

## Regionalism in International Politics: a Comparative Analysis of ASEAN and the European Union

Maisha Karim

UCSI University, Bangladesh Branch Campus, maishakarim@ucsiuniversity.edu.my

**Abstract:** Regionalism has emerged as a significant phenomenon in international politics, shaping the geopolitical, economic, and social landscapes of diverse regions. This study conducts a comparative analysis of two prominent regional organizations: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU). Drawing on theoretical frameworks and historical contexts, the paper examines their institutional structures, governance models, economic integration, and political-security cooperation. The findings reveal critical distinctions between the EU's supranational and legalistic approach and ASEAN's informal, consensus-based mechanisms, shaped by their unique historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts. Despite their differences, both organizations face common challenges, including economic disparities, political instability, and external pressures. By comparing their trajectories and challenges, this paper highlights key lessons for enhancing regional cooperation and integration, offering valuable insights for policymakers and scholars alike.

**Keywords:** Regionalism, ASEAN, European Union



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### Introduction

In the contemporary global landscape, regionalism has become a cornerstone of international relations, reshaping how states interact and cooperate across political, economic, and cultural dimensions. As a response to the challenges of globalization and shifting power dynamics, regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) have emerged as vital actors in fostering regional stability and integration (Hurrell, 1995). While these entities share a common goal of promoting cooperation among member states, their paths, structures, and approaches to regionalism diverge significantly due to differences in historical contexts, institutional designs, and geopolitical environments.

This study focuses on comparing ASEAN and the EU, two leading examples of regionalism in the Global South and Global North, respectively. ASEAN, established in 1967, has pursued a model rooted in consensus and informality, often referred to as the "ASEAN Way" (Acharya, 2001). In contrast, the EU, originating from the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, has

progressively embraced a supranational structure characterized by formal institutions and legal frameworks (Börzel & Risse, 2016). These contrasting approaches offer a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of regionalism in different cultural and geopolitical settings.

The primary objective of this paper is to analyze the similarities and differences between ASEAN and the EU, focusing on their institutional frameworks, decision-making processes, economic integration, and political-security cooperation. Through a comparative lens, this research aims to shed light on how these regional organizations address internal and external challenges, including economic disparities, political fragmentation, and global geopolitical shifts.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on regionalism by providing a nuanced understanding of the factors shaping regional integration and cooperation. It also seeks to offer practical insights for policymakers striving to enhance regional governance and address emerging global challenges. By examining ASEAN and the EU, this research underscores the complexities of regionalism and its evolving role in the international political order.

The paper is structured as follows: the first section outlines the theoretical frameworks underpinning regionalism, followed by a historical overview of ASEAN and the EU. Subsequent sections delve into their institutional structures, economic integration, and political-security cooperation. The final section discusses challenges and future prospects, drawing key lessons from the comparative analysis.

## **Methodology**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Understanding regionalism requires a comprehensive theoretical approach that captures its multifaceted nature across political, economic, and social dimensions. This section explores key theoretical perspectives on regionalism and outlines the comparative framework used to analyze ASEAN and the European Union.

Regionalism can be broadly defined as a political and economic process whereby geographically proximate states cooperate and integrate for mutual benefit. Scholars identify multiple forms of regionalism, including economic, political, cultural, and security cooperation (Hurrell, 1995). These forms often overlap, reflecting the diverse motivations of member states in forming regional organizations. For example, the European Union exemplifies deep integration through economic and political convergence, whereas ASEAN prioritizes regional stability and economic collaboration with less emphasis on legalistic frameworks (Acharya, 2001).

The evolution of regionalism has been shaped by both endogenous and exogenous factors. Internally, shared cultural and historical ties play a crucial role in fostering regional identity, as seen in ASEAN's emphasis on non-interference and consensus (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Externally, global power dynamics, such as the Cold War and globalization, have driven states to form regional blocs as a means of collective security and economic resilience (Börzel & Risse, 2016). These dynamics highlight the need to adopt a flexible theoretical framework that accounts for the unique trajectories of regional organizations.

### ***Theoretical approaches to Regionalism***

Several theoretical perspectives offer valuable insights into the dynamics of regionalism:

#### **1. Realism**

Realism posits that states pursue regionalism as a strategy to enhance their security and power in an anarchic international system. From this perspective, regional organizations like ASEAN and the EU serve as mechanisms for balancing power against external threats or dominant global actors (Waltz, 1979). For example, ASEAN's formation in 1967 was partly driven by concerns over the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.

## 2. Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal institutionalism emphasizes the role of institutions in fostering cooperation among states by reducing transaction costs, enhancing transparency, and ensuring credible commitments (Keohane, 1984). The EU's institutionalized approach, exemplified by the European Commission and European Court of Justice, aligns closely with this theory. ASEAN, while less formalized, also reflects liberal institutionalism through frameworks like the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

## 3. Constructivism

Constructivism focuses on the role of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping regionalism. According to this perspective, regional organizations are not merely tools for state interests but also sites for the construction of shared identities and norms (Wendt, 1992). ASEAN's emphasis on the "ASEAN Way," characterized by consensus and mutual respect, underscores the importance of cultural and normative factors in regional cooperation.

## 4. Neo-Functionalism

Neo-functionalism emphasizes the role of economic integration in driving political integration. Pioneered by scholars like Ernst Haas, this theory explains how functional spillovers in areas such as trade and monetary policy can lead to deeper political cooperation (Haas, 1964). The EU's progression from an economic community to a political union is a prime example of neo-functionalism in action. While ASEAN's integration remains primarily economic, its evolving security frameworks suggest potential for functional spillovers in the future.

### *Comparative framework for ASEAN and the EU*

To analyze ASEAN and the EU, this paper adopts a comparative framework grounded in key dimensions of regionalism: institutional structures, decision-making processes, economic integration, and political-security cooperation. This framework is informed by Börzel and Risse's (2016) typology of comparative regionalism, which highlights the diversity of regional governance models and their underlying drivers. By applying this framework, the study aims to elucidate how these organizations address shared challenges and their implications for regional and global governance.

The comparison also considers the role of external actors and global trends in shaping regionalism. For instance, ASEAN's relationship with major powers like China and the United States contrasts sharply with the EU's engagement in global governance and its tensions with Russia. These external dynamics provide critical context for understanding the evolution of regionalism in different geopolitical settings.

### **Historical development of ASEAN and the EU**

The historical trajectories of ASEAN and the European Union provide critical insights into the diverse paths to regionalism. Both organizations emerged in response to geopolitical challenges, yet their historical contexts, objectives, and integration strategies differ significantly.

#### *The formation and evolution of ASEAN*

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on August 8, 1967, through the Bangkok Declaration, signed by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. ASEAN's primary objective was to promote political stability, economic cooperation, and social progress in a region fraught with Cold War tensions, political instability, and territorial disputes (Acharya, 2001). The organization emphasized the principles of non-interference and consensus, often referred to as the "ASEAN Way," to accommodate the diversity among its member states and avoid overt dominance by any single power (Severino, 2006).

Over the decades, ASEAN expanded its membership, incorporating Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997), and Cambodia (1999). This expansion highlighted ASEAN's role as a unifying force in Southeast Asia. Economic cooperation became a focal point with initiatives such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1992, which aimed to reduce tariffs and enhance intra-regional trade (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008). More recently, ASEAN has broadened its scope to include security and environmental concerns through platforms like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.

Despite its achievements, ASEAN faces challenges stemming from economic disparities, political diversity, and external pressures from global powers such as China and the United States. Nonetheless, its ability to maintain regional peace and foster dialogue has made it a significant player in regional and global politics.

### ***The formation and evolution of the EU***

The European Union traces its origins to the post-World War II period, when European leaders sought to prevent further conflict by fostering economic interdependence. The Treaty of Paris (1951) established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), integrating the coal and steel industries of six founding members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. This effort was driven by the belief that economic integration could serve as a foundation for political unity (Haas, 1964).

The Treaty of Rome (1957) further deepened integration with the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). Over the subsequent decades, the European project evolved through key milestones, including the Maastricht Treaty (1993), which formally established the European Union, and the Lisbon Treaty (2009), which redefined the EU's institutional structure and decision-making processes (Börzel & Risse, 2016).

The EU achieved significant milestones in economic integration with the creation of the Single Market (1992) and the introduction of a common currency, the euro, in 1999. However, it has also faced challenges, including the Eurozone debt crisis, Brexit, and rising populism. The EU's focus has expanded beyond economics to encompass foreign policy, security, and global governance, positioning it as a unique supranational entity.

### ***Key differences in historical contexts***

The historical contexts of ASEAN and the EU underscore their distinct approaches to regionalism. The EU emerged from a desire to overcome historical rivalries and foster economic and political unity in a relatively homogeneous cultural and economic context (Schimmelfennig, 2003). ASEAN, by contrast, was formed to address political instability and external threats in a region marked by vast economic and cultural diversity (Acharya, 2001). These differences have influenced their institutional designs, decision-making processes, and priorities.

While the EU has pursued deep integration through legally binding treaties and supranational institutions, ASEAN has opted for a more flexible and informal approach, emphasizing consensus and voluntary compliance. These contrasting strategies reflect their unique historical legacies and regional imperatives.

### ***Institutional structures and governance***

The institutional structures and governance models of ASEAN and the European Union reflect their unique approaches to regionalism, shaped by their historical and geopolitical contexts. This section examines the key features of each organization's institutional architecture and decision-making processes.

### ***ASEAN's informal and consensus-based model***

ASEAN's institutional structure is characterized by informality, flexibility, and a strong emphasis on consensus. The organization's primary decision-making body is the ASEAN Summit, composed of the heads of state or government of member countries. The ASEAN Secretariat, based in Jakarta, Indonesia, plays a supporting role, facilitating coordination and implementation of ASEAN agreements, though it lacks the authority to enforce compliance (Severino, 2006). Other key organs include the ASEAN Coordinating Council and various ministerial meetings, which address specific issues such as trade, security, and environmental concerns.

ASEAN's governance model, often referred to as the "ASEAN Way," prioritizes non-interference, sovereignty, and voluntary compliance. This approach reflects the region's diversity and the need to accommodate varying political systems and development levels among its members (Acharya, 2001). While this model has been effective in fostering regional unity and dialogue, it has also faced criticism for its inability to address pressing issues decisively, such as human rights violations and transboundary challenges.

The informality of ASEAN's institutions allows for flexibility and adaptability, but it also limits the organization's capacity for deep integration and robust enforcement of agreements. Despite these limitations, ASEAN has successfully promoted peace and stability in Southeast Asia, making it a cornerstone of regional cooperation.

### **Result**

#### ***The EU's supranational and legalistic model***

In contrast to ASEAN, the European Union has developed a highly institutionalized and legalistic governance model. The EU's institutional framework is built around several key organs, including the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Council. The European Commission serves as the executive arm, proposing legislation, enforcing EU laws, and managing the budget. The European Parliament represents the citizens of the EU, while the European Council comprises the heads of state or government of member countries and provides strategic direction (Hix & Høyland, 2011).

A distinctive feature of the EU's governance model is its reliance on supranational institutions that hold binding authority over member states. The European Court of Justice ensures compliance with EU law, and its decisions take precedence over national laws in areas of EU competence (Börzel & Risse, 2016). This legalistic approach facilitates deeper integration, enabling the EU to implement ambitious initiatives such as the Single Market and the Eurozone.

The EU's institutional structures are designed to balance the interests of member states and the supranational entity. However, this model is not without challenges. Issues such as Brexit, rising nationalism, and disagreements over migration policy have highlighted tensions between national sovereignty and supranational governance.

#### ***Comparative analysis***

The contrasting governance models of ASEAN and the EU illustrate their differing priorities and regional contexts. ASEAN's emphasis on consensus and sovereignty reflects the region's political diversity and the need to maintain harmony among its members. However, this approach often limits the organization's capacity to implement binding decisions and address sensitive issues. In contrast, the EU's supranational institutions enable deeper integration and enforceability but can provoke resistance from member states wary of ceding sovereignty (Schimmelfennig, 2003).

Despite these differences, both organizations have demonstrated resilience in navigating regional challenges. ASEAN's ability to maintain peace and stability in a historically volatile region and

the EU's leadership in global governance highlight the effectiveness of their respective governance models in addressing unique regional needs.

### **Economic Integration**

Economic integration is a cornerstone of both ASEAN and the European Union, serving as a driving force for regional cooperation and stability. While both organizations aim to enhance trade, investment, and economic collaboration among their members, their approaches and achievements reflect their distinct historical and geopolitical contexts.

#### ***Economic integration in ASEAN***

ASEAN's economic integration efforts have been shaped by the region's economic diversity and the need to accommodate varying levels of development among its member states. The ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), established in 1992, marked a significant milestone in reducing tariffs and promoting intra-regional trade (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008). AFTA's Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) scheme has facilitated greater market access for member countries, fostering regional economic interdependence.

More recently, ASEAN has pursued broader economic initiatives, including the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), launched in 2015. The AEC aims to create a single market and production base, enhance competitiveness, and promote equitable economic development across the region (Das, 2012). Despite these efforts, ASEAN's economic integration remains limited compared to the EU. Factors such as non-tariff barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and varying degrees of political commitment among member states have hindered progress (Severino, 2006).

ASEAN's engagement with external partners has also played a crucial role in its economic integration. Agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) have expanded ASEAN's economic influence globally, linking it with key trading partners, including China, Japan, and Australia. However, the reliance on external trade partners highlights ASEAN's vulnerability to global economic shifts.

#### ***Economic integration in the EU***

The European Union's economic integration is among the most advanced globally, underpinned by the creation of a customs union, single market, and monetary union. The Single Market, established in 1993, is one of the EU's most significant achievements, enabling the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor among member states (Pelkmans, 2006). This integration has strengthened the EU's economic competitiveness and fostered economic convergence across the region.

The introduction of the euro in 1999 marked a further step toward deep economic integration. As the official currency of 19 EU member states, the euro facilitates cross-border trade, reduces transaction costs, and enhances price transparency (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2015). However, the Eurozone has also faced significant challenges, particularly during the sovereign debt crisis of 2009-2012, which exposed structural weaknesses in fiscal coordination and economic governance (Schimmelfennig, 2015).

The EU's economic policies are supported by robust institutions, including the European Central Bank (ECB), which manages monetary policy, and the European Commission, which oversees competition policy and trade agreements. These institutions ensure compliance and provide a framework for addressing economic disparities among member states.

#### ***Comparative analysis***

While ASEAN and the EU share the goal of fostering economic integration, their approaches and levels of achievement differ significantly. ASEAN's focus has been on incremental integration

through voluntary agreements and external partnerships, reflecting the economic and political diversity of its members. In contrast, the EU has pursued deeper integration, supported by legally binding treaties and supranational institutions, enabling it to achieve a higher degree of economic convergence (Börzel & Risse, 2016).

Despite its progress, the EU faces challenges in maintaining economic cohesion amid disparities between member states and external pressures such as Brexit. ASEAN, while less integrated, has leveraged its flexibility to adapt to diverse economic contexts and engage with global partners. Both models offer valuable insights into the complexities of regional economic integration and its implications for global economic governance.

### **Political and Security Cooperation**

Political and security cooperation are vital dimensions of regional integration, as they enable member states to address shared threats, maintain stability, and promote collective resilience. ASEAN and the European Union (EU) have pursued political and security cooperation in distinct ways, reflecting their unique historical contexts, institutional frameworks, and geopolitical challenges.

#### ***Political and security cooperation in ASEAN***

ASEAN's approach to political and security cooperation is grounded in its principles of sovereignty, non-interference, and consensus. These principles are embodied in the "ASEAN Way," which emphasizes informal diplomacy and voluntary agreements to foster trust among member states (Acharya, 2001). Key mechanisms for political and security dialogue include the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1994, and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), launched in 2006. These platforms allow ASEAN and its external partners to address issues such as maritime security, terrorism, and transnational crime (Severino, 2006).

ASEAN's political cooperation has been formalized through agreements such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and the ASEAN Charter, which provides a legal framework for its operations. While these initiatives underscore ASEAN's commitment to regional stability, the organization often struggles to take decisive action on contentious issues due to its consensus-based decision-making process. For example, ASEAN's response to the Rohingya crisis and political unrest in Myanmar has been criticized for its limited effectiveness (Jones, 2012).

In the security domain, ASEAN's focus has expanded to include non-traditional security threats such as climate change, pandemics, and cyber threats. However, the organization remains heavily reliant on partnerships with external powers, including the United States and China, to address complex security challenges. This external reliance underscores the limitations of ASEAN's security framework in achieving strategic autonomy.

### **Discussion**

#### ***Political and security cooperation in the EU***

The EU's approach to political and security cooperation is rooted in its supranational governance model, which facilitates legally binding agreements and collective decision-making. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), established under the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, provides a framework for coordinating foreign policy and responding to international crises. The EU's security efforts are further supported by the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), which oversees civilian and military missions across the globe (Howorth, 2014).

The EU has played a significant role in promoting peace and stability within and beyond Europe. Its involvement in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and counter-terrorism initiatives highlights its commitment to multilateralism and global governance. For example, the EU's diplomatic

engagement in the Balkans and its role in the Iran nuclear deal demonstrate its capacity for effective international mediation (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014).

Despite its achievements, the EU faces challenges in achieving coherence and unity in foreign policy. Divergent interests among member states often complicate decision-making, as seen in its response to the Ukraine crisis and relations with China. Furthermore, the EU's reliance on NATO for collective defense underscores its limitations in developing an independent security framework.

### ***Comparative analysis***

The political and security cooperation models of ASEAN and the EU reflect their differing regional contexts and institutional structures. ASEAN's emphasis on consensus and sovereignty fosters inclusivity but limits its ability to address sensitive political issues and enforce security commitments. In contrast, the EU's legalistic and institutionalized approach enables more decisive action but often encounters internal disagreements and external dependencies (Börzel & Risse, 2016).

Both organizations have demonstrated resilience in adapting to evolving security challenges. ASEAN's flexible approach has allowed it to address non-traditional threats, while the EU's institutional framework provides a foundation for global leadership in multilateral diplomacy. However, their effectiveness in navigating future geopolitical complexities will depend on their ability to balance internal cohesion with external engagement.

### **Challenges and Future Prospects**

Both ASEAN and the European Union face significant challenges that shape their trajectories and influence their future prospects. While these challenges stem from internal dynamics and external pressures, they also present opportunities for growth, reform, and increased relevance in a rapidly changing global landscape.

#### ***Challenges facing ASEAN***

ASEAN's primary challenges stem from its diversity, reliance on consensus, and geopolitical pressures. Internally, economic disparities among member states, ranging from high-income nations like Singapore to developing economies like Cambodia and Laos, complicate efforts to achieve equitable economic integration (Das, 2012). Political diversity, including differing governance systems and levels of democratization, further complicates collective decision-making, as seen in ASEAN's cautious responses to regional crises such as the Rohingya crisis and Myanmar's political unrest (Jones, 2012).

ASEAN's reliance on the "ASEAN Way," characterized by non-interference and voluntary compliance, limits its capacity to address contentious issues decisively. This approach often results in delayed or inadequate responses to pressing challenges, such as transboundary environmental issues and human rights violations (Acharya, 2001). Moreover, ASEAN's security framework, while inclusive, remains heavily dependent on external powers, making it vulnerable to shifting geopolitical dynamics, particularly the growing rivalry between the United States and China (Severino, 2006).

#### ***Challenges facing the EU***

The European Union faces challenges related to internal cohesion, economic disparities, and external geopolitical tensions. Internally, the EU's unity has been tested by the rise of populism and nationalism, exemplified by Brexit, which highlighted tensions between supranational governance and national sovereignty (Schimmelfennig, 2015). Economic disparities between Northern and Southern European countries, exacerbated by the Eurozone debt crisis, continue to pose a threat to economic and monetary cohesion (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2015).

Externally, the EU is confronted with complex geopolitical challenges, including tensions with Russia, the migration crisis, and strained transatlantic relations. The EU's ability to act as a unified global actor is often hindered by differing foreign policy priorities among member states. Additionally, the EU's reliance on NATO for collective defense underscores its limited capacity for independent security initiatives (Howorth, 2014).

### ***Future prospects for ASEAN***

Despite these challenges, ASEAN's future prospects remain promising. The organization's adaptability and emphasis on inclusivity provide a foundation for addressing emerging issues such as climate change, digital transformation, and non-traditional security threats. ASEAN's external partnerships, particularly through agreements like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), position it as a key player in global trade and economic cooperation (Das, 2012).

To enhance its relevance and effectiveness, ASEAN must address its institutional limitations by strengthening its Secretariat, promoting deeper integration, and adopting a more proactive stance on political and security issues. Initiatives to bridge economic disparities and foster regional connectivity, such as the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), will be critical to sustaining growth and cohesion.

### ***Future prospects for the EU***

The EU's future depends on its ability to navigate internal divisions and assert its role in global governance. Strengthening economic and monetary union through reforms in fiscal coordination and investment in lagging regions could address economic disparities and bolster cohesion (Börzel & Risse, 2016). The EU's leadership in addressing global challenges, such as climate change and digital regulation, highlights its potential to remain a global standard-setter.

Geopolitically, the EU must balance its strategic autonomy with transatlantic ties while enhancing its capacity for independent security and defense initiatives. Strengthening the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and deepening cooperation with neighboring regions could position the EU as a more assertive global actor (Howorth, 2014). Additionally, fostering unity among member states through inclusive decision-making and citizen engagement will be essential to counter populist narratives and rebuild trust in EU institutions.

### **Conclusion**

This comparative analysis of ASEAN and the European Union highlights the diverse pathways regional organizations take in pursuing integration and cooperation. While both ASEAN and the EU share the overarching goal of fostering peace, stability, and economic growth, their historical contexts, institutional designs, and approaches to regionalism differ significantly.

ASEAN's consensus-driven and non-interference-oriented model has enabled it to accommodate the political and cultural diversity of its member states. This flexibility has been instrumental in maintaining regional stability and fostering incremental economic cooperation. However, its reliance on voluntary compliance and informal structures often limits its capacity to address contentious political and security issues decisively. The EU, in contrast, represents a deeply integrated and institutionalized model of regionalism. Through supranational governance, binding legal frameworks, and robust economic and security policies, the EU has achieved significant milestones in integration. Yet, it faces challenges in maintaining internal cohesion amid economic disparities and rising nationalism.

The analysis underscores that both organizations face shared and unique challenges, including internal diversity, economic inequality, and external geopolitical pressures. For ASEAN, addressing its institutional limitations and deepening integration are critical for sustaining its

relevance. The EU, on the other hand, must balance its supranational ambitions with the sovereignty concerns of its member states while navigating complex global challenges.

Despite their differences, ASEAN and the EU provide valuable lessons for each other and other regional organizations. ASEAN's adaptability and focus on inclusivity offer insights into managing diversity, while the EU's structured approach to governance highlights the potential of deeper integration for regional stability and global influence. By learning from their respective experiences, both organizations can strengthen their capacities to address emerging global challenges and enhance their roles as regional and global actors.

In conclusion, regionalism remains a dynamic and evolving phenomenon in international politics, shaped by the interplay of historical legacies, institutional choices, and external pressures. ASEAN and the EU exemplify the diversity of regional approaches and underscore the importance of regional cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world. Their trajectories provide critical insights for scholars and policymakers seeking to understand and advance regionalism in the 21st century.

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