



# ASEAN

Bold markets, cautious decisions



# Dossier



In a region defined by dynamic but uneven economies, as well as shared security concerns, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is at the intersection of opportunity and vulnerability.

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## Experts



**Adinda Khaerani Epstein**

Policy analyst, researcher and contributor specializing in maritime security in Southeast Asia and the U.S.-Turkey relationship.



**Prince Michael of Liechtenstein**

Executive chairman of Industrie- und Finanzkontor Ets., a leading trust company with expertise in the long-term, multigenerational preservation of wealth, family values and businesses. Among other ventures, he is also the founder and chairman of Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG.



**Prashanth Parameswaran**

Expert on foreign and security policy in Southeast Asia, fellow at the Wilson Center, senior columnist at The Diplomat magazine and the founder of ASEAN Wonk.



**Thitinan Pongsudhirak**

Analyst on Thailand, ASEAN and Southeast Asia, professor of international relations at Chulalongkorn University, and a senior fellow at the Institute of Security and International Studies in Bangkok.



**Bob Savic**

Head of international trade and sanctions consulting at the Global Policy Institute and head of European Union trade and industry regulatory advisory at the Federal Trust for Education and Research.



**Junhua Zhang**

Senior associate at the European Institute for Asian Studies, and professor of political science at the School of International and Public Affairs of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Zhejiang University.

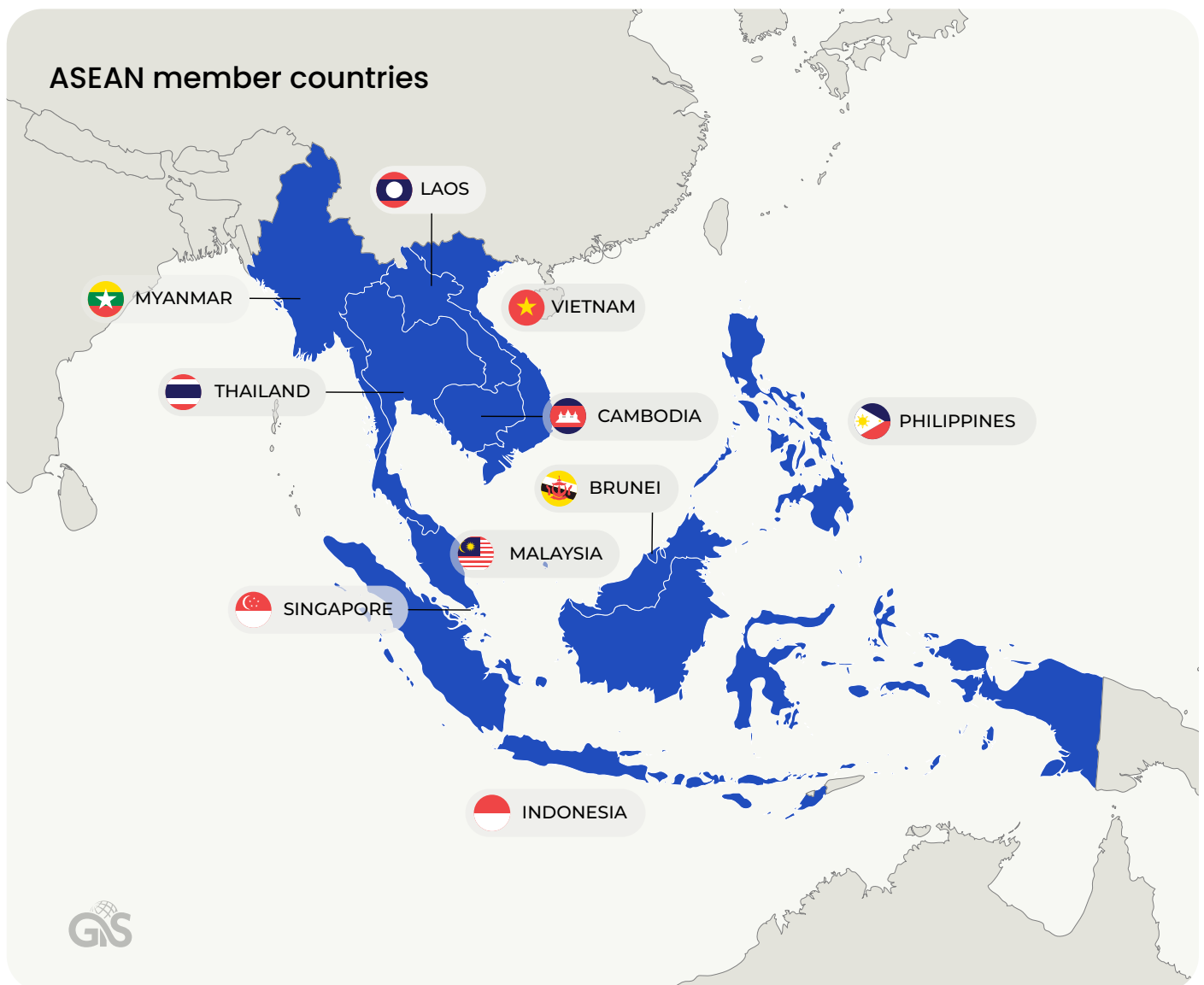
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Illustrations of experts by Andreas Leitner

# Introduction

Bound together by crowded sea lanes, porous borders and a volatile strategic environment, in 1967, 10 nations formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Initially founded by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, ASEAN has since expanded to include Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. Over the decades, the bloc has evolved from a loose diplomatic forum into a central regional player, engaging in dialogue partnerships with major powers and spearheading economic initiatives such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The organization pursues the nations' common goals of economic growth, political cooperation and regional stability.

While often cautious, consensus-driven ASEAN has managed to position itself as a forum for multilateral diplomacy in Asia, balancing the strategic interests of global powers such as China and the United States. It faces ongoing challenges, particularly in maintaining unity amid divergent national interests, handling sensitive issues such as the military regime in Myanmar and the South China Sea disputes, and responding to democratic backsliding in member states. Nonetheless, ASEAN remains a key fixture in the Indo-Pacific geopolitical landscape, with its role likely to grow in a world increasingly shaped by multipolar competition.





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