intention behind EU's aim for a block-to- block cooperation, a "Strategic Partnership" with the ASEAN should be examined as to what extent the EU's utilizing a multilateral approach of regional trade cooperation towards the ASEAN is vital to the regional political alliance against Russia. Moreover, despite the dynamic nature of the global problem and the interlinking web of issues brought about by the Russia- Ukraine war and the COVID-19 pandemic, the agreed commitments between the two regions have been amplified in an energy security dialogue for a long- term energy security through a green transition partnership. The shared commitments between the EU and ASEAN posit perplexities because such free trade in energy security can be complicated, given *first*, the two regions' different priority agenda in securing energy and *second*, the EU's energy security issue is much more severe

compared to the ASEAN's energy insecurities. Therefore, it is important to underline that priorities of the ASEAN in securing energy could be different compared to those of the EU. The EU is geographically closer to the conflict area, Russia and Ukraine, which means that the EU is directly affected by the shortage of energy supply, given that Russia is one of the EU's major suppliers of natural gas and fossil fuel, and Ukraine is a transit country for the EU's gas supply. While the ASEAN have a different energy supplier like the Middle East or within the Asian countries. To emphasize, the EU's intention behind an intensified approach towards ASEAN partnership, under the regime of Multilateralism *vis á vis* on the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership, is the focal point of this thesis.

Therefore, this thesis employed the Case Study research design to focus on the perplexities of the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership agenda. And through the lens of the theory of International Political Economy (IPE) and Neoliberalism this thesis will analyze the economic and political motivation behind using energy security as the main agenda for regional cooperation. Due to the impact brought by the global energy crisis, the EU has depicted that a strategic partnership with the ASEAN is imperative and urgent for both regions. However, due to the rapid development in the war between Russia and Ukraine, increasing geopolitical tensions are inevitable. Therefore, by examining the EU's urgency in building stronger economic ties with the ASEAN, amid the global energy crisis, this thesis will examine the underpinning of the EU's actual intentions in crafting the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership impetus to energy security. Moreover, this thesis intends to examine the energy security situation of the EU compared to the ASEAN, as how the energy security circumstances manifest in their behavior on the international stage. This behavior will be analyzed through the lens of IPE and Neoliberalism aiming to unravel the socio-economic and security-political factors as the motivation behind of the EU in reaching out to the ASEAN for a strategic partnership underpinning the Multilateralism. Therefore, this research intends to shed light on utilizing the principle of Multilateralism as an approach taken by the EU in reflecting its energy crisis to the ASEAN. There are multiple areas of cooperation highlighted in the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. But this thesis will focus on the free trade agreement in energy security through a "Just Energy Transition" program to accelerate the green energy transition as a priority based on the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Summit's Joint Leaders' Statement. Therefore, this thesis examines the *modus operandi* of the EU's real intention behind building regional alliance with the ASEAN. This thesis also examines the ASEAN's *modus vivendi* towards the EU's strategic partnership in energy security.

## **Problem Statement**

Based on previous EU- ASEAN partnerships, accelerating free trade is the main focus between the two regions. However, from the perspective of the recent global challenges, especially the crisis in energy security, the EU-ASEAN cooperation has evolved into many aspects of cooperation that have transformed into a more deliberate and calculated plan, a “strategic” way that proposes to bring the EU and ASEAN into a block- to -block alliance. Moreover, based on the list of important commitments, the vital point of the partnership is long- term energy security, by building alliances for supply chain resilience and green energy transition. To trim down the area of cooperation and commitment based on the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Summit’s Leaders’ Joint Statement, the focal point of this thesis is to unravel the motivation behind the “Strategic Partnership” in energy security through the free trade agreement under the “ Just Energy Transition” scheme to acquire long-term energy security.

The EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership is clearly an ambitious agenda. Given the organizational differences of both regions. The EU and ASEAN may be considered successful regional integration organizations. However, both organizations have challenges and differences that will cause perplexities as strategic partners they both come from different places and conditions. However, despite disagreements, both have agreed on the same priorities based on the list of commitments from the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit’s Joint Leaders’ Statement. And that agreement created a sense of bewilderment as how two different regions, the EU and ASEAN came to an agreement, especially on controversial and complex issue pointing to the security- politico dilemma of the South China Sea boundary dispute and the stability of the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, the problem area of this thesis will revolve around the social, economic and political exigencies of a regional cooperation. By examining the EU and ASEAN’s strengths and weaknesses based on their organizational structure, values and principles, this research intends to understand the approach taken by the EU in order to craft an strategic partnership with the ASEAN to resolve the demanding issue of energy security.

Moreover, energy security has become the center of discussion in the realm of International Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE). Thus, energy security has posited a debate that cuts across the paradigm of the economic and political discourse. Energy, by definition, “is a scarce vital source used to fuel to the society’s economic and social

development” (Esakova,2012) and “energy security means the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price” (IEA,2022). In this context, energy has become a primal factor of modern society’s survival.

As the regime of energy security rose to prominence, debates on securing energy supply have evolved into more complex discussions. Furthermore, the important events that have happened in the past have created a conundrum that has made energy security a critical topic in security debates. To enumerate, the 2006 and 2009 cutting off by Russia of Ukraine’s gas supply which, eventually blocked the gas supply to the EU, has sparked severe political tension. Russia’s seizure of Crimea heightened political pressure due to border security issues (Colon Reyes et al., 2022). The dependency of the EU on Russian gas builds political and economic vulnerability to the EU as it creates the EU- Russia interdependency in gas trading relations (Locatelli, 2015). The progressive nature of energy security may be likened to a wicked problem wherein the central issue of energy insecurity has escalated and affected many areas of development and activities in society. Therefore, the social, economic and political issues brought about by the Russia- Ukraine war have opened many points of discussion, including Neo- liberalism, Multilateralism, Interdependency, Regionalism and the notion of Multipolarity making the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership as a controversial event amid recent geopolitical and geoeconomic situation.

### **Research Questions**

As the global energy crisis has resulted in geopolitical and geoeconomic dilemmas, it unfolds clearly that the EU takes a decisive action to address the energy security issue, by crafting regional “Strategic Partnership” with the ASEAN. In this sense, this thesis will define the knowledge gap and perplexities of the regional cooperation *vis á vis* the EU and ASEAN as strategic partners. By looking through the EU’s urgent step to build alliance with the ASEAN through a renewed and enhanced regional free trade cooperation in energy security *vis á vis* the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership, this thesis seeks to answer:

#### **Research question:**

***“What is the intention of the EU’s regional Strategic Partnership to the ASEAN in resolving global energy security?”***

This research question serves as a compass in guiding the thesis' overall framework. Moreover, this overarching question points to a hypothesis that the EU- ASEAN partnership, with a strategic goal, is limited because the EU and ASEAN's commitments to the cooperation agenda are perplexed not only due to the fragmented organizational structures of both regions but also due to the intention behind the regional partnership.

**Sub- question:**

***“How feasible is the EU and ASEAN free trade agreement in energy security”?***

The hypothesis of this sub-question explains that many aspects of cooperation are feasible for both regions since the EU and ASEAN are considered successful integration organizations. In addition, the EU and ASEAN are described as strong trading partners, but because of the ASEAN's domestic affairs, such as political and legislative fragmentation and the EU's different organizational value and structure compared to the ASEAN, the uncertainty to fully pledge cooperation as strategic partners in energy security towards a green transition agenda can be contested.

In examining the current EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership and the past regional cooperation and partnerships of the EU and ASEAN, this thesis will discuss an inquisitive narrative in each chapter. Through these research questions, this thesis intends to explore discussions of the political and economic features of the EU and ASEAN and how each organization's approach towards energy security is feasible in the current global energy situation, and with green energy transition as a long-term goal.

**Delineation**

In conducting this research, four significant reasons are highly substantiated to unfold. *First* is the importance of pursuing regional partnership and forging political alliance among regional organizations amidst the global energy crisis. The ongoing geopolitical crisis, which has brought energy markets into turmoil, has made the EU and ASEAN's decision- making volatile, therefore, regional socio- economic cooperation and security-political alliance are inevitable. *Second*, studying the EU and ASEAN as regional economic and political actors is crucial to their organizational structures and practices. Thus, understanding the EU and ASEAN dynamic as regional organizations may guide the route to an efficient strategic partnership on green

transition. *Third*, in examining the gaps in the EU's approach toward energy security dialogue with the ASEAN, and the ASEAN's challenges in meeting the EU's partnership standards and expectations, this thesis intends to reveal the EU's intentions and motivations in using energy security agenda as an urgent call in forging regional economic and political alliance with the ASEAN. *Fourth* and last, this thesis topic deliberates to divulge academic debates in forging regional political alliances and economic cooperation amidst (geo)political and (geo)economic implications brought about by the ongoing global energy crisis due to the Russia- Ukraine war.

With this intention, this research aims to unravel geopolitical challenges and unwrap possible opportunities for making regional cooperation in energy security towards green transition feasible. The primary purpose of this research's findings is to contribute to the academic debates in the realm of geopolitics and regional socio-economic and political cooperation between the EU and ASEAN as prominent regional organizations. The recent energy crisis brought on by the Russia- Ukraine war that broke out on 24 February 2022, has urged states and regional economic organizations to establish partnerships and cooperation in bolstering green transition through renewable energy generation. By diversifying energy sources, the EU has intended to combat fossil fuel dependency, especially from the Russian energy source, while simultaneously achieving the net zero emission goal.

As potential regional partners, the EU and ASEAN partnership started when a Special Coordinating Committee of the ASEAN was established in 1972 (Devadason & Mubarik, 2020). Thereafter, the EU- ASEAN cooperation has thrived under conventional bilateral interregionalism or bi-regionalism (ibid, p.707). The main interest of the ASEAN in the 1970s was focused on gaining access to the European market. Entering the European market became significant in increasing trade volume between the ASEAN and EU. Trade intensified between the two regions due to the ASEAN's drive to export industrialization during the 1970s (ibid). Despite trade relations between the EU and ASEAN, it was observed that due to measures imposed on quota regulations, such as the Multifibre Agreement (MFA) and Voluntary Exports Restraints (VERs), the ASEAN did not entirely enjoy access to the European market (Rüland, 2018). The milestone of EU- ASEAN relations commenced in 2007 when the Nuremberg Declaration on an ASEAN and EU Enhanced Partnership was adopted, aiming for a long- term vision commitment to cooperation (asean.org). In 2012, the EU acceded to the ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), which adopted the ASEAN- EU Plan of Action (eeas.europa.eu). Moreover, the EU has extensively crafted legislations and policies in addressing climate change issues, environmental protection, and energy security. One of the

most critical environmental and clean energy transition policies is the European Green Deal (EGD), a set of green legislation by the EU Commission that aims for a climate-neutral Europe in 2050. The targeted greenhouse emission of the EU, by 2030, is a 55 percent reduction.

To emphasize, the perplexities of the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership is the main focus in this research. By examining mainly, the “Strategic Partnership” agenda focusing on the free trade agreements on accelerating renewable energy *per* “Just Energy Transition” scheme for long-term energy security, this research will elucidate how the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership stands, given the history of unmotivated economic dialogues due to unparalleled organizational models and practices of both the EU and ASEAN as regional organizations. The gap between the EU and ASEAN organization systems will be discussed through scholarly debates from the Literature review section. The foundations of the EU and ASEAN, as regional organizations will be explained as well. As such, in understanding the EU and ASEAN’s “conventional bilateral relations, between individual EU members and individual Southeast Asian nations, and forms of multilateral and asymmetrical bilateral relations between the EU as a global actor and individual ASEAN members, the space for interregionalism is indeed very limited” (Camroux, 2010). Therefore, the knowledge gap between the EU and ASEAN organizational structures will be analyzed from various theoretical frameworks. The intention behind the EU’s approach in bringing forth the perspective of multilateralism in crafting a strategic partnership with the ASEAN, in the backdrop of addressing the global energy crisis will also be analyzed.

Through the realm of International Relations (IR), this research will employ the International Political Economy (IPE) theory to navigate the economic mechanisms and the political nature of the EU and ASEAN. Albeit the focal point of the regional strategic partnership is trade, the existence of political attachment towards the regional agreements is inevitable. In this sense, the global energy crisis has impacted not only the regional political economy, but also the political economy at the international level. Moreover, the neoliberalism, multilateralism, and interdependency approaches of the EU to the ASEAN, and *vice versa* will be examined. Thus, in the global energy crisis, regionalism plays a vital role in regional cooperation. By employing the theory of Liberal- Intergovernmentalism, the regional actorness of the EU and ASEAN will be discussed. Also, to be discussed is how the two regional organizations are different or similar towards their approaches to energy security *via* a green transition agenda. Therefore, this research aims to unfold how regional systems function and their interactions towards their external policies. This research also aims to unfold the extent to which both regional

organizations can be compromised based on socio-economic and energy security cooperation in the circumstances under which a political alliance is included in the regional strategic partnership agenda.

## **Chapter II. Overview of EU and ASEAN and Literature Review**

The earlier studies and debates are divided into two mainstreams to clarify the literature gaps in the approach taken by the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in becoming regional trade partners. This literature review discusses the EU and ASEAN foundations as regional organizations. It also discusses their respective evolutions as global actors. By navigating the debates on the EU and ASEAN's organizational principles, structures and functions, this review in literature intends to illuminate how differences and similarities between the two regional organizations result in challenges and opportunities that have become the vehicle in forging trade partnerships in energy security towards green transition. This section commences the overview of the EU and ASEAN's origins and evolutions as regional and international actors.

### **The EU and ASEAN Foundations and Evolutions as Regional and International Actors**

The Treaty of Paris, on 18 April 1951, marked the start of European integration when six European countries, namely, West Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands, initiated the idea of regional cooperation by creating the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) (Ivandić, et al., 2018). The ECSC laid a foundation that paved the way for the European Federation. This further evolved in forming the European Economic Community (EEC), which was signed to another treaty, the Treaty of Rome in 1957 (ibid). Eventually, this treaty energized the post-war economy through cross-border economic transactions in trade, investment, and production (Paik, 2017). This was followed by the foundation of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) (ibid). To further the integration, in 1967, these three communities, the ECSC, EEC and EURATOM, were combined to form a single Commission.



Twelve members of the European community signed the Maastricht Treaty; therein the single Commission transformed into the European Union (EU) (Chen & Lombaerde, 2019).

The continuous integration process of the EU resulted in a single market agreement in 1992, removing trade barriers of EU members. In the same year, the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) was established with the function to regulate and coordinate economic policies among member states managed by the European Central Bank (ECB) (Ivandić et al., 2018). The Euro was launched in 1999 as the single currency under the ECB's authority to develop a comprehensive monetary policy throughout the eurozone (ibid). The monetary policy and currency integration have been regarded as highly successful, which benefit the EU and the euro currency (Rose, 2000 & Glick, 2000).

On the other hand, comparable to the EU integration, the ASEAN has emerged as a strong candidate for regional integration. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed in 1967 after the signing of the ASEAN Declaration in Bangkok, Thailand, founded by five Southeast Asian nations, namely, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand (asean.org). In 1984 Brunei Darussalam joined the association, followed by Vietnam in 1995, Laos PDR and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. East Timor, after the country's independence in 2002, has recently applied for membership in the ASEAN (ibid). The ASEAN community aims to accelerate regional activities in trade and economy, social and cultural development, and to establish regional peace and stability. The ASEAN centrality is expressed through these three important pillars: "ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)" (asean.org; Caballero-Anthony, 2014). While these three vital pillars are implemented according to an ASEAN accord, members strictly adhere to the *non-interference* principle, in respect of each other's domestic affairs, which stems from the traditional notions in international relations and equality to sovereign states (Ramcharan, 2000). Dent (1998) explained that the ASEAN's regional integration arrangement has been the most successful of any that have emerged in the developing region.

Paik (2017) & Robles (2004) explained that the EU was observed to be the most developed regional integration organization since the end of World War II. As seen in the establishment of the EU by the Maastricht Treaty, the EU is by far the most successful case of regional integration. Manners & Murray (2015), under the lens of European narrative construction, argued that the story of European integration is an important narrative to be told as to how the

EU has evolved in the past six decades. To emphasize, the EU's experience of regional integration, which focuses on the principles of equality, the values of democracy, the rule of law and promoting peace and stability, have established an economic union that serves as a safety net for peace and security (europa.eu; Ekengren & Hollis, 2019; Paik, 2017). Manners & Murray (2015) observed that the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the EU marks the pinnacle of the EU's chronicle as a "peace project". However, this award surprised many, because of the challenging image of the EU in global politics, pointing to the 2008 Eurozone crisis that began with Greece. Murray (2015) & Fitriani (2014) emphasized that due to the recession caused by the eurozone, public doubts arose, questioning the EU's policy effectiveness, which resulted in the decrease of public support for the EU. As such, the EU halted its efforts in maintaining high public welfare standards in its member countries, which has driven people to question the objective of the EU integration. This resulted in the collapse of public support for the EU relating to the economic, social and political crises.

Manners & Murray (2015) underlined that the EU has to create a new narrative. Murray (2015) explained that the EU needs a fresh narrative, a new "script" to tackle global challenges. This sense-making story draws back to the attention of understanding the European integration story. Thus, recalibrating the current EU narrative into a new one will help internal audience, which is the EU citizenry, and external or international audience understand the aim of the EU, in response to global crises. The changing of narrative over time is vital in understanding the social world corresponding to lived reality. As such, "the social world is constituted by inter-subjective understandings, knowledge... and social facts rely on the attachment of collective knowledge" (Chen Xuechen, 2018). Therefore, this "narrative should be credible as narratives are stories people tell to make sense of their reality" (Andrews et al., 2015:1); Hammack & Pilecki, 2012: 76). Moreover, a new narrative aims to provide the EU with an image that resonates with the rest of the world. In other words, the narrative shared by the EU, in terms of the region's economic and political challenges, is the same as the rest of the world. Hence, this relatable narrative, could lead the EU to more successful trade negotiations and regional cooperations in many aspects.

In the same manner, Siow Yue & Tan (1997) & Caballero- Anthony (2014) explained that the ASEAN, since its foundation in 1968, has been the most successful regional organization in the developing world. The ability to manage peace and security throughout the Southeast Asian region is regarded as the critical achievement of the ASEAN's 54-year history of integration. However, key debates have questioned the ASEAN's centrality regarding its relevance,

legitimacy and effectiveness to regionalism. Jetschke & Theiner (2020) argued under the perspective of Institutionalism, wherein the concern of the ASEAN's relevance and legitimacy as a regional institution could fully influence cooperation among its members, given its diverging stance in security, geopolitics and some regional economic agenda. This points to the ASEAN's *non-interference* policy in its members' domestic affairs. Acharya (2018) & Narine (2012) explained through *de facto* and *de jure* concepts, that the ASEAN non-interference principle is a cultural and diplomatic feature that is attached to a model of integration, the "ASEAN Way". This decision making approach, through building consensus is rooted from a Malay cultural practice where communities' decisions are based on consultations (Narine 2002,13 cited in Cuyvers,2019). To emphasize, the "ASEAN Way", is a type of approach in the economic sphere geared toward a market-driven regionalization (*de facto*) rather than a regional integration process (*de jure*). In other words, this type of integration focuses on cross-border linkages of individual economies, wherein geopolitical aspects and security aspects are not the main priorities for the integration. Therefore, the non-interference principle employed by the ASEAN is for the purpose of maintaining the respect of sovereignty to its members' domestic political affairs, while creating economic networks and activities. However, the "ASEAN Way" is often criticized as ineffective in terms of decision-making. Thus, it is time consuming since decisions and matters that need to be resolved must have the appropriate approval through consultations with the member states.

Like the EU and many other regional organizations, the ASEAN faces global political, economic, security, human rights, health and migration challenges. Mahesa Drajat (2022) and Murray & Moxon- Browne (2013) argued that the ASEAN credibility is arguably, at stake. As such, the ASEAN's role and function as a regional institution came under fire because of its passive reaction to the February 2021 *coup d'état* in Myanmar when the military defense service (Tatmandaw) seized power from Aung San Suu Kyi, the elected leader of the Myanmar government. The coup in Myanmar has resulted in a political, social, economic and humanitarian crisis, particularly the killing of civilian Rohingya ethnic groups in Rakhine State. Paik (2017) argued that this is a clear human rights violation of ethnic and religious minorities, wherein the Myanmar military authoritarian regime aggravated the religious conflicts between the Buddhist majority and the Rohingya Muslim minority. It was argued that the humanitarian situation in Myanmar needs humanitarian intervention from the ASEAN as it is supposed to be a critical opportunity for the ASEAN to demonstrate the organization's serious commitment to promote democratic principles, good governance and human rights. The ASEAN's

complacency regarding Myanmar's internal affairs during the National League for Democracy's (NLD) tenure between 2016 and 2021, has supposedly exacerbated the situation, as the inconsistent multilateral approach of the ASEAN towards Myanmar was deemed unresponsiveness for rendering support to its member state. This has sparked a negative notion of doubting whether the ASEAN is outdated, as the principle of non-interference let Myanmar, as an ASEAN member state crumble into chaos. However, the complex situation of the ASEAN-Myanmar relations, wherein adherence to the association norms, including the non-interference policy, has also depended, to a large extent, on the principle of respect for sovereign equality to a member state. This can be the lived reality of the ASEAN, in which a non-interference principle limits its decision-making capability in the Myanmar political situation. As a result, this may cause a repercussion to the ASEAN's primary objective of maintaining regional peace and stability. Thus, this crisis has resulted in "repercussions for ASEAN's credibility, image and legitimacy on the global stage" (Mahesa Drajat, 2022). In this case, the ASEAN centrality, "... building a caring, sharing, socially responsible society" (Caballero- Anthony, 2014) is in question due to its failure to adhere to its obligation as a regional organization regarding the situation in Myanmar.

Likewise, Hourn & Kaplan (2000) argued that since 1998, the "Cambodian question", pertaining to the invasion by Vietnam of Cambodia in 1978, has sharpened the attention of the ASEAN's credibility due to the Cambodian crisis; observers indicated that the ASEAN lost its credibility, which led to a looming question of whether the ASEAN is a dormant organization or, worse "dead". Therefore, conferences have aimed to examine the current debates on the ASEAN's future over its principle of non – interference, in which Cambodia has served as a focal point of the discussion. In fact, by constructively engaging an ASEAN member, without compromising its long standing non- interference principle to its members domestic affairs, a round table discussion in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in November 1998 was organized by the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) with Friedrich- Ebert Stiftung, to discuss the Cambodian and ASEAN relations with the theme, "Flexible Engagement vs Non-Interference: Where Does ASEAN Stand?" (Hourn & Kaplan, 2014:14-16) In the hope to solve sensitive political issues that the ASEAN is facing, the discussion for a non-confrontational approach can be applied. An "ASEAN Way" *per se* may be "flexible engagement or constructive intervention", which is a method geared towards a principle of "engage... but not interfere" (ibid). Nevertheless, Chhon & Ali (2022) argued that the ASEAN Way became the safety measure for the ASEAN to maintain its regional peace. Thus, since the foundation of the

ASEAN in 1967, there has never been a military conflict that has broken out between or among ASEAN countries. Nevertheless, there is a widespread perception of the ASEAN's ineffectiveness since the Cambodian conflict always gaslights the ASEAN's non-interference doctrine.

However, the ASEAN way of consensus building, and consultation serves the ASEAN well; therefore, this doctrine should not be compromised, despite many concerns about whether the ASEAN can maintain its spirit of consensus and consultation. As such, concern has been overlooked because the ASEAN has overcome, and even continues to successfully weather the storms of global conflict and political turmoil, especially the region's economic difficulties brought about by the global energy crisis and the COVID- 19 pandemic. As the world is going through a tremendous phase of history in economic crisis and due to inevitable trends towards globalization, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) continues to hold discussions to enhance regional understanding, especially in the realm of political-security interests. This forum ventured to broaden the area of cooperation to other regional powers, for instance, the EU, the United States, China, Japan and other major economies. In addition, the ARF encouraged the evolution of cooperation into a more predictable relation and a constructive pattern through dialogue and consultation, the ASEAN Way, building confidence and comfort in an ideal community (Oba, 2014).

In other words, "Member states shall vigorously develop an awareness of regional identity and exert all efforts to create a strong ASEAN community" (Oba, 2014:63).

Furthermore, despite many regional socio-political and security challenges faced by the ASEAN, especially regarding ASEAN- Myanmar relations, the ASEAN centrality has catapulted the organization into a high profile one in the international community. Thus, the ASEAN's image and credibility with its external partners continue, based on recent EU-ASEAN strategic partnerships, although the ASEAN organizational structure is marked as different from the EU's supranational system, relating to both organizations', practices, norms and values. In fact, the ASEAN members have displayed various types and levels of preference towards different aspects of integration. This is due to the ASEAN's heightened profile in the international scene, which is described by former United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, as "the fulcrum of an evolving regional architecture" (Caballero- Anthony, 2014). Therefore, ASEAN regionalism stands even more attractive as a regional partner. Moeller (2007) argued that despite the EU and ASEAN's unformalized framework, these two regional

organizations thrive on working as reliable partners sharing a mutual outlook on global politics and economic issues. Therefore, Moeller (2007) & Camroux (2010) observed that the EU-ASEAN engagement goes far beyond economic provisions. In other words, building an EU-ASEAN trade corridor has paved the way for the two regions to work together in solving complex global issues.

Novotny & Portela (2012) explained that the institutionalization of the ASEAN- EU dialogue, has not only tremendously built trade and investment ties but has also extended into many aspects of partnerships, especially in the political and security environment. In 1972, an informal dialogue commenced between the ASEAN and EU. This was followed by a series of informal dialogues until, in 1977, the first formal and official dialogue took place and was further institutionalized in 1980, after the signing of the ASEAN- EC Cooperation Agreement in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This institutionalization of dialogues not only resolves issues concerning narrow market access of ASEAN- EU, and *vice versa*, but also opens a connection beyond economic relations. Thus, the ASEAN- EU cooperation has extended and widened the partnership scope in the political and security fields. This security- political dialogue evolved into more interdependent relations after the participation by the EU in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 (Siow Yue & Tan, 1997).

The regional cooperation between the EU and ASEAN evidently created interdependence in trade and investments. This interdependence has spread to many crucial aspects of cooperation, such as legal, political, social and security aspects. Through narrative construction analysis, Allison- Reumann (2020) underlined that the EU has shifted its narrative in promoting regionalism into a strategic notion. The EU's changing narrative in promoting regionalism is the attempt to build support from other regional actors, such as the ASEAN. This revised approach to the EU's regionalism promotion is a way to project an image of how the EU stands in the world. However, the regional promotion narrative may have changed due to the EU's role and response to the unprecedented socio-economic and political crises, referring to the United Kingdom's (UK's) leaving the EU, also known as "Brexit", the refugee crisis in 2015, and the current Russia- Ukraine war that started in 2022. These prominent socio-economic and security-political crises have brought nuances of doubt on the EU's normative power and its being a compelling global actor. However, the EU's normative power in convincing other external regional actors of its significant role, influence and even hierarchy as a global actor has significantly impacted the ASEAN to forge economic cooperation with the EU. Moreover, the plethora of severe economic and political crises has also equally brought the EU into a

crisis in the narrative of regionalism promotion. In this sense, the EU developed a narrative to reformulate its approach to a “comprehensive strategic narrative”. This elevates its place globally as a reliable regional strategic partner, especially to the ASEAN.

On the other hand, Xuechen (2018) argued that the evolving strong EU- ASEAN relationship has been influenced by the role of the ASEAN’s identity. Based on the perspective of Constructivism, the ASEAN’s social identity has played an important role in reshaping the EU- ASEAN interactions. This construction of the ASEAN identity has resulted in the EU’s change of attitude towards the ASEAN which has led to revise and modify the EU’s Eurocentric approach to its external policy. In other words, the EU’s foreign policy to the ASEAN has significantly upgraded the scope of relations quality to forging more comprehensive economic ties in energy security, cooperation in security and defense and political dialogues, while expanding sustainable development aid programs in green energy transition. In this context, the EU’s way in projecting a particular type of power aims to show the output of European integration: the union of peace, security, economic stability and reconciliation. Correspondingly, this mirrors the ASEAN’s concept of integration. Therefore, embracing a strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN is viable, despite remarkable differences in both organizations’ structures.

However, Pelkmans (1997) & Ariff (1995) argued that the EU’s approach towards ASEAN relations might need to create a new substance. Thus, despite a series of economic dialogues for closer cooperation, the EU’s policy developments have not significantly affected the ASEAN, particularly in the agricultural trade debate in the Uruguay Round. The ASEAN position weakened as a trade partner to the EU in the Uruguay Round in discussing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), as looming Multilateral Trade System policies posit a challenge rather than an opportunity for the ASEAN. Although the ASEAN has benefited from its export orientation, economic openness has depicted the ASEAN as vulnerable to external forces. In other words, economic liberalization of trade and services can be beneficial towards the ASEAN *per* openness to EU market access. However, high tariffs in agriculture products that fall under the “sensitive” category hurt ASEAN exports, because these products serve as the backbone of the ASEAN economy. Clearly, the imposed selective safeguard codes discriminated ASEAN exports and became a major barrier to the international free trade between the EU and ASEAN. Moreover, the recent ASEAN- EU Strategic Partnership presented many beneficial cooperation agreements. However, the EU’s green legislative agenda placed the ASEAN in a difficult position as regards the restriction of goods and products

that are connected to deforestation, including carbon border tax on imports to the EU. The green legislation might lead to ASEAN skepticism about the EU partnership. Thus, this trade barrier can be discriminatory and may pull down the ASEAN region's economic growth.

Indeo (2019) argued that sharing best practices between the EU and ASEAN will help efficiently implement renewable energy projects aiming for long-term energy security. On the other hand, Papatheologo (2014), based on the perspective of EU's interregionalism actorness, expressed concern that the EU applied inter regionalism as a strategy for extending European norms and values to the developing world while promoting global governance. The EU's status, as a pre-eminent actor in external relations, has become a chief architect to a distinct type of actorness in global governance and in the international system, although the EU-ASEAN evolution of cooperation, mainly in energy security has shared the same approach to employing energy diversification in energy mix. However, the EU and ASEAN's role as strategic partners in Energy Security raises a question of how this agenda can be feasible when the ASEAN economic openness to trade is through an ASEAN member's bilateral relations with the EU. In other words, the ASEAN is unlike the EU, which system functions to negotiate as one entity. In contrast, the ASEAN, as an organization, based on its constitution, cannot represent itself as one entity in any of its member countries' economic investments or agreements with the EU. Instead, the economic contracts with the EU must be made bilaterally with each ASEAN member country. This is due to the adherence by ASEAN and its member countries to the principle of non-interference while maintaining open economies. In fact, a free trade agreement has been done bilaterally between the EU and Indonesia, the EU and Vietnam and the EU and Singapore.

Moreover, during the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit, the EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, expressed enthusiasm for more free trade agreements through bilateral partnerships with the ASEAN countries, especially in green energy to build a value chain resilience. The EU's banner to multilateralism, *vis á vis* the EU and ASEAN Strategic Partnership agenda can only be seen as a symbol of gathering more regional alliances amid the global energy crisis. Thus, the significance of regional cooperation amid the global energy crisis is vital for the survival of economies. For the EU, "energy is the lifeblood of its society; thus, the well-being of people, industry and economy depends on safe, secure, sustainable and affordable energy sources" (European Commission, 2010). In the same manner, Southeast Asian countries aim to realize energy security by providing uninterrupted energy supplies to meet the massive energy demand that will support the ASEAN region's growing population



and economic growth. With this purpose, energy security promotion between the EU and ASEAN has resulted in elevated regional energy dialogues, such as the ASEAN-EU Action Plan for 2018-2022 (Wnukowski, 2021). This has been followed by the recent EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership, a new energy dialogue focused on Renewable Energy investment projects geared towards bolstering Green Transition.

In this perspective, among different ASEAN- EU strategic partnership fields, energy is one of the most crucial fields in which both regions aim for long-term cooperation. This strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN will test whether this closer cooperation, under the backdrop of a sustainable development agenda, can be effective in terms of building resource-sharing capacity, the transfer of clean technology, and the exchange of knowledge and workforce. Thus, the focal point of the EU-ASEAN, Strategic Partnership aims for multilateral cooperation between the two regions. The efficiency of the governance framework between the EU and ASEAN, *per* strategic partnership agenda in green, transition should also be examined as the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Summit's Joint Leaders' Statement presented many significant points of partnership in many fields, not only in economic areas but also in many areas of energy, climate and security, such as in maritime, the environment, food, health and medicine. Thus, the EU is economically balancing by seeking stronger trade relations with the ASEAN, encouraging political cooperation, and referring to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation request towards Ukraine (ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit/2022). At the same time, the EU encourages the ASEAN to take a firmer verbal line in a joint communique against Russia. In a complex and sensitive situation, the ASEAN has found it difficult to compromise on a language suitable for each of its member countries.

Therefore, some ASEAN member countries have expressed individual statements against Russian aggression towards Ukraine. In this case, the ASEAN community has agreed to condemn the Russian invasion, but will not go further, unlike the EU member countries, which have shown strong condemnation and actions like economic sanctions against Russia. In comparison, concerning the conflict between China and Taiwan, the ASEAN also took a divided voice towards China. The political sensitivity of the issue between China and Taiwan, has made the ASEAN take a balancing approach, as the economic and diplomatic ties of its member countries to China can be at stake.

In this context, with the debated dynamic relations of the EU and ASEAN in trade and, most especially, based on the wordings presented in the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit's Joint Leaders' Statement, the reaffirmed regional cooperation that has upgraded into a Strategic Partnership will unfold the dynamic relations between the EU and ASEAN as prominent regional actors. Therefore, the contribution of this literature review aims to shed light on the economic nature of their partnership and the future repercussions in the socio-political and security-political environment of EU and ASEAN's closer cooperation.

### **Chapter III. Methods, Methodology and Choice of Data**

This chapter elaborates the methods and methodology employed in this thesis. Moreover, this section outlines the thesis Case Study research design which draws solely on Qualitative approach, as such as analyzing, discussing and describing the EU and ASEAN relevant socio-economic and security-political agenda, legislations and policies that correlate to the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership.

#### **Research Design: Case Study**

In conducting research, Case Study was the most suitable method for producing a logical understanding of this thesis' concrete topic (Yin, 2009), as such a Case Study research design guides this research in examining specifically the "Strategic Partnership" between the EU and ASEAN in energy security. An in depth understanding of the particular event which is the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. Thus, utilizing the Case Study design will help to illuminate the controversial issue regarding the EU's true motivations behind forging strategic partnership with the ASEAN amid the global energy crisis. With this purpose, the Case Study research design helps operationally define the complex nature of this thesis topic as the research questions aim to reveal the EU's relationship towards the ASEAN *per* economic agenda. At the same time, it unravels the political motivations behind the strategic partnership agenda that may lead to, or prevent, geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions, as far as multilateralism and interdependency are concerned. The ASEAN- EU Strategic Partnership is a recent development, but its regional cooperation has roots that go back decades. Therefore, this thesis discussion includes former relations in trades, and the EU and ASEAN partnership evolutions in socio- economics, energy security and political aspects. Moreover, this thesis aims to be an

up-to-date theoretical contribution to the ongoing debates in the realm of International Relations in the strands of International Political Economy of energy security, the EU and ASEAN Regionalism, Interdependence and Multilateralism in Energy Security through Green Energy Transition. As such, energy security has evolved into a “wicked problem” *per se*, therefore the landscape of energy security studies also evolved into a wider range of studies in the sphere of politics and economy.

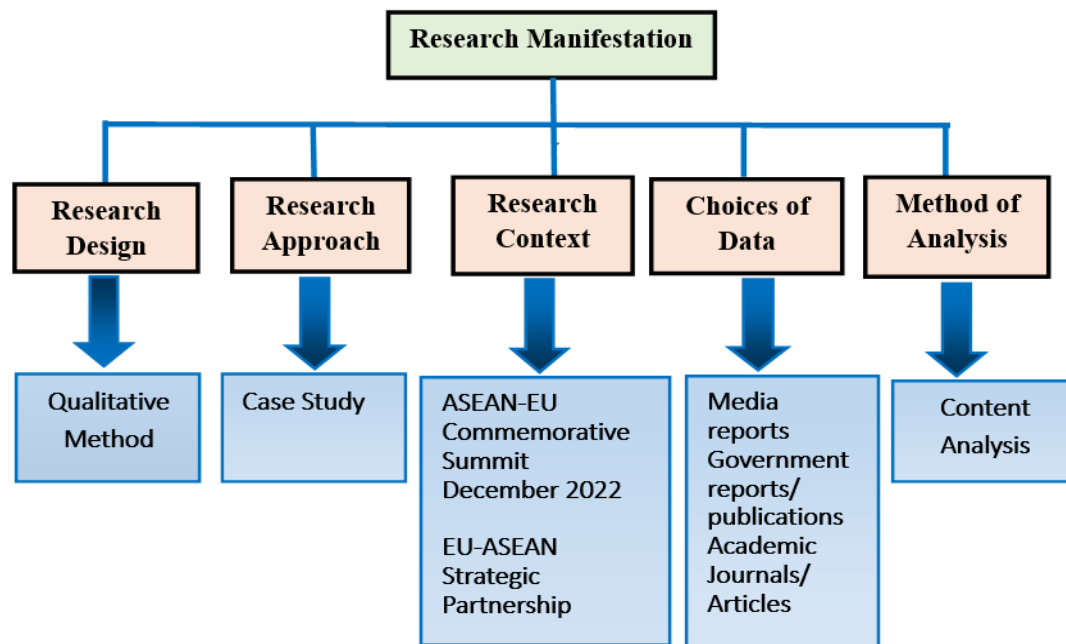


Table 1. Author’s Illustration of Chosen Methods and Methodology

### Methods: Content Analysis

This thesis mainly utilizes Content Analysis since this research aims to understand the context of state leaders' speeches and written agreements concerning the vision and mission of the EU and ASEAN as regional partners. It is important to highlight the crucial point of regional leaders’ rhetoric, by reading and understanding between the line of what the EU leaders and the ASEAN aims to deliver. And to unravel how the leaders’ portrayal of the “Strategic Partnership” matches to the reality of geopolitical and geoeconomic situation at hand. Thus, this explains the “discussion of the relationship between language and the actual world, since the perception of language and meaning is an important element to constructing the social world,” as such, legitimacy and credibility are established through discourse (Egholm, 2012:153). Therefore, “language and speech are never neutral representations of the world nor

is it the world that asks to be represented in a certain way, but the representation of it makes the world specific” (Egholm, 2012: 153). In other words, interpreting intricately the objectives and perspectives that surround the arrangements and agreements of the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership will guide this research in unfolding the motivations and the reasons the “block-to-block” partnership is vital for both the EU and ASEAN, especially with the ongoing global energy crisis. Methodically, this research will not only divulge the economic standpoint of the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership, but also aims to reveal the contextual descriptions of policies and agenda presented in the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Summits Leaders’ Joint Statement. Moreover, content analysis intends to interpret not only the EU’s and ASEAN’S perspectives, but also the viewpoint of the observers such as scholars, the media and many diverse sources within the realm of geopolitics and geoeconomics in energy security. By gathering a wider range of viewpoints in understanding implications, impediments and advantages of the regional partnership between the EU and ASEAN, this thesis will provide a greater outlook on regional cooperation dynamics. Therefore, content analysis will help unravel the rationale behind the discourse and contents of the EU-ASEAN ultimate goal of a block-to-block solid free trade cooperation. To clarify, the point of discussion is the language used by the EU and ASEAN in crafting deals with each other and the rhetoric used on why they conclude on the agreements.

### **Data Collection**

The empirical data collected for this research came from diverse sources, such as media reports, interviews, leaders’ public statements, speeches of government officials and heads of state, official government documents, policy briefs and scholarly journals and academic articles. Moreover, since the thesis topic is about the dynamic nature of the EU and ASEAN’s structures and functionalities of regional organizations, primary data focused on leaders’ speeches concerning the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership and the understanding of the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit’s Leaders’ Joint Statement. In comparing the summits Joint Leaders’ Statement to the leaders’ speeches, this thesis intends to understand the motivation, beliefs, character and nature of the agenda behind the EU and ASEAN partnerships. By describing and interpreting the summit’s Joint Leaders’ Statement, this research aims to understand the social, economic and political repercussions of these regional partnerships. In addition, thesis analyses are induced through an inductive approach to outline the logical reasoning of the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership.

### **Philosophy of Social Science Perspective**

This thesis methodology is accompanied by a strand social constructivist point of view correlated with the philosophical tradition of Constructivism. The ontology of Constructivism connects to a relativist understanding of the world. As such, “one’s reality is different from other’s reality, which explains that there are not one, but many relative realities specific to a context” (Egholm, 2014:144-152). Moreover, Constructivism’s epistemology points to the relativist notion wherein varied nuances in understanding circumstances bring different knowledge on how we approach their relative consequences. Within these diverse perspectives, constructivists intend to present that there are many ways and criteria for understanding the truth. As such, this depends on how valid and relevant the meanings are. “Constructivism rooted in skepticism about whether scientific statements can be valid independently of how people make sense of the world” (Egholm,2014:14).

Concerning the thesis topic in energy security, the philosophical standpoint of constructivism helps examine the reality of the EU’s energy security issue compared to the ASEAN. As such, the notions of the EU and ASEAN realities are different, since each organization has constructed its own realities through its communities, societies and other significant forces that influence each organization's decision-making regarding energy security issues. Thus, the EU and ASEAN’s institutional inertia may vary in many ways, reflecting their different views and approaches towards the complex nature of energy security.

The thesis objective is to reveal the constructivist notion of the EU and ASEAN Strategic Partnership. Therefore, through the lens of Constructivism, this thesis will shed light on the reason behind the EU’s motivation for regional partnership as well as the ASEAN’s. The regional organizations’ dynamics and mechanisms differ in crafting policies towards energy security due to the tremendous effect of the global energy crisis. Moreover, based on many decades of EU and ASEAN economic dialogues, for instance, the Asia- Europe Meeting (ASEM) forum, this thesis will elucidate on how the new EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership is regarded as more relevant compared to the past EU-ASEAN forums.

## **Study Limitations**

Although this thesis employs Constructivism, the pragmatic notion may inevitably influence the understanding of this research, given the palate of perspectives revolving around the political scene in connection with the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit. Therefore, the author of this thesis is employing the pragmatic approach, to maintain logical reasoning and avoid bias perspective towards the EU- ASEAN cooperation, considering the thesis author's Asian background. However, the author's extensive exposure, throughout her academic and professional career in Denmark includes many years of experience as an active member of women's development initiative groups in Denmark and as a member of the Danish Foreign Policy Organization, as well as her internship period at the Philippine Embassy in Copenhagen as an economic and political researcher. Therefore, the thesis author's active participation in many relevant events and organizations have made her familiar not only with the ASEAN understanding, but also with the EU's socio-economic and political knowledge.

In connection with the primary objective of this thesis, pragmatism also attempts to explain the contents of the research question and sub-question in correlation with its hypothesis by finding the practical consequences of the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership. Moreover, the regional cooperation agenda between the EU and ASEAN is not a new phenomenon. However, in the backdrop of the global energy crisis and COVID-19 economic recovery, the world can be volatile to political consequences brought about by these remarkable events, given the sophisticated nature of energy security. In this case, pragmatism intends to clarify the discourse and contents of the collected data. Therefore, the limitation of this research may be geared towards the up-to-date data collection from media sources and scholarly debates, since the turn of events concerning the Russia- Ukraine war and the global energy crisis is inevitable at this point.

## **Chapter IV. Concepts and Theoretical Framework**

The backdrop of the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership serves as the main premise of the analysis. Therefore, this thesis sets itself in the realm of International Relations (IR) studies. In addition, considering that Energy Security is often understood by scholars as a subfield under the academic discipline of International Political Economy (IPE), this thesis focal point is to examine the approach taken by the EU in securing energy as a long- term goal, through a regional cooperation with the ASEAN.

## **International Political Economy (IPE) in Energy Security**

This thesis sets itself in the realm of International Relations (IR) studies. Thus, having energy security as the main theme of the analysis *per* the EU and ASEAN Strategic Partnership, this thesis discusses the politico- economic exigencies of regional institutions' dynamics and dilemmas in regional cooperation between the EU and ASEAN in energy security. Moreover, this thesis is confronted with the complex nature of energy security and the dynamics towards green transition based on the renewed and upgraded EU- ASEAN "strategic" cooperation. To emphasize, the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership agenda centers on energy and the environment. Therefore, employing the International Political Economy (IPE) under the theoretical strands of Liberal IPE energy and the environment resources shall be discussed. Although the intention is to utilize the Liberal IPE, the tripartite approach of IPE (liberal, realist, critical) is also employed as a tool for an interdisciplinary approach in order to understand the premise of perplexities in the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership in energy security. To clarify, employing IPE in a broader scope, will help navigate the energy debate into a more in depth grain in analysis. Furthermore, understanding the narrative between the connection of energy studies and IPE can be explained starting from Gilpin's (1987) three core approaches to IPE namely, Liberalism, Mercantilism and Marxism, which effectively covered many significant ideas in economic and political debates (Watson, 2017; Gilpin, 1987).

To enumerate, the Liberal IPE, beginning with Adam Smith's 1776 "The Wealth of Nations" (Watson, 2017) has presented a clear set of perspectives that correlates with the ongoing relevance to the study of energy and resources from the mechanism of supply and demand in competitive markets, which established the necessary but minimum levels of government intervention to support the operation of markets. In case of "market failures", government interference would be needed (de Buck & Hosli, 2022). Hence, in the situation of global energy crisis, it is observed that the government and energy firms, therefore, the public and private sectors, work together in resolving the energy crisis. As such, in the ongoing Russia- Ukraine war, there is synergy between the government (public sector) and energy firms (private sector) where a clear indication of IPE in the sphere of energy security is a complicated area in politics and economy. On the other hand, David Ricardo's 1817 principles of political economy and taxation explain the Comparative Advantage of the economy's ability to lower opportunity cost, which has led to benefits of specialization and trade (Watson, 2017). Comparative Advantage means that "states should focus on the production of certain goods or services that can produce the best and cheapest. If all states apply this system, it will eventually help the

global economy. This will be beneficial to all resulting in comparable levels of economic performance (Gilpin, 2001). John Stuart Mill's 1848 managing of the distribution of resources is a separate question to production mechanisms. In this context, Smith and Ricardo's ideas in politics and economy have inextricably intertwined in the historical memory of IPE. As such, Smith and Ricardo's notion of IPE is presented as part of a single "liberal ancestry" (Phillips, 2005:9). Therefore, the consummate IPE perspectives have "established the central concepts that are now recognized as classical liberalism" (Goddard et al., 2003: 33). Even demographer and economist Thomas Robert Malthus' 1798 principle of population presented a view on the power of population and the ratio of its supply and consumption (Watson, 2017; Ricardo, 2004/1820). Stating theories behind the neoclassic IPE approach in economic and political debates leading to the connection of the contemporary IPE in energy security will provide a better analysis of how the Liberal IPE presented its role as a catalyst to the understanding of energy security that played an important role in understanding energy governance, protection- exploiting of energy resources, energy source distribution, supply and demand, energy efficiency and societal related issues such poverty and inequality that rooted from the effects of energy insecurities.

Therefore, the EU's energy security, and the ASEAN's energy security, have different perspectives hence both regions have different circumstances as well as priorities. In this context, under the lens of IPE, this research aims to unravel each regional organization's motivations and intentions in securing energy as a long- term goal.

Arguably, "energy scholarship, whether it realizes it or not, is grounded in IPE as a discipline" (Kuzemko et al., 2023). Thus, IPE of energy security and resources offers an understanding of the current state of political and economic thinking (ibid). Analysis of key intellectual themes in International Relations has a fundamental link to IPE's prominent discussions, from arising volatility of the energy market to energy governance and socio- political regional cohesion in energy security. Moreover, Russia's attitude towards its aggression to Ukraine has triggered the re- emergence of geopolitics in energy. As such, the Russia- Ukraine war has not only impacted the global economy through insecurities in energy supply and energy market, moreover, it has affected the political and diplomatic relations of states from a global perspective, which includes the rivalry between major poles of economies, for instance, China, the United States and the European Union (EU). China is observed to be maneuvering the market economy by accelerating its competition in many industries, namely, in bio-technology, raw materials and fossil fuel energy and while at the same time, increasing its carbon finance globally on clean



energy and renewables under the Belt and Road Initiative investment scheme (Geng et al., 2022). The growing geopolitical and geoeconomic rivalry in energy security has become extensive and has resulted in forging regional alliances as a strategy for securing energy. As a developing region in Southeast Asia, the ASEAN region has worked its way up to thrive in its economic development, despite the pressing issue of climate change and global energy crisis, which have added to its own regional and domestic economic and political issues.

These energy security dilemmas remain central in contemporary liberal IPE, and within its main variant, pointing to the neoclassical economics. Thus, due to the complex nature of energy security, IPE approaches will not directly engage with energy security issues although, according to liberal theory, “all goods can be treated equally, just as they are treated equally by impersonal market mechanisms” (ibid). Moreover, Smith’s theory explained that markets should operate and be fully functional on their own, causing an “invisible hand” to generate favorable economic conditions resulting in welfare gains that benefit all (de Buch & Hosli, 2020:12). However, energy security’s complex nature not only tackles with market mechanisms, but also with entangled webs of socio-economic and political issues in confronting the energy security pressures. In other words, energy security has created a “wicked problem” that needs to be treated strategically (Jamikowicz, 2022).

In this case, the IPE of energy security is again in a stage of global transformation, as IPE scholars described, “IPE returned home” (Goldthau et al., 2018). The EU is reacting to the pressing climate change challenges and persisting insecurity pertaining to Russia’s Gazprom’s energy supplies to the EU (Sharples, 2016), most especially with the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, which has exacerbated the EU energy crisis. Hence, these critical situations have brought impediments in fulfilling the EU’s largest energy project, the Energy Union. Furthermore, the energy insecurities in the EU have impacted financial markets and the global investment movement, for instance, on Wall Street, including some major banks and insurance companies that have started falling short on coal assets (Kuzemko et al., 2016). In addition, there is a slow pacing of project implementation, most especially the lack of financial investments in renewables and clean-tech energy sources in Asia and the Southeast Asian region (Ng & Tao, 2016; Gujba et al., 2012; Sonntag-Obrien & Usher, 2006). These major financial setbacks due to the global energy crisis and lack of legal capacity in the implementation of renewable energy generation are not only a policy matter.

Therefore, IPE as a discipline must properly conceptualize market dynamics and socio-political state behaviours in an international arena and make sense of energy security in the broader IPE spectrum. Such geopolitics play an important role in the EU's crisis in energy sources.

In this context, IPE exists in a present situation for additional academic studies of the contemporary IPE of energy and resources. The reproduction of world economic relations, especially in the emergence of energy security, is now routinely confronted by the intractable politics of securing access to a wide range of resources, particularly energy sources. In this regime of the EU's building regional alliance, a region- to- region agreement can be observed on the EU's utilizing an environmental security approach with other regional organizations *per* the climate change mitigation resulting to the EU's appeal to the ASEAN for closer cooperation towards long- term energy security. In addition, the drive towards constituting a distinctively net zero target or a low-carbon economy has implications for environmental governance and institutional reconfigurations of policies in the domestic, regional and international levels.

Therefore, this carbon- free global economy is an ambitious goal that will need wider cooperation from every aspect of the social, economic and political fronts. Politics in energy security resonates with such relevance with how a typical language steered in energy security debates, such as tensions, transitions, confrontations and urgency (Kuzemko, et al.,2016). Therefore, the EU's behavior towards energy security is much more intense in aiming to forge more allies at the level of a regional partnership. In this perspective, the EU's urgency to form a block-to-block partnership with the ASEAN can be understood in an environmental protection and economic sense. However, the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership *per se* can be seen as equally vital from a political angle. As such, energy security is present in the EU's everyday political language, in correlation with the pressing global energy crisis and the goal of a carbon-free economy, which are drivers for the EU's goal for regional cooperation with the ASEAN. In this sense, it is imperative that the energy security dilemma can be explained through the lens of IPE.

### **Neoliberalism: Institutionalism Theory of Regional Cooperation**

In the theory of International Relations (IR), the liberal strands of thought are labelled Neoliberalism, also known as Neoliberal Institutionalism, as one approach. Liberalists Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, in 1989, published a book, “Power and Interdependence”, explaining that several global actors influence world politics (Bliddal et al., 2013 cited in Walker, 2013:148-149). Therein, transnational linkages and various patterns of interdependence between states crucially impact how states behave and conduct their foreign policies. Neoliberalism, like Neorealism, characterized the global system as anarchic. However, in Neoliberalism, states do not act cohesively as one unit of entity; hence, states are constituted through different actors that can actively cooperate across and beyond state borders.

Moreover, rules of cooperation are vital in Neoliberalism. Keohane and Milner, in “The Promise of Institutional Theory” (1995), argued that institutions affect how states define their self-interests, hence, overtime interaction via institutions can influence states to prioritize collective or absolute gains that are facilitated by cooperation” (de Buck & Hosli, 2020:13). As such, domestic politics and international institutions shape the priorities of governments and co-determine their behavior (ibid). Therein, through the impact of the vital function of institutions, interdependence arises naturally as an effect of reciprocity. This can be reflected through regional cooperation *vis á vis* the EU and ASEAN regional partnerships. With the ongoing global energy crisis, a state's behavior can be seen differently in how the EU as a regional institution behaves and conducts its foreign policy. The EU’s multinational energy companies, clean-tech or renewable energy firms and transnational environmental interest groups are seen as playing an imperative role in shaping the incentives for states to act amid the global energy crisis. However, amid the global energy crisis, the EU has projected itself as one solid institution, collectively facing the energy crisis as a whole region.

On the other hand, the ASEAN behaves differently in its approach towards the global energy crisis, despite the notion that it has extensively affected the Southeast Asian region. The ASEAN states may react differently towards the global energy crisis due to their varied socio-economic and political circumstances. However, these differences are not an excuse for avoiding regional cooperation. Hence, for the ASEAN, as a regional institution, it is imperative that multilateralism is colossal, for regional cooperation. In other words, the multilateral principle is embedded in international institutions as the mechanism for regional cooperation. The ASEAN’s principle of “non-interference” or the “ASEAN Way” may impede multilateral cooperation. However, interdependence with other regional organizations, like the EU is

inevitable. Thus, a rule-based order has brought sustainable peace and cooperation, which can be a better strategy and far more beneficial than conflict (ibid:13).

Moreover, international institutions, in other words, “regimes” are sets of rules, norms and principles which influence behavior in a particular phenomenon, in this case, the global energy crisis. This has been seen to affect a state's behavior toward energy security. According to a realist, Stephen Krasner, through the lens of an institutionalist perspective, international regimes are “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner,1982:186). In addition, in the distribution of power, regimes and behavior can become a central phenomenon of international relations. Thus, regimes may not change, although the essential causal variables (political power or economic agreements) that led to their creation may have altered (Krasner, 1982:500).

The institutional inertia in the international regime subdues this persistent anarchic state behavior. As such, institutions in international relations created interdependence of regional organizations wherein decision-making, power-distribution and economic agreements were applied through equal footing and consensus. Moreover, multilateralism is based on the principle of institutional cooperation, through a rule-based order. However, multilateralism can be effective through voluntary and compliance mechanisms and consensual modes of decision-making (Murray & Moxon-Browne, 2013:523). But due to the gap between the EU’s organizational structure and the ASEAN’s organizational structure, there are debates whether regional integration agreements are more effective than multilateralism. Thus, in the case of the EU pursuing more free trade agreements with the ASEAN *per* the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership, the apparent impediments to this region-to-region partnership agenda, particularly in energy security, are the trade-off between the trade liberalization and national regulations or the domestic regulations in conducting international trade. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has successfully resolved trade barrier issues, such as tariffs, tax policy, credit, and monopoly and, in particular, has established the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), by satisfying individual (states) interests for them to follow the international norms. The regional and economic order may have resulted in a systemic pattern of economic activities, but it is not guaranteed to be feasible in all regional cooperations and partnerships given that the ASEAN has a different format in its organizational structure and belief system, where the principle of consensus and the value of each member’s national sovereignty are highly regarded through the policy of non-interference.

This characteristic feature of the “ASEAN Way” is directly opposite the EU’s Supranational nature, where the intense political bargaining and compensation mechanisms are integral to the EU’s economic and political development in its member states (Murray & Orcalli,2012:434).

Deepening regionalism is apparent in both the EU and ASEAN, where regionalism can be observed through institutionalized mechanisms for cooperation. However, unlike the EU, the ASEAN lacks a solid economic integration in comparison to the EU single market, which has made the trade investment flows within and outside the EU more plausible. In addition, Chandra (2016) argued that the resurfacing protectionism as a sign of economic nationalism within the ASEAN is one of the key obstacles to ASEAN’s effort to deepen its economic integration project and to accelerate the regional free trade agreements. As such, this politico-economy actors operate within their domestic economic influences by rescaling domestic regulatory this is to protect the domestic market and adjust from the intense pressure of globalism.

Therefore, the absence of a single market in the ASEAN and the rising protectionism within the ASEAN, may prevent the full feasibility of the clean energy revolution, which is one of the main agenda items of the new EU-ASEAN Energy Dialogue under the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership program. However, there are skeptical notions towards the success of the EU integration and to its common currency. (Stubbs,2019) as having such common currency or a single market can be a risky experiment for the ASEAN (Fitriani, 2014). Thus, the Eurozone crisis may reflected that the power of the EU as a global player is decreasing. On the other hand, many in the ASEAN economic community believed that the EU’s fight against the financial crisis and the EU’s re-emerging as a strong partner regional integration has made the ASEAN want to deepen its relations with the EU.

Furthermore, the diverse nature of the ASEAN integration will lead other regional partners such as the EU to embark on a bilateral negotiation. Nevertheless, the EU is stating that the EU-ASEAN partnership is rooted from a “multilateral DNA” (EU Commission President/ EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit press conference 22/12/2022). However, circumstances have only allowed the EU to actively employ bilateral negotiations with the ASEAN, specifically, on free-trade agreements with each of its member states(ibid). Despite all free trade obstacles, the EU is willing to pursue a closer economic relationship with the ASEAN because the severe energy crisis has made economic and political alliances inevitable.

Moreover, in the world of interdependence, liberal theorist, Andrew Moravcsik, through the lens of Liberal- Intergovernmentalism *per* the European integration, argued that due to national preferences, the issue-specific functional interdependence invokes an “asymmetrical interdependence” in pursuit of vital geopolitical interest and policies to idealism” ( Moravcsik, 2018:1649-1650). In other words, Liberal- Intergovernmentalism means that the “governments act as rational actors pursuing domestic goals and interests” (Moravcsik, 1995:53). Therefore, regional integration is the result of an active interstate “bargaining” and can best be analyzed as a “process of collective choice through which conflicting interests are reconciled” (Börzel & Risse, 2016). Accordingly, the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership presented a bargaining agreement and negotiations between two regions, which are characterised as natural ways in a world of interdependence.

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## **Chapter V. Analysis**

This chapter discusses the impediments and perplexities of the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership and unravels the approaches taken by the EU in addressing the intricate issue of energy security. This section elaborates on the importance of regional strategic partnerships for the EU in the midst of the global energy crisis. It also elaborates on the ASEAN’s existing economic and political treaties that may hamper the EU’s aim for a solid region-to- region partnership with the ASEAN. This section clarifies, key players intention in crafting the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. The EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the

EU Council President Charles Michel, spear headed the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership, as part of the EU's sustainable development project. And for the ASEAN, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, is the Chairperson for this year's ASEAN-EU dialogues.

### **The South China Sea Disputes and Indo- Pacific Stability: Whose Security?**

The December 2022 ASEAN – EU Summit was surrounded by geopolitics as each region emerged with security and political dynamics, wherein self-interest was in the strategic partnership agenda. This self-interest is clearly highlighted in the declaration “the Joint Leaders’ Statement” or the Joint Communiqué. The declaration indicated that the EU Strategy on the Indo- Pacific has the same view as the ASEAN's. The point of the declaration sets the EU and ASEAN convergence of interest concerning China, as neither the ASEAN countries nor the EU countries would like to be with the United States regarding its abrasive way of confronting China. However, a dilemma arose in the recent move of China acting as a peace broker in the Russia- Ukraine war. China's peace deal plans raised concern as Chinese President Xi Jinping, during the 2022 G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia, met only with the EU heads of government of France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands, while avoiding the European Commission President and the European Council President (Hennessey, 2023:570). According to observers, Xi Jinping's avoiding the said EU leaders is due to the EU's calling out to China in the sensitive political issue between China and Taiwan. In the same manner as what the United States did when the United States Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, recently visited Taiwan in support of the country's democracy, as independent from China *per se*, this situation has created more tension between China and the United States (Hennessy, 2023). On the other hand, China's approach in offering to be a peace deal broker between Russia and Ukraine can be seen from an economic perspective. If the Russia-Ukraine war continues, China will lose its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investment in Ukraine (Mendez et al., 2022). In 2017, China became Ukraine's foremost single-country trading partner, which accelerated in 2019 but lost its momentum in 2020 due to the COVID- 19 pandemic. Based on Chinese policy banks and loan commitments to Ukraine, experts estimated that China has a loan portfolio of approximately 7 billion USD, where the bulk of the investments is dedicated to infrastructure projects and 20% of China's overseas lending since the year 2000 has been accounted for Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. In addition, the “UN Comtrade in 2021 made the China- Ukraine bilateral trade total 18.6 billion USD” (Sahakyan, 2023).

Despite the intricate situation, especially with the recent economic partnership between Russia and China through “Ukraine as BRI gateway to Europe” (Mendez et al.,2022), the EU does not want to isolate China. Thus, the EU maintains strong economic ties with China because the EU and China are major trading partners. In 2021, “China was the third largest partner for EU exports of goods, with 10.2% and the largest partner for EU imports of goods, with 22.4%” (Hennessey, 2023:560). Instead, the EU leverages itself as a strong ally to the ASEAN in support of a rules based order over the maritime security issue with China. The EU presented itself to be devoted and supportive of the ASEAN in the South China Sea conflict by promoting respect of the Code of Conduct (CoC) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The CoC promotion created a positive outlook for the ASEAN in resolving the South China Sea maritime issue. Hence, in the spirit of multilateralism, having a strong alliance with the EU to uphold the rule of law *per* UNCLOS in the South China Sea maritime dispute is a vital legal tool to confront the aggressive behavior of China towards the ASEAN. Having a third-party observer in resolving maritime boundary disputes between China and the ASEAN in the South China Sea is an advantage, in terms of majority support to the ASEAN *per* UNCLOS. However, there is skepticism about the EU’s involvement in other regional maritime security issues, especially regarding the ASEAN member that is a claimant and is heavily affected by the South China Sea dispute, namely, the Philippines. According to Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as ASEAN coordinator of the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership expressed, “...the future of Asia Pacific region should be decided by the Asia Pacific countries, and not with any other power outside of our area”(ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit - Leaders Press Conference/2022). Accordingly, resolving the South China Sea issue should be from an Asian perspective, and should only be between the ASEAN claimants and China. In other words, the conflict among Asians should be treated and resolved in an “Asian Way”. In this case, one approach taken between the ASEAN and China is through trade diplomacy. China makes financial investments in the ASEAN region under the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) launched in 2013 (Merino, 2023). For instance, the Philippines and Malaysia are among the biggest recipients of BRI in their programs of modernization in infrastructure and developments (Camba, et al., 2021). Moreover, China has been seen as the biggest supplier and donor of medical supplies (COVID-19 vaccines) and hospital equipment to the ASEAN countries, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made China the largest trading partner of the ASEAN during the pandemic.



Regarding strong regionalism within the bounds of the ASEAN, it has been argued by maritime dispute experts and risk and security scholars that intervention from other regional superpowers, such as the EU or the United States would only create more complications, since the Western perspective has a different view in resolving the South China Sea conflict. According to the EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership under the Global Gateway initiatives includes providing a digital submarine in the South China Sea. According to the EU, this digital infrastructure will enhance the interconnectivities between two regions. This is to ensure peace and security in the South China Sea and Indo- Pacific region. On the other hand, protecting the Taiwan Straits from China's aggression through the United States military vessels patrolling the Indo- Pacific under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) pact, is claimed to be the best way to maintain stability in the area. In this perspective, the EU has approved to embark on a military approach in the same manner as the United States wherein building military bases around China is the most feasible way to maintain stability and peace in the disputed maritime spaces.

The EU's interest in Taiwan is more likely due to the initiated free trade agreements. Taiwan has been included in the EU's strategy toward East Asia under the EU's new trade policy in 2015 with the mantra "trade for all" (Cho, 2018). In 2014, the EU initiated a Bilateral Investment Agreement with Taiwan and Hong Kong under the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment framework between the EU and China. Trade relations with the EU have been continuously progressing over the past decades under a consistent adherence to the "One China Policy", which is a China principle making Taiwan a part of China (Cho, 2018:89). Many challenges have been encountered in the EU- Taiwan economic partnership. However, this economic arrangement amplifies non- economic objectives (ibid). In the perspective of multilateralism, this includes the promotion of the principle of freedom and democracy in a world of rules -based order. The interest of the EU in the peace and security of Taiwan is geared towards democracy promotion wherein, from the Western viewpoint, Taiwan's "independence" is in peril due to China's intense pursuit of bringing back Taiwan as a part of China.

For the ASEAN, peace and maritime stability are important in the South China Sea. Thus, the South China Sea is fundamental to the global economy (Merino,2023) since it serves as a vital geobody of water for trade routes, delivering goods and products to all corners of the world. With 80 % of the global trade volume, the South China Sea is carrying an estimated one-third of global shipping(unctad.org/2022). Therefore, the South China Sea is a geostrategic body of water, playing an important role as a waterway to global shipping trade in East Asia, Southeast

Asia and other parts of the world, including the EU and has annual earnings of approximately 3.37 USD trillion as an international shipping passage (chinapower.csis.org/2023). The South China Sea is also one of the fertile sources of fisheries as well as natural resources since underneath the seabed lies enormous oil and gas reserves. In fact, China's recent study has speculated that natural gas reserves in the South China Sea have a potential for resources ranging from 37.6 billion to 117.7 billion tons of oil (Su et al., 2022). In addition, a recent calculation by the United States Energy Information Agency has estimated that probable oil reserves in the South China Sea hold about 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 11 billion barrels of oil. This knowledge asserts the importance of the South China Sea from the energy security perspective that encompasses the EU in forging a long- term, stronger economic relationship with the ASEAN. In this sense, the EU believes that energy security plays a significant role in maintaining peace in the South China Sea and stability in the Indo- Pacific region, since a multilateral relationship towards the ASEAN can be a strategic way for more economic and trade cooperation with the ASEAN. It is apparent that China's economic influence on the ASEAN, is far stronger than the EU's economic influence on the ASEAN, since China has secured access to many key markets in Asia through working on trade diplomacy over the past decades (Bungenberg & Hazarika, 2017).

Moreover, although the EU stands at 13. 1 % of the ASEAN's global export, it is still substantially less compared to China, which stands at 22.2 % and is expected to accelerate as the ASEANs infrastructure project under China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) investment strategy is already ongoing (ibid). At least the EU's offer of a 10 billion euro budget for the ASEAN serves as a third financing alternative for the ASEAN, especially in renewable and clean energy projects. As such, EU financing through the Global Gateway is a financial advantage to the ASEAN, a lucrative financial source to have a third possibility of financing other than China and the United States. This EU strategy can be observed as a self- interest offer of the EU, to compete against China's influence over the ASEAN. The EU's Global Gateway is likely to be seen as the competitive strategy of the EU against China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Apparently, there are risks and opportunities in engaging with China. Thus, China's increasing worldwide socio- economic and political influence provides China with a leverage for security and a control of market economy. China is becoming a major economic power as the leading exporter and global producer/manufacturer of various goods and products, for example, bio- tech products, electronics, raw materials and China's recent investment on renewable energy

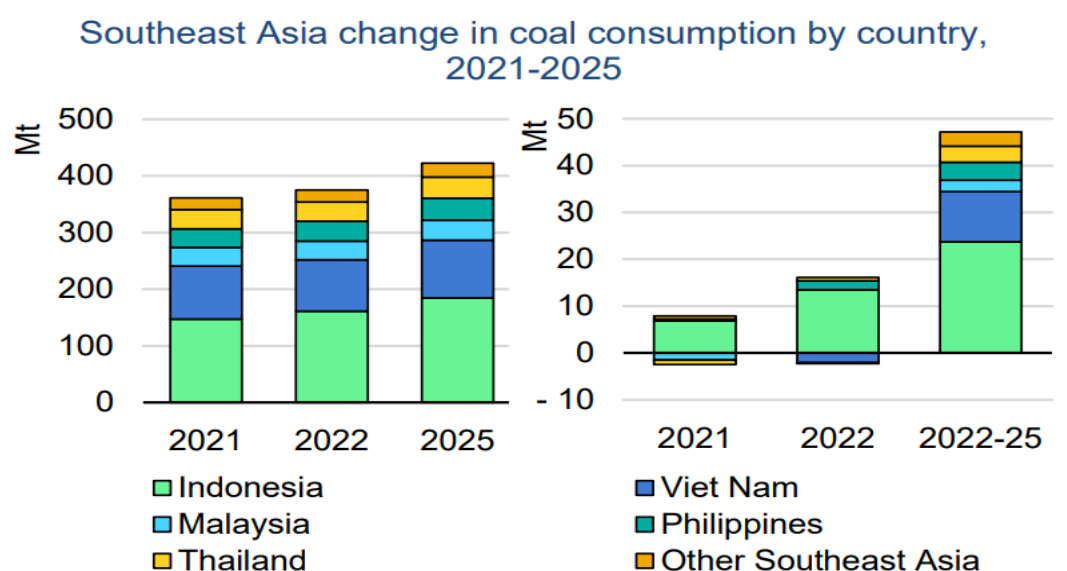
sources equipment (Geng et al., 2022). Therefore, the EU's approach to energizing old regional partnerships with the ASEAN, *per* the Asia- Europe Meeting (ASEM) framework (Fitriani, 2014), and the EU- participation in the recent EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership can be ways for the EU to draw back the ASEAN from China's influence in order for the EU to gather more allies against Russia. Moreover, with the looming Russia- Ukraine war, the EU aims to inflict not only economic influence on the ASEAN, but also on a political influence as a friend and ally against Russia under the spirit of multilateralism. In other words, the EU's regional partners should share the same attitude towards Russia, as the EU expects that the ASEAN will condemn Russia's aggressive authoritarian behavior against another democratic state, in this case, Ukraine.

### **Multilateral under a Bilateral Negotiations Dynamics in Free Trade Agreements**

The ASEAN is focused on achieving progress in a trade pact with the EU, rather than just receiving "help" or aid. However, doubts arise on how feasible a broad- based trade agreement in short term is, considering that there are existing obstacles in fulfilling such region-to -region free trade agreements. To point out, one of the major impediments in region to region dealing is the use of the jargon "systemic" during speeches of the EU leaders during the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit and in the summit's Joint Leaders' Statement. To clarify, the European Commission has the prerogative to negotiate free trade agreements on behalf of the EU, in the same manner that the EU has negotiated free trade agreements with Asian nations like Singapore, Vietnam, South Korea and Japan. The problem with using systemic free trade negotiations is that the ASEAN Secretariat, in respect of ASEAN member states, does not have the prerogative that the European Commission has in respect of the EU member states. This means that the ASEAN Secretariat is unable to negotiate on behalf of the ASEAN member states, or on behalf of the whole ASEAN organization. Thus, the free trade agreements are the responsibilities of individual ASEAN member states. In these circumstances, the EU is more realistically heading towards negotiating individual free trade agreements with countries that are members of the ASEAN. For instance, the EU's negotiating separate agreements with the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, and then consolidating these individual agreements into a single pact, can be a problematic free trade arrangement, because the internal political fraction of the ASEAN member states should be considered, particularly with respect to Myanmar. In this case, the consolidated free trade agreements of the individual ASEAN countries with the EU will not be and may not be ratified by the European Parliament, because of the issue of the civil war in Myanmar. From the EU Parliament's perspective, the issue in

Myanmar is a moral and ethical issue that runs deeply into the EU’s core principle of democracy promotion. The absence of Myanmar in the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Summit indicated that the ruling military *Junta* in Myanmar will not abide the “rule of the game” by the multilateral rule base order (Goh, 2011). Therefore, this systemic issue will hamper the economic free trade agreements between the EU and the ASEAN and ASEAN member states, due to internal political fragmentation in the ASEAN. This serves as a weakness of the ASEAN as a regional organization. However, Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen, at the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Summit, expressed that the situation in Myanmar should not be the basis for changes in the future of EU- ASEAN cooperation. The problem in Myanmar or any other country should not disturb the efforts for economic partnership, nor should politics hinder the free trade agreement between the two blocks (Hun Sen, EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit Press Conference/ 2022).

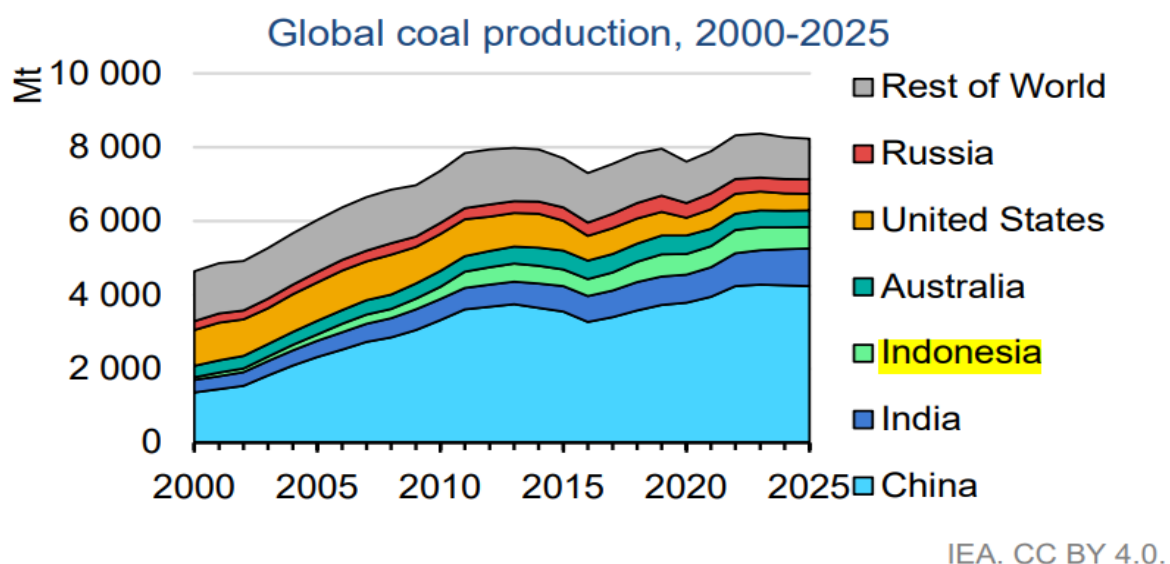
Furthermore, each ASEAN member state has internal issues with its domestic affairs in legal, social or political aspects that may impede the EU’s goal for bolstering renewable energy projects. Coal is one of the major energy sources for developing countries in Southeast Asia. Coal consumption in Southeast Asia totalled 361 million tons in the year 2021, increased by 1.5 % from the previous year. The largest coal consumers in the region are, first, Indonesia with 41 % second, Vietnam with 26 %, third, Thailand with 9 %, followed by Malaysia with 9 %, and then the Philippines with 9 % (iea.org/2022).



IEA. CC BY 4.0.

Figure 2. Southeast Asian Countries Year 2021- 2025 Coal Consumption

Next to China and India, Indonesia is the world's third largest coal producer (iea.org/2022). The EU has signed a bilateral agreement with Indonesia for a “Just Energy Transition Plan” (JETP), a recent model for international cooperation in a Public- Private Partnership (PPP) investment for a specific country to accelerate renewable energy generation. However, based on the International Energy Agency 2022 executive report, Indonesia aims to expand its coal industry until the year 2025 (ibid). Coal has become in demand, prompting the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has sharply altered the dynamics of coal trade price levels and the supply and demand patterns. The prices of fossil fuels have risen significantly, with natural gas showing the sharpest increase. This has resulted in a wave of fuel energy switching away from gas, leading to a demand for more price-competitive options, including coal, which is way more affordable and accessible compared to other fossil fuel energy sources. Indonesia is the major supplier of coal to its neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia.



*Figure 2.* Indonesia is among the Top 3 Countries in Global Coal Production

In this perspective, Southeast Asian dependency on fossil fuel has resulted in a huge demand for coal consumption, which will lead to more demand for production. This will substantially pull down Indonesia's aim to hasten the transition from fossil fuel energy sources to renewable energy. Despite the willingness of the Southeast Asian countries to comply with the Paris Agreement, the region's growing demand for power consumption and the ever changing landscape of energy security will mean that cooperation and mitigation plans of these countries, regarding climate change, will be greatly impacted. Accordingly, the EU's goal for more free trade agreements through bilateral negotiations, including agreements considering the

“Just Energy Transition” (JETP) model, in order to combat climate change, will most likely be affected. As such, some of the Southeast Asian countries’ energy architecture is not yet totally prepared in terms of financial, social, political and even legal changes towards green energy transition.

Furthermore, the Philippines is one of the Southeast Asian countries that have legal obstacles in bringing Renewable Energy (RE) investments into the country. Philippine laws on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) restrict foreign ownership, and the country’s laws on Exploration, Development and Utilization (EDU) restrict the use of the country’s natural resources. These Philippine laws have been observed as impediments in bolstering the country’s RE projects. With the Philippines’ ageing power plants and low installed capacity for power generators the country’s energy security is at high risk, most especially with the ever rising demand for energy to cater to the country’s growing population (Agaton, 2018).

Moreover, the ongoing Russia- Ukraine war has aggravated the energy crisis, wherein a developing country like the Philippines has been heavily affected by the energy shortages and the exponential rise of energy prices, which have further led to the country’s dependency on fossil fuel, including coal, as a cheaper energy source (Colon Reyes, 2022). The global energy crisis has become the tipping point for the Philippines to aim for long-term energy security through renewable energy generation(ibid). From this perspective, the Philippines has tried to lure many foreign RE investors by crafting the Philippine Republic Act 9513, also known as the Renewable Energy Act of 2008. Under this RE law, the “National Renewable Energy Program” was created, aiming to increase RE projects in the country by providing incentives to local entrepreneurs and encouraging them to create more RE-related activities and jobs (doe.gov.ph/2022). However, despite the government’s efforts to accelerate RE projects in the country, Philippine laws on foreign investments have been blocking the country’s RE development. Thus, the FDI restriction discourages potential foreign investors due to the huge disparity in entity ownership, which is 40% foreign and 60% Filipino. Philippine laws on FDI restriction aim to protect national interest (sovereignty) against foreigners. This is due to the colonial history of the country. However, legislative bills have been filed in Philippine Congress, with the intention to lift some of the FDI restrictions and to liberalize the utilization of natural resources, which emphasizes the exclusion of wind, solar and hydro as potential energy sources (DOJ Opinion21/Sept/22). This amendment of laws is through the revision of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of relevant laws, in conjunction with a Philippine Department of Justice (DOJ) Opinion. By amending the laws through IRR revision,

foreign RE companies will be able to invest, ensuring 100 % of ownership. This IRR revision will pave the way to accelerate RE investments in the country. However, due to the Philippine system of bureaucracy, the filed bills for law amendment remain pending. It will take a while before the law amendments will be fully implemented.

Moreover, the EU- ASEAN Strategic Partnership agenda for free trade is seen as a competition to the existing ASEAN regional economic treaties like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) led by China in 2012 (Merino, 2023). The RCEP serves as an instrument that has given the ASEAN and its member countries access to several bilateral negotiations and free trade agreements, including the ASEAN+3 China- Japan- Republic of Korea (CJK), and ASEAN+6, which is a free trade agreement among China, Japan, Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia (CEPEA) (Hamanaka, 2014). Nevertheless, the RCEP aims to influence the shaping of the regional order and the nexus between multilateralism and regionalism of the ASEAN. The RCEP is an ASEAN-centric economic agreement which primarily serves to propel closer intra-ASEAN integration and the deepening of the Asian Economic Community ties and to harmonize policies between the ASEAN and its free trade agreement partners” (Pasha et al.,2019:53).

On the other hand, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a US led economic group, is a trade agreement among 12 Pacific Rim economies, namely, the United States, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam (Hamanaka,2014). The TPP came about as a rival of the RCEP since the main agenda of the TPP is to deliberately exclude China in any economic negotiation (ibid). Moreover, the co-existence of the RCEP and TPP in the global economy resulted in competition. As such, RCEP and TPP created more options and possibilities for other economic groupings to choose what is more favourable to their economies.

Furthermore, economic rivalries between several major economies have paved the way for the realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia- Pacific (FTAAP), which is rooted from the suggestion of the Asia Pacific Economic Conference Leaders (APEC) leaders (ibid). The FTAAP will be a major instrument for the APEC’s regional economic integration agenda, wherein all regional economic groupings, such as the RCEP, may it be ASEAN+3 or ASEAN+6, and Trans- Pacific Partnership (TPP) can negotiate with free trade agreements without any exclusion (ibid). However, the rivalry between RCEP and TPP may affect the ASEAN centrality. In other words, the rivalry may divide the ASEAN solidarity due to

competing proposals from the RCEP and TPP. This ASEAN division might create pro-RCEP against pro-TTP groups, considering that only two ASEAN countries, Malaysia and Singapore, have dual membership with RCEP and TPP. This ASEAN divide may be viewed from an economic perspective, given that some ASEAN members have strong economic positions compared to other ASEAN members.

On the other hand, the ASEAN division can be seen from a security angle, given China's maritime dispute in the South China Sea with the ASEAN claimants. These economic and political dynamics have made the ASEAN attractive, as a regional partner, to many economic regional organizations. Moreover, "towards end of the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century the eurozone experienced severe financial crisis" (Fitriani, 2014). While during this time the EU and the United States suffered financial crises. Asia, on the other hand, became the engine of global growth making the ASEAN countries enjoy economic growth brought about by China's rise in economy due to its investments to the ASEAN (ibid). On the other hand, the growth of rising regional economies made bigger regional economies such as the EU and the United States fight to stay in the hierarchy as dominant players. However, due to the rising growth of economies, especially in the developing countries, this multipolarity has led to the competitive notion of the bigger poles.

## **Chapter VI. Discussion**

### **Multipolarity: A Theory of (Geo)Political and (Geo) Economic Survival**

" Since the turn of the 21st century, the world has thus become increasingly multipolar. This rising multipolarity has occurred in concert with the expansion of globalization" (World Bank Group, 2011:23). As a result of the geopolitical and geoeconomic rivalries, the EU formulated a long -standing preferential free trade policy with several economic regional organizations from the north side, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to the south side through the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), as well as the EU- Mediterranean free trade agreement which has a large share of Mediterranean exports to the EU, consisting of 43% (Péridy, 2005), and then the EU's recent "strategic" economic partnership with the ASEAN. In this sense, in the world economy of interdependence, the EU would like to cover the entire demography for economic advantage and take its position as one of the bigger poles in the multipolar system. Between the decline of the United States geopolitical and geo economic



influence, and the ever-rising ambition of China for domination in global economy, security and politics, this phenomenon of the rivalry of position created an opportunity for the EU to exert its effort for unprecedented influence in a global arena (Thomas, 2021).

“As power continues to diffuse from the unipolar United States, we can expect a multipolar world to be more complex and multi-layered. We can expect geopolitical self-assertion in a multipolar system to mean that interventions will continue, if not indeed grow in importance, but that they will not define by a single regime type and its associated set of ideas, for example, liberal internationalism, human rights” (Cunliffe, 2019). Despite the successes and impediments under the rules- based order, the EU would like to maintain the principle of multilateralism in the behest of regional cooperation and partnerships. The strong mechanism in regional political cohesion can be an impediment. However, it can also be a success. As “there is a rapid rise of new great powers and unprecedented globalized interdependence” (Goh,2011:376), acquiring this privileged position within the international community, is through the process of constant institutional development, including negotiations and “cooperative bargaining” (Thomas, 2021:621) for great power. In other words, the positions obtained by great powers are through sustainable normative agreements and cooperation to attain regional order. As such, having regional power is by holding on to a pole of influence which is not only through a logic of economic material influence, but is also through a sustained regional dialogue of ideas. The EU’s behavior in taking its global position as one of the bigger poles in a complex multipolar system can be observed from a hegemonic perspective, wherein the EU’s hierarchy is vital to maintain its relevance despite rising multipolarity. In this case, with the EU aiming to be a leading regional power, expect a “strategic interaction” (Acharya, 2018:33) and “cooperative mechanism” from other regional organizations like the ASEAN to arrange a common public goods such as free trade and energy security (Goh, 2011:377). Therefore, the EU’s penchant for multilateral free trade deals with the ASEAN is the result of the geoeconomic and geopolitical reality, due to the pressure brought by the arising multipolarity.

Furthermore, as the result of the geopolitical and geoeconomic complexity of the past, and the recent global crises namely, the 2008 eurozone crisis and the global energy security crisis as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war, the EU must rise from those difficult circumstances.

The EU aims to maintain itself as one of the bigger poles, therefore, the EU must project an image as “EU- the Unifier” and “EU- the Problem Solver”.

In this viewpoint, the EU must maintain and build stronger ties through cooperative bargaining among the great powers or with rising regional powers, for instance with the United States, China, India, Japan and Southeast Asia, while navigating the steep competition of poles on the global arena. The EU believes that a rules- based order should compass the emergence of multipolarity, such that in the redistribution of global powers, there must be a stable configuration of regional cooperation to protect and maintain order within the international community by following the agreed international norms and behavior in a democratic community. In other words, since the EU is claiming the top hierarchy position in the multipolar system, the EU should take a major role as the torch bearer of liberal principles in upholding freedom and democracy, not only in the European region but also regarding its regional partners and the entire democratic world *per se*. From this perspective, the EU has projected itself as a leader of strong united free nations, which is a significant symbol of democracy. Therefore, through this intention, the EU has expressed its expectations that it would play a greater role as a leader of a strong regional economic partnership and politico-security alliance. This sends a compelling message against authoritarian regimes, which have an opposite value compared to the democratic nations under the EU's leadership.

### **Russia- Ukraine War: The EU's Discourse on the Mantra for Liberal Principle of Freedom and Democracy**

Since the EU is claiming on the top hierarchy position in the multipolar system, the EU should take a major role as the torch bearer of liberal principle in upholding freedom and democracy not only in the European region but also to its regional partners and the entire democratic world *per se*. From this perspective, the EU projected itself as a leader of a strong united free nations, which is a significant symbol of democracy. Therefore, through this intention the EU expressed their expectations that they would play a greater role as a leader of a strong regional economic partnership and politico-security alliance. This send a compelling message against authoritarian regimes which are opposite to the belief of democratic nations under the EU's leadership.

During the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit, it was discussed how agreeable the ASEAN was towards supporting Ukraine by the signing of several ASEAN member countries to the Treaty of Amity for Ukraine. Notably, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand abstained during a United Nations vote in October 2022. Vietnam, Laos and Thailand abstained from condemning Russia's attempted annexation to some of Ukraine's regions, since the 24 February 2022 start

of the war in Ukraine. The fact that some ASEAN member states have refrained from denouncing Russia is a reflection that there is a line of division within the ASEAN. As such, concerning the Russia- Ukraine war, there is no single voice, from the ASEAN as a regional organization. The EU pushed the ASEAN to take a harsher stand against Russia in the December 2022 ASEAN-EU Summit's Joint Leaders' Statement. From the EU's perspective, obtaining a strong statement of condemnation against Russia from the ASEAN is vital. Thus, having the approval of the ASEAN, pointing to Russia as an aggressor, is symbolically important for the EU. In this context, the war between Russia and Ukraine significantly influences the EU's agenda for ASEAN strategic partnership.

*"... the term Strategic Partnership is the reality of two regions the EU and ASEAN. Despite a world being miles apart, we have so much in common besides the most successful regional integration project, we share the commitment to multilateralism and international rule of law. The European Union pleads for closer cooperation between the EU and ASEAN partners. The war returned to European continent as Russia unleashed aggression against Ukraine. The world has felt the brutal shockwave of the war on food prices and energy security. In the world of interdependencies, this is not solely a European or Asian problem. Thus, the challenges we face today are of global nature"* – Ursula von der Leyen (EU Commission President/ EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit press conference 22/12/2022)

According to the EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, the global energy crisis is not only a problem to Europe but also to Asia. This statement clearly manifests that for EU a regional cooperation is necessary. Clearly, the necessity of regional cooperation is due to the impact of the energy crisis on securing energy supply through a strong and uninterrupted value chain. As the world lives through the severe impact of an energy crisis, the idea of interdependency has become the driving vehicle for regional cooperation. Resolving the energy crisis is not only the EU's problem, but also the ASEAN's problem.

*"... Our Strategic Partnership is more relevant than ever. Our destinies are linked, more than ever before, we see it in the pandemic, we see it on our connections with the value chain, we see it in climate change, and with geopolitics. Russia's war against Ukraine has sent shockwave through the world, not only it is an attack against the rules- but based order which protects every country's right at all corners of the world. Russia's war aggression has also destabilized the global economy and make the global commodity soar"- (ibid)*

*“... I know that ASEAN has signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and this speaks louder than a million times. Both EU and ASEAN has multilateralism in our DNA, we have strong economic ties and the same outlook in the Indo-Pacific. This summit will give opportunity to join forces even more in energy and climate, we must speed up our transition away from fossil fuel and works towards renewable energy”- (ibid)*

The EU's mantra for region- to- region economic partnership is observed to be a facade to a much greater objective, which is to gather more allies to promote the liberal value of democracy. As such, the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership is framed to be an economic agenda but is also depicted as a political cooperation against Russia, which the EU believes is an antagonist to the principle of liberal democracy. Moreover, from the EU's viewpoint and the viewpoint of the rest of the democratic nations, the invasion by Russia of Ukraine is an act of violation of the sovereignty of Ukraine.

*“... Our Strategic Partnership is more relevant than ever. Our ultimate goal is a one of region-to-region agreement and we need to seize now the opportunity to make it work”- (ibid)*

Apparently, the urgency of the EU – ASEAN Strategic Partnership is mainly geared towards economic influence. However, this economic influence has been observed to be the “best hooks” for the EU trying to impose on the ASEAN to propagate the policy that the EU wanted, or to “legitimize the policies of the elites” (Keohane & Goldstein, 1993 cited in Acharya, 2018:34). The EU's aim to gain support from the ASEAN against Russia is important as this support will help cement the idea of the multilateral principle of cooperation of the EU-ASEAN, not only in economic intentions, but also in political relations.

Moreover, the word of condemnation from the ASEAN against Russia will reflect a bonded relationship between the two regions, which will evolve to an institutionalized agreement that could play a significant role in the transmission of ideas, in this case the democratic promotion ideas. Ideas that turn into institutional policy will help realize “more efficient outcomes” (Acharya, 218:35). The group of rising powers can sustain cooperative regimes in the provision of a collective good. As such, powerful actors concede that in maintaining or creating a cooperative regime, a rising regional actor's socio-economic and political powers should not be underestimated.

Thus, this political inertia within regional actors can play a vital role in bringing socio-economic and political transformation. In enforcing the liberal principle of freedom, independence and democracy, there should be hegemonic stability. In other words, through

regional cooperation *vis á vis* the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership, there is consent generated by ideological consensus, which is the preferred way for a hegemon to legitimize its agenda.

## Chapter VII. Conclusion

In Summary, this thesis is an analysis of the EU's actual intention in the urgency of forging a Strategic Partnership with the ASEAN. Findings have shown that through multilateralism, the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership is manipulated in order to promote a political agenda. The thesis findings have reflected that motivation of the EU-ASEAN region-to-region cooperation is beyond the economic agenda. The regional partnership also has political motivation intended to lure the ASEAN to be on the EU's side in fighting against Russia's aggression towards Ukraine. This last chapter will conclude by elaborating the response to this thesis' research questions:

***“What is the intention of the EU's regional Strategic Partnership to the ASEAN in resolving global energy security?”***

Liberal principle promotion is one of vital intentions of the EU in forging the EU – ASEAN Strategic Partnership. The main motivation behind the EU's urgency to forge a Strategic Partnership with the ASEAN is to uphold the liberal principles of freedom, independence and democracy promotion *per se*, by identifying shared goals and beliefs. This is the EU's method of building an ideal community.

Therefore, the word “strategic partnership” is not only geared towards an economic agenda wherein accelerating block-to-block free trade agreements is one of the *modus operandi* of the EU to address the global energy security in a long-term. It is also geared towards a political agenda. Thus, the EU's ultimate goal is not only to have an economic impact, but also to make the ASEAN one of its strongest regional allies against Russia. Notwithstanding perceptions that the EU's global influence or power is decreasing due to many adversities that the EU has faced, such as the financial crisis, the COVID- 19 pandemic and security- politico challenges, the EU's role as a global player remains strong in regional integration.

Real- world events, such as the global energy crisis, pose a greater challenge, therefore, a regional “Strategic Partnership” is necessary in order to collectively address global issues. Among the characteristics of a democratic society are a cooperation, collective action, an open forum among democratic nations, and having a discussion on how to solve a common problem. The EU has shown a clear intention to deepen its relations with the ASEAN even though with the EU’s normative power of supranationalism has clashed with the ASEAN ‘s centrality accord, because strengthening relations is a strategic solution.

Despite all the hindrances, the ASEAN in return, aims to remain a regional partner of the EU and is even motivated to improve its relationship with the EU, most specifically on its trade relations. This is one of the “ASEAN Ways, a *modus vivendi* method which is finding common ground despite differences. It is also important for the ASEAN to project an image as a great regional organization and a partner to EU. On the part of the ASEAN the pursuit of new cooperative measure towards the EU especially in trade and security agenda is observed to be as set of instances of their “mimetic adoption from the EU or the western perspective of norms for the sake of legitimacy” (Katsumata,2011), as such the ASEAN also struggle within their regional integration. Most especially with their maritime security problem in the South China Sea and the political issue in Myanmar. Moreover, it is an advantage for the ASEAN to have a strategic partnership with the EU as one of the bigger poles in the multipolar world. More importantly, the strong partnership of the EU with the ASEAN signals a strong command of the EU’s leadership in the international community. This is the image that the EU would like to portray, that the EU- ASEAN strong cooperation is a symbol of unity among democratic nations.

### ***“How feasible is the EU and ASEAN free trade agreement in energy security”?***

Despite unparalleled organizational structures, values and practices between the EU and ASEAN, free trade agreements are feasible. Thus, the EU and ASEAN are capable of making adjustments to free trade agreements *per* bilateral negotiations in a “Just Energy Transition” program. In other words, in the world of interdependence, flexibility to every free trade agreement is inevitable in order to reach a certain goal which is securing energy through green energy generation. In this case, in addressing global energy security, free trade agreement should have a level of understanding and reciprocity. During the December 2022 ASEAN- EU Summit, the acting ASEAN Chairperson, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, expressed, “the

economy of the two regions should have a complimentary, as the ASEAN and EU (Europe) agreed to have a free trade together, therefore we should have an equal partnership” (EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit Leaders’ Press Conference,2022). The EU’s strong relationship with the ASEAN is the vital factor to make the free trade agreements in energy security feasible. The ASEAN has *first*, a larger demography than the EU, *second*, a rising growth of population, *third*, highly developed economies and *fourth* it is the abundant in natural resources. All these are viable for green energy projects. Therefore, the ASEAN has an enormous potential to become a valuable partner to the EU in confronting the global energy crisis through green energy generation in order to attain a long-term energy security goal.

Overall, the global energy crisis has influenced the EU to advance its socio-economic and political ties with the ASEAN. Therefore, this thesis unravel that how can a regional “Strategic Partnership” through the bedrock of Multilateralism can be manipulated as a tool for an political agenda. The EU’s method of exploiting trade relation history with the ASEAN as a long time trading partners reflects as to what strategic actions and decision are taken by the EU in luring the ASEAN to be committed in a region-to-region “ Strategic Partnership” in energy security. The intense pressure brought about by the global energy crisis made the EU taken a decisive measure in utilizing the energy security issue as a guise for an economic regional cooperation, but the real intention is to build a political alliance with the ASEAN against Russia. Moreover, EU aims to project an image as a leader of a united democratic nations against the antagonist belief of Russia. Lastly, the rising multipolarity made regions *vis á vis* the EU to take a balancing approach to be on the top of the hierarchy as one of the bigger poles in a multipolar world.

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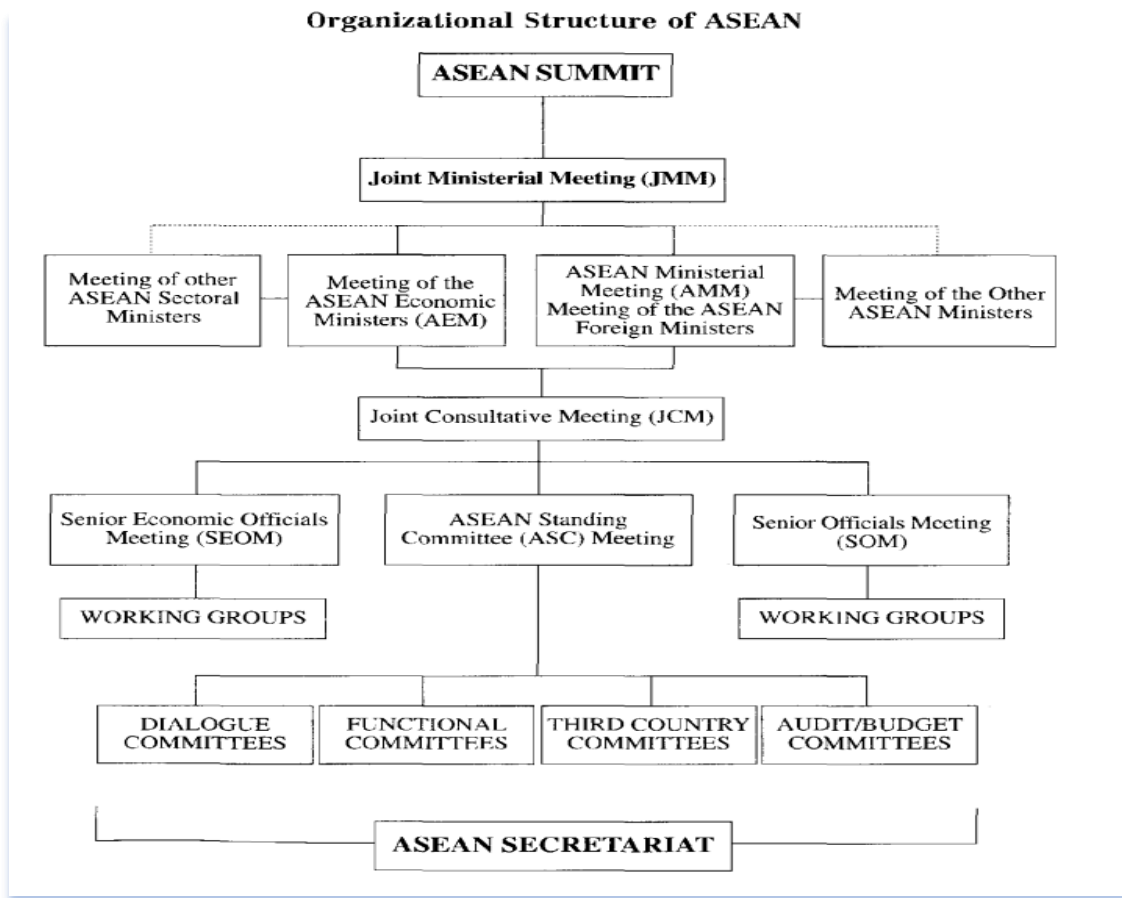
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### List of Legislation and Policies

- a. Treaty of Rome: The Single Market Programme
- b. Maastricht Treaty: European Union
- c. The Paris Agreement: Policy on Climate Change
- d. European Green Deal
- e. RePowerEU
- f. EU Global Gateway
- g. China Belt and Road Initiative



**Figure 1.** ASEAN Organizational Structure. Illustration from: Suthiphand Chirathivat



**Figure 2.** EU Organizational Structure. Illustration from: Suthiphand Chirathivat p. 221(1997)

