

THE ASEAN SINGLE VISA SCHEME AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO BORDER SECURITY IN THE REGION: A PHILIPPINE PERSPECTIVE

Matthew G. Marquez^{1*}

¹ University of the Philippines Open University (Philippines)

*Corresponding Author: mgmarquez@up.edu.ph

ABSTRACT – The vision of the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme is to boost tourism in Southeast Asia with the hope of bolstering regional tourism business and investment through the influx of international travellers amongst ASEAN member states (AMS). However, security and sovereignty issues have hampered the discussions of a regional common visa. As a contribution to scholarly discussions in the security aspect of such a scheme, this study offers to answer how the ASEAN Single Visa will affect security governance in the Region, particularly in the Philippines. In addition, the questions regarding implications of the scheme on visa policy and border security situation of the Philippines, factors affecting the adoption, and measures necessary for the realization of the scheme were answered using quantitative and qualitative analyses in a sequential explanatory design. By analyzing the Bureau of Immigration (BI) statistical data, key respondents' interviews from the BI, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and several AMS embassies particularly Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, it was shown that there is a significant difference between visa-required and visa-free nationals on security-related violations in the country in relation to the current visa policy of the Philippines. It also revealed that (1) security and sovereignty; (2) the development of internal sharing mechanism; (3) support border control management; (4) synchronization of visa issuance systems; (5) human resource development; and (6) upgrades of infrastructure and technology of immigration agencies were factors hampering the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa scheme in the country. In spite of this, key officials from the BI, DFA and select embassies said that the single visa scheme would be beneficial to the Philippines and the Region. The ASEAN Single Visa scheme is set to bring about positive impact for ASEAN security governance as it intends to bolster closer inter-agency and regional cooperation between the Philippines and AMS. Thus, its implementation will become an impetus among AMS to work together to improve border management capabilities of the Region in the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme.

Keywords: ASEAN single visa, border security, visa policy, immigration, cross-border movements, transnational issues

Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Single Visa Scheme has been a subject of debates at the ASEAN Summit and several ministerial meetings for years. The scheme is intended to enable non-ASEAN nationals to freely navigate the Region thereby stimulating the rising tourism sector of ASEAN member states (AMS). During the 2016 ASEAN Tourism Forum held in the Philippines, AMS launched the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016 - 2025 which envisions the Southeast Asian Region as a quality tourism destination committed to responsible, sustainable, inclusive, and balanced tourism development.

To cite this paper: Marquez, M. G. (2018). The ASEAN Single Visa Scheme and Its Implications to Border Security in the Region: A Philippine Perspective. *Journal of Management and Development Studies* Volume Number 7, 13-23.

Among the measures contained in the ATSP 2016-2025 is the implementation of a single visa for the ASEAN Region that will provide foreign visitors easy access to all ten (10) AMS using a common regional visa.

According to the ATSP 2016-2025, the unified ASEAN visa system will require foreign tourists to complete a single process for the common visa valid in any of the ten (10) AMS (Coffee, 2016). However, security tensions in the region have hampered the discussion to implement the ASEAN single visa scheme. Dilemma on local immigration laws result to apprehensions on who gains control and who to trust, in instances where security and accountability are concerned (Ocampo, 2016).

The main goal of the ASEAN Single Visa is to increase international tourism in the Region. This would help increase the 12.3% GDP in the Region to 15% by 2025 by addressing inefficiencies caused by multiple border checks. The ATSP 2016-2025 noted that most member states require visas from non-ASEAN countries. Using a single visa in entering the Region would allow tourists and business travelers to move freely within AMS, potentially boosting tourist numbers significantly and easing trade and investment measures (Goodrich, 2015, Thuzar, 2017).

However, there are several issues impeding the implementation of a single visa scheme. According to Goodrich (2015), security issues remain primary concern especially in terms of policy differences among AMS. There are also issues involving security and stability that plague Southeast Asia. Terror groups continue to threaten the tourism industry in the Philippines and Indonesia. Official reports indicate that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has penetrated the Region, recruiting local clandestine groups to their cause; this includes the Maute group in the Philippines. Also, there are existing threats of illegal animal trade, drug, and human trafficking in the Mekong Region (Auethavornpipat, 2017, Viano, 2010, p.97). At a regional level, AMS cannot effectively solve the problem of the Rohingyas much less tourists wandering the region on a wider scale (Lego, 2017). In March 2017, terrorism has been noted to thwart the potential tourism growth engines (Flores, 2017).

Last April 2017, the Abu Sayyaf, a local terrorist group in the Philippines, infiltrated Bohol Province with failed attempts in kidnapping tourists. This prompted tourists to cancel their bookings in the Philippines due to the fear of getting kidnapped and even due to the prospect of being killed (Flores, 2017). As a result of these threats, several foreign embassies in the country like the US and Australian Embassies have issued travel advisories instructing their nationals to avoid some areas when vacationing in the country (Chandran, 2017, Flores, 2017). In addition, there were reports of Jihadist foreign fighters participating in the Marawi siege in 2017. Former Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año cited the presence of suspected foreign terrorists in Southern Philippines amid continuing firefights in Marawi City. He believed that they may have entered through the Philippines' backdoor. However, reports also confirmed that some of these foreign fighters came to the country through airports and other regular points of entry (Lopez, 2017).

These security threats have shown the weaknesses of intelligence gathering and border control management in the Philippines. Thus, an ASEAN single visa scheme may become a possible avenue for individuals with links to terrorists and other transnational criminal groups to freely roam the Region and cause serious security repercussions.

It must be noted that security concerns like the aforementioned are among the key factors foreign tourists are wary of visiting the Philippines. In the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2017, the Philippines slid to the 79th spot out of 136 countries with an overall score of 3.6. Among the 14 pillars considered, the Philippines ranked lowest in the safety and security pillar (Nicolas, 2017). According to the report, terror threats make it harder for the country to become a key tourist destination in the Region. In addition to security concerns, political and economic factors also affect the realization of a regional common visa. Visa fees, which provide significant income and revenue in less-developed countries, would probably be reduced as a consequence of the single visa. Also, reciprocal agreements for ASEAN citizens outside the bloc and self-interests of AMS will be factors in the discussions concerning visa agreements of ASEAN and non-ASEAN (Goodrich, 2015).

In terms of structure, ASEAN tourism ministers have intended to pattern ASEAN Single Visa to that of the European Union's Schengen area arrangement. The Schengen Agreement has allowed most Europeans to move freely around the continent without ever having their passports checked and without having to register. Non-EU nationals who have a Schengen visa generally do not have identification checks once they are travelling inside the zone (Richburg, 2015, Peter, 2016). However, the Schengen Visa is not without faults and criticisms. Criticisms against the Schengen Agreement stem from related, perceived failures in curtailing irregular migration flows and the uneven application of external Schengen border controls, especially in Italy and Greece. For example, the Brexit event was fueled by the loose immigration setup of the Schengen Agreement. British nationals felt that the EU is opening its doors to foreigners, specifically immigrants and refugees, who take away employment and social services paid by British taxpayers (Moller, 2016, p.15). Despite these concerns, ASEAN scholars and experts believe that there will be no Brexit in the region.

According to Chalermpanupap (2016), all AMS still believe in the existence of ASEAN to create and maintain regional peace and security, given that ASEAN is not linked to domestic politics as compared to the member countries of the EU. All ASEAN members, regardless of international standing, have an equal say in decision-making based on consultation and consensus. No leader of any AMS would dare gain any political advantage from calling a referendum of one's country in the region. In fact, ASEAN can learn the mistakes the EU made with the Brexit incident by focusing on the benefits of regional cooperation (Chalermpanupap, 2016). ASEAN tourism ministers have called on the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa not only to attract more international tourists in the Region but also to showcase the evolution and resiliency of the ASEAN (Misrahi, 2016; Peltier, 2017).

In the Philippines, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) has made several initiatives in easing border formalities for AMS. It has institutionalized the ASEAN lane in airport jurisdiction, and has eased the rules for ASEAN delegates coming into the country for ASEAN related meetings (Aurelio, 2017; Calayag, 2017). On a related note, the BI, together with the DFA, is in coordination with ASEAN counterparts in studying the possibility of the ASEAN Single Visa through meetings and workshops that discuss the pros and cons of such a scheme. However, it has been observed that the adoption of a unified visa will face many hurdles including the need for additional technological equipment for border security operations and the necessary Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, equipment, budget and manpower requirements.

The study was conducted to (a) determine on how the ASEAN Single Visa scheme would affect ASEAN security governance, particularly in the Philippines; (b) describe the visa policy and border control situation in the Philippines in relation to the implementation of the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme; (c) identify the factors that impede the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme in the country; and (d) to recommend measures the Philippines may adopt in order to implement the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used the sequential explanatory mixed method design. The sequential explanatory design was used in order to comprehensively determine the effects of the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme in border security of the Philippines and the Region by encompassing all possible aspects specifically the challenges and opportunities for its realization. Initially, data from immigration and security-related offenses in the Philippines were gathered in order to describe the current visa policy and border security situation in the country. The data available to the researcher was the number of deported foreign nationals from 2013 to 2017. The modes of analysis in this study was divided into two parts. The two-tailed t-test was used in the quantitative aspect of this study to test the statistical data gathered.

Afterwards, the statistical data obtained was given consideration in the formulation of the questions needed for the qualitative aspect of this study that requires data gathering through key respondent interviews. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner in order to obtain open-ended questions and free-flow discussions after the set of questions.

The framework analysis method was used in the qualitative aspect of this study to collate and analyze the information gathered from officials from the BI, DFA and ASEAN embassies in the country. The purpose of this technique was to answer the sub-queries concerning the factors affecting the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme. The unit of analysis in this study is the potential ASEAN Single Visa. The level of analysis is at a national level since the study aims to determine the possible effects of the common regional visa to border security operations in the region, particularly the Philippines.

Data Collection & Analysis

The researcher conducted a desk review of data concerning the background, history, and progress of visa policies, border security, and immigration matter in the Philippines and ASEAN over the last 20 years. A few relevant historical events and past occurrences were also mentioned as well as recent facts concerning the ASEAN meetings between foreign ministers, consular, and immigration heads. Moreover, direct interaction between the Philippines and ASEAN member states on matters regarding border security and immigration is significant in explaining certain concepts of this study.

The sources of the data in this study were mainly gathered from the statistical data acquired from the Bureau of Immigration and the Department of Tourism. Primary sources of data were gathered from key respondent interviews with key officials and experts from the Bureau of Immigration, Department of Foreign Affairs and embassy officials from the Indonesian, Singaporean and Royal Thai embassies. respondents were specifically chosen because of their participation, involvement, and knowledge on the areas concerning visa issuances, policies, immigration and consular in relation to the single visa scheme. In addition, some of the respondents were specifically designated by their respective offices and embassies because of their availability and involvement with the discussions on the single visa scheme.

The interviews with the respondents from government agencies like the Bureau of Immigration, the Department of Foreign Affairs and several ASEAN embassies, particularly the Indonesian, Singaporean and Thai Embassies, here in the Philippines were initiated personally. The set of questions were formulated based on the research question. The answers given by the respondents were analyzed and elaborated meticulously. The interview process was conducted in a semi-structured interview format. This was done in order to collate and compare the information gathered from key respondent interviews regarding the subject matter. The gathered data and information by the researcher in various government agencies, ASEAN embassies and reliable online institutions helped build up the foundation for the analysis of the objectives. The Philippines and other ASEAN members' purposes and explanation for the implementation of the ASEAN Single Visa were reviewed and studied. The potential security risks and effects to operational procedures of concerned Philippine government agencies were also studied carefully. These methods have helped the researcher in analyzing and verifying the problem statement and answer the research questions. Statements made by the Philippine government, ASEAN Member States and government agencies particularly the Bureau of Immigration and the Department of Foreign Affairs were examined and probed thoroughly. This study made use of the sequential explanatory mixed method design. As mentioned earlier, the quantitative data were gathered, analyzed, and explained further through the collection of qualitative data. Initially, data from immigration and security-related offenses in the Philippines were gathered in order to describe the current visa policy and border security situation in the country. The modes of analysis in this study was divided into two parts. The two-tailed t-test was used to determine if there is significance between visa-free and visa required nationals. Afterwards, the statistical data were given consideration in the formulation of the questions needed for the qualitative aspect of this study that requires data gathering through key respondent interviews. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured process in order to obtain open-ended questions and free-flow discussions after the set of questions.

Results and Discussions

Table 1 shows the socio-economic profile of the respondents. The average age of the respondents was 42.6 years old; the youngest and oldest respondents were 18 years old and 77 years old, respectively, and about 86% of the respondents were less than 60 years old. About half of the respondents declared that they attended high school or were high school graduates, while around 36% declared that they attended college or were college graduates. This is indicative that the community is composed of literate community

members. The average year of residency is 33 years and around 75% of the respondents were residents for more than 20 years. Around 86% had no plans to migrate elsewhere and the common reasons for staying in the barangay are personal attachment to the island, loyalty to the community, existence of livelihood, and peace and social order. The main socio-economic activities in Barangay Libo are rice, vegetable, and coconut farming and open fishing. Other activities are selling of fish catch and making of fish nets.

Table 1. Number of Deported Foreign Nationals in the Philippines

Year	Visa-Free	Visa-Required	Total
2013	354	421	775
2014	411	578	989
2015	611	1812	2423
2016	613	1925	2538
2017	359	396	755

Source: Unpublished statistical data from the Deportation and Implementation Unit, Bureau of Immigration – Philippines.

From the data given by the Deportation and Implementation Unit of the Bureau of Immigration, it can be inferred that there are more visa-required nationals than visa-free nationals who are offenders of immigration and related laws of the Philippines. Currently, the Philippines offers visa-free status to nationals coming from 157 countries. However, it has been noted that visa-required countries have been consistently larger in numbers as compared to visa-free nationals.

It should be emphasized that no exact data was given on the number of immigration and specific offenses through specific cases and crimes committed. However, it was noted that most of the offenses that lead to the deportation of these foreign nationals were due to issues concerning illegal immigration cases like overstaying and working without proper working visas and documents. Besides that, criminal offenses were done by these foreign nationals through money laundering, physical and sexual abuse, gambling, and drug and sex-related crimes like child prostitution and pornography. There were also cases where foreign nationals are wanted for serious crimes in their countries of origin and who hid in the Philippines to evade prosecution or service of sentence. Terrorism and other related crimes were also indicated but were minimal.

There should be a better method in monitoring these violators that have been evading police, immigration authorities and their respective foreign partners in the country. Subsequently, there is the need to identify if the current visa policy situation in the Philippines is an indicator on what nationalities and tourist characteristics to be wary of. Also, this should show the necessary preventive measures that are need to be in placed in order to effectively screen the potential vagrants and violators from the legitimate tourists and businessmen coming in the country.

Thus, in order to describe the visa policy and issuances of the Philippine visa and visa-upon privileges to these nationals and the loosening of border control checks on them it is important to assess if this is a factor to the current security concerns happening in the country. One of the methods used in this study is by comparing whether there is a significant difference between the two visa statuses of foreign nationals in relation to immigration and security-related offenses to check whether foreign nationals who are currently visa-required are likely to be violators of immigration and security-related offenses. As extracted from the interviews of key respondent interviews, it was pointed out by the Indonesian counsellor, Dr. Eddy Mulya, that there are different levels of security between each ASEAN member state. Each ASEAN country has its own problems with regard to border security. Also, each country has its own 'negative list', or list of countries that are deemed restricted and under observational status (Mulya, 2018, Taphaopong, 2018). As such there is the need for member states in ASEAN to meet at a certain level and discuss preventive measures in security, particularly border checks and operations, in the future. It is believed that security-related discussions will be vital in the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa as security and sovereignty are prominent issues in the discussions between AMSs. Thus, by comparing between the visa statuses of security-related offenders in the country, it becomes possible to describe the current visa policy situation in the Philippines which may be a factor in crafting of common visa policies.

In order to answer this objective, this study tested if there is a significant difference between the average number of immigration and security offenders of visa-free and visa-required foreign nationals in the Philippines. In order to analyze the difference between the two sets of data, the two-tailed t-test is used. The t-test is used for independent samples that will compare the means of the two (2) groups. In this study, it is used to determine if there is a significant difference between the average number of immigration and security offenders based if these foreign nationals are visa-free or visa-required.

Table 2. Two-Tailed t-test Computation of the Number of Deported Foreign Nationals in the Philippines.

Year	Visa-Free		Visa-Required		α (two-tailed)	t-stat
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance		
2013	7.24	308.7167	60	8804.3333	0.188332366	1.1484
2014	8.0588	341.5765	44.4615	10487.1026	0.225968327	1.2764
2015	11.3148	845.6160	139.3846	164246.9231	0.27705981	1.3868
2016	10.7544	1014.8672	128.3333	160256.2381	0.274788606	1.1366
2017	9.4618	614.5641	86.9661	78716.1712	0.265456118	1.1733
Overall	9.4198	637.3632	98.6458	95247.6378	0.03830313	2.1199

α (alpha) < 0.05

According to the two-tailed t-test used against the number of offenders of immigration and security violations in the Philippines, it can be said that there is no significant difference between visa-free and visa-required nationals when looking at the yearly basis. The p-value for each year is greater than α .

In this study, however, according to the computations of the two-tailed t-test on the overall number immigration and security-related offenders that was extracted from the statistics of the deported of foreign nationals in the Philippines from 2013-2017, it has been presented that the average mean of visa-required nationals is not equal to the average mean of visa-free nationals. Upon computation of the overall number of immigration and security-related offenders in the Philippines, the equation generated the value of 0.038 which is less than 0.05. An alpha of 0.05 is used as the cut-off for significance. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the visa-required and visa-free nationals concerning the immigration and security-related offenses that led to deportation of these nationals in the Philippine situation.

Although it is apparent that there is no significant difference between visa-free and visa-required nationals when observing at a yearly basis, it can be surmised that considering the overall impact of the immigration and security violations committed by foreign offenders (2013-2017), it is evident that there is a significant difference between the number of visa-free and visa-required foreign nationals when looking at a long-term perspective. One of the reasons is because of the slow judiciary system in the Philippines.

One example is the recent deportation case of Patricia Fox, an Australian nun doing missionary work in the Philippines. Sister Fox was detained last April 2018 after she was found to have participated in a human rights fact-finding mission in Mindanao, an island south of the Philippines. She was ordered to be deported a month after, however, she won her appeal on her deportation case. The Department of Justice gave Sister Fox a reprieve and nullified the BI's deportation case against her on May 2018. However, the BI once again issued another deportation order for her because she was found to have allegedly violated the terms of her missionary visa status in the country by joining political rallies and fact-finding missions (Lagrimas, 2018, Mogato, 2018).

Given the results, it can be established that there is a significant difference between the average number of visa-required and visa-free nationals who are immigration and security offenders in the country. It is presented that the Philippine visa policy and security-related situation in the country was effective in issuing these nationalities in visas as they are consistently on the top list of deported nationals in the Philippines.

According to Ledesma (2006), foreign nationals who are subject for deportation are found to be in violation of Section 37 of the Philippine Immigration Act, which consists of offenses relating to immigration, security and economic violations in the country (p. 284). Thus, this should be taken into consideration when Philippine policy makers, immigration and consular officials will convene one day and begin the official discussion of the ASEAN Single Visa scheme. In addition to the statistical data of deported nationals, the analysis of interviews from key respondents were used to answer the objectives of this study.

Among the six interviews conducted with the BI, DFA, and the Indonesian, Singaporean and Thai embassies in Manila, it is frequently noticed and mentioned that the ASEAN Single Visa is seen to boost tourism and business investments in the Philippines and the Region as a whole. In addition to tourism, most of the respondents are aware and also concern of the security risks and implications surrounding a single visa scheme in the Region. Nonetheless, the respondents have all agreed that tourism and security go hand-in-hand, and both are vital in the crafting measures and policies for the implementation of the ASEAN Single Visa Scheme. This study has also found out that tourism is not the only intended effect of the ASEAN Single Visa. According to the interviews conducted, the ASV is projected to create better opportunities for trade, investment and business opportunities in the Philippines.

This study found recurring themes from analysis of the key respondent interviews in the words "tourism", "security", "policy" and "challenges", in determining the viability of the ASEAN Single visa and its implications to political and socio-economic aspects of the Philippines. First, is that tourism will be boosted in the Philippines. With tourism, trade, investment and business opportunities will enter the Philippines because of the influx of more tourists and visitors.

Second, security is mentioned to always go hand-in-hand with tourism. As most of the respondents have claimed that they cannot be divided. Philippine and AMS officials have recognized the degree of security implications surrounding the ASV like illegal immigration, drug and human trafficking and misuse of the visa. However, the respondents have said that security should not impede tourism but complement it. Thus, several challenges and problems were pointed out during the interviews so as to ascertain the necessary adjustments countries like the Philippines would do in drafting policies and operations needed for its implementation.

Third, policy is also stressed as more than half of the respondents have pointed out that the Philippines and ASEAN member states have different mindsets, laws, policies, rules and regulations in consular and immigration concerns. Jasli (2018), have stressed that this is due to the sovereign working environment currently operating in the region. Also, Mulya (2018) added that each AMS has different development and infrastructure gaps. This would affect the crafting of state policies regarding the ASV as each AMSs have their own national interests and bureaucratic processes to consider. As such, the ASEAN countries are finding ways to manage the potential negative implications and maximize the advantages of implementing a single visa scheme in the Region.

Lastly, the respondents stated that there is a lot of problems and challenges involve in the realization of a common visa. For one, security and sovereignty are prominent issues in the meetings and policy-making processes of the single visa scheme. In addition, several transnational issues like drug trafficking, human trafficking, and terrorism are plaguing the Region. Mulya (2018) stated that there are different levels of security for each ASEAN member state. It may be challenging for ASEAN countries to harmonize security operations processes. Also, BI officials have stated that there will be challenges in the operation side of the ASV due to the expected influx of visitors and may lead to additional documentary inspection processes and border security operational procedures in the process (Castillo, 2018).

Table 3. Major Themes and Issues from the Key Respondent Interviews.

	Tourism	Security Concerns	State Operations	Challenges
Visa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visa Applications - Visa Issuances - Identity and Profile of Applicant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validity of the visa - Authenticity - Possible abuse and misuse of the ASV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common assessment criteria - Timeline of application - Rules & Regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Interest/s - Priorities - Political Will - Personnel of Foreign Service Post/s - Tourist attitudes
Border Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Screening of Passengers - Loosening of border controls on ASV holders - Seamless mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retain internal border checks - More trainings and seminars for immigration officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional documentary checks - Additional immigration procedures - Border control management - Special Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personnel - IT infrastructure - Budget - Government funding - AMSs unwillingness to surrender internal border checks
Transnational Issue/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visa Runners - Transnational criminal syndicates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drug Trafficking - Human Trafficking - Illegal Immigrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exposure to non-traditional security threats - Corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transnational crime - Terrorism - Security capabilities of AMSs
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name Recall - Branding - Visa issuance systems - Application time line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intelligence sharing - Information sharing - Database sharing - Security cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of internal sharing mechanisms - Policy crafting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mindset of AMSs - Common laws & legislation - IT system to support common database

Source: Mulya, et al., 2018

In addition to the four main themes, four sub-themes were also extracted from the key respondent interviews. These are: visa, border security, transnational issues and integration. All possible facets of the potential single visa scheme were discussed in the interviews from visa issuances and application processes to the validity and possible abuse of the ASV. Since this paper focuses on border security, it was also mentioned often with regard to the potential policy and operational adjustments of the BI and other ASEAN immigration agencies. Transnational issues were often brought up because the ASV entails a more flexible cross-border movement of people which would also entail possible entry and movement of transnational criminal groups and even terrorists among them. Integration is also mentioned because of the current integration of ASEAN member states towards the vision of an ASEAN Community. Integration was extracted from the data as there is a need to synchronize a common assessment criterion for visa issuances, implementing rules and regulations of border security agencies and the necessary laws and legislation between ASEAN member states that will create a uniform border security procedure on the potential holders of the ASV. Also, integration processes mentioned in this study were emphasized because the Philippine and other ASEAN member states will need to compromise their respective visa issuance and border security procedures to ultimately integrate their information database and intelligence sharing with each other in order to create an effective database sharing system akin to that of the Schengen Information System. Thus, steps must be considered in order to have a synchronized regional information database by assessing the current information database and intelligence sharing capabilities of concerned government agencies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the ASEAN Single Visa scheme is expected to have a positive effect in the security governance in the Philippines, as this scheme will entail a closer international cooperation between and among security-related agencies of AMS. This study has determined the main challenges that will impede in the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa in the Philippines. The most important one is the lack of an integrated information sharing and intelligence database system in the country that will connect visa issuances and border security information systems. Other challenges the country will in the realization of the ASV is the IT infrastructure needed to support this system, coordinated rules and regulations, consular and immigration integration with other AMSs, the budget needed to fund the implementation process and human resource to handle this. Also, the different bureaucratic processes of Philippine government agencies hamper the facilitation of this integration processes. On a regional level, ASEAN member states' different mindsets, national interests and apprehension to facilitate and remove internal border checks will delay the realization of the ASEAN Single Visa scheme that aims to bring seamless mobility into the region. Lastly, transnational issues concerning illegal immigration, drugs, human trafficking, and terrorism are plaguing the Region and are impeding discussions concerning the loose cross-border movements of people that will come together with the intended benefits of a single visa scheme.

According to the key respondent interviews of the BI and DFA officials, there are several suggested policies and practices that would help assist in the realization of the single visa scheme in the Philippines. Lao (2018) stated that the crafting of policies harmonization of visa issuance and implementation policies needed further study. He pointed out the issue on sharing of databases. There has yet to be a memorandum of agreement on database sharing between the DFA, BI, and NICA. But the DFA representative has stated that it is currently in process. The sharing of databases between the BI and DFA will be vital in the visa application and issuance processes of the ASV as this will serve as a platform for the verification of derogatory records of a particular visa applicant. This would serve as an impetus in the creation of an extensive information system for border security agencies between the Philippine and other ASEAN Member States akin to that of the Schengen Information system.

BI representatives have also suggested potential operational adjustments that the Philippines will need in its border security operations when the single visa scheme will be implemented. Castillo (2018), proposed creating a separate lane for the entry of ASV visa holders. This would mean placing immigration officers who will be trained and knowledgeable at verifying the security features of an ASV to check its validity and the passenger profile of the foreign national holding it. This will segregate the workload of each primary inspector and frontline personnel at border security operations in the Philippines as it is expected that there would be an influx of foreign visitors entering the country with the implementation of the ASV. Taruc (2018) recommended the creation of a special unit that will cater to the inspection of valid and genuine ASEAN Single Visas in international ports of entry and exit in the country. This unit should also have access to Interpol and the harmonized information database of the Philippines and ASEAN countries on information regarding the visa holders list, notices from Interpol and derogatory records from across the region. BI officials have raised concerns on the hurdles in its implementation as the BI still needs additional technological infrastructure, equipment, budget and personnel for the single-visa implementation. If the BI and DFA can overcome these issues, then the realization of the ASV in the Philippines would be hastened. If the Philippines and other ASEAN member states can establish a harmonized information database consisting of foreign nationals who are entering their respective countries, derogatory records and other pertinent security data, then it would be more than likely that an undesirable foreigner would not be able to enter the Philippines due to the stringent preventive measures in place. In the end, for the ASEAN Single Visa to be effective the Philippine government must have the political will to oversee that the implementation of policies and agreements surrounding the ASV will be in place even after another President, immigration commissioner or foreign secretary has come and gone. This would showcase the country's commitment in realizing the implementation of a potential ASEAN Single Visa scheme as a sign of support towards ASEAN initiatives that would help realize the goals and visions of the ASEAN Community.

References

- Auethavornpipat, R (2017, March 2). Tackling human trafficking in ASEAN. New Mandala. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://www.newmandala.org/tackling-human-trafficking-asean/>
- Aurelio, J (2016, November 17). BI database linked with Interpol now running in 10 int'l airports. Inquirer.net. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/149717/bi-database-linked-with-interpol-now-running-in-10-intl-airports>
- Bureau of Immigration (2018, January 11). Arrival Statistics of Top Foreign Nationals for the Period of 2005 – 2015. Manila: Bureau of Immigration, Management Information Systems Division.
- Bureau of Immigration (2018, January). Deportation Database Updated as of January 2018. Manila: Bureau of Immigration, Deportation and Implementation Unit.
- Calayag, K (2017, April 27). BI designates ASEAN lanes at NAIA. Sun.star Pampanga. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://www.pressreader.com/philippines/sunstar-pampanga/20170427/281526520946093>
- Castillo, B (2018, March 5). Personal interview.
- Chalermphanupap, T (2016, June 28). No Brexit Repeat in ASEAN. The Diplomat. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/no-brexite-repeat-in-asean/>
- Chandran, N (2017, May 17). Terrorism could thwart one of the Philippines' growth engines. CNBC. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/17/terrorism-could-thwart-one-of-the-philippines-growth-engines.html>
- Coffee, F (2016, March 4). ASEAN Member States to Implement Single Visa Scheme For Foreign Tourists. Immigration World. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://www.immigrationworld.com/etc/asean-member-states-implement-single-visa-scheme-foreign-tourists/>
- Department of Foreign Affairs (Not Indicated). Guidelines on the Entry of Temporary Visitors to the Philippines. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://www.dfa.gov.ph/list-of-countries-for-21-day-visa>
- Department of Tourism (Not Indicated). Visitor Arrivals to the Philippines by Country of Residence. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from http://web.tourism.gov.ph/tourism_dem_sup_pub.aspx
- Flores, M (2017, May 30). Terror threats hit the tourism industry, tourist cancel bookings in PH. Reporter.ph. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://reporter.ph/terror-threats-hit-the-tourism-industry-tourists-cancel-bookings-in-ph/>
- Goodrich, J (2017, August 5). ASEAN Single Visa Plan Points to an Emerging Powerhouse. China Global Television Network. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d67444d3045544e/share_p.html
- Jasli, T (2018, February 21). Personal interview.
- Lao, M (2018, March 6). Personal interview.
- Ledesma, R (2006). An Outline of Philippine Immigration and Citizenship Laws. Manila: Rex Printing Company, Inc., Vol. 1, pp. 3-285.
- Lego, J (2017, May 17). Why ASEAN Can't Ignore the Rohingya Crisis. The Diplomat. Retrieved February 8, 2018 from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/why-asean-cant-ignore-the-rohingya-crisis/>

- Misrahi, T (2016, June 1). ASEAN may have 10 nations but it should only have one visa. World Economic Forum. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/06/asean-one-visa-travel-destination/>
- Moller, J (2016, June). Lessons from Brexit for ASEAN. ASEAN Focus. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Issue 4, pp.14-16.
- Mulya, E (2018, February 13). Personal interview.
- Nicolas, B (2017, May 29). Terror threats make it harder for PH to become key tourist destination. Inquirer.net. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://business.inquirer.net/230330/terror-threats-make-harder-ph-become-key-tourist-destination>
- Ocampo, R (2016, January 21). Single ASEAN visa more benefits than risks: PATA CEO. TTG Asia. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from http://www.ttgasia.com/article.php?article_id=26543
- Peltier, D (2017, May 3). Southeast Asia Wants to Copy Europe's Visa-Free Travel. Skift. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://skift.com/2017/05/03/southeast-asia-wants-to-copy-europes-visa-free-travel/>
- Peter, L (2016, April 24). Schengen: Controversial EU free movement deal explained. BBC News. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13194723>
- Richburg, K (2015, December 16). What ASEAN can learn from the EU. Nikkei Asian Review. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints-archive/Viewpoints/What-ASEAN-can-learn-from-the-EU>
- Taphaopong, S (2018, March 13). Personal interview.
- Taruc, M (2018, March 9). Personal interview.
- Thuzar, M (2017, May 9). ASEAN ponders a common visa scheme. The Myanmar Times. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/asean-focus/26000-asean-ponders-a-common-visa-scheme.html>
- Viano, E (2010, April). Globalization, Transnational Crime and State Power: The Need for a New Criminology. *Rivista di Criminologia, Vittimologia e Sicurezza*, Vol. 4, No.1, Settembre 2009–Aprile 2010, pp.63-85. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from http://www.vittimologia.it/rivista/articolo_viano_2009-03_2010-01.pdf