

**Alignment and Regional Community in Southeast Asia:
ASEAN Diplomacy from 1967-1999**

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Abstract

This study examines the alignment behaviour of ASEAN towards external parties between 1967 and 1999 with the goal of establishing which factors have been most important for determining patterns of cooperation and conflict in Southeast Asia. For this purpose, the study uses an integrative perspective that primarily builds upon the insights from realism and social constructivism but also incorporates some ideas borrowed from selective cognitive theories. The study pursues three goals. Firstly, on the theoretical level, it aims at making a contribution to debates in security studies about the causes of alignment. In particular, this study assesses the relevance of three different explanations of alignment in the ASEAN context: balance-of-threat theory, identity-based accounts, and balance-of-interest theory. Secondly, it evaluates to what extent ASEAN has evolved into a regional community, based on the existence of a collective identity. The notion of regional community is subjected to critical analysis by gauging ASEAN diplomacy against three indicators that are used to operationalize the concept of regional identity: shared problem representations, mutual identifications and norm compliance with the 'ASEAN way'. Thirdly, with regard to the study of international relations in Southeast Asia, this study intends to explore the nature of state interaction in the region.

What factors have guided alignment of ASEAN members between 1967 and 1999? The findings of this study are threefold. Firstly, only limited support is found for both threat-based and identity-based explanations of ASEAN alignment, whereas balance-of-interest theory has high plausibility for most cases of ASEAN alignment. Secondly, with regard to the community idea, this study concludes that while ASEAN's diplomacy has partly been based on the idea of community, ASEAN has constituted a rule-based community, not one based on a shared regional identity. Thirdly, as to the nature of state interaction in the region, this study finds that, on a fundamental level, ASEAN behaviour has been characterized by continuity since 1967: alignment has been in support of the status quo. Moreover, security relations in Southeast Asia have become characterized by a high degree of ambiguity, yet this ambiguity has not been adequately accounted for by Western security theory.

Introduction

What factors guide the alignment of states? This study analyses the diplomacy of ASEAN between 1967 and 1999 in order to explore the causes of alignment and the foundations of state interaction in Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asian region has been chosen, because it is a particularly intriguing subject of study for the discipline of international relations. There are at least three reasons why Southeast Asia should attract the attention of scholars of foreign policy and international politics: size, diversity, and changes in social interaction. Firstly, for political scientists with their preoccupation with power and its behavioural consequences, Southeast Asia's power potential and location are hard to ignore. Although Southeast Asia does not include a global power, a population of about 510 million underlines the significance of the region. By comparison, North America is populated by about 400 million people and the European Union, one of the most thoroughly studied subjects in international politics, by fewer than 400 million. Southeast Asia's power potential is all the more interesting, because the region lies perched between India and China, the two global giants in terms of population, and within the ambit of American and Japanese power.

Secondly, the ten countries that are conventionally regarded as part of the region startle the observer with a diversity of cultures, religions, and historical trajectories that is arguably unique for any geographic region of limited extension – the whole region comprises only 4.5 million square kilometres, less than the size of Australia. Southeast Asian countries have to varying degrees adopted elements of both the Chinese and the Indian civilization and have fused them with local indigenous practices. The cultural microcosm has an equivalent in the religious sphere. Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia are predominantly Islamic, whereas the majority in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand is affiliated with Theravada Buddhism. In addition, Southeast Asia includes a Catholic country, the Philippines. In Vietnam a Chinese-influenced mixture of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist teachings exists side by side with two local religions, those of Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. In all Southeast Asian states, substantial religious minorities exist in reflection of ethnic diversity, most strikingly so in Singapore.

The diversity created by those different cultural influences was further amplified by colonialism. Throughout the era of colonialism, only Thailand retained its independence, while the rest of Southeast Asia was under the yoke of different

colonial empires. While the Philippines was subjected to Spanish and, in the twentieth century, American rule, the Indonesian archipelago was under Dutch control, the states of Indochina came under French colonial rule, with the remainder of Southeast Asia forming part of the British empire. This diversity of cultural, historical, and religious influences is mirrored in the gamut of political systems that are currently present in the ten regional states.

For the discipline of international relations, size and diversity provide an intriguing combination of context factors. However, it is a third factor that renders the Southeast Asian region even more interesting for scholars of international relations: the transformation of social interactions in the region. In the 1960s Southeast Asia was a hotbed for conflict. Numerous countries were beset by Communist insurgencies, bilateral tensions poisoned the regional climate, and the region witnessed one of the costliest conflicts of the century in terms of human life lost: the Vietnam War. By the end of the 1990s some tensions remained, but by then the whole region had become engaged in wide-ranging cooperation within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Given the region's diversity and its previous record of conflict, the success of regional cooperation since the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 is a fascinating phenomenon for observers of international politics.

Undoubtedly, between 1967 and 1999 the Southeast Asian region has been profoundly transformed, although the news from the region since 1997 has not been sanguine. Recently, Southeast Asia has been associated, among other things, with ethnic-religious conflicts in Indonesia, human rights violations in Myanmar, and back in 1997-1998 serious socio-economic crisis. However, it should be remembered that those problems have overshadowed a positive fundamental trend in regional relations.

In a region beset by confrontation and smouldering border disputes back in the 1960s, ASEAN has not only maintained peace for 30 years among its members but also managed to foster increasingly close cooperation across many issues-areas within the region. This is in stark contrast with other Third World regions where the legacy of colonial boundaries, nationalism, ethnic and religious cleavages and lack of economic complementarity have combined to thwart comparable attempts at far-reaching cooperation: the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. Equally striking has been ASEAN's ability to display regional unity and diplomatic cohesion

towards other parties. The development of ASEAN's common alignment posture and cooperation presents an arresting phenomenon both on the regional-empirical level and from the perspective of international relations theory.

The admission of Cambodia to ASEAN in April 1999 marked the realization of the long-term vision of ASEAN's founders for the organization, namely to encompass all ten countries in the region.¹ This juncture provides an appropriate point in time to ponder the achievements of ASEAN and assess their significance, firstly, for the Southeast Asian region as well as, secondly, for our understanding of the nature of international politics. ASEAN's success gives rise to the question of what has enabled ASEAN members to cooperate diplomatically in the international arena. Central to this question is one of the most fundamental concepts in international relations: alignment. When do international actors support one another's foreign policy against other parties? In the ASEAN context, why and under which circumstances do ASEAN members cooperate as a collective with or against parties external to the grouping?

The interpretation of ASEAN cooperation has become intertwined with broader theoretical debates about the essential character of security behaviour in the wider Asia-Pacific region (Dibb, 1995; Roy, 1995; Simon, 1995 and 1998; Ball, 1996; Huxley, 1996; Leifer, 1996; Khong, 1997a; Acharya, 1998 and 1999a; Lim, 1998; Busse, 1999; da Cunha, 1999). This broader debate has become an important testing ground for competing explanations of international politics, in particular between realist theories of international relations (Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1987 and 1988, Grieco, 1990 and 1993; Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Schweller, 1994 and 1998) which focus on power and interests, and approaches belonging to liberal and constructivist paradigms (Kratowil and Ruggie, 1986; Wendt, 1992 and 1994; Finnemore, 1996; Katzenstein, 1996a; Adler, 1997a, b; Adler and Barnett, 1998a; Hopf, 1998; Ruggie, 1998) that to varying degrees emphasize the importance of institutions, norms and identities for state interactions.

This debate touches on all significant areas of international relations in the region. As a matter of fact, determining the foundations of state interactions in the region can be seen as the main objective of scholarly contentions in the first place.

¹ The future status of East Timor with regard to ASEAN membership has not yet been resolved. Membership of the South Pacific Forum is also a possibility.

Not surprisingly, proponents of those two strands of thought disagree on the interpretation of several phenomena in Southeast Asia. Firstly, they disagree on the prospects for cooperation and the possibility that institutions and norms, formal or informal, can make a significant contribution to peace and stability in the region. Are security institutions in the Asia-Pacific, particularly the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) but also ASEAN itself, mere 'talkshops' with a negligible impact on states' preferences and ultimately, behaviour (Lim, 1998)? Or have they made a tangible contribution towards permanent peace by transforming states' interests and identities towards those of a community of states that share values and a collective identity in one cognitive region (Busse, 1999)? With regard to conflict resolution, sceptics argue that ASEAN has not resolved intra-ASEAN disputes but merely swept them under the carpet (Huxley, 1993: 11) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has made "bricks without the straw" (Leifer, 1996: 59), a reference to attempts at conflict management without the existence of a commensurate balance-of-power to enforce it. Others argue that ASEAN's consensual, gradualist, and informal style of conducting regional relations has generated a high degree of trust, enabling ASEAN leaders to focus on commonalities instead of disputes (Acharya, 1996; 1998; Snyder, 1996).

What renders the Southeast Asian region a particularly rewarding case for students of international relations theory is the lack of a self-evident answer, as Southeast Asian security has displayed characteristics associated with different schools of thought. On the one hand, the region has been the object of great power rivalry in the past, including Sino-US, Sino-Soviet and Soviet-US rivalries during the Cold War era. Presently, several scholars in the realist tradition cast Southeast Asia again into the centre of great power competition, encapsulated in the debates about an emerging China and a possible Sino-US clash (Segal, 1994; Roy, 1995; Shirk, 1997; Lim, 1998). Additionally, realists have questioned the character of arms acquisitions in the region and pointed to the persistence of territorial conflicts within ASEAN (Huxley, 1993; Mak and Hamzah, 1996; da Cunha, 1999). In a nutshell, there are ample indications that international relations in the region contain a competitive element conducive to balance-of-power politics. Certainly realists could not complain that Southeast Asia presents a 'least likely case' for their theories.

On the other hand, if identity considerations do indeed play a significant role for alignment, then Southeast Asia should be able to provide evidence. Since its

establishment in 1967, ASEAN has succeeded in nurturing regional cooperation in political, economic, and cultural affairs, based on an understanding that the region as a whole would benefit. Therefore ASEAN has been most conducive to the evocation of a sense of community and collective identity. Decision-makers in ASEAN states have indeed propagated the distinctness of their region, as expressed in the notion of the 'ASEAN way'.² Because the region has been characterized by power competition and regional cooperation, an examination of ASEAN's alignment behaviour should be a good test for the assumptions of identity-based as well as for realist theories of alignment.

However, as will become clear when this study proceeds, those two explanations of foreign policy behaviour are not complete if treated in isolation. Instead, strategic calculations and identity considerations are mutually constitutive and only provide meaningful explanations if put into context with the beliefs and perceptions of human agents that initiate and implement foreign policy. Identities and strategic factors are both endowed with significance by human agents. This perceptual dimension has been left unexplored by the schools of thought mentioned. For reasons to be outlined in chapter 2, this study cannot hope to completely remedy this deficiency. However, by integrating ideas from selective cognitive theories in the design of an integrative approach that serves as the instrument for empirical analysis, this study will be able to provide a more illuminating account of the relevance of strategic factors, identities and norms for security policy in Southeast Asia. By doing so, it intend to do justice to the region's unique set of material and social factors.

Alignment in International Politics

What phenomena are central to a discussion of security and, more generally, the nature of state interaction in the Asia-Pacific? If security is generically defined as "the protection of and enhancement of values that the authoritative decision makers deem vital for the survival and well-being of a community" (Alagappa, 1998: xi), it becomes clear that a relational aspect is inherent to the concept of security. Security deals with the protection of some entity, however defined, against some other entity.

² For recent examples, look at the Keynote Address by Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, of Vietnam at the Sixth ASEAN Summit in Hanoi, December 15, 1998, and the Opening Statement by Surin Pitsuwan, Foreign Minister of Thailand at the Thirty-second ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in

The concept that deals with diplomatic cooperation in general is that of 'alignment'. Alignment depicts patterns of cooperation and conflict and is hence integral to an understanding of security behaviour. In its broadest sense, alignment can be described as 'support for another actor's behaviour'. Generally, studies of alignment seek to determine when and why states support the foreign policy of other states, in other words, "how do states choose their friends" (Walt, 1987: 1)? 'Support' for some other entity implies a relationship and, not surprisingly, the relational and interactive element of alignment has generally been characterized as intrinsic to the very concept (Lai, 1995: 350-51; Snyder and Diesing, 1977).³ The crucial point relates to the significance of psychological factors: "alignment, at bottom, consists of states' intentions and expectations of others' intentions concerning supportive or opposing behaviour in future interactions" (Snyder and Diesing, 1977: 473). Similarly, Snyder conceptualises alignment as "a set of mutual expectations between two or more states that they will have each other's support in disputes or wars with particular other states" (Snyder, 1990: 105).

Knowledge of what factors cause states to support one another against third parties would be pivotal for a better understanding of political behaviour in Southeast Asia and, arguably, in the international arena in general. Alignment if defined as above includes but is not confined to alliances. It is an omnipresent phenomenon in international politics with far-reaching ramifications for the international system.

Alignment is regarded as one of the most fundamental concepts in international relations. Yet critics could claim that definitional precision is generally lacking in the scholarly treatment of the phenomenon and that its broad-based usage makes the concept ill-suited for empirical investigations. This criticism is largely based on the fact that 'alignment' indeed describes a wide variety of behaviour. It deserves attention but the problems of a broad conceptualisation of 'alignment' need not impede empirical enquiries, provided case selection is carefully accounted for.

Any study that aims at examining patterns of co-operation and conflict and their causes is bound to encounter conceptual difficulties, because the broad definition of key concepts like 'alignment' needs to be reconciled with the need to define a

Singapore, July 23, 1999 (Hyperlink <http://www.aseansec.org>). See also Mutalib (1997: 78-79) and Busse (1999).

relatively narrow range of cases that serve that study's research goals. A broad conceptualisation of alignment, like that endorsed by Walt (1987), may be valid – foreign policy co-operation assumes vastly different forms ranging from war-winning coalitions to temporary support of like-minded trading partners – but it poses a problem for case selection. The above definition of 'alignment' would mean that one ends up with countless instances of foreign policy action. For any empirical study, the subject of analysis has to be narrowed down to allow a meaningful examination of diplomatic behaviour that is conducive to theoretical debate.

What is crucial for this study is that principles for case selection are brought in line with its research goals. If this is achieved, a broad definition of core concepts does not need to be a problem. While maintaining a broad definition of 'alignment' in general, this study can nonetheless justify a selection of particular categories of cases – namely in the security sphere - that seem best suited for theory testing. The choice of particular cases for this study has been guided by its aspiration to contribute to the theoretical debate in security studies about the relevance of power, interest and identity-based interpretations of security policy. These theoretical goals necessitate a particular focus in the study's case selection, a broad definition of 'alignment' notwithstanding.

While military support in a war as well as voting on a human rights convention may fit the broad definition of alignment, it is clear that they constitute categories of behaviour that are not of similar importance to countries and hence are not equally suited to the task of validating particular theories of security behaviour. For example, there would be little point to try and refute realist arguments about the primacy of the national interest by looking at alignment that is unrelated to power, the core concept emphasized by realism. Theory-testing is only meaningful if the cases selected conform to the premises of the schools of thought in question. It is therefore important to delineate the limits of this study.

It is believed that the sphere of security holds a special key to the theory-testing task of this research undertaking, because an emphasis on the area of security allows for a selection of cases that conform to the assumption of both realism and social constructivism (Katzenstein, 1996). As this study wants to assess the rival

³ This relational quality distinguishes alignment from groupings. Alignment is qualitatively different from mere groupings, because, rather than accidental factors like geographic proximity, relationships

explanations of international relations by realist and identity-based theories, it has to select cases that are not in contradiction with the tenets of the schools of thought to be assessed. However, realists have always asserted that security is the area where the 'national interest' ruled supreme,⁴ whereas they diverge on its importance in other issue-areas – a topic discussed in section 1.1. Therefore an emphasis on security issues allows this study best to use the case of ASEAN for the purposes of theory-testing.

This study concentrates on alignment that is pertinent to security, because such empirical cases allow significant insights into the quality of theoretical arguments about the influence of strategic factors and the role of regional identity and community for foreign policy. This is not to say that other instances of support for another state, for example a vote for an international labour charter, are not cases of alignment. They are, but they do not serve the goals of this thesis.

In the security sphere, there is another definitional problem to consider, even though this issue is of little consequence for this work. Generally, conceptual confusion surrounds the term alignment and its demarcation from alliance. One landmark study implies that the terms 'alignment' and 'alliance' are interchangeable (Walt, 1987: 12). However, Modelski distinguishes between alliances as "military collaboration" and alignment as "all types of political cooperation" (1963: 769-76). The use of the term 'alignment', as defined by Snyder and Diesing, is not confined to the sphere of security in the classical sense. Alignment choices are made for disparate issue-areas. Thus the term lends itself more readily to general foreign-policy analysis than does 'alliance'.

Alignment is the more general category of behaviour, and, in keeping with Snyder, alliances are "a formal subset of a broader and more basic phenomenon, that of alignment" (Snyder, 1990: 105; 1991: 123). Thus alignment includes but is not limited to alliances. It can become manifest in formal or informal arrangements.⁵ For this work, alignment is regarded as an overarching concept that describes a wide range of behaviour provided it conforms to the working definition of alignment laid

form a **constitutive** element of alignment (Lai, 1995: 350).

⁴ Some like Grieco (1990) contend that this even applies to the economic sphere but this view is more controversial - even within the realist school.

⁵ This operationalization is in marked contrast to that of Lai who subsumes alignment under the category of alliance and coalition and differentiates it from the latter by its "primarily informal" character (Lai, 1995: 350- 51).

out before: “states’ intentions and expectations of others’ intentions concerning supportive or opposing behaviour in future interactions” (Snyder and Diesing, 1977: 473). An ‘alliance’ is understood as an arrangement that includes actual military cooperation. Alliances need not to be formal or in the form of a treaty. Instead they can be informal, but they include the element of military support whereas the definition of alignment above comprises all cases of diplomatic support, even those that fall short of providing specific security commitments.

However, the demarcation of alliances and alignment is less important than it first seems. The distinction does, anyway, not help to answer the question about the depth of commitment. Consistent diplomatic support, like that which could be expected from a regional community, may well signal a higher degree of commitment and, in the case of abdication of promises or violation of rules, a higher cost for non-compliance than a military alliance. However, the issue of commitment and non-compliance costs is beyond the coverage of this thesis. It can only be determined by a detailed analysis of domestic decision-making and the calculations that determined a country’s entry into an agreement in the first place. As such, an examination of the costs and benefits of alignment and alliances is unsuited for the questions pertinent to this research undertaking with its emphasis on regional diplomacy, although theories that do examine those issues are briefly mentioned in the section on utility-theories in chapter 1.1.

Knowledge of what factors cause states to support one another against third parties would be pivotal for a better understanding of political behaviour in Southeast Asia and, arguably, in the international arena in general. Alignment, which if defined as above includes but is not confined to alliances, is an omnipresent phenomenon in international politics with far-reaching ramifications for the international system.

Knowledge of the processes of alignment is not only vital for security studies, but it is also highly relevant for research on state behaviour in other issue-areas, for example trade negotiations, conflicts over human rights or the initiation of cooperation on environmental issues. However, the ubiquity of the concept is not matched by a commensurate amount of empirical studies of the real world phenomenon.

One problem with the existing body of research rests with the limited geographic coverage of empirical tests of alignment theories. A lot of work has been

published on Post Cold War security behaviour in the Asia-Pacific region, which includes Southeast Asia, but most efforts have been descriptive in nature with no attempts at theory building or testing. Most of the research listed before on patterns and causes of alignment has centred on Europe past (alignment before and during the world wars) and present (the Western community). Very little work has been done on other regions. Barnett (1996) and Walt (1987) offer two different accounts of alignment in the Middle East, and credit should also be given to Walt for a cogently argued analysis of alignment in Southwest Asia, covering Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan (1988). Alignment behaviour and its causes in other regions, including Southeast Asia are seriously 'understudied'. In order to fill this perceived gap in the scholarly literature, this project undertakes a case study of alignment in the Southeast Asian region, as no comprehensive analysis of alignment behaviour of ASEAN states or Southeast Asia in general has been conducted.

Objectives

This study examines the alignment behaviour of ASEAN members between 1967 and 1999 with the goal of establishing which factors have been most important for determining patterns of cooperation and conflict in the region. For this purpose, the study explores the interplay of material factors and social interaction, emphasized by realism and social constructivism. Within the broader theoretical context, the objectives of this study are twofold.

Firstly, this work is committed to making a contribution to international relations theory by enriching the main debate in the sub field of foreign policy, which addresses the question of what "accounts for variations in processes and outcomes of foreign policies within and between states" (Evangelista, 1989: 147). Based on an empirical analysis of ASEAN alignment, this study evaluates in detail three different perspectives on alignment: threat-centred explanations (Walt, 1987 and 1988), identity-based accounts (Acharya, 1998; Adler and Barnett, 1998a; Busse, 1999), and balance-of-interest theory that privileges power and interests (Schweller, 1994 and 1998). In particular, this study is interested in illuminating whether ASEAN members have constituted a diplomatic community, based on a shared regional identity. When and under which circumstances do particular factors (threat/ regional identity/ interest) explain security behaviour?

Secondly, this study seeks to improve the understanding of the nature of international relations in Southeast Asia, in particular the nexus between identity and the foreign policies of ASEAN members. Knowledge of how ASEAN elites approach foreign policy decisions would not only enable us to comprehend alignment decisions, but it would also improve the understanding of the intricate net of interests and identities that determines state interactions in this important region. In the broader context of Asia-Pacific relations, a better comprehension of the nature of state interaction in Southeast Asia has assumed even more significance after the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has extended ASEAN's model of cooperation to the wider region. This has raised the stakes in the debate of whether notions of identity have any bearing on regional cooperation, as the answer to this question may allow predictions for the likely success of cooperation in the larger Asia-Pacific region.

Outline of this Study

This study follows a conventional outline. Chapter 1 reviews the two perspectives on security behaviour that have defined security studies in the Post Cold War era: realism and social constructivist identity accounts. This chapter pursues two goals. Firstly, the chapter provides a summary of the existing literature on alliances and alignment and, secondly, it attempts a critique of strengths and weaknesses that can guide the design of an improved approach to security behaviour that can be employed for this study's empirical investigation. What is the 'state of the art' in the field of alignment studies?

Chapter 2 outlines the design of this study and explains how it will be employed to analyse the security behaviour of ASEAN members. Firstly, it develops an integrative approach to security behaviour, including the design of criteria that make it possible to operationalize the concept of regional identity. The chapter explains how this study integrates the ideas of existing theories in an approach that allows for the improved attribution of specific strategic and social factors to security behaviour, thus providing a basis for theory-testing. Chapter 2 provides an outline of a three-step approach to security behaviour. The three steps proceed from the description of security behaviour in a given situation to the examination of interpretations of decision-makers and, finally, the evaluation of security behaviour

and testing of alignment theories. Secondly, chapter 2 explains how this integrative approach can be adopted to the circumstances of Southeast Asia. In particular, it makes applicable the criteria of community developed previously to the case of ASEAN. Furthermore, chapter 2 contains the rationalization for the selection of diplomatic events, explains the emphasis put on the Post Cold War era, and points to some of the limitations of this study.

Chapter 3 provides a brief outline of ASEAN's development during its formative years, 1967 – 1978. The subsequent three chapters apply empirically this study's integrative approach to examine systematically the security behaviour of ASEAN members. ASEAN alignment during the Cambodia Conflict from 1979 until 1988 is analysed in chapter 4, and alignment in the Post Cold War era in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 covers the development of ASEAN up to the first Post Cold War ASEAN Summit in Singapore in January 1992, chapter 6 traces ASEAN's evolution from then until mid-1997.

The development of important events from mid-1997 until the end of 1999 is briefly outlined in chapter 7, 'analysis and conclusions', which provides an assessment of the empirical cases in the light of the approach developed in chapter 2. In its conclusions, chapter 7 also evaluates what contribution this work has made to both security theory and explanations of regional international relations, including an assessment of different theories of alignment behaviour. In particular, this part evaluates the trajectory of the ASEAN community from 1967–1999 and assesses which factors have enhanced and / or attenuated the strength of common alignment of the ASEAN community. Finally, this study concludes with some ideas about the nature of state interaction in the Southeast Asian region and the prospects for future regional cooperation.

Chapter 1

Theories of Alignment: A Call for Development

How is the phenomenon of alignment explained in international relations theory? More specifically, what has the field of international relations contributed to the analysis of alignment patterns in Southeast Asia? This chapter conducts a review of the two most relevant research programmes, including an assessment of their strengths and shortcomings, with a particular emphasis on the Southeast Asian and wider Asia-Pacific region. The following review is divided into three sections. It provides an outline of relevant work on alignment in the realist mould in section 1.1, followed in section 1.2 by an overview of the most relevant research on security behaviour conducted within the social constructivist school. Finally, section 1.3 provides an evaluation of the contribution of the two schools of thought to the area of alignment studies. Providing an assessment of the relevance of realism and social constructivism for the Southeast Asian context, the review outlines deficiencies of the existing approaches that need to be remedied or, at least, accounted for.

Given the pivotal role of alignment in international politics, one would expect a plethora of research on the phenomenon of alignment. Surprisingly, the field is bereft of systematic and comprehensive treatments of what instigates and directs alignment choices. While the area of military alliances has attracted considerable attention (for example, Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1987, 1988; Schweller, 1994 and 1998; Snyder, 1997), the broader notion of alignment has not been the object of theory building with only one dated exception (Liska, 1962). Criticism that instead most researchers have been satisfied with the examination of specific cases (Snyder, 1991: 121) still holds true almost ten years after the point was first raised.

Paradoxically the lack of in-depth studies of alignment combines with a deluge of alignment-related research. Most topics in international relations are in some way intertwined with questions of alignment. The very fact that so many different research undertakings can be related to the subject renders any attempt of a comprehensive literature review impossible. This study's coverage of material is guided by two considerations: its relevance to current scholarly debates about alignment and security behaviour and its conduciveness to creating a more comprehensive perspective on alignment. An exploration of the topic of alignment

from different vantage points, makes it possible to identify focal points of different perspectives as well as to expose their blind spots.

Befitting a literature review, it reflects the contemporaneous dominance of particular paradigms. Consequently, at the centre of this review are the two predominant approaches in security studies in the Post Cold War era. Section 1.1 presents the main insights of realist theories. Social constructivist/liberal theories are reviewed in Section 1.2.⁶ This study concentrates on those constructivist/liberal theories that emphasize the importance of norms and identities in the international arena.

Those two schools of thought have dominated the theoretical debates in security studies in the Post Cold War era and in terms of theory testing this thesis concentrates on two realist theories (balance-of-threat and balance-of-interest theory) and the identity-based approach of the social constructivist school. Given the pivotal role of the notion of security community for this thesis, identity-based models of security behaviour will be reviewed at the end of this chapter in order to provide a benchmark for this study and necessary improvements.

Two other liberal research programmes on security behaviour are not included, because their insights are not applicable to the evolution of ASEAN's security from 1967 to 1999. Firstly, neoliberal claims that increased trade flows and economic interdependence decrease the potential for conflict (for the quintessential neoliberal position, see Keohane, 1984; Baldwin, 1993) are not relevant to the study at hand. Trade links among ASEAN members have remained insignificant, aside from those with Singapore.

Secondly, research on the 'democratic peace' (for example, Siverson and Emmons, 1991; Dixon, 1993 and 1994; Russett, 1993; Hermann and Kegley, 1995; Werner and Lemke, 1997) examines why democracies have not fought wars with one another, but generally neglects alignment (for an exception, see Siverson and Emmons, 1991). Moreover, among ASEAN members only the Philippines (since 1986) and Thailand (since 1992) have been democratic at least for some of the periods

⁶ The exact relationship between constructivism, liberalism and the realist paradigm is a subject of debate. While Walt argues that realism, neoliberalism and constructivism are three competing paradigms (1998), other authors posit a close relationship between realism and neoliberalism based upon their shared rational actor assumptions (Keohane, 1989; Katzenstein, 1996b; Ruggie, 1998: 4-11)

covered by this study. For those reasons, the literature on the ‘democratic peace’ does not readily lend itself to a study of alignment in Southeast Asia between 1967 and 1999.⁷

1.1 Realist Theories of Alliances

When do states enter alliances and who is aligning with whom? In international relations theory ideas on the causes of alignment differ widely. However, reflecting the prominence of the realist school of thought, most theories in international relations dealing with alliances have a realist pedigree (Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1987 and 1988; Christensen and Snyder, 1990; Wohlforth, 1993; Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Schweller, 1994 and 1998). This section reviews three different realist theories, Waltz’s (1979) balance-of-power theory, Walt’s (1987 and 1988) balance-of-threat theory, and Schweller’s (1994 and 1998) balance-of-interest theory, assesses realism in the Southeast Asian context, and finally evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of this predominant paradigm in security studies.

Perspectives on the origins and forms of alignment are closely interlinked with, and derived from, assumptions about world politics in general. It is therefore helpful to first outline briefly what ‘worldview’ underpins this particular paradigm in international relations before exploring in more detail the nuanced differences among realist approaches. Different strands of realism have developed that diverge in their detailed conceptions of foreign policy behaviour but nonetheless share the same core assumptions about the nature of international politics and the primary determinants of state behaviour.

Realist theories can broadly be distinguished according to their adherence to either classical realism or neorealism.⁸ However, all realist models, whether linked to

with a third group arguing for the close relationship between different versions of liberalism and constructivism (Acharya, 1999a: 5; Sterling-Folker, 2000).

⁷ Another category of alignment studies has not been included. Studies on voting alignment, particularly in the context of the United Nations, have been extensive, but they have been limited by their quantitative and descriptive nature. For some examples, see Newcombe et al. (1970), Tolmin (1985), Iida (1988), Holloway (1990), Holloway and Tomlinson (1995), and Kim and Russett (1996).

⁸ This review assumes that the most useful distinction is based upon what explanatory variables are accentuated. Accordingly, it distinguishes between neorealists that concentrate on relative power (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 1994/95) or at least purport to maintain a (Waltzian) systemic framework (Walt, 1987 and 1988; Christensen and Snyder, 1990) and realists in the classical tradition (Morgenthau, 1948; Jervis, 1978; Schweller, 1994 and 1998) that give weight to intervening variables like motivation or perceptions. However, different classifications of realist thought abound. Rose (1998) has distinguished between offensive, defensive, and neoclassical realists. In contrast, Grieco

the classical tradition exemplified by Morgenthau's work (1948) or to the neorealist Waltzian variant (Waltz, 1979), rely on a particular ontology. That ontology includes a belief in the anarchic structure and competitive nature of the international system and the assumption that states are unitary actors (Katzenstein, 1996b: 12). In addition, neorealists posit the primacy of survival among states' goals (Waltz, 1979: 126; Grieco, 1997: 167) and, closely related, the determinacy of structure, that is the assumption that different actors will react in an identical way to structurally alike situations (Herrmann and Fischerkeller, 1995).

In contrast, classical realists have introduced motivation as an intervening variable and have made a crucial distinction between status quo and revisionist states (Gilpin, 1981; Schweller, 1994 and 1998). According to them, survival may only be the utmost value for status quo powers whereas revisionist powers may be ready to take risks for the sake of expansion (Schweller, 1994: 86). Despite those nuanced differences, all realists maintain that relative power is the single most important variable, an assumption innate to realism's logic of anarchy and competition.

Both survival, the most fundamental goal in a self-help system, and expansion depend upon the most advantageous relative power position of states, even though precise calculations may differ according to states' goals (Schweller, 1998). Therefore the elementary goal for states has to be not an increase in absolute power, but gains in power that are larger than those of others states, potential competitors. This argument on the importance of relative power and its adverse effect on the prospects of international cooperation has been most elegantly articulated in Grieco's (1990 and 1993) work on relative gains. As a consequence of the predicament of states, namely the need to enhance security in a competitive environment, states require power capabilities as a means of deterring threats and increasing their security (Gilpin, 1981; Snyder, 1984; Walt, 1987; Grieco, 1990 and 1993). The necessary accumulation of power can be accomplished through armament, territorial aggrandizement, or alliance formation (Snyder, 1984: 461).⁹

(1997) has termed all neorealists as defensive realists. Ultimately, those disagreements are secondary given the convergence among realists that relative power is the most important variable.

⁹ Territorial aggrandizement has ceased to be a legitimate way of increasing power, but it was common until the end of the Second World War and the attempt by Iraq to incorporate Kuwait into its own territory in 1991 was a case in point that the concept might not be as dated as would be desirable.

Given this particular conceptualisation of states' problems and interests, realist theories have concentrated on two issues in their approach to alignment: the utility of alliances versus other modes of security provision (Altfeld, 1984; Morrow, 1991 and 1993; Lake, 1996; Snyder, 1997) and the factors determining alliance formation (Walt, 1987 and 1988; Christensen and Snyder, 1990; Schweller, 1994 and 1998). Those two problems are referred to as primary and secondary alliance dilemmas (Snyder, 1984). Firstly, do states prefer to arm themselves or do they enter alliances? Secondly, who do states align with and why?

Utility theories deal with the primary alliance dilemma as a choice between armament and alliances, determined by cost-benefit calculations, either in terms of 'governance costs' (Lake, 1996) or in terms of their impact on domestic actors (Morrow, 1991 and 1993). However, those theories do not explore the relational element that is at the core of this study with its interest in cooperation among a regional collective. More significant for the purposes of this study are realist theories on alliance formation. Theories of alliance formation have revolved around two questions: what evokes the search for allies and causes states to align? Who do states preferably align with, with the stronger side (bandwagoning), or against it (balancing)?

The predicament associated with alliance choices is exacerbated by the desire to avoid the twin dilemma of entrapment and abandonment (Snyder, 1984: 466-467). Entrapment refers to the possibility that states are dragged into disputes by their allies, in which they have no desire to partake in and which do not affect their own interests. In contrast, abandonment denotes the risk that states may be deserted by their allies in times of need.¹⁰

Realist theories of alliance formation focus on the conceptual pair balancing and bandwagoning. The most influential proponent of the balancing-bandwagoning distinction has been Waltz (1979). Waltz used the terms as opposites, with "bandwagoning" describing alignment with the stronger side, whereas balancing denotes alignment against the stronger side (Waltz, 1979: 126). However, as will be

¹⁰ Those two forms of behaviour are not just challenges that confront foreign policy decision-makers, but they also have an effect on the systemic level. In 1914, unconditional guarantees given to alliance partners led to the entrapment of bigger powers in the local conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, which then escalated into the First World War. This process of unconditional balancing, called 'chainganging' by Christensen and Snyder (1990), had its counterpart in the process of 'buckpassing'

seen, different scholars have put forth divergent ideas as to the causes and direction of alignment, prompting an intra-paradigm debate about the factors catalysing alliance formation.

In this section three realist approaches to alliances are reviewed. These approaches differ according to the combination of factors they impart with explanatory power and are exemplified by the work of Waltz (1979), Walt (1987 and 1988), and Schweller (1994 and 1998). The first, Waltz's theory of international politics, does not deal with alignment behaviour of individual states but examines alliances on the level of the international system. Waltz is included here because of the seminal impact of his work on the wider field of international relations where Waltz's axioms have become the core of neorealism. The second approach reviewed here, Walt's balance-of-threat theory (1987 and 1988), understands itself as an application of Waltz's theory to foreign policy. Finally, this section reviews Schweller's balance-of-interest theory (1994 and 1998). His work can be seen as following the tradition of classical realism, with a strong emphasis on motivation (Rose, 1998). Despite the differences among the three realist approaches, the similarities should not be overlooked. They all share the belief that relative power is the prime determinant of state behaviour; where neorealism and classical realism differ is the degree to which intervening variables like perceptions and motivation matter (Rose, 1998: 146-57).

Waltz's Balance-of-Power Theory

In his 1979 book *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz established the tenets of structural realism and developed a particular perspective on alliances. In a departure from classical realism, Waltz assumed that states are like units for which security is the primary goal (Waltz, 1979: 74-77). Those premises were at odds with classical realism, as the latter had posited the importance of motivation and had drawn a distinction between status quo and revisionist powers (Morgenthau, 1948).

Following Waltz's parsimonious approach neorealists privileged one variable, the structure of the international system, in their explanations of state behaviour (Grieco, 1990 and 1993; Mearsheimer, 1994/95). According to that Waltzian

at the onset of the Second World War when potential allies failed to come together in a balancing coalition against Nazi Germany (Christensen and Snyder, 1990).

conception of international politics, the distribution of power capabilities determines the interactions of states. In essence, states are seen as 'defensive positionalists' that are sensitive to relative gains (Grieco, 1990).

Based on the premises of his structural theory, Waltz arrived at conclusions about the expected alignment behaviour of states (Waltz, 1979: ch. 6). He posited that states generally balance against the strongest state. As he explained, because states have to ensure their survival under conditions of anarchy, their preference will be to balance against the strongest power, as it is the strongest power that poses the most severe threat to survival (Waltz, 1979: ch. 6). States that do not behave competitively will be eliminated in the long run.

Waltz's logic suggests that states tend to flock together against the strongest state irrespective of threat perception. The variable that explains alignment in Waltz's approach is power capabilities. However, it is important to note that power is conceptualised in terms of how many great powers exist in the international system. Solely the polarity of the system determines behaviour and Waltz makes no allowances for power differentials among great powers (Schweller, 1998: 185). Waltz argued that the overall configuration of alliances and their stability are determined by the structure of the international system, that is its polarity, for example, bipolarity implies a more stable system of alliances.

In its crudest form this determinism is surely not confirmed by state behaviour in the current system. Since the end of the Cold War the United States has been the preponderant power and it previously had been the single strongest power over the past 50 years. Yet, the foreign-policy behaviour of most actors in the international arena has tended towards cooperation with the United States over the past 50 years. Even states with great power potential, at least economically, like Germany or Japan have not indicated any desire to balance against the United States, as predicted by balance-of-power theory. The end of bipolarity has not altered their orientation in any significant way. There seems to be more subtlety to alignment behaviour than Waltz's structural realism can explain.

To his defence, one could claim that Waltz devised a systemic theory of international politics and did not intend to construe a theory of foreign policy behaviour, the realm to which alignment choices belong. Neorealism, based on Waltz's balance-of-power theory, constitutes a theory of international politics, as it

“can describe the range of likely outcomes of the actions and interactions of states within a given system” (Waltz, 1979: 71-72). As a systemic theory it does not purport to provide explanations of the foreign policy behaviour of individual states (Rose, 1998: 145).

However, even on the systemic level it is hard to find evidence that the international system has evolved in the way predicted by Waltz. The most incisive critiques of Waltz’s theory from partisan realists (Christensen and Snyder, 1990; Schweller, 1998) are based on the fact that his allegedly parsimonious theory is indeterminate with regard to the two most important events a structural theory must purport to explain: the origins of the First and Second World War. In both cases, Waltz started with the assumption that the systemic structure was multipolar. To fit his theory to historical events, he then had to concede that states are prone to two contradictory errors (Schweller, 1998: 18): in 1914 European states balanced unconditionally, precipitating World War I; in 1939 they avoided the costs of balancing against Germany and “passed the buck” (Christensen and Snyder, 1990).

Walt’s Balance-of-Threat Theory

In response to the inability of neorealism to provide explanations of foreign policy behaviour, several scholars within the realist paradigm (Walt, 1987 and 1988; Snyder and Christensen, 1990) have modified Waltz’s balance-of-power theory in attempts to make it applicable to foreign policy. Probably most influential for research on alignment and alliances has been Walt’s work (1987 and 1988). Walt agreed with Waltz that balancing is more common than bandwagoning, however, he conceived of alignment as a reaction to the perception of threat rather than a response to capabilities as such (Walt, 1987: 21). Whether another states poses a threat hinges on aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions (Walt, 1987: 22-26).

Walt supports his balance-of-threat theory with compelling case studies of alliance behaviour in the Middle East (1987) and in Southwest Asia (1988), focusing on Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan. Both studies suggested that balancing, that is alignment against the main threat in Walt’s parlance, is by far the more common behaviour. Walt dismissed the role of ideology and similar domestic systems as limited (1987: 203 and 214-215; 1988: 313).

Walt's work has been challenged on different grounds. Some critics have argued that Walt's balance-of-threat theory neglected domestic factors and thus requires modification to be applicable to Third-World contexts (David, 1991; Barnett and Levy, 1991; Levy and Barnett, 1992). David introduced the concept of 'omnibalancing' to take into account that Third-World leaders often face internal and external threats. 'Omnibalancing' describes "the need of leaders to appease secondary adversaries, as well as to balance against both internal and external threats in order to survive in power" (David, 1991: 236). Similarly, Levy and Barnett take into account the need of leaders to incorporate their domestic situation in calculations of alignment choices (Levy and Barnett, 1992).

Those criticisms are noteworthy and sound but they do not affect the core assumption that leaders balance against threats. The most substantial criticism of Walt's work stemmed from Barnett (1996), a proponent of an identity-based approach to alliances. Barnett charged that Walt confounded ideational factors and ideology, and did not consider the constitutive role of identity and images for interests, and ultimately alignment (Barnett, 1996: 406).

It should be pointed out that the use of aggressive intentions as a variable that determines threat perceptions propels Walt beyond the systemic realm. Perception is turned into an intermediary variable linking power capabilities, intentions, and anticipated behaviour. Walt's assumptions in that regard may be very sensible, but they constitute either a substantial modification of Waltz's systemic theory or a departure from systemic reasoning all together.¹¹ Perception cannot possibly be measured on the systemic level. Threat perceptions inevitably introduce the decision-maker to the analysis. The same capabilities can be perceived very differently depending on who holds sway over them and elicit very different responses.

The same trade-off between parsimony and high explanatory power also haunts other attempts to employ balance-of-power theory at the level of foreign policy analysis. Christensen and Snyder (1990) remedied the deficiency of Waltz's theory by introducing the variable of perceived offensive / defensive advantages to explain what Waltz's structural theory cannot explain: different behaviour under putatively the same structural condition (multipolarity) in 1914 and 1939. Again, this

modification of Waltz's theory introduced perceptual elements, thus putting into question neorealist claims of parsimony.

Schweller's Balance-of-Interest Theory

A third realist approach to alliance formation has been advanced by Schweller (1994 and 1998) who focused on both power and interests in explaining alliance patterns. Schweller's idea of taking into account motivational factors can be traced back to classical realism, particularly the work by Morgenthau (1948). However, emphasis on motivation is shared by other realists (Gilpin, 1981) and by power transition theory (Organski and Kugler, 1980; Houweling and Siccamo, 1988). Proponents of power transition theory argue that dissatisfaction of states with the rules of the international system and with their positions in the system will affect their conflict proneness. Common to this research programme as well as Schweller's work is the assumption that the alignment behaviour of states can be categorized alongside a status quo/revisionist dimension (Gilpin, 1981; Schweller, 1994 and 1998).

Schweller, a partisan realist, criticized Walt's balance-of-threat theory on both definitional and substantive grounds. On the first matter, Schweller's criticism concerned Walt's use of 'bandwagoning'. As both Snyder (1991) and Schweller (1994) pointed out, the balancing-bandwagoning dichotomy does not truly represent diametrically opposed forms of behaviour. Balancing refers to defensive behaviour whereas bandwagoning can be either defensive or offensive (Snyder, 1991: 129). However, Walt's theory operates under the premise that balancing and bandwagoning are opposite forms of behaviour.

Most importantly, Schweller criticized Walt on the grounds that his usage of bandwagoning tended to focus narrowly on the security motive ignoring another crucial determinant of alignment: interests (Schweller, 1994 and 1998). Furthermore, Schweller dropped Walt's assumption that all great powers are alike and their behaviour is determined by the polarity of the system. Instead he distinguishes units according to relative capability (Schweller, 1998: 186).

Based on those perceived deficiencies of Walt's work, Schweller proposed a third realist approach, disparate from both Waltz and Walt, based on the interests of

¹¹ Waltz contends that Walt's work belongs to the sphere of "foreign-policy application" not the realm of international political theory and, thus, can be accommodated by his theory (Vasquez et al., 1997:

states (1994 and 1998).¹² Most importantly for this study, Schweller explained alignment as a function of power and valuation of the status quo. He challenged the common realist assumption that the primary goal of all states is security. Instead, he suggested that some states value potential gains in power more highly than their current position and are willing to risk what they possess for the possible but uncertain attainment of gains (1994: 85-88; 1998: 75-83). As he put it, “interests, not power, determine how states choose their friends and enemies” (Schweller, 1998: 189).

Schweller proceeded to divide states up into status quo-oriented actors, which “covet what they have more than potential gains,” and revisionist states which value gains more highly than the possessions they already hold. The goal of the latter is to change the system in their favour. Bandwagoning takes place in anticipation of gains by revisionist powers, and will only happen when they form the stronger coalition (1994: 106-107). Schweller claimed that balancing and bandwagoning cannot be regarded as opposite behaviours. Balancing is a reaction to aggression and aims at protecting what one possesses. With regard to the systemic level, Schweller proposed that balancing and bandwagoning were symptoms denoting different systemic conditions: the former stasis, the latter fluidity (Schweller, 1994: 107). Ddd

Realism and Southeast Asian Security

Reflecting the general predominance of realist theory in the field of security, it is hardly surprising that realist thought has also influenced if not dominated most analyses of security in Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific region. Examples of realist accounts of regional politics in the Post Cold War era include Betts (1993), Friedberg (1993), Huxley (1993), Buzan and Segal (1994), Segal (1994), Mandelbaum (1994), Dibb (1995), Roy, (1995), Leifer (1996), Mak and Hamzah (1996), Lim (1998), Narine (1999). What those approaches have in common is the realist emphasis on balance-of-power considerations, underpinned by the assumption that state interactions are ultimately driven by competition. The realist perspective dismisses institutionalised multilateral cooperation as a form of state interaction that

916).

¹² Schweller applies his balance-of-interest model to the case of the Second World War. In that study Schweller employs a sophisticated measure of capabilities to argue that, contrary to the common

merely reflects the existing configuration of power and interests in the region (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Lim, 1998) and cannot work in the absence of a stable balance-of-power (Leifer, 1996).

Realist accounts of Southeast Asian security concentrate on three observations that they use as evidence of the predominance of competitive balancing as the primary means of security policy, and by implication, the weakness of regional institutions (Simon, 1995; Huxley, 1996). Firstly, realists point to the persistence of external alliances, which have expanded in the Post Cold War era despite the growth of cooperative institutions (Dibb, 1995; Roy, 1995; Lim, 1998). Secondly, realist scholars, in their discussions of the ongoing arms acquisitions in the region, have privileged interpretations centred on state competition at the expense of explanations that focus on factors like prestige, the economic boom in the 1990s and the overdue transition from counterinsurgency to conventional defence (da Cunha, 1999: 10). Thirdly, realist scholars emphasize the destabilizing nature of territorial disputes that have not been resolved but left dormant (Huxley, 1993; da Cunha, 1999).

Those interpretations are in keeping with and underpinned by realist tenets. On a more abstract level, those tenets are manifest in four assumptions that characterize the realist perspective on the Asia-Pacific (Acharya, 1999a: 2-5): belief in great power primacy, the centrality of the balance-of-power, the persistence of economic competition despite or even because of increased interdependence, and the denial that institutions have any independent effect on state behaviour. Those premises have had a discernible effect not just on above interpretations of ASEAN security behaviour, but they have resulted in a particular research focus that has negatively affected the depth of analysis of ASEAN behaviour.

Firstly, a belief in great power primacy and balance-of-power implies that behaviour of ASEAN, an association of at best middle powers in terms of capabilities, is derivative of the relations of the great powers in the region. Consequently, many accounts of Asia-Pacific security have given scant attention to ASEAN. The role of ASEAN members in creating a regional order is seen as subordinated to the workings of great power relations and hence the preferences of ASEAN or other middle powers are not examined. This means that realist analyses do not provide any insights into

the interests of ASEAN collectively or those of individual members, and how the interplay between them may affect ASEAN's position towards the great powers.

However, the realist focus is not exclusively on power capabilities, but also incorporates 'motivation'. In their analysis of ASEAN-China relations several scholars (Segal, 1994; Roy, 1995; Snyder, 1996; Shirk, 1997) accept, often implicitly, the importance of motivation as determinant for regional relations when they discuss the need to maintain a (status quo) balance-of-power against potential Chinese (revisionist) ambitions, or create a great power consensus that can advance multilateral cooperation (Snyder, 1996: 567-68; Narine, 1999: 360-62). Shirk discussed the implications of status quo versus revisionist orientations for a concert of great powers in the Asia-Pacific – China, Japan, Russia, the United States - but did not attempt a comprehensive account of the interests of the four powers (Shirk, 1997). Assumptions about China's motivation inform many realist interpretations, but no sophisticated theoretical treatment along the lines of Schweller's work is devoted to the underlying patterns of state interactions in the Asia-Pacific. In turn, an existing comprehensive study of renegade (revisionist) states did not attempt to illuminate the nature of interaction in the Asia-Pacific region, even though some examples were drawn from the area (Chan and Williams, 1994).

A second feature of the realist treatment of the region is linked to the premise that institutions do not have an independent effect on state interaction. The realist perspective dismisses institutionalised multilateral cooperation as a form of state interaction that merely reflects the existing configuration of power and interests in the region (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Lim, 1998; Narine, 1999) and cannot work in the absence of a stable balance-of-power (Leifer, 1996). According to that perspective, international relations in the region is ultimately determined by power, not by rules and norms that constrain state behaviour or by shared values (Leifer, 1996). Exemplary of such an approach is Segal's framing of ASEAN's problem with regard to the South China Sea disputes, concluding, "without a balance of power, Southeast Asians are vulnerable" (Segal, 1994: 46).

In this context, it is important to note that the norms and practices of ASEAN's approach to regional relations and conflict management are seen as epiphenomena (Lim, 1998). Norms for regional conduct may have played an important role for ASEAN cooperation, but ultimately they are subordinate to

considerations of power, in particular with regard to ASEAN's relations with bigger external powers (Leifer, 1996). Leifer argued that multilateral institutions are unlikely to succeed in the absence of an existing stable balance of power (Leifer, 1996: 53-54). Implicitly, this position denies that an ASEAN community has any significant impact on foreign policy behaviour. This assertion can be surmised from the power-focus inherent to realist studies, which implies that the behaviour of ASEAN members emanates from parochial national interests, seen as a function of the balance-of-power considerations.

An Evaluation of Realist Alliance Theories

What contribution does realism make to the explanation of alignment in general and security behaviour in Southeast Asia in particular? Given the diversity of the scholarly work reviewed, this question eludes a simple answer. Realist theories share important assumptions, most importantly, the belief in the primacy of relative power in determining states' behaviour. In addition, they contend that norms and institutions have no intrinsic function of their own, but simply reflect the existing configuration of power and national interests (Gilpin, 1981; Mearsheimer, 1994/95).

While all realists see alliances as a response to the systemic configuration of capabilities, they differ in how much significance they attribute to intervening variables like interests and threat perceptions (Rose, 1998). Neorealist scholars generally claim that expectations can be derived from the anarchic structure of the system, relegating cognitive factors to the position of epiphenomena. However, on the level of foreign policy behaviour they have been forced to incorporate perceptual factors into their analyses (Walt, 1987 and 1988; Snyder and Christensen, 1990).

Although all realist approaches rely on the same set of premises, they arrive at different conclusions as to which causal variables they privilege and they differ with regard to the behavioural outcomes they predict. This is best illustrated by looking at their contradictory predictions of alignment behaviour. Within the realist paradigm confusion seems to persist about the causes of alignment. What instigates balancing? Is balancing alignment against power (Waltz, 1979), threat (Walt, 1987 and 1988) or against revisionist intentions (Schweller, 1994 and 1998)? And does bandwagoning represent alignment with the strong due to fear and defensive motives (Walt, 1987), or due to revisionist greed (Schweller, 1994)?

Those different motives for alignment are hard to subsume under one rubric. Certainly, the varied use of balancing /bandwagoning does not support realist claims of parsimony. Those differences within the same paradigm and substantial modifications to Waltz's original theory have put into question claims that realism constitutes a rigorous research programme of the scientific standards advocated by Lakatos.¹³

Beyond the possible contradiction between claims that realism represents a coherent research programme and the effective existence of different substreams of realist thought, the realist conception of alignment proves problematic because of the implications of three interrelated premises:

- 1) The assumption that interests are exogenously given.
- 2) The premise of structural determinacy and, consequently, the neglect of human agency.
- 3) The focus on power or threat as a catalyst for alliances.

The difficulty with realist approaches is that they take externally given threats and interests to security as starting points for security behaviour. At that juncture, all that is left to debate is the response to what is seen as a threat to the survival of states by a particular enemy. The major shortcoming of this approach is the neglect of how and why another entity has become defined as 'enemy'. Realist theories focus on crisis management rather than the development of relationships. The relations between two states generally develop in a cooperative or conflictual direction for some time. If a state is identified as a friend it will not be regarded as a threat regardless of its capabilities.

The significance of identification can even be inferred from one study that claims a realist pedigree. Yoon's (1997) quantitative analysis of US interventions in Third World internal wars finds strong support for the hypotheses that both the involvement of a party that has been identified as Communist and involvement by a Soviet ally considerably increase the probability of US intervention (Yoon, 1997: 592-594). Yoon, keeping within the parameters of a realist analysis, interpreted this as evidence for the significance of strategic factors. However, there is little doubt that

¹³ This has been the subject of an intense scholarly debate, see special edition of the *American Political Science Review* (Vasquez et al., 1997).

those 'strategic factors' presuppose an identification and categorization process that implicates beliefs and perceptions. How else would one decide that one party involved is Communist?

However, realism does not engage in debates about social interactions. Realist studies can therefore not trace the development of relations and, by implication, they cannot explain the underlying reasons for conflict beyond the general assertion that states are bound to compete under the conditions of anarchy. This leads to the second problem, the reluctance of realism to examine those variables, which provide its theory with explanatory power. Realism argues that interests can be inferred from the structure of the international system and the distribution of capabilities therein. In turn, the structurally determined configuration of interests determines alliances. In the realist paradigm, interests are seen as exogenously given. The question of where the interests of states are derived from is evaded. In short, "...realist theories do not explain preferences over outcomes only over actions" (Powell, 1994: 318). This criticism applies to a lesser degree to Schweller's work (1994 and 1998). However, in his work interests are externally given too and it is not clear how the status quo has come to be defined that then guides the motivation of states.

This focus becomes problematic in conjunction with the tenet of structural determinacy, an integral part of realist ontology. As has been pointed out elsewhere (Herrmann and Fischerkeller, 1995), one of the underlying assumptions of rational-choice theories is the belief that different decision-makers react to the same structural configuration in an identical way. Ontologically, structure determines how agents will behave. Agency has no independent role to play. The realist research agenda in which security is implicitly defined as a function of autonomy and capabilities perceives no need for cognitive factors. However, given their neglect of perceptions and identities, realist approaches are not well suited to explain the causes for alliance formation. The relational elements that explain perceptions of friends and allies and thus determine alignment elude realist models.

This problem also besets balance-of-interest theory. Although the assumption of structural determinacy is dropped and motivation is considered as an important variable (Schweller, 1994 and 1998), the issue of on what grounds and by whom interests are defined is ignored. Schweller acknowledges the role of agency, but he limits his analysis of decision-makers to strategic beliefs, whereas ideology is

deliberately omitted (Schweller, 1998: 168). This is problematic, particularly for his study of the Second World War. After all, it is difficult to see how many of Hitler's strategic beliefs can be separated from his racist ideology.

Nonetheless, Schweller's balance-of-interest theory is very promising as it avoids the conceptual poverty of structural theories. The focus on goals and interests of states combined with an accurate assessment of states' capabilities provides for a theory with high explanatory power. However, given its emphasis on states' goals it is unclear why Schweller confined the perceptions of decision-makers to the level of epiphenomena. After all, it is the perceptions of decision-makers and their identifications with other actors that drive goal-directed state behaviour. And perceptions, including those related to the desirability of the status quo, can change according to what dimensions decision-makers use to define that status quo (for example, human rights or military standing).

Realist explanations of the Southeast Asian context reflect the shortcomings mentioned. The focus on the balance-of-power combined with the premise of great power primacy effectively denies ASEAN members autonomous influence on security in the region. However, given those assumptions, from a realist perspective Southeast Asia's security environment has displayed behavioural anomalies that realist approaches find difficult to explain. Two observations that elude explanation in the realist framework expose most seriously the inadequacy of realist approaches to security.

Firstly, in the case of ASEAN alignment has become detached from military alliances. The extent of cooperation among ASEAN members towards external powers is not self-evidently explicable in terms of either power aggregation or shared threat perceptions. Among themselves, ASEAN members have been aligned diplomatically, even though their security has largely rested on alliances with external powers. For the very reason that ASEAN has not had sufficient power capabilities to combine forces effectively, alignment among ASEAN members must have had reasons other than calculations of power or of shared threats.

ASEAN members not only maintained but expanded their scope of cooperation in the Post Cold War period, contrary to realist assumptions that alliances would dissolve once the common adversary has ceased to pose a threat (see Mearsheimer, 1990 and 1994/95). Even more startling given realist premises has

been ASEAN's ability to lead an Asia-Pacific security forum, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which encompasses the great powers (Acharya, 1999a: 4-5; Haacke, 1998). Whatever their shortcomings may have been, it is evident that norms and procedures unique to the region have exerted influence on ASEAN discourse and behaviour.

Secondly, since ASEAN's establishment in 1967, in particular in the Post Cold War period, ASEAN members have simultaneously participated in cooperative as well as competitive security arrangements, the co-existence of which is not explicable in the dichotomic terms of realist alliance theories. The recent informal alignment between ASEAN and China over human rights issues and non-interference indicates that alliances are not stable across issue-areas, a factor difficult to accommodate in a framework that does not examine how interests are defined and how that definition affects the desirability of particular allies. While the ultimate relevance of realism for the Southeast Asian context can only be assessed in the empirical section, it is clear from this general outline that the realist model is underspecified. Under what conditions and in what direction does relative power exert behavioural pressure?

Nevertheless, we can gain a great deal of insights from realist alliance theories about the reaction of states to strategic factors. Bearing in mind realist assumptions, there are reasons to contend that the realist focus on relative power may be well fitted to explain alignment, provided the input-factors that determine threat perception and interests can be derived from other theories. On the other hand, the realist preoccupation with relative power has left many questions unanswered and alternative approaches have challenged the material-rational focus in security studies that emanated from realism's dominance. While material structures are pivotal they cannot be translated unmitigated into security behaviour and the assumption of perennial competition is contested.

1.2 The Role of Identity: Constructivism and Alignment

The observation that not all security behaviour is guided by the forces of competition and rational calculations of power has contributed to the dissatisfaction with realism's logic of anarchy and its focus on material structures and has motivated the search for alternative approaches to international politics. Since the end of the Cold War a

serious challenge to realism's predominance in security studies has emerged from scholarship that has privileged the realm of social interactions in explanations of security behaviour and identified identities and norms as driving forces for international politics (Wendt, 1992, 1994; Katzenstein, 1996a; Kratochwil and Lapid, 1996; Risse-Kappen, 1996; Adler, 1997a, b). Those approaches are generally regarded as social constructivist in nature, but as a matter of fact they defy easy categorization.¹⁴ What they certainly have in common is the rejection of realism's preoccupation with material structures.

Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of intersubjective meanings and the structures of social rules and identities that are constituted by social interactions.¹⁵ The most elaborate research programme on the identity-security nexus is that on security communities (Deutsch, 1957; Acharya, 1991, 1993, 1996, 1998; Risse-Kappen, 1996; Adler, 1997b; Adler and Barnett, 1998a). However, although its assumptions are highly relevant for this topic, the literature on security communities does mostly not deal explicitly with alignment. Because this caution does not apply to their research, this review pays special attention to Risse-Kappen's (1996) work and Barnett's (1996) explanation of alliances in the Middle East as examples of how identity concepts can be used to analyse alignment patterns. Following an outline of the security community literature and Barnett's contribution to alliance theory, this section assesses social constructivist research on security in Southeast Asia before it turns to a general evaluation of the literature and an appraisal of what role the analysis of social interaction can play for security studies.

¹⁴ Although constructivism is seen as the main counterforce to realism or, more broadly, rationalist approaches (Ruggie, 1998: 4-11), such a dualistic structure conceals the vast differences in epistemology and ontology that characterize the scholarship lumped together under 'constructivism' (Ruggie, 1998: 35-36). Furthermore, one of the most significant contributions to the identity-norms-security research field has identified itself as a sociological approach to security studies (Katzenstein, 1996a) rather than as constructivist. Any categorization is not made easier by the claims of scholars of an overlap between constructivism and liberalism (Acharya, 1999a: 5) and of existing parallels in accounts of cooperation by neoliberalism and constructivism (Sterling-Folker, 2000).

¹⁵ According to social constructivism, "states take cues from the social environment" (Shannon, 2000: 297) to establish expectations about identities and behaviour (Jepperson et al., 1996: 54). In contrast to the rational logic adopted by rational choice approaches, social constructivism hence posits a 'logic of appropriateness' (March and Olsen, 1989: 21-26) whereby "socially shared ideas – be it norms or social knowledge about cause and effect relationships – not only regulate behaviour but also constitute the identity of actors" (Risse, 2000: 5). For concise reviews, see Checkel (1998) and Hopf (1998).

Research on Security Communities

The research programme on security communities is possibly the single most cohesive approach to the nexus of identity and security behaviour. The idea of 'security communities' is commonly associated with the work by Karl Deutsch (1957) on transatlantic relations. Deutsch has defined a security community as a grouping of states "in which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way" (Deutsch, 1957: 5). For the development of relations characterized by the peaceful settlement of conflicts, Deutsch stressed the importance of compatible values and a sense of "mutual identity and loyalty, a sense of 'we-ness', or a 'we-feeling' among states" (Deutsch, 1957: 36 and 66-67).

Deutsch applied the concept of security community to the relations of Western democracies in North America and Europe to argue that relations had assumed a different quality from that of competition-driven alliances commonly assumed to prevail in international politics. Rather than for alignment as such, the concept has been used to explain the absence of military conflict, a phenomenon in contradiction to the realist assumption of the inevitability of war. In the Post Cold War era, the concept has experienced a revival. It has been applied to several regions (Risse-Kappen, 1996; Hurrell, 1998; Waeber, 1998; Williams and Neumann, 2000), including Southeast Asia (Acharya, 1991, 1993, 1996 and 1998; Ganesan, 1995; Khong, 1997b; Busse, 1999).

The research programme on security communities does not primarily deal with alignment, but it can be inferred from its conception of security communities that the extent to which cognitive structures are shared among states would be crucial to explain the modes of interaction between states (Adler, 1997b), including alignment. Scholars have adopted the view that security communities are reliant on "shared practical knowledge" and are thus socially constructed (Adler, 1997b: 263-65). Central to the concept of security community is the notion of collective identity. Adler stressed the significance of a sense of common identity, which originates from the perception of belonging to the same category as a specific other (Adler, 1997b: 264). This relational understanding of security communities can be traced back to the original work by Deutsch (1957).

On the level of international relations theory, Adler (1997b) and Adler and Barnett (1998b) have put forth more sophisticated theoretical conceptualisations of the notion 'security community'. In their seminal work on security communities, Adler and Barnett have emphasized three features of community (Adler and Barnett, 1998b: 31): firstly, shared identities, values, and meanings; secondly, many-sided relations across numerous domains; thirdly, a specific kind of reciprocity that assumes long-term interest if not altruism. In the hitherto most advanced articulation of this research programme, Adler and Barnett described three ideal-typical phases for the development of a security community that are distinguished by increasing degrees of trust and institutionalisation, and the emergence of a collective identity (Adler and Barnett, 1998b: 49-57).

The concept of security communities has gained most currency in descriptions of Western Europe and the broader North Atlantic region (Risse-Kappen, 1996; Waever, 1998; Williams and Neumann, 2000). Most relevant to this study, Risse-Kappen used the concept of a pluralistic security community to explain why the institutionalised security partnership within NATO has persisted after the Cold War despite the absence of external threats, a phenomenon realist theories find difficult to explain (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 397).¹⁶ He argued that the "Western community of values" has perpetuated security cooperation independent of external threats.

In support of his claim that "democracies are likely to develop a collective identity facilitating the emergence of cooperative institutions for specific purposes" (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 397) focuses on two crucial historical junctures of the NATO alliance. Risse-Kappen uses an empirical study of the behaviour of NATO allies during the Suez crisis in 1956 and the Cuba Missile crisis in 1962 to make the point that norms and their violations provide a good explanation of patterns of co-operation and conflict within the alliance. He illustrates how norm violations can lead to the breakdown of community, as happened during the Suez crisis (Risse-Kappen: 1996: 379-85). His argument that NATO had developed a collective identity by the time of the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962 is based on rhetorical evidence of identifications among alliance members (Risse-Kappen: 1996: 393).

¹⁶ For an alternative realist argument, see McCalla (1996). He advanced an argument centred on organizational theory to explain the persistence of NATO. It is debatable though whether this can count as a mere modification of neorealism, as claimed by McCalla (1996: 470-471).

In essence, what renders Risse-Kappen's argument distinct from any realist explanation of NATO – which would invariably emphasize the military threat that emanated from the Communist bloc – is its focus on the norms and institutions of liberal democracies. As he argues, it is norms and institutions that evoke perceptions of community and they also serve as identity markers. Most significant is Risse-Kappen's explanation of the sense of community. As he explained, in the case of NATO common threat perceptions emanate from discernment that different values and norms rule another actor's domestic system (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 367). Domestic norms and values thus become the demarcation of ingroup and outgroup determining alignment patterns.

Risse-Kappen narrowly emphasized the significance of democratic norms and institutions for the development of the Western security community thus implying a need for democratisation before security communities can come into existence (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 399). If correct this argument would have repercussions for this research undertaking, given that most ASEAN members have not enjoyed democratic forms of government during the three decades covered here. Hence, the accuracy of a regime type argument would lengthen the odds for ASEAN to develop a collective identity.

However, there are problems with Risse-Kappen's position. Most importantly, he cannot account for the stark variation in security behaviour. While it would be plausible that democratic forms of government tie together NATO members, this would not suffice to explain patterns of co-operation and conflict. The United States has co-operated very closely with countries like Thailand and South Korea when they were ruled by military dictatorships. However, if regime type was the one variable responsible for threat perceptions, why were the Soviet Union and Vietnam seen as enemies but not South Korea when it was ruled by a military dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s? In a different vein, the Japanese-US security alliance has thus far failed to evoke a sense of collective identity despite the fact that both countries are democracies. Risse-Kappen acknowledged this and goes as far as implicitly admitting that NATO may indeed be unique (1996: 397). In short, Risse-Kappen's explanation may well be plausible for his chosen case but in terms of providing generalizable insights his claims are underspecified.

This shortcoming is compounded by Risse-Kappen's failure to examine in more detail the perceptions of decision-makers instead of relying on, possibly, deceptive rhetorical devices. With regard to the Cuba Missile crisis, Risse-Kappen pays scant attention to decision-making devices like the domino-theory. Because of his failure to analyse decision-making, Risse-Kappen does not consider alternative explanations for NATO's alliance behaviour. For example, his finding that the US failed to consult with NATO allies at the beginning of the crisis – in violation of community norms – could indicate that NATO is simply based on hierarchical power relationships. The powerful – the US – expects consultation but is not willing to reciprocate unconditionally. It may be the case that his much-touted norms are nothing but a disguise for a power-hierarchy in the realist mould.

Also, there are considerable problems with Risse-Kappen's emphasis on institutions. Undoubtedly, institutions have been pillars of and have played a vital role for the Western security alliance as well as for the European Union. However, for the purposes of this study Risse-Kappen's claims that institutionalization has been pivotal for the emergence of the Western security community are problematic. There is little doubt that Southeast Asia has not developed a comparable institutional apparatus. But from Risse-Kappen's argument it cannot be conclusively inferred why institutionalisation should be crucial if the determinant for alliance patterns is actually similarity in regime type? Risse-Kappen is silent on the possibility that similarities other than having a Western-style, institutionalised democratic system could lead to alliances. However, provided that all regional states agree on procedures and have compatible domestic arrangements why would a less insitutionalized arrangement be less prone to fostering a community?

Risse-Kappen's work provides some good ideas but in order to make it useful for the empirical study attempted here two shortcomings would need to be addressed. Firstly, Risse-Kappen falls short of demonstrating causal links between community and security behaviour. Secondly, his claim that regime type determines alliance behaviour is underspecified. However, Risse-Kappen's narrow-based argument does not provide evidence that the idea of security communities is irrelevant for regions outside the Western realm. Although this bias towards liberal democracy is partially shared (Adler, 1997b), most scholars also consider the possibility of other sources for collective identities (Acharya, 1996 and 1998; Adler and Barnett, 1998b). The

application of the notion of community to the Southeast Asian region will be reviewed below. What is clear is that this study with its focus on Southeast Asia will need to come up with a study design that allows the discernment of a broad range of factors conducive to the rise of a community, as the concept of democracy has only been relevant to the Philippines (since 1985) and Thailand (since 1992). Variations in regime type may need to be accounted for but they can only be one part of a bigger picture.

Competing Identities and Alignment: The Middle Eastern Case

The literature on security communities uses the concept of community to illuminate incidences when states have abstained from the use of force over extended periods of time. However, the issue of alignment is not explicitly addressed with one exception (Risse-Kappen, 1996). In order to demonstrate more clearly how identity can affect alignment, this review outlines the work of Barnett (1996). His analysis of Middle Eastern alliances illustrates how identity factors can be employed to explain patterns of alignment. Barnett uses two episodes in the history of inter-Arab relations, the Arab response to the Baghdad Pact in the 1950s and cooperation among members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to demonstrate the behavioural impact of identity. He proposes that identities and their associated norms encapsulate expectations of behaviour that in turn affect alignment patterns among Arab states (Barnett, 1996: 405 and 410-12).

Barnett assumes the existence of competition between a Pan-Arab identity and the identity of sovereign states in the region. He traces the development of a common Arab identity to a history of shared threats and argued that a common Pan-Arab identity manifested itself in expectations of foreign policy consultation among Arab states and the avoidance of war among one another (Barnett, 1996: 413-414). Being an Arab state thus became associated with particular role expectations (Barnett, 1996: 415).

The conclusion of the 1955 Baghdad Pact, the alliance between Iraq and Turkey, was in contradiction with those role expectations. Firstly, Iraq aligned not just with a state outside the Arab fold but with the West and Turkey (the successor of the Ottoman Empire), states that could be linked to a legacy of hostility towards Arab nationalism. Secondly, Iraq violated the norms that demand Arab states to coordinate

their security policies (Barnett, 1996: 421). Because it represented a challenge to Pan-Arabism, the Baghdad Pact was opposed by Arab states.

What makes this study significant is that it contradicts realist explanations of alignment behaviour. Barnett argues that in the case of the Baghdad Pact the definition of threat was independent of changes in military power, but inextricably linked to identity. Conflict occurred not over challenges to the balance-of-power but over the norms that governed Arab identity (Barnett, 1996: 421).

In a similar vein, Barnett's analysis of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) emphasizes how a shared identity was the crucial determinant of GCC membership and threat perception. Barnett argues that the members of the GCC, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, have developed a distinct 'khaliji' regional identity that shapes images of allies and threats (Barnett, 1996: 424-427). The 'khaliji' identity that distinguishes the GCC members from the other members of the League of Arab States is based on shared economic interests, similar domestic regimes and proclamations of a common culture (Barnett, 1996: 423-424).

Finally, Barnett also discusses the basis of the US-Israeli alliance. Again, he reiterates the notion that identity and shared values are integral to an understanding of alliances. He emphasizes three developments that raised questions about Israel's identity as a state belonging to the community of Western liberal democracies, and consequently put strains on the alliance with the US (1996: 437-445). Firstly, with the end of the Cold War the East-West divide lost its meaning for Israeli-US relations. Furthermore, both the 'Greater Israel' debate and the events of the *Intifada* severely affected the image of Israel as a Western democracy in the US casting doubts on the foundations of the alliance.

Barnett's narrative of Middle Eastern alliances reveals the impact of contested identities on alignment. Crucially, Barnett argued that identity and threat perception are causally related and that accounts of identities offer a convincing explanation why some actors are perceived as threats and others as friends (Barnett, 1996: 403-405, 421, and 447). Reminiscent of Deutsch's pioneering work on security communities (1957), Barnett stresses the importance of mutual identifications. As he argues, "because an important basis for the strategic association is not simply shared interests in relation to an identified threat but rather a shared identity that promotes an affinity and mutual identification, the language of community rather than the contractual

language of alliance arguably better captures this type of strategic association” (Barnett, 1996: 410-411).

This emphasis on mutual identifications provides a link to cognitive theories. Like them, Barnett’s approach can explain why states are categorized as enemies or allies. However, Barnett cautions that collective identities are constantly being re-negotiated. As a consequence, any investigation of cases across time needs to ensure that it is applying standards to evaluate identities that are actually relevant to the community members at a given time.

Another important point made by Barnett must also be borne in mind when thinking about an evaluation of the community idea. The fact that the perception of external threats and a common identity are shared by a group of states does not preclude the possibility of conflict within that group. Barnett suggests that conflict among actors who share a common identity does not negate the significance of that identity but rather indicates contention about the meaning of shared norms (1996: 408-409).

In summary, Barnett’s account of Middle Eastern relations is strikingly different from Walt’s balance-of-threat approach (1987). Barnett’s cases are cogently argued to support the notion that both material and identity factors are important for explanations of alignment (Barnett, 1996: 446) but his work also reveals some weaknesses that are symptomatic of constructivist research on alignment. The principal shortcoming of Barnett’s work is that he has not probed under what circumstances identity factors and material factors respectively deserve prime attention. Instead they were simply seen as variables “with different causal weight at different historical moments” (Barnett, 1996: 446), leaving unspecified the influence of both material power and social interaction.

A second weakness of Barnett’s work concerns the problematic use of cultural concepts. Given that people think of shared cultural backgrounds first when thinking of identity and community (both on the national and the international level), it is probably not surprising that Barnett uses a cultural argument in his discussion of regional Arab identities. However, this link deserves more critical investigation, because the conceptualisation of identity in cultural terms poses difficulties. Firstly, culture, broadly understood, may be important but it is only one of many possible sources of a feeling of identity. This does not preclude the use of the cultural concept.

However, in Barnett's work, terms like 'pan-Arab' identity appear to and, indeed, do play a major role, as he claims that it is such an identity that determined the patterns of interaction in the Middle Eastern region.

Yet, at no point does Barnett explain what exactly distinguishes a pan-Arab identity. The reader can guess that what is meant is the shared Islamic identity of Arabic countries that have had a common history under the Ottoman empire. The problem though is that such a broad – and largely unsubstantiated - conceptualisation of identity leaves Barnett open to criticism that he is relying on rhetorical platitudes. If there is a pan-Arab identity, how does it manifest itself and how can one know that it is indeed an important determinant for foreign policy behaviour? While it is highly plausible that a pan-Arab identity influences foreign policy, the link to foreign policy behaviour has to be established. Secondly, it is by no means clear what the benefits of the use of a concept of culture are. What does culture comprise and what are its behavioural implications?

This shortcoming of Barnett's work serves as a caution against the use of cultural constructs to measure the existence of a regional identity. Whatever concept is used, a careful operationalization is needed and a loose notion of shared culture does not appear to be the most practical solution to this dilemma. Nonetheless, overall Barnett's discussion has made a significant contribution to the debate about causes of alignment in that he succeeds in demonstrating the need to incorporate both identity and material considerations. Most importantly, he has highlighted the possibility of partially overlapping but yet competing identities, a point neglected in the literature on security communities.

Research on Identity and Alignment in Southeast Asia

Unfortunately, no account of alignment patterns in Southeast Asia along the lines of Barnett's approach to the Middle East is available. Some scholars emphasize the importance of cultural factors for an understanding of security practice in the Asia-Pacific (Ball, 1993; Baker and Sebastian, 1996). However, their accounts are satisfied with an enumeration of general traits that characterize regional state interaction, for example the gradualist, consensus-based, and informal approach to international relations. They do not provide explanations of specific cases of security behaviour or attribute patterns of cooperation and conflict to identity factors and their

discussions do not address the behavioural impact of identities on security behaviour in Southeast Asia.

More pertinent to this study, Wang (1997) discussed patterns of alignment in the Asia-Pacific from a cultural perspective. Positing that the current state system and its rules and norms are a creation of the West, he juxtaposed the existing international state system with China's divergent norms of international interaction. Based on the assumption that cultural harmony positively affects alliances (Wang, 1997: 24), Wang then examined the alignment of various countries in the Asia-Pacific vis-à-vis the Western state system and China. He came to the conclusion that due to a process of socialization the original five ASEAN members have all become embedded in the current (Western) state system and Myanmar and Vietnam can be expected to follow suit (Wang, 1997: 31). Moreover, those countries could be expected to persuade China to become socialized into the same system (Wang, 1997: 32), implying that they currently tend to align with the West against China. Unfortunately, the treatment of Southeast Asian nations is too brief and Wang's underspecification of the socialization process means that the causal relationship between cultural factors and alignment remains unclear. While the idea that cultural practices affect alignment seems plausible, it is important to explore under what conditions culture and identity become determiner of relations.

Most insightful for this study's purposes of examining alignment is the research that has applied the concept of 'security community' to ASEAN. Since the end of the Cold War the idea of 'security communities' has been discussed extensively in the Southeast Asian context (Acharya, 1991, 1993, 1996, 1998; Ganesan, 1995, Dosch, 1997; Khong, 1997b; Busse, 1999). Explanations of security behaviour that have focused on a regional ASEAN identity have provided a useful alternative to balance-of-power explanations of ASEAN.

The research programme on security communities with its focus on collective identities is highly relevant to the Southeast Asian region. The concept of security community has informed several discussions of ASEAN foreign policy (Acharya, 1993 and 1998; Khong, 1997b; Busse, 1999) and other scholars have adopted the concept of community and collective identity without specific references to security (Dosch, 1997; Snitwongse, 1998). While the idea that ASEAN has already developed into a full-fledged security community in the Deutschian sense is discarded

(Acharya, 1998: 219), strong claims are made for the existence of an ASEAN collective identity and ASEAN is categorized as a nascent security community (Acharya, 1998: 207-214; Khong, 1997b: 337). However, other scholars have been more critical and have emphasized that the persistence of bilateral tensions negates the idea of a peaceful community in Southeast Asia (Ganesan, 1995).

At the centre of the argument of 'community scholars' is the idea that norms and practices that are integral to the regional community exert independent behavioural force. In a clear departure from realist frameworks, both Acharya (1998: 209) and Khong (1997b: 333) pointed out that ASEAN's opposition to Vietnam during the Indochina Conflict stemmed largely from the fact that ASEAN regarded Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia as a violation of its integral norms, namely non-interference in internal affairs and respect for state sovereignty as well as the abstention from aggression.

Khong emphasized and elaborated on the impact of the norms of *musyawarah* (consultation) and *mufakat* (consensual decision-making) on relations with Vietnam (1997b: 334). Khong asserted the significance of cognitive factors, as they explain the sense of 'we-ness' that provides the basis for community (1997b: 321-322). He subsequently pointed to the cohesive policy towards Vietnam in spite of discrepant threat perceptions as evidence of the behavioural force of norms and decision-making procedures in determining security relations (1997b: 336). However, Khong failed to demonstrate whether such a causal link between policy cohesion and 'we-ness' indeed existed. Khong simply inferred "we-ness" from foreign policy cohesion without examining to what extent and under which conditions the policies of individual ASEAN members were influenced by the assumed collective identity.

In a more refined approach, Acharya enumerated four components of ASEAN's collective identity: multilateralism, norms for interaction, the creation and manipulation of symbols, such as the "ASEAN Spirit" and the "ASEAN Way", and the principle of regional autonomy (Acharya, 1998: 208-213). However, as Acharya argued, although a regional identity is pertinent to ASEAN behaviour, on balance the lack of shared external threat perception and high-level military integration as well as extant border fortifications negate the existence of a 'mature security community' (Acharya, 1998: 218-19).

The problem with Acharya's approach rests with some of the four elements of collective identity he put forth to demonstrate the relevance of a regional identity for behaviour of ASEAN members. Most importantly, Acharya failed to advance criteria against which the concept of community can be measured. Two of his elements of collective identity, multilateralism and the norms of interaction enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, are not self-evidently specific to ASEAN. Therefore – even if measured – they cannot be assumed to disclose whether the community is anchored in the ASEAN grouping or part of a collective with different demarcations.

Firstly, it is difficult to see how multilateralism *per se*, defined as cooperation among more than two states, is linked to collective identity. Multilateralism describes a mode of interaction but does not indicate more than a minimal willingness to cooperate. Many forms of multilateralism exist, for example within the WTO framework, but participants in multilateral cooperation may or may not comprise a community based on identity concerns. It has to be examined what kind of community, if any, is constituted by such cooperation and what the specific identity markers are that indicate belonging to that community.

Secondly, the compliance with the norms of regional conduct enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, respect for sovereignty, peaceful resolution of conflicts, non-interference in internal affairs, and non-use of force, cannot *a priori* be assumed to be indicators of a regional community. Even though those norms have been adopted as regional code of conduct, they are common rules in international law (Leifer, 1999). It is therefore not obvious why their observation, laudable as it is, should betoken the existence of a regional community, based on a shared identity.

With regard to those two elements of regional identity, Acharya failed to establish why multilateralism and the norms mentioned can be assumed to delineate an ASEAN community. As widespread as they are in international politics, they may indicate the belonging of ASEAN members to a minimalist (rule-based) global community of states, not a regional community. However, most significantly, Acharya did not design criteria of community that can be subjected to testing and hence provide a gauge for the strength of a regional identity, for example a test of norm compliance, to substantiate if and when those norms and practices matter to ASEAN members.

Busse's (1999) claim that ASEAN constitutes a community suffers from similar shortcomings. He used the observance of norms of regional conduct, particularly the non-use of force and peaceful resolution of conflict, as indicators of community (1999: 46). Based on the observation that ASEAN has followed those norms, he then argued that ASEAN members did not behave according to realist premises on the occasions of the Cambodia Conflict and the Spratly Islands dispute (Busse, 1999: 48-52). According to Busse, instead of engaging in balancing against threats, ASEAN members followed the prescriptions of ASEAN norms that emphasized the non-use of force, indicating the behavioural consequences of community ideas.

There are several problems with this line of argument. Firstly, Busse's proposition that ASEAN's abstention from balance-of-power politics alone negates realist policy prescriptions is highly problematic. Busse argued that ASEAN's disinclination to form an alliance during the Cambodia Conflict was a reflection of regional norms and ASEAN's "dislike for confrontational social behaviour" (Busse, 1999: 50). This cultural account deserves merit. However, it is notable that Busse's account effectively uses culture only in narrowly defined terms as a set of procedural norms. This may well be a promising approach, as it in theory allows for an operationalization of the concept – although Busse does not accomplish this. However, given the significance Busse attributes to a cultural disinclination to confrontation, more elaboration would have been needed on the link between norms and culture. Busse's work underlines the elusiveness of cultural constructs.

In terms of causal attribution, his cultural account ignores that balance-of-power policies have been common; they have just not involved ASEAN as an organization. Throughout ASEAN's existence, the Philippines and Thailand have maintained military alliances with the United States. In addition, Thailand responded to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia with a secret alliance with China (Chanda, 1986). Busse has not explored whether the lack of a concerted ASEAN balance-of-power response may on the contrary indicate the lack of a strong regional identity. Members might simply not have identified with the security of ASEAN partners.

Secondly, Busse correctly pointed out that ASEAN's endorsement of the norms of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation represented a shared commitment to the ideal of state sovereignty but he failed to recognize that this is common in

international relations. As with Acharya's account, it is not clear from Busse's elaborations why those norms can be assumed to define an ASEAN identity even though they describe common practices in international law. Neither are those norms measured systematically. Also, while Busse accepted that the region should not be treated as a monolithic bloc (Busse, 1999: 56), he has not examined individual ASEAN members to put this insight into practice.

Those shortcomings are most serious in the context of claims that ASEAN members have developed a sense of togetherness based on shared norms (Busse, 1999: 53). Busse supported this claim with three assertions, based on circumstantial evidence and interviews: growing empathy among members' foreign policies, assertiveness towards outsiders, and the fact that war has become increasingly unthinkable (Busse, 1999: 54). However, reliance on statements from officials without any systematic examination of behaviour and at least some 'measurement' of community leaves this account open to criticism. Moreover, the implicit assumption that a regional community is equally relevant across situations and shared by all members remains unsubstantiated. Overall, Busse's explanation of ASEAN behaviour is plausible, but for the purpose of specifying a link between regional identity and security behaviour, his analysis cannot demonstrate a causal link.

Assessment of Identity-Based Approaches

Identity-based accounts of security behaviour have certainly made a significant contribution to security theory. Social constructivist research has incorporated the realm of social interaction into the field of security studies - formerly a realist prerogative - and has highlighted the need to explain the social basis of international politics. Because material factors put important constraints on behaviour but do not determine relations, the nature of security relations can only be explained in reference to the interaction of the material and social world. Barnett's (1996) analysis of Middle Eastern alliances has demonstrated that research on identity factors is not tantamount to disregard for power.

However, this review of work on the identity-security nexus has revealed several major shortcomings, which in combination point to a potentially highly useful but ultimately not yet mature research programme. As to the latter point, the review of Barnett's (1996) and Risse-Kappen's (1996) work has pointed to diverse

conceptions of what can trigger alliance formation within the school of thought. None of the approaches is without problems. Mostly, these are related to the constructivist use of core concepts, which are meant to explain security behaviour but are either underspecified or not operationalized, thus impeding the transferability of such studies. In order to make the social constructivist approach most useful for this study, the latter has to select carefully which concepts can advance its objectives in terms of theory-testing and evaluating the importance of regional community. Concepts that have featured most prominently are 'culture', '(democratic) regime' and norms. However, as this assessment concludes only the concept of 'norms' lends itself readily to a meaningful investigation into ASEAN diplomacy, whereas Barnett's use of culture and Risse-Kappen's emphasis on regime type are less helpful.

Barnett (1996) emphasized the importance of a shared culture even though he fails to specify which cultural elements are in fact a trigger for close alliance relations. In contrast, Risse-Kappen (1996) stresses the importance of democratic institutions for the formation of security communities. This divergence within the school of thought makes an overall assessment of its usefulness more difficult but in both cases questions have to be asked about the case-specific nature of the claims, rendering the use of the concepts employed difficult for this study of Southeast Asia.

Risse-Kappen's (1996) work focuses on the Western world where one can find little fault with his conclusion about the significance of democratic regimes and institutions for the emergence of a Western security community. However, the fact that those factors provide a plausible explanation for the cases of NATO and the European Union does not give any indication about their relevance outside the Western realm. It could be that Risse-Kappen is indeed right and democratic institutions are vital for the development of a security community but it could also be that other elements (cultural similarity or other) give rise to close alliances and democracy is nothing more than a 'conducive' factor. The crucial question to ask is what is so special about regime similarity to justify Risse-Kappen's single-minded focus?

As it emerges, his claim that democracy and the norms required for a functioning security community are mutually constitutive may be erroneous, rendering the use of 'democratic regime' as a determinant for communities a doubtful proposition. Risse-Kappen mentions particular norms, for example those that make

peaceful dialogue and conflict solution imperative. However, other examples from around the world, not least ASEAN itself but also the peaceful relations between Argentina and Brazil even under military regimes, show that the peaceful resolution of conflicts is by no means confined to democratic states. Yet, if these norms are also respected by other regimes (ranging from semi-authoritarian Singapore to the Communist one party state of Vietnam), why should one examine the variable of regime type although it is the close correlation between specific norms and diplomatic behaviour that is of particular note? With this in mind, it could be judged that Risse-Kappen fails to explain why the foreign policy behaviour of Western democracies can be assumed to be special. Certainly, the sense of closure Risse-Kappen conveys is not of much help. In ASEAN's case, Risse-Kappen's ideas would only be validated if the foreign policy behaviour of democratic members differed from that of its authoritarian counterparts.

As far as Barnett's (1996) and Wang's (1997) use of the concept of culture is concerned, the problem is not so much the fixation with one variable but the attribution of behaviour to an ill-defined concept that defies operationalization. Barnett fails to tell the reader what is actually meant by culture. What factors is he looking at? The vague idea of a shared Arab culture based on a common language and religion makes it difficult to transfer the concept to other empirical cases. However, while his cultural explanation may be highly plausible in the Middle East, what kind of 'culture' does qualify as a crucial determinant of security behaviour elsewhere? With religious and linguistic diversity being a prominent feature of Southeast Asia, neither component – language or religion - appears to be a promising startingpoint. Other elements like similar political practices (consensus-seeking, informality), alluded to by Ball and Wang and employed as core concepts by Acharya (1998) and Busse (1999), could also be more helpful but their use stretches the scope of culture. If any practice constitutes a cultural element, what threshold then defines when 'cultural similarity' influences policy behaviour?

A principal problem with the use of culture is the implicit assumption that community and shared identity are based on cultural similarity. This may often be the case, as it arguably is in the Arab world. However, it would be desirable for this study to use an approach that can detect various kinds of positive identifications, which serve as a basis for alignment, not just those that are culturally derived. In any

case, if an analysis of foreign policy wants to benefit from the use of the concept of 'culture', a way needs to be found to clearly demarcate what is actually measured. A closer look at norms seems to be a more promising avenue, as norms may or may not have cultural content but, regardless of their precise relationship to 'culture', they certainly define commonalities and – above all – they can be operationalized.

With regard to problematic methodological issues two shortcomings have been common to all social constructivist research undertakings. Firstly, the concept of regional identity is assessed on the aggregate level (ASEAN) not on the level of individual countries. Secondly, the significance of regional identities is not measured against other identity constructs. How relevant is the ASEAN identity versus other identities? The lack of any operationalization of the concepts of 'community' or 'collective identity' that would allow such an assessment besets all research undertakings on security communities.

Firstly, although the notion of a regional identity is central to the literature, no attempts have been made to measure the strength of regional identities in comparison to other potentially significant identities that can be expected to have different behavioural consequences. At least one scholar has explicitly acknowledged the existence of multiple, potentially competing, identities, seen as representing "concentric circles of allegiance" (Adler, 1997b: 265). However, the problem of competing identities has not been dealt with empirically.

Secondly, the research programme on security communities does not examine whether the behavioural prescriptions of a regional identity are enacted by all members and, if yes, whether they are enacted across situations. Regional identity is seen as monolithic despite the fact that it exists in the minds of decision-makers in individual countries and is only relevant in so far as those individual decision-makers enact policies based upon their espousal of those social identities. Any serious evaluation of the community concept has to demonstrate the relevance of the concept for the policies of individual countries.

Those shortcomings point to a more intricate problem with identity-based accounts. Although social constructivist scholarship can offer rich insights into the intersubjective nature of identities and norms, it falls short in its attempts to link those intersubjective constructs to behaviour. This deficiency can be attributed to the

neglect of agency (Chekel, 1998). Constructivist work is guided by sociological institutionalism, excluding agency and power (Chekel, 1998: 341).

Because the relationship between intersubjective constructs, identities and norms, and decision-making is not explored, constructivism forsakes the explanatory power that may be derived from examining discourse. Even though norms and identities are social phenomena that are only comprehensible as constructs on the collective level, they nonetheless have to operate on the individual level in order to exert behavioural force. For example, a norm against genocide is only relevant to political behaviour in as much as particular decision-makers recognize it as an existing principle for political action and incorporate it into their calculations (whether they then, based on their reasoning, act in accordance with the norm or not is a different question). Without specific agents whose discourse and behaviour is influenced norms are meaningless. However, the internal processes of actors do not feature in identity-based accounts (Kowert and Legro, 1996: 477-483).

With regard to agency, the problems of existing constructivist approaches mirror those of realism. Agency becomes subordinated to structure, whether defined in terms of relative power or conceptualised in terms of collectively shared identities and norms. Neither school of thought has devoted a lot of attention to the question of whether the variables posited as significant are indeed significant. In essence, they are theories that operate on the macro level of analysis, examining the configuration of power or identities, but ignore that their attributions of behaviour may not accurately reflect internal processes at the micro level, that of decision-makers. To remedy those shortcomings it is necessary to examine what reasoning determined decision-making in given situations and to probe what identities and material factors were relevant for security behaviour.

This may disclose under what circumstances realist and identity accounts have high validity. Recent assessments of security in the Southeast Asian region have agreed on the co-existence of competitive and cooperative security agreements (Simon, 1998; da Cunha, 1999, Funston, 1999), but the question of what conditions have given rise to this security structure has not been answered in a satisfactory way. Notwithstanding the problems mentioned, the research programme on 'security communities' has advanced a broader perspective on security behaviour and, by implication, alignment. They have drawn attention to how intersubjective

understandings can guide interpretations of material factors and how norms exert behavioural force in interaction with those factors. Those insights can be of immense benefit for research on ASEAN diplomacy, provided above shortcomings are remedied.

1.3 An Evaluation of Existing Theories of Alignment

This chapter has provided a review of the two most prominent research programmes in the field of security studies, realism and social constructivism, and their main strengths and weaknesses. However, before a brief evaluation of the preceding discussion is attempted, it is important to bear in mind the objectives of this study in order to avoid misunderstandings about its theoretical ambitions. This study is not engaged in theory-building. Instead, it aspires to evaluate the relevance of different realist and social constructivist theories of security behaviour for the Southeast Asian context and, by improving upon their analysis, aims at providing insights about the significance of a regional identity.

What is important for this study is to design an approach that can serve as a reliable tool for the ensuing empirical analysis. For that purpose, the ideas from existing theories are crucial but, as it turns out, not sufficient, as both suffer from similar weaknesses. This section points to several shortcomings of existing theories that deserve particular attention, most significantly the failure of both schools of thought to attribute security behaviour to the explanatory variables they privilege. However, it is also important to remember the strong points of the two sets of theories with a view of designing a theoretical approach that serves best the purpose of analysing regional alignment patterns.

Realism privileges the role of material structures, in particular the role of relative power. Social constructivism focuses on social interactions among international actors and the structures of identities and norms that emerge as a consequence thereof. Both approaches highlight certain variables while bracketing others that are pivotal to a comprehensive understanding of security behaviour. However, as has become clear realist and social constructivist approaches are also beset by problems, with the latter's use of core concepts like 'culture' providing a questionable basis for the operationalization of determinants of security behaviour.

The mainstream, realist, literature on alliances (Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1987 and 1988; Christensen and Snyder, 1990; Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Schweller, 1994 and 1998) emphasizes the paramountcy of strategic factors for alliance formation, primarily the distribution of relative power capabilities and the existence of threats. Underpinning such theories are worldviews that conceptualise the conduct of international affairs as competitive balancing. Balance-of-power theory and its variants (balance-of-interest, balance-of-threat) have in common the assumption that relative power is the most important determinant of behaviour. However, the focus on relative power and the assumption of competition makes it difficult to account for variations in patterns of cooperation and conflict. Moreover, those theories are silent on the initial conditions that evoke perceptions of commonality among alliance partners and antagonistic relations among opponents.

Those shortcomings, characteristic of research on alignment in general, are particularly germane to existing research on Southeast Asia. Given the co-existing patterns of cooperation and competition in Southeast Asia, the multitude of realist approaches (Betts, 1993; Friedberg, 1993; Buzan and Segal, 1994; Segal 1994; Dibb, 1995; Roy, 1995; Leifer, 1996; Mak and Hamzah, 1996; Lim, 1998) have had problems accounting for a diversity of alignment patterns that has differed markedly from the one-dimensional pattern of the global alliances during the Cold War. Notwithstanding the undeniable influence of material structures, alignment behaviour is not comprehensible without an understanding of the underlying structures of identities and it cannot be causally related to material factors unless the intervening force of perceptions and beliefs of human decision-makers is accounted for.

The second perspective, social constructivism and identity-based accounts of alignment, can contribute insights on social interaction, but like realism focuses too exclusively on one set of variables. Identity considerations are certainly a crucial factor influencing security behaviour (Acharya, 1996 and 1998; Barnett, 1996; Risse-Kappen, 1996; Adler, 1997a, b; Khong, 1997a, b; Adler and Barnett, 1998a; Busse, 1999). Decision-makers identify interests partly in reference to larger communities and pursue goals in accordance with the norms of regional groupings or the wider community of states. However, identity perspectives are sometimes oblivious of the consequences of those material structures that precipitate the emergence of identities and that constrain the behavioural impact of norms and identities. Norms are not

“unencumbered by physical reality”, but instead they are “attached to real physical environments and are promoted by real human agents” (Kowert and Legro, 1996: 490).

Social constructivism is plagued by the use of variables that do not easily lend themselves to a critical analysis of foreign policy in Southeast Asia. Risse-Kappen’s narrow focus on democratic institutions and norms effectively negates the usefulness of his approach for the Southeast Asian region, where democracy has only become established in two countries. However, the school’s broader ideas about the power of norms and institutions are of great relevance and will be subjected to critical examination in the empirical analysis of Southeast Asian foreign policy. In contrast, other research undertakings have been beset by a heavy reliance of an ill-defined concept of ‘culture’ as an explaining variable. However, as has been pointed out, culture is too broad and diffuse as a concept, rendering an effective operationalization a true challenge.

Yet, one of the most severe deficiencies of identity-based approaches is an implicit assumption that identities are to a large degree stable across issue-boundaries. Positing the existence of one stable identity that explains behaviour regardless of the context is tantamount to the realist assumption of structural determinacy. Actors possess multiple identities that are relevant in different contexts (Adler, 1997b; Busse, 1999). What factors evoke the salience of one identity over others in a given situation has to be carefully examined. Although several approaches acknowledge the existence of multiple and potentially competing identities (Barnett, 1996; Adler, 1997b; Busse, 1999), very few (Barnett, 1996) make attempts to examine the phenomenon empirically and measure the strength of regional identities vis-à-vis other identity categories.

The lack of operationalization and measurement of the identity concept is a particularly severe shortcoming if the subject of enquiry is a regional community, as it is in the case of ASEAN. If any meaningful statements about the strength of regional community are to be made, the salience of this identity vis-à-vis others has to be examined. Despite their emphasis on a regional collective identity, the research programme on security communities fails to achieve this.

The co-existence of cooperative and competitive elements in the Southeast Asian security complex suggests that any research undertaking with the goal of

proving the superiority of one set of theories over the other is likely to sacrifice subtlety and accuracy for a false sense of parsimony. Such an attempt would also be inherently flawed as it suggests a dichotomy that does not exist. Both balance-of-power and identity accounts of international politics have validity. This has been reflected in recent assessments of security relations in the region that have concluded that the regional approach to security is best characterized by a multiplicity of perspectives, comprised of a mixture of competitive and cooperative elements (Simon, 1998; da Cunha, 1999; Funston, 1999).

However, the realization that insights from both theories are relevant should not lead to a temptation to obtain more reliable results by mere aggregation of the two approaches. The problem is that both research programmes - despite their different emphasis on power and social interaction respectively - have one weakness in common that needs addressing. Neither approach examines whether the variables posited as determinants of behaviour indeed exert behavioural force. On the basis of the variables they privilege, both approaches arrive at conceptions of the interests of actors. In a second step, research in this mould then infers from the assumed compatibility of interests or identities which parties will be allies and opponents. The mistake is that the mere plausibility of explanations based on power or social interactions and norms is taken as evidence of their actual relevance. In fact, both schools of thought fail to provide proof that their core variables indeed influence behaviour. What this means is that realist approaches as well as studies on the concept of security community put a 'black box' between context variables and the observable outcome, state behaviour.

The omission of the decision-making process from analysis impairs the ability to make causal claims, because it effectively denies realists and security community scholars the opportunity to demonstrate that it is the very factors they put at the centre of their enquiry that indeed determine a decision. Claims that assessments of the distribution of power (Waltz, 1979) or the perception of threat (Walt, 1987 and 1988) underpin alignment may be plausible, but that does not prove that they are relevant for decision-makers in a given situation. Similarly, indicators that point to the existence of a regional community may abound, for example regular official interactions at multiple levels (Acharya, 1998), but this does not automatically mean that this

particular identity determines behaviour at all times, across issue-boundaries, and towards different groups of actors.

The question pivotal for explanations of alignment in Southeast Asia has to be under what circumstances decision-makers select one particular approach to security, associated with a specific pattern of security relations, over another. Regardless of the exact configuration of material factors and social interaction, ultimately security behaviour is initiated by human agents, whether they are prime ministers, foreign policy officials or generals. However, this fact has not been adequately accounted for by the predominant theories in security studies. As Shannon noted, “humans are not omniscient observers of reality; they are imperfect interpreters of it” (Shannon, 2000: 298). Shared identities are only relevant to the extent that they are recognized and accepted by decision-makers. Relative power may exist independently of people’s assessments, but their security behaviour is nonetheless a response to perceptions of power not to power as an ‘objectifiable’ entity. This study will aspire to analyse the decision-making process more closely than previous work on Southeast Asian diplomacy has done, even if it is unable to probe in detail into the internal processes of individual leaders due to the immense scope of this study.

Overall, the two perspectives on international relations, realist and constructivism, can provide important clues about what factors influence security behaviour but what is needed is an approach that delivers more reliable evidence on the accuracy of attributions of behaviour to explanatory variables. Realist theories alert us to the possibility that in some crisis situations strategic factors assume overriding significance and can give rise to alliances that would not have emerged without a particular ‘shock event’. Identity-based accounts of security behaviour draw attention to the significance of norms and the behavioural implications of group memberships as constraining and guiding influences on behaviour. If combined the research programmes reviewed provide a good starting point for the development of an approach to alignment in Southeast Asia that can account for the interplay of strategic elements, social interactions, and cognitive factors.

Two major challenges remain for a comprehensive analysis of alignment behaviour in Southeast Asia. Firstly, it has to provide evidence for the attribution of alignment decisions to specific factors, for example threat perceptions, instead of simply inferring it from exogenously given interests or power capabilities. It is not

sufficient to examine the distribution of capabilities in one area and then claim that a particular alignment posture is a response to threat as derived from those capabilities. Such claims are underpinned by the assumption that there is only one objective representation of reality shared by all rational unitary actors (Krause and Williams, 1996: 233). Secondly, in order to assess the relevance of the concept of regional community for alignment, criteria are needed that can gauge the strength of regional identity compared to other relevant identities. Instead of asking whether a Southeast Asian identity exists or not, the more rewarding question is under what circumstances it becomes influential for decisions and trumps other alternative identities, for example a pan-Asian identity or a non-Communist one.

Importantly, even though the research interest in international relations is ultimately directed at the aggregate regional level, that is, the question whether a regional identity influences ASEAN policy, the temptation to treat ASEAN as a monolithic bloc has to be resisted (Busse, 1999). Leaders in individual countries may differ in their conceptions of which identities are relevant for the conduct of security relations and hence have different ideas of why ASEAN should enact particular policies. The following chapter devises an approach that builds upon insights from both realism and social constructivism but tries to improve upon the explanatory power of existing approaches by mitigating the neglect of decision-making that is common to both. For this purpose, this study will utilize ideas from selective cognitive theories.

Chapter 2

Designing an Integrative Approach to Southeast Asian Security

This chapter aims at developing an integrative approach to Southeast Asia's security relations that builds upon the insights gained in the previous section and can serve as an appropriate instrument for the empirical analysis of security behaviour of ASEAN members in chapters 3 to 6. This chapter is divided into four sections. In section 2.1, a general approach to security is devised that draws on the previous discussion of existing realist and identity-based approaches but attempts to remedy or at least mitigate some of the deficiencies outlined in section 1.3. In particular, this approach attempts to take into consideration the decision-making process in a more satisfactory way. After explaining its theoretical stance, the section outlines the steps this study will follow in its investigation of empirical cases of ASEAN security behaviour. This is followed in section 2.2 by the development of community indicators that can be used to operationalize the concept of community, crucial to determine whether the policies of ASEAN members have been guided by a regional identity. Those community indicators draw explicitly on the discussion of the security community literature in chapter 1. Section 2.3 represents in detail how this study will approach the case of ASEAN between 1967 and 1999, including a detailed account of case selection and the rationalization thereof. Finally, in section 2.4 this chapter will briefly discuss the methodology used, the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of sources, and some limitations that are inherent to the methods and theoretical approach employed. However, it should be clear that this study does not make an attempt at theory-building.

2.1 Building on Existing Theories: Insights and Limitations

The preceding outline of theories that deal with security has reviewed the two schools of thought that have dominated security studies in the Post Cold War period: realism and social constructivism. It has revealed that neither school of thought delivers an explanation of security behaviour in Southeast Asia that is entirely satisfying. This does not mean that these two perspectives do not have strengths that offer an excellent starting point for the ensuing empirical investigation. Security behaviour is not comprehensible unless the observer can analyse the distribution of power and the

social context such behaviour is embedded in. The contributions of realism and social constructivism are thus indispensable. However, this study will attempt to achieve some improvements compared to the existing approaches by utilizing insights from cognitive approaches, which emphasize the importance of human agency and decision-making for policy behaviour. How this can be accomplished is outlined in the following section.

Realist approaches have excelled at the analysis of structural factors. Their studies of balancing and bandwagoning behaviour have provided insights into the likely reaction of states to relative power or combinations of threat and power (balance-of-threat theory; Walt, 1987 and 1988) or interests and power (balance-of-interest theory; Schweller, 1994 and 1998). In contrast identity-based approaches possess advantages in highlighting relevant relational factors. They have enhanced knowledge of how social interactions and expectations affect security behaviour.

What the two approaches have in common is a focus on the factors that define a situation. Outcomes - at least for the purposes of this study on security behaviour - are illuminated by looking at those context factors, whether relational (social interaction) or structural (like material power). Neither theory has been good at conclusively attributing behaviour in given situations to the variables they privilege; however, both sets of theories have directed attention to important elements that describe a given environment.

For example, realism can contribute ideas about the distribution of power capabilities and about the geostrategic setting in which parties are operating. Identity accounts can provide information about the qualities of relationships among parties and can indicate whether those parties share a common identity. In that vein, Busse linked ASEAN security behaviour to a collective identity that made armed conflict impermissible (Busse, 1999).

Identity theories may explain what behavioural expectations can be derived from a particular relationship, based on knowledge of the norms of interaction that may be relevant. For example, the literature on security communities claims that the lack of conflict among certain regional groupings is linked to the existence of a regional identity and norms of peaceful conflict management (Risse-Kappen, 1996; Adler and Barnett, 1998a). In Barnett's account of Middle Eastern alliances,

expectations of Arab states derived from a pan-Arab identity explained alignment (Barnett, 1996).

However, as has been argued there are some deficiencies common to both schools of thought. As has been noted in section 1.3, the main point of criticism that has tied together the review of realist and identity-based approaches concerned their relative neglect of agency and their interrelated difficulties to make well-founded attributions of security behaviour to particular causal variables. Although it is clear that both material structures and social interaction have an impact on security behaviour, the circumstances and conditions under which certain factors prevail are not evident. In other words, the effects of the variables realism and constructivism privilege are underspecified.

This study wants to make a contribution to the field of international relations theory by providing some insights under what conditions and to what extent strategic factors and social interaction determine foreign policy. In order to achieve this objective, this study needs to provide an account of under what circumstances these factors have influenced policy-decisions. When a given decision-making environment is assessed, best results are obtained when insights from the two approaches, realism and constructivism, are combined to illuminate a wide range of context factors that define the situation. Realism and identity accounts offer important clues about what factors may be important for the categorization of allies and opponents and ultimately security behaviour. A combination of those variables will for most cases have high explanatory power.

However, as has been pointed out a mere aggregation of the two sets of variables is insufficient to improve this study's explanatory power, because of the deficiency common to both realism and constructivism. The missing link concerns the interpretation of the context factors emphasized by the two schools of thought. Although realism and constructivism can provide an array of information about the broader picture, the macro level of decision-making, they cannot tell for certain how the situation is indeed interpreted by those human agents that make policy. Structures, whether political or social, are too broad and constant to capture variations in state behaviour (Shannon, 2000: 297). As has been explained in section 1.3, realism and social constructivism effectively put a 'black box' around the decision-making process. This shortcoming needs to be mitigated at least.

Any model for the empirical analysis should enable the observer to attribute security behaviour to particular causal variables or combinations thereof. Ideally, this would be done by fully integrating the factor of human agency into the analysis but this study has to accept limitations as to its evaluation of human cognition. Although this study attempts to integrate the decision-making factor more closely into the analysis than realism and social constructivism, some limitations of this undertaking should be made clear straightaway. Given its broad regional scope, this study cannot hope to completely remedy the deficiencies outlined. Yet, it can use ideas from other schools of thought, which have not contributed directly to research on alignment, to improve upon previous studies conducted in the realist and constructivist mould and which entirely omitted the factor of human agency.

As far as the purpose of this research undertaking is concerned, it should be emphasized that this is not to be understood as genuine theory-building. Instead, what is attempted here is the construction of a theoretical approach that serves as an instrument for the ensuing empirical enquiry. After all, the main objective for this study is to analyse security behaviour in a way that allows for an evaluation of different theories and, most importantly, an assessment of the significance of a regional identity for security policy in Southeast Asia.

In order to increase this study's explanatory power and improve the accurate attribution of security behaviour to causal variables like power and social interactions, the empirical analysis will draw on the insights from selective cognitive theories and use as an analytical tool the concept of problem representations (Sylvan and Thorson, 1992), which forms part of one particular cognitive approach to the study of foreign policy. In general, cognitive approaches provide information about underlying interpretative frameworks by examining the internal processes of human agents. Although they differ in terms of what elements of the decision-making process they examine, cognitive theories have one basic idea in common. According to the proponents of cognitive models, the way a situation is perceived determines what course of action will be chosen (Voss and Dorsey, 1992: 3). The subject of cognitive approaches are "people's interpretations of their environment and the attitudes, beliefs, scripts, and schemata that develop as a result of their experiences" (Young and Schafer, 1998: 66). Those interpretations are instrumental for an

understanding of why different decision-makers can display different reactions to the same situation (Hirshberg, 1993: 19).

Because of the strengths of cognitive theories in assessing interpretations of decision-makers, the incorporation of ideas from cognitive theories would be ideal to remedy the neglect of human agency common to both realism and social constructivism. Based on their detailed investigations into the interpretations of decision-makers, cognitive theories can make substantiated claims about the relevance of specific context factors for given decisions. In a recent critical review of 'cognitive research programmes' (Young and Schafer, 1998) four different research programmes have been identified: cognitive mapping, conceptual complexity, operational codes, and image theory. However, many useful ideas from cognitive material cannot easily be adapted to this study, because of the different focus of this research project.

Those research programmes listed are not easily applicable to this research undertaking, because their main interest lies in the area of leadership and they consequently tend to focus on the cognitive processes of particular individual leaders instead of sharing the broad regional focus of this study. While cognitive studies of particular leaders could provide a desirable in-depth analysis of decision-making, it is unsuitable for a study that examines the foreign policy of ten countries across a 30-year period, because the material needed to do justice to all important regional leaders would overwhelm any individual researcher. This may be the reason why there has been an absence of alignment studies by researchers in the cognitive mould. No systematic examination of security behaviour across the Southeast Asian or Asia-Pacific region has taken place. This is largely due to the fact that a systematic analysis of internal processes of decision-makers is most often beyond the reach of the researcher.

Due its broad focus on policy behaviour across a whole region over 30 years, this study can do no justice to the wealth of cognitive material in existence. There can be no attempt to account satisfactorily for the internal processes of decision-makers. Instead the cognitive material will be used to generate ideas on how to incorporate the decision-making process sufficiently to make more informed claims about the accurate attribution of security behaviour to causal factors privileged by realism and

social constructivism. In this context, the difference between the decision-making process and its outcome assumes crucial importance.

This study will focus on one particular cognitive approach that allows insights into the outcome of decision-making, namely Sylvan and Thorson's (1992) use of problem representations. Using an approach that examines the outcome and rationalization of decision-making limits this study's ability to accurately attribute behaviour directly to internal processes. However, a study of the outcome of decision-making can provide crucial insights, provided that such an approach delivers an assessment of whether the publicly proclaimed rationales of decisions are in correspondence with actual foreign policy behaviour. A methodology that can help detect discrepancies between rhetoric and behaviour can provide a hedge against inaccurate attributions, in turn allowing a sound assessment of different theories. How this goal can be accomplished and how the shortcomings of this approach can be limited will be explained below.

This study needs to balance the need to look in more detail at the 'black box' left dark by realism in particular with the constraints that are inherent to a research project that examines a large number of different decision-makers operating in an opaque environment away from the public eye and academic scholars. The integrative approach, which this study proposes, tries to illuminate decision-making sufficiently to allow for assessments of alternative explanations of alignment. At the same time, this research effort needs to be conscious of the remaining limitations. This study works with two premises: Firstly, this study attempts to take into account both material and social interaction variables that define the decision-making context. Secondly, this study regards the decision-making process as an important intervening variable instead of linking directly context variables and behavioural outcomes.

Ontologically, this study follows the tenets of foreign policy decision making: 1) the primary actors in international politics are foreign policy elites acting on behalf of state and non-state actors; 2) definitions of the situation determine policy behaviour; 3) policy is best understood as sequential problem-solving by goal-directed elites; 4) information is the primary currency of international politics (Ripley, 1993: 406.). Those tenets set this approach apart from realism. While realism assumes that all people react in the same way to structurally alike situations and states can be treated as unitary actors, the concept of problem representations starts from the

premise that different interpretations of the same situation are possible. Different decision-makers may differ in their interpretations and as a result foreign policy cannot be inferred from an analysis of the decision-making context alone

Three Steps towards a Comprehensive Analysis of Alignment

How can the evaluation of security behaviour be best approached? This study is informed by the proposition that neither material factors nor ideational factors alone should be privileged, but that their interaction should be studied instead. This perspective shares the constructivist assumption that decision-makers “act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them” (Wendt, 1992: 396-397). However, this study intends to take seriously the examination of social interactions between actors in a given strategic environment and attempts to improve upon the near-complete neglect of human agents that is a feature of the realist and social-constructivist literature.

The study starts from the premise that actors have multiple identities, an idea accepted by several authors in the constructivist camp (Barnett, 1996 and Busse, 1999) but initially espoused by cognitive studies of foreign policy (Holsti, 1970; Chafetz et al., 1996). It employs the concept of problem representations (Sylvan and Thorson, 1992) in order to illuminate what structural and relational factors are salient for decision-makers and are hence responsible for alignment decisions in a given situation. Problem representations are used to gain insights into the strategic perceptions of decision-makers and employed to assess whether and on what grounds they identified their own state with other groups of states. However, analysing problem representations does not equate to a detailed analysis of the cognitive processes of leaders. Rather, it provides insights into the outcome of that process. The ‘black box’ of decision-making does not become translucent but a better view of its input and output can be gained.

How can this be achieved? What combination of strategic and relational factors propels decision-makers to adopt particular security policies? In its examination of empirical cases, this study proceeds in three steps:

- 1) Description of security behaviour in given situations.
- 2) Attribution of behaviour to specific factors like power and norms.
- 3) Evaluation of the three theories under examination.

Firstly, the study presents an outline of the given event, including general information about context factors. It may describe the geostrategic environment, the historical context of the relationship of parties concerned, and the norms that have previously been relevant for their interaction. This is followed by a brief description of the observable security behaviour. Have the parties been in conflict and what have alignment patterns been like? This first step constitutes the problem-definition stage which states what sequence of event and security behaviour needs to be explained.

In a second step, the causes of alignment are examined. At this stage the cognitive problem representations or, simply, interpretations of the given situation by decision-makers are analysed. In order to gauge the significance of either set of context factors, relational or material, it is important to determine whether those factors have featured in the reasoning of decision-makers. Have they talked about military threats or have they interpreted a situation with a focus on economic interests?

For this purpose, the concept of *problem representation* is borrowed from Sylvan and Thorson (1992 and 1998). Sylvan and Thorson (1992) use *problem representations* to explain how decision-makers simplify the world in their minds when confronted with a complex decision-making context. Problem representations highlight certain facets of a given situation and downplay others. Because certain elements of a situation are selected as important at the expense of other features, problem representations privilege certain perspectives on a given event (Sylvan and Thorson, 1992: 727-730). By doing so, problem representations guide interpretations of reality, because a selective perspective comes to be seen as an accurate representation of reality. Such selectivity has behavioural implications. According to their interpretation of a situation, decision-makers select a course of action that they believe is conducive to the attainment of their goals.¹⁷

Put simply, problem representations reveal the referent point (the salient feature) for particular alignment decisions. Knowing the referent point allows the attribution of meaning to relationships with other actors, defining their identities, in a given decision-making situation. Because they are representations of reality as

¹⁷ Sylvan and Thorson (1992) stressed the importance of this process when they argued that only the comprehension of problem representation and their underlying ontologies really enables us to understand decisions. Using the example of the Cuban Missile Crisis, they show how the

endorsed by political leaders, problem representations disclose the outcome of the cognitive process of decision-makers. For that reason, the notion of problem representations is highly relevant for alignment. For each case of security behaviour, an examination of problem representations reveals which elements – strategic or identity-based – decision-makers have emphasized in a given situation. This makes it possible to determine whether and on what basis a particular identity has been significant for policy decisions. Particularly relevant for this study of a regional grouping, it can be assessed whether officials have made references to specific identity concepts, for example a regional community, in their explanations of security behaviour.

It should be noted that problem representations do not offer access to the actual cognitive processes of political leaders. The latter would require an intimate knowledge of individual decision-makers and their thought processes that is beyond the scope of this broad based study of regional diplomacy. This shortcoming is regrettable and puts limits on the claims this study can make as to the re-integration of human agency into the analysis. However, it can be suggested that in the opaque decision-making environment of Southeast Asian politics the intimate knowledge of political leaders is ultimately unobtainable for anybody but true insiders to the corridors of power. Scholars, even those who have the opportunity for wide-ranging interviews, need to be content with an approximation, as accurate accounts of internal decision-making processes are elusive.

However, for the purpose of this study, the strength of the empirical investigation can be improved. By means of analysis of public discourses, problem representations will reveal whether decision-makers have approached a situation by defining threats, have been guided by particular rules of conduct, or, possibly, by personal loyalties to other leaders. In order to mitigate the shortcomings arising from the use of problem representations, it is crucial for this study to develop criteria that allow a detection of discrepancies between rhetoric and actual policy behaviour. This is most important for assessments of the power of a regional identity, which is easily proclaimed in public but less often enacted in operational policy by nation states. Such indicators that allow an evaluation of discourse and behaviour in conjunction

representation of missiles capable of reaching the US as inherently offensive determined the chances of particular policy arguments to be accepted or rejected (Sylvan and Thorson, 1992: 727-730).

will be designed in section 2.3 below, allowing the effective use of problem representations as a gauge of policy motivation.

Once the elements that have determined security behaviour have been identified, the notion of multiple identities can be put into context with patterns of alignment. The reasons why countries are categorized as allies and opponents in different given contexts is omitted by realist analysis and identity-based accounts. Realists consider this choice as logically derived from the configuration of interests and power that define a situation. Identity-based approaches are cognizant of the existence of multiple identities (Adler, 1997b; Busse, 1999) but do not explain why one is chosen over the other. This study's approach can remedy this shortcoming, because it can explain variations of alignment patterns. Problem representations that emphasize a different aspect of a situation evoke divergent categories of allies and opponents. Alignment patterns in turn follow those categorizations.

To take an example from the Southeast Asian region, one could imagine the multitude of different social identities that may guide Indonesian decision-makers in their categorization of other states as ingroup members (and potential allies) and outgroups (likely opponents): pan-Asian, Islamic, developing nations, Southeast Asian, states with free-market economies, archipelagic states to name but the most obvious. From this list it is clear that categorizations based on similarity will result in very diverse and, most significantly, contradictory groups of allies and opponents. Only with the knowledge of how a particular situation is interpreted can it be understood who is regarded as friends and enemies and why.

The emphasis on problem representations can help solve another dilemma, which was evident in Barnett's work (1996) and which has beset the social constructivist contribution to security studies in general. Barnett relies on the concept of culture without specifying what links exist between culture and identity. Consequently, he is not able to operationalize identity in cultural terms. However, while there is no doubt that culture could play a pivotal role in influencing foreign policy behaviour, it is clear that without operationalization of the concept no substantiated empirical claims can be made. Unfortunately, the loose concept of culture does not lend itself to measurement – although some elements, for example norms that express a particular, culturally-based identity, may well do so. This study evades this dilemma through its use of the concept of problem representations. An

analysis of problem representations can reveal whether decision-makers couch foreign policy behaviour in cultural terms.

The use of problem representations allows this study to avoid the thorny issue of defining culture. This approach is based on the belief that culture and identity do not stand in a clearly defined relationship. While cultural affiliations are associated with a particular identity, not each identity is in turn influenced by cultural notions. Social constructivist scholars have recognized that multiple identities exist but they have failed to point out that only some have cultural content while others do not. For that reason this study does not intend an operationalization of 'culture' but intends to interpret the identifications that are evident in problem representations – which are the outcome of leaders' cognitive processes. Culture will only be examined as far as it is revealed in relevant problem representations, because there is no reason why culture should be privileged over other potential ways of categorizing other states. If regional leaders make references to a 'shared culture' one can assume that cultural elements influence discourse. Whether in such a case discourse and political behaviour correspond, needs to be examined in a second step.

Following the determination of which factors were important for alignment decisions, this study can finally proceed to the stage of theory-testing. In a third step, this study can evaluate the contribution of theories towards the explanation of a given security outcome. Because one goal of this study is to illuminate the causes of alignment beyond specific cases, it puts particular emphasis on the variables privileged by existing theories of alignment. Therefore in the third step, this study is in a position to assess the predictions of balance-of-threat theory, identity-based accounts, and balance-of-interest theory against the evidence available from problem representations for given cases of security behaviour.

2.2 How to Operationalize the 'Identity' Factor in Security Relations:

The Design of Community Indicators

The integrative perspective developed above posits that knowing the problem representations of decision-makers can provide clues as to why other parties are categorized in a certain way, giving rise to specific alignment patterns. By doing so, it can validate the propositions of particular theories. For example, if decision-makers

make references to power and threats, it would provide evidence for the relevance of realist explanations in a given situation.

However, concerning this study's goal of evaluating identity-based explanations on the regional level there are two problems that need to be addressed. Firstly, as mentioned above, decision-makers may refer to a regional or other collective identity in public, but *de facto* follow policies contrary to the norms and expectations associated with that identity. Secondly, even if the attributions of security behaviour to identity factors were accurate for individual countries, it would still be necessary to determine whether this is tantamount to that identity exerting behavioural force on the regional level. For example, if only three out of five members of a regional grouping display behaviour in conformity with a regional identity, it cannot be claimed that the behaviour of the regional grouping provides evidence for the importance of identity considerations.

The following design of community indicators aims at remedying those two problems. Firstly, those community indicators include criteria that can measure both security discourse and behaviour. They can therefore detect any discrepancies between public proclamations and actual policy. Secondly, the criteria below make possible an evaluation of the community concept at the aggregate regional level. Overall, this approach aspires to a more precise operationalization of the concept of 'regional community' that allows a measurement of the strength of regional identity.

Problem representations reveal only what aspect of an environment has been important for alignment on the level of individual countries (for example, shared economic interest or threat). In order to relate those insights to the concept of regional identity it is important to find a measure of comparison across countries. How can this approach with a focus on the problem representations of decision-makers be best used to assess the importance of a regional identity for alignment decisions?

Integral to the concept of community is the notion of collective identity, a point that has been central to the debate about security communities, including claims that the security behaviour of ASEAN members is explicable in the framework of community (Khong, 1997b; Busse, 1999). However, a proper operationalization of the concept of collective identity has so far been neglected. In order to gauge the substance of the concept of regional community, it is necessary to identify elements of

identity that are susceptible to measurement and hence allow a systematic appraisal of case studies. In the following, the discussion of characteristics of security communities (Adler and Barnett, 1998b) is linked to the integrative approach outlined above with the goal of devising indicators that can measure the strength of regional identities.

The preceding review of the research programme on security communities referred to Adler and Barnett's conceptualization of security communities as characterized by three features: firstly, shared identities, values, and meanings; secondly, many-sided relations across numerous domains; thirdly, a specific kind of reciprocity (Adler and Barnett, 1998b: 31).

Shared meaning structures and values are in evidence when perspectives converge on the principal problems and objectives that inform interpretations of and responses to given situations. The concept of problem representations (Sylvan and Thorson, 1992) is most useful for the purpose of ascertaining the existence of shared meaning structures. Problem representations of officials in different countries can be juxtaposed to assess whether they have in common similar interpretations as to security problems, objectives, and strategies and whether or not they identify with the security of their regional partners. This serves to validate or disconfirm the notion of shared meaning structures and common values. If shared meaning structures existed, decision-makers could be expected to converge to a significant degree in their interpretations of basic problems and objectives.

Mutual identifications, the second feature of community, are intrinsic to identity-based approaches, but their empirical investigation has been neglected by proponents of the security community concept (Acharya, 1996 and 1998; Khong, 1997b). Adler and Barnett have referred to "many-sided relations across numerous domains" (1998b: 31) as one crucial element of community. However, in today's world of interdependence the mere existence of manifold interactions does not seem to be a good indicator of an identity-based community. If this criterion is applied, one may come to the conclusion that China-US relations are indicative of community, given the extent of economic interaction, evidence of cultural exchanges and even military relations.

More crucial than the density of interaction, undoubtedly a necessary element, is evidence of positive identifications in the respective relationship. In that context,

Deutsch has stressed the importance not only of compatible values but also of a sense of “mutual identity and loyalty, a sense of ‘we-ness’, or a ‘we-feeling’ among states” as constituent of community (Deutsch, 1957: 36 and 66-67). Recent theoretical advances of the concept of security community have reasserted the importance of a shared identity (Adler and Barnett, 1998b). However, while some scholars are cognisant of the existence of multiple identities (Adler, 1997b; Busse, 1999), no efforts have been made to evaluate the strength and prominence of regional identities vis-à-vis alternative and, potentially, competing identities. This is a consequential oversight for any theory that accentuates the behavioural force of identities.

More insightful than stating that a regional identity exists is to ask how relevant it is for decision-makers compared to, for example, a pan-Asian identity or an anti-Communist identity. This study intends to gauge whether considerations of regional identity featured in security decisions. For this purpose this study uses mutual identifications as a second community indicator, asking whether members of a regional grouping have identified positively with one another’s security.

Shared meaning structures and mutual identifications can be seen as cognitive structures. However, community is not only a cognitive construct, it also exerts measurable behavioural force. This finds its expression in a third community indicator: norm compliance. Communities exist on the basis of commitments, duties, and obligations, and, more generally, expectations held collectively by the group (Adler, 1997b: 263). Those collective expectations are encapsulated in the concept of norms. Norms “operate as standards for the proper enactment or deployment of a defined identity,” reflecting “collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity” (Jepperson et al., 1996: 54). Self-categorization theory has postulated as one consequence of social categorization that the conduct of people will be governed by the norms of the ingroup of which they regard themselves as members (Turner et al., 1987: 101). Because norms function as an embodiment of collective expectations, they constitute an ideal measure of the influence of group membership on behaviour.

Norm compliance constitutes the third community indicator for this study. The criterion of norm compliance requires community members to abide by the rules agreed upon by the grouping. This criterion can also be related to claims by security community scholars that community members display a specific form of diffuse

reciprocity in their dealings with one another (Adler and Barnett, 1998b: 31). According to that logic, if partners were not willing to sacrifice short-term gains for the sake of community rules and practices, claims about the existence of community would be invalidated.

When states are defined as members of a particular group, they (or to be precise, their representatives) are assumed to internalize certain norms that are associated with that identity (Adler, 1997b: 264). In international relations theory it can be posited that leaders' expectations converge around sets of norms accepted by particular groups of nations. This logic underpins claims that norms in international law have power that extends beyond states' calculations of self-interest and the maintenance of their reputation (Busse, 1999). It illuminates why norms pertinent to a regime or an organisation exert influence on actors irrespective of their immediate effect on self-interest. One example quoted earlier is Barnett's elaboration on the behavioural prescriptions of norms associative with being an Arab state (Barnett, 1996: 405 and 421).

Although norm compliance could arguably be derived from ingroup/outgroup categorizations, for this study it represents an indicator in its own right. The strength of the criterion of norm compliance rests on the fact that it can be measured independent of policy declarations and official statements. Hence it can serve as an important gauge for the authenticity of declared identifications. Any divergence between ingroup categories and compliance with associative norms would require an explanation.

To sum up, based on the conceptualization of community advanced by Adler and Barnett (1998b), this study suggests that three elements best capture the essence of collective identities: shared meaning structures and values, mutual identifications among community members and compliance with the norms and practices accepted by the group. It should be made clear that the yardstick for the existence of a community is not evidence of a common security policy. However, if there is substance to the concept of regional community, including the existence of a collective identity and shared values, evidence of the three criteria should be found in the diplomacy of the regional grouping in question.

2.3 An Integrative Approach to ASEAN Security

This section outlines the framework that will be used to apply empirically the above integrative approach to a study of alignment among ASEAN members. Since its establishment in 1967 ASEAN has developed into a highly regarded regional organization whose members have been remarkably successful in achieving a high degree of external cohesion. As explained previously, the security behaviour of ASEAN members has given rise to controversies among international relations scholars about the underlying parameters of state interaction in the Southeast Asian region. Those theoretical discussions render ASEAN an interesting test case for any theoretical study that seeks to improve the understanding of the underlying causes of security behaviour.

This study examines the alignment behaviour of ASEAN members with the goal of determining what factors have facilitated or impeded a common ASEAN alignment posture vis-à-vis external parties. More specifically, the following empirical analysis of the diplomacy of ASEAN strives to answer three sets of questions:

- 1) As to International Relations Theory: What factors have guided security policies and alignment of ASEAN members at different junctures between 1967 and 1999? How well do existing approaches, balance-of-threat, identity accounts, and balance-of-interest theory, explain ASEAN alignment?
- 2) As to the Regional Community: Has ASEAN evolved into a regional community and, if yes, what has been its relevance for security? Under which conditions has an ASEAN identity been the reference point for policy initiatives?
- 3) As to the Nature of International Relations in Southeast Asia: What are continuities and discontinuities in ASEAN's diplomacy across particular time periods (Cold War/Post Cold War)? What patterns of cooperation and conflict have been prevalent in the region and what can be inferred from those findings about the nature of state interaction in the region?

In order to accomplish those objectives, this study has designed the above approach to security that looks in detail at interpretations of situations by decision-makers and subsequently links alignment decisions to the identifications with other

parties that follow from particular selective interpretations. By pairing the analysis of problem representations with that of actual foreign policy behaviour, this study can evaluate the relevance of different theories of alignment. The use of community indicators that incorporate discursive and operational factors allow this study to arrive at conclusions as to the policy relevance of an ASEAN identity.

The analysis of ASEAN alignment behaviour from 1967-1999 is divided into five time periods. The Cold War era is analysed in two sections, 1967 - 1978 and 1979 - 1988, whereas developments in the Post Cold War era are subdivided into three periods: 1989 - January 1992, February 1992-mid 1997, and mid 1997- 1999. The formative period of ASEAN from 1967 to 1978 is examined in chapter 3. During the first twelve years of its existence, ASEAN cooperation was in its nascent stage and, most importantly for this study, the collective did not engage in the coordination of policies towards external actors. The phenomenon at the centre of this study, alignment, was absent among ASEAN members. For that reason, chapter 3 deals with the period differently from the remainder of the study. Instead of providing a systematic analysis, it is satisfied with a brief outline of ASEAN's development. Nonetheless, the themes central to this study, alignment and community, are discussed and a summary is given of significant trends during ASEAN's early years.

Chapter 4 covers ASEAN during the Cambodia Conflict, 1979-1988. The scope of ASEAN alignment changed drastically after Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 / January 1979. This development warrants a treatment of this period separate from the earlier Cold War era 1967 -1978. During the ensuing Cambodia Conflict, ASEAN emerged truly as an international actor, explaining the centrality of the conflict in most scholarly accounts of ASEAN's evolution (for example, Leifer, 1989 and 1999; Antolik, 1990; Ganesan, 1995; Acharya, 1996 and 1998; Dosch, 1997; Khong, 1997b; Narine, 1998; Busse, 1999).

In its choice of a 1988 cut-off date for the Cambodia Conflict, this study has been guided more by considerations of the broader strategic context than by the date of the final peace settlement in Cambodia in 1991. As will be explained in greater detail in chapter 4, by late 1988 the progress in Sino-Soviet rapprochement indicated that the Cold War was drawing to a close and, as far as Southeast Asia was concerned, the Cambodia Conflict effectively ceased to be an international conflict. Chatichai's new Indochina policy in early 1989 already occurred against the background of a new

international environment and thus forms part of chapter 5 on the transformation from Cold War to Post Cold War politics. The period covered in chapter 5 includes events up to the Singapore Summit in January 1992.

As the first Post Cold War ASEAN Summit, the Singapore gathering provides an appropriate dividing line for an analysis of Post Cold War developments. In addition, the two periods, 1989-92 and 1992-97 were characterized by different security dynamics, as will be explored in greater detail. Chapter 6 covers the evolution and consolidation of the Post Cold War regional security structure from February 1992 until mid-1997.

Mid-1997 was originally envisaged as the cut-off date for this study, which was begun in September 1997. However, at that stage it could not be foreseen that the reasonably brief amount of time of just over three years would be quite as eventful in Southeast Asia as it has been. A brief outline of recent developments in Southeast Asia since mid-1997 in chapter 7 represents an acknowledgement that recent events have simply been too important to be ignored by a study that aspires to a comprehensive account of ASEAN security.

Focus on Original Five ASEAN Members

Like any other research undertaking, this study has its own implicit biases. It is therefore important to be clear about principles that have guided case selection and the focus of this study. The following section lays out the framework for the empirical chapters on ASEAN alignment 1967-1999. A regional identity can be expected to develop over time (Acharya, 1998; Busse, 1999), even though such a process cannot be expected to be path-dependent (Adler and Barnett, 1998b: 49). It does not follow a predictable trajectory with a well-defined endpoint. Because of its interest in the development of the idea of regional community it is important for this study to rely on cases that provide continuity and that allow insights into the evolution of regional identity over the period of 32 years, which this study covers.

With this point in mind, it becomes clear that this study can only make reliable claims about the development of an ASEAN identity and its impact on foreign policy for the original five ASEAN members, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. In contrast, only tentative conclusions can be drawn as to the impact of Vietnam's admission to ASEAN in 1995 and as to the effects of

membership on Vietnam's foreign policy. The time period covered is simply too short to draw authoritative conclusions.

This reservation applies even more strongly to the mutual influence between the foreign policies of Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia and ASEAN's regional identity and alignment. Laos and Myanmar were only admitted to ASEAN in 1997, and Cambodia joined in 1999. Those countries have not been members long enough to ascertain what impact ASEAN membership has had on their foreign policy behaviour. In turn, the influence of the three new members on ASEAN's collective identity is at this stage still a subject of speculation, not of substantive analysis. Nonetheless, the impact of ASEAN expansion on the prospects for a regional community will be discussed at some length in the concluding chapter. Finally, the lack of coverage of Brunei, the smallest member of ASEAN in terms of population and admitted in 1984, is explained by the dearth of sources on its foreign policy.

Case Selection

The ambitious goal of evaluating ASEAN alignment between 1967 and 1999 poses problems for the design of this study. It is evident that despite aspirations for comprehensiveness, any analysis of 32 years of foreign policy of several countries has to be selective. However, the scope of research is narrowed by this study's interest in common ASEAN alignment (or the lack thereof) towards outsiders. This means, in contrast to research on security communities with a focus on relations within a region, this study can concentrate on security policies of ASEAN members towards external actors. Nonetheless, given that countless diplomatic events with outsiders have involved one or more ASEAN members at some stage between 1967 and 1999, what rationale exists for the choice of particular diplomatic incidents over others?

This study has adopted a two-pronged approach to case selection. Firstly, its choice of diplomatic events is underpinned theoretically by the concept of security complexes. Secondly, on the empirical level, this study draws support for its focus from the coverage of scholarly work on the international relations of Southeast Asia.

First and foremost, case selection is based on the application of the concept of 'regional security complexes', which originated from Buzan (1988 and 1991) and was subsequently refined by Lake (1997), Morgan (1997), and Buzan and Wæver (1998). A regional security complex is characterized by security interdependence of its

participants. However, even though the locus of those security interrelationships embeds a security complex in a particular region (Morgan, 1997: 31), participants may be from outside the region. The distinguishing feature of participants to a security complex is the perception that their security is interdependent and that interactions with other participants are more substantial than their relations with states outside the security complex (Morgan, 1997: 30-31).

The application of that concept can help define what have been relevant relationships for ASEAN and important events during a particular time period. Case selection for this study has been determined by the degree to which a diplomatic event has had an impact on the regional security complex and the extent to which it has actively involved ASEAN members and actors outside the region but party to the security complex. The former is an important criterion for case selection. Meaningful statements about the link between shared identity and alignment of ASEAN as a community can only be made if the alignment decisions under examination are relevant for all parties involved, that is if all states have something at stake in a particular decision.

For example, Malaysia's support for the Bosnian Muslims may provide fascinating insights about the influence of Malaysia's Islamic identity on foreign policy. However, given the assumed irrelevance of the Bosnian conflict for other ASEAN states and the fact that Bosnia had no link with the Southeast Asian security complex, this case cannot provide evidence as to the collective identity – foreign policy interface (even if other ASEAN states turned out to be supportive). It is hence outside the scope of this study. For different reasons, initiatives like the proposal for a NATO-style security pact in the region, mooted by Thai Defence Minister Chavalit in 1996, have been confined to general background information. While the initiative concerned the whole region, it did not survive preliminary discussions in March 1996 and hence had no impact on regional security.

Based on the notion of 'security interdependence', derived from the literature on regional security complexes, a selection of relevant relationships and of particular events can be rationalized for each time period under examination. Coverage of the first period of ASEAN's existence from 1967-1978 serves the purpose of a historical introduction and is therefore not intended to provide systematic coverage. This period is presented in chapter 3 as a narrative without in-depth study of particular events and

the three-step approach outlined above is not applied to ASEAN diplomacy in this time period. The chapter provides a summary that evaluates alignment behaviour and the idea of regional community, the main topics of this study, for the years 1967-1978. By doing so this chapter establishes a baseline against which the further development of the regional association can be judged in subsequent chapters.

The coverage of events is guided by the main themes of this study: cooperation and alignment. In sections 3.1 and 3.2, chapter 3 devotes attention to the international environment and regional dynamics that set the stage for ASEAN's establishment and explores which factors made possible the initiation of regional cooperation. The significance of the founding of ASEAN justifies the inclusion of domestic developments in Indonesia in 1965-1966, events seminal for an understanding of regional cooperation in 1967. However, following a description of the external and internal circumstances of ASEAN's creation, chapter 3 shifts its emphasis to ASEAN's relations with external actors, in line with its main goal of examining alignment. Developments between 1967 and 1971 are summarized in 3.3 and 3.4. Although the format of this chapter as a historical review without in-depth analysis is not changed, the ZOPFAN Declaration of 1971 (section 3.5) is given special attention due to its overriding importance for the grouping's future diplomatic development – a fact that is virtually uncontested in the literature (see, for example Leifer, 1989 and Narine, 1998). For the same reasons, the pivotal nature of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 1976 has warranted its own section (section 3.6). Again, scholars are in general agreement that this was a landmark event for ASEAN (Acharya, 1996 and 1998; Narine, 1998; Busse, 1999). Finally, chapter 3 explores ASEAN's response to rising tensions in Indochina after 1976 (section 3.7). Throughout, one should bear in mind that chapter 3 serves the purpose of a historical introduction, not a systematic examination. Due to its emphasis on alignment, chapter 3 includes domestic developments in ASEAN member states only in so far as events directly impacted on alignment and security policy. For that reason, several regime changes and domestic crises in ASEAN countries are not given full attention, most notably the riots in Malaysia in 1969, the imposition of martial law in the Philippines in 1972, and developments in Thailand in the early 1970s.

After the introduction to ASEAN and its regional environment in chapter 3, chapter 4 marks the start of the empirical examination proper. However, in contrast to

the Post Cold War period, ASEAN diplomacy in the 1979-1988 period was characterized by an anomaly. The period was so overwhelmingly dominated by one particular security issue, the Cambodia Conflict, that the design of this chapter had to follow a different structure from that adopted in chapters 5 and 6. The preoccupation of ASEAN with the Cambodia issue is reflected in the focus of scholarly research on that period (among others, see Huxley, 1985; Weatherbee, 1985; Leifer, 1989; Antolik, 1990; Broinowski, 1990; Khong, 1997b; Narine, 1998; Busse, 1999) and there is no reason to question this consensus. However, for this study the domination of the Cambodia issue posed the challenge that the usual treatment of ASEAN diplomacy on an event-basis would have distorted the overall analysis. The single-issue focus of foreign policy between 1979 and 1988 warrants a different approach from alignment in the Post Cold war periods, with the analysis conducted on an event basis, lest alignment on the issue of Cambodia is afforded equal weight to the divergent cases of alignment in the latter periods. A compromise had to be struck between methodological consistency and an implicit weighting of events that would be misleading as to the significance of various foreign policy events.

As a matter of fact, the Post Cold War periods encompassed events where the security dynamics differed even if the general patterns of conflict and co-operation were similar (e.g., ASEAN's response to Spratly Islands crises in 1992, 1995 and 1997). If the same event-based approach would have been used for the 1979-88 conflict, with an overall number of about 10 different diplomatic events of significance, the effect would have been a bias towards the patterns of co-operation that prevailed during this period (pitching a Thai-Singaporean camp against an Indonesian-Malaysian one, with a largely passive Philippine stance). However, as the Cambodia Conflict essentially represented but one drawn-out diplomatic struggle – one could even justify speaking of one event – this would have resulted in findings that would have not been comparable with those from the only slightly larger number of Post Cold War events, which, however, showed a much greater diversity of behaviour.

It is therefore clear that the Cambodia Conflict had to be weighted differently from other periods. Otherwise, the separate treatment of different instances of alignment in the 1979-88, related to only one issue, would have given the impression that all alignment cases taken together were comparable to all Post Cold War cases.

This would have been inaccurate and could have led to misleading comparisons between the different time periods, giving greater weight to the Cambodia conflict than what the single-issue nature of the case would justify. In order to avoid the distortions that would have resulted from maintaining an events-based approach to that period, similar diplomatic incidents were grouped together in several phases. By doing so, this thesis aspired to accomplish a balanced treatment of different periods of the Cambodia Conflict but without implying that those periods could all be regarded as totally separate incidents – equivalent to diplomatic events in the Post Cold War periods.

The analysis is divided up into five time periods, characterized by similar patterns of diplomacy that allowed combining several diplomatic incidents. The subdivisions reflect the occurrence of turning points in ASEAN diplomacy that betokened either changes in alignment or significant shifts in security discourse, which could have resulted in different alignment patterns - but never did for reasons to be discussed. Chapter 4 starts with an outline of ASEAN's response to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia in early January 1979 and traces the emergence of a cohesive ASEAN diplomacy during that year (section 4.1). The next two sections analyze two episodes that differed in terms of ASEAN discourse. Firstly, in 1980 events surrounding the Kuantan Declaration indicated considerable disagreement within ASEAN (section 4.2); however, in the aftermath of Vietnam's incursion into Thai territory in June 1980 until late 1982 ASEAN diplomacy again displayed a high degree of cohesion (section 4.3). In contrast to the eventful years 1979-1982, the years 1983-1986 were characterized by relatively few diplomatic activities. Due to their similarities, the initiatives launched during this period are summarized in conjunction with one another (section 4.4), followed by a brief recounting of events in 1987 and 1988, which marked the effective end of the Cold War in Southeast Asia (section 4.5).

The Post Cold War period, 1989-1997, analysed in chapters 5 and 6 is the most important for this work on ASEAN alignment, given plausible claims that a regional identity is most likely to evolve over time (Adler and Barnett, 1998b; Acharya, 1998). If a regional identity has developed, it could be expected to become manifest in those more recent time periods. In a similar vein, as the third research question of this study relates to continuities and discontinuities in ASEAN security

behaviour and the nature of state interaction in the region, most trends could only be expected to be in evidence after ASEAN has been in existence for a considerable period of time.

Finally, special attention is devoted to the Post Cold War period, because ASEAN's evolution since the end of the Cold War could provide evidence for or against specific accounts of alignment. After all, realist accounts would predict the weakening of alliances in the absence of threats (Mearsheimer, 1990 and 1994/95). The two Post Cold War periods are distinguished from each other and the Cold War era by different strategic environments, providing a particularly good test of alternative explanations of alignment.

The detailed examination of ASEAN security behaviour in the Post Cold War period follows chronologically fifteen diplomatic events. Table 1 below provides an overview of the Post Cold War events selected for this study and indicates in which sections in chapter 5 and chapter 6 those events will be discussed.

Table 1: ASEAN Alignment:

Core Events Selected in the Post Cold War Period 1989-1997

Event	Section
1 Chatichai's New Indochina Policy	5.1
2 Singapore's Offer to Host US Military Facilities	5.2
3 ASEAN's Response to Events at Tiananmen Square	5.3
4 The Initiation of the South China Sea Workshops	5.4
5 The EAEC Proposal by Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir	5.5
6 The Pre-Singapore Summit Security Debate	5.6
7 China's Law on the South China Sea	6.1
8 The Creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)	6.2
9 The Mischief Reef Incident	6.3
10 The Admission of Vietnam	6.4
11 The Australian-Indonesian Security Agreement	6.5
12 The Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty	6.6
13 The Oil Rig Dispute between China and Vietnam	6.7
14 The Informal 9+3 Summit	6.8
15 The Admission of Myanmar/Laos	6.9

The selection of particular diplomatic events in the Post Cold War period has been guided by their significance for the regional security complex and their conformity with the above criteria. Those core events affected the security affairs of ASEAN as a whole and have resulted in significant debates among regional officials and scholars. This selection of important diplomatic events for ASEAN is supported by a review of the relevant literature.

The development of relations with China, covered in the table in events 3, 4, 7, 9, 13 and 14, and the United States, covered in events 2, 5, 6, and 8, has been the focal point of attention for observers of Post Cold War Southeast Asia (Ball and Kerr, 1996; Leifer, 1996; Khong, 1997a, b; Whiting, 1997; Haacke, 1998; Lim, 1998; Narine, 1998; Simon, 1998; Busse, 1999; da Cunha, 1999; Lee, 1999a, b). Much attention has been devoted to the evolution of the regional security structure, which changed considerably between the time of the pre-Singapore Summit security debate (event 6) and the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (event 8) (Ball and Kerr, 1996; Leifer, 1996; Khong, 1997a; Lim, 1998; Narine, 1998).

However, most central to many writings have been developments in the South China Sea. Events there, which culminated in the establishment of the South China Sea Workshops (event 4), and the diplomatic standoffs in 1992 (China's Law on the Territorial Sea, event 7), 1995 (the Mischief Reef Incident, event 9), and 1997 (the Oil Rig Dispute, event 13) (Catley and Keliat, 1997; Snyder, 1997; Austin, 1998; Lee, 1999a, b), have come to be seen as inextricably linked with the broader issue of ASEAN's strategic position towards China and the United States (Leifer, 1996; Whiting, 1997; Haacke, 1998; Lim, 1998; Simon, 1998; Busse, 1999; da Cunha, 1999; Lee, 1999a, b).

Additionally, the Australian-Indonesian security agreement (event 11) has been put into context with relations with China (Dupont, 1996; Sebastian, 1996; Whiting, 1997; Lim, 1998) and thus deserves attention as to its wider importance for ASEAN security relations. Event 14, the informal 9+3 summit, is included, because its establishment implies patterns of cooperation between ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea (Lee, 1999b) that affect the regional security complex.

Relations with the United States have been recognized as the other main element of ASEAN's security relations. The ASEAN-US link has been part and parcel of discussions about Southeast Asia's security, in general terms (Haacke, 1998;

Acharya, 1999a; da Cunha, 1999), related to the ASEAN Regional Forum (see above), Singapore's relationship with the US (event 2, the Singapore Offer) (Methven, 1992). Relations with the United States have also been at the centre of debates about the linkage between alternative frameworks for economic cooperation and strategic considerations as well as regionalism which underpinned the controversy over the EAEC proposal (Ganesan, 1995; Acharya, 1996; Buszynski, 1997) outlined in event 5.

Two other events included have received less attention in the scholarly literature. Event 1, Chatichai's new Indochina policy in late 1988-1989 (Ganesan, 1995; Narine, 1998) is included on the basis that it signified a major change within the Southeast Asian security complex and evoked significant debates within ASEAN (Mochtar, 1990; Buszynski, 1994). The conclusion of the Treaty on a Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), event 12, has attracted only limited attention (Acharya and Bouting, 1998). However, this study has selected the event on the basis of its link to the ZOPFAN declaration, a milestone in ASEAN's evolution, which has received ample attention in the scholarly treatment of ASEAN (Leifer, 1989; Acharya, 1998; Narine, 1998).

Additionally, this study discusses the expansion of ASEAN membership. It includes the admission of Vietnam in 1995 (event 10), and Myanmar and Laos in 1997 (event 15). Their entry into ASEAN manifested the existence of interdependent security relations, the primary indicator of regional security complexes, hence justifying selection according to the above criteria. The same applies to Cambodia's admission in April 1999; however, the latter will be dealt with separately in the section on developments since 1997.

With selection based on the concept of security interdependence, for the 1989-1997 period this study concentrates on ASEAN diplomacy towards the United States and China. This focus reflects the importance those two powers have held for ASEAN in the Post Cold War period. In contrast, Russia only participated in the Southeast Asian security complex for a comparatively short period of time. The Soviet Union was not seen as equally threatening as China by ASEAN prior to its close alignment with Vietnam in November 1978. In turn the Soviet Union had regarded Southeast Asia as a low priority area for most of the 1960s and 1970s (Nair,

1984: 13-15). Similarly, in the Post Cold War era, while interested in good relations with Southeast Asia, Russia is clearly focused on Northeast Asia.

Most controversial will be the neglect of Japan. Japan, while consistently on the minds of ASEAN decision-makers, has not truly participated in the regional security complex since 1945, despite a strong economic involvement. In the Post Cold War period, Japan has supported and sponsored several organizations that deal with conflict resolution in the Asia-Pacific. However, despite those activities, ASEAN members have generally not envisaged a security role in the region for Japan nor have they regarded the country as a threat (Ganesan, 2000: 270-273). This implies the absence of interdependent security relations between ASEAN and Japan. Consequently, Japan is treated by this study as an outsider to the regional security complex.

The selection of significant cases of alignment has been made more difficult in the Southeast Asian context by the fact that security in Southeast Asia is defined comprehensively (Dewitt, 1994).¹⁸ This study concentrates on diplomatic and military alignment. There are two justifications for this, one endogenous to the research design of this study and one linked to exogenous factors. Firstly, it is believed that the method of enquiry with its focus on problem representations of decision-makers can illuminate, where needed, what underlying dimension of security was important for ASEAN leaders. By doing so, an emphasis on diplomatic initiatives can do justice to the complexity of security in Southeast Asia. The second justification for a narrow definition of security concerns the issue of compatibility with other studies of alignment. As most studies on alignment focus on conventional aspects of security in the Western realist tradition (Krause and Williams, 1996), it is important to establish a study design that guarantees that its findings are transferable to the existing body of knowledge. The elite-centred approach of this study is justified in the context of Southeast Asia, as foreign policy has been the prerogative of a small group of people with little input from the general public. The official referent for security has been the state, not the individual, although this study hopes to provide some insights into the link between state security and regime security.

¹⁸ Leaders have believed that social and economic progress hinged upon regional peace and order, the attainment of which would also deny external actors the opportunity to interfere in and destabilize the region.

Community Indicators in Southeast Asia

Based on the ideas of Adler and Barnett (1998b) the above discussion arrived at three community indicators that can be used to measure the strength of regional community: shared meaning structures, mutual identifications, and norm compliance. How can they be applied in the ASEAN context to gauge the relevance of a Southeast Asian regional identity?

As to shared meaning structures, the comparison of problem representations within the regional grouping can be used as a community indicator. The comparison can determine what, if any, principles and values have been shared among decision-makers in particular situations. Given specific events with security relevance, to what extent have ASEAN leaders held similar views as to problems inherent to given events and have they subsequently pursued identical goals and adopted compatible strategies towards their attainment? This study puts particular emphasis on principles that are conducive to the development of regional community like the principle of regional autonomy, seen by one scholar as an element of ASEAN identity (Acharya, 1998: 212-213).

As to the second community indicator, mutual identifications, it will be examined to what extent ASEAN leaders have identified security with ASEAN partners, thus privileging relations with ASEAN over those with other external powers. More precisely, for each case under examination, this study will assess what ingroup /outgroup categorization underpinned the perspectives of ASEAN leaders. Do ingroup configurations indicate that a 'we-feeling' influences the policies of ASEAN members?

By combining the ingroup-outgroup indicator with an examination of shared meaning structures, this approach can avoid equating alignment with other ASEAN members wrongly with identification with the regional community. An analysis of problem representations can reveal whether the basis for 'ingroup' categorizations were indeed shared perspectives or whether different perspectives prevailed that simply happened to produce the same outcome with regard to alignment behaviour.

With regard to the community indicator of norm compliance, this study looks at the procedural norms of the 'ASEAN way'. ASEAN leaders as well as some scholars have accentuated the importance of the so-called 'ASEAN way' for the

success of regional cooperation.¹⁹ Those repeated proclamations of the 'ASEAN way' provide evidence that it does entail 'collective expectations of proper behaviour'.

The 'ASEAN way' entails behavioural norms encapsulated in a code of conduct and a set of procedural norms (see Acharya, 1997: 328-329; Busse, 1999: 46-47). The former contains standard norms of international law: respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful resolution of conflicts and non-use of force. More unique to ASEAN, and hence more relevant for an assessment of the identity-foreign policy nexus, are the procedural norms, which prescribe decision-making procedures ASEAN leaders are expected to follow.

According to those prescriptions, ASEAN's decision-making process should observe the principles of *musyawarah* (consultation) and *mufakat* (consensus). Together with a proclivity for informality and non-confrontational behaviour they constitute the core features of the ASEAN way (Acharya, 1999b: 56-67). The mode of decision-making is associated with the Malay village level and is designed to prevent the majority or the most powerful from imposing their views on the whole group. The process is characterized by informality and it serves to forge a general consensus that accommodates the differing viewpoints of all parties before a formal decision is made (Thambipillai and Saravanamuttu, 1985: 10-13).

The consensus norm hence transcends the sphere of the policy process. It affects policy outcomes, as the final result of the decision-making process is supposed to reflect the sensitivities of all parties. The yardstick for norm observance should not be the pursuit of 'one ASEAN foreign policy', but, firstly, evidence of a process of consultations and consensus building and, secondly, policy outcomes that take into account previous ASEAN positions and vital interests of other members.

2.4 Summary: How to Approach Alignment in Southeast Asia?

The following four chapters will employ the integrative approach developed above to investigate systematically ASEAN alignment behaviour from 1967-1999. Chapter 3

¹⁹ For recent examples look at the Keynote Address at the Sixth ASEAN Summit by Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister of Vietnam, Hanoi, December 15, 1998; the Opening Statement by Surin Pitsuwan, Foreign Minister of Thailand at the 32nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Singapore, July 23, 1999. See also the speeches on the occasion of the 32nd ASEAN AMM in Singapore. In his keynote address, Prime Minister Goh of Singapore talks of consensus decision-making as a core principle, July 23, 1999. HYPERLINK <http://www.aseansec.org>; for the scholarly side, see Mutalib, 1997: 78-79; Busse,

offers a brief historical introduction of ASEAN between 1967 and 1978. Chapter 4 covers ASEAN diplomacy during the Cambodia Conflict between 1979 and 1988. Subsequently, chapters 5 and 6 analyse in more detail ASEAN's behaviour during the Post Cold War era, followed by a brief review of recent events in chapter 7.

The empirical analysis of ASEAN alignment proceeds in three steps. Firstly, this study describes the security behaviour of ASEAN members for given diplomatic events. Have ASEAN members been aligned with one another, with particular outsiders or both? Secondly, given a particular alignment posture that can be inferred from security behaviour, the concept of 'problem representations' is employed to disclose what factors have informed alignment decisions in individual ASEAN states. What motives have determined alignment in that situation?

In a third step, this study proceeds to interpret security behaviour. It uses problem representations to evaluate the relevance of three alternative explanations of alignment, balance-of-threat theory, identity-accounts, and balance-of-interest theory. In particular, it assesses evidence of a regional community by using the three community indicators - shared meaning structures, mutual identifications, norm compliance with the 'ASEAN way' - to appraise systematically the relevance of regional identity across situations. In its conclusions this study seeks to interpret the particular combinations of shared interests, shared threat perceptions, and shared identity that induced common alignment among ASEAN members.

The previous section has developed the argument that particular policy decisions, including those in the sphere of security, can only be understood if the relevance of context variables is assessed through the prism of problem representations of those decision-makers that interpret situations and based on their interpretations choose one course of action. Positive and negative identifications with other actors, which constitute the foundation for security policies, follow decision makers' interpretations of a situation, emphasizing particular dimensions of the problem and downplaying others.

However, because of the existence of multiple identities, each associated with different categories of ingroup and outgroup and, possibly, conflicting behaviour, knowledge of what factors 'activate' particular identities is crucial for meaningful explanations of alignment behaviour. This knowledge can be gained through an

analysis of problem representations of decision-makers. The attractiveness of self-categorization theory rests on its flexibility to accommodate any factor that proves to be salient in the perception of decision-makers.

A model of alignment based upon an analysis of the interpretations of decision-makers is compatible with theories that focus on interest and capability. Obviously, the perception of shared interests would be sufficient as a focal point between states. For example, a common military threat would evoke the perception of commonality and would most likely elevate military considerations to a salient position in the minds of decision-makers.

A study of alignment that utilises problem representations and self-categorization theory can thus explain the interaction of strategic facts and identity by looking at how decision-makers frame those decisions. While compatible with interest-based theories of alignment, this approach can claim explanatory power for cases that elude the former. However, at this point the limitations of this study should be noted. What this study does is to examine how decision-makers have rationalized alignment behaviour. Based on public statements and secondary sources, the empirical work can analyse the reasoning that has been disclosed by officials. It does not attempt to determine whether those rationalizations have indeed been causal to the course of action taken. Publicly accessible rationalizations of behaviour rather than the actual thought processes of leaders are at the centre of analysis. Nevertheless, this constitutes considerable progress compared to any approach that completely brackets the decision-making process.

For this purpose, this thesis makes use of a variety of sources. Each of them has weaknesses but, used in combination, their strengths allow for a careful empirical examination of ASEAN diplomacy. Primarily, this thesis uses secondary sources. It relies heavily on scholarly work. This has its merits given that the task of covering foreign policies of up to ten countries across thirty years would stretch any individual researcher beyond limits. Being able to draw on the expertise of scholarly colleagues who have specializations in particular subfields or individual countries enhances the quality of analysis considerably. It can reveal numerous details, which this researcher could not hope to unearth himself. On the downside, a reliance on scholarly work means that priority-setting and case selection are biased towards topics or events emphasized by previous research efforts. This thesis has hedged against this risk by

coming up with its own rationale for case selection as well as the usage of a broad range of secondary sources.

The problems with the extensive use of media sources differ slightly. They can also result in a bias towards certain events or topics, but more importantly the interpretations thereof could be heavily influenced by political standpoints of the responsible journalists or, at worst, by outright censorship. This problem is particularly pertinent to reporting on foreign policy in Asia, as the decision-making process is rarely transparent. Newspapers, even if they aim at providing impartial and independent coverage can fall prey to deliberate deceit. The best way to ensure that neither intentional bias nor misguided reports adversely affect empirical findings, this study has adopted the set of three indicators outlined above that allow to detect any discrepancy between rhetoric (or the reporting thereof) and foreign policy behaviour.

The dilemma posed by potentially misleading quotes or publicly available statements can be alleviated but solved by the conduct of interviews with decision-making. This thesis uses several interviews with foreign policy officials as well as with members of the informal, so-called Second-Track, fora in Southeast Asia. Insights gained from interviews can significantly enrich empirical research, as such interviews may provide access to people involved in or, at least, close to the actual decision-making. However, contrary to the belief of some within the academic community, interviews do achieve little in terms of validation. Like publicly available statements in various media, interview responses are generally geared towards conveying a message that is meant for public consumption and there is no reason to assume that the interviewer is less prone to become the victim of deceit (or, more benignly, omission) simply because he or she is there in person.

This thesis attempts to combine those different methods of 'data collection' and every single one of them offers potential advantages. However, it operates under the assumption that determining of what has guided decision-making will ultimately have to rely on a highest probability approach where rhetoric and policy behaviour are assessed in conjunction. Once plausible explanations of behaviour are found, the researcher has to evaluate whether an interpretation that incorporates publicly available statements and interviews and which takes into account the views of other scholars, matches up to actual policy behaviour. Any discrepancy between behaviour and official statements, whether gained through the media or directly through

interviews, would require an explanation. However, given the broad range of sources used in this thesis, there are grounds for optimism that its empirical findings have not a high degree of plausibility but actually explain convincingly ASEAN diplomacy that has traditionally been clouded in secrecy. However, there are time periods when a lesser variety of sources are used or predominantly use is made of one or two particular sources. This applies in particular to Chapters 3 and 4 that rely heavily on the *Bangkok Post*. In the early period this has had a lot to do with the availability of sources, as English-language newspaper were scarce in the region. For the late 1970s and 1980s, when regional attention focused on the Cambodia Conflict, the heavy use of the *Bangkok Post* is explained by a different dilemma. Other regional papers provided very little coverage of events in Indochina. As far as the English language press in the Philippines is concerned, this reservation applies generally to the field of foreign policy, which simply did not feature prominently.

The reliance on the Bangkok Post does not pose problems for the early period of ASEAN, covered in Chapter 3, as this section fulfils the function of providing historical background information rather than offering findings pivotal to this thesis' argument. Moreover, the use of the Bangkok Post is backed by the secondary literature, significantly reducing the risk of omissions or biases pertinent to this research undertaking. In contrast, the heavy use of the *Bangkok Post* for coverage of the Cambodia Conflict could be problematic. After all, Thailand was one of the main participants in the diplomatic struggle at the time and usage of a Thai paper could therefore introduce a bias. However, given the wide use of secondary sources and other newsmedia that all support the main course of events the risk should be confined. The resulting bias, tilted towards the Bangkok Post coverage of public statements, probably reflects the differing degrees of importance attributed to the Cambodia Conflict. While Vietnam's invasion was seen as a serious threat by Thailand, for other ASEAN members events were relatively remote. Consequently, the topic did not feature in other regional papers. Crucially, one can assume a similar attitude among regional politicians, resulting in a considerable asymmetry of interest among ASEAN members. How this played itself out in regional diplomacy will be spelt out in Chapter 4.

The Thai-focused bias should nonetheless be considered a weakness of this research but given the dearth of sources used throughout the thesis it should not be a

critical one. More serious is a different shortcoming of this work, namely its inability to account for the outcome of cognitive processes of regional leaders, but not the cognitive processes themselves. This is a notable shortcoming given that the neglect of the decision-making process has been identified as a major deficiency of both realist and social constructivist accounts. However, the lack of transparency of politics in Southeast Asia – a problem that cannot be alleviated by interviews given the problem of selective disclosure – and the monumental task of analysing cognitive processes of leaders in several countries across three decades has forced the adoption of a second-best solution: the use of problem representations to arrive at the rationalization of diplomacy. This account hence only provides a starting point for a more in-depth examination of regional decision-making. For the time being, the objective is to deliver a coherent interpretation of regional diplomacy that makes optimal use of the resources available.

The rationale for the development of this integrative perspective has been the promise for a more comprehensive understanding of security behaviour. This promise will be tested empirically against the reality of ASEAN alignment. Ultimately, the only good justification for a theoretical perspective is its practical relevance and contribution to knowledge.

The greatest challenge for any theoretical approach in international relations is to explain profound changes in the nature of interaction. The transformation of international relations in Southeast Asia between 1967 and 1999 provides such a test case. When the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed on August 8, 1967, by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, few observers thought that the regional organization would endure for long, let alone have a significant impact on regional relations.

The regional environment, aptly characterized as one “...of violence, turmoil and revolt against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution...” (Kim, 1997: 72) hardly seemed to provide the seedbed for cooperation. Yet, by 1999, ASEAN had expanded to include ten states, its members had not engaged in armed conflict with one another for 32 years, cooperation had become extensive across all issue-areas and ASEAN acted in concert towards external parties. The following four chapters set out to analyse the evolution of this state of affairs. They intend to demonstrate that the proposed approach to alignment that incorporates

material factors, social interaction and human agency can keep its promise of delivering a perspective with higher explanatory power.

Chapter 3

The Formative Years of ASEAN 1967-1978

This chapter explores the development of ASEAN from 1967 to 1978. Its intention is to provide an overview of the regional environment in which ASEAN was established and operated in its nascent years. Because ASEAN cooperation was limited during this period, this chapter purports to explore the broad trends that characterized the regional environment and state interaction rather than to provide a systematic analysis of security behaviour. Therefore the three-step approach of this study is not applied to ASEAN diplomacy in this time period. Nonetheless, the chapter provides a summary that evaluates alignment behaviour and the idea of regional community, the main topics of this study, for the years 1967-1978. By doing so this chapter establishes a baseline against which the further development of the regional association can be judged in subsequent chapters.

The coverage of events is guided by the main themes of this study: cooperation and alignment. In sections 3.1 and 3.2 this chapter devotes attention to the environment and regional dynamics that set the stage for ASEAN's establishment and explores which factors made possible the initiation of regional cooperation. The significance of the founding of ASEAN justifies the inclusion of domestic developments in Indonesia in 1965-1966, events seminal for an understanding of regional cooperation in 1967. In the remainder of the chapter, the emphasis is on ASEAN's relations with external actors, with developments between 1967 and 1971 summarized in 3.3 and 3.4, and policy initiatives that had significant implications for the latter, most notably the ZOPFAN Declaration of 1971 (section 3.5) and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 1976 (section 3.6). Finally, this section explores ASEAN's response to rising tensions in Indochina after 1976 (section 3.7). Due to its emphasis on alignment, this chapter includes domestic developments in ASEAN member states only in so far as events directly impacted on alignment and security policy. For that reason, several regime changes and domestic crises in ASEAN countries are not given full attention, most notably the riots in Malaysia in 1969, the imposition of martial law in the Philippines in 1972, and developments in Thailand in the early 1970s.

3.1 Background Factors: The Nature of Regional Relations before 1967

When representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand signed the Bangkok Declaration on August 8, 1967, to establish ASEAN, the circumstances for regional cooperation hardly seemed propitious. Three factors or, more accurately, liabilities characterized the environment in which the five Southeast Asian nations tried to set up ASEAN as a conduit for regional cooperation. Firstly, the overall security climate was one characterized by the fierce geopolitical conflict of the Cold War era. Given the very recent creation of the modern state system in Southeast Asia, which only evolved after the end of the Second World War, Southeast Asian states came into being in an environment of competition. Secondly, within the region bilateral tensions and a legacy of recent conflict characterized the relationships among several ASEAN members. Thirdly, any attempt at regional cooperation had to contend with the failures of previous regional organizations.

First of all, the existing patterns of state interaction at the time of ASEAN's creation have to be acknowledged. They were clearly structures of competition. The year 1945 marked a true watershed in Southeast Asian history not only because of Japanese defeat, but because it is associated with the irreversible end of the era of colonialism in Southeast Asia (Osborne, 1995: 134-53). However, the post-1945 environment in Southeast Asia clearly limited the ability of the new states to create an international order to their liking. Soon after the end of the Second World War Southeast Asia was embroiled in the global dynamics of the Cold War, even before the consolidation of the regional state system had come to a conclusion.²⁰ The Communist victory in China and the subsequent establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 created an Asian focal point for the 'East-West' Conflict. Among US decision-makers, the Sino-Soviet alliance in February 1950 and the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-53) in June that year added further impetus to

²⁰ While the consolidation of the new Southeast Asian state system was not completed until the unification of Vietnam in 1976, or strictly speaking until Brunei's attainment of autonomy in defence and foreign affairs in 1984, its main contours were in place by 1965. The Philippines became independent in 1946, Burma in 1948, and Malaya in 1957, while Indonesia and Vietnam had to take up armed struggle to gain their independence, the former in 1949 and the latter in 1954 - at that stage as a divided country. Cambodia and Laos gained their independence in 1953 and had it codified at the Geneva Conference. In 1963 the three British colonies of Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore joined Malaya in a newly created Federation of Malaysia, only for Singapore to become independent in 1965 after tensions within the Federation proved unbridgeable. In 1999 East Timor's independence has increased the number of states in Southeast Asia to eleven, even though it is not clear whether the country would be willing to join ASEAN or rather attach itself to the South Pacific Forum.

ideas that Communism had to be contained. Consequently, the United States established a system of largely bilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific, commonly known as the San Francisco Treaty System, to counter what was perceived as a global Communist threat.²¹

Thailand and the Philippines both became part of the American alliance system. Thailand sent a contingent to Korea in July 1950 and concluded agreements on economic and military assistance with the United States in September/October 1950, placing Thailand firmly in the Western Cold War camp (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 114). The Philippines and the United States concluded a Mutual Defence Treaty on August 30, 1951.

Subsequently, the Philippines and Thailand joined the Manila Pact in September 1954 and in 1955 they became members of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), created under the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty concluded the previous September in Manila. SEATO was an alliance under the aegis of the US that also comprised Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. It constituted a “multilateral framework for collective defence” with the goal of deterring “Communist expansion in the region after the Geneva Conference of April-July 1954” by facilitating American intervention (Buszynski, 1983: 1). For that purpose, the definition of the SEATO treaty area included Cambodia and Laos, independent since 1953, and designated neutral status at the Geneva Conference, and South Vietnam.

While the Philippines and Thailand entered alliance relations with the United States, Malaya chose to remain under the British security umbrella, which had been crucial for fending off a Communist insurgency after 1948 during what was called the ‘Emergency’. At the time of independence in 1957, Malaya and Britain concluded the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA). This arrangement offered Malaya the best of both worlds. The low-key AMDA was seen as sufficient to deal with minor threats, but Malaya could still accrue benefits from SEATO, because the alliance would deter Communist aggression from the North. However, the AMDA did not impose the same domestic liabilities by associating Malaya only indirectly with the Western alliance (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 152; Buszynski, 1983: 70).

²¹ For an overview, see Hara (1999).

This was a classic case of a buckpassing strategy, as conceptualized by Christensen and Snyder (1990).

In the 1950s and 1960s the Cold War cast an all-pervasive shadow over Southeast Asia, which no state could easily escape. Under President Sukarno, Indonesia tried to create a third bloc of developing countries. Corresponding with its leadership among Third World countries, manifest in the hosting of the Bandung Conference in 1955, Indonesia became one of the pivotal members of the Non-Alignment Movement. However, reflecting the pervasiveness of Cold War bipolarity, Indonesia could not maintain its third bloc position. In the 1960s it was forced to take sides in the global superpower conflict and tilted towards alignment with China (Legge, 1972).

The second liability for regional cooperation was related to regional problems. Not only was Southeast Asia embroiled in the global tensions of the Cold War, with the Vietnam War being the most serious regional manifestation, but intra-regional relations were likewise characterized by persistent conflict and lingering suspicions. In 1963 President Sukarno of Indonesia had initiated *Konfrontasi*, a low-intensity war against Malaysia with the avowed goal of breaking up the newly founded Malaysian Federation. Sukarno regarded the Malaysian Federation as a product of British imperialism and rejected its creation out of a mixture of ideological and domestic reasons.²² Although *Konfrontasi* came to an end in 1966 under Sukarno's successor Suharto, the episode of confrontation left Indonesia's neighbours concerned about the ambitions of the biggest and most populous state in Southeast Asia (Leifer, 1983: 120). This applied in particular to Singapore whose majority Chinese population was a potential target given the traditional hostility of other ethnic groups in the region towards the Chinese (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 180 and 187-89).

Furthermore, numerous unresolved territorial disputes jeopardized cordial relations between ASEAN members. By far the most serious of those was the Philippine claim to Sabah, asserted in 1962. The separation of Malaysia and Singapore in 1965 left a legacy of bitter feelings between the two neighbours that was fed by ethnic-religious tensions as well as personal animosities among their elites. Moreover, despite generally good relations and border arrangements going back to the

²² Sukarno used the Malaysian issue as a device to rally the Indonesian Army and the Communist Party (PKI) together thus trying to avoid domestic confrontation between them (Legge, 1972: 372-73).

'Emergency' period, tensions persisted on the Malaysian-Thai border over the issue of Islamic separatism in Southern Thailand and extant residual elements of the Malay Communist Party in Thailand (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 163-164).

The third impediment to regional cooperation was the lack of positive precedents for ASEAN to build on. Aside from SEATO,²³ two previous attempts at regional cooperation had foundered. The first of the two, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) was founded in 1961 by Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Originally, Philippine President Carlos E. Garcia and Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman shared more ambitious political goals when they issued a joint communiqué in January 1959 that called for a Southeast Asian regional organization. Various proposals were floated, including a Southeast Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty that would have targeted Communist subversion (Turnbull, 1992: 615), however, ultimately leadership rivalry and Prime Minister Tunku's unilateral pursuit doomed the project (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 266-267).

Instead, the less ambitious Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) with a focus on economic cooperation was put in place in 1961. Following Thailand's insistence, it was limited to informal annual discussions among the three members. ASA nonetheless failed because of the acrimonious conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah (Leifer, 1989: 3).

A second regional organization, MAPHILINDO, was established in 1963 by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. It meant to highlight the common Malay identity of the three countries involved (Turnbull, 1992: 585), but the very focus on ethnicity negated any ambitions to establish a region-wide forum, as it excluded Singapore and Thailand (Anwar, 1994: 50). Even with a more limited membership, MAPHILINDO came to naught, when the Philippine claim on Sabah in 1962 increasingly antagonized Malaysia and the Philippines and President Sukarno of Indonesia embarked on his 'Crush Malaysia' campaign in 1963. MAPHILINDO became associated with the failure to achieve regional reconciliation (Anwar, 1994: 50).

Overall, in 1967 the states of Southeast Asia confronted an international environment that was characterized by competition and conflict without being able to

²³ For reasons that will be discussed below, a categorization of SEATO as regional organization is highly problematic.

build on positive indigenous patterns of interaction. Systemic patterns of interaction were dominated by the polarization of the Cold War, most starkly demonstrated by the Vietnam War. However, the Communism/anti-Communism divide constituted only one dimension of security and other conflicts in the region may have attracted even more attention (Gordon, 1966). Southeast Asian states confronted manifold challenges, having been cast into the Western system of state sovereignty after 1945. Domestically they faced the task of nation building in a region where colonial boundaries had been drawn arbitrarily and ethnic-religious differences prevented the clear demarcation of communities. This task was made harder as Communist insurgencies became a security preoccupation of most governments in the region. Domestic issues of ethnicity, religion and economic inequality became intertwined with international conflict. It is in this broad context that initiatives for regional cooperation have to be understood.

3.2 The Establishment of ASEAN in 1967 - A Historic Opportunity?

Given the previous record of conflict, a legacy of suspicion and animosity, past failures in regional cooperation, and a general predominance of competition in the region's international relations, the establishment of ASEAN is not exactly a self-explanatory development. By August 8, 1967, factors more positive than those listed above must have entered the calculations of regional leaders when they declared

*The countries of Southeast Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development, and...they are determined to ensure their stability and security from any external interference in any form or manifestation.*²⁴

What factors made possible the establishment of ASEAN, an organization with the objective of regional cooperation? How did leaders in Southeast Asia come to define their interests as sufficiently convergent to warrant the creation of a new institution and what was the basis of perceived commonalities?

While all five founding members played a role, the compatible interests of Indonesia and Thailand were pivotal for bringing about ASEAN (Morrison and

²⁴ ASEAN Declaration, Preamble, Bangkok, August 8, 1967.

Suhrke, 1978: 269). The initiative of Thailand's Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman combined with the Indonesian interest in regional reconciliation to give impetus to the establishment of a regional organization that encompassed all members of the two previous aborted attempts to forge regional cooperation (Leifer, 1989: 22-23; Solidum, 1997: 59). However, the immediate source of change was developments in Indonesia in 1965-1966. The regional climate for cooperation took a decisive turn to the better in the wake of President Sukarno's demise and General Suharto's ascendancy to power.²⁵ The subsequent consolidation of the 'New Order' regime under General Suharto not only resulted in dramatic changes of Indonesia's domestic power configuration, with the army eliminating the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) as a political force, but also led to significant realignment in Indonesia's foreign policy.

Initially, President Sukarno had pursued a declaratory policy of independence in keeping with the principle of 'bebas-aktif' (free and independent). He attempted to create a third bloc of non-aligned countries, what he dubbed the 'New Emerging Forces', in opposition to colonialism and neo-imperialism (Legge, 1972: 343-46). However, in the bipolar world of the 1960s, Sukarno's vision of a third bloc in opposition to neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism was not viable.

Between 1959-1965 his foreign policy had increasingly become a reflection of the domestic power struggle between the army and the PKI (Anwar, 1994: 27). The launch of *Konfrontasi* against the creation of the Malaysian Federation, perceived as a product of imperialism, thus originated from both ideological motives and domestic calculations that diverted the conflict between army and PKI towards an external enemy (Legge, 1972: 372-73; Leifer, 1983: 79-81).

However, externally *Konfrontasi* alienated moderate members of the Non-Aligned Movement, which saw the campaign as big-country bullying (Anwar, 1994: 27). Almost as a default option, Indonesia's foreign policy became characterized by

²⁵ The exact circumstances of Suharto's rise to power are still not entirely clear. For a wide range of views on the events, see Crouch (1988), for a detailed account, see Legge (1972: chapter 15). General Suharto used an alleged Communist coup in September 1965 and Sukarno's affiliation with the Communist Party to manoeuvre President Sukarno out of power by 1967. General Suharto, at the time commander of the Army Strategic Reserve (KOSTRAD), thwarted a coup attempt launched by a group of officers under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Untung on 30 September 1965. Neither the exact goals of the coup leaders nor their relationship to the Communist Party (PKI) have been sufficiently clarified. The involvement of some PKI members was taken as a pretext by the army to eliminate the PKI, its political rival under Sukarno. However, the political purges escalated into a massacre of up to one million people, tolerated if not actively supported by the Indonesian army.

closer relations with the People's Republic of China. Sukarno's idea of an anti-imperialist Jakarta-Beijing-PhnomPenh-Hanoi-Pyongyang axis in August 1965 indicated a departure from non-alignment. Sukarno's alignment resulted in foreign policy oblivious of economic consequences and increasing international isolation (Sukma, 1997: 233-234).

In contrast, under the 'New Order' regime of General Suharto foreign policy was largely subordinated to economic development (Sukma, 1997: 238), but also became de facto anti-Communist, a reflection of the domestic power balance. In the aftermath of Suharto's coup of 1965, avowedly a safeguard against a Communist takeover, relations with the PRC were frozen, as Chinese involvement with Communist groups was suspected. In line with the objective of economic development, priority was given to mending relations with the West. After the turmoil surrounding Suharto's coup, Indonesia had to reach rapprochement with the West simply out of financial need.

In order to overcome the "self-imposed isolation" that had characterized Sukarno's stand against "cooperation with neo-colonialism" (Huxley, 1990: 84), Indonesia started to repair relations with its neighbours, particularly Malaysia, the target of Sukarno's 'Crush Malaysia' campaign begun in 1963. The establishment of ASEAN served the goals of the new Indonesian foreign policy well, because the attainment of good neighbourly relations appeared to be a prerequisite of the envisaged socio-economic development. Furthermore, ASEAN brought together Southeast Asian countries that shared the anti-Communism of Suharto. In that context, rapprochement with Malaysia is not surprising, as influential parts of the army regarded Malaysia as a crucial buffer against the Communist threat from the north (Anwar, 1994: 43).

Undoubtedly, the profound changes in Indonesia made ASEAN possible and the efforts of Foreign Minister Adam Malik were instrumental in bringing about agreement (Anwar, 1994: 50-51). However, the major driving force behind ASEAN's creation was Thailand's Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman (Leifer, 1989: 17). Thailand's interests were complementary but not identical with Indonesia's.

The conclusion of the Thanat-Rusk agreement of 1962 provided Thailand with unilateral American security guarantees against the Communist threat. Because it implied a US promise for military support, the Thanat-Rusk agreement qualifies as an

alliance for the purposes of this study, as the definition used requires neither a formal agreement nor a reciprocal arrangement. The promise of military support is sufficient for a relationship to be characterized as 'alliance'. However, despite the US commitments Thanat was not reassured. The Laotian crises of 1960-62 had proven the ineffectiveness of SEATO (Buszynski, 1983) and Thanat consequently arrived at the conclusion that the interests of the United States and Thailand increasingly diverged (Snitwongse, 1997: 89). As a consequence he foresaw the need to supplement the alliance with the United States.

Subsequently, Thanat embarked on what he saw as a long-term strategy of regional cooperation, creating a bloc of like-minded Southeast Asian nations, although he dismissed the non-aligned option (Snitwongse, 1997: 88). Thanat Khoman persisted in the pursuit of those ideas despite the failures of the ASA and MAPHILINDO projects. While there is little indication that the long-term vision for a regional bloc was shared at this stage, the effect of Thanat's efforts at providing good offices for disputants on the regional climate cannot be overestimated.

The emphasis put on Indonesia and Thailand does not imply that contributions from other member states were insignificant. They were not, but their input was more indirect. ASEAN incorporated several principles that had been important for ASA and MAPHILINDO (Leifer, 1989; Saravanamuttu, 1997; Solidum, 1997). Elements of ASEAN drawn from ASA included commitment to sovereignty of members, and commitment to self-constraint in relations with partners as well as the naming of military threats. The most important adoption from MAPHILINDO was the formula on the temporary nature of foreign military bases and the practice of *musyawarah* - the principle of consultation (Solidum, 1997: 52).

Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore left the initiative largely in the hands of Indonesia and Thailand. They were guided in their approach to ASEAN by a desire to incorporate Indonesia in a regional forum. After the end of *Konfrontasi*, which had threatened the survival of the Malaysian Federation, the Malaysian leadership was happy to cooperate with the 'New Order' regime in Indonesia and all three countries were ready to implicitly accept Indonesia's regional leadership, as long as it expressed itself in cooperative policies (Huxley, 1990: 84). At this stage, only Thailand was not concerned about possible Indonesian ambitions for hegemony (Anwar, 1994: 231).

ASEAN fulfilled an identity-defining function for both Malaysia and the Philippines. Malaysia after it had depended on Western support during the *Konfrontasi* wanted to restore credentials as a developing, and by implication, non-aligned Third World country (Saravanamuttu, 1997: 37). In the case of the Philippines, ASEAN membership served to emphasize an Asian identity with the purpose of assuaging nationalistic sentiments and diverting domestic criticism from close links with the United States (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 243-244).

Considerations that focused on the country's regional image most likely informed Singapore's participation in ASEAN, too. With its predominantly Chinese population, Singapore had reason to prove to its neighbours that its leadership regarded the city-state as part of Southeast Asia (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 185-90). Singaporean decision-makers wanted to avoid a situation where Singapore would be cast into the image of an island Chinese enclave in Southeast Asia.²⁶

Overall, the creation of ASEAN did not result so much from convergent interests as from different motives that proved complementary, or at least compatible. Many of those converged on security, evident in the fact that in August 1967 there was a clear disjuncture between the public emphasis of ASEAN on socio-economic development and the actual focus on security (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 271). The collocation of external events has given rise to the argument that the security dimension was the true reason d'être for ASEAN (Nair, 1984: 4). However, the security argument has most substance if domestic and external threats are seen as inextricably linked with economic development.

By 1967 there were signs that the United Kingdom and the United States would reduce their protective umbrellas (Nair, 1984: 4-7). Just months before the Bangkok Declaration, Britain had made public its intention to withdraw its forces from Malaysia and Singapore. At the same time, there was mounting evidence that the US Vietnam policy was becoming more responsive to its war-weary public opinion (Nair, 1984: 6-7).

Although the founding members carefully avoided explicit hints to particular external threats, it was evident that ASEAN was established based on a strong

²⁶ Singapore's close relations with Israel rendered that task more difficult. The choice of Israel as a model for Singapore's military in 1967 and the subsequent employment of Israeli advisers was highly provocative to Singapore's Islamic neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia, as it implied a parallel between

aversion to Communism and China, as it was the enticement of Communist revolution that threatened the status quo of the market economies in the region (Huxley, 1990: 84-85). Decision-makers in ASEAN countries shared a fear of Communist subversion (Kim, 1997: 70). In order to forestall subversion, the betterment of socio-economic conditions became one of ASEAN's primary goals. Socio-economic development was seen as a medium to enhance national and regional resilience (Huxley, 1990: 84-85). In turn, the latter would enhance ASEAN's security, according to the premises of comprehensive security. In keeping with the concept of comprehensive security²⁷ espoused by ASEAN, development was regarded as the most effective response to the Communist threat.

ASEAN members at this stage were united by their desire to preserve the status quo, because stability was seen as a prerequisite for socio-economic development. Yet, its members did not agree on security strategy. The most significant controversy with regard to ASEAN's establishment surrounded Indonesia's proposal to incorporate a clause that declared the presence of all foreign military bases temporary. While all other four ASEAN members had reservations about this clause, as they depended on Western powers for security, the Indonesian argument that this clause was necessary to assuage domestic proponents of non-alignment held sway because the ASEAN partners apprehended that the removal of foreign bases was a goal that was not realizable in the immediate future (Narine, 1998: 197-198).

Despite the importance of security discussions, ASEAN's preoccupation with the subject must be put into perspective. First and foremost, ASEAN fulfilled a confidence-building function for intra-regional relations, following the *Konfrontasi* campaign and due to the persistence of a multitude of bilateral tensions, most seriously the dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah. Given the lack of security initiatives and the focus on intra-mural relations, ASEAN's founding bears out Michael Leifer's claims that security considerations were "a by-product of institutionalized regional reconciliation" (Leifer, 1989: vii).

Singapore's and Israel's geostrategic position and conflictual relations with neighbours (George, 1973: 170-171).

3.3 ASEAN's Low Key Start as an International Actor

In August 1967 intra-ASEAN relations were in a precarious state. Indonesia's 'Crush Malaysia' campaign had only recently been terminated and latent tensions soured relations between Singapore and Malaysia in the aftermath of their separation in 1965. The Philippine claim to Sabah was the most grave but by no means the only territorial dispute. In the light of poor intra-ASEAN relations it becomes comprehensible why ASEAN members initially gave priority to the improvement of the regional climate.

ASEAN achieved that objective. Indonesia and Malaysia moved from reconciliation towards cooperation after two agreements were signed, one of broad intent in September 1966 and the second concerned with border cooperation in May 1967 (Anwar, 1994: 143). ASEAN multilateral cooperation survived a serious conflict between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah when Philippine claims challenged Malaysian sovereignty (Leifer, 1989: 30-36). The episode represented a considerable success for ASEAN, as both parties to the dispute showed restraint based on their expressed interest in regional cooperation (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 244; Leifer, 1989: 35).

Despite continued animosities between Singapore and Malaysia and the row between Singapore and Indonesia in 1968 over the hanging of two Indonesians (Leifer, 1989: 39-40), ASEAN progressed as it managed to build up confidence and its members stuck to the principles of peaceful conduct. However, in its formative years ASEAN moved very slowly with regard to the realization of tangible cooperation. By 1969 ASEAN had set up five functional committees and meetings of ASEAN officials had become frequent (Anwar, 1994: 62). However, the main conduit of cooperation remained the annual meeting of foreign ministers (Leifer, 1989: 24-25).

Due to the emphasis on the improvement of intra-mural relations, foreign policy beyond ASEAN members took a backstage between 1967 and 1970. However, between 1968 and 1970 security trends in the wider region pointed to fundamental changes in Southeast Asia's strategic environment that ASEAN members could not afford to ignore much longer. The Tet Offensive in January 1968 changed American perceptions of the Vietnam War (Evans and Rowley, 1990: 17). Also in January 1968

²⁷ For a discussion of the concept, see Dewitt (1994).

Britain announced the acceleration of the withdrawal of its troops 'East of Suez' by 1971 except for a token contingent in Singapore. The sighting of a Soviet naval squadron in the Indian Ocean in March 1968 exacerbated anxieties about those developments.

It became obvious that fundamental changes in the regional strategic environment were imminent when President Nixon announced the Guam Doctrine in 1969. It indicated American intentions to disengage from Vietnam, although the declared goal of 'greater responsibility for Asian states themselves' couched the pending American withdrawal in more palatable terms. The implications of this policy were potentially far-reaching for American allies, as it threatened to leave them largely to their own devices. While the Philippines enjoyed the luxury of an insular location, in Thailand the prospects of an American withdrawal caused great unease given the country's involvement in and proximity to the Vietnam War.

Singapore, neither formally aligned with the United States nor a party to the Vietnam War, was nonetheless affected by the pending withdrawal of British and US forces, as the relationships with its more populous neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia were frayed in the early years of Singapore's statehood, even after ASEAN had come into existence in 1967. The country least affected by the retreat of Western powers was Indonesia. Neither the pending American withdrawal from Vietnam nor the British disengagement from 'East of Suez' interfered with Indonesia's foreign policy goals outlined above.

It is doubtful whether the leaders of other ASEAN members would have felt comparably anxious, if the Western retreat had not combined with the rapid ascendancy of Communist China as a significant regional player by 1970. ASEAN's establishment had coincided with the most tumultuous time of the Cultural Revolution in China that paralyzed foreign policy making in Beijing. During the first years of ASEAN, there were no formal relations between any of its members and the PRC²⁸ and this was an accurate reflection of the poor prospects for mutual accommodation, let alone cooperation.

Indonesian leaders were hostile towards the PRC due to its alleged support for the coup in 1965, depicted as a Communist plot by the 'New Order' regime of President Suharto. Malaysian leaders were equally suspicious of the Communist

²⁸ Strictly speaking, relations with Indonesia were frozen.

PRC, as they were still reeling from the days of the 'Emergency,' the largely ethnic-Chinese based Communist insurgency that had threatened Malaya from 1948 until 1960.²⁹ Sentiments between the People's Republic and the two Southeast Asian allies of the United States, the Philippines and Thailand were characterized by hostility, as the Vietnam War implicated them on opposite sides. Thailand served as an important base for the American war effort in Vietnam. Thailand even supported the United States with a small troop contingent there as well as helping the US to fight a secret war in Laos against the Pathet Lao.³⁰ The Philippines, aligned with the United States since 1951, also had lent support to the US in the Vietnam War.

Generally, because of Chinese support for Communist insurgencies in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, China was seen as the biggest threat in the short as well as long run (Nair, 1984: 9-13). In all three countries concern about Chinese-sponsored Communist insurgencies was compounded by the fear that the Overseas Chinese minorities could be used as a 'fifth column' to carry out Maoist ambitions of world revolution in Southeast Asia (Tilman, 1987: 86-87). The loyalty of Overseas Chinese was doubted because China maintained the concept of Chinese citizenship for all Overseas Chinese putting into question their status as subjects of Southeast Asian states.

Between 1966 and 1969 the PRC had been embroiled in the chaos of the Cultural Revolution and foreign policy had effectively been paralyzed. Only the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969 indicated the end of the Cultural Revolution, the restoration of the party structure (Wang, 1992: 21), and reopened the political field for an orderly planning and conduct of foreign policy. Subsequently, China's moderate Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai embarked on a major foreign policy offensive.

By 1970 ASEAN leaders could no longer be oblivious of the resurgence of the People's Republic of China in the international arena. By that stage, China had reason to rejoice in its foreign policy successes. Signals from Washington indicated that the US was willing to accept greater Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. They marked the beginning of President Nixon's new China policy, which culminated in

²⁹ There was scant evidence for any other than verbal support by the PRC, but the Malaysian leadership portrayed the 'Emergency' and *Konfrontasi* as signs of the aggressive nature of Chinese Communism (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 149).

³⁰ By 1973 there were an estimated 20,000 Thai military 'volunteers' fighting in Laos (Evans and Rowley, 1990: 66).

his Beijing visit in 1972 and transformed the regional power configuration to what has become known as the strategic triangle (for details, see Lai, 1995).

In the strategic triangle, relations between the great powers in the region were transformed considerably compared to the Cold War dynamics of the 1950 and 1960s, which in a simplified form had been based on an East-West dichotomy between Communist and anti-Communist forces. However, by the late 1960s, the 1950s China-Soviet Union alliance had come to an end. The gradual emergence of China as a third great regional power had spurred geopolitical rivalry and, paired with extreme ideological alienation, led to a drastic deterioration in bilateral relations. These culminated in border skirmishes in 1969. The impact of Chinese-Soviet hostility on alignment dynamics in the Asian region was profound. For the next two decades, temporary alliances between two of the three powers against the third party were to replace the previous Communist versus anti-Communist configuration, after China and the US had first improved relations rapidly in the early 1970s. Overall, China was the greatest beneficiary at the time as the country managed to overcome the isolation of the Cultural Revolution years. Although the weakest of the three in terms of power, China managed to play the US and the Soviet Union off against each other, hence increasing its own leverage in global politics.

Furthermore, events in Southeast Asia unfolded in a way favourable to Beijing. The right wing coup in Cambodia by General Lon Nol resulted in a coalition between all anti-Lon Nol groups, the Khmer Rouge and the formerly neutralist King Sihanouk. This provided Peking with bright strategic prospects, as it resulted in a system of alliances favourable to Chinese causes (Simmons, 1970: 14-15). If faced in the future with a victorious North Vietnam, traditionally truculent towards Peking, China now had an alliance partner with which it could stymie Vietnamese designs on Indochina (Simmons, 1970: 15). The reemergence of the PRC as an international actor, the changes in US China policy, and the possibility of American disengagement from Indochina irreversibly and drastically altered the international environment for Southeast Asian states. The need to contemplate readjustments of their own foreign policies was evident.

3. 4 ASEAN's Response to Geopolitical Change in 1970-1971

Individual ASEAN members launched diplomatic initiatives in 1970 and 1971 that indicated that their leaders had realized the need for a more active foreign policy, but at this stage initiatives were firstly made unilaterally, with no attempts to coordinate policies, and secondly they were proposed outside the ASEAN framework. Until mid-1971 there was no indication that ASEAN members were aspiring towards the coordination of their diplomacy. A culture of consultation and consensus seeking was conspicuously absent.

In 1970 Indonesia organized the Jakarta Conference on Cambodia to discuss possible solutions to the problem of foreign intervention in Cambodia following Lon Nol's coup. However, ASEAN's role as a collective was virtually non-existent at the Jakarta Conference, partly because of the lack of interest of some members (Singapore did not send any senior minister). The conference resulted in a communiqué recommending the withdrawal of foreign troops with no further action taken to end the civil war.

At the Jakarta Conference Indonesia's Foreign Minister Malik aimed at presenting ASEAN as a non-ideological group, assuming this stand would allow Indonesia to play a significant role at the Paris talks on a Vietnam settlement.³¹ However, Indonesia's position was characterized by ambiguity. In public, Indonesia presented itself as a paragon case of non-alignment, whereas trade and aid relations with the West and the virulent anti-Communism of the 'New Order' regime suggested pro-Western alignment.

Together with Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman Malik co-sponsored proposals that envisaged Asian nations acting as a bloc and aimed at forestalling the worrisome emergence of two antagonistic blocs in Southeast Asia.³² Ideally, the superpowers would be kept out of the region. A Southeast Asian bloc with sufficient strength to lend it credibility in negotiations with China and the Soviet Union could aim at guarantees of permanent non-interference, 'live and let live agreements'.³³

³¹ Indonesia's non-aligned stand was accentuated when Foreign Minister Malik spoke out against 'any form of military alliance in Southeast Asia', and expressed his doubts about the usefulness of a Thai-South Vietnamese alliance. Quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 23, 1970: 4.

³² *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 14, 1980: 16.

³³ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 3, 1970.

In contrast to Malik, Thanat deemed it necessary to obtain US support for the realization of those plans that extended beyond support for South Vietnam only.³⁴ Although Malik and Thanat differed in their preference for US support, they agreed on the desirability of 'Asian solutions for Asian problems'.³⁵ However, the proclaimed preference for 'Asian solutions for Asian problems' at the Jakarta Conference was not helped when China, North Vietnam and North Korea declined to attend, partly in reflection of Indonesia's pro-Western image (Leifer, 1983: 135).

At this juncture it became apparent that while ASEAN members shared an aversion to Communism they differed in their envisaged strategies to deal with the problem. Those differences became most evident when the Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman issued a controversial invitation to the pro-Western regimes in South Vietnam and Laos to attend the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in 1970. He issued the invitation without the consent of the rest of ASEAN and despite evidence that Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand all disagreed with the move.³⁶ The issue of attendance constituted more than a procedural question, as ASEAN partners objected to the ostensive anti-Communist bias inherent in invitations to South Vietnam and Laos. The differences among ASEAN leaders are evident if Malaysia's preferences are juxtaposed with those inherent to Malik and Thanat's proposals in 1970 as well as Thanat's suggestion in 1971 for a Bandung-like summit of Asian countries from which the rigidly anti-Communist regimes of Nationalist China, South Korea, and South Vietnam would be excluded.³⁷

If those initiatives indicate divergent approaches to the problem of regional security, the inherent lack of shared visions was exacerbated by the absence of consultative practices. Most significantly, in September 1970, two weeks before becoming Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Razak chose the venue of the Non-Aligned Conference in Lusaka to propose the neutralization of Southeast Asia without prior consultation of ASEAN partners (Narine, 1998: 198). The fact that a non-ASEAN forum was chosen to moot a topic of primary concern for ASEAN said everything about the state of foreign policy coordination during ASEAN's formative years.

³⁴ At this juncture, it became evident that Thailand's interest diverged from that of the US, as it was not just seeking containment of Communism, but a Southeast Asia that would be stable in the long run.

³⁵ It should be emphasized that Thailand's leadership was divided. Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn was staunchly anti-Communist and opposed any accommodation with China.

³⁶ See *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 8, 1970: 5. However, only Singaporean officials spoke out openly against it.

Noticeably, most unilateral initiatives at that time came from Malaysia. In that vein, the Five-Power Defence Agreement between Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom that supplanted the Anglo-Malay Defence Agreement (AMDA) also came about without consultations.³⁸ Razak's neutralization proposal nonetheless indicated a change in Malaysia's foreign policy strategy that brought Malaysia closer to the positions of Malik and Thanat.

The lack of foreign policy coordination became most visible at the occasion of the October 1971 vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the admission of the People's Republic of China to the UN. On October 25, 1971, the General Assembly voted in favour of a twenty-three power draft resolution expelling the Republic of China from the UN and recognizing the People's Republic of China as exclusively endowed with the right to legitimately represent China. The so-called Albania resolution was supported by 76 states while 35 voted against it and 17 abstained.³⁹ Consequently, the PRC replaced the Republic of China as the sole representative of the Chinese people.⁴⁰

The voting patterns of the ASEAN member states were divergent. As Table 2 indicates, the Philippines followed unambiguously the line of its formal ally, the United States, thus proving most hostile among ASEAN members to the PRC's intentions. Thailand also supported the United States by co-sponsoring both resolutions, on the relevance of Article 18 and on dual representation. In contrast to the Philippines, however, Thailand diplomatically abstained in the final vote when it had become apparent that nothing would stop the PRC's entry. It could be said that Indonesia also followed the American line, albeit it refrained from co-sponsoring anti-PRC resolutions. In contrast, Malaysia and Singapore unequivocally supported the admission of the PRC. The United Nations vote illustrated most dramatically the lack of even a minimal coordination of the policies of ASEAN members.

³⁷ Cabinet Source, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, August 9, 1971: 1.

³⁸ For details, see Morrison and Suhrke (1978: 153-156).

³⁹ The 1970 vote (51y - 49n - 27 abs) had been an indication of the People's Republic's improving fortunes, although according to 1970 procedures it was insufficient to seat the PRC.

⁴⁰ This vote had been preceded by a vote on a draft resolution, which set out that the expulsion of Taiwan was an important question under Article 18 of the UN Charter requiring a two-thirds majority. However, this resolution was turned down (55 in favour versus 59 against, with 15 abstentions). As a result, only a simple majority was required for the decision on PRC / Taiwan representation.

Table 2: ASEAN and the UN China Resolutions

	Resolution 2758	Co-Sponsor	Article 18 Resolution	Co-Sponsor
Indonesia	A	N	Y	N
Malaysia	Y	N	N	N
Philippines	N	N	Y	Y
Singapore	Y	N	N	N
Thailand	A	N	Y	Y
United States	N	N	Y	Y

Y – In Favour of PRC; N – Against Seating the PRC; A -Abstention

3.5 The ZOPFAN Declaration and ASEAN Foreign Policy 1971-1975

Before the vote on China's UN representation, ASEAN members had already arranged for an ad hoc meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers at the end of November 1971, reflecting consensus on the fundamental nature of geopolitical changes (Leifer, 1989: 56). Indonesia was particularly concerned about the possibility of a separate agreement between Malaysia and China. This was perceived as a threat to regional order as envisaged by Indonesia (Leifer, 1989: 55), after the announcement of the planned visit by Burma's President Ne Win to Peking⁴¹ had already added to anxieties about China's diplomatic offensive, both global and regional. The trade accord between Malaysia and China in August 1971, the first direct agreement between any ASEAN member and China in this period, exacerbated those concerns.

In October, Tun Razak sought support for his neutralization proposal at the United Nations (Shaw, 1976: 228), prior to any endorsement by ASEAN fellow members. However, he had visited Indonesia and Thailand the previous December in support of his plans (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 158). In November, the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur avowedly established consensus on how to approach China but no details were made public.⁴² However, its most important outcome was the adoption of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration that endorsed the

⁴¹ Reported in *Bangkok Post*, August 5, 1971: 5.

⁴² *Bangkok Post*, 27 November, 1971: 1.

ZOPFAN idea (Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality) on November 24, 1971. In its most important clause, ASEAN members declared their intentions

To exert initially necessary efforts to secure the recognition of, and respect for, South-East Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers...

The ZOPFAN declaration constituted ASEAN's concerted answer to the changed regional environment (Nair, 1984: 15). The compromise and the unity displayed were lauded as a first in the history of Southeast Asia.⁴³ Undoubtedly, as the first collective foreign policy position of ASEAN, the declaration marked a significant milestone for cooperation. However, the praise for this collective achievement concealed considerable differences in strategic outlook that were plastered over by a formula that represented "an expression of creative ambiguity" (Leifer, 1989: 58).

The original proposal, mooted by Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Razak at the Non-Aligned Conference in Lusaka in September 1970, had envisaged the neutralization of Southeast Asia, guaranteed by the great powers. The proposal contained two elements: firstly, it aimed at the neutralization of the region, guaranteed by China, the Soviet Union, and the United States and required those superpowers to abstain from attempts to draw the region into their zones of influence. Secondly, it asked Southeast Asian countries to pledge their commitment to policies of non-interference and non-aggression (Alagappa, 1991: 272).

However, Indonesia rejected the assumption implicit to Razak's proposal that the big powers should guarantee Southeast Asia's neutralization (Narine, 1998: 199). In general, Razak's proposal had endorsed a legitimate role for great powers in Southeast Asia's security, contrary to the preamble of ASEAN's founding document and Indonesia's aspirations for regional autonomy. More specifically, Razak's proposal would have given China a stake in the region, an unacceptable proposition from Jakarta's perspective.

⁴³ Thanat, Thailand's 'special representative' after Thanom Kittikachorn's coup, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, November 29, 1971: 1.

The declaration ultimately arrived at by ASEAN foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur essentially denied endorsement to the Malaysian vision of regional order and instead adopted Indonesia's perspective (Leifer, 1989: 57-59). The declared objective of the Kuala Lumpur ZOPFAN Declaration in November 1971 was a Southeast Asia free of interference by external powers. It thus rejected the accommodation of China inherent to Razak's proposal and established a compromise that reaffirmed the formula of the founding document of 1967. It allowed Thailand and the Philippines to maintain temporarily their bilateral alliances with the United States while endorsing aspirations for the neutralization of the region held by Malaysia and Indonesia (Narine, 1998). Malaysian officials supported the compromise formula, because Malaysian officials could use the neutralization proposal as a domestic device to downplay the importance of the Five Power Defence Agreement (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 158), stressing the limited military significance and transient character of the agreement (Shaw, 1976: 222).

Both Singapore and Thailand shared the conviction that the presence of the US military was needed for the stability of the region. The Philippines also had reservations against the declaration, as it had the potential to negatively affect both the US military presence and the Philippine claim to Sabah (Alagappa, 1991: 273).⁴⁴ Ultimately, the concerns of the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand were assuaged by an interpretation of the ZOPFAN principles as long-term goals that would not affect any country's security arrangement in the current climate.⁴⁵

Overall, the ZOPFAN episode underlined Indonesia's claim for regional leadership, as the declaration essentially endorsed the Indonesian vision for regional order (Leifer, 1989). However, if the ZOPFAN declaration had raised hopes for a coordinated ASEAN approach to security relations, based on the Kuala Lumpur agreement "to continue to consult each other with a view to fostering an integrated approach on all matters and developments which affect the Southeast Asian region", such hopes quickly dissipated. The ZOPFAN formula was omitted from the joint communiqué at the next ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Singapore in April 1972, indicating that the "consensus of aspiration by the foreign ministers of ASEAN

⁴⁴ President Marcos ostensibly linked his approval to the Philippine's unsettled claims to Sabah and to the endorsement of a yet to be convened Asian summit. *Bangkok Post*, November 26, 1971: 5.

meeting on an *ad hoc* basis did not constitute a commitment by ASEAN as a corporate entity” (Leifer, 1989: 59).

In the aftermath of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, ASEAN members continued to pursue their security objectives unilaterally, without consultations with ASEAN partners. The most blatant example of uncoordinated unilateralism was Malaysia’s opening of diplomatic relations with China in May 1974, instigated by Tun Razak’s visit to China (Leifer, 1989: 63). At this juncture the differences covered up by the compromise formula of the ZOPFAN Declaration resurfaced when Malaysia pursued unilaterally the accommodation with China it had originally sought through Razak’s neutralization proposal.

Unilateral foreign policy initiatives may have been contrary to the spirit of regional cooperation, but they did not prevent ASEAN members from making strides in two other areas. Firstly, ASEAN started collective bargaining in economic affairs with external partners, evident in the formal dialogue established with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1972 and Australia in 1974. Secondly, by 1975 several pairs of ASEAN members had advanced confidence building far enough to carry out military exercises. The fact that the network of exercises centred on Indonesia, which by 1975 cooperated with all other ASEAN members (Anwar, 1994: 151), was a success bearing in mind the concerns of ASEAN’s partners about Indonesia’s intentions in 1967.

Evidence for the success of confidence building can also be found in Singapore’s foreign policy. In the early years of ASEAN Singapore had been a distinctly inward-looking place and foreign policy assumed low priority. However, coinciding with the development of a sense of security within ASEAN, Singapore started to adopt a more outward-looking perspective on international affairs. In that context, 1973 can be regarded as the watershed in Singapore’s relations with ASEAN (Rau, 1981; Kim, 1997). In that year, the first visit by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to Indonesia since Singapore’s independence in 1965 indicated a qualitative change in regional relations, even though the anticipated fall of South Vietnam to Communism certainly added an external incentive too.

⁴⁵ This understanding became apparent in comments by President Marcos that the Philippines’ military agreements with the US or the Five Power Defence Agreement would not be affected “as yet” (quoted

3.6 ASEAN from the End of the Vietnam War to the Bali Summit

If the geopolitical changes of the years 1968 - 1971 had presented a challenge, the Communist ascendancy to power in Indochina in 1975 posed a problem of far greater magnitude for ASEAN members. Even farsighted observers, who could have predicted the general trends, would nevertheless have been surprised by the speed at which changes materialized. The Communist victories in Cambodia and South Vietnam in April 1975, followed by the takeover of Laos in December, must have come as a shock to ASEAN governments, all with a history of anti-Communist struggles. It confronted them with an Indochina ruled by regimes that adhered to the very Communist ideology that ASEAN members had feared most when they established the association in 1967. On a more tangible level, a wave of refugees soon became a problem for several ASEAN members, in particular Thailand but also Malaysia, as more than one million people escaped from Vietnam.

Nevertheless, scholars and foreign policy officials came to regard those developments as a two-edged sword for ASEAN. Several scholars argued that the Communist takeover of Indochina might have been the wake-up call that prodded ASEAN into closer cooperation (Huxley, 1985: 4; Osborne, 1995: 199) and “breathed new life into ASEAN” (Thayer, 1990: 142). This view is underpinned by the assumption that an external challenge common to all ASEAN members would enhance cohesion. The sequence of events in Southeast Asia certainly lends credence to this view.

The perceived need for enhanced regional cooperation in the aftermath of the Communist victories in Indochina was reflected in intense consultations (Huxley, 1990: 86), at a scale hitherto unknown among ASEAN governments. At a meeting in May 1975 ASEAN foreign ministers adopted a conciliatory approach towards Indochina, even though different interpretations as to threats and opportunities inherent in the new situation emerged (Thayer, 1990: 142). While Malaysia’s leadership under Tun Razak emphasized the chance for peaceful relations, Indonesia and, especially, Singapore and Thailand were more sceptical. Thailand at the same time wanted to avoid any steps towards ASEAN military cooperation that could have been interpreted as an alliance in “SEATO style” (Thayer, 1990: 142). The particular concerns in Singapore and Thailand about developments in Indochina were reflected

in *Bangkok Post*, November 28, 1971:1).

in consultations between Lee Kuan Yew and Thai Prime Minister Kukrit in Bangkok right after the Communist victory in Vietnam (Thayer, 1990: 141).

Among ASEAN members, it was in Singapore and Thailand that foreign policy had undergone the most significant reorientation since 1970/1971. The 1973 visit by Lee Kuan Yew to Jakarta had prepared the ground for a more outward-looking Singaporean foreign policy. In the aftermath of the Communist victory in Vietnam in 1975 Singapore's policy became increasingly "externally propelled" reflecting the profound geopolitical changes (Kim, 1997: 76). The Communist victories in Vietnam and Cambodia were perceived as adverse changes in Singapore's environment and, as a result of those changed threat perceptions, the Singaporean leadership was given an impetus to extend cooperation with ASEAN countries beyond economics to political and security affairs (Kim, 1997: 76).

In Thailand foreign policy had also become more pragmatic by 1975. Under the staunchly anti-Communist leadership with Thanom Kittakachorn at the helm (1963-1973), both China and Vietnam had been regarded as parts of the same big enemy, Communism, which threatened Thai security in the form of insurgent groups. However, after Thanom was brought down in 1973, the image of a monolithic Communist enemy was modified (Leifer, 1989: 70). Subsequently, in July 1975, following the fall of Saigon, formal ties with China were established by the Kukrit government against the opposition of the National Security Council (NSC) and the military (Jiwalai, 1994: 67). Furthermore, the US bases, a highly visible symbol of Thailand's involvement in the Vietnam War, were removed in 1976.

When ASEAN leaders decided to convene their first ever summit of ASEAN heads of governments on Bali in February 1976, the policy towards Indochina was one major topic. Both Singapore and Thailand gave clear priority to a potential threat from Vietnam, while Indonesia and Malaysia did not. In contrast to that of Singapore and Thailand, Malaysia's foreign policy remained fundamentally unchanged when Hussein Onn succeeded Tun Razak after his death in January 1976 (Saravanamuttu, 1997: 40), even though relations with the West were strengthened (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 167). The Philippines were preoccupied with domestic security, benefiting from maritime insulation, the US alliance and comparatively good communal relations with the small Chinese community (Leifer, 1989: 71-72). Not surprisingly, given those differences, the Bali Summit failed to produce a clear

Indochina policy, due to “opposing pressures” from China and Vietnam as well as ASEAN’s desire not to openly antagonize Vietnam (Nair, 1984: 62-64).

The true significance of the Bali Summit does not rest on particular policies, but on the conclusion of two documents, the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Firstly, ASEAN heads of government signed the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. This document is significant as it included, for the first time, ASEAN political cooperation as part of the regular ASEAN agenda and ASEAN members agreed to co-operate in security matters albeit on a non-ASEAN – essentially bilateral - basis (Tuan Hoang Anh, 1996: 64).

Secondly, ASEAN concluded the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Also referred to as the Bali Treaty, TAC outlined ASEAN’s concept of a regional order and became a document of paramount importance for ASEAN. The norms enshrined in TAC encompass respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force and the peaceful resolution of conflict. What was significant was the fact of ASEAN’s joint proclamation, not the nature of it. The TAC norms corresponded closely to the sets of norms contained in the United Nations Charter as well as other regional groupings (Leifer, 1996: 35; 1999: 29).

The two documents indicated ASEAN’s agreement on normative prescriptions for the conduct of regional relations and provided a framework for extended ASEAN cooperation (Tuan Hoang Anh, 1996: 64). As an expression of ASEAN’s willingness to conduct relations with the Indochinese countries on a cooperative basis, ASEAN designed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as a code of regional conduct that was open for accession by other states (Huxley, 1990: 87). However, this also indicated the desire of ASEAN members to make the norms enshrined in TAC applicable to the whole of Southeast Asia. On the institutional level, the conclusion of the two declarations was accompanied by an agreement to establish an ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. However, this measure did not constitute a major revamp of ASEAN, as the intergovernmental character of the association was maintained (Leifer, 1989: 26-27).

3.7 Rising Tensions in Indochina: ASEAN Foreign Policy after the Bali Summit

Communist rule in the Indochina region and China was certainly disconcerting for ASEAN governments at a time when some of them still struggled to control

Communist insurgencies in their own countries. Yet, in the aftermath of the Bali Summit, ASEAN members had reasons to be sanguine about regional stability. Firstly, relations between ASEAN members and the Communist countries displayed no signs of immediate crisis in 1976-1977, even though Thai-Vietnamese relations deteriorated sharply for some time under Tanin Kraivixien's leadership (October 1976 to October 1977). His staunchly anti-Communist policies⁴⁶ reversed the marked improvement of relations achieved under the governments of Kukrit Pramoj (1975-1976), and Seni Pramoj (1976) that had brought about the normalization of relations (Jiwalai, 1994: 64-74).⁴⁷

Secondly, at the time of the second ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977, it was clear that ASEAN had gained a good measure of international standing, evident in the attendance of foreign ministers from Australia, New Zealand and Japan at a postministerial dialogue with their ASEAN counterparts, followed by ministerial-level dialogue with the United States in September (Leifer, 1989: 81-82).

However, by September 1977 existing anxieties among ASEAN members were exacerbated by the spectre of serious conflict among their Communist neighbours, which threatened to engulf the region. The relationship between Vietnam and Cambodia had already deteriorated after the breakdown of their May 1976 border negotiations. In April 1977 Cambodian soldiers started raids on Vietnamese villages (Chanda, 1986: 229; Thayer, 1990: 145), which then in September culminated in a massacre of civilians (Chanda, 1986: 229). The Cambodian aggression was encouraged by China, which saw the Khmer Rouge as a useful ally against Vietnam at a time when Vietnam's posture of independence led to a deterioration of Chinese-Vietnamese relations (Chanda, 1986). Following Vietnam's rapid reunification in 1976, China feared Vietnamese predominance over Indochina, traditionally regarded as part of the Chinese sphere of influence (Chanda, 1986; Leifer, 1989).

After a punitive Vietnamese action in October, Cambodia in December 1977 for the first time publicly accused Vietnam of aggression. Mounting tension on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border and the accelerating deterioration of Chinese-

⁴⁶ He even linked the student demonstrations - which had caused the major rift in Thai politics and ultimately enabled Tanin to take over power - to a Vietnamese plot (Nair, 1984: 77).

⁴⁷ Foreign Minister Bhichai Rattakul's visit to Laos and Vietnam, resulting in the communiqué of August 6, 1976, prepared the opening of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Vietnam. One of the four principles agreed upon was that the two countries would not allow any aggressive acts to be

Vietnamese relations as well as the reluctance of the United States to enter relations with Hanoi induced Vietnam to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union on November 3, 1978 (Chanda, 1986). This treaty between the Soviet Union and Vietnam added a new dimension to existing conflicts, as it linked Southeast Asia to the vitriolic Sino-Soviet conflict and, by extension, to the global Cold War between the superpowers.

ASEAN members were apprehensive about the increasing involvement of China and the Soviet Union in the region, contrary to ZOPFAN principles, which ASEAN wanted the Indochinese countries to ascribe to, too. However, at this stage the prevailing attitude of ASEAN towards events in Indochina and Chinese-Vietnamese relations was characterized by passive neutrality. The attitude towards the Communist rivals was one of "we have to live with these people, but we don't want to get too close to any of them."⁴⁸

Among ASEAN governments, the prevalent problem representation of the rapidly deteriorating relations between Cambodia and Vietnam, and China and Vietnam, regarded this as an internecine Communist conflict. By implication, ASEAN members were neither involved nor did regional leaders feel they should be. However, soon there were indications that ASEAN members would find it difficult to maintain ostensive indifference to the relations between their neighbours. The visits by the Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong in September 1978 and by the Chinese Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping in November 1978 served the purpose of courting ASEAN members to take sides with either China or Vietnam.

The reaction towards the two guests differed across the region. While Deng received a warm welcome in Thailand, his reception in Malaysia and Singapore was much colder.⁴⁹ Pham Van Dong went to all five ASEAN capitals in September 1978. Not surprisingly, statements with regard to the abstention from involvement with local insurgencies drew applause from Thailand and Malaysia.⁵⁰ However, while his announcements were generally well received, all ASEAN members individually declined Pham Van Dong's proposal of a non-aggression treaty.

committed by any foreign country from one's territory against the other or against any country in the region, see *Bangkok Post*, May 21, 1980: 3.

⁴⁸ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 24, 1978: 32.

⁴⁹ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 24 1978: 30-32.

⁵⁰ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 27, 1978: 10.

Most notably, ASEAN members coordinated their responses to Pham Van Dong's offer and collectively opted against its adoption (Huxley, 1990: 89; Thayer, 1990: 145-146). Previously, they had already declined to accommodate Vietnam's proposal for a Zone of Peace, Independence, and Genuine Neutrality (ZOPIGN) alongside their own ZOPFAN concept. However, while ASEAN officials consulted one another and agreed on a common stance towards Vietnam's overtures, there was no similar effort to reach an agreement on a collective response towards China's courting of ASEAN.

As a consequence of those state visits, the only noticeable effect was the shift in Thailand's policy towards China. By the time of Deng's visit to Thailand in late 1978 (November 5 -14), both countries had a lot to gain in strategic terms. While China tried to fend off Soviet and Vietnamese influence in the region, Thailand was concerned about both Indochina and Burma (Lee, 1981: 58-62). Indeed, at this stage Thai leaders had abandoned the image of monolithic Communism that had prevailed since the Korean War and began to see China as a potential countervailing power against an expansionist Vietnam (Leifer, 1989: 70). It is not explicit in statements by Thai leaders what brought about this perceptual shift. Presumably, the increasing polarization between two Communist camps following the Chinese-Soviet clashes in 1969 did not escape the attention of strategists in Bangkok. However, it is not clear why the cognitive adjustment process still took a decade to complete. One plausible explanation is that only the Communist victory in Indochina and the subsequent emergence of a Chinese-Vietnamese rivalry lend the regional trends significance for decision-makers in Bangkok. It was only after 1975 that Thai policy makers needed to address the question of how to deal with Vietnam, arguably leading to the insight that a split within the Communist had a) occurred and b) could be exploited to Bangkok's advantage.

Given this change in perception, it came as no surprise that further rapprochement between Thailand and China happened rapidly. Deng's public display of homage to the royal family was interpreted as an indication that China was willing to prioritize state-to-state over party-to-party relations (Lee, 1981: 64).⁵¹ In contrast, Pham Van Dong's assurances with regard to the Thai Communist Party (CTP) had been regarded with a great deal of skepticism. From the Chinese perspective, the visit

⁵¹ Soon thereafter the broadcast of Communist propaganda into Thailand from the Voice of the People of Thailand, a Yunnan-based radio station, was stopped, giving credibility to Deng's assurances.

marked the shift from Sino-Vietnamese alignment to Sino-ASEAN ties (Lee, 1981: 72).

Overall, the diplomatic visits by Pham Van Dong and Deng with the purpose of winning over ASEAN did not tilt the diplomatic balance towards either China or Vietnam. If Thailand favoured the Chinese side, within ASEAN this was offset by opposite feelings in Jakarta, where amicable relations between Indonesia and Vietnam combined with continued suspicions of Communist China. The lack of a common alignment posture is consistent with the differences in threat perceptions that informed debates in ASEAN capitals. Despite the trend that pointed towards Thai-Chinese alignment against Vietnam, and Indonesian understanding for Vietnam's position, the belief prevailed that ASEAN could stay out of what was interpreted as an internecine struggle among Communist rivals. ASEAN was afforded the luxury that it did not have to make a choice (Leifer, 1989: 730).

3.8 ASEAN's Formative Years 1967 – 1978: More than Survival

This chapter has served the purpose of giving a brief overview of ASEAN's formative years in order to provide a baseline against which ASEAN's development can be judged. It has not aimed at a systematic analysis of security behaviour and the evaluation of different perspectives on alignment. However, it does allow insights into the nature of ASEAN security during the association's formative period. To what extent did ASEAN transform the patterns of international politics that prevailed in the region before 1967?

By the end of 1978 it was clear that ASEAN constituted a success story in regional cooperation that set the organization apart from its ill-fated predecessors. During the first twelve years of its existence ASEAN underwent an evolution from an inward-looking organization that had to contend with considerable tensions among its members to an emerging international actor that in 1971 and 1976 formally set out its members' vision for regional order and conduct. However, apart from rudimentary confidence building through bilateral exercises the association did not play any significant role in security affairs.

ASEAN's achievements during the 1967-1978 period have to be assessed relative to the state of affairs in the region prior to 1967. In the light of the legacy of conflict and suspicion that the organization inherited in 1967, ASEAN's record is

noteworthy. Far-reaching security co-operation could not be expected shortly after the termination of *Konfrontasi* and given the seriousness of the Malaysian-Philippine dispute over Sabah. The positive achievement of ASEAN in its early years did not rest on the display of a common position in external relations, and not even on the co-ordination of policies, but simply on the fact that intra-mural tensions were prevented from erupting into open conflict. As a matter of fact, "ASEAN was the institutional product of regional conflict resolution" (Leifer, 1989: 17). The resulting climate of regional reconciliation proved to be a seedbed for the first steps of ASEAN as an international actor, manifest in the 1971 ZOPFAN Declaration and collective negotiations with outside parties in the economic sphere, and made possible agreement on regional rules for conduct which became enshrined in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC).

On the other hand, the alignment behaviour of ASEAN members in the years 1967 – 1978 provides no evidence that the regional association had any impact on the direction of their members' security policies. Confronted with profound geopolitical changes between 1968-1971, ASEAN did not provide a forum for the development of a joint diplomatic approach towards China. Talks among ASEAN members about the coordination of their foreign policies towards China in November 1971 yielded the ZOPFAN Declaration as an expression of a regional vision, but the momentum of foreign policy coordination could not be maintained. Malaysia's unilateral initiation of diplomatic relations with China in 1974 put into doubt the prospects for consultative foreign policies.

Nonetheless, after the Communist victories in Indochina in 1975 ASEAN members held their first ever summit on Bali in 1976 and came up with a set of principles that they regarded as a blueprint for regional order, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Yet, again, after 1976 ASEAN did not respond with a common alignment posture to tensions in its neighbourhood.

If measured against the three indicators of community, the modest beginnings of ASEAN become apparent. Throughout the 1967-1978 period shared interpretations of problems and objectives facing the region centred on the necessity to keep Communism at bay. However, despite a shared concern about Communist threats and a strong proclivity to approach security from a balance-of-power perspective, strategies among ASEAN members varied. While Thailand and the

Philippines engaged in external balancing with the help of their alliances with the US, Singapore displayed a mixed strategy of external and internal balancing. Indonesia focused on internal development, the enhancement of national resilience, in a clear example of internal balancing. In terms of balance-of-threat theory, Malaysia changed from an external balancing strategy against China under Tunku Abdul Rahman to one of bandwagoning under Tun Razak.

The absence of a common alignment posture is noteworthy, because ASEAN members had in common the same threat perceptions. There is little doubt about the general orientation of ASEAN in the early years as an essentially anti-Communist grouping (Frost, 1990:6), based on the shared experience of Communist insurgencies (Kurus, 1993: 29). This was evident in the unambiguous support by four out of five ASEAN members for US intervention in Vietnam (Lau, 1976: 537). In 1967 four out of five ASEAN members hosted foreign military bases and the Jakarta conference in 1970 was essentially an anti-Communist gathering (Lau, 1972: 9).

The provision of security for ASEAN members continued to rest with Western powers, particularly the United States. Despite some signs of a long-term vision for a Southeast Asian bloc there was no indication that the alignment of individual ASEAN members was affected by ASEAN membership. The shared anti-Communist outlook of ASEAN governments provided an area of agreement that helped establishing non-antagonistic relations among member states, but it did not provide a rallying point for a common alignment posture.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Rajaratnam expressed his view on the limitations of ASEAN when he pointed out in 1969, "ASEAN still was a long way from developing clearly recognized regional interests" apart from "fear of Communism."⁵² Those observations are instructive for theories of alignment, as they cast doubt on the proposition that shared threat perceptions or shared interests are sufficient to give rise to alliances in the absence of an immediate threat.

However, the period from 1967 to 1978 also provides little evidence for the significance of identity considerations. In their security relations ASEAN members looked at outside sources for support. Thailand and the Philippines, despite efforts to diversify their external relations, relied heavily on the security umbrella of the United

States. Consultations were rare, even though the principle of *musyawarah* was proclaimed. Despite the fact that some incipient traces of a desire for regional consciousness were detectable, there is little evidence of mutual identifications, as claimed by one scholar (Khong, 1997b: 338). Also, with regard to Risse-Kappen's (1996) argument about the importance of institutions for the creation of a security community, it must be noted that ASEAN failed to establish any significant institutional mechanisms during its formative years. Beyond the meetings of foreign ministers, which could be called 'institutionalized', regional leaders deliberately abstained from establishing institutions. At this stage, ASEAN's development conformed to Risse-Kappen's assumptions that there could be no community without the development of an institutional framework. However, it is interesting to note that the closer foreign policy coordination did not coincide with any significant change in institutional mechanisms.

The most important insight from the early years of ASEAN was that regional cooperation was difficult to accomplish as long as material structures and desired social interaction were not aligned. Material security needs and regional identity were not complementary.⁵² On the one hand, SEATO, arguably moribund since the Laotian crises in 1960-62 and dismantled in 1977 (Buszynski, 1983), showed that the possession of material power and anti-Communism were not sufficient by themselves to provide a basis for regional security cooperation. SEATO suffered from an emphasis on intra-regional competition, as derived from its anti-Communist orientation. As a mode of interaction, competition was not welcomed by Indonesia and, at least after Tun Razak's rise to power, Malaysia, because it contradicted the (Indonesian-sponsored) idea of regional autonomy enshrined in both the ASEAN founding document and the ZOPFAN declaration.

On the other hand, the principle of regional autonomy and extensive regional cooperation could not be implemented because structures of material power made this

⁵² *Straits Times*, December 19, 1969, quoted in Rau (1981: 104). George argues that Singapore only moved closer to its neighbours because it perceived that if it did not cooperate, the United States would give priority to resource-rich Indonesia and in the process ignore Singapore (George, 1973: 176).

⁵³ The Philippines embodied this new orientation that comprised the contradictory elements of superpower protection and regional self-reliance. Carlos Romulo, Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, expressed his conviction that "the time has come for the countries in this region to strike out for themselves – to become more self-reliant," and "we can have a regional grouping of Asian nations, irrespective of ideology, including the People's Republic of China." At the same time, Romulo cast no doubts on his attachments to the United States (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 30, 1970: 13).

option unpalatable for most ASEAN members. Firstly, their external security was best served by alliances with external partners and secondly, regional autonomy was burdened by the notion (and previous experience) of Indonesian attempts at regional hegemony. However, in the early 1970s ASEAN started to conduct economic bargaining as a collective, encouraged by the European Community that wanted to negotiate with the whole grouping. While this was a first hint at the possibility of functional cooperation, the ZOPFAN Declaration and the principles of regional order proclaimed in 1976 could be seen as the nucleus of an emergent Southeast Asian consciousness, even though this did not affect operational security policies. In summary, the international relations of Southeast Asia underwent considerable change between 1967 and 1978, as the five ASEAN members managed to transform their relations from competition to cautious cooperation. What are the lessons from this period?

Firstly, on the theoretical level, the development of ASEAN security relations in the early period is only comprehensible if understood as a complex interplay between material structures, social interaction, and changing perceptions. Material structures, the distribution of relative power explains important limitations of the potential for security cooperation among ASEAN members. At the same time, the transformation of regional relations from patterns of conflict and competition to cooperation is inexplicable if only looked at through the prism of power. An understanding of ASEAN's establishment and the transformation of patterns of conflict towards (limited) cooperation is not possible without the appreciation of beliefs and perceptions of individual leaders.

Secondly, with regard to ASEAN security behaviour and cooperation, two aspects of ASEAN's formative years should be remembered: the catalyzing effect of external events, evident in ASEAN's response to the geopolitical changes in 1969-1971 and 1975, and the creative ability of ASEAN leaders to obscure policy intent and differences in outlook through ambiguous declarations. Contradictions between Indonesia's declaratory non-alignment and de facto pro-Western alignment under Suharto can be interpreted as the skilful use of ambiguous diplomacy. However, ambiguity can also be regarded as the strategy of the weak, compensating for a lack of true freedom of action. In the case of ZOPFAN, the compromise formula temporarily

bridged the contradiction between proclaimed aspirations for regional autonomy on one hand and the perceived strategic need of great power involvement on the other.

The absence of common identifications and shared perspectives combined with the lack of consultations among ASEAN members to underline the fact that ASEAN's primary accomplishment was the ability to prevent the eruption of intra-mural conflicts. The lack of common alignment lends credence to the view that security considerations were a by-product of ASEAN's founding (Leifer, 1989: vii) rather than the primary purpose. In its formative years ASEAN's main function was intra-regional confidence building. However, by 1978 ASEAN had yet to endure a real test of its approach to regional cooperation. As contemporary observers noted:

ASEAN as a political entente has contributed to the stability of non-communist Southeast Asia. Whether or not it will continue to function successfully in this respect will increasingly depend upon its ability to manage relations with the communist states in Southeast Asia (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 287-88).

Chapter 4

ASEAN and the Cambodia Conflict 1979-1988

This chapter examines systematically ASEAN's alignment behaviour during the Cambodia Conflict between 1979 and 1988. The analysis is divided up into five time periods, characterized by different security dynamics. The subdivisions reflect the occurrence of turning points in ASEAN diplomacy that betokened either changes in alignment or significant shifts in security discourse, which could have resulted in different alignment patterns but did not for reasons to be discussed.

This chapter starts with an outline of ASEAN's response to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia in early January 1979 and traces the emergence of a cohesive ASEAN diplomacy during that year (section 4.1). The next two sections analyze two episodes that differed markedly in terms of ASEAN behaviour. Firstly, in 1980 events surrounding the Kuantan Declaration indicated considerable disagreement within ASEAN (section 4.2); however, in the aftermath of Vietnam's incursion into Thai territory in June 1980 until late 1982 ASEAN diplomacy again displayed a high degree of cohesion (section 4.3). In contrast to the eventful years 1979-1982, the years 1983-1986 were characterized by relatively few diplomatic activities. Due to their similarities, the initiatives launched during this period are summarized in conjunction with one another (section 4.4), followed by a brief recounting of events in 1987 and 1988, which marked the effective end of the Cold War in Southeast Asia (section 4.5). Applying the approach outlined in chapter 2, this chapter analyses in detail differences and commonalities among ASEAN states and the causes thereof for those different periods. Finally, this section concludes with a summative assessment of ASEAN alignment during the Cambodia Conflict, including an evaluation of the development of regional community.

When Vietnam invaded Cambodia at the end of 1978 it became obvious that the maintenance of regional stability was beyond ASEAN's control. Vietnam's action marked the beginning proper of the Third Indochina or Cambodia Conflict. ASEAN's ability to manage relations with its Communist neighbours was negatively affected by crosscutting alignments between regional parties and global adversaries, with the Cambodia Conflict being the outcome of international, regional, and local lines of conflict (Yahuda, 1996: 89).

The centuries-old feud between Cambodians and Vietnamese and the even more ancient antagonism between China and Vietnam became inextricably interlinked with the conflict between the two major Communist powers, China and the Soviet Union, after Vietnam and the Soviet Union entered a formal alliance in November 1978. This mixture of internecine ideological struggles among Communist states and nationalist, regional, and global ambitions combined to create a powder keg that exploded when Vietnam invaded Cambodia in December 1978. Moreover, the Cambodia Conflict became part of the global struggle for geopolitical influence between the Soviet Union and the United States. China and the United States aligned, as they found common ground in their shared enmity towards the Soviet Union, a trend further exacerbated by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979.

When Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia on December 25, 1978, and occupied Phnom Penh two weeks later, the event perpetuated decades of violence in Indochina, but it also had ramifications far beyond the two Indochinese rivals. The People's Republic of China chose to escalate the conflict rather than accept a humiliating defeat of its proxy, the Khmer Rouge with Pol Pot at the helm (Mackie, 1980: 4-5). This brought the Sino-Soviet conflict and the global East -West Conflict into the heart of Southeast Asia and had wide-ranging implications for ASEAN-China relations. China's invasion of northern Vietnam commencing on February 17, 1979, did not dissuade Vietnam from the continued occupation of Cambodia and subsequently two adversary coalitions became deadlocked in Southeast Asia.

Throughout the 1980s the region was characterized by polarization between a Soviet-sponsored Indochina bloc under Vietnam's leadership and an anti-Vietnamese alignment of ASEAN, China, and the United States that sustained the guerrilla war of a Khmer Rouge-led coalition against Vietnam's occupation.⁵⁴ Despite numerous initiatives to resolve the conflict in the 1980s, the stalemate in Cambodia was only broken after Gorbachev's ascendancy to power in the Soviet Union in March 1985 resulted in a radical redefinition of Soviet foreign policy between 1986 and 1988. Its implementation in turn precipitated a readjustment in Vietnam's foreign policy and paved the way for negotiations between the parties to the Cambodian Conflict.

⁵⁴ For comprehensive accounts of the conflict, see Leifer (1989) and Antolik (1990); for a brief but excellent review of ASEAN diplomacy, see Funston (1998a).

Initiated in 1987, this peace process eventually led to the Paris Peace Accord of October 1991.

The Cambodia conflict confronted ASEAN with the most difficult external challenge since its establishment. The problem for ASEAN as a collective derived from the existence of two incompatible interpretations of what the main security problems for Southeast Asia were and how the Vietnamese invasion affected ASEAN's objectives. The Indonesian side regarded Vietnam as a buffer against China in the same vein that Thailand had considered Cambodia a buffer against Vietnam. The different positions centred on the question of whether a Cambodia under Vietnamese control was preferable to Chinese influence there and in the wider region. The two strategies that logically followed from Indonesian and Thai interpretations of regional security problems were diametrically opposed: acceptance of Vietnam's action as a *fait accompli* for the sake of balancing China, or balancing against Vietnamese aggression.

The Thai position prevailed and throughout the Cambodia Conflict defined ASEAN's diplomatic alignment with the United States and China against Vietnam. In the course of the conflict, ASEAN emerged as a respected international actor based on the association's ability to maintain unity. Because the different initial preferences of ASEAN members would have suggested divergent alignment postures, the unity that prevailed on the Cambodia issue serves as an illustrative test case for competing explanations of alignment behaviour. This chapter will analyze systematically ASEAN security behaviour during the Cambodia Conflict 1979-1988. For each stage of the conflict, the three-stage approach outlined in chapter 1 will be applied to determine, firstly, the observable security behaviour and, secondly, the prevailing problem representations among ASEAN members, in order to evaluate the explanatory power of alternative explanations of alignment, threat, identity, and interest.

4.1 Vietnam's Invasion of Cambodia

ASEAN's previously upheld attitude of collective neutrality towards China and Vietnam changed when Vietnam overran Cambodia within two weeks between Christmas 1978 and early January 1979. Vietnam toppled the Khmer Rouge and set up the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) with a regime loyal to Hanoi. In

response ASEAN confronted Vietnam diplomatically. Three days after Vietnamese forces had occupied Phnom Penh, the Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik, in his capacity as chairperson of the ASEAN Standing Committee, issued an ASEAN statement on January 9, 1979, that reiterated the norms of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.⁵⁵ This was followed immediately by a Thai initiative at a special meeting in Bangkok that led to a joint communiqué on January 12, 1979. The latter used stronger language, deploring the armed intervention and demanding the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops.⁵⁶

Thailand adopted a dual strategy. In addition to Thailand's diplomatic initiative within the ASEAN framework, Thailand relied on bilateral alliances. Firstly, Thailand received backing from its traditional alliance partner, the United States. Furthermore, the Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak Chamanan secretly met with a Chinese delegation instructed by Deng Xiaoping in Ubon and reached an agreement on January 14, 1979, that established a *de facto* alliance between China and Thailand.⁵⁷ One integral part of the alliance was the agreement to allow China to channel arms and other support to the Khmer Rouge through Thailand. The security component of this new Chinese-Thai relationship justifies terming it an alliance. While this may be controversial due to the informal nature of security co-operation - China never signed a treaty outlining concrete steps towards security co-operation - China's pledges to aid Thailand in case of Vietnamese attack mean the criterion of an alliance relationship is fulfilled. In contrast, the ASEAN-China relationship, which was characterized by diplomatic but not security co-operation, can be most accurately described as 'alignment'.

In the following months, this concord was implemented, contrary to Thailand's official declarations of neutrality.⁵⁸ Furthermore, China repeatedly made alliance pledges to Thailand. In that vein, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Song Zhiguang promised, "in the event of Vietnamese aggression against Thailand, we

⁵⁵ Statement by the Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee on Escalation of the Armed Conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea, January 9, 1979, in Weatherbee, 1985: 97.

⁵⁶ Joint Statement by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting on the Current Political Development in the Southeast Asia Region, January 12, 1979, in Weatherbee, 1985: 98.

⁵⁷ A senior Thai official, quoted by one well-informed observer (Chanda, 1986: 348-349).

⁵⁸ Thailand's neutrality looked hollow when Chinese Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping (and King Sihanouk for that matter) revealed to American journalists that Chinese supplies were sent through Thailand (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 23, 1979: 8-9).

will support [the Thais].”⁵⁹ Thailand consistently reiterated its neutral stance, turning down Beijing’s offers for help as well as Vietnam’s proposal to sign a non-aggression pact.⁶⁰

In February / March 1979 China invaded Vietnam’s northern border region. At this moment, neutrality by ASEAN prevailed. The Chinese action elicited an appeal by ASEAN to both China and Vietnam to withdraw their troops from Indochina.⁶¹ Thailand and Singapore approved of the Chinese action, whereas Indonesia and Malaysia harboured strong reservations (Nair, 1984: 120). However, by June 1979, when Defence Minister General Prem Tinsulanond went to ASEAN capitals to rally support for the eventuality of a Vietnamese attack, ASEAN was united behind Thailand against Vietnam. This was manifest in another communiqué by ASEAN’s foreign ministers in June 1979 that expressed disapproval of Vietnam in stronger terms than that of January 1979, reflecting concern about the continued fighting along the Thai-Cambodian border and the (causally related) unabated flow of refugees.⁶²

Over the course of 1979, ASEAN cohesion strengthened and the association acted with one voice on the international scene. ASEAN initiated a UN resolution that called for the immediate Vietnamese withdrawal, the recognition of the principles of non-intervention and self-determination, humanitarian aid for refugees as well as the initiation of efforts for an international conference on Indochina.⁶³ ASEAN defended the interests of the Pol Pot regime at the UN and those ASEAN countries that were also members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, did the same at the Sixth Non-Aligned Summit Meeting in Havana in September 1979. ASEAN managed to defend the representation of the Khmer Rouge at the United Nations and achieved a stalemate at the Non Aligned Meeting with the result that the seat remained vacant, even though fifty countries backed Heng Samrin

⁵⁹ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 18, 1979: 14.

⁶⁰ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 22, 1979: 18 and July 6, 1979: 19. Thailand further attempted to maintain the mantle of neutrality in the conflict by showing evenhandedness with regard to Soviet overflights to Vietnam. The Thai authorities approved a largely increased number of flights from March to May 1979 (after the start of the Chinese invasion) and then again after August 1979 (coinciding with preparations for a new offensive in Cambodia), see *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 5, 1979.

⁶¹ ASEAN Statement on the Vietnam-China Border War, February 20, 1979, in Weatherbee (1985: 101).

⁶² Communiqué of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, June 30, 1979, in Weatherbee (1985: 102-4).

⁶³ UN General Assembly, Resolution 34/22 on the Situation in Kampuchea, November 14, 1979.

and only nineteen Pol Pot.⁶⁴ However, ASEAN's diplomatic efforts failed to have any impact on Vietnamese policy and by late 1979 the two opposing blocs had reached an impasse that left little immediate prospect for conflict resolution.

Security Behaviour

Prior to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, ASEAN as a collective had maintained a posture of 'passive neutrality'. The association had ignored Cambodia's violations of Vietnam's territory and had rejected overtures by both China and Vietnam. In the aftermath of the invasion, this neutral stance changed and by mid-1979 ASEAN members displayed a common alignment posture towards Vietnam.

However, it took some time for ASEAN alignment to consolidate, as two camps emerged within the association. Although all ASEAN members 'deplored' Vietnam's action in the communiqué of January 12, it soon became clear that Indonesia and Malaysia were not willing to support unconditionally an anti-Vietnamese position. For that reason, ASEAN remained formally neutral when China launched its invasion of northern Vietnam in February 1979. Yet, by the middle of 1979, the efforts of Thailand to build a diplomatic coalition had paid off and, subsequently, ASEAN members acted with one voice against Vietnam in the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Vietnamese invasion also elicited a response on the bilateral level. In January 1979 Thailand forged a secret de facto alliance with China in support of the Khmer Rouge. This bilateral alliance became the main conduit for military aid to the Khmer Rouge-led resistance against Vietnam and combined with the long-standing alliance with the United States to bolster Thai security against Vietnam. However, while the alliance with the United States was compatible with the previous, largely pro-Western policies of ASEAN members (notwithstanding Indonesian proclamations of non-alignment, and the NAM membership of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore), the link with China proved problematic, as will be discussed in detail below.

ASEAN's common alignment posture is noteworthy. It represented the first clear departure from the previous state of ASEAN cooperation when ASEAN members did not coordinate their foreign policy (a first modest beginning was the

⁶⁴ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 14, 1979: 12-13, September 21, 1979: 12-13 and September 28, 1979: 11.

coordination of individual responses to Vietnamese offers for a non-aggression pact in 1978). Firstly, what distinguished Thailand's position from those of other ASEAN members, particularly those more supportive of Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia? Secondly, what factors made nonetheless possible a common alignment posture of ASEAN? The sources of shared perceptions and divergent perspectives are best illuminated in detail if the problem representations in ASEAN capitals are compared.

Problem Representations

Alignment behaviour in 1979 indicated that some commonalities existed among ASEAN partners that gave rise to a united position while at the same time Thailand pursued specific goals not shared by all ASEAN members. What ASEAN members had in common was their inferiority to Vietnam in terms of military power. ASEAN members lacked adequate air and naval forces. However, combining military forces was not an option considered. Aside from the technical problems associated with an aggregation of ASEAN capabilities, a serious impediment to a common position was the fact that ASEAN member states occupied very different strategic locations.

That the states of maritime Southeast Asia would be less concerned about the menace of land-based Vietnamese aggression than those on the continental landmass is intuitively plausible. This combined with Indonesian sympathy for Vietnam and divergent threat perceptions to amount to considerable differences in problem representations among ASEAN leaders. However, beneath seemingly incompatible threat perceptions a core of shared beliefs was discernible.

The Thai problem representation of events was straightforward in that it interpreted Vietnam's behaviour within a balance-of-power framework. From that perspective the Vietnamese invasion was seen as an unprecedented violation of Thailand's strategic environment (Leifer, 1989: 90) and hence constituted a severe threat. Cambodia had formerly served as buffer towards Vietnam, a traditional competitor for influence in continental Southeast Asia. Now, for the first time in 500 years of contention over Cambodia, this buffer had been removed.⁶⁵ Although neither Thailand nor any other ASEAN member was at that stage the target of hostilities, having the armies of Communist Vietnam right at their doorstep instead of being able

⁶⁵ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 26, 1979: 12.

to rely on the (traditional) buffer functions of Cambodia seriously alarmed Thai leaders (Buszynski, 1987: 766; Leifer, 1989: 91). As Michael Leifer explained,

Vietnam's occupation foreshadowed the emergence of a historically unique centre of power in the mainland of South-East Asia besides which Thailand would almost certainly stand in a subordinate position. Such a prospect, permitting intervention in support of subversion, was viewed by the ruling military-bureaucratic establishment in Bangkok as posing a threat to the very independence of the Thai state (Leifer, 1989: 91).

In keeping with balance-of-power theory, Vietnam was seen as a threat, because it was powerful and in close proximity. While those two factors were undoubtedly significant for the Thai leadership, perceptual factors were probably even more crucial. The Thai leadership regarded Vietnam as expansionist and aggressive. And importantly, they believed both qualities derived from its Communist nature. Thai leaders attributed to Vietnam the objective of establishing a Federation of Indochina, including the sixteen provinces of northeast Thailand.⁶⁶ Those perceptions of threat were fuelled by the strength of the Communist insurgency in northeast Thailand.

The conceptualization of Thai security built on a particular categorization of friends and enemies according to ideology and perceived intentions. Thailand's leadership declared as one tenet of national security that no Marxist regime should be tolerated in neighbouring countries.⁶⁷ However, given the previous co-existence with the Khmer Rouge and then current cooperation with China and Pol Pot, Thailand's enmity towards Vietnam can only be explained by a combination of Thai aversion to Marxist regimes and the attribution of expansionist intentions to Vietnam. The perceived immediate threat in Thailand's neighbourhood from Vietnam explains the alliance with China. It was born out of expediency, as Thailand and China had in common a shared enemy.

⁶⁶ Thai Prime Minister Prem referred to Vietnam's "expansionist campaign which, after securing a firm grip on the former states of Indochina, is likely to be extended to the sixteen provinces of northeast Thailand ...and join them in the pipe dream project of the Federation of Indochina," quoted in *Bangkok Post*, September 11, 1980: 1. See also comments by Prasong Soonsiri, the Deputy General-Secretary of the National Security Council (NSC), in *Bangkok Post*, August 16, 1980: 1.

⁶⁷ Thanat Khoman, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, August 20, 1980: 3.

In its opposition to Vietnam, Thailand obtained the most vociferous support from Singapore. The virulent Singaporean response to Vietnam's invasion was a consequence of a combination of three factors, two of which were shared with Thailand: belief in balance-of-power precepts,⁶⁸ perceptions of a Communist threat, and concern about norms of regional conduct. Irrespective of Singapore's distance from the conflict, Singaporean leaders shared the Thai proclivity to approach the problem in balance-of-power terms. In a second area of agreement, Communism was anathema to Singapore's leadership. They held negative images of Communist countries, even though the focus of threat perceptions differed somewhat from that in Bangkok. Similarly to Thailand's case, alignment with China did not derive from a positive identification, but simply from the perception that China itself lacked sufficient capabilities to constitute a threat in its own right.⁶⁹

From Singapore's perspective Vietnam posed a threat, because its invasion of a small neighbour set a dangerous example. Vietnam's violation of the concept of sovereignty had serious security implications for Singapore. It was feared that the existence of Singapore's different ethnic groups could serve as an excuse for interventions from ethnically akin states. Vietnam's invasion was seen as setting a precedent that put into jeopardy the existence of small states thus posing a threat to Singapore (Mak, 1993: 27). One powerful safeguard against potential future interventions would be upholding the relevant norms of international law, hence Singapore's vigorous opposition to Vietnam.

If the concept of threat in its conventional sense seemed less relevant for Singapore than for Thailand, applied to the situation of the Philippines it seemed bereft of any substance. Due to its removed maritime location, at this stage neither Vietnam nor China featured in the country's threat scenarios (Leifer, 1989: 93). However, in his way of thinking, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos displayed the same affinities to realist ideas as Singaporean and, for that matter, Thai decision-makers. The focus of Philippine leaders on the need to maintain the balance-of-power

⁶⁸ Both Singaporean Foreign Ministers, Rajaratnam and his successor Dhanabalan, appointed as Foreign Minister on June 1, 1980, were frank to admit their realist inclinations and their espousal of balance-of-power precepts. As Dhanabalan argued, Vietnam had found it in its national interest to enroll the support of the Soviet Union. Consequently, Singapore would itself seek the support of big powers, because "if our security is threatened, our security and national interest will have to come before any purist idea of non-alignment." *Bangkok Post*, January 14, 1980: 3.

⁶⁹ See comments by Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs Rajaratnam (quoted in *Bangkok Post*, June 12, 1980: 6), and Prime Minister Lee (quoted in *Bangkok Post*, 5 July, 1980: 3).

in Asia against Soviet-led Communism is in evidence in several references to the domino-doctrine by Philippine officials (Tilman, 1987: 75). Given the commonalities in problem representations, the support of the Philippines for the Thai position is not surprising.

The reasoning in terms of the domino-doctrine in the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand is noteworthy, because it meant that those three countries shared important strategic assumptions with the United States, one of their allies against Vietnam. The problem representation that guided US policy interpreted the Cambodia Conflict in terms of geopolitical competition with an expansionist Soviet Union, which necessitated containment.⁷⁰

However, it was not alignment with the United States that was contentious. Indonesia and Malaysia had shared concerns about Communism with the US, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines since 1967, and throughout this time maintained good relations with the United States, official proclamations of non-alignment notwithstanding. With regard to the Cambodia Conflict, it cannot be established whether the United States influenced the strategic reasoning of ASEAN members or vice versa. Whatever direction the transmission of ideas took, similarities in outlook clearly outweighed discrepancies. Therefore alignment with the US did not represent a paradigm shift for ASEAN. It was a change in degree not in substance.

This was markedly different in the case of alignment with China, which was opposed by Indonesia and Malaysia. What explained the divergent Indonesian and Malaysian reasoning? The realist approach to international politics that by and large informed strategic reasoning in the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand was shared in Malaysia and Indonesia, but not the underlying threat perceptions. Consequently, preferred policies differed widely.

In Indonesia's case, its location in the southern maritime region of Southeast Asia meant that the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia did not directly affect Indonesia, nor could Vietnam have represented a threat in the long run. Moreover, the Indonesian leadership had always felt a particular affinity for the regime in Hanoi

⁷⁰ See the elaborations by Richard L. Armitage (1982), at that stage US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

despite its Communist affiliation. The sympathy with Hanoi emanated from what was seen as the shared experience of violent struggle for independence (Leifer, 1989: 71).

In contrast, China was regarded as the most serious threat to Indonesia (Anwar, 1994: 186). This was based on the attribution of the 1965 coup to Chinese-supported Communists, continuing Chinese support for insurgencies in the region, and a persistent mistrust of the Overseas Chinese in Indonesia. In the context of those threat perceptions, the Indonesian leadership saw a strong Vietnam as a useful counterbalance to China. In that vein, a senior policy planner in Indonesia confided “if Vietnam was alone in a vacuum, we would be more pro-Vietnam because we would consider Vietnam a buffer in Southeast Asia to China.”⁷¹

In Malaysia, Indonesia’s sympathy for Vietnam’s situation and its threat perception of China were shared, even though no common experience of independence struggle linked the two countries. Like their counterparts in Jakarta, officials in Kuala Lumpur felt that Vietnam had been propelled into invading Cambodia by Chinese pressure and thus its security concerns should be taken into consideration (Thayer, 1990: 148). However, the anti-Chinese bias in Malaysia had deeper roots. Mistrust towards China persisted despite rapprochement in 1974 because of the historical experience with the ethnic-Chinese dominated insurgency during the 1950s and lingering fears of the Communist Party (CPM). However, feelings of hostility were less intense than in Indonesia (Tilman, 1987: 90-92).

The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia created an enormous foreign policy predicament for Indonesia and, to a lesser degree, Malaysia, when Thailand and Singapore rallied their fellow ASEAN members to adopt a tough stance against Vietnam. Their dilemma was exacerbated by the fact that ASEAN did not just embrace an anti-Vietnamese position but this position increasingly evolved into a de facto ASEAN-Chinese alignment. Indonesia and Malaysia upheld ASEAN unity despite perceptions of threats that were the reverse of those underlying the official ASEAN policy. Indonesian officials made it clear that they regarded ASEAN unity as an extremely important objective and, if needed, were willing to give priority to regional unity over Indonesian beliefs and strategic interests. As one Indonesian

⁷¹ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 June, 1979: 23.

senior policy planner explained, only the “Indonesian appreciation of Thai concern” induced an accommodation of Indonesian policy to the Thai view.⁷²

The Indonesian deference to the Thai position can also be explained in strategic terms. Provided Thailand was kept engaged in ASEAN, Indonesia could influence the discourse within the organization. Indonesia used this leverage to forcefully oppose any suggestions of a military role for ASEAN, thus keeping alive the official non-aligned posture so integral to its foreign policy. In early 1980, following Thai suggestions to revive the Manila Pact, Indonesian Vice President Adam Malik cautioned, “the Manila Pact, SEATO and other military pacts are not effective.”⁷³ Similarly, Foreign Minister Mochtar also rebuffed proposals by Singapore to supply arms to resistance forces – which would have made Indonesia a party to the conflict - but instead urged leaders to seek a peaceful, political solution.⁷⁴

Despite the differences in threat perceptions, all five ASEAN members crucially agreed on one interpretation pertinent to their response to Vietnam. Indonesia and Malaysia concurred with Singapore and Thailand that Vietnam’s invasion had transgressed the accepted norms of regional order (Buszynski, 1987: 768). This point was also important to the Philippines, which adopted a legalistic outlook on international relations (Leifer, 1989: 93),

Most instructive in this regard is the very first ASEAN communiqué issued by the Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja in his capacity as chairperson of the ASEAN Standing Committee on January 9, 1979, which the Foreign Ministers reaffirmed in a follow-up communiqué three days later:

In accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, and the Bandung declaration, and bearing fully in mind the pledges made by the states in Southeast Asia they appeal to all countries in the region to firmly respect the freedom, sovereignty, national integrity and political system of the respective countries, to restrain themselves from the use of force or threat of the use of force in the implementation of bilateral relations, to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of the respective countries and disassociate themselves from engagement in subversive activities either

⁷² *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 June, 1979: 23.

⁷³ *Bangkok Post*, January 19, 1980: 3.

*directly or indirectly against one another, and to resolve all existing differences between these countries through peaceful means by way of negotiations in a spirit of equality, mutual understanding and mutual respect.*⁷⁵

The highlighted statements refer to the respective norms in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, ASEAN's blueprint of regional order. Those norms reappeared in different statements throughout the conflict and combined with a fear of expansionist Communism to provide the core of a minimalist consensus by ASEAN, notwithstanding the differences mentioned.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

The external challenge to regional order emanating from Vietnam resulted in a common alignment posture of ASEAN in 1979, even though this was limited to the diplomatic sphere. If problem representations are examined, it becomes clear that ASEAN's alignment behaviour cannot be explained convincingly by one single theory.

Firstly, if the plausibility of identity-based accounts is assessed and the community idea is gauged against the three indicators norm compliance, mutual identifications, and shared meaning structures, conditional support can be found for identity-accounts. Problem representations among ASEAN leaders converged to a significant degree (even though threat perceptions did not). They shared the same approach to security conduct, an aversion to Communism and a desire to defend the norms of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. However, references to ZOPFAN principles and the notion of regional autonomy were notably absent.

Norm compliance was generally high with extensive consultations taking place. The norms of consensus and consultation clearly exerted influence. For example, after China had launched its war against Vietnam, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn and Indonesian President Suharto suggested that they would be willing to mediate, but both emphasized the need to consult with their ASEAN partners first.⁷⁶ At this stage the proclivity to seek consensus was mirrored by the

⁷⁴ *Bangkok Post*, March 9, 1980: 1.

⁷⁵ ASEAN Statement on Indochina, January 9, 1979, point 3 (emphases added), in Weatherbee (1985: 97).

⁷⁶ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 16, 1979:12-13.

efforts of Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak to consult with ASEAN leaders before his state visit to Moscow.⁷⁷ However, there was one highly significant exception to norm compliance. The secret conclusion of Thailand's alliance with China in January 1979 was a particularly grave norm violation, because Thailand was undoubtedly aware of the reservations of some ASEAN partners against alignment with China.

Thailand's sole emphasis on Thai security needs also found its expression in the lack of identification with the security concerns of ASEAN partners. Given the unilateral security guarantees and persistent support by the United States, the alliance with China cannot be regarded as essential for Thailand's survival. By implication, Thailand could have taken into account the security concerns of other members. However, based on the experience of South Vietnam's fall to Communism, Thailand might have been unconvinced of US reliability and thus decided to hedge its bets and keep two allies against abandonment.

Other ASEAN members displayed identifications with Thai security, intermixed with functional considerations as they might have been. Indonesia identified most clearly with ASEAN, although this identification might have originated from Jakarta's desire to exert regional leadership with ASEAN as the vehicle of leadership ambitions. In essence, the idea of regional community may have been relevant for other ASEAN members, particularly Indonesia, but it did not apply to Thailand. Overall, a measurement of community indicators does not validate the idea that identity considerations influenced ASEAN security behaviour, with the notable exception of Indonesia's case. Norm compliance and shared problem representations indicate that some basis for a community existed. Yet, the absence of references to ZOPFAN and the notion of regional autonomy points to the clear dominance of power or threat centred calculations.

Thai balancing behaviour is best explained by balance-of-threat theory, provided it accounts for the origin of threat perceptions, in this case the presumed aggressive nature of Vietnam's regime and the history of competition in continental Southeast Asia. Thailand's choice of China as an alliance partner is also compatible with the prescriptions of balance-of-threat theory; however, Thailand's identification of Communism as a threat casts a particular light on the alliance with China. It originated from the need to balance against the most immediate threat, Vietnam, and

⁷⁷ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 30, 1979: 5.

thus was a matter of expediency. The alliance was based on the commonality of enmity towards Vietnam, not on an inherently positive relationship with the People's Republic. The alliance with China is best explained by structural balance theory, which posits that an enemy of an enemy will be regarded as a friend (Lai, 1997). Thailand and China did not share more than their commonality of enmity towards Vietnam.

In the cases of Singapore and the Philippines, balance-of-threat theory is not equally convincing, as neither country was exposed to any direct threat.⁷⁸ Balance-of-threat theory is only plausible if threat is explained in terms of ideology and concern about regional norms. In that context it is important to recognize that problem representations in the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand corresponded to a large measure to those in the United States: the main issue to be addressed was the containment of expansionist Communism. The fact that the focus of the US (on a global threat from the Soviet Union) and ASEAN allies (on Vietnam and Soviet intentions in the regions) differed is secondary.

This is a different story with regard to Indonesia and Malaysia. Because the US focus on containment of the Soviet Union made opportune an alliance with China, differences were more substantial. Balance-of-threat theory cannot explain why Indonesia and Malaysia subordinated their views to those of ASEAN, even though they perceived China as a greater threat than Vietnam. Because of that threat perception, Indonesia's behaviour in particular eludes the theory, which would have predicted balancing with Vietnam against China. However, this must be put into perspective. The threat to Indonesia was remote, whereas the one to Thailand was acute. This implies that sacrifices required for a compromise were uneven.

In contrast, balance-of-interest theory has high explanatory value for all but one case. From that perspective, ASEAN rallied together to defend the status quo. If the status quo is conceptualized in terms of regional norms of conduct, it becomes clear that all ASEAN countries had in common opposition to Vietnam's violation of the norms enshrined in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. If the status quo is thought of more broadly in terms of the maintenance of the existing free-market systems in the regions, it becomes clear why ASEAN and the United States found

⁷⁸ Mak (1993) claims otherwise, but it is difficult to see how Singapore's leaders could have reasonably imagined a Vietnamese invasion of the republic.

fertile ground for cooperation, as they arguably had since 1967. Additionally, Thai leaders reacted to a threat to their regional status, as they regarded Vietnam as a geopolitical competitor. This concern about Vietnam's ambitions was shared by China, which did not wish to see Indochina under the aegis of one country.

Indonesia's case presents more serious problems for balance-of-interest theory. From an Indonesian perspective, the status quo was threatened by China, not by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. However, the balance-of-interest explanation may possibly be accommodated if Indonesia's concern for regional unity is considered. The invasion violated the very same principles that defined ASEAN, seen as vehicle for Indonesia's leadership aspirations, and Thailand's sense of threat made Thai unilateral action likely, which could have resulted in a split within ASEAN. Indonesia's position was ultimately guided by concern for ASEAN unity and the recognition that this was the only way to retain a measure of influence over Thailand's regional policies. The strength of ASEAN was closely linked to foreign policy aspirations in Jakarta. In Indonesia's case, ASEAN unity had intrinsic value. Thus identity and interest provide complimentary accounts of alignment behaviour.

4.2 The Kuantan Declaration in March 1980

If ASEAN's common alignment against Vietnam in the second half of 1979 betokened a united front, it soon became clear that the differences within the grouping were more fundamental than discernible from ASEAN declarations. Towards the end of 1979, amidst rumours that ASEAN was beset by disunity,⁷⁹ the Malaysian Foreign Minister Tunku Ahmad Rithauddeen became the unofficial intermediary of ASEAN. On a visit to Hanoi he elicited Hanoi's acceptance in principle of the 1971 Kuala Lumpur Declaration. The newly found common ground between ASEAN and Vietnam gave rise to hope for détente between the two blocs.

In March 1980 an Indonesian-Malaysian initiative fuelled those hopes but also revealed some deep fissures within ASEAN. Following the fall of General Kriangsak's government in Thailand in February 1980, Indonesian President Suharto and Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn met in Kuantan on March 27. In a joint statement they asked Vietnam to establish equidistance to China and the Soviet

Union (Funston, 1998a: 57); however, their call to the Soviet Union and China to stay out of Indochina implicitly endorsed the Vietnamese proposition that the invasion of Cambodia was linked to the Sino-Vietnamese conflict.

Prior to the Kuantan Declaration Indonesia and Malaysia undertook no efforts to consult and seek consensus with ASEAN partners. This was in contrast to the conduct of ASEAN diplomacy in 1979 and constituted a clear breach of ASEAN's procedural norms. Discussions of the Kuantan principle and of the possibility of a peaceful settlement involving all ASEAN capitals only took place after the Declaration in March. At the time a split within ASEAN seemed a distinct possibility, especially when ambiguous statements by the Malaysian Prime Minister Hussein hinted at compromise short of ASEAN's demand for a Vietnamese withdrawal.

However, ASEAN regained its diplomatic unity. Hussein's suggestions precipitated the announcement by the new Thai Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanond and Philippine President Marcos that a summit meeting of ASEAN governments would be necessary.⁸⁰ Apparently, the need for a restoration of consensus was deemed indispensable if a major rift within the grouping was to be prevented. At this stage President Marcos' support for Thailand's policy became significant. During a visit to Manila by Thai Prime Minister Prem, President Marcos gave full support to Thailand's position,⁸¹ hence strengthening the Singapore-Thailand camp against dissenting views in Indonesia and Malaysia.

ASEAN consensus towards the outside was finally restored by the end of May. The visit of Prime Minister Prem to ASEAN capitals in May 1980 managed to mend ASEAN's cohesion. Indonesian officials fell back in line behind the Thai position, partly encouraged by Prem's willingness to consider a role for King Sihanouk in Cambodia, thus improving the chances for a political arrangement, as it was clear that negotiations between the Khmer Rouge and the PRK were out of the question.⁸²

⁷⁹ A top ASEAN official reportedly emphasized a common interest between ASEAN and Vietnam in preventing a pro-Chinese Indochina and hinted to mutual economic benefits available in a peaceful region, quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 28, 1979: 9.

⁸⁰ Reported in *Bangkok Post*, May 17, 1980: 1.

⁸¹ *Bangkok Post*, May 16, 1980: 1.

⁸² *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 9, 1980: 12.

Security Behaviour

The so-called Kuantan Declaration owed its significance to the fact that two ASEAN members launched a bilateral initiative that ran counter to the previous hard line position of ASEAN. It is clear that from late 1979 until May 1980 Indonesia and Malaysia attempted to readjust ASEAN's alignment in favour of Vietnam and against the position adopted by Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines. What was at stake was not the support for Thailand or alignment with the United States, but the extent to which ASEAN should align with China. Whether Indonesia and Malaysia were on the brink of abandoning the common alignment posture with Thailand cannot be established, because Vietnam's uncompromising position ruled out any serious consideration of the Kuantan formula. However, the fact that ASEAN consensus was restored by May 1980 would suggest that the likelihood for a consequential split within ASEAN was not that grave after all.

Problem Representations

The Kuantan Declaration brought to light divergent problem representations among ASEAN members. It gave expression to the concerns harboured in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur about Thailand's (and, by extension, ASEAN's) close alignment with China. Apparently, the declaration represented an attempt by Indonesia and Malaysia to forestall a further increase in Chinese influence and (re) direct the thrust of ASEAN policy at a time of transition in Bangkok.⁸³

Statements by different Indonesian officials underline the unease prevailing in Jakarta about ASEAN's position. While Indonesian decision-makers thought in terms of balance-of-power precepts as much as their counterparts in other ASEAN capitals, they held reverse threat perceptions. For them, Vietnam constituted a buffer against China, which was seen as the most serious threat (Anwar, 1994: 186-89). Indonesia displayed sympathy for Hanoi's position and latent enmity towards China. In contrast to the interpretations dominant in Thailand and Singapore, which looked at Vietnam and the Soviet Union respectively as the primary aggressor, in Jakarta the invasion of Cambodia was seen as part of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict.⁸⁴

⁸³ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 25, 1980:10 and May 9, 1980: 12.

⁸⁴ See for example, Mochtar's comment that he was in concordance with Nguyen Co Thach that the Kampuchean issue was part of the conflict between China and Vietnam. He also asked those ASEAN

Some officials went as far as to argue that Vietnam did not pose a serious threat to ASEAN. This line of argument that Vietnam was not in a position to “launch an invasion to the south, especially Indonesia”⁸⁵ informed Indonesia’s initiative for a peaceful settlement. As a consequence of this assessment, the Kuantan Declaration acknowledged a Vietnamese sphere of influence in Indochina.

Similarly, in Malaysia a sense of unease prevailed in 1979 and the first half of 1980 about ASEAN’s collective tilt towards China. Attempts to pursue dialogue with Hanoi in January 1980 and the Kuantan Declaration in March 1980 were clear manifestations of the Malaysian discontent with ASEAN’s pro-China position. Statements by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn indicated that Vietnamese predominance in Indochina was regarded as tolerable in Malaysia. As he put it, in case the UN resolution could not bring about a solution, Malaysia was “guided by our concern for the sovereignty and integrity of Thailand. This is of paramount importance.”⁸⁶

In essence Hussein stated that Malaysia was not concerned about Vietnam’s presence in Cambodia as such, but about the threat this posed to Thailand. This was a departure from the ASEAN consensus that Vietnam had to withdraw its troops from Kampuchea. On the other hand, the Malaysian position indicated that some fundamental elements of ASEAN’s diplomacy were still seen as valid. The security of the frontline state Thailand was the pivotal issue.

The prevalent reasoning in Indonesia and Malaysia that put the Vietnamese invasion into the broader context of Sino-Vietnamese conflict was vehemently opposed by Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. In Thailand, any proposal that diverted attention from Vietnam’s aggression and implied the validity of Vietnam’s interpretation of the Cambodia Conflict as part of the Chinese-Vietnamese conflict was given short shrift. Preoccupied with an image of expansionist Vietnamese Communism, Thai leaders declined to acknowledge Vietnam’s security concerns. This reasoning informed Thailand’s refusal to give endorsement to the Kuantan Declaration in 1980.

countries with diplomatic relations with Beijing to use those ties to persuade China to play a more conciliatory part. Reported in *Bangkok Post*, June 22, 1980: 1.

⁸⁵ Major General Purnomo, Secretary to the Minister for Defence and Political Affairs, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, March 5, 1980: 2.

⁸⁶ *Bangkok Post*, May 14, 1980: 1.

The Thai hard line approach was supported by Singapore and the Philippines. In strategic thinking parallel to Bangkok's, expansionist intentions were attributed to the Vietnamese-Soviet camp and the Singaporean leadership emphasized a threat from Soviet imperialism and designs for global dominance.⁸⁷ Foreign Minister Rajaratnam warned that "the rising tide of a Soviet-led Communist revolution is real" and that the purpose of such a revolution was more than containment of China.⁸⁸ In contrast to Thailand, the blame for the conflict was put on the Soviet Union, with the Indochina War seen as a proxy war to Vietnam's detriment.⁸⁹ However, this did not result in behavioural preferences different from Bangkok's. A very similar set of motives also explains the stand of the Philippines. The aforementioned support for ASEAN's principles, and balance-of-power reasoning provide the most obvious reasons for the Philippine position. The evocation of Cold War imagery in descriptions of the situation in Indochina (Tilman, 1987: 75) indicated that the Vietnamese invasion was seen in the context of global tensions.

However, despite the significance of the Kuantan Declaration, the differences within ASEAN can easily be overstated. With regard to China, the question was not whether a security relationship with China was desirable *per se* - the answer was clearly no - but rather whether it was relatively more desirable than having Vietnam in control of Indochina. In that vein, China was not only seen as a threat in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, but also in Singapore and, to a lesser extent, in Bangkok. Vice versa Indonesia and Malaysia sought to retain a strong Vietnam as a countervailing force to China, but they did not approve of Vietnam's behaviour.

This is best illustrated if the underlying logic and the general realist proclivity of ASEAN's discourse is brought to light. The argument of the Singaporean leadership against the Indonesian and Malaysian approach was not that China was a friend.⁹⁰ Instead, Prime Minister Lee argued that China was currently not a serious threat to ASEAN, because, compared to the Soviet Union and the United States,

⁸⁷ Speech by Dhanabalan, Foreign Minister since June 2, 1980 (*Bangkok Post*, June 6, 1980: 6).

⁸⁸ *Bangkok Post*, April 6, 1980: 3.

⁸⁹ "I believe that they are serving as unwitting proxies for a much bigger war - of which they are undoubtedly the victims and of which they will never be the beneficiaries - the Sino-Soviet war", Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs Rajaratnam (*Bangkok Post*, June 12, 1980: 6). For similar comments see *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 24, 1979: 26-27.

⁹⁰ Rajaratnam said, "China, like any great power, has a tendency to dominate weaker nations" (quoted in *Bangkok Post*, June 12, 1980: 6). He dispelled the idea that Vietnam could act as a bulwark towards China, as its military and economic resources were too limited (June 12, 1980: 1 and 6).

China's economy and military were backward. Thus, China could only cause problems through support of Communist insurgents and appeals to ethnic Chinese.⁹¹

The differences in opinion within ASEAN rested on Indonesian and Malaysian reluctance to accept the position of the United States and its ASEAN partners. They did not agree that the containment of Soviet/Vietnamese Communism was of sufficient importance to warrant alignment, let alone an alliance with China. Ultimately, Indonesia and Malaysia returned to the previous ASEAN position, albeit for different reasons. In Indonesia, decision-makers held two irreconcilable values, interest in regional cooperation and the desire to keep China at distance. The Indonesian Ambassador to Thailand, Lt.-General Adnil Hasnan Habib, alluded to Indonesia's predicament when he pointed to the possibility that "sometimes national interests might clash with regional interests", further stressing that "this would be where sacrifices, accommodations and compromises would be most needed."⁹² Confronted with a choice, the Indonesian leadership opted to give first priority to regional cooperation.

It is clear that ASEAN was important for Indonesian officials. Several observers point to Indonesia's long-term goals of regional leadership (Suryadinata, 1990), which evidently required loyalty to the ASEAN position and concern for the needs of ASEAN partners (Huxley, 1990: 91). According to that instrumental reasoning, officials in Jakarta had to identify with ASEAN, because it constituted the vehicle for Indonesia's policy ambitions. This would explain the willingness to make sacrifices for ASEAN unity.

However, the accommodation of Thailand's security concerns had its limits. Although non-alignment was at times reduced to a thin veneer on an anti-Vietnamese policy, Indonesian leaders were not willing to go further and compromise the main tenets of Indonesian foreign policy: non-alignment and abstention from any military blocs.⁹³ Those were the main guidelines of the 'bebas aktif' principle that continued to guide Indonesia's foreign policy discourse under Suharto's 'New Order' regime

⁹¹ *Bangkok Post*, July 5, 1980: 3.

⁹² *Bangkok Post*, June 21, 1980: 2.

⁹³ The Singaporean leadership repeatedly called for overt military support of the resistance force in Cambodia. See Rajaratnam's statements, "the Democratic Kampuchea Government is entitled to assistance, including military, to help them fight off the invaders," in *Bangkok Post*, June 12, 1980: 6. As he explained after a meeting of Foreign Ministers from ASEAN and the European Economic Community (EEC), "in no war in history has moral support put an end to military aggression," quoted in *Bangkok Post*, March 9, 1980: 1.

(Sukma, 1997: 233-234), whether a true reflection of operational policies or not. Proposals that crossed the boundary between diplomatic alignment and anything that could have been construed as alliance – by definition, of a military nature- were consistently denied endorsement by Indonesian officials.

In Malaysia's case, reasoning on the Cambodia Conflict was less influenced by considerations for ASEAN unity as such than by the need to retain Thailand as an ally against possible Communist challenges, particularly emanating from a revival of the CPM (Huxley, 1990: 91). Good Malaysian-Thai relations and effective border cooperation dated back to the 1960s (Morrison and Suhrke, 1978: 163) and this provided the main rationale for the identification with Thailand's security. Ultimately, this proved of more immediate importance for Malaysian foreign policy than a more balanced approach to the Sino-Vietnamese conflict in anticipation of a potential long-term threat from China.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

ASEAN diplomacy in early 1980 is difficult to interpret, because the thrust of Indonesian and Malaysian behaviour changed between the Kuantan announcement in March and late May 1980 in the absence of changes in material factors in the region. Indonesian and Malaysian diplomacy does not lend itself readily to one particular explanation; it makes most sense, if analyzed as a two-step process. The initial declaration can best be understood in terms of divergent threat perceptions, but the return of Indonesia and Malaysia to ASEAN's fold is hard to comprehend without reference to identity considerations.

At first glance, the Kuantan episode is difficult to reconcile with the idea of regional community. None of the three community indicators was in evidence. As has been pointed out, problem representations as to security objectives diverged and Indonesia and Malaysia ignored ASEAN norms when they announced publicly the Kuantan Declaration without prior consultations. Furthermore, Malaysian hints that Thailand's security was considered important but not ASEAN's common position casts doubts on the idea that mutual identifications with a regional community existed. The fact that Indonesia and Malaysia breached ASEAN's norms of consultation and consensus seeking and proposed an initiative oblivious of the

security concerns of ASEAN partners supports an interpretation that explains alignment in terms of threat and dismisses identity considerations as irrelevant.

The launch of the Kuantan initiative by Indonesia and Malaysia and the ensuing disunity within ASEAN can be explained in terms of divergent threat perceptions giving credence to a balance-of-threat perspective. Concerns about China and the calculation that Vietnam may be useful as a buffer against a potential Chinese threat gave rise to the initiative by Indonesia and Malaysia, contrary to the previous ASEAN consensus. Yet, balance-of-threat theory by itself cannot account for the restoration of ASEAN consensus in May 1980 and explain Indonesia and Malaysia's acquiescence to the Thai position. The Thai perspective might ultimately have prevailed, because the threat faced by Thailand was much more grave than that perceived in Indonesia and Malaysia. However, such an interpretation introduces considerations exogenous to the realist analysis, as it assumes that regional unity had some intrinsic long-term value that justified compromising national interests in the short run.

Notwithstanding the lack of norm compliance of the initiative, the ultimate convergence on the need to support the Thai position indicates that on this occasion the degree of mutual identifications was higher than the original proposal suggested. The importance attached to ASEAN unity in Indonesia and to Thai security in Malaysia points to strong regional loyalties, even though ASEAN was the referent point only for Indonesia. By May 1980, concerns about ASEAN consensus and Thai security had clearly trumped threat perceptions that focused on China.

Balance-of-interest theory is relevant to the extent that the Kuantan initiative revealed differences about the desirable regional status quo in the region. Should the restoration of the status quo ante be the main strategic objective, as purported by Singapore and Thailand? Or was it an accommodation of Vietnam that prevented an expansion of Chinese influence, a potential threat to the status quo, as desired by Indonesia and Malaysia?

4.3 Southeast Asia from June 1980-1982: Confrontation Prevails

Any residual ideas of a peaceful settlement with Vietnam evaporated in June 1980. On June 23, just two days before the commencement of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Vietnamese forces intruded into Thailand and

clashed with the Thai army near the village of Non Mak Mun. This violation of Thai territory, contrary to assurances that Thailand's territorial integrity would be respected,⁹⁴ had grave consequences for Vietnamese credibility and evoked a unanimous response from ASEAN members. On June 25, 1980, ASEAN's Foreign Ministers issued a joint communiqué that condemned the Vietnamese actions and threw their full support behind Thailand.

The Vietnamese incursion into Thai territory in June 1980 rallied ASEAN members together and put a temporary end to peace initiatives by Indonesia and Malaysia. Subsequently, ASEAN intensified their lobbying efforts in the UN. They secured the continued recognition of the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea (DPK) and sought support for an 'International Conference on Kampuchea'.

As 1980 passed, the likelihood of a full-scale Vietnamese military threat to Thailand looked increasingly remote, notwithstanding occasional hot-pursuit missions into Thai territory by Vietnamese soldiers. The focus of ASEAN's efforts consequently shifted from securing Thailand against a Vietnamese threat to the actual resolution of the Cambodia problem. This became manifest in the general tone of ASEAN statements which became more conciliatory. When ASEAN sponsored proposals in the UN General Assembly for an International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) in October, the ASEAN proposals included clauses for a sovereign and independent Cambodia but also provisions that Cambodia would have to provide guarantees not to pose a threat to the security of neighbouring countries, an accommodation of perennial Vietnamese concerns.

Because of its propensity to look for a political solution, at the 1981 International Conference on Kampuchea ASEAN found itself at odds with China, which adopted a much more uncompromising position (Chanda, 1986) that virtually excluded the possibility for a political settlement. Chinese insistence led to the substantial dilution of a clause that was meant to make provisions for the disarming of the Khmer factions after Vietnam's withdrawal (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 42-43). Given the balance of power this would effectively have opened the door for a return to power of the Khmer Rouge. When the United States supported the Chinese position, a reflection of the American geopolitical imperative of containing the Soviet Union, ASEAN gave in (Jackson, 1982: 132-33). Otherwise, the ICK issued a

⁹⁴ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 27, 1980: 10.

declaration that reiterated the standard demands of the UN resolutions: a ceasefire, the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia and the holding of free elections under UN supervision, abstinence from alliances and guarantees of non-aggression by Cambodia.⁹⁵

ASEAN also fostered an agreement on the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) that was forged by three Cambodian factions, FUNCINPEC, the Khmer Rouge, and the KPNLF (Khmer People's National Liberation Front) at the end of 1981. The agreement required considerable efforts of coalition building by Singapore and Thailand (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 46), but the three factions finally signed a coalition agreement on June 22, 1982. The creation of the CGDK constituted a considerable success for the anti-Vietnamese alignment of ASEAN, China and the United States, as it gave the Khmer resistance a more acceptable appearance than that of the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot. Yet, this diplomatic effort did not yield any results in terms of changing the realities inside Cambodia where the Vietnam-sponsored PRK regime continued to wield control.

Security Behaviour

The most noteworthy development in the aftermath of Vietnam's incursion into Thailand was the increase in ASEAN cohesion. Compared to the disunity displayed earlier in 1980, in the wake of the June events ASEAN displayed cohesive diplomatic alignment. Indonesia and Malaysia ceased to pursue policies of accommodation towards Vietnam contrary to ASEAN's common position. Yet, the grouping could not translate its cohesion into measurable political clout. Despite its unity, ASEAN failed to exert a strong measure of influence on the elaborations at the ICK where China and the United States propelled ASEAN into acceptance of a 'hard line' stand against Vietnam (Jackson, 1982; Chanda, 1986)

Furthermore, ASEAN unity had its limits. ASEAN as a collective did not enter a military alliance with any party to the conflict, even though individual ASEAN members did. Thailand and Singapore provided direct military support to the Khmer Rouge-led military coalition against Vietnam while Malaysia helped with training of the non-Communist factions (Weatherbee, 1985: 4; Leifer, 1989: 131).

⁹⁵ United Nations International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK), 17 July 1981, in *UN Monthly Chronicle* 18, No. 9, 1981: 37-39.

However, Indonesia was not the only ASEAN member opposed to military involvement. The Philippines clearly resisted the idea of turning ASEAN into a military alliance, as suggested by Lee Kuan Yew, despite a prevailing sense of crisis after Vietnam's mid-1980 incursion into Thai territory.⁹⁶

Problem Representations

In all ASEAN countries the Vietnamese incursion of June 1980 led to a hardening of their position towards Vietnam. Both Indonesia and Malaysia readjusted their stance on Cambodia. As a result ASEAN acted with unprecedented cohesion between July 1980 and 1982. Diplomacy was consistent, as ASEAN, China, and the United States all displayed a preference for military engagement over a political settlement. However, in ASEAN's case this reflected less conviction than the perceived need to maintain alignment with the US and China.

The discourse in Thailand that focused on a Vietnamese threat gained further currency in 1980. Vietnam's violation of Thai territory in June 1980, contrary to assurances given by both Vietnam and the Soviet Union that Thailand's territorial integrity would be respected,⁹⁷ understandably exacerbated the existing sense of threat among Thai leaders. Similarly, the Vietnamese incursion reconfirmed beliefs in Singapore about Vietnam's aggressive intentions. However, nuanced differences continued to distinguish the positions of the two governments. While the Thai leadership regarded Vietnam as a threat in its own right, in Singapore Vietnam was seen as a proxy of the Soviet Union in pursuit of world revolution in general, and socialism in Southeast Asia in particular.⁹⁸ Yet, those differences were irrelevant given the concordance on the fundamental problems and desirable outcomes.

The particular militancy of Singapore, manifest in calls for military support, is explicable in terms of Singaporean sensitivities that became particularly salient after the June 1980 incursion. From the Singaporean perspective Vietnamese behaviour constituted a dangerous precedent that had to be opposed by all means.

⁹⁶ The plan received no enthusiastic reaction from President Marcos as he described such ideas as Lee's private opinion, reported in *Bangkok Post*, July 9, 1980: 5.

⁹⁷ The Soviet Ambassador to Thailand, Iouri Kouznetsov, had given a guarantee to Thailand on April 15, 1980, reported in *Bangkok Post*, April 16, 1980: 3.

⁹⁸ Rajaratnam, then Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, in an interview with the *Bangkok Post*, August 26, 1980: 6. Earlier that year, he already had claimed that the Indochina War was a Soviet war and the Soviet Union was using Communist ideals for the realization of its world dominance, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, January 21, 1980: 1.

*At stake is the fundamental principle of integrity and sovereignty of small nations. If we allow the Heng Samrin regime to usurp the seat (at the UN General Assembly), then we are setting a precedent. In accepting the practice of big powers invading, occupying, and installing puppet regimes in small nations.*⁹⁹

While all ASEAN members deplored Vietnam's norm violation, as manifest in their joint communiqués, the Singaporean leadership identified particularly strongly with the very principles Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia had transgressed: the rights of states to territorial sovereignty and self-determination, regardless of how small and weak they were. Proposals for military support for the anti-Vietnamese resistance and the unrelenting work of the Singaporean officials to persuade decision-makers in other countries to vote for the retention of the Khmer Rouge seat at the UN become comprehensible in that context.

The incursion into Thai territory also reinforced assumptions about the nature of expansionist Communism and made Singaporean leaders more adamant than ever in their opposition to Vietnam. Tantamount to belated re-runs of the domino-doctrine, they argued that the inclination of states to bandwagon necessitated a determined balancing reaction. In that vein, Singaporean leaders elaborated that unless credible leadership was provided, the non-Communist countries would "slowly drift away to the side which they may not want to win but which looks like the winning side."¹⁰⁰

Those beliefs explain why Singaporean decision-makers were seriously concerned about the possibility of further encroachments by Vietnam unless their gains in Cambodia were reversed when Vietnam invaded the Thai border region on June 23, 1980. Singapore's uncompromising position towards Vietnam can be seen as the logical course of action, originating from this assumption of bandwagoning behaviour combined with an aversion to Communism. This reasoning corresponded closely to beliefs in Washington where the US position in Asia was defined as "directed toward preventing the Soviet Union and its Vietnamese surrogate from

⁹⁹Rajaratnam, lobbying for the Khmer Rouge seat, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, August 26, 1980: 3.

achieving a dominant presence in the area from which to foster actions inimical to the interest of the United States and its allies” (Armitage,¹⁰¹ 1982: 70).

Following Vietnam’s incursion into Thai territory, even Indonesian policymakers revealed a perception of threat with regard to Vietnam that focused on the traits of expansionist Communism.¹⁰² It is not quite clear whether suspicions of Communist Vietnam existed in Indonesia prior to the June invasion or whether they were precipitated by it. President Suharto and Foreign Minister Mochtar concluded after Vietnam’s incursion that Indonesia’s accommodationist attitude towards Vietnam was not reciprocated and, most significantly, it was disruptive to ASEAN (MacIntyre, 1987: 518-519). Consequently, in the 1980-1982 period Indonesia adhered to the ASEAN consensus as defined by Thailand’s position.

Arguably, the most noticeable shift in attitudes was discernible in Malaysia. Back in March Malaysia had, jointly with Indonesia, issued the Kuantan Declaration, an expression of strategic reasoning at odds with Bangkok’s. The need to maintain Thailand as a strong bulwark against Communist subversion propelled Malaysia back in line with the Thai position (Huxley, 1990: 91). In the aftermath of Vietnam’s incursion into Thai territory in June 1980, this propensity in Malaysia’s foreign policy grew even stronger. Malaysian officials provided unconditional support to Thailand and declared, “Malaysia considers any country that threatens Thailand to be its enemy.”¹⁰³

In sum, ASEAN members clearly converged in their problem representations on the necessity to keep at bay expansionist Communism¹⁰⁴ and on defending regional norms of conduct that required determined resistance to Vietnamese aggression in order to revert to the status quo ante. This approach to the Cambodia Conflict was generally compatible with the objectives of the United States and China, which partly explains the stability of the alignment. Yet, the ICK exposed differences

¹⁰⁰ Speech by Foreign Minister Rajaratnam in Tokyo in the aftermath of the Kuantan Declaration, quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 9, 1980: 14.

¹⁰¹ Richard L. Armitage was at that time US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for East Asia and Pacific Affairs.

¹⁰² Sukardi, Golkar’s spokesman in parliament, attested to the fear of aggressive communism when he linked references to the domino theory with Vietnamese aggression against Thailand which, if successful, would be directed against all ASEAN members, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, July 8, 1980: 2.

¹⁰³ The Thai Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur, Nissai Vejajiva, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, July 26, 1980: 20.

in long-term goals. ASEAN members wanted to restore regional peace and stability and were therefore willing to consider a political solution, whereas the United States and China were preoccupied with the containment of the Soviet Union, disposing them towards military means of conflict management.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

Balance-of-threat theory can predict the behaviour of ASEAN as a whole after Vietnamese aggression in June 1980. Confronted with Vietnamese violations of Thai territory, ASEAN closed ranks. Threat perceptions and the fear that crises may recur at any time would also explain why ASEAN was willing to subordinate its own preference for a political settlement to the position of the US and China at the ICK. It was obvious from that behaviour that ASEAN members valued alignment with the two powers. ASEAN behaviour is explicable in terms of threat, even though Indonesia's reaction remains elusive and the case of Malaysia cannot be explained by balance-of-threat concepts alone.

The predominant problem representations in Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines were strengthened. Their reactions to Vietnam's incursion followed the predictions of balance-of-threat theory. In Malaysia's case balance-of-threat also has plausibility, but it needs to be complemented by assumptions about cognitive processes. Malaysia acted against their leaders' perception of China as the primary external threat. In the context of a balance-of-threat perspective, Malaysia's alignment with Thailand becomes explicable as a response to threats only if seen in conjunction with the domestic challenge of the Communist Party (CPM). De facto alignment with Thailand against Vietnam then became a case of "the enemy of your friend is your enemy", a pattern predicted by structural balance theory (Lai, 1995).

Indonesia's reaction is better explained by considerations of identity than by threat. President Suharto made it clear that ASEAN unity was the highest value for Indonesia (MacIntyre, 1987: 520-521). Moreover, given the persistence of concerns about China it seems doubtful whether the small-scale violation of Thai territory was sufficient to change threat perceptions. More likely, Indonesia compromised its own preference for alignment against China, because the threat to Thailand was

¹⁰⁴ All ASEAN members shared serious concerns that Soviet expansionism aimed at control of the Southeast Asian waters, including the Straits of Malacca and that this cause would be helped by

considerably more serious, with an immediate Chinese threat to Indonesia being a highly implausible event. Against that background, Indonesia could afford to make sacrifices for ASEAN unity.

Generally, the period 1980-1982 provides some support for the idea of regional community; however, it was a community galvanized by exogenous pressure not evolution from inside. ASEAN behaviour lends support to the idea that an external challenge can give rise to community behaviour. After Vietnam's incursion, problem representations converged to a great degree on TAC norms and the need to restore the status quo ante in Indochina. Moreover, ASEAN members displayed strong mutual identifications with one another's security when the Foreign Ministers Meeting stated, "any incursion of foreign forces into Thailand directly affects the security of the ASEAN member states and endangers peace and security."¹⁰⁵ Indonesia and Malaysia unambiguously supported Thailand at a time of crisis.

Furthermore, norm compliance was high. After Vietnam's incursion into Thai territory and the subsequent Foreign Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar lauded ASEAN solidarity and reassured ASEAN that Jakarta's Vietnam link would only be utilized after consultations with its fellow members.¹⁰⁶ Over the following months ASEAN members coordinated closely their policies towards the Cambodia Conflict in keeping with the norms of consultation and consensus seeking. This was particularly evident in the run-up to the United Nations International Conference on Kampuchea in July 1981 (Weatherbee, 1985: 133-135).

All three community indicators would support a community account of ASEAN behaviour. However, if some kind of community existed, it was not based on a shared regional identity. The principle of regional autonomy and references to ZOPFAN were not prominent. The idea of regional autonomy was clearly subordinated to the maintenance of the alignment with the US and China. At the ICK ASEAN was compelled to agree to China's uncompromising formula after the United States opted to support China rather than ASEAN (Jackson, 1982: 132-34). Considerations of threat and interest prevailed, as ASEAN was beset by its own lack of power capabilities. However, the plausibility of interest-centred explanations is likewise high as ASEAN's response to the Vietnamese incursion into Thai territory

Vietnamese bases. See *Bangkok Post*, July 28, 1980: 1.

¹⁰⁵ Joint Communiqué, Thirteenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, June 25, 1980.

corresponded to what can be expected of states aligned for the preservation of the status-quo. Given the strength of community indicators, and the simultaneous validity of realist theories, this period is indeterminate in terms of lending endorsement to any particular theory.

4.4 Southeast Asia 1983-1986: The Stalemate Persists

The creation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) had been a cumbersome process because of the mutual mistrust of the participating factions. Once up and running in 1982, the CGDK increased the international respectability of the Khmer Rouge-dominated resistance but it did not succeed in its main objective. Between 1983 and 1986, the CGDK's armed resistance continued the fight against the Vietnamese-sponsored People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). However, despite support by ASEAN, Western countries, and China both diplomatically and militarily, the CGDK not only failed to dislodge the Vietnamese-sponsored regime, but also suffered the loss of most of its bases in the 1984 Vietnamese dry-season offensive.

However, vice-versa, even with the involvement of up to 180,000 Vietnamese soldiers, the PRK regime did not succeed in eliminating the guerrilla force led by Pol Pot's faction. Militarily, the dispute was deadlocked, despite the fact that the PRK regime maintained control of most of Cambodia's territory at all times. In a similar vein, the diplomatic struggle between the two opposing coalitions came to naught, although the support for the PRK-Vietnam-Soviet Union alliance in the United Nations was ever dwindling gauged by the annual ritual of a vote in the UN General Assembly and it was in steep decline from 1983-85 (see Table 3). ASEAN continued to succeed in denying the PRK international recognition as the legitimate representative of Cambodia. However, this diplomatic success for ASEAN and China bore little fruit beyond its symbolism, as the threat of a Soviet veto in the Security Council blocked any meaningful initiative towards enforcement of the majority view.

¹⁰⁶ *Bangkok Post*, June 30, 1980: 1.

Table 3: United Nations General Assembly Votes on the Situation in Kampuchea, Calling for the Withdrawal of Vietnam

UN Vote	Yes	No	Abstentions
1979	91	21	29
1980	97	23	22
1981	100	25	19
1982	105	23	20
1983	105	23	19
1984	110	22	18
1985	114	21	16
1986	115	21	13
1987	117	21	16

Sources: Evans and Rowley, 1990; Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995.

ASEAN continuously emphasized the UN resolutions as basis for a settlement, with the Vietnamese withdrawal and Cambodian self-determination as the cornerstones. The association stayed united behind the Thai position, but several foreign policy initiatives from ASEAN members aimed at breaking the deadlock and accomplishing a political solution. Firstly, at the Delhi Non-Aligned Meeting in March 1983 a proposal mooted by Malaysian Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie for talks between ASEAN, Laos, and Vietnam was accepted by Nguyen Co Thach. However, Thai opposition effectively stymied the idea when it was discussed at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (Funston, 1998a: 61).

Not surprisingly, the most serious challenge to ASEAN's united stand originated from Indonesia. In February 1984 General Benni Murdani, Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces, deviated from ASEAN's position when he claimed that Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia was an act of national survival (Funston, 1998a: 69). This was followed by a meeting between President Suharto and Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach in Jakarta in March 1984 where the former suggested a peacekeeping role for Vietnam and the exclusion of Pol Pot from any settlement (Leifer, 1989: 130; Funston, 1998a: 62). However, Nguyen Co Thach declined to negotiate the Vietnamese position and the talks ended without progress. After the rejection of the Indonesian proposals, a Special Foreign Ministers Meeting convened

in May when a statement by Suharto re-emphasised ASEAN's unity on the Cambodian issue.¹⁰⁷

Another initiative that put into question ASEAN's position as defined by Thailand emanated from Malaysia. In April 1985, the Malaysian Foreign Minister Tunku Ahmad Rithauddeen suggested the facilitation of 'proximity talks' between the CGDK and the PRK. Modelled after negotiations in the Afghanistan conflict, the proposal aimed at circumventing the issue of recognition by using a middleman between parties that would be in close proximity (Funston, 1998a: 64). However, following an ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting in June 1985, the Thai view prevailed that the PRK could only participate as part of a Vietnamese delegation.

The idea of informal talks between all Cambodian factions, which underpinned the idea of 'proximity talks', also provided the basis for the so-called "Cocktail Party" talks, suggested by the Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar in December 1985. Again, due to Thai objections the proposal was first altered to make the meetings contingent upon Vietnam's attendance, and then dropped from the agenda (Funston, 1998a: 65). Because of the dogged resistance of both Thailand and Vietnam against any compromise formula that would have forced them to modify their interpretations of the conflict, a diplomatic and military stalemate prevailed in Indochina despite several promising peace initiatives in 1984 and 1985.

In contrast, 1986 was a quiet year on the diplomatic front, at least as far as ASEAN was concerned. This can be seen as proof that Southeast Asian states were unable to break the deadlock themselves without significant changes in great power relations. However, the relations among the Cambodian factions started to develop a dynamic of their own. In March 1986, the CGDK issued an eight-point proposal that for the first time dropped the complete Vietnamese withdrawal as a precondition for negotiations. Instead it hinted at the possibility of a two-phase withdrawal interspersed by negotiations and suggested the formation of a quadripartite government including the CGDK and the PRK (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 92-93).

¹⁰⁷ *Documents on the Kampuchean Problem, 1979-1985*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok. 1985: 105.

Security Behaviour

ASEAN's alignment posture changed little between 1983 and 1986, even though several proposals by Indonesia and Malaysia may have suggested otherwise. ASEAN partners continued to follow the lead of Thailand, which persisted in its hard-line approach towards Vietnam. The only occasion when ASEAN's common stance was seriously put into question was in 1984. However, when statements from General Murdani and proposals by President Suharto indicated possible Indonesian willingness to reach an agreement with Vietnam even without the support of ASEAN partners, Vietnam showed no inclination to compromise. Thus the true extent to which Jakarta might have been willing to deviate from the common ASEAN alignment was never put to the test. Malaysian efforts have to be put into perspective too. Malaysia combined peace proposals with enhanced cooperation with the United States in 1984, when a secret memorandum on security was concluded (da Cunha, 1999: 19). This proved that Malaysia did not put into question ASEAN's overall strategy.

The most noteworthy trend during this period concerned intra-ASEAN alignment. Firstly, ASEAN's fold was strengthened in 1984 when Brunei became the sixth member. Being effortlessly socialized into the grouping, Brunei supported the ASEAN consensus, even though it did not come up with proposals of its own. Secondly, despite the similarity of some of their proposals, Indonesian and Malaysian initiatives were characterized not only by a lack of coordination but, at least on one occasion, by a conspicuous absence of mutual support. The two ASEAN members that had reason to align diplomatically against the prevailing Thai position failed to do so.

The disjuncture of the diplomatic efforts of the two countries was evident on several occasions. Firstly, in February 1984, just days after General Murdani's controversial comments in Hanoi that displayed concord with Vietnam, Malaysian Foreign Minister Shafie Ghazali agreed with his Chinese counterpart Wu Xueqian that aid should be increased to the CGDK (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 69-70). Vice versa, when Ghazali's successor as Malaysian Foreign Minister, Rithauddeen, suggested 'proximity talks' in 1985, Indonesia did not support the initiative but came up with its own idea for dialogue, the 'Cocktail Talks' (Funston, 1998a: 65).

Problem Representations

The stumbling bloc for all peace initiatives was competing interpretations of the nature of the Cambodia Conflict. Vietnam consistently argued that the conflict was an internal affair between Cambodian factions, not a conflict between Cambodia and Vietnam. The international dimension of the conflict concerned Sino-Vietnamese relations. In a variation of this theme, from the time of the NAM Meeting in 1983 onwards, Vietnam tried to arrive at an accommodation with ASEAN by suggesting talks between Vietnam and ASEAN without any Cambodian involvement (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 60-61 and 63).

In contrast, ASEAN communiqués that backed the Thai position had cast the conflict as an international one between Cambodia and Vietnam, based on the fact of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. Accordingly, the conflict could only be resolved if Cambodia's independence was restored, Vietnam withdrew its troops, and the right of self-determination was implemented.¹⁰⁸ Put into the broader strategic context, this view remained in line with the goals of the US and China, namely to weaken and contain the Soviet Union and its allies. All attempts at a political settlement initiated by Indonesia and Malaysia ultimately foundered, because they implied an interpretation of the conflict that was not acceptable to the Thai side. Effectively the proposals were vetoed by Thailand.

Ghazali's plan in 1983, the peace initiative by President Suharto, and the 'proximity talk' proposal all had in common that they made allowances for Vietnam's interpretation of the conflict. They differed from the (ultimately prevailing) Thai position in that they hinted at formulas for conflict resolution that accommodated Vietnam's position that the Cambodia Conflict was an internal affair and Vietnam was only a party to the conflict as far as the broader context of Sino-Vietnamese relations was concerned. In that vein, the 1983 Ghazali proposal for ASEAN-Laos-Vietnam talks did not correspond with the Thai problem representation of the conflict as an international issue between Cambodia (to be represented by the CGDK) and Vietnam. Similarly, at the core of disagreement over the 'proximity talk' proposal was an interpretation of the conflict as a civil war, to be resolved by the Cambodian factions, not Vietnam (Leifer, 1989: 131).

Disagreement within ASEAN centred on the extent to which ASEAN should compromise and take into account Vietnam's security concerns vis-à-vis the Khmer Rouge and, by extension, China. An understanding of prevailing beliefs in Bangkok, unchanged since the onset of the conflict, is important if one is to comprehend why Thai leaders rebuffed the Indonesian and Malaysian initiatives in 1983, 1984, and 1985 to resolve the conflict peacefully. Preoccupied with the idea of Vietnam's expansionism and geopolitical competition, outlined before, Thai officials first and foremost wanted any initiative to start out from the premise that Vietnam had committed an act of aggression that had to be reversed. Thailand lobbied vigorously against any initiative that construed the conflict as a civil war, implying that the Vietnam-sponsored PRK government had a legitimate role to play in Cambodia's internal affairs. Throughout the conflict the main elements of the UN resolution of September 1979 were seen in Thailand as the basis for any settlement.

The Thai problem representation exerted paramount influence on the parameters of ASEAN-sponsored initiatives and Thailand effectively vetoed those attempts of conflict-resolution that did not share its premises. Ultimately, Thailand succeeded in rallying ASEAN partners behind a position that accepted the propositions of the UN resolution as the starting point for any initiative. In 1983, following Ghazali's agreement with Nguyen Co Thach, Thai officials went as far as stating that ASEAN members had to follow Thailand because it was the frontline state (Funston, 1998a: 61). Subsequently, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting effectively ignored the proposal.

Thailand obtained the support of Singapore against any peace initiative that implied a deviation from demands of a complete Vietnamese withdrawal as precondition. As outlined above, Singaporean leaders assumed that states bandwagon, which in their calculations made balancing against Vietnamese aggression a necessity even in the absence of a direct Vietnamese threat. Singapore joined the uncompromising Thai position that denied any legitimacy to the PRK regime out of fear of rewarding what was seen as aggression.

Due to the priority given to Thailand's security, Malaysia fell back in line whenever Thailand objected to the initiatives, underlining the primary importance of

¹⁰⁸ Appeal for Kampuchean Independence, issued by ASEAN Foreign Ministers, September 21, 1983, in Weatherbee, 1985: 121-22. Joint Communiqué of the Seventeenth ASEAN Foreign Ministers

solidarity with Thailand. Thai rejection doomed Foreign Minister Ghazali's 1983 proposal at the Non-Aligned Summit in Delhi for a dialogue between ASEAN on one side and Vietnam and Laos on the other. The same fate befell Rithauddeen's suggestion in 1985 to hold proximity talks between the Cambodian factions.

The Malaysian proclivity towards strong support for Thailand had been reinforced after Mahathir Mohamad became Prime Minister in July 1981. The stance reflected an appreciation of the importance of the relationship with Thailand, but it also expressed Mahathir's personal leadership ambitions in ASEAN that required policies different from Indonesia's (Leifer, 1989: 129). The departure from common policies with Indonesia became *inter alia* manifest in the greater Malaysian support for the Cambodian coalition government (GCDK) when Malaysia, in contrast to Indonesia, named an ambassador to the GCDK (Weatherbee, 1985: 5). However, Malaysia's policy should not be mistaken as proof that threat perceptions of China had evaporated. On the contrary, the alignment with China and the strategic cooperation between the United States and China in pursuit of containment of the Soviet Union continued to cause unease in Kuala Lumpur (Tilman, 1987: 132). The security agreement with the US in 1984 underlined this point.

The Thai position also held sway over Indonesia throughout this period, but it seems much less certain whether this betokened Thailand's clout. The basic parameters of Indonesia's foreign policy, which required the maintenance of ASEAN unity, had not changed since 1979. However, in 1984 President Suharto seemed closer than ever to defying ASEAN consensus when he welcomed Nguyen Co Thach for talks in Jakarta and seemed determined to broker an agreement. The Indonesian leadership seemed united behind a peace initiative and Foreign Minister Mochtar openly acknowledged differences between Indonesia and Thailand (MacIntyre, 1987: 522-523).¹⁰⁹ Most likely, Indonesia's attempts at accommodating Vietnam foundered because Nguyen Co Thach was not willing to make any concessions and there was no pretence about the blunt rejection of Suharto's efforts (Funston, 1998a: 62-63).

As noted before, another reason why Indonesia went, reluctantly, along with Thailand's position was the desire to retain a modicum of influence on Bangkok's policies. By maintaining solidarity with the joint ASEAN position of resisting

Meeting in Jakarta, July 10, 1984, in Weatherbee, 1985: 129-30.

¹⁰⁹ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 1, 1984: 9 and March 8, 1984: 16.

Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia, Indonesia could prevent a scenario which was seen as even less palatable: an overt alliance between Thailand and China and even more direct great power influence in Southeast Asia (Anwar, 1994: 189).

Explanations of Security Behaviour

ASEAN's security behaviour between 1983 and 1986 was largely characterized by continuity. The initiatives by Indonesia and Malaysia indicated that previous concerns about a continued antagonism towards Vietnam and its effect on the regional balance-of-power lingered. The goals and motives of ASEAN members had not changed. In the absence of serious regional crises peace initiatives and security discourse during this period allowed insights into the long-term preferences of ASEAN members and hinted at limitations to and factors conducive to the development of a regional community.

The behaviour of ASEAN members during the period 1983-1986 cast doubt on the idea that alignment was a function of a shared collective identity. Instead, a gauge of the three community indicators lends credence to the view that ASEAN's cohesion in the 1980-1982 period had been the result of an immediate crisis. Indonesian and Malaysian proposals pointed to the persistence of divergent problem representations within ASEAN as to the nature of the Cambodia Conflict. They implied to differing degrees that the conflict was to a substantial part a struggle between Cambodian groups. Those differences in opinion had been in the background during times of crisis in 1979 and 1980.

Worse from the point of an ASEAN community, between 1983 and 1985 there were several incidents that made obvious the absence of mutual identifications. Neither Indonesia nor Thailand was willing to take into account the security concerns of each other. Thai assertions that ASEAN had to follow Thailand's position in 1983 and Suharto's 1984 proposal that Vietnam could be part of a peacekeeping force in Cambodia displayed a similar disregard for the sensitivities of their ASEAN partners.

Furthermore, the Indonesian and Malaysian initiatives between 1983 and 1985 to varying degrees went against the principles of consultation and consensus-seeking, when representatives of the two countries approached Hanoi with proposals that contained concessions in contradiction with ASEAN's official position. The most serious transgression of ASEAN's norms was Suharto's proposal to Nguyen Co

Thach in 1984, which went far beyond any initiative that could be labelled 'exploratory' (Funston, 1998a: 62). The divergence from the previous ASEAN position was obvious and most likely instigated the Special Foreign Ministers Meeting in May. The veneer of unity restored by Suharto's statement at that meeting was less a reflection of a common purpose than a function of Suharto's indignation over Nguyen Co Thach's blunt rejection (Leifer, 1989: 130; Funston, 1998a: 62-63).

Taken together, a measurement of the three community indicators for this period does not support the idea of community. In Indonesia's case policy seemed to have been guided not by concerns for ASEAN, but by a desire to create a balance against China. However, because Vietnam failed to entertain seriously the Indonesian proposal it is impossible to ascertain whether Indonesia would seriously have been willing to ignore the ASEAN consensus and Thailand's security concerns. Malaysia shared the same objective of balancing China, but its strategy of enhancing security cooperation with the United States was more in keeping with ASEAN consensus. Identity considerations were only relevant in the case of the Philippines and, arguably, Singapore. However, in both cases, no hard choices were required, as strategic interest and the ASEAN position converged.

Particularly in the case of the Philippines strategic preferences coincided with identity considerations. The Philippines continued to maintain a low profile throughout the Indochina conflict, reflecting the country's preoccupation with domestic insurgencies. There is little evidence for any variation in the Philippine position; as noted, from the outset, it was influenced by balance-of-power reasoning, concern for ASEAN norms, and the need to register a regional identity. Those considerations coincided conveniently with the strategic outlook of the United States and Thailand and would explain why the Philippines found it easy to conduct itself as an excellent ASEAN citizen in terms of giving unambiguous backing to ASEAN's consensus (Solidum, 1997).

Singapore is another case in point that threat perceptions, interests, and regional identity exerted behavioural force in the same direction, making it difficult to privilege one particular explanation. Regional norms had intrinsic value and provided a motive for identifications with ASEAN. However, realist accounts and functional considerations focused on economic interests were complementary, as Singapore

depended on “the whole region, especially ASEAN” being “politically stable, economically progressive, and with its security assured.”¹¹⁰

ASEAN’s unity appeared to be a function of external challenges, like Vietnam’s June 1980 incursion, not a reflection of a shared strategic outlook. One group within ASEAN, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines, was content to work with the United States towards what was described as the containment of Soviet-led expansionist Communism. However, the other group within ASEAN, Indonesia and Malaysia, was concerned about the very implications of the containment strategy implemented, as it worked towards strengthening China. The unease felt about cooperation with China explained Malaysia’s repeated attempts to bring about a political settlement in Indochina.

Given the strength of the Indonesian opposition to Thailand’s uncompromising position and Malaysia’s reluctance, at least initially, to follow suit, it is surprising that no viable policy alternative emerged. Two additional factors most likely contributed to the predominance of Thailand’s policies. Firstly, Vietnam resorted to the use of force at crucial times of ASEAN disunity and showed no willingness to compromise, instigating a united ASEAN response. Secondly, after the ascendancy to power of Mahathir, Indonesia and Malaysia were engaged in a competition for leadership rather than combining forces to attain a settlement that would have benefited their stance.

In sum, realist accounts provide more compelling explanations of the behaviour of ASEAN members during 1983-1986 than identity-based theories. For this period balance-of-threat theory and balance-of-interest theory can be regarded as complementary and both provide plausible accounts of ASEAN behaviour. However, as has been explained, different motives can explain similar behavioural outcomes, rendering the validation of particular theories a complex task.

4.5 The Cocktail Talks in 1987-1988: First Steps Towards Peace

In 1987 Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar revived the idea of ‘Cocktail Talks’ first raised in December 1985. On July 6, 1987, he discussed the proposal for an informal meeting between all Cambodian factions with Norodom Sihanouk, the head of the CGDK, in Pyongyang. Subsequently, on a visit to Vietnam, Mochtar

¹¹⁰ Interview with Foreign Minister Dhanabalan, *Bangkok Post*, September 7, 1980: 5-6.

succeeded in receiving a positive response from Hanoi to his idea of Cocktail Talks among all four Cambodian factions, followed later by a second round of talks involving Vietnam and other international actors (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 128-129). In a joint communiqué on July 27 Vietnam and Indonesia endorsed the proposal and diplomats from the two countries agreed on the establishment of a bilateral working commission.

However, Mochtar had not consulted with the ASEAN Standing Committee (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 131) and the proposal was in contradiction to the previous ASEAN position endorsed at the June 1986 Foreign Ministers Meeting. The latter had expressed support for the CGDK eight-point plan that required Vietnam's participation in direct negotiations with the Khmer factions. An informal ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting was urgently called in Bangkok on August 16, 1987. There, Thailand and Singapore objected to the bilateral agreement between Indonesia and Vietnam. Subsequently, it was given a different tone when the ASEAN ministers readjusted the proposal from one without preconditions to one that stated that there would only be one meeting and that Vietnam would participate immediately after talks between the Cambodian factions (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 131-132; Funston, 1998a: 66). Not surprisingly, the Vietnamese rejected the alteration.

However, if anything the ASEAN manoeuvring proved counterproductive as it arguably diminished ASEAN's influence on the ensuing negotiations. In early December 1987 Sihanouk, in his capacity as head of the CGDK, bypassed ASEAN and met Hun Sen in France (Leifer, 1989: x). Facilitated by Mochtar, this first direct encounter between PRK and CGDK marked an important step towards the ultimate resolution of the conflict (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 143). Hun Sen and Sihanouk tentatively agreed on convening an international conference in Paris, even though the latter was only finalized in May 1989 and held in July 1989 (Leifer, 1989: xiv-xv).

However, the peace process would not have been thinkable without changes in Sino-Soviet relations. With Gorbachev at its helm, Soviet foreign policy was redefined after 1985. This redefinition, articulated in public in Vladivostok in July 1986 and Krasnoyarsk in September 1988 (Williams, 1991: 367; Yahuda, 1996), included as one crucial objective rapprochement with China. However, back in 1982 the Chinese leadership had made an improvement of relations dependent upon three

factors: Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, troop reductions on the Sino-Soviet border and Mongolia, and, most consequential from a Southeast Asian perspective, the termination of support for Vietnam's Cambodia policy (Nathan and Ross, 1997: 49).

Bilateral Sino-Soviet discussions of regional disputes started in 1986 (Williams, 1991: 369), and, as it became clear that improved relations with the former archenemy China was a priority of Gorbachev's foreign policy, change in the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance was imminent. By late 1987, the redefinition of Soviet foreign policy was given concrete shape and as a result of ensuing Sino-Soviet rapprochement and economic failure in Vietnam, Vietnam sought a political settlement in Cambodia (Leifer, 1989: xi; Funston, 1998a: 66).

Those developments also signalled the beginning of ASEAN's marginalization for the settlement of the conflict, even though the Indonesian-Vietnamese proposal was successfully implemented in July 1988 when the first meeting of the 'Cocktail Talks' or Jakarta International Meeting (JIM) took place. The meeting employed the format of the July 1987 communiqué. However, the Paris Conference signified the sidelining of ASEAN, as evident in the conference location and the predominance of the great powers, a diplomatic snub hardly softened by Indonesia's appointment as co-chair.

Although the Cocktail Talks did not produce tangible results, by late 1988 the resolution of the conflict gained irreversible momentum, as the former great power adversaries of the Cold War moved towards cooperation. By the end of 1988 the Cambodia Conflict had ceased to be a dividing issue for Sino-Soviet relations (Leifer, 1989: x). When both sides agreed on holding a Sino-Soviet Summit in May 1989 it betokened the effective end of the Cold War in the wider Asian arena. By the end of 1988, the international dimension of the Cambodia Conflict had been defused sufficiently to depict developments in late 1988 as marking the end of the Cold War era in Southeast Asia, even though a final settlement in Cambodia was only agreed upon in 1991. The Vietnamese announcement in January 1989 that it would withdraw its troops from Cambodia by September gave way to a new chapter in the international relations of Southeast Asia, which will be dealt with in detail as part of Post Cold War developments.

Most significantly, the marginal role ASEAN played in the final stage of the conflict resolution process underlined that ASEAN would face new challenges in the emerging Post Cold War era, as the relevance of the organization could not be taken for granted. ASEAN's reaffirmation of ZOPFAN as one of its objectives at the December 1987 ASEAN Summit in Manila indicated that ASEAN members were aware that they had gained new room for manoeuvrability but also that they had to reconsider their strategic outlook.

Security Behaviour

The significant change in regional dynamics in 1987-1988 became manifest not in changed alignment patterns but in strategic outlook. The overall alignment patterns remained the same as in previous years, even though the Soviet support for Vietnam was lessening in the wake of Gorbachev's redefinition of foreign policy. What changed was the willingness of Vietnam and ASEAN to compromise. However, it was clear that instrumental for a settlement was the qualitative change in Sino-Soviet relations. At the same time, relations between the United States, ASEAN's main ally, and the Soviet Union had also improved immeasurably. Great power realignment, not regional patterns of conflict and cooperation determined the end of the Cambodia Conflict as an international issue.

Problem Representations

The most important change in problem representations within ASEAN was observable in Thailand. Between 1979 and 1987 Thailand and Singapore vigorously opposed any initiative that could have been construed as recognition of the Cambodia Conflict as a civil war or as part of a wider Sino-Vietnamese conflict. According to that perspective, any proposal had to start from the premise that an act of Vietnamese aggression had occurred and the goal of any settlement would have had to be the reversal of the latter.

This reasoning informed Singapore and Thailand's response to the Indonesian-Vietnamese communiqué in July 1987 that endorsed the Cocktail Talk proposals. The reinterpretation of the agreement at the ensuing ASEAN meeting towards one that required direct Cambodian-Vietnamese talks can be traced to the

well-known concerns in Singapore and Thailand that the conflict could otherwise be interpreted as an internal affair of Cambodia (Raszelenberg and Schier, 1995: 129).

However, by late 1987, Thailand had quietly dropped its unreserved opposition to peace initiatives that implied a separation between the domestic level of conflict (a meeting of the four Cambodian factions) and the international one (with Vietnamese participation). Thailand approved the Cocktail Talk initiative, encouraged by Soviet reassurances and the evident Vietnamese weakness (Leifer, 1989: xi; Funston, 1998a: 66), even though the two separate meetings could still be seen as implicitly confirming Vietnam's interpretation of the conflict as primarily a Cambodian affair.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

The stalemate in Cambodia was finally broken not primarily because of regional efforts but one factor exogenous to the region: Gorbachev's ascendancy to power in the Soviet Union in March 1985 and the subsequent radical redefinition of Soviet foreign policy. The threat from Vietnam ceased when the Soviet Union stopped its unconditional support, paving the way for a regional settlement. At the same time, the rationale for US and Chinese containment of the Soviet Union evaporated when Gorbachev sought rapprochement with all major powers.

The circumstances of the conclusion of the Cambodia issue as an international conflict lends support to realist interpretations. Thailand and Singapore refrained from vetoing the implementation of peace initiatives only when Vietnam was weak economically in 1988 and the threat from Vietnamese expansionism had disappeared. Also, from the perspective of balance-of-interest theory, Vietnam's pending withdrawal from Cambodia would have marked the return to the regional status quo ante 1979, which had come to define ASEAN's diplomatic efforts in terms of both territorial divisions and rules of regional order. For the future, Vietnam's weakness would also provide some reassurance that the country could not pose a serious threat to the existing status quo in continental Southeast Asia. The Thai and Singaporean acquiescence to a settlement not entirely on ASEAN's terms thus supports both threat and interest-based explanations.

With regard to identity-based explanations, the three community indicators provide scant support for identity accounts. Firstly, in terms of norm compliance

Indonesia's unilateral pursuit of the Cocktail initiative cast some doubt on the idea that community considerations influenced ASEAN behaviour. Foreign Minister Mochtar's conclusion of a communiqué with Vietnam in July 1987, which agreed on a formula for Cocktail talks, was in contradiction with the previous ASEAN consensus and ignored the norms of consultation and consensus. In contrast, the actual Cocktail Talk meeting in 1988 went ahead with the approval of ASEAN partners.

While norm compliance was lacking, problem representations and identifications with the security of ASEAN partners showed some changes towards a stronger focus on regional autonomy. However, the assertion of ZOPFAN principles at the 1987 December summit should not be taken at face value. The declaration indicated that the principle of regional autonomy had resurfaced. However, it is difficult to see how the proclamation of ZOPFAN principles had more than declaratory significance. Notably, it was only when the Vietnamese threat was dissipating that ASEAN members recalled the desirability of their autonomous regional order after they had previously engaged in balancing with external powers. This observation supports realist accounts, as it indicated that operational security policies in the region were guided by realist prescriptions in times of challenges and only in the absence of conflict would identity considerations enter the equation. The changes in the regional security environment in 1987-1988 were clearly not attributable to alterations in identities or norms but shifts in external material circumstances.

4.6 Summary: ASEAN during the Cambodia Conflict 1979-1988

The Cambodia Conflict changed considerably the patterns of cooperation among ASEAN members. Prior to the invasion of Cambodia, no attempts to come to a common position had been made, even though the coordination of individual responses to Vietnam's offer of a non-aggression treaty in 1978 had hinted at ASEAN's ability to coordinate foreign policy. In contrast, from 1979 until 1988 ASEAN states maintained a common alignment posture with China and the United States in support of a coalition of the Khmer Rouge and other resistance movements.

Contrary to ZOPFAN principles, which did not feature prominently in ASEAN's security discourse until late 1987, ASEAN members strengthened

considerably their security links with external powers. The United States fulfilled the role of a pivot, as cooperation with Malaysia combined with the traditional alliances with the Philippines and Thailand. However, given the good relations since 1967, this development was not novel and only represented a change in degree not substance. In contrast, Thailand's alliance with China constituted a significant shift from previous ASEAN policies and for the first time indicated the diversification of security links beyond Western powers, even if it was strictly based on shared enmity towards Vietnam.

Throughout the Cambodia Conflict, ASEAN military cooperation did not undergo any significant changes. Bilateral exercises continued and marginally expanded but they did not evolve beyond the framework that had been put in place by 1975. Undoubtedly, those exercises remained subordinated to external links and, in most cases did not go beyond confidence building. Even when they did, as was the case with Singapore-Thailand exercises, their military utility was extremely limited.

However, they might have made a contribution to good relations within ASEAN and, by extension, to ASEAN's ability to stay united at crucial junctures. As a result of its ability to unite behind a common position,¹¹¹ ASEAN emerged from the Cambodia conflict as a respected international actor, despite the fact that ASEAN's influence on the final settlement of the conflict was marginal. ASEAN's cohesive alignment posture is remarkable, given firstly its previous lack of cooperation in foreign affairs, and secondly, the divergent geopolitical outlook of its members. Primary threat perceptions and commensurate strategies differed between two camps in ASEAN.

In short, Thailand chose a balancing strategy against Vietnam that relied upon alignment with the peculiar coalition of China, the Khmer Rouge and the United States. Singapore and the Philippines supported Thailand's strategy, the former in a vociferous way, the latter in a low-key manner. On the other hand, Malaysia and Indonesia favoured a political solution and were willing to compromise with Vietnam, at least to the extent of acknowledging Vietnam's need of security towards Cambodia and China. Notwithstanding those differences, ASEAN stayed aligned with the US and China. How did the interplay of material structures, strategic perceptions and

social interactions result in ASEAN alignment and how much relevance do different approaches to security have for this time period?

Common Alignment: A Regional Community in the Making?

Several scholars (Khong, 1997b; Acharya, 1998) have argued that shared norms provided the basis for ASEAN unity and one observer (Busse, 1999) has taken the argument further to suggest that ASEAN unity required some of its members to act contrary to realist predictions and indicated a sense of community. Measured against the three indicators of community, shared interpretations, mutual identifications, and norm compliance, how much credence does a community-based approach deserve? As it turns out, the prevalence of the three community indicators is uneven. While there were comparable problem representations, indicative of shared meaning structures, the evidence of norm compliance was ambiguous and mutual identifications with ASEAN had a very narrow basis.

With regard to the Cambodia Conflict, shared meaning structures among ASEAN leaders existed with regard to three broad areas: adherence to balance-of-power practices, aversion to Communism, and consensus to defend the norms of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. The problem with those findings is that two of those three elements of shared interpretations – balance-of-power reasoning and anti-Communism – initially divided ASEAN, as they resulted in divergent threat perceptions. However, between January 1979 and June 1980 anti-Communism, beliefs in the need to balance against the most immediate threat, and Vietnamese aggressiveness combined to result in ASEAN's anti-Vietnamese/anti-Soviet bias.

One additional factor proved important for forging unity of all five ASEAN members: the agreement that the code of regional norms enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation should be respected and that Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia represented an unacceptable violation of ASEAN's norms of behavioural conduct. The convergence of ASEAN members on the TAC norms is manifest in the numerous communiqués the association concluded between January 1979 and 1987.

Overall, agreement on the importance of regional norms of conduct and fear of Communist expansionism provided sufficient commonalities among ASEAN

¹¹¹ The fact that the association consistently declined to negotiate with Vietnam in a multilateral framework can be explained in terms of political expediency, as ASEAN wanted to avoid giving the

members at crucial junctures to maintain ASEAN cohesion. The fact that ASEAN unity was particularly strong when Vietnam intruded into Thai territory supports claims that norms of territorial sovereignty and non-use of force were seen as highly significant, however, it also lends support to threat-based explanations.

If evidence of shared meaning structures lends support to the community idea, the picture as to norm compliance is more ambiguous. On the one hand, ASEAN governments engaged in numerous formal and informal meetings to consult on and coordinate their policies towards Vietnam, indicating that the norms of consultation and consensus seeking were regarded as important. Moreover, on several occasions, individual ASEAN leaders exercised restraint when unilateral initiatives seemed feasible and desirable.¹¹² Those incidents revealed the general willingness by ASEAN leaders to adhere to the rules of consultation and consensus, even though there were divergent perceptions of the conflict.

On the other hand, on numerous and, arguably, the far more important occasions, Indonesian, Malaysian, and Thai initiatives did not comply with those norms. The diplomatic significance of those proposals derives from the fact that they conveyed the (accurate) impression of disunity jeopardizing the common external policies of the association for the sake of narrow national interests. However, norm compliance tended to be high at times of crisis, like in early 1979 and after the Vietnamese incursion into Thailand in June 1980.

Diplomatic unity implies identification with ASEAN's position. However, with regard to the third community indicator, identifications, an analysis of the motives of ASEAN members reveals the significance of functional motives and a low degree of 'we-feeling' among ASEAN members. In this context, it is noteworthy that the ZOPFAN principle and the notion of regional autonomy, possible referent points for the regional community, did not influence ASEAN's security policies when confronted with Vietnam's aggression. This changed only in late 1987 when the conflict was drawing to a close.

The country where decision-makers identified most unambiguously with the regional grouping was Indonesia. Indonesia's policy was changed measurably from its preference for Vietnam to alignment with Thailand against Vietnam. However, in

impression that this was a conflict between ASEAN and Vietnam.

the later stages of the conflict, when the immediate danger had passed and the risk of an ASEAN split seemed low, Indonesia reverted to unilateral initiatives. The identification with ASEAN is best explained in the context of leadership ambitions. Jakarta envisaged Indonesian leadership over ASEAN and this goal necessitated the support of the joint ASEAN position, even if that meant short-term sacrifices.

For the Philippines and Singapore evidence also points to a strong identification with ASEAN. However, in their cases the pursuit of ASEAN policies coincided with their own policy preferences, making it virtually impossible to distinguish between community identification and selfish motives. In the case of the Philippines, the identification with the established ASEAN consensus fulfilled a functional purpose. ASEAN was seen as a crucial vehicle for a Philippine foreign policy, "governed by the need to register a regional identity and to diversify external affiliations overshadowed by the U.S connection" (Leifer, 1989: 93). In Singapore's case the importance of regional stability for economic growth necessitated identifications with ASEAN security. Identification with the community and selfish interests converged, as the interdependence of the Southeast Asian region was seen as linked to Singapore's prosperity and ASEAN's principles of regional order were regarded as vital for Singapore's survival.

While identifications with ASEAN's position can be asserted in the case of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore, this is not the case with Malaysia and Thailand. Malaysia came to identify its security with that of Thailand, but was not equally concerned with the ASEAN consensus. Malaysia's identification with Thai security emanated from a balance-of-power conception that regarded Thailand as a buffer against Communist threats. The multitude of initiatives that aimed at resolving the Cambodia Conflict on terms that Thai leaders opposed does not negate this evaluation. Those initiatives while harmful to ASEAN consensus did not jeopardize Thailand's security. Whenever Thailand was the target of Vietnamese aggression, Malaysia firmly supported the Thai position.

The country that most clearly did not identify its security with that of ASEAN partners was, surprisingly, Thailand. For Thailand, ASEAN constituted the lesser element of its overall strategy against the perceived threat from Vietnam compared to

¹¹² Those included the Thai-Chinese alliance, the Kuantan Declaration, the 1984 proposals by Suharto, and the July 1987 Communiqué between Indonesia and Vietnam.

the significance attached to alliances with the US and China (Buszynski, 1994: 731). Thailand did not rely on military support from ASEAN (whether it could have in case of Vietnamese aggression is an open question) but only used diplomatic backing from the organization. The respective power capabilities would explain why Thailand looked for external support from the United States and China against Vietnam. This by itself would not negate the notion of a regional community. However, more significantly, Thailand ignored the security concerns of those ASEAN partners that regarded China as a threat, tarnishing the idea that ASEAN was more than an expedient diplomatic alignment. Given the strong support from the United States, the alliance with China was not vital. However, indicative of the regional state of affairs between 1979 and 1988, the idea of regional community was subordinated to strategic reasoning.

The period also offers insights into the link between institutions and foreign policy that are significant for earlier debates about the determinants of community behaviour. It should be noted that the considerably tighter diplomatic co-operation among ASEAN members did not translate into any significant institutional adjustments compared to the earlier period. Although an ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta was created, following an earlier accord at the Bali Summit in 1976, its functions never went beyond minimal co-ordination activities. In essence, ASEAN's decision-making procedures were unchanged. Decision-making continued to be confined to the close circle of leaders. Personal meetings among leaders and the atmosphere that prevailed there were far more significant for ASEAN's direction than any institutions. What did change in the 1979-1988 period compared to ASEAN's nascent stage was the intensity and frequency of meetings among high-level officials and political leaders. It is impossible to say conclusively whether the Cambodia Conflict was causal to this development but the timing provides support for the argument that the crisis propelled regional leaders closer together. The fact that regional trade remained highly limited further reinforces the impression that personal contacts among top-level leaders, not growing ties among countries at large contributed to foreign policy co-operation. These trends are highly significant in the context of Risse-Kappen's claims (1996) that democratization and institutionalization are pivotal for the emergence of a security community. Neither process was in evidence in the region, as authoritarianism remained entrenched, yet foreign policy

interaction changed as visible in ASEAN's alignment. Even if ASEAN's record between 1979-1988 does not allow conclusions as to importance of institutionalization for regional communities – after all a community did not exist – it casts some doubts on Risse-Kappen's ideas. After all both, regime type and degree of institutionalization cannot explain the variation in regional alignment behaviour between the earlier period and that of the Cambodia Conflict.

Interest and Threat-Based Explanations

Despite the predominance of strategic motives, the evidence for realist arguments is mixed. ASEAN's behaviour during the Cambodia Conflict poses a conundrum for balance-of-threat theory. ASEAN maintained diplomatic alignment **despite** discrepant threat perceptions. However, the issue of divergent threat perceptions can be overstated. Where ASEAN decision-makers differed was the perception of the most immediate threat, not their general attitude towards Communism. At stake were not fundamental differences in outlook but rather the ranking of priorities. A security relationship with China was not desirable *per se*, but some ASEAN members preferred this option over Vietnamese control of Indochina. Ultimately, the support of the frontline state, Thailand, proved more important than the low-level threats perceived by Indonesia and Malaysia.

Balance-of-threat theory can accurately predict Thailand's balancing behaviour against Vietnam, based on Thai perceptions of aggressive intentions, power, and proximity. Together with structural balance theory it can explain the Thai-Chinese alliance. With a lesser degree of plausibility the theory can also explain the balancing approach of Singapore and the Philippines. Given their distance to the Cambodian theatre their threat perceptions cannot be explained without extensive references to factors balance-of-threat purports to relegate to secondary importance: ideology and, in Singapore's case, the norms of regional conduct. In the initial stages of the conflict, 1979-1982, the theory fails to account adequately for Indonesian behaviour and can only partially explain Malaysian behaviour if aided by complementary theories.

In Malaysia's case, external threat perceptions centred on China, not Vietnam. However, the primary threat was a domestic challenge by Communist insurgents. Because of Malaysian dependence on Thai cooperation for controlling this danger,

Thai security assumed primary importance. In essence Thailand was supported not because of fear of Vietnam, but because, according to structural balance theory, the enemy (Vietnam) of a friend (Thailand) is an enemy. Indonesia's behaviour eludes balance-of-threat theory because it cannot explain why ASEAN unity presented an intrinsic value for the Indonesian leadership.

In contrast, balance-of-interest theory provides a very plausible account of ASEAN behaviour during the 1979-1988 period. If seen through the prism of status quo and revisionist actors, ASEAN opposed the Vietnamese invasion, because it constituted the most immediate challenge to the status quo, which was highly valued by ASEAN members. A settlement became possible when the status quo ante was restored. However, one shortcoming of balance-of-interest theory concerns the assumption that countries agree on the meaning of the status quo. As it turned out, behind the diplomatic alignment of five ASEAN members hid different definitions of the status quo. They encompassed Thailand's desire to preserve its status as regional power in continental Southeast Asia, and the interest by Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore to maintain ASEAN unity because of, respectively, leadership aspirations, the need to establish a regional identity, and functional considerations of economic interest and the need to uphold the principle of state sovereignty. The latter and the aversion to Communism were shared among all ASEAN members.

Those different interests most clearly converged when the threat to the status quo was particularly strong. The fact that support for Thailand was highest in crisis moments and when Thai territory was under threat supports this view. At times when Thailand was not threatened, but the only issue under consideration was Cambodia itself, proposals were made that reflected the underlying suspicion of Beijing's intentions.

How much relevance do the concepts of regional community and identity-based accounts of security behaviour have? Norm compliance varied considerably and only tended to be high at times of immediate crisis. With regard to identifications, three out of five ASEAN members identified with regional security, albeit for different reasons, and Malaysia identified with Thailand's security. Problem representations did converge to a considerable degree on the unacceptability of norm violations (territorial integrity) and a general aversion towards Communism. Given the functional considerations for three countries (vehicle for leadership;

establishment of regional credentials; economic interdependence), lack of identifications, and several significant incidences of unilateral action, ASEAN can be classified as a community at this stage only to the extent that it was based on the complementarity of fundamental interests and agreement on the importance of TAC norms. It was not a diplomatic community based on identity considerations.

Overall, ASEAN alignment during the Cambodia Conflict is best understood in terms of a diplomatic community defined by compatible interests that all converged on the desirability of the status quo of free-market regimes. Because the perspectives of ASEAN members became equated with the status quo, the Vietnamese invasion was the most immediate challenge to the principles and norms underpinning the status quo. The identity of ASEAN was not just defined by a shared aversion to Communism but also by a minimalist understanding that the norms of regional conduct of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) should be respected. However, the extent to which this influenced policies was very uneven. The prevailing view in Indonesia is a clear example of the general compatibility of identity-based and interest-based explanations of international relations.

If a community was in the making among ASEAN members, at this stage it was not detectable in the sphere of security. Even the criteria used to define a nascent security community (Adler and Barnett, 1998b: 50-53) are not in evidence: a common threat perception did not unite ASEAN. On the contrary, divergent threat perceptions sowed disunity. A sense of shared destiny is only discernible in the statements and actions of one member (Indonesia), which aspired to regional leadership and thus had an interest in fostering regional unity. Whether an atmosphere of trust was created is open to debate.

ASEAN found it difficult to extricate itself from great power interests. Members opted to give the security motive of protection against expansionist Communism greater weight than the principle of regional autonomy. As this coincided with US and Chinese interests in containment of Soviet Communism, ASEAN received support, but in turn ASEAN members had to compromise ZOPFAN principles to great power influence. ASEAN was not necessarily a pawn of the great powers, but its strategic choice and its interlinked fear of abandonment limited considerably its room of manoeuvrability, as evident at the ICK in 1981.

During the Cambodia Conflict alternative explanations of security behaviour, threat, interest, and identity, all had validity, but their plausibility varied from country to country. Given the predominance of the strategic motive, realist accounts were probably more compelling in explaining ASEAN behaviour, but they are most insightful if combined with identity accounts that can reveal ASEAN's self-conception as a rule-based community of free-market oriented states. Regardless of its causes, there is little doubt that ASEAN's diplomatic alignment during the Cambodia Conflict was clearly externally propelled by Vietnam's invasion. This insight cast doubt on what rationale would exist for ASEAN once the threat of Communism had receded.

Southeast Asia in the Post Cold War Era

The end of the Cold War had an impact on Southeast Asia that was a small-scale mirror image of its effect on global politics. It profoundly transformed the patterns of international relations in the region. After Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia in January 1979, the Cambodia Conflict had come to define the parameters of international relations in Southeast Asia. However, the thaw in great power relations between China and the Soviet Union, which then culminated in the Sino-Soviet Summit in May 1989, paved the way for rapprochement in Indochina. By late 1988 the Cold War in Southeast Asia was effectively over, with negotiations over Cambodia in full swing and the Vietnamese withdrawal imminent, although only the Paris Peace Settlement in 1991 formally put an end to the international dimension of the Cambodia Conflict. What challenges and opportunities did the transition from Cold War politics offer to ASEAN members? And how did ASEAN leaders perceive and react to those?

After the geopolitical disengagement of the Soviet Union from the region and the subsequent withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, people in Southeast Asia had reason to believe that the 1990s could be devoted to issues of economic and social development. While this was largely true and the economies of ASEAN members flourished, the very disappearance of immediate security issues constituted a challenge for ASEAN. It raised the question of what rationale existed for continued ASEAN cooperation, particularly as its record in economic cooperation was meagre compared to the results in the diplomatic realm.

Undoubtedly, ASEAN's confidence building function and the prevention of intramural conflict that had been so instrumental in its formative years remained important, given numerous unresolved disputes among ASEAN members. On the other hand, it cannot be overlooked that ASEAN had been in alignment. As explained in the previous chapters, ASEAN states had forged the association against the backdrop of a perceived threat of Communist subversion in the region (Kim, 1997). From 1979 onwards, ASEAN conducted acted in diplomatic alignment during the Cambodia Conflict.

Alignment might have been less important in the early stages than during Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, but it had nevertheless been a consistent rationale for ASEAN. The seeming irrelevance of the alliance motive in the Post Cold War era would

have realist scholars (Mearsheimer, 1990 and 1994/95) suggest that ASEAN had fulfilled its purpose and could be expected to wind down. Furthermore, the fact that the final stages of the Cambodia settlement took place without ASEAN exerting influence indicated a degree of diplomatic marginalisation (Leifer, 1989) that did not bode well for ASEAN's future as a significant actor in the Asia-Pacific in the Post Cold War era.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the end of the Cold War offered ASEAN leaders unprecedented room of manoeuvrability to implement their own vision of regional order. ASEAN now could forge its own identity and redefine its *raison d'être* independently, after the region had been freed of the straitjacket of superpower geopolitics, 'systemic overlay' in the vernacular of the literature on regional security complexes (Buzan, 1988 and 1991; Buzan et al., 1998). Given this context, how did ASEAN security discourse and behaviour develop in the Post Cold War era? How did different factors – threat perceptions, interests, and identities interact to determine alignment patterns? In particular, do security discourse and behaviour provide evidence of the emergence of a regional community?

The analysis of ASEAN's Post Cold War security diplomacy is divided up into three chapters. The following two chapters, chapter 5 and chapter 6, will analyse ASEAN diplomacy between early 1989 and mid-1997 using the fifteen diplomatic events selected for the Post Cold War period (see Table 1, p. 82). They will systematically examine the problem representations of ASEAN leaders for each event to determine the factors that guided ASEAN alignment behaviour in the Post Cold War era; subsequently, they will assess the applicability of the alternative theories of alignment. The idea of an emerging regional community is critically evaluated by gauging the three elements that are believed to capture the essence of community, shared meaning structures, norm compliance with the 'ASEAN way', and mutual identifications with ASEAN partners.

The two periods covered in chapter 5, from late 1988/1989 to the Singapore Summit, and chapter 6, from February 1992 until mid-1997, are characterized by different dynamics in ASEAN's security environment. During what could be called the transitional period from Cold War to Post Cold War politics, ASEAN discourse from 1989 to early 1992 evolved against the backdrop of a benign security environment. Given the absence of external security challenges, how would ASEAN leaders like to

position the organization? Would they attempt to implement policies towards regional autonomy as envisaged in the ZOPFAN Declaration?

In contrast, the period since February 1992 in the wake of the Singapore Summit has been characterized by a perceived challenge from the People's Republic of China in the South China Sea. Chinese assertiveness introduced a different dynamic to the region and the issue of how ASEAN should relate to both great powers gained added salience. Chapter 6 explores ASEAN diplomacy between 1992 and mid-1997 and traces the evolution of a new regional security structure, including relations with the US and China but also the expansion of ASEAN. Finally, the analysis of Post Cold War developments concludes in chapter 7 with a brief summary of recent developments since mid-1997 and an evaluation of their impact on alignment and the evolution of regional community.

All three chapters put the emphasis on perceptions of and behaviour towards the People's Republic of China and the United States. It is self-evident that the relationships with the United States and China would form the integral components of any strategy Southeast Asian nations would devise for a new regional order. In the wake of Russia's departure from Southeast Asia as a geostrategic player¹¹³ and Japan's continuous emphasis on non-military components of foreign policy, security thinking in Southeast Asia could concentrate on relations with the remaining two great powers with an impact on Southeast Asian security: the United States, preponderant but ultimately distant, and China, only an emerging great power but in much closer proximity.

¹¹³ Up to the present day Russia has held on to its naval base in Camh Ran Bay in Vietnam. However, beyond possible sharing of intelligence with Vietnam, there is no evidence that Russia intends to play a pro-active role in the Southeast Asian security complex.

Chapter 5

ASEAN 1989-1992: What New Order for Southeast Asia?

The Transition from Cold War to Post Cold War Politics

Relations with the Region

5.1 Chatichai and Thailand's Volte-Face towards Vietnam

Given that ASEAN had backed Thailand during the 1980s, the first serious challenge to ASEAN's unity in the new and, arguably, more benign security environment came from an unexpected source. After Thailand's Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanond had resigned, Chatichai Choonhawan emerged victorious from an election on July 24, 1988, and formed a coalition government. With Chatichai at its helm, Thailand commenced commercial relations with its erstwhile bitter enemy of the Cambodia Conflict: Vietnam. Touted by Chatichai as part of his vision of 'Suwannaphume' (Golden Peninsula), he and his advisory team devised a new policy that advocated turning Indochina 'from a battlefield to a marketplace'.

Theory was put into practice quickly and the policy was implemented without any prior consultation with ASEAN partners. In January 1989, amidst signs that Vietnam was ready for peace and the Cold War was effectively over, a large Thai delegation visited Hanoi. This was followed up by an invitation to Cambodian Premier Hun Sen, formerly despised as illegitimate and Vietnam's bogey. This change in strategy and the lack of consultation upset Thailand's ASEAN partners. Those sentiments were aggravated further when Chatichai terminated his policy after consultations with Beijing, not ASEAN (Buszynski, 1989: 1071). Chatichai's policy led to a serious deterioration of relations with Thailand and even gave rise to semi-official Indonesian proposals for Indonesian-Malaysian-Singaporean cooperation instead of ASEAN-wide cooperation.¹¹⁴

Security Behaviour

The implementation of Chatichai's new Indochina policy meant that Thailand abandoned ASEAN's diplomatic alignment, which, ironically, had been created in 1979 to help Thailand against Vietnam and had been maintained despite divergent policy preferences

from Indonesia and to a lesser degree Malaysia. When Thailand enacted unilaterally Chatichai's new Indochina policy, it left in tatters what had been a remarkably cohesive ASEAN front. However, other ASEAN members did not oppose accommodation with Vietnam per se but Thailand's approach. At the centre of controversy was not a conflict about alignment preferences, but Thailand's unilateral abandonment of common alignment.

Problem Representations

The underlying assumption of Chatichai's initiative was that Vietnam had been weakened sufficiently to be regarded as a lesser threat to Thai security (Buszynski, 1989). Chatichai apparently judged that ASEAN's diplomatic strategy combined with the military efforts of the CGDK coalition (supported by China, the West and Thailand) had fulfilled its purpose and could hitherto be abandoned. The dramatic changes in foreign policy style and substance from Prem to Chatichai were reminiscent of the 1970s when successive Thai governments pursued different and often contradictory policies towards Communist powers. And in another parallel to the 1970s, the reorientation was ardently contested. The Foreign Ministry – still under the aegis of Siddhi - opposed the radical policy change but was bypassed (Sirikrai, 1990: 257; Snitwongse, 1997: 93). In contrast, business people, obvious beneficiaries from an opening to Vietnam, gave enthusiastic support. In that context, observers emphasized the close link between politics and business, in particular the business-friendly membership of Chatichai's Chart Thai party (Sirikrai, 1990: 257; Funston, 1998a: 74).

Among ASEAN partners the unilateral implementation of Chatichai's policies was seen as an affront. Firstly, they had agreed to an uncompromising stand against Vietnam for the sake of ASEAN unity rather than out of conviction that it served their own interests. This applied in particular to Indonesia. Secondly, contrary to ASEAN norms, the Thai volte-face had not been coordinated with fellow ASEAN members. The violation of the norms of consensus and consultation was one reason for the indignation felt by Indonesian and Singaporean decision-makers. The reaction of the Indonesian

¹¹⁴ See the ideas of Indonesia's former Foreign Minister Mochtar (Mochtar, 1990).

leadership was genuine consternation,¹¹⁵ as Chatichai's initiative was seen as undermining Indonesia's own efforts at conflict settlement.

On a deeper level, unease in Jakarta centred on the wider ramifications of the Thai initiative for ASEAN cooperation, in particular uncertainty over the continued commitment of Thailand to the regional association (Mochtar, 1990: 167). Those concerns were exemplified in the view of former Foreign Minister Mochtar, who thought that Thai aspirations towards "Suwannaphume" (Golden Peninsula) would redirect Thai attention away from ASEAN towards Burma and Vietnam (Mochtar, 1990). Moreover, because Thailand consulted closely with Beijing, officials in Jakarta wondered whether Thailand's commitment was greater towards ASEAN or China (Buszynski, 1989: 1070-71). However, Mochtar also expressed hope that Prime Minister Chatichai's policy did not represent a broader consensus in Thailand (Mochtar, 1990: 166).

Explanations of Security Behaviour

Chatichai's attempt to forge a new order can be regarded as a farsighted response to the demands of a new era where the perceived threat of expansionist Communism had all but disappeared. Chatichai's market initiative that embraced Indochina hinted to both opportunities and new challenges arising from the transformation of international order. On the positive side, it pointed to the benefits accruable from cooperation with former enemies and the possibility that ASEAN members would be able to concentrate on socio-economic development. On the other hand, the episode brought to the forefront the question of whether ASEAN members still had enough in common to provide the basis for meaningful cooperation.

If gauged against the three indicators of community, Chatichai's policy clearly failed the test of providing evidence that security policy was influenced by a sense of ASEAN community. Firstly, the implementation of his new Indochina policy displayed a blatant disregard for ASEAN's procedural norms. No consultations took place. This shortcoming was aggravated by the fact that Chatichai's policy ran counter to the previous consensus, according to which normal relations with Vietnam were contingent upon the settlement of the Cambodia problem. Notwithstanding the imminence of the

¹¹⁵ Interview with a witness to President Suharto's reaction, Singapore, August 1999.

Vietnamese withdrawal, it is clear that the Cambodia Conflict had not entirely been put to rest by early 1989.

However, arguably most, if not all, ASEAN members shared the assumptions implicit to Chatichai's policy regarding the insignificance – or even non-existence- of the Vietnamese threat and the desirability of mutually beneficial trade relations. As a matter of fact, at the time of Chatichai's announcements, Singapore already conducted substantial trade relations with Vietnam, indicating that Vietnam was not perceived as a threat anymore. But while it can be argued that the shift toward economics reflected the predominant reasoning among ASEAN members and hence constituted a shared interpretation of the situation, another element of the 'Suwannaphume' concept was certainly not shared: the idea that continental Southeast Asia should be under Thai leadership.

Aspirations to turn the subregion into a 'Greater Thailand' can be traced back at least to the 1940s and are in variation detectable among several Thai leaders (Buszynski, 1994: 727-28). At this juncture, the concept of a 'mainland Southeast Asian' identity took clear precedence over an ASEAN-identity, even though Chatichai's policy was primarily driven by considerations of economic gains, not identity. Whether those two identity concepts were in fact competing or whether they were compatible is hypothetical, as other ASEAN members clearly perceived them as competing and Thai decision-makers made little effort to assuage such apprehensions. There were few signs that ASEAN was seen as central to Thailand's concerns after the end of the Cold War. Thai behaviour effectively negated the community idea, with two of the three community indicators not in evidence.

Nonetheless, the conception of a Thai-dominated continental Southeast Asia lends support to the idea that Thai foreign policy was influenced by identity concerns - just not an ASEAN identity. However, Thailand's alignment behaviour was also consistent with the predictions of realist theories that the disappearance of threat would result in reduced, or no, commitments. In contrast, policies of other ASEAN members were explicable in terms of a regional community. They had maintained loyalty with the Thai hardline position despite the disappearance of threat. Policies of other members, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, are best explained by identity accounts, even though Singapore's

beneficial trading relationship with Vietnam would support functional, interest-based explanations.

Chatichai's unilateral initiative gave an indication of the potential centrifugal impact of divergent visions within ASEAN.¹¹⁶ Its divisive nature served as a reminder that ASEAN unity could not be taken for granted. After the unifying effect of the conflict with Vietnam, ASEAN leaders faced indeed a paradox. While the end of the Cold War removed the only immediate threat to their states, at the same time it posed a serious challenge to the organization, as it erased the rationale for acting in diplomatic alignment. During the Cambodia Conflict, ASEAN had been held together by concern about expansionist Communism and the belief that the principles of the TAC should be defended against Vietnam.

However, this consensus did not provide a basis for further cooperation in the absence of challenges to this minimalist version of regional order. Chatichai's policy initiative pointed to a different rationale for cooperation in the region: trade and prosperity. Yet, basing cooperation on an economic foundation put into question ASEAN's privileged position in any cooperative venture, given the association's dismal record in promoting economic cooperation.

Ultimately, Chatichai's initiative achieved relatively little for Thailand in the international arena.¹¹⁷ Vietnam was slowly opening up towards ASEAN, but the main beneficiary became Singapore, which already maintained the most extensive trade links among ASEAN members in 1989. Nonetheless, Chatichai's Indochina policy was significant with regard to two aspects. Firstly, it manifested a paradigm shift in Thai foreign policy from security to economics (Buszynski, 1994). Secondly, its unilateral pursuit caused damage to ASEAN unity and in turn marked the beginning of a difficult transitional period for ASEAN.

Overall, while the end of the Cold War was welcomed, it also challenged regional leaders to come forward with a shared vision for a stable Post Cold War order. Given

¹¹⁶ As a consequence of what he saw as Thailand's wavering commitment to ASEAN, Mochtar encouraged close tripartite security cooperation between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, as they "have proven their firm commitment to ASEAN and have been sufficiently like-minded on important ASEAN matters" (Mochtar, 1990: 167).

¹¹⁷ However, benefits may have accrued to Chatichai domestically, as he managed to reduce the influence of the military.

the distribution of power capabilities in the broader region it was clear that a new security order that included a meaningful role for ASEAN would require ASEAN nations to come to a consensus on how to deal with the two great powers with the biggest impact on regional security: the United States and China.

Relations with the United States

5.2 The Singapore Offer

Notwithstanding long-term aspirations for regional autonomy, manifest in the ZOPFAN Declaration of 1971, an American role in the region had been tolerated by all ASEAN members in the Cold War era. In the perceptions of decision-makers the threat of expansionist Communism in its variant forms had been salient and in turn had necessitated a US presence. The problem representation that had been based on fear of expansionist Communism had trumped any alternative interpretations as the basis for security policy.

However, the end of the Cold War precipitated a redefinition of identities. When the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia was imminent, it was obvious that the threat of Communist expansionism had ceased to exist. At the same time, Chinese behaviour in 1989 and 1990 invalidated lingering beliefs that Chinese Communism constituted a threat to the stability of ASEAN nations. In the course of 1989 China renounced claims that it represented Overseas Chinese and instead recognized their local citizenships (Henderson, 1999: 20), thus dispelling residual fears that China could use the Overseas Chinese as a so-called fifth column to undermine Southeast Asian regimes. In the light of those positive developments questioning the rationale of a continued US presence clearly deserved some merit, taking into account the consistency of ASEAN's proclamations of ZOPFAN principles.

The first serious public debates about a US presence did not take place in the regional arena but began in the Philippines, ever since independence in 1946 one of the closest allies of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. After the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos was toppled in 1986, nationalist sentiments in the Philippines were vented towards the existing American bases, Clark air force base and

Subic Bay naval base. Before the Third ASEAN Summit in Manila in December 1987 the newly appointed Philippine Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus had tried to forge regional consensus on the desirability of a continued US presence in the Philippines. However, despite visits to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand in keeping with ASEAN norms of consensus seeking, Manglapus failed to gain support for a public statement by ASEAN, as Indonesia in particular was unwilling to endorse the presence of foreign bases (Frost, 1990: 23-24). Subsequently, he abandoned the initiative.

The subject of US involvement in Southeast Asia assumed much greater public prominence in the region when Singapore declared in August 1989 its willingness to grant the US access to military facilities.¹¹⁸ Even though ASEAN partners had been informed of a visit by an American exploratory mission in June, Malaysian and Indonesian officials revealed that no proper consultations had taken place and that they were left in the dark as to the intended form of military cooperation (Methven, 1992: 75 and 80-81). This sparked an intra-ASEAN debate that probed the boundary between national autonomy and regional responsibility with regard to security issues. More specifically, it questioned the compatibility of a US presence in Singapore with the principles of the 1971 ZOPFAN Declaration in which ASEAN members had vowed to keep Southeast Asia free from great power influence and to work towards the attainment of that goal by eventually phasing out the military presence of outside powers in the region.

Singaporean officials insisted that they did not have any intention to allow US military bases on their territory, but those declarations did not mollify Indonesian suspicions and vociferous criticism from Malaysia. There were worrisome signs that the debate could escalate further and, if carried out at ASEAN level, potentially jeopardize the image of unity ASEAN had projected towards the outside. However, Thai officials blocked Malaysian demands for an ASEAN meeting on the issue, implying that they saw no need for an ASEAN consensus.¹¹⁹ As the ASEAN practice required keeping contentious issues out of multilateral meetings, the Thai intervention sealed the fate of a possible ASEAN meeting on the issue, Malaysian misgivings notwithstanding.

¹¹⁸ Parliamentary Statement on US Site Survey Team, Brigadier-General Yeo, August 4, 1989.

¹¹⁹ *Straits Times*, August 13, 1989: 10, and August 25, 1989: 17; Methven (1992: 81).

The debate eventually subsided after it had become clear that Singapore would allow the US access to facilities but not the establishment of a military base. That outcome assuaged Indonesian and Malaysian sensitivities and left the declaratory value of ZOPFAN intact. However, the Singapore-US link was enhanced incrementally. In November 1990 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed according to which the parties agreed on the permanent stationing of US personnel in Singapore (Huxley, 1993: 23). During this time period Thailand also intensified cooperation with the United States.

Security Behaviour

The Singapore-US agreement on access to military facilities fell short of an alliance, as it did not entail provisions that are integral to alliances, namely a promise to give support in case of military aggression against one or all of the parties involved. However, statements from Singaporean decision-makers indicated that they saw the agreement as fulfilling a similar purpose: ensuring a continued presence of the United States as a balancing and deterrent factor. Hence Singaporean policy paralleled those of the Philippines and Thailand that maintained bilateral alliances with the United States. However, as Indonesia and Malaysia opposed the expansion of the US military presence, no common ASEAN alignment posture emerged. On the contrary, ASEAN was divided on whether to support the Singaporean initiative or not. An acrimonious debate occurred at a time when no immediate threat existed. After ASEAN had managed to maintain its diplomatic alignment during the Cambodia Conflict despite divergent threat perceptions, what factors can account for this display of disunity?

Problem Representations: Military Base or Commercial Contract?

On the most fundamental level, differences among ASEAN members centred on the question of how much sway partners should have over one another's security policies, particularly when the topic concerned security cooperation with external powers. Singaporean decision-makers made no secret of the fact that their decision would be determined by their considerations of Singapore's national interest. In line with this reasoning, Singaporean officials rebutted Malaysian protests against the lack of consultations by asserting that the issue concerned was one of national interest and hence

a prerogative of Singaporean decision-makers (Methven, 1992). The Singaporean position was supported by Thailand and, more tacitly, the Philippines. The Thai leadership declined to elevate the issue to ASEAN level, which would have given support to the view that ZOPFAN was relevant to the case. Instead, Prime Minister Chatichai publicly referred to the matter as a bilateral affair between Singapore and the United States.¹²⁰ In contrast, Indonesian and Malaysian officials believed that any cooperation that was in contradiction with the spirit of ZOPFAN was automatically a regional issue.

The controversy about the ambit of national decision-making and its demarcation from matters of regional responsibility was interlinked with divergent views on how security relations should be organized. The Singaporean initiative signaled support for a besieged Philippine government (after the demise of President Marcos, domestic opposition to a continued presence of US bases became vociferous) and aimed at ensuring a continued US presence in the region. The Singaporean leadership under Lee Kuan Yew has long held a balance-of-power based view of international relations and believed that Southeast Asia's security and stability could best be maintained if it was underpinned by a balance-of-power created by the American presence.¹²¹

According to that perspective, balancing would fulfill two functions. Firstly, it would assure general stability in the Asia-Pacific by preventing deep-seated suspicions from resurfacing. In turn stability in the region would provide favourable conditions for Singapore's growth and prosperity. As Lee Kuan Yew reasoned,

*If they (the United States) pack up then all the ancient suspicions and animosities between Japan and China, Japan and Korea, and Korea and China and the fears of ASEAN for China and Japan would shift the focus from the positive which we have achieved to defence and security.*¹²²

Secondly, the balancing role of the United States would provide Singapore with more

¹²⁰ Quoted in *Straits Times*, August 19, 1989: 12.

¹²¹ This view has changed remarkably little since the early 1970s when the question of the American presence arose for Singaporean policy makers. Singapore's foreign policy has throughout ASEAN's existence been based on the premise that the US presence "provides the 'only bulwark' against potential aggressors for the smaller Southeast Asian states" (Defence of Singapore 1992-1993, quoted in Mak and Ramzah, 1996: 142).

security against any regional contingency. In contrast to an alliance, the agreement with the US did not include guarantees of support, but it nevertheless shared its psychological effect of raising doubts for any would-be aggressor as to what coalition it would be up against.

Singapore received indirect support from Thailand and the Philippines. Thai officials agreed with the general thrust of the Singaporean position when they stated that the US presence would prevent the emergence of a regional power vacuum (Methven, 1992: 70). The Thai attempt to keep the issue out of ASEAN's ambit was motivated by the favourable position Thailand enjoyed as an alliance partner of the United States and concurrent good relations with China as well. The Philippines, whose domestic debate had in part evoked the Singaporean initiative, understandably maintained a low profile during the whole episode. Being under pressure domestically, the Aquino government certainly welcomed the sign that it was not alone in Southeast Asia in being interested in a US presence. On the other hand, President Aquino must have feared that a region-wide debate could inflame anti-US sentiments even further.

The major difference between the Singaporean attitude and the predominant perspective in Malaysia and Indonesia was that the latter assessed the Singaporean initiative against the principles of the ZOPFAN Declaration. Singaporean leaders attached highest value to stability, while the predominant theme for Indonesian and Malaysian officials was regional autonomy as expressed in the ZOPFAN principles.¹²³ It cannot be established whether the Malaysian position emanated from true concern that ASEAN might miss the opportunity offered by the end of the Cold War to implement ZOPFAN, which would have required the reduction and, finally, termination of great power involvement. Another possibility is that Malaysia did not oppose a US presence per se but rather one with Singapore as a pivot. It would have been an obvious conclusion for Malaysian officials that they were one target of Singapore's balance-of-power politics. Whatever the underlying motive, conducting the policy discourse in

¹²² *New Straits Times*, May 18, 1993, quoted in Mak and Hamzah (1996: 143).

¹²³ However, in Malaysia the most acrimonious voices had not come from the government but from the Youth Group of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and other grassroots movements (Methven, 1992: 77-78). It must be said that the higher echelon of Malaysian officials mostly directed their concern against the possibility of military bases rather than cooperation with the United States per se.

terms of ZOPFAN principles was the most feasible way for Malaysia to derail the Singaporean plan.

In seeming support of Malaysia, the Indonesian side made known that the principles of the ZOPFAN Declaration were of utmost importance to them. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas emphasized the need to consider existing agreements before any new issue was approached,¹²⁴ reprimanding Singapore for its disregard of ASEAN norms. However, while Indonesian and Malaysian officials agreed on this principle, they differed in their interpretations of whether ZOPFAN was applicable to the Singapore-US negotiations or not. In contrast to Malaysian politicians, the Indonesian leadership had not decided how to interpret the situation. In other words, they were unsure whether to adopt a perspective that focused on the issue of regional autonomy, using the principles of the ZOPFAN Declaration as a yardstick.

The crucial issue for Indonesia was whether negotiations between Singapore and the United States would lead to the establishment of a permanent base in the island republic. It was clear that if military bases were involved Indonesia would have joined condemnations of the Singaporean policy. On the other hand, if the Singapore-US negotiations yielded a lesser result - as they did - Indonesia would not regard the issue as one of importance for the region. However, even though Indonesian President Suharto reportedly expressed "no concern" when the issue of hosting American military facilities was raised by Lee Kuan Yew in Brunei,¹²⁵ Singaporean assurances that no bases would be established were met with suspicion in Indonesia (Methven, 1992).

Explanations of Security Behaviour

Regional Community

Given the positions outlined above, it is obvious that on the occasion of the second major security debate in the Post Cold War era, ASEAN was again beset by disunity. Gauged against the criteria of shared problem representations, mutual identifications, and norm compliance, the episode revealed the irrelevance of the community idea in 1989.

However, Defence Minister Rithauddeen reportedly spoke out not only against US bases but any increase in the US presence, see *Straits Times*, July 10, 1989; *New Straits Times*, August 7, 1989: 7.

¹²⁴ *Straits Times*, August 16, 1989.

¹²⁵ According to statements by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee, quoted in *Jakarta Post*, August 22, 1989.

The Singapore offer revealed a clear lack of shared meaning structures among ASEAN members. Firstly, there was no agreement on which, if any, principles were applicable for the conduct of security relations of ASEAN members. Worse from a community perspective, ASEAN members did not even agree on yardsticks for distinguishing issues that were national prerogatives from those that were under ASEAN's aegis and hence required consultations.

Little common ground existed between the proponents of the neutralization concept and those who have always believed that security relations with Western powers were vital for the region's security. Back in 1971, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand had signed the ZOPFAN Declaration, even though they had no intentions to forego their links with Western partners in the foreseeable future. The compromise formula of the ZOPFAN Declaration that allowed the maintenance of temporary military bases glossed over those differences. After the end of the Cold War, ZOPFAN's goals seemed realizable but the aforementioned countries were not any more willing to implement the agreement.

The differences in problem representation between the main protagonists were mirrored in incongruent identifications. The main reference point as to security for Indonesia and Malaysia was ZOPFAN indicating that they identified ASEAN as the in-group, with external powers being cast as out-group, albeit not necessarily as hostile. In contrast, the main reference point for Singapore was a positive relationship with the United States, seen as a means to maintain a balance-of-power, which would in turn guarantee security and the status quo. Singapore identified its security with the United States, an external power, not with ASEAN partners.

In addition to the lack of shared interpretations and the subordination of ASEAN to the United States in terms of relevant relations, the lack of norm compliance on Singapore's side also indicated that the notion of an ASEAN community did not rate highly in the reasoning of its leadership. During the episode, Singapore was repeatedly criticized because of the lack of consultation with ASEAN partners and the disregard for the previous ASEAN position.¹²⁶ Indeed, measured against ASEAN's norms of consultation and consensus seeking, Singapore's approach was unsatisfactory with regard

¹²⁶ Methven (1992: 76); *New Straits Times*, August 10, 1989: 2.

to due process. Singaporean officials conducted no proper dialogue. The fact that ASEAN partners were 'informed' of an exploratory US mission in June does not satisfy the criterion of 'consultations'. Furthermore, the information provided on what exactly Singaporean intentions were was vague.

The Singaporean argument that national security was its own prerogative might have been correct from a legalistic point of view. However, the Singaporean demeanour was in contradiction with the spirit of ASEAN cooperation that would require consultations with partners before foreign policy initiatives are undertaken that could concern the whole grouping. While ultimately the extent of military cooperation between Singapore and the United States was acceptable to other ASEAN members (whereas military bases certainly would not have been), this fact does not remedy the lack of norm abundance in the process. On this occasion the lack of shared interpretations among ASEAN leaders as well as the identity categories inherent to Singapore's policies invalidate the idea of a regional community. However, it is not clear whether Singaporean officials originally envisaged military bases, but scaled their plans down to 'repair facilities' because of the hostile reaction of their Malay neighbours.¹²⁷ This would be an indication that 'regional opinion' exerted compliance pressure on Singapore. However, given the absence of shared perspectives, norm compliance, and lack of identifications, it would not fundamentally alter the assessment that a regional identity had a very limited effect on operational policies.

Interest and Threat-Based Explanations

What interests determined the policy positions among ASEAN members? In order to illuminate their motivations it is useful to look at the actual impact of the Singapore-US agreement on regional security. Given that the Singaporean announcement sparked such an acrimonious debate within ASEAN, one thing was surprising: there was no change to the regional security structure due to the Singaporean-US agreement. More to the point, from a Singaporean perspective the very purpose of the agreement was to prevent change. Singapore's leadership desired a continued involvement of the United States that was not contingent on the state of Philippine-US relations. As has been pointed out, the balancing

¹²⁷ *New Straits Times*, October 2, 1989: 1, quoted in Methven (1992: 85).

function of the United States served two purposes for Singapore: perpetuate regional stability needed for the trading state's prosperity and, as an instrument of psychological deterrence, provide protection against contingencies in an uncertain environment.

While there is no indication that Singaporean decision-makers saw a particular threat on the horizon, they clearly sought reassurance against the uncertainty that defined regional relations in the Post Cold War era. Although this was not openly said, it can be inferred from Singapore's positive relations with China that most likely Singapore's Malay neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia featured at least as prominently in Singapore's contingency plans as China did. In more general terms, Singapore's policy is best characterized by a desire to maintain and shore up the regional status quo.

The Singaporean desire to prevent any fundamental change in the regional security structure was shared in both Thailand and the Philippines.¹²⁸ The Singaporean approach buttressed their own security policies that relied on a protective American umbrella while allowing for the development of cordial relations within the region and - at least in Thailand's case - with China. Their links with the US were traditional alliance relationships and hence in a different dimension from Singapore's. Nevertheless, the acceptance of Singapore's policies towards the United States implied that their own relations with the US were less likely to come under scrutiny at the ASEAN level.

Malaysian officials, while not necessarily opposed to the regional status quo, clearly did not share the Singaporean zeal for an American presence in Singapore. The interest of Malaysian officials, the most vociferous opponents of the Singapore offer, has been explained in connection with the identity implications of alignment with the United States. Huxley stressed the need for the Malaysian leadership to downplay the US link in order to enhance the country's Islamic and non-aligned credentials both internationally and domestically (Huxley, 1993: 22). According to this view, declaratory support for ZOPFAN has to be seen as separate from Malaysia's operational security policy, which follows *realpolitik* considerations and is based on the belief that the US presence is needed to balance China (da Cunha, 1999: 19). This perspective is based on revelations of secret military cooperation between Malaysia and the United States and the inherent

¹²⁸ As evident in the campaign against the American bases, in the Philippines this sentiment was only prevalent among one segment of the foreign policy elite.

contradiction between public declarations and actual policy (Huxley, 1993: 22; da Cunha, 1999: 19).

These were indeed good grounds for questioning Malaysian sincerity with regard to ZOPFAN principles. However, despite their apparent logic, those realist interpretations that suggest a proclivity to balance China and explain Malaysia's public furor with domestic pressures are hard to reconcile with another Malaysian policy initiative, the proposal for an East Asian Economic Grouping (to be discussed below) that effectively worked against the inclusion of the United States in the region. It seems more likely that the change in Malaysia's policy towards the United States was genuine and reflected the dramatic reduction of a Communist threat from Cold War to Post Cold War politics that made the need for an expedient alliance with the United States appear much less urgent. The same point can be made for Indonesia.

However, while in line with predictions of threat-based accounts, the behaviour of ASEAN members may be best explained by balance-of-interest theory. The most plausible explanation of differences within ASEAN seems to be one that focuses on divergent views of regional order. How important was the maintenance of the regional status quo in the absence of any identifiable enemies and to what extent should the newly gained room of manoeuvrability be used to implement an indigenous vision of regional order, as favoured by Indonesia and Malaysia? Therefore approaches that emphasize the role of interests are more relevant than variants of balance-of-threat theory.

Overall, the 1989 episode revealed the limits of ZOPFAN as a guiding principle for ASEAN security policies. Even after the end of the Cold War and the removal of expansionist Communism from ASEAN's list of threat scenarios, ZOPFAN remained only a declaratory instrument. Malaysia used the ZOPFAN terminology to try to discredit Singapore's initiative in the region. ZOPFAN principles hence influenced discourse and set broad parameters for permissible policies; for example, a discussion conducted in reference to ZOPFAN foreclosed the option of establishing foreign bases in Southeast Asia. However, ZOPFAN had little impact on actual policies. It remained a discursive weapon that member states could brandish against initiatives they disliked. It did not prevent Singapore in 1989 and 1990 from the pursuit of 'realpolitik' in contradiction to the idea of regional autonomy endorsed by Indonesia and Malaysia. At

this juncture the notion of regional community did not have any substantial impact on security behaviour.

Diplomacy towards China

5.3 The Tiananmen Events 1989

If relations with the United States constituted one pillar of Southeast Asia's Post Cold War security policies, the other central factor was relations with the People's Republic of China. Due to a combination of China's geographic proximity and its great power potential, Southeast Asia's relations with the People's Republic were bound to be the most integral component of any new security structure for the region.

During most of the 1980s, all three actors, the United States, China, and ASEAN had worked together in informal diplomatic alignment to contain Vietnam and, by extension, the Soviet Union. Despite differences between the United States and China over arms deals with the Middle East and Taiwan, the 1980s witnessed a strategic partnership between the two great powers (Mann, 1999: ch. 7-8). At the same time, their common alignment on the Cambodia issue propelled ASEAN-China relations towards normalization after decades of ideological antagonism, notwithstanding residual mistrust on the side of Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia.

The nature of China-US relations changed dramatically when the Chinese government oppressed by force student demonstrations around Tiananmen Square in June 1989. The bloody events near Tiananmen gave rise to a complete reorientation of US policy. With the end of the Cold War the basis of Chinese-US relations shifted as the focus of American decision-makers – and public opinion – changed from strategic issues to the realm of human rights (Mann, 1999). The Chinese crackdown near Tiananmen Square put an end to what had been seen in the United States as a community of interests between the two countries. June 1989 marked the beginning of an era in the Chinese-US relationship that has since increasingly vacillated between cooperation and competition, reflecting a mixed-motive situation.

Relations between ASEAN members and China followed a different trajectory. By the time Vietnam withdrew from Cambodia, those relations had developed their own

dynamic, largely detached from China – US relations. Contrary to expectations that the disappearance of the threat from Vietnam would spell the end of an alignment of convenience, relations between ASEAN members and China reached a new peak in 1990-1991, manifest in the completion of bilateral links and the apparent absence of any serious conflict of interest. Due to its seminal role in ASEAN, the restoration of Indonesia's relations with China was the most significant change in the region's diplomatic landscape. Singapore followed Indonesia's example by formally recognizing the PRC, the formalities of which were finalized during Premier Li Peng's visit in August 1990. When Brunei and China established diplomatic relations on September 30, 1991, the network of ASEAN-China relations was complete.

The marked improvement of ASEAN-China ties after the end of the Cold War was to a considerable extent due to China's efforts to overcome the diplomatic isolation that followed the Tiananmen events (Lee, 1995: 144-146). Those efforts included two visits by Premier Li Peng in 1990, one to Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand in August, and a second one to Malaysia and the Philippines in December 1990. As Lee pointed out, contrary to traditional practice in Chinese foreign policy, which had it that foreign leaders visit Beijing, Li Peng went to Southeast Asia (Lee, 1995: 146). This diplomatic campaign was matched by the interest of ASEAN states in good relations.

Security Behaviour

In 1989 and 1990 Western countries shunned Beijing because of its brutal crackdown on protestors near Tiananmen Square. Against that background, the establishment of diplomatic relations with China by Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei combined with an ASEAN-wide studied silence on human rights issues to convey the impression that ASEAN effectively aligned with China against Western criticism, although no active support was rendered to China. However, while there were signs that China's leadership stepped up efforts to court ASEAN countries, it is clear that the normalization of ties with Indonesia, the most important development at this juncture, was well underway before the Tiananmen events. Relations were characterized by continuity rather than change in

the wake of Tiananmen.¹²⁹

The restoration of relations had been announced by Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and Indonesian Minister for the State Secretariat Moerdiono after a meeting in Tokyo between Qian and President Suharto on February 23, 1989. Following the events of June 1989, President Suharto simply rebuffed any review of normalization as a consequence of Tiananmen (Suryadinata, 1990: 694).¹³⁰ Thus, the timing of normalization did not suggest a deliberate decision to align with the PRC against its Western critics, even though the reaction indicated that the matter was regarded as an internal Chinese affair.

Most significant for an evaluation of ASEAN as a diplomatic community was the convergence of policies. The policies of ASEAN members towards China in the years of 1989 and 1990 seemed to have been in concord, in marked contrast to the debates about the role of the United States in the region in 1989 that had been marred by controversy. In the context of the differences in attitude towards China during the Cambodia Conflict, what brought about the tacit agreement of ASEAN to ignore China's violent crackdown?

Problem Representations

For both ASEAN and the United States, the anti-Soviet and anti-Vietnamese rationale for alignment with China had disappeared. The difference lay in the way the United States and ASEAN responded to the foreign policy options afforded by the end of the Cold War. While US decision-makers focused on human rights, ASEAN members focused on opportunities. Neither the Taiwan issue nor debates over human rights - the two principal controversies that bedevilled relations between the US and China - affected Beijing's ties with Southeast Asia. Ever since the PRC's admission to the United Nations in 1971, ASEAN members had been unequivocal about their support for a one-China policy.¹³¹ With regard to human rights, it became evident in the aftermath of the Tiananmen incident that the China policies of the US and ASEAN differed measurably.

¹²⁹ The attendance of Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian at the anniversary meeting of the NAM in Bandung in April 1985 and the signing of a trade memorandum in July 1985 had already indicated the thaw in bilateral relations.

¹³⁰ Suryadinata (1990: 693-94) has stressed the differences of opinion among Indonesian decision-makers, in particular dissent from military leaders like General Subiyakto. There is little doubt that Suharto was the paramount decision-maker on the issue of normalization.

¹³¹ Philippine-Taiwanese relations and Singapore's military manoeuvres ('Star Exercises') had not caused problems with Beijing, as the one-China policy was not put into question (Lee, 1999b).

For ASEAN members China's acceptance of the principle of non-interference that recognized the rights of ASEAN states as equals was much more crucial than the issue of individual rights at stake in debates about the Tiananmen crackdown. In that vein, most important from an ASEAN perspective were signs that China was willing to conduct relations with ASEAN members on the government level only instead of, as before, on a dual track state-to-state and party-to party level.

Important in this context was the aforementioned adoption of a new citizenship law in 1989, which effectively renounced China's right to speak on behalf of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asian countries. However, perhaps even more crucial was the Chinese decision to support the Malaysian and Thai governments in their efforts to dismantle the Communist Parties of Malaysia (CPM) and of Thailand (CPT), the latter in progressive dissolution since 1983/1984. Subsequently, the decision of the Malaysian Communist Party in December 1989 to halt insurgent activities had a strong psychological impact in Malaysia (Ho, 1998: 79-80).

Beliefs in the region that the danger of Communist subversion had come to rest, first encouraged by the advancing disbandment of the CPT, were further reinforced by the incipient disintegration of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1989. The Chinese gestures were warmly welcomed in the region (Ganesan, 1999: 14). They implied that China had departed from its revolutionary ideology and instead was willing to engage ASEAN according to the principles enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, namely respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs.

Given their strong emphasis on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and the authoritarian nature of most regimes in the region, particularly Indonesia's, it is doubtful whether ASEAN leaders even perceived a serious conflict of interests. Thai intellectuals criticized the PRC, but the governmental response was a welcoming for Chi-Haotian, the PLA Chief of General Staff in August and a visit by Prime Minister General Chatichai to Beijing in October, the first leader of a non-Communist state of any importance to do so (Wilson, 1991: 8).

With regard to the most important event at this point in time, the restoration of relations between Indonesia and China, the leadership aspirations of President Suharto most likely determined Jakarta's decision combined with an interest in non-interference

and economic interests. Suharto's desire to position Indonesia (and himself) in a leading role within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) - which required Indonesia to display some distance from the West in order to win support for the NAM chair for the 1992-1995 period - had combined with economic reasons to gradually induce a policy change since 1984 (Suryadinata, 1990: 687; Emmerson, 1991: 180-81).

The economic weight of China had become difficult to ignore for Indonesia's leadership, which put so much emphasis on development. The benefits that could be derived from trade with China have to be put in context with Indonesia's goal of enhanced national resilience in keeping with the precepts of comprehensive security. The feeling that Indonesia would be left behind after even the Soviet Union had normalized relations with the PRC between 1987 and 1989 spurred the efforts towards normalization together with Suharto's leadership ambitions (Suryadinata, 1990).

Suharto needed at least China's acquiescence for the pursuit of his aspirations, because neither the NAM leadership nor a solution of the Cambodia problem (Indonesia hosted the Jakarta Informal Meetings in 1988 and 1989) would have been feasible without Chinese support (Suryadinata, 1990: 690-91; 1996: 109-110). In turn, China welcomed any evidence of international recognition at a time when it was diplomatically isolated following the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre (Lee, 1995). Thus in 1990 the diplomatic needs of Indonesia and China proved to be complementary and hence conducive to normalization.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

ASEAN members shared the same priorities in their relations with Beijing. Even though it would be exaggerated to talk of a diplomatic community, given that ASEAN members did not undertake special efforts to coordinate their policies, there was a broadly shared understanding among ASEAN members that relations with Beijing developed in a positive way and, in the unlikely event that such a conflict of interest was perceived in the first place, the consolidation of good relations was not worth risking over human rights.

As mentioned, ASEAN members appreciated signs that China was willing to conduct relations on the basis of the norm of non-interference. Since 1967 non-

interference had been a tenet of regional order, codified in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 1976, and ASEAN members had no inclination to act against their own rules for regional conduct by broaching the issue of human rights with Beijing. As far as the Tiananmen uprising was concerned, it was therefore clear that for ASEAN members human rights issues took second stage to considerations of economic well-being and the positive outlook for diplomatic cooperation (Wilson, 1991: 9).

While shared perspectives on the importance of norms indicate a foundation for ASEAN cooperation, the other two community indicators are not applicable to this case. Because of the lack of active involvement by ASEAN and the studied silence of its members, it is not possible to identify whether ASEAN leaders consciously identified with their partners on the basis of principles of state interaction. Indonesia's behaviour may be explained by identity-considerations, namely the need to reassert non-aligned credentials in order to attain NAM leadership.

Similarly, the criterion of norm compliance cannot be evaluated. In the build-up to the restoration of Chinese-Indonesian relations no consultation took place within ASEAN. However, given that Indonesia's initiative was in line with existing policies of other ASEAN members, there was no need for Suharto to consult with his ASEAN partners. Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand already maintained relations with Beijing and, in reflection of its sensitive ethnic position in the region, Singapore had openly declared that it would follow Jakarta's lead on the issue, which it did in August 1990.

Overall, ASEAN's position is explained by the shared interest with Beijing in norms of conduct that emphasized respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The timing of China's decision to help ASEAN members disband Communist movements indicated a desire to maintain friendly relations with ASEAN after the end of the Cambodia Conflict (Ganesan, 1999: 14). This desire, most certainly exacerbated by China's diplomatic isolation after Tiananmen, was reciprocated by ASEAN. Continued shared interest determined ASEAN-China alignment whereas the disappearance of the shared Vietnamese threat proved irrelevant, casting doubt on claims that threat perceptions alone determine alignment relations. Balance-of-interest theory can illuminate the diplomacy of ASEAN members as behaviour that was driven by a

shared interest with China in particular regional norms of order, namely non-interference and respect for sovereignty.

5. 4 The South China Sea Workshops

Due to the complementarity of diplomatic interests in 1990 and 1991 the prospects for ASEAN-China relations seemed bright. While the Chinese leadership struggled to shrug off the diplomatic quarantine imposed by Western countries, no major conflict of interest separated ASEAN and China. Against the backdrop of a positive relationship with China and a generally amenable security environment, ASEAN members then initiated efforts to address the dispute that was seen as potentially most destabilizing for the region in the Post Cold War era: the Spratly Islands dispute.

Background

Situated in the South China Sea the Spratly Islands consist of a multitude of sandy islets, reefs and banks. In 1994, PRC sources identified 193 different named geographical entities that can be divided into up to twelve island groups (Austin, 1998: 131). These minute islets, all originally uninhabited, warrant attention because under the 1982 United Nations Conference Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) they may allow claims of an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles in an area that has been perceived as important because of three features:

- Suspected but largely unconfirmed deposits of oil and gas that may allow exploitation in the future.
- Rich maritime resources.
- Its strategic location at important sea-lanes of communication.

The claimants to parts or the entirety of the Spratly Islands or surrounding waters have been the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Vietnam and three ASEAN countries: Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines.¹³² The Spratly Islands dispute has generally been regarded as a problem of the Post Cold War era. This discussion follows this trend by

discussing the issue in the framework of Post Cold War developments in the Asia-Pacific. However, the contours of conflict became recognizable already in the 1980s, and the involvement of ASEAN countries in the South China Sea clearly predated the end of the Cold War. Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan had all established a physical presence in the area by the early 1980s. Even earlier, in 1974, China had wrestled the Paracels, north of the Spratlys, from Vietnam, giving rise to a bilateral dispute that Vietnam has at times tried to intertwine with that over the Spratlys.

Military activities in the area can be traced back as far as 1956 when Taiwan apparently established a military garrison on Itu Aba (Austin, 1998: 66). Occupations by the Philippines and Vietnam took place in 1971 and 1975 respectively. The Philippines had already occupied three islands during or before 1971 and expanded its occupation to ten islets by the mid-1980s (Austin, 1998: 152-154). Malaysia announced its claim for the first time in 1979 followed by the occupation of three features in 1983 (Snyder, 1997: 22-23), including Swallow Reef and Terumbu Layang-Layang - after Chinese ships had allegedly been spotted in the latter area one month earlier (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 105). Likewise, for Indonesia the South China Sea was not a neglected area prior to 1988. Indonesia staged naval exercises in the area in December 1980 and opened a runway on the Ranai/Natuna Islands in 1981 that was conducive to military operations (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 143).

Contrary to later claims that the occupation of Mischief Reef represented the first move against an ASEAN state, PRC forces occupied six atolls in Philippine claimed territory in late 1987 or early 1988 (Austin, 1998: 83). On one of the first atolls occupied, Fiery Reef, China constructed a military outpost that was completed by July 1988. There was little evidence of a determined Philippine reaction, nor were there signs that at that stage China was perceived as a military threat. After all, the senate of the Philippines announced on November 10, 1987, that the future of US bases was under review.¹³³

It was only in the aftermath of the naval clash between China and Vietnam in

¹³² The proclamation of extensive Chinese claims in 1992 resulted in overlapping claims with Indonesia, due to the unresolved demarcation of waters surrounding Indonesia's Natuna Island. The implication of this will be discussed below.

¹³³ Quoted in Austin (1998: 85).

1988 - and the imminent end of Cold War conflict in Asia - that the issue attracted the (public) attention of policy makers. The fact that the military moves of the People's Republic of China in 1987/1988 crystallized interest on the Spratlys issue is ironic, because the People's Republic was actually the last claimant state (other than Brunei which only claims a resource zone but not any features) to physically occupy islands. However, what has set Chinese behaviour apart from the conduct of other claimants has been the proclivity to use force. After it had wrestled the Paracel Islands (north of the Spratlys) from South Vietnam in 1974, China defeated the Vietnamese navy in 1988 to occupy some of the formerly Vietnamese-held islets.

The Initiation of the Workshop Process

Up until 1989 ASEAN disputants pursued their claims unilaterally and no efforts towards consultation, let alone settlement, were undertaken on the regional level. This changed when in late 1989 Malaysia initiated a seminar project on the topic, and an Indonesian delegation led by Ambassador-at-large Hasjim Djalal visited all ASEAN capitals to discuss the establishment of an informal forum to discuss the problems in the South China Sea.

The consultations conducted by Ambassador Djalal concluded with a positive result after the Indonesian side took into account the concerns of ASEAN partners, most importantly the discomfort of Singaporean and Thai officials with the exclusion of external actors, in particular China and Vietnam (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 155-156). Consequently, Indonesia agreed to invite non-ASEAN countries for the second workshop. Concerns by Malaysia and the Philippines regarding the compatibility of the planned workshops with bilateral efforts were similarly reflected in Indonesian statements that bilateral initiatives would be encouraged (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 155-156).

Following the successful conclusion of the consultation process, Indonesia organized the first Workshop on the South China Sea in Denpasar, Bali, on January 22, 1990, with the assistance of the Canadian International Development Agency (Catley, and Keliat, 1997: 153). Only ASEAN members were represented at the first workshop, but, in line with the compromise reached, the following year delegates from China,

Taiwan, Vietnam, and Laos¹³⁴ were invited to join the second workshop in Bandung in July 1991. Since then, the South China Sea Workshops (SCSWs) have become an annual forum. They are attended by government officials in private capacity and are assisted by academics in advisory positions,¹³⁵ a form of consultation known as Track Two diplomacy. This informal process resolves the tricky issue of Taiwan's representation; it may also confirm a cultural preference for informal and gradual approaches in the Asia-Pacific (Ball, 1993).

Security Behaviour

Officially, the South China Sea Workshops (SCSWs) have been limited to the discussion of technical matters and have excluded the issue of sovereignty. Due to the SCSWs' limitations, the assessments of its success have been mixed. While some have dismissed it as a mere 'talkshop', others have emphasized the confidence building function as well as the importance of the ecological dimension and monitoring mechanisms (Townsend-Gault, 1998: 171-190). The significance of the establishment of the workshop series under Indonesia's leadership derives from the fact that the workshops constituted the first, albeit informal, manifestation of diplomatic activities in a multilateral ASEAN-wide forum with regard to the South China Sea.

Because of the informal and non-committal nature of the workshops, caution has to be exercised in attributing particular alignment behaviour to the participants. However, due to the involvement of governments, the initiative still allows for an examination of problem representations of respective officials. Given the obvious asymmetry of interests, what determined the participation of individual states in the Indonesia-guided project? In particular, what motivated Indonesia, a non-claimant to the dispute, to launch the project? A more in-depth examination of the workshop initiative reveals some continuity in the foreign policies of ASEAN members as well as some new trends that would exert a strong influence throughout the 1990s.

¹³⁴ The invitation of Laos is explicable by its pending admission as an observer to ASEAN meetings in 1992.

¹³⁵ See Lee (1999a: 165-178).

Problem Representations

Despite the activities in the South China Sea in the 1980s, the attention of decision-makers in China and ASEAN countries remained focused on the Cambodia problem. ASEAN and China formed a diplomatic alignment against Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, and the perception of that shared interest became the overriding factor in determining foreign policy. The problem representation, which focused on Cambodia as the most salient security issue for Southeast Asian security, led to the conclusion that the Spratly Islands were not then important.

It seems clear that the Chinese-Vietnamese clash over the Spratly Islands in March 1988 served as the catalyst for an Indonesian initiative to mediate a dispute that was seen as impinging upon Indonesia's interests. Following the armed confrontation, two statements by the newly appointed Foreign Minister Ali Alatas in April and May 1988 asked the parties to the dispute to resolve differences peacefully and referred to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the ZOPFAN Declaration respectively.¹³⁶ This was a marked difference from Indonesia's indifference when China had taken over the Paracel Islands in 1974 (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 140), an island group much further away from Indonesian-claimed waters.

Foreign Minister Alatas' references to ZOPFAN gave an indication that Indonesia feared that conflict in the South China Sea offered a conduit for great powers to exert influence on regional security. In that sense, even though Indonesia's leadership did not regard their country as a party to the conflict, they reasoned that any armed conflict would nevertheless harm Indonesia's interest as it would bring great power influence to bear that could jeopardize Suharto's leadership ambitions for the region. Suharto had sought a leadership role for Indonesia since the mid-1980s (Suryadinata, 1996; Catley and Keliat, 1997: ch. 7). A South China Sea initiative under Indonesian leadership was seen as enhancing Indonesia's role further, after Indonesia had played a major role in the settlement of the Cambodia Conflict and also mediated in the Moro Conflict in the Philippines. These mediation attempts were the most visible expression of Suharto's determination to raise the country's international profile after two decades of successful

¹³⁶ *New Straits Times*, April 16, 1988 and *Kompas*, May 20, 1988, in Catley and Keliat (1997: 140-141).

economic development. While the SCSW's were not a mediation attempt as such,¹³⁷ the workshops served the same objective with regard to Indonesia's standing. Indonesia's positive experience with informal talks on the Cambodian Conflict and the successful negotiation of the Timor Gap Agreement with Australia (Catley and Keliat, 1997: ch. 7) would have predisposed Indonesian officials to opt for an informal framework, commonly referred to as Track Two Diplomacy. Given the overall thrust of Indonesia's foreign policy since the mid-1980s, it seems clear that Indonesia did not merely act as a disinterested guardian of stability when it initiated the South China Sea Workshops.

Two factors support the hypothesis that Indonesia's initiative was guided by leadership aspirations. Firstly, the workshops arose from a unilateral Indonesian initiative and followed closely the patterns of cooperation that underpinned recent Indonesian foreign policy successes. Secondly, Jakarta's willingness to take into account substantial concerns of ASEAN partners contrasted sharply with its opposition to any attempts to question Indonesia's prerogative over the initiative. While Singapore and Thailand succeeded in including outside powers in the forum, Singaporean suggestions to rotate the workshop meetings among ASEAN members were rejected (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 158).

Indonesia's preoccupation with process over outcome lends credence to the view that Jakarta saw itself as arbiter of ASEAN affairs. The reaction from ASEAN partners implies recognition of Indonesia's leadership role on this issue. They accepted the process as Indonesia's prerogative and Malaysia even abandoned its own seminar project of November 1989 to the benefit of the Indonesian initiative (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 158).

Officials in the two other non-disputant states, Singapore and Thailand, shared Indonesia's preoccupation with process over outcome. They were most concerned that the exclusion of disputants external to ASEAN, in particular China and Vietnam, might be misinterpreted as collective enmity by ASEAN (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 155-156). They were strictly opposed to an arrangement that would imply an adversarial relationship between ASEAN and other parties in the region by casting ASEAN-China

¹³⁷ Ambassador-at-large Hasjim Djalal claimed that Indonesia's intention was "not mediation but the creation of an atmosphere conducive to facilitating solution," quoted in Buszynski (1996: 15).

and ASEAN-Vietnam interactions as antagonistic ingroup-outgroup relations centred on the Spratly issue. Any such framing would have run counter to their policies of cooperation at a time when relations with China had blossomed and the divide with Indochina was narrowing. Following Indonesia's restoration of ties with China, Singapore was preparing for the long awaited opening of formal relations and gained from trade with Vietnam, while Thailand's relations with China improved further despite the disappearance of the uniting Cambodia issue.¹³⁸

In contrast with the non-disputant states, the two most active claimant states within ASEAN, Malaysia and the Philippines, shared a different concern. Officials in those two countries feared that discussions in any multilateral forum could compromise their ability to pursue bilateral settlements. In essence, Malaysia and the Philippines reiterated a longstanding position: they were not willing to grant endorsement to ASEAN to settle conflicts involving member states.

Explanation of Security Behaviour

It would clearly be an exaggeration to talk of distinct patterns of alignment in conjunction with the South China Sea Workshops. Nonetheless, the particular kind of cooperation that emerged allows interesting insights into what policies of their partners ASEAN members were willing to support. Did ASEAN act as one community or did the implementation of the workshop initiative only reflect a modicum of compatible interests? A closer examination of the perspectives of ASEAN members reveals that only a minimal consensus existed on how to approach the South China Sea dispute and on what role ASEAN should play. The idea of community is not supported by the absence of a shared collective identity, although extensive consultations and the lack of any consequential disagreement may have suggested otherwise.

For the purpose of this study it is not significant whether Indonesia displayed a desire for leadership. Instead, the yardstick for the role of a regional identity is the abidance by ASEAN norms. By those standards, Indonesia behaved like a role model before the initiation of the South China Sea Workshops in 1990. Although the workshops emerged from a unilateral initiative, the Indonesian side took great care that

¹³⁸ Among other things, visible in the development of military purchases, see Buszynski (1994).

the sensitivities of other ASEAN members were taken into consideration. A delegation led by Hasjim Djalal had visited all ASEAN capitals and engaged in comprehensive discussions with senior officials and academic scholars (Catley and Keliat, 1997: 155).¹³⁹

The process developed under Indonesia's guidance in a way that closely observed ASEAN's norms of consensus and consultation. The Indonesian side under Djalal's guidance arrived at a consensus that reflected everybody's position. No ASEAN member had objected to the process as such and specific sensitivities were accommodated by Indonesia. The initiation of the workshop process can hence be seen as a paragon case of regional cooperation in keeping with the 'ASEAN way'. Interestingly, the reaction of ASEAN partners displayed deference to Indonesia's claims to regional leadership, as shown by Malaysia's termination of its own South China Sea project.

However, this positive evaluation of the 'regional community spirit' has to be put into perspective. As outlined above, ASEAN members approached the initiative from very different angles and with very different objectives; however, crucially, their interests were not incompatible, as long as the process entailed no commitments or formal settlement procedures. The informal workshop process satisfied Indonesian leadership ambitions while not infringing on the policy options of ASEAN partners.

In identity terms, a strong identification with ASEAN was only apparent on Indonesia's side – which regarded ASEAN as the realm for its leadership. Singapore and Thailand indicated that they regarded ASEAN as an important partner but at the same time insisted on an open forum. Their insistence to include China hinted at their determination to avoid alignment with ASEAN against outsiders, or more generally, a situation where they had to choose between partners. And finally, the determination of Malaysia and the Philippines to preserve their national autonomy as to conflict resolution reinforced the perception of ASEAN as a confidence building, not a conflict resolution forum.

The informal and non-committal nature of the workshops complicates the task of vetting underlying motives of ASEAN members. The smooth emergence of the workshops as the prime forum to address the South China Sea disputes was possible

¹³⁹ According to that particular account, the initiative was under the aegis of the Foreign Ministry, which might explain the more consultative approach.

precisely because of its informal nature, which did not entail commitments by the participants and hence allowed them to maintain their different positions on the purpose of the forum. However, the initiative can best be understood in the context of a shared interest in preserving the status quo and stability in the region. A broadly defined interest in the preservation of stability in the area combined with the belief in the efficacy of ASEAN's methods of conflict management to bring ASEAN members together in support of the workshop process.

While balance-of-interest can explain the cooperation of ASEAN members towards the initiative, balance-of-threat theory seems to be irrelevant to this case. Being an inclusive initiative, the workshop did not constitute a case of alignment of ASEAN against any outsider. Threat perceptions can be discounted as motives for two reasons. On the side of the initiator, Indonesian officials still assumed at this stage that their country was not a party to the dispute, ruling out threat perceptions as a driving force for the initiative. Secondly, the claimant states that had most to gain from an ASEAN alliance, Malaysia and the Philippines, showed no inclination to rally ASEAN behind their claims (which were partly overlapping). Their insistence that bilateral settlements should not be compromised by the SCSWs indicated that they did not intend to use the leverage of a multilateral forum against China. Overall, the workshop process can be seen as a classical case of confidence building in the 'ASEAN way' among ASEAN members as well as with outsiders, but it did not lend support to the idea that ASEAN constituted a true diplomatic community.

Towards the Singapore Summit

The debates about the US role in the region and the workshop initiative indicated that ASEAN members had very different ideas about the desirable scope, the problems, and the objectives of ASEAN in the new Post Cold War security environment. Disagreement about ASEAN's security role raised questions about its organizational relevance. This was compounded by the fact that ASEAN's achievements in the economic sphere had been minimal at a time when cooperation in trade became a predominant theme. The prospects for the conclusion of the Uruguay Round looked gloomy and regional trade

blocs assumed greater than ever importance. The establishment of NAFTA in North America and the consolidation of the European Union contrasted sharply with ASEAN's stagnation. Given that context and the fact that there was no obvious reason that ASEAN was needed to fulfill the function of a diplomatic coalition as it had since 1979, ASEAN's relevance depended on the answer to two questions:

Firstly, according to which principles should ASEAN members organize their security relations, and, what did this imply for ASEAN's role? Secondly, whom did decision-makers in the various ASEAN countries regard as partners and allies and how important was ASEAN? The answers to both these questions had a clear bearing on ASEAN's future. If most ASEAN members regarded ASEAN as irrelevant for their security and preferred powers outside the region as partners, ASEAN's role would be limited to regional confidence building measures, a function which had been one of its prime purposes initially and one which it had realized very successfully.

Those issues and particularly ASEAN's role vis-à-vis other actors were at the core of the two major policy debates that engulfed ASEAN between late 1990 and the Singapore Summit in January 1992. One focused on the issue of how and with whom ASEAN members should conduct economic cooperation. This debate had major repercussions for security and the interconnectedness of strategy and economics became salient when Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir suggested an East Asian Economic Grouping. The other debate centred on how best to devise a security structure for Southeast Asia in the Post Cold War era. It started from informal second track proposals and remained unresolved beyond the Summit. The two debates were interlinked by the common thread of uncertainty about ASEAN's role in the future.

While the realm of trade and economic relations is not at the centre of this work, the following discussion about the organization of economic relations is included, because it encapsulates deep-seated beliefs about who ASEAN's friends and competitors were. Particularly, as will be explained below, attitudes towards security relations with the United States were perceived as inextricably linked to ideas about economic cooperation. Contradictory ideas of how ASEAN should be positioned between the United States, Japan, China and other Asian countries were manifest in proposals for economic alignment, thus making this episode relevant for this study.

5.5 The EAEC Proposal and Economic Alignment

In December 1990 Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir proposed an all-Asian East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG), encompassing ASEAN, China, Japan, and South Korea. However, following the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in July 1991 and the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting (AEM) in October 1991 Mahathir's proposal was downgraded to a caucus and the role of this East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) was limited to that of a loose consultative forum. The AEM decided against the institutionalization of the forum and, instead, endorsed the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) that had been proposed by Thailand. AFTA was based upon the introduction of a Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT), as suggested by Indonesia. However, the ministers dropped a more far-reaching Philippine proposal for a formal ASEAN economic treaty.¹⁴⁰

The agreements reached by the AEM set the stage for the formal approval of ASEAN's new approach to economic cooperation at the Singapore Summit. In keeping with ASEAN's consensual culture, the AEM resolutions should also have marked the end of any publicly aired disagreement. Instead, the debate about what primary framework ASEAN states should use to advance economic cooperation continued. Despite the fact that ASEAN had effectively denied approval for his project, Mahathir continued to promote it vigorously in public and attempted to push it through ASEAN's decision-making process in defiance of ASEAN's consensual practices. Shortly before the Singapore Summit, ASEAN ministers reconsidered the proposal and referred it back to the level of senior officials.¹⁴¹

Mahathir's apparent refusal to subordinate the EAEC to the broader framework of APEC, as demanded by Suharto,¹⁴² ruined any chances to obtain Indonesia's approval. Essentially the initiative was stillborn. The referral to a committee for further deliberations was clearly a move in keeping with ASEAN's practices that aim at preventing loss of face by avoiding outright rejection. The debate reached its nadir during the Singapore Summit of 1992 when Mahathir's unilateral efforts culminated in an opening speech where he publicly asked ASEAN partners to support the EAEC, ignoring

¹⁴⁰ For those details, see *Jakarta Post*, January 27, 1992.

¹⁴¹ "Mahathir urges ASEAN leaders to support EAEC", *Jakarta Post*, January 28, 1992.

the consensus reached.¹⁴³

Security Behaviour: Implications of EAEC and AFTA for Alignment

The protracted debate about the scope of economic partnerships marred not only ASEAN's unity at the Singapore Summit, it also brought into the limelight substantial disagreement among ASEAN members about who the friends of ASEAN were. The latter question assumed importance beyond the economic sphere. Its true significance becomes apparent only when the ramifications of different forms of economic cooperation on ASEAN's alignment with the great powers in the Asia-Pacific are assessed. For the purpose of linking economic cooperation and security relations, it is most useful to detect what alignment underpinned the EAEC and AFTA proposals respectively. Inherent to both proposals was a demarcation between insiders and outsiders. Where they differed was firstly the composition of those two groups, but also, more importantly, they diverged in their prescriptions for relations between the two groups.

The Malaysian initiative to establish an East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG) envisaged an exclusionary Asian grouping. In contrast, the inclusionary approach to economic relations envisaged cooperation within an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) that was in turn embedded in APEC. The Thai proposal for the creation of an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) aimed at strengthening ASEAN cooperation and hence afforded the group privileged status versus other trading partners. However, while it assumed close relations within ASEAN, the initiative envisaged ASEAN's continued cooperation within APEC. ASEAN countries would stay ahead of the rest of APEC in terms of trade liberalization and economic cooperation while still co-operating with external partners.

Problem Representations

The policy debate surrounding the EAEC implicated sets of goals that transcended the economic sphere. On the surface, the problem seemed straightforward: which combination of partners would be most beneficial for ASEAN's economic progress?

¹⁴² *Jakarta Post*, January 27 and January 28, 1992.

¹⁴³ *Jakarta Post*, January 28, 1992.

However, for ASEAN leaders, economic cooperation became interlinked with different concepts of international order, strategic considerations about the commitment of the United States to smaller Asian states (Jesudason, 1995: 216), and personal jealousies between Mahathir and Suharto (Vatikiotis, 1993). The latter in turn brought to the forefront the issue of Indonesia's status within the grouping (Vatikiotis, 1993). The incompatibility of problem representations obscured what was actually contested among ASEAN members.

The two competing concepts for economic cooperation encapsulated in the EAEC and the AFTA proposals can be compared according to several features that allow insights into the underlying problem representations as well as the identifications they implied. The EAEG concept differed from the inclusionary Thai proposal in two aspects. Firstly, in terms of shared identities, the reference point of Mahathir's proposal was not ASEAN, but the distinction between Asians ('ingroup') and non-Asians ('outgroup'). He accorded ASEAN no obvious privileged position beyond that derived from its belonging to the greater entity 'Asian'. Secondly, the underlying relationship between ingroup and outgroup was antagonistic. Mahathir was unwilling to embed the EAEG or EAEC in the broader framework of APEC – at least not in a subordinate position as implied by suggestions from Jakarta.

Those differences can be traced to different interpretations of, and preferred responses to, global trends. The perspective underpinning Thailand's proposal was one that looked at economic relations as a mutually beneficial undertaking. In contrast, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir approached the issue of trade in adversarial terms. Consequently, he searched for a response to economic blocs in Europe and North America. This framing implied a generally hostile perception of Western economic groupings. The two most prominent features of his problem representation were the competitive nature of economic relations and a view of alliances that clustered states according to civilizational affiliation. The most striking – and contentious - feature of the initiative was the deliberate exclusion of non-Asian Pacific nations, in particular the United States but also smaller nations like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

The role envisaged for Japan in his EAC plans negates claims that the divide was primarily defined by economic standing. Although Mahathir expressed dismay at what

he called the lack of respect granted to developing countries or even groupings like ASEAN,¹⁴⁴ his calls for a strong voice of East Asians included Japan. Therefore it appears that the civilizational divide between the West and Asia has featured more strongly in his thinking than that between developed and developing countries. Mahathir's anti-Western statements as well as the pedigree of his economic policies since 1981 support this interpretation.¹⁴⁵

Mahathir's opening speech at the occasion of the Singapore Summit discussed above provided further support for the idea that Mahathir approached the problem in antagonistic terms and framed it as an issue that pitted Asians against the West.¹⁴⁶ Mahathir's policies have been determined by goals of independence and economic development intermixed with a heavy dose of anti-western sentiments. The relatively low level of Malaysia's trade with the United States might have encouraged Mahathir, while other ASEAN members could not have ignored the economic impact of incurring Washington's wrath.

Mahathir's EAEC project also differed in its prescriptions for international order. For Mahathir, the idea of the EAEC had ramifications that extended beyond the economic sphere to the question of how a global order should be organized. When the United States launched efforts to dissuade Japan from participating in the EAEC, Malaysia's leadership framed those actions as attempts to perpetuate a unipolar international system under US hegemony (Saravanamuttu, 1996: 8). This implies that Mahathir saw the establishment of an Asian forum as one step towards a multipolar international order. Given the evidence from this episode, it can be suggested that Mahathir's opposition to the US military presence in Singapore was indeed derived from genuine dislike for an American influence on regional security.

The assumption that strategic and economic factors could not easily be separated was shared by other states in the region, but their policies sharply diverged from the Malaysian position as to the desirability of changes to the status quo. The issue of economic cooperation was intimately linked with strategic partnerships. According to

¹⁴⁴ *New Straits Times*, October 15, 1992.

¹⁴⁵ Immediately after his rise to power in 1981 Mahathir started to supplement Malaysia's Western-oriented economic policies with a 'Look East' policy that modelled Malaysia's development strategy on Japan - and implicitly Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Saravanamuttu, 1996: 3).

that logic, an economic grouping that constituted a competitive bloc and excluded the United States would have put into jeopardy the commitment of the United States to the region. This was a crucial issue for several states in the region (Jesudason, 1995: 216). The debates about the Singapore offer had made clear that the elites in Singapore and Thailand desired a continued involvement of the United States in the region. The situation in the Philippines was more complicated, where some groups driven by nationalist sentiments desired the removal of the US bases, whereas others continued to favour an American presence.

These elaborations are not meant to imply that economic considerations were irrelevant to Mahathir's proposal or the ideas of his opponents. Disappointment with ASEAN's lack of progress in the economic sphere certainly played a role in Mahathir's thinking (Saravanamuttu, 1996: 5; Ho, 1998: 81). However, it was the adversarial interpretation of economic relations that required the creation of a larger (East Asian) economic grouping. If the Western-dominated trade blocs had not been seen as hostile and the goal had just been the acceleration of ASEAN's progress in trade liberalization, the Thai AFTA proposal could have been regarded as adequate for achieving that objective. On the other hand, it could have been argued that the low level of intra-ASEAN trade (except for that involving Singapore) rendered AFTA unviable for the advancement of economic progress of ASEAN members.

Unfortunately, the ASEAN decision-making process and the surrounding discussions have not been transparent enough to ascertain whether resistance to Mahathir's proposal on strategic grounds would have been enough to doom the project. Furthermore, it is not clear whether trepidations about the EAEC's strategic ramifications were shared in Indonesia. What is certain is that the opposition from Indonesia helped to relegate the proposal from centre stage. Equally evident is that regardless of the strategic reasoning in Jakarta, the main motivation behind Indonesia's opposition was the issue of leadership. Leadership became salient for Jakarta on two levels. Suharto saw himself personally as well as Indonesia collectively as ASEAN's leader.

Suharto denied endorsement to Mahathir's plan because the latter had not consulted him (Vatikiotis, 1993). Suggestions that Suharto perceived Mahathir's

¹⁴⁶ *Asiaweek*, February 7, 1992: 23.

behaviour as a *personal* challenge to his leadership are complementary to explanations that accentuate Indonesia's aspirations for regional leadership. If Indonesia aspired to regional leadership, this would explain a preference for any arrangement that was limited to ASEAN. If ASEAN were but one part of a larger (all-Asian) entity, Indonesian leadership aspirations may be trumped by those of more powerful states, for example China or Japan, or even by Malaysia in its capacity as initiator of the proposal. Considerations of which arrangement would bring maximum economic benefits seemed to have been secondary for Indonesia. What does this diverse array of approaches to the problem of economic cooperation tell us about the state of ASEAN's community?

Explanations of Security Behaviour

A reflection on ASEAN discourse and foreign policy behaviour indicates that on the occasion of the Singapore Summit the association lacked cohesion, a fact demonstrated by the diversity of positions within the organization. An evaluation of all three elements of community comes to a negative conclusion as to the strength of a shared identity. Firstly, the perspectives on goals, problems, and strategies for ASEAN differed so widely and the two proposals entailed such radically different prescriptions of international order that it is hard to find any evidence of shared meaning structures. Most importantly, Mahathir's proposal ignored fundamental foreign policy tenets of ASEAN partners who relied on a US presence and whose opposition towards the proposal stemmed from concerns about the strategic ramifications of non-inclusion of the United States. What was at stake was not simply the most beneficial organization of economic relations.

Malaysia and other members disagreed about who ASEAN's partners should be as well as about the nature of the international environment. Singapore and Indonesia revealed different priorities in their foreign policies: the former was preoccupied with security, the latter with symbolism and leadership. Those different problem representations made it harder for ASEAN to operate as a community than the disagreement between Malaysia and Thailand about allies and competitors alone could have.

Secondly, at the time of the Singapore Summit the EAEC initiative clearly ignored ASEAN's norms of consultation and consensus seeking. Although ASEAN had

come to the decision that the EAEC would only be an informal forum, Mahathir ignored this position, continued to promote the EAEC publicly and tried unilaterally to bulldoze it through the decision-making process. In contrast, in the negotiations leading to the acceptance of the AFTA proposal Thailand followed ASEAN procedural norms and painstakingly consulted with its ASEAN partners before submitting its AFTA proposal to the 1992 Singapore Summit (Vatikiotis, 1993: 361). Arguably, the Thai case provides evidence for an institutional learning process. The conscientiousness of Prime Minister Anand's government partially aimed at removing the suspicions harboured by other ASEAN members toward Thailand after the unilateral approach of the Chatichai government (Buszynski, 1994: 732). Prime Minister Anand realized the importance of ASEAN endorsement and the necessity to work in a wider framework of multilateralism in order to fulfil Thailand's ambitions in the region (Buszynski, 1994: 732). Whether this represented a change of tactics, conviction of ASEAN's importance, or simply a different leadership style is not entirely clear.

It was partly the lack of consultation on Malaysia's side that doomed the EAEG project. Consultation with Indonesia played a particularly important role for the acceptance of the AFTA framework. Indeed, one scholar claims that the different treatment accorded by Indonesia's government to the Thai and Malaysian proposals was by no small means a function of Suharto's perception that he had been consulted by Thailand (Vatikiotis, 1993: 361). The disregard for procedural norms certainly compounded personal jealousies between Mahathir and Suharto and questioned Indonesia's leadership over ASEAN.

Thirdly, as is evident from the above analysis of problem representations, only Indonesia, in keeping with its leadership aspirations, identified with ASEAN. For the other members, ASEAN was not the referent point for their diplomacy. For Mahathir it was a broader Asian grouping, for others, in particular Singapore, their reasoning centred on the maintenance of the security and trading relationship with the United States. However, it is possible that Mahathir's stance was rhetoric targeted at the domestic audience, as claimed by realist scholars in the case of Malaysia's response to Singapore's offer to the US (Huxley, 1993; da Cunha, 1999). Even Malaysia could hardly afford to ignore the benefits of a positive relationship with the United States.

The conflict about who ASEAN's friends were was not primarily related to the perception of specific military threats on the side of ASEAN members. As pointed out previously, given the benign security environment after the end of the Cold War, even in security-conscious states like Singapore security reasoning of elites centred on uncertainty not threat. The lack of agreement on ASEAN's position was therefore not a function of divergent threat perceptions.

In contrast, the absence of consensus on desirable partnerships for ASEAN can best be explained in terms of different visions for international order. Essentially, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand wanted to maintain the status quo. They wanted to deepen cooperation within ASEAN based upon the premise that the association would remain embedded in the Western system of military alliances and economic fora. In contrast, Mahathir wished to change the status quo and switch the basic focus of ASEAN from Western dominated organizations to a new pattern of cooperation centred on an Asian axis. An interest-based approach to alignment that takes into account preferences for the status quo seems to hold most explanatory power at this juncture.

The debate about which framework would be preferable for economic cooperation highlighted several problems of ASEAN in the Post Cold War era. Firstly, the lack of compliance with ASEAN's decision-making norms underscores the fact of low norm compliance in the transitional period. Mahathir's disregard for consultation and consensus is consistent with the lack of norm compliance in Chatichai's Indochina policy and Singapore's US policy. Yet, from the perspective of social learning even the EAEC episode contained good news for ASEAN. While Mahathir's disregard for decision-making norms was blatant, the very fact that Mahathir failed to bring about the adoption of the project can be interpreted as evidence that norm violations incur sanctions, albeit indirectly, through loss of prestige due to a failed policy initiative.¹⁴⁷ More damaging from a community perspective was that very different ideas existed about how ASEAN should be positioned in the international arena and what values it should endorse.

¹⁴⁷ An alternative explanation is derived from social psychology. Accordingly, people adhere to the norms of the groups whose membership they perceive as relevant at a given time (McGarty and Turner, 1992: 256). From this perspective, it is not surprising that Thailand's Prime Minister Anand followed ASEAN's norms of consultation and consensus seeking while Mahathir did not. After all, the AFTA proposal allocated the central role to ASEAN as the relevant group for trade, whereas for Mahathir ASEAN was subordinate to a larger grouping.

5.6 ASEAN's Pre-Singapore Summit Security Debate

Differences of opinion on the need and the desirability of a continued involvement of the United States in the Post Cold War era had been prominent during the debate about the Singapore – US military relationship and had underpinned the controversy about which forum to use for economic cooperation. However, despite the disagreement about the role of the United States in the region, Southeast Asian leaders all realized that the changed security environment required them to come up with a new blueprint for regional order if they wanted to keep ASEAN relevant. Less prone to consensus were the form and the participants of the new security structure.

Prior to 1992 ASEAN had not served formally as a multilateral framework for the debate of security issues, in keeping with the long-standing position that ASEAN did not have a security function. Yet, members had used the Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) to discuss the security implications of the Cambodia Conflict with dialogue partners. At that stage they included Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and the United States.

Proposals to establish a forum for the discussion of security issues in the broader Asia-Pacific region had been made by Australia's Prime Minister Hawke and Foreign Minister Evans in 1990 as well as by the Canadian side. Evans proposed the establishment of a 'Conference on Security Cooperation in Asia' (CSCA), designed as an Asia-Pacific counterpart to the European Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – now the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The response to such ideas was negative from both ASEAN and the United States. The European-based concept was seen by ASEAN as inappropriate for the region and its security issues and the United States did not regard the promotion of multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific as in its interest (Ball and Kerr, 1996: 20-21).

At this point ASEAN leaders could not agree on the desirability of formal dialogue. Instead, initiatives focused on less comprehensive forms of cooperation. In mid-1991 Malaysian Defence Minister Abdul Razak put forth an initiative for more intra-state security dialogues, a proposal intended to increase confidence building measures (Ho, 1998: 94). It therefore did not signify a change towards more inclusive, multilateral

approaches to security. In a similar vein, a seminar on security cooperation organized by the Foreign Ministry of the Philippines in June 1991 produced a consensus to *consider* the formation of a consultative committee on security issues that could deal with issues like international terrorism or possibly the protection of sea lanes.¹⁴⁸ However, a more substantial discussion did not unfold.

Given that the PMC was the forum that served as a venue for discussions between ASEAN and external powers, it is not surprising that suggestions for an enhanced security dialogue that stemmed from outside centred on the transformation of the PMC. Soon after the seminar in the Philippines, at the July 1991 PMC in Kuala Lumpur, the Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama proposed the PMC as a forum for region-wide political dialogue, giving expression to Japan's interest in multilateral cooperation on security issues (Ball and Kerr, 1996: 24; Soeya, 1998: 222). This initiative dovetailed a 1991 memorandum by ASEAN ISIS (Institutes for Strategic and International Studies) to ASEAN governments that exhorted them to initiate political talks in the broader Asia-Pacific setting (Ball and Kerr, 1996: 25; Khong, 1997a: 292).

Increasingly, the idea to expand the PMC to a broader forum for the discussion of security gathered steam (Huxley, 1993: 77), but agreement on how to formally include security under the ASEAN umbrella proved difficult to engender. Although the PMC communiqué declared that the PMC was 'an appropriate base' for the discussion of regional security,¹⁴⁹ ASEAN was not ready for multilateral cooperation on security issues. The declaration of the July Foreign Ministers Meeting revealed that views in the region did not converge beyond the recognition that ASEAN should play an active role in shaping its security environment.¹⁵⁰ By the time of the Singapore Summit in January 1992 ASEAN members were still not able to agree on the format of security cooperation. It seemed that nothing more than a loose consultative structure would emerge from the summit, after Malaysia denied endorsement to Nakayama's idea of turning the PMC process into a formal security mechanism comprising most significant actors in the Asia-

¹⁴⁸ *Asian Defence Journal*, 7/91: 93.

¹⁴⁹ Joint Communiqué of the Twenty-Fourth ASEAN Post-Ministerial Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, July 19-20, 1991.

¹⁵⁰ Declaration of the Annual Foreign Ministers Meeting, July 1991.

Pacific.¹⁵¹

However, at the 1992 Singapore Summit ASEAN leaders initiated the formal discussion of security in multilateral fora under ASEAN's aegis. The summit decided to put security on the agenda of the annual postministerial meetings with dialogue partners (Simon, 1998: 206). This implied a tacit acknowledgement that discussions of security issues with external actors were beneficial. ASEAN members were now willing to accept security as an integral part of their regular discussions. The summit decision constituted a significant departure from the 1987 Manila Declaration (Abad, 1996: 239). The latter had stated that "each member state shall be responsible for its own security", with cooperation conducted on a non-ASEAN basis "in accordance with their mutual needs and interests." In contrast, at the Singapore Summit, intra-ASEAN cooperation on security was encouraged and this change of mind led to the establishment of the Special Senior Officials Meeting (Special SOM). The Special SOM included both foreign and defence ministry personnel and convened for the first time in June 1992 (Abad, 1996: 239). However, reflecting the differences of opinion about scope and membership of those talks no high level forum was set up.

Security Behaviour

ASEAN members were not in common alignment on the issue of who and how outside powers should be included in a regional security dialogue forum. Essentially, the association was divided into two camps. On the one side were officials from Singapore, Thailand, and, with a different emphasis, the Philippines who favoured a security structure that included the great powers, in particular the United States but also China. On the other side were Indonesia and Malaysia who still resisted any institutionalized integration of outside powers in the regional security structure.

Problem Representations

What were the contentious issues and why could ASEAN leaders not agree on one common outlook? The Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand all desired a multilateral forum that included all significant regional actors and incorporated the great powers,

¹⁵¹ *Jakarta Post*, January 24, 1992.

even though the emphasis put on ASEAN cooperation vis-à-vis great power links differed from high in the Philippines to low in Singapore. The reasoning, espoused most vigorously in Singapore and Thailand, was that the institutionalized integration of the major powers in the regional security structure would give them a stake in the region, which in turn would enhance regional stability. In particular, it would encourage the United States to maintain its commitment with the effect of balancing any potential threat.

The Philippines was the most ardent supporter of a multilateral forum.¹⁵² This becomes explicable if one considers the country's security situation at this juncture. In September 1991 the Philippine Senate declined to approve the use of Subic Bay by the United States for another 10 years. Then, at the end of 1991 the United States was given one year to completely withdraw its forces after an agreement on a gradual withdrawal over three years had failed to come to a conclusion.¹⁵³ With the departure of American forces scheduled for late 1992, Philippine decision-makers were left pondering how best to provide security for their country. Observers agreed that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were woefully underprepared for any external threat (Morada and Collier, 1998: 573). Therefore the Philippine leadership tried to offset military weakness with diplomatic support, particularly from ASEAN. Philippine officials called for closer defence cooperation within ASEAN. The appeal by Assistant Foreign Secretary Romualdo Ong to ASEAN partners to take greater responsibility for the formation of regional security arrangements can be understood in that context, even though the unpalatable language of alliances was avoided.¹⁵⁴

In contrast to the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand did not suffer from dramatic defence shortcomings. Most importantly, their security relations proceeded independent of ASEAN, notwithstanding their expressed preference for a region-wide security structure. Thailand maintained its own alliance with the United States. Singapore had ensured a continued US presence with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in November 1990 and had deepened the relationship when it approved the transfer of a Navy logistics headquarter in January 1992 (Huxley, 1993: 23).

¹⁵² *Jakarta Post*, January 24, 1992.

¹⁵³ *Asian Defence Journal*, 2/92: 122.

Despite varying degrees of urgency, all three countries supported an involvement of the United States in the regional security structure, based on the belief that its balancing function would enhance stability. It should be noted that despite Thailand's desire to see the U.S. involved in regional security, the country supported the search for an indigenous security structure. However, Thai endeavours to devise an indigenous security structure for Southeast Asia were not sufficient to bridge the gulf between the proponents of an institutionalized forum that included the United States and the Malaysian and Indonesian position that aimed at minimizing external influence.

Indonesian and Malaysian officials objected to an expansion and institutionalization of security cooperation for the very reason that they wanted to keep great power influence out of the region. Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas exemplified this view when he asserted that any dialogue should be based on the ZOPFAN concept.¹⁵⁵ Implicit to his references to ZOPFAN as the desirable guiding principle for security was a particular perspective on the nature of Southeast Asia's security problems. For Alatas this was the problem of great power influence. He emphasized that security dialogues should be pursued under the auspices of existing organizations effectively opposing the creation of a new forum. With regard to security discussions with external powers, Alatas wanted to see them continued within the PMC framework. By doing so, ASEAN would avoid falling under great power influence (Antolik, 1992: 149).

Not only did Indonesia oppose any forum that included external powers, it also blocked the modest Thai initiative of opening up the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation to ratification by external powers. This was a clear indication that Indonesia resisted the formal involvement of outsiders in any form in Southeast Asia's security affairs. Indonesia had an ally in Malaysia. Malaysian officials had consistently opposed the multilateralization of security in Southeast Asia. They had only agreed to the informal and non-committal South China Sea workshops under the condition that the Track Two forum would not compromise Malaysia's bilateral efforts. This position extended beyond the South China Sea to security in general. In 1992, Malaysian Armed Forces Chief

¹⁵⁴ *Jakarta Post*, January 17, 1992.

¹⁵⁵ *Jakarta Post*, January 25, 1992.

General Tan Sri Hashim Mohamed Ali proclaimed the advantages of bilateral cooperation saying, “the trilateral or multilateral approach to defence and security cooperation is still politically sensitive and considered even more irrelevant.”¹⁵⁶

At a time when Indonesia and Malaysia resisted the involvement of external powers in a new regional security structure, the Singaporean decision to allow the transfer of the US logistics facilities to the republic must have caused consternation in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur despite the lack of public criticism it brought about.¹⁵⁷ The timing of the decision, whether incidental or not, underlined how remarkably little the predominant theme of ‘regional autonomy versus great power involvement’ and the contrasting policy outlook of the two camps had changed since the early days of ASEAN, even though the dynamic of the Cambodia Conflict had temporarily relegated the topic to the backstage.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

The behaviour and discourse of ASEAN members followed the very patterns that had been visible during the debates over the 1989 Singapore offer to the United States to host military facilities. Despite the shared acknowledgement that ASEAN had to adjust somehow to the new security environment, ASEAN elites still did not converge in their problem representations. They held divergent views of what goals ASEAN should pursue and which strategy would best serve regional security. Interlinked with those views were different referent points for alignment.

One camp within ASEAN identified security primarily with external partners, whereas Indonesia, Malaysia, and some influential elements in the Philippines favoured a regional approach to security, either in pursuit of ZOPFAN principles or, in the case of Philippine officials, a broadly defined collective security arrangement. In terms of community indicators, neither the criterion of shared meaning structures nor that of mutual identifications with ASEAN partners were fulfilled. However, in contrast to the EAEC debate, no ASEAN member deviated from the norms of consultation and

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 4/92: 125.

¹⁵⁷ In public, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas asserted that Singapore’s actions were “within the framework of the ASEAN Memorandum of Understanding and not the least intended at setting up a base or at transferring a part of Subic to Singapore,” quoted in *Jakarta Post*, January 27, 1992.

consensus seeking.

Even though the debate concerned the creation of a new regional security structure, balance-of-threat theory had remarkably little relevance. Threat contingencies seemed to have informed policy preferences only in Singapore's case. The debate was bereft of any references to potential threats, indicating that at this juncture it was goals other than protection against military threats that informed the policy discourse in different countries. Crucial were ideas about who should be included in the regional security structure, based on assessments of the desirability of the status quo vis-a-vis a new ZOPFAN-based order.

5.7 Summary: Southeast Asia in Transition 1989-1992

An evaluation of the various policy initiatives between 1989 and the Singapore Summit in January 1992 provides a picture of ASEAN as an organization in disarray. ASEAN cooperation in the transitional period from Cold War to Post Cold War politics was characterized by, firstly, low norm compliance, secondly, a lack of shared perspectives on objectives, problems and strategies of how to solve them, and, thirdly, a shortage of policies that identified the security of member states with that of ASEAN partners instead of external powers.

Chatichai's new Indochina policy, Singapore's negotiations with the United States, and Mahathir's EAEC initiative were all pursued unilaterally with little or no regard for ASEAN's norms of due process. From above elaborations, it also becomes clear that two distinct modes of thinking about Southeast Asia's security problems existed among ASEAN members. One aimed at establishing an indigenous Southeast Asian regional order based on the implementation of the ZOPFAN principles. The other focused on the benefits of a constructive great power role in the region. Not surprisingly, the two perspectives differed most widely on the involvement of the United States. Proponents of the former view argued that the competitive nature of US policy ran counter to regional goals, as zero-sum policies hindered cooperation and prosperity, whereas the latter perspective pointed to the putative benefits the whole region had derived from the US presence (Stevenson, 1992: 89-90). The only area of agreement,

evident in ASEAN's non-response to the Tiananmen events, was the significance of the norms of non-interference and sovereignty enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

Possibly most detrimental to the prospects of a regional community at this stage was the lack of common identification among ASEAN partners. The considerations of ASEAN partners played a subordinate role for most initiatives during this time period. Chatichai's Indochina policy identified Thailand's policy with continental Southeast Asia, not ASEAN or an expanded ASEAN as a whole. Mahathir's EAEG proposal centred on an all-Asian identity. Again, the entity used for ingroup-outgroup identification was not synonymous with ASEAN. Finally, the discussions about security partnerships indicated that at least one member country, Singapore, identified its security with the United States, an external party, not with ASEAN.

Indonesia was the only member state that in the 1989-1992 period consistently paid deference to ASEAN norms as well as indicating that ASEAN was regarded as the prime reference point for foreign policy. With regard to economic cooperation and, to a lesser extent, the South China Sea Workshops, Indonesia refrained from pursuing its own interest without consideration for the sensitivities of its partners. However, from the context of Indonesia's foreign policy it can be surmised that Indonesia aspired to a leadership role in ASEAN and hence it was natural for its officials to turn ASEAN into the prime reference point for policies. Any policy that threatened to dilute ASEAN's influence was vigorously opposed by Jakarta, as the participation of external powers would have challenged Indonesia's leadership aspirations.

The overall thrust of ASEAN's policies towards the United States ensured that the general alignment between the two was kept intact. ASEAN members opted against Mahathir's proposal that would have implied the exclusion of the United States and hence would have signaled realignment. However, what explained the preference of Singapore and Thailand for continued close alignment with the United States after the threat from Vietnam ceased to exist? This question becomes a riddle if it is taken into account that the desire for close cooperation with the United States was not tantamount to an adversarial attitude towards the People's Republic of China. On the contrary, out of all ASEAN members Singapore and Thailand had arguably the best relations with Beijing.

In Singapore's case, residual mistrust towards Indonesia and Malaysia contributed to a strong preference for a US presence. However, more than being induced by a specific threat, it expressed a general proclivity for a balance-of-interest as the ideal organizing principle for security relations.

Generally, the different models for a regional security structure and the partnerships they implied were not so much related to different threat perceptions as to notions of what international order was desirable. From a broader, comparative perspective, ASEAN members disagreed on the effect of the end of the Cold War on their relationship with the United States. It became clear that Thailand and Singapore saw their relationship with the United States as delinked from the existence of a specific external threat. For elites in both countries, general balancing motives continued to play a role (more so for Singapore) but their positive attitude toward US involvement also stemmed from a belief that they benefited from the international order promoted by the United States. This was obvious in their attempts to ensure ASEAN's involvement in APEC and their resistance to a vaguely defined but essentially competing notion of 'Asian solutions'. Singapore and Thailand's aspirations for ASEAN saw it as an in-group embedded in a broad coalition of pro-free trade, and essentially pro-Western states. Their definition of in-group did not entail a sharp distinction from outsiders. Instead it was inclusionary as epitomized by the APEC concept.

In contrast to Thailand and Singapore, the Malaysian leadership reasoned that the implicit alignment with the United States during the Cold War era had fulfilled its purpose and could now be sacrificed for the pursuit of other goals. A search for policies of self-reliance and Mahathir's confrontational stance towards the West have set Malaysia's foreign policy apart from those of other ASEAN members (Ho, 1998: 88-89). Mahathir's critical remarks about the impact of a new world order hinted at different conceptions of the international order. Malaysia under Mahathir aspired to a change in international order and hence promoted a different pattern of security relations than ASEAN partners. Indonesia's behaviour was guided primarily by Suharto's aspiration for regional leadership. This priority made Indonesia willing to compromise on substance in the 1988-1992 period, provided the decision-making process (ASEAN norms) and basic principles (for example, ZOPFAN) that defined ASEAN were adhered

to.

The cleavage between Malaysia's position and that of Singapore and Thailand on the other hand is best explained by a balance-of-interest model. If the attitude of ASEAN members towards the prevailing international system is analyzed, Mahathir's aversion to a US dominated international order illuminates why Mahathir wished to unite ASEAN with other Asian countries. In contrast, Singapore and Thailand both saw their interests served best by an inclusive system in the Asia-Pacific under the guardianship of the United States.

Chapter 6

ASEAN Security after the Singapore Summit:

The Evolution of a New Security Structure, 1992-1997

The year 1992 can be seen as a watershed for the creation of a Post Cold War security structure in Southeast Asia. At the Singapore Summit in January 1992, progress was made towards the formal incorporation of security in ASEAN's agenda. However, ASEAN leaders failed to reach agreement on the format of a new security structure and ASEAN's role therein. The debate between proponents of ZOPFAN and those of an open inclusive security structure that included the United States remained unresolved. This was partly due to the fact that a debate about security lacked any substance in January 1992, as it was not entirely clear what if anything Southeast Asia's security problems would entail.

Shortly after the Singapore Summit Chinese assertions of claims in the South China Sea provided some unwelcome clues to this question and consequently added impetus to the debate. Subsequently, ASEAN members agreed on a collective response to signs of Chinese forcefulness in the South China Sea and reached consensus on the institutionalization of a new regional security structure that extended beyond Southeast Asia to the wider Asia-Pacific region. The creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) constituted a diplomatic effort that simultaneously anchored the participation of the United States in regional security as a stabilizing factor and secured the constructive engagement of China, thus avoiding the latter's antagonization. Nevertheless, on three occasions between 1992 and 1997 ASEAN acted in alignment vis-à-vis China, based on the understanding that the status quo in the South China Sea should be maintained. Between 1992 and 1997 ASEAN members developed a dual track strategy of 'soft' balancing and engagement, a strategy tailor-made for an environment that has been characterized by uncertainty rather than threats and enmity. By 1997 the most important building blocs of the new security structure were in place and, as is argued here, the evolution of Southeast Asia's Post Cold War security structure reached a stage of consolidation. The following section will describe the emergence of that security structure which entailed a combination of multilateral instruments for security dialogue and engagement and bilateral arrangements for the actual provision of security.

ASEAN after the Singapore Summit

6.1 The Spratlys and ASEAN Security 1992

On February 25, 1992, China's National People's Congress passed a Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone of the People's Republic of China. This act of legislation formalized far-reaching claims in the South China Sea. Subsequently, the occupation of Da Lac Reef / Johnson Patch in July 1992¹⁵⁸ proved to ASEAN that China meant business. Although ASEAN members differed in their assessment of the urgency and scope of a response to China's Law on the Territorial Sea, they all agreed that concerted action should be taken.¹⁵⁹ ASEAN responded to the formalization of Chinese claims and their subsequent assertion with the 'ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea', issued at the meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Manila in July 1992. It called on all parties to resolve differences 'by peaceful means', and urged them to exercise constraint,¹⁶⁰ but did not single out any specific country as target. The Declaration on the South China Sea represented a compromise and the practices of consultation and consensus seeking were integral to the decision-making process. The initiative for the declaration originated from the Philippines. The original draft version was redrafted four times, because officials from most other ASEAN members did not concur with the strong wording favoured by Philippine officials.¹⁶¹ They also rebuffed a Philippine proposal to call for a United Nations conference on the subject. However, the declaration made clear that all ASEAN members attached utmost importance to the norms of conduct enshrined in the TAC relating to peaceful settlement of conflicts, respect for sovereignty, and the non-use of force.

Security Behaviour

The 'ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea' issued at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in July 1992 was the first expression of a collective ASEAN position on the issue, limited as it might have been. It can also be regarded as ASEAN's first formal declaration on regional security, reflecting the perceived significance of the issue

¹⁵⁸ *Jakarta Post*, July 20, 1992; Austin, 1998: 87.

¹⁵⁹ Interviews with Indonesian Foreign Ministry Officials, Jakarta, September 1999.

¹⁶⁰ ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea, Manila, July 1992.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Prof. Lee Lai To, National University of Singapore, August 1999.

(Mak and Hamzah, 1996: 132). This was a noticeable shift from the informality of the South China Sea Workshops that had emerged from a unilateral Indonesian initiative (Acharya, 1993: 36). In terms of alignment, the display of a common ASEAN position was noteworthy. The declaration only represented an implicit alignment of ASEAN members against China, because the declaration merely reiterated ASEAN's preferred rules of conduct and no country was singled out as recipient. However, if it is recalled that on the occasion of the first South China Sea Workshop in 1990 only Indonesia showed a strong inclination to bring together all ASEAN members, the agreement on concerted action was undoubtedly an achievement. What explains the emergence of collective action by ASEAN, given the organization's previous lack of formal involvement in security issues and the fact that not all members were equally affected by events in the South China Sea?

Changes in Problem Representation

The public affirmation of China's claim and its subsequent assertiveness cast serious doubt on two interrelated assumptions ASEAN leaders had made prior to China's public proclamation of claims:

- a) China would not use force against ASEAN members.
- b) China would acquiesce to the status quo.

Firstly, regional leaders had assumed that China would only use force against Vietnam but not against ASEAN. That assumption had been based on the observation that in the 1980s Malaysia and the Philippines had encountered a considerably milder response than Vietnam when they established a physical presence to cement their claims in the Spratlys (Austin, 1998: 97 and 307). Evidently, the belief that China would not use force against ASEAN members to enforce its claims had persisted, although Chinese occupations of reefs in Philippine-claimed waters in 1987 / 1988 suggested otherwise. The expression of Chinese assertiveness in 1992 put into question whether that reasoning was still valid amidst the changed circumstances of the Post Cold War environment. China's earlier restraint might have been influenced by the need to accommodate ASEAN as an ally against Vietnam, or it could have been a genuine expression of good will. Either way, Chinese behaviour certainly never indicated the acceptance of claims by Malaysia and the

Philippines.

Secondly, when China's National People's Congress claimed sovereignty over the Spratly Islands in its law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone of the PRC, it awoke ASEAN members to the fact that the acquiescence to the status quo by the People's Republic could not be taken for granted. The renewed sign of Chinese forcefulness cast doubt over the adequacy of the informal workshop process. As recently as 1991, at the second South China Sea Workshop in Bandung all participants had agreed that South China Sea issues would be settled peacefully, that restraint would be exercised, and that cooperative programmes should be advanced (Djalal, 1999: 188). The spirit of cooperation between ASEAN members and China had seemingly evaporated within a year. Concerns about the territorial status quo in the region and the possible use of force were most likely shared among ASEAN members given the importance attached to norms of regional conduct. This shared outlook expressed itself in the reiteration of TAC norms in ASEAN's Declaration on the South China Sea.

However, behind the appearance of ASEAN unity hid disagreement about the preferred response to China's behaviour. Two distinct strategies emerged, best exemplified by the position of Malaysian officials on the one side and their Philippine counterparts on the other side. While the strategy of the Philippine leadership aimed at internationalizing the issue to the largest possible extent, as manifest in their proposal for a United Nations Conference, Malaysian officials attempted to confine the dispute to the region. When he appealed to all parties to resolve the issue peacefully, the Malaysian Defence Minister Najib Tun Razak made clear that any interference by external actors, including the United States was not desired.¹⁶²

At this juncture Malaysian officials still deemed regional autonomy a higher good than achieving a favourable balance through external support. However, the Malaysian position underwent some changes between April and July 1992. It shifted towards the acceptance of an American presence manifest in Malaysia's support for ASEAN's pledge to the United States at the Foreign Ministers Meeting to maintain its commitment to the region.

¹⁶² *Asian Defence Journal*, 4/92: 125.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

ASEAN's cohesion towards an external party betokened a much higher convergence among members than what had been detectable in the security debates between 1988 and 1992. This change in behaviour allows interesting insights for security theory. What role did identity factors play and how much weight do threat and interest-based explanations have?

ASEAN's collective action fulfilled two of the three criteria of a diplomatic community. An extensive process of consultation and consensus seeking preceded the declaration. Furthermore, with regard to shared meaning structures, ASEAN officials had in common a concern for regional stability and observance of regional norms of conduct as to non-use of force and peaceful resolution of conflict. However, this was a minimal consensus, as the differences between the positions of Malaysia and the Philippines testified. ASEAN partners still disagreed about the benefits of regional autonomy versus involvement of external actors. With regard to the third criterion, mutual identifications, ASEAN failed the test of community. Although ASEAN members identified with the principles of regional order there is no evidence that they identified with one another's security per se against a potential Chinese threat.

ASEAN's diplomatic alignment can best be explained by a common interest in the preservation of regional order and its underlying principles. A shared interest in the existing regional order came to define the regional community, making it impossible to separate functional considerations from those driven by a shared identity. On this occasion, the idea of regional community and balance-of-interest theory were complementary. While balance-of-interest theory can explain ASEAN behaviour, provided interest is defined in terms of rules of regional conduct that defined the status quo, balance-of-threat theory is less plausible.

Evidence that behaviour was threat-driven is limited. Balance-of-threat theory can explain the balancing efforts of the Philippines as a function of threat perception and, possibly, the shift in Malaysia's position between April and July 1992. However, it cannot explain ASEAN's collective action. The low level response by ASEAN – China was not even named in the declaration – indicated that some ASEAN members deemed it unnecessary and undesirable to take steps towards a stronger alignment posture which

could have antagonized China, indicating that ASEAN behaviour was not driven by shared threats. Singapore and Thailand had no direct stake in the South China Sea, other than a general interest in stability, and Indonesian officials regarded their country as a non-disputant to potential conflicts in the South China Sea. With those interests in mind, it is clear that confrontational behaviour towards China was seen as undesirable by the majority of ASEAN members.

6.2 The Creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

Following China's occupation of Johnson Patch, the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea was the most immediate result of the Annual Foreign Ministers Meeting in Manila. However, more important in the long run was the impact of Chinese behaviour on ASEAN's security discourse. Chinese actions became the catalyst that enabled ASEAN to overcome the deadlock, which had stymied its debate about a new security structure prior to the Singapore Summit. The Foreign Minister Meeting focused on security, and more precisely, on how best to provide a security framework for the region.¹⁶³ With the consent of Indonesia and Malaysia, hitherto opposed to an institutionalized security forum, ASEAN moved towards the implementation of closer security cooperation with powers external to the region.

Over the course of the next twelve months, ideas to turn the Post Ministerial Conference into a formal security dialogue forum were realized, building on previous proposals by ASEAN ISIS and by the Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama in 1991.¹⁶⁴ Following the first ASEAN PMC Senior Officials Meeting in May 1993, the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Singapore in July 1993 agreed on the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) that comprised ASEAN, its PMC dialogue partners as well as China, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Russia, and Vietnam. The first ARF meeting convened in Bangkok on July 25, 1994. Even though no concrete results were achieved at this meeting, the ARF has since turned into the single most important multilateral security forum for the Asia-Pacific.

¹⁶³ *Jakarta Post*, July 20 and 23, 1992.

¹⁶⁴ For a detailed account see Ball and Kerr, 1996: 17-26.

Security Behaviour

The ARF is significant for a study of alignment for two reasons. Firstly, its establishment was made possible by agreement of all ASEAN members.¹⁶⁵ The creation of the ARF indicated that the diplomacy of ASEAN members had come to be aligned towards the same goals. This common position was a marked change compared to the prevailing disunity about new security institutions in the build-up to the Singapore Summit. Secondly, from the creation of the ARF it can be inferred how ASEAN members preferred to position themselves towards external powers.

The newly created forum fulfilled two desired functions. It engaged China by giving China a stake in the region's security structure and it integrated the United States in the new regional structure, providing for a balance among the major powers (Leifer, 1996). To avoid any misunderstanding on this point: the ARF was not designed as a balancing instrument but as a multilateral confidence building and dialogue forum. However, the mere fact that the United States and China were included created a formal balance-of-influence between the great powers. ASEAN achieved a balance without resorting to the terminology of balance-of-power relations associated with antagonistic behaviour.

ASEAN assumed important agenda-setting powers and in its approach the ARF was explicitly modeled after ASEAN (Leifer, 1996: 26-35; Haacke, 1998). The informal non-legalistic nature of the forum and its attachment as an appendage to ASEAN's Annual Foreign Ministers Meeting signaled ASEAN's primacy (Narine, 1999). In so far as it was modeled after ASEAN, the culture of the ASEAN Regional Forum was thus an 'indigenous' solution, even though its 'hard' organizational structure, in essence an extended ASEAN-PMC dialogue process, can be traced to proposals from the outside. The strong influence of Track Two proposals on its creation was mirrored in the continuation and enhancement of the informal Track Two process with external partners. In the wake of the Singapore Summit, the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) was established in June 1993.

¹⁶⁵ Self-evidently, it also required the agreement of the external powers involved, most notably China and the United States. For a treatment of their motivation, see Leifer, 1996: 26-30, for some of the problems, see Haacke (1998).

Changes in Problem Representation

Conceptually, the ARF can be seen as the product of a dialogue between two camps within ASEAN, proponents of the ZOPFAN concept and those that have relied on the United States for the provision of security. On the level of meaning structures that underpinned policy debates, the effect of events in 1992 was a higher degree of convergence among ASEAN members' in their approaches to security. The compromise that emerged from security debates tilted heavily towards great power involvement, but the organizational arrangement allowed ZOPFAN proponents some success in retaining ASEAN's influence. At the time of the Singapore Summit in January 1992, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand already supported a new formal security forum that included the United States, in keeping with their belief that a US presence would be beneficial. However, instrumental for the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum was a change of attitude in Indonesia and Malaysia. By July 1992, the Indonesian and Malaysian foreign ministry establishments realized the need to engage China more closely and became more inclined to accept an American role in the new security structure.¹⁶⁶ Just months after Malaysian Defence Minister Najib Tun Razak had spoken out strongly against United States interference,¹⁶⁷ the change of attitude was apparent when Indonesia and Malaysia supported a plea by all six ASEAN members that called on the United States to maintain its commitment to the region's security.¹⁶⁸

Explanations of Security Behaviour

Given the disagreements present at the Singapore Summit, the unity of ASEAN towards events in the South China Sea is noteworthy. However, the interpretation of ASEAN behaviour is complex. Neither threat nor identity-based accounts explain this case satisfactorily. Balance-of-interest theory is most convincing, provided the status quo is conceptualized in terms of regional norms and principles of order.

With regard to the three community indicators, an analysis of ASEAN's security discourse and behaviour reveals measurable differences compared to the pre-Summit period. Overall, Chinese assertiveness in 1992 led to a higher degree of convergence

¹⁶⁶ Interviews with Indonesian Foreign Ministry Officials, Jakarta, September 1999.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 4/92: 125.

among ASEAN leaders as to the acceptance of balance-of-power concepts for the conduct of security relations, signaling the emergence of this interpretation as a shared meaning structure among members. At the same time the efforts to engage China in multilateral fora betokened the desire to avoid an adversarial relationship.

Those common interpretations of security problems and appropriate strategies, manifest in the creation of the ARF, signified an overall shift in ASEAN's security discourse. The inclusion of external powers as integral participants of the regional security arrangement meant that ZOPFAN had effectively ceased to guide ASEAN policies, notwithstanding attempts by the Indonesian and Malaysian leaderships to represent the ARF as a continuation of ZOPFAN policies. However, this fact was made more palatable for proponents of ZOPFAN by granting ASEAN a pivotal, even privileged role in the forum. In that context it is secondary whether the participation of the US and China was motivated by tactical considerations (Lim, 1998; Narine, 1999). The impression of a diplomatic community held together by shared meaning structures as to security affairs was reinforced by the close observance of the norms of consultation and consensus seeking at ASEAN meetings.

However, shared interpretations and norm compliance were not matched by mutual identifications among ASEAN members. The fact that security cooperation with external powers was formalized in a multilateral setting stood in sharp contrast with the absence of progress in multilateral security cooperation among ASEAN members. Beliefs that ASEAN was central to the security needs of its members were missing. A focus on security with external partners implied that relations with ASEAN partners did not take priority and thus negated the idea that ASEAN's collective action was driven by considerations of regional community. Effectively, considerations of regional autonomy had ceased to guide policies in Indonesia and Malaysia. Yet, given their insistence, with Thai support, on ASEAN's privileged status, it could be argued that the notion of regional identity constituted a persistent albeit limited influence on security policy.

Also, it must be noted that the creation of the ARF was precipitated by external developments. Prior to Chinese moves in the South China Sea, ASEAN decision-makers had been divided in their interpretations of how the Post Cold War environment should

¹⁶⁸ Statement at ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, Manila, July 1992.

be managed. While officials in the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand had approached the situation in balance-of-power terms, Indonesia and Malaysia had taken as a primary reference point the ZOPFAN principles. Hence, there was little evidence of shared meaning structures among ASEAN leaders, until China's actions forced a readjustment of Indonesian and Malaysian thinking towards a stronger focus on great power involvement.

The timing suggests that Chinese behaviour has had a catalytic function. This would lend support to realist explanations that privilege threat perceptions as the determining factor for alignment. However, the idea of a China threat had no plausibility in the cases of Singapore and Thailand. Furthermore, Indonesia did not regard itself as a party to any conflict. Generally, the lack of a joint military alliance against China and the attention given to an engagement of China suggest that ASEAN decision-making, even in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, was informed by uncertainty rather than by threat perceptions that would have cast ASEAN-China relations in ally-enemy terms. Notwithstanding those reservations as to threat-based explanations, balance-of-threat theory has plausibility in the cases of Malaysia and the Philippines.

In contrast to threat centred explanations, balance-of-interest theory with its focus on status quo orientations is better suited to illuminate ASEAN behaviour. ASEAN's unity towards the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum can be explained by a desire to strengthen the status quo in the region, best guaranteed by a stable balance of power. What brought ASEAN members together was a shared interest in the maintenance of the territorial status quo. All ASEAN members interpreted Chinese behaviour as a violation of the norms of the TAC, as evident in their appeal to all parties to resolve conflicts peacefully. ASEAN behaviour in the aftermath of the Singapore Summit is explicable not in terms of a shared identity, but a tacit agreement among ASEAN leaders that ASEAN's norms of regional conduct should be the cornerstone of regional order.

In an environment dominated by uncertainty, the expansion of ASEAN's tested model of dialogue and confidence building to the wider Asia-Pacific region was seen as most appropriate. ASEAN's strategy to avoid diplomatic escalation by involving external powers, notably the United States, was rewarded when the People's Republic of China endorsed ASEAN's Declaration and the norms of conduct enshrined therein

(Austin, 1998: 308). This reassurance gave rise to hopes that the status quo in the South China Sea could be maintained and any crisis could be averted.

From Mischief Reef to the Bangkok Summit - Competing Security Discourses

6.3 The Mischief Reef Incident

Following China's assurances in 1992 that the principles of ASEAN's Declaration on the South China Sea would be respected, the area remained quiet and disappeared from the limelight. Generally, cooperation between all parties with a security interest in the region proceeded satisfactorily. The ASEAN Regional Forum conducted its first working session in Bangkok in July 1994, and, combined with the meetings of several Track Two fora (for example, the South China Sea Workshops and CSCAP) to convey an amenable atmosphere and a sense of stability, despite a lack of tangible progress on concrete security issues.

However, this picture changed dramatically in February 1995 when the Philippines discovered the construction of a military post by China on Mischief Reef, a Philippine-claimed formation close to the coastline of the Philippine island Palawan. The Philippines protested against Chinese actions and Philippine officials attempted to resolve the issue in bilateral meetings with their Chinese counterparts on March 19, 1995. Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said that China was willing to manage the islands jointly;¹⁶⁹ however, he was not willing to discuss the sovereignty issue and rejected calls by the Philippines for multilateral talks. The crisis was exacerbated in May 1995 when a Philippine ship – the *Benguet* - tried to transport journalists to an inspection of Mischief Reef. A tense standoff between the naval forces of the two countries occurred.¹⁷⁰ On this occasion, the Chinese abstained from the use of force despite earlier warnings to the contrary, but afterwards issued a warning threatening "serious consequences" in case of further intrusions on what it claimed as its territory.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ The offer was made on April 4 after a visit to Slovakia. Reported in *Asian Defence Journal*, 6/95: 75.

¹⁷⁰ *Bangkok Post*, May 17, 1995: 9.

¹⁷¹ *Asian Defence Journal*, 7/95: 64.

Together with the ongoing modernization and upgrading of Chinese naval and air forces, this display of Chinese assertiveness was highly unsettling to regional leaders.¹⁷² The potential for conflict was underlined by Chinese documents that referred to the area as 'shengcun kongjian', or survival space, emphasizing the point that the suspected oil resources were regarded as crucial for China's development programme.¹⁷³ ASEAN anxieties would not have been assuaged either by a report in the Hong Kong based *Wide Angle*, regarded as close to the Chinese military. That magazine outlined a strategy of "killing a chicken to scare the monkeys" implicitly promoting aggression against the weakest claimant state (the Philippines) in order to gain acquiescence from other claimants.¹⁷⁴

ASEAN's Collective Reaction

ASEAN officials were slow to respond to events in the South China Sea. Initially, only Vietnam protested against the Chinese actions, while studied silence informed behaviour in ASEAN capitals; but then on March 18, 1995, ASEAN foreign ministers issued a joint statement calling for the peaceful and early resolution of the conflict. The move had been initiated by the Philippines at the level of senior officials. On the surface, it appeared to be a similar reaction and was indeed in reference to ASEAN's 1992 Declaration on the South China Sea. However, what emerged was a concerted ASEAN diplomacy that for the first time confronted China.

In the aftermath of China's 1992 Declaration of its Law on the Territorial Sea, ASEAN had issued its own declaration as a collective statement, but it had been addressed to all claimants without singling out China. ASEAN's reaction to the Mischief Reef incident was much more direct: the March declaration was followed up by a collective stand vis-à-vis China on the occasion of the 1995 Hangzhou meeting – the first Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) between ASEAN and China. For the first time ASEAN did not restrict its reaction to a declaration but actively demonstrated solidarity when

¹⁷² Analysts have neither been able to agree on the magnitude nor on the primary motivation of China's military modernization programme. For a recent non-alarmist view, see Huxley and Willett (1999: 67).

¹⁷³ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 9, 1995: 22. Also, a 1993 publication of the Chinese Public Security Ministry had talked about "a possible battle in the Spratly islands" (*South China Morning Post*, July 17, 1993: 7, as quoted in Acharya, 1996).

¹⁷⁴ *Bangkok Post*, April 25, 1995: Inside Indochina, p.2.

ASEAN Senior Officials collectively conveyed their misgivings about Chinese intentions at the first ASEAN-China SOM in Hangzhou. Although their criticism was limited to the informal dinner preceding the SOM, ASEAN's cohesive position reportedly caused consternation among Chinese officials (Leifer, 1996: 38; Whiting, 1997). It led to the recognition by Chinese officials that the topic could not be excluded from the agenda (Lee, 1999b: 35-36).

The fact that ASEAN collectively emphasized the need for discussions at the multilateral level evidently left an impression on Chinese officials, and subsequently led to readjustments in Chinese policy (Snyder, 1997: 27). Formerly reluctant to participate in multilateral talks, China made concessions and, albeit reluctantly, agreed on discussion of the topic within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (Snyder, 1997: 27; Lee, 1999b: 36). This was a major success for ASEAN's diplomacy. Previously, China had insisted on discussing the Spratlys issue on a bilateral basis only. China had rejected the Philippine wishes for multilateral talks involving China and some ASEAN countries and, according to Philippine Ambassador Romualdo Ong, had even warned ASEAN not to put the issue on the ARF agenda.¹⁷⁵

The change of mind in the wake of the Hangzhou dinner indicated a willingness to allow a limited (read: without the US) multilateralization and internationalization of the South China Sea issue (Lee, 1999a: 174; Lee, 1999b: 36). At the same time Chinese officials made clear that this concession was not tantamount to a repudiation of Chinese claims to sovereignty over the area. Even though the willingness to become engaged in multilateral fora might only have presented a tactical change on China's side (Whiting, 1997: 319), the change in negotiating behaviour was testimony to ASEAN's diplomatic clout at that juncture. ASEAN's position was boosted further when the United States on May 10, 1995, in its strongest public statement up to then, asserted its interest in peace in the region, calling upon all sides to "intensify diplomatic efforts."¹⁷⁶

Security Behaviour

On the occasion of the Hangzhou meeting, ASEAN acted in diplomatic alignment against

¹⁷⁵ *Bangkok Post*, April 5, 1995: 14.

¹⁷⁶ *Asian Defence Journal*, 7/95: 68.

China, after the mixture of military modernization, propaganda, and the display of strength by China interspersed with conciliatory gestures had raised the spectre of conflict over the area. Two aspects of the dispute over the Spratlys have combined to turn it into a precarious issue for ASEAN. Firstly, the Mischief Reef incident signified that contrary to reassurances given in 1992 Chinese foreign policy is at loggerheads with the traditional ASEAN approach to conflict resolution. Secondly, no other major power has expressed sufficient interest in the issue that would hint at willingness to support ASEAN in case of conflict. Given their sophisticated means of surveillance, the US officials must have been aware of Chinese actions early on but did not react. Even though United States officials later emphasized American interest in free sea-lanes of communication, they have shown no inclination to balance against an aggressive China in the South China Sea. In this context of possible conflict with China, the alignment posture of ASEAN is highly significant.

However, there were clear limits to the support ASEAN partners were willing to give to the Philippines and although the joint diplomatic action by ASEAN was reassuring for the Philippines, ASEAN efforts did not go as far as Philippine officials desired. Some of its ASEAN partners thwarted the Philippine endeavour to reach a collective position at the ARF Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in May 1995 (Buszynski, 1997: 572). Also, privately some ASEAN officials criticized Manila for unduly blowing one incident out of proportion, ignoring the sensitivity of sovereignty issues at a time of transition in Beijing (Whiting, 1997: 300). Nevertheless, ASEAN's collective criticism of Chinese behaviour and the cohesion displayed indicated the strongest alignment posture of ASEAN since their opposition to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.

Problem Representations

The ASEAN collective acted in diplomatic alignment against China at the Hangzhou meeting. However, in assessing ASEAN's behaviour a subtle but highly significant distinction has to be made between support for ASEAN's principles of peaceful conflict resolution against Chinese encroachment and actual backing of the Philippine position on the Spratlys. The two were not identical even though they might have resulted in the same policy. Although ASEAN partners condemned the Chinese for casting aside the

status quo arrangement and for the use of force, this did not mean that they were willing to endorse a common ASEAN position on how to approach sovereignty claims. Singaporean and Thai officials joined ASEAN's united stance because they disagreed with Beijing's methods of conduct – policy process - not because they perceived a conflict of interest with China on substantive issues. The interpretation of events in Bangkok and Singapore differed significantly from that in the Philippines, and as it turned out, Indonesia.

It is noteworthy that China chose Mischief Reef, at the outer parameter of the Spratlys and very close to the Philippine island of Palawan for its assertion of sovereignty. The geographic location certainly magnified the effect of Chinese assertiveness. Given the Philippines' military vulnerability towards China after the withdrawal of the protective umbrella of US forces, it was not surprising that Philippine leaders attempted to rally ASEAN behind their country. For this purpose Philippine officials tried to represent the dispute as an ASEAN issue that was "not only of vital importance to us as a nation but is also critical to the peace and stability of our region."¹⁷⁷

On the other hand, the low-key treatment of the relationship with China in the Philippine press cast doubt on whether Chinese behaviour was unequivocally perceived as a serious threat to national security. At the crucial time when bilateral consultations took place in mid-March 1995, coverage of the Flor Contemplacion affair¹⁷⁸ by far outshone the Spratlys issue.¹⁷⁹ This observation lends credence to the view that the incident may have been blown out of proportion at a time of intense discussions over an increased military budget.¹⁸⁰

The Philippine interpretation that Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea endangered the whole region was only partially shared by other ASEAN leaders. This is not surprising given that neither Singapore nor Thailand were directly involved as claimant states in the Spratlys dispute and given that both maintained mutually beneficial

¹⁷⁷ Congress Speaker Jose de Venecia, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, April 11, 1995: 9.

¹⁷⁸ Flor Contemplacion was a Philippine maid, convicted and duly executed for murder in Singapore. The affair led to a near complete breakdown in Philippine-Singapore relations until early 1996.

¹⁷⁹ Review of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 15 – 25, 1995.

¹⁸⁰ One Philippine congressman, Joker PC Arroyo, claimed that the incident was merely used to justify the bill that granted the army more money (quoted in *Bangkok Post*, April 30, 1995). However, government officials denied any link between the Mischief Reef incident and the military modernization programme, asserting that the latter had been long planned, see *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 5, 1995: 12.

trade relations and excellent political relations with China. Thai officials were concerned about stability in the region, but at the same time they were not inclined to support Philippine claims against China. In contrast to Philippine leaders, Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan regarded the conflict as a bilateral one rather than one between ASEAN and China. This interpretation explains why Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan offered his country's mediation to settle the dispute between China and the Philippines.¹⁸¹ In identity terms, his offer implied that Thailand was not part of the dispute and did not have to take sides against China.

Nonetheless, Thai decision-makers were apprehensive about the tensions in the South China Sea. They evidently perceived their country's security interests as being implicated in the area as 95% of Thailand's trade passes through sea-lanes in and around the South China Sea.¹⁸² Thailand's desire for stability in the area explains why Thailand had a strong interest in securing the status quo that was guaranteed by norms of non-use of force and peaceful resolution of conflict. Hence China's violation of those norms of the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation constituted a challenge to Thailand's foreign policy goals, leading Thailand into joining ASEAN in reprimanding China's actions of bad faith.¹⁸³ Other than Thailand's interest in the maintenance of the stability enhancing TAC regime, the need to repay ASEAN for the loyalty during the Cambodia conflict as well as assessments of ASEAN's utility in the long run might also have influenced Thailand's decision (Whiting, 1997: 314).

Statements from Singaporean leaders indicate that their reasoning was almost identical to Thailand's. Evidence that the paramount issue for Singaporean officials was also not competing claims over sovereignty between the Philippines and China, but the preservation of regional stability can be taken from Prime Minister Goh's approach. During a visit to Beijing in mid-May 1995 that was dominated by the Spratlys issue,

¹⁸¹ Quoted in *Bangkok Post*, April 6, 1995: 7. In a similar vein, opposition leader Banharn proposed that Thailand could host talks to settle the dispute peacefully, something that Thailand 'as a neighbouring country' would like to see happen. Quoted in *Bangkok Post*, April 4, 1995: 7.

¹⁸² The perception of vulnerability has found its manifestation in the Southern Seaboard Development Project, which envisaged a link between Krabi on the Andaman Sea and Khanom on the Gulf of Thailand. The Navy's desire for submarines and minesweepers is also explicable in that context as they are based on contingency plans for cases when the Gulf of Thailand is blocked as a consequence of conflict around the islands (*Bangkok Post*, November 10, 1995: 5).

¹⁸³ This line of reasoning was revealed by members of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, September 1999.

Singapore's Prime Minister Goh asked China to prove that it would be a responsible member of the international community and to provide evidence that it was serious about peace and stability in the region.¹⁸⁴ In a personal meeting with Li Peng, Goh emphasized that the issues involved in the Spratlys dispute extended beyond matters of sovereignty to include the freedom of navigation and the peace in the region.¹⁸⁵

Both Singapore and Thailand were concerned about the rules for state conduct and the effect the breakdown of those rules could have on regional stability. The predominant concern for Malaysian policy towards the conflict seems to have been similar to that in Bangkok and Singapore, even though Malaysia is a party to the dispute in the South China Sea. While some insiders have described the reaction in Malaysia to the events in the Spratlys as 'shock' (Whiting, 1997: 311), other observers have emphasized the positive aspects of the Chinese-Malaysian relationship (Lee, 1999b: 121-125). Indeed, there is little evidence of heightened anxiety in either Malaysia's public discourse or security behaviour.

Most significantly, Malaysia's attitude towards the settlement of the Spratlys issue has remained consistent, with an emphasis on peaceful resolution within a bilateral framework without any involvement of external powers – exactly the modus preferred by China's representatives (Lee, 1999b: 121-122). Despite the Mischief Reef incident, Malaysia has opposed any joint ASEAN position towards China that goes beyond the reiteration of the norms of conduct of the TAC. In most public comments Malaysian officials admitted discomfort but also a propensity to manage relations with China constructively,¹⁸⁶ signifying a disinclination to balance against China.

Among ASEAN members other than the Philippines, the Mischief Reef incident had the most profound effect on strategic thinking in Indonesia. The attitudes in Indonesia towards the dispute changed considerably after the Mischief Reef incident. In order to understand why Chinese behaviour greatly alarmed Indonesian decision-makers, one needs to understand that Indonesia's interest in the South China Sea is both strategic and economic and has some roots in history. No full justice can be done to Indonesia's

¹⁸⁴ Reported in *Bangkok Post*, May 14, 1995: 4 and May 17, 1995: 4.

¹⁸⁵ Meeting on May 11, 1995, reported in *Asian Defence Journal*, 7/95: 68.

¹⁸⁶ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 9, 1995: 22.

concern with the area unless the link between Indonesia's geography and its self-conception is explored. Indonesia consists of between 13000 and 17508 islands – depending on the source (Dupont, 1996: 276), linked by a couple of major and thousands of smaller waterways. This geographic reality has determined Indonesia's self-conception as a state comprising *tanah air keta* – "our land and waters" (Dupont, 1996: 287) and in turn has given rise to the archipelagic concept (*Wawasan Nusantara* – archipelagic outlook). Enshrined in this concept is the unity of all the islands and seas of Indonesia (Singh, 1994: 48).¹⁸⁷ Historical experiences that underlined the importance of effective control over its waterways have enforced Indonesia's preoccupation with sovereignty over its water and explain its lobbying for international recognition of the archipelagic concept (Singh, 1994: 48; Dupont, 1996: 287). The archipelagic concept has gained international recognition through the 1982 Third United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and undoubtedly constitutes one of the core tenets of Indonesia's security thinking (Singh, 1994; Dupont, 1996).

The importance attached to the archipelagic concept explains the sensitivity of Indonesian thinking to events in the South China Sea. Prior to the publication of China's far-reaching claim line in 1992, which included waters around Natuna Island, Indonesian officials had assumed that they were not a party to the conflict. Based on that assumption the South China Sea workshops were organized to facilitate a solution. When Indonesia initiated the South China Sea workshop process in 1989/ 1990, Indonesian officials were convinced that they were not a disputant and therefore well placed to facilitate co-operation.

However, following Chinese assertiveness in early 1995, concerns in Jakarta about potential overlapping claims around Natuna Island were exacerbated. The waters around Natuna Island are a rich source of gas (and, possibly, oil) for Indonesia, but those waters had also been within the limits of the Chinese claim line. Given this context, the main motivation for officials in Indonesia in supporting a united ASEAN position against China was to maintain the status quo in an area that was perceived as sensitive to Indonesian interests. In interviews, Indonesian officials emphasized the deep concern

¹⁸⁷ The concept evolved out of the 1957 Djuanda Declaration and its refinement by ABRI in the 1966 *Wawasan Nusantara Bahari* Document (Dupont, 1996: 287).

about China's Mischief Reef action. The latter was interpreted as dishonourableness in the light of Chinese assurances that the principles of the 1992 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea would be respected.¹⁸⁸ Those concerns were most certainly exacerbated by the fact that China occupied a reef at the outer limits of the Spratlys. As will be explained further on, Chinese behaviour had a profound impact on Indonesia's security discourse and precipitated a more incisive reaction later in 1995.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

Overall, ASEAN's reaction to Chinese assertiveness was a united stand that can be categorized as a diplomatic alignment against China. Measured against the three criteria of community, ASEAN behaviour after the Mischief Reef incident provides conditional support for the community hypothesis. The exemplary process of consultation and consensus seeking that preceded ASEAN's declaration provides evidence for the importance of the norms of the 'ASEAN way'. The importance of the ASEAN culture was also evident in the informal and quiet diplomacy ASEAN employed when confronting China.

However, behind the display of cohesion towards China different interpretations existed of the Mischief Reef incident and what it signified for regional security. As emerged from statements by different ASEAN leaders, consensus centred on the need to defend the norms of TAC that circumscribed ASEAN's vision of regional order and the observation of which was seen as a guarantee for stability. ASEAN leaders converged in their interpretation of the event on the fact of China's violation of the norms of peaceful resolution of conflict and non-use of force. However, while ASEAN members identified with the norms of regional order, they did not identify with one another's security. Rather, they identified with the status quo – as evident in Singapore and Thailand's approach to the incident.

The community concept clearly has relevance for explanations of ASEAN's collective stance. However, it is important to recognize that the idea of community did not rest on a sense of shared identity that would have required ASEAN members to identify with the security of their partners. Instead it was based on a shared interest in the

¹⁸⁸ Personal Interviews with Foreign Ministry Officials, Jakarta, September 1999.

preservation of regional stability and the territorial status quo, both goods that were best protected by the regional code of norms. The absence of mutual identifications was evident in Thailand's offer of mediation. Given this conceptualization of community, identity and interests became mutually constitutive explanations. Balance-of-interest theory and approaches that focus on identity are complementary.

In contrast, balance-of-threat theory fails to explain ASEAN unity. Only the Philippines may have perceived China as an outright threat, whereas in February/March 1995 all other ASEAN members did either not regard themselves as a party to the conflict (Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand) or were not sufficiently concerned to evoke determined balancing behaviour (Brunei, Malaysia). In Malaysia's case balance-of-threat theory, while intuitively plausible, can only be adopted with reservations. If Malaysian behaviour had been ruled by threat perceptions, it would have resulted in changed relations with China. Yet, as a matter of fact, Malaysia maintained the same approach to negotiations with China, preferring a bilateral framework as before. However, as will become clear, the Mischief Reef incident profoundly changed perceptions and strategic assumptions in Indonesia, even though this was not in evidence in the first half of 1995 and is hence not dealt with in this section.

6.4 Vietnam's Admission to ASEAN

The ranks of ASEAN were strengthened just months after the Mischief Reef incident when, in July 1995, Vietnam became its seventh member. After Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia in 1989 and the signing of the Cambodian Peace agreement in October 1991 in Paris, relations between ASEAN and its erstwhile enemy had improved rapidly and it soon became apparent that Vietnam's entry to ASEAN was only a matter of time. ASEAN leaders in three countries were already very supportive of the idea in 1992, most notably the Philippine President Fidel Ramos (Zagoria, 1997: 167), Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir and Indonesian officials (Gainsborough, 1993: 386).

By the time Vietnam and Laos acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in July 1992, a general agreement on membership expansion had emerged among ASEAN members but no consensus on the conditions or timetable had yet been established. Notes of caution had come from Singapore as well from Thailand (Gainsborough, 1993:

385-386),¹⁸⁹ however, it should be noted that the reasons cited for a deferred admission were economic. While the exact modalities and the timing of Vietnam's entry proved contentious, the decision in principle to admit Vietnam to ASEAN was unanimous in keeping with ASEAN's vision of creating a community of ASEAN-10.

However, by 1994 a consensus on the timing of Vietnam's admission was still missing. Both Singapore and Thailand resisted Vietnam's ASEAN entry at this stage, although their motives differed. By the time of the 1994 Foreign Ministers Meeting, Singapore still cited problems of economic compatibility against Vietnam's admission. Thai officials indicated that admission was some time away¹⁹⁰ and instead suggested the formation of a loose Southeast Asian-10 grouping, parallel to ASEAN. This grouping would have contained Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam with the purpose of preparing the four countries for ASEAN membership over the course of ten years (Rüland, 1999: 343). This proposal was strongly rebuffed by Indonesia and Malaysia. Given those objections by Singapore and Thailand as recently as 1994, Vietnam's rapid admission at the ASEAN Annual Meeting in Brunei in July 1995 was surprising.

Security Behaviour

Vietnam's entry to the organization represented a case of broad alignment with the goals and strategies of ASEAN. However, two caveats are apt as to the validity of accounts that have explained Vietnam's admission in terms of a strategic alliance against China. Firstly, such explanations equate ASEAN with an alliance whereas in reality the organization has no security mandate and has also not engaged in multilateral military cooperation. Secondly, and most importantly, while membership in ASEAN implied the existence of mutual expectations of support among members and expectations of the observance of norms and practices germane to the organization thus fulfilling the criteria of alignment, there is no indication that Vietnam and ASEAN colluded against any

¹⁸⁹ See also an interview with the Singaporean Defence Minister Dr Yeo Ning Hong who argued, "Singapore has no fundamental problem with Vietnam. We opposed Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia as a matter of principle... Now that political settlement in Cambodia is within sight, Singapore is prepared to resume normal contacts and cooperation with Vietnam. ...Membership of ASEAN may, however, have to wait until Vietnam is able to participate meaningfully in ASEAN cooperation without slowing down the progress of ASEAN," quoted in *Asian Defence Journal* 2/92: 7-10.

¹⁹⁰ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 4, 1994: 15.

outside party. Any references to cooperation in the South China Sea – potentially against China – can be attributed to individual members, to be precise the Philippines, not ASEAN as a grouping. Nonetheless, it was clear that Vietnam's admission increased the likelihood of conflict with China.

Problem Representations

The overriding motive for Vietnam's admission, as expressed by Indonesian and Malaysian officials early on, was to move ASEAN one step closer to the vision of its founders that envisaged the whole of Southeast Asia under ASEAN's aegis. However, when the implementation of this vision became practicable, support and opposition to Vietnam's entry became intertwined with the question of leadership within ASEAN and strategic motives influenced attitudes towards Vietnam's admission. Both Indonesia and Vietnam shared an interest in constraining Thailand's role in Continental Southeast Asia (Rüland, 1999: 342-343). In turn, Thai suggestions to facilitate slowly the entry of all four potential new members through membership in a parallel organization was clearly motivated by concerns about its own position in the region (Dreis-Lampen, 1998: 173). Arguably, Thai leaders were anxious about the resurrection of the 'special relationship' between Indonesia and Vietnam that threatened ASEAN unity during the Cambodia Conflict (Rüland, 1999: 342-343).

Possibly, the determination of the Thai opposition has been overstated, but more likely the events unfolding in the South China Sea in early 1995 exerted a strong influence on ASEAN members to include Vietnam at this particular juncture. This hypothesis is supported by statements by Philippine Senator Ernesto Herrera who proposed that the Philippines should push for Vietnam's membership in ASEAN, as that would strengthen the association against threats like China's Spratlys actions.¹⁹¹ In a similar vein, an Asian non-ASEAN diplomat argued, "ASEAN needs Vietnam more than Vietnam needs ASEAN. They need Vietnam as the ultimate (land) bulwark against China."¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Quoted in *Bangkok Post*, May 22, 1995: 11.

¹⁹² Quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 4/95: 82.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

The case of Vietnam's admission is difficult to interpret, as identity and strategic motives became inextricably intertwined. The decision in principle to admit Vietnam emanated from the desire of some ASEAN members to bring the whole of Southeast Asia under its umbrella and hence derived from considerations of identity. Nevertheless, public rhetoric might have been misleading. With regard to the idea of regional community, Vietnam's admission exposed substantial differences among ASEAN members as to motives and identifications with the whole region, again casting doubts on the idea of community.

Even on the issue of ASEAN membership, ASEAN leaders did not share the same problem representations. Thailand's initial resistance against Vietnam's admission was clearly motivated by considerations of regional influence, although not threat. Thai leaders did not identify with Vietnam as a fellow Southeast Asian state but a competitor for regional influence. However, as necessitated by the character of the decision, the norms of consultation and consensus seeking were adhered to.

Statements by Philippine officials and the timing of Vietnam's admission point most ominously to a balancing effort on the side of ASEAN on the heels of Chinese assertiveness. However, given the earlier agreement in principle and the divergent views among ASEAN members about the seriousness of a China threat, it seems unlikely that admission was a function of Chinese assertiveness, although the latter might have influenced the timing. It is interesting to note that Singapore and Thailand, the two countries that were most lukewarm about Vietnam's admission, also had the least incentive to balance against China.

Even if Vietnam's entry was not causally related to events in the South China Sea, the strategic convergence between ASEAN and Vietnam was noteworthy and certainly welcomed by some ASEAN members. It is clear that after the Mischief Reef incident in February 1995 Vietnam's leadership shared with the ASEAN-6 a strategic outlook that focused on China. One indication of the strategic convergence was Vietnam's encouragement of American involvement in the region,¹⁹³ at this stage an emerging theme in the region. Converging views between the Philippines and Vietnam became manifest at the Bangkok Summit in December 1995 when the Philippines and Vietnam

¹⁹³ *Bangkok Post*, May 31, 1995: 8.

called for the demilitarisation of the South China Sea and reiterated calls for a peaceful settlement of the dispute (Hay, 1996: 263).

In terms of lending support to particular theories of alignment the case of Vietnam's admission to ASEAN is indeterminate. In the case of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines identity considerations and strategic motives would have resulted in the same preferences. For the Philippines, balance-of-threat theory has the highest plausibility, for Malaysia identity considerations, and for Indonesia a mixture of all three (concern about China, identification with an ASEAN-10, and interest in reining in Thai ambitions). Thailand's initial resistance is best explained by interest, defined in terms of its privileged position in continental Southeast Asia, whereas Singapore's case eludes all three theories.

6.5 The Australian –Indonesian Security Agreement

Following the discovery of China's occupation of Mischief Reef in February 1995, the Indonesian leadership partook in ASEAN's collective rebuke of Chinese behaviour at the Hangzhou Senior Officials Meeting. However, bearing in mind the importance attached to the archipelagic concept in Indonesian security reasoning, outlined above, it is not surprising that the leadership in Jakarta did not deem ASEAN's action sufficient. In July 1995 Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas visited Beijing to gain a clarification from Chinese officials as to potentially overlapping claims around Natuna Island. However, during meetings with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen from July 19-21, 1995, Alatas did not succeed in obtaining the unambiguous recognition of Indonesian sovereignty he sought.¹⁹⁴ Then, in September 1995, shortly after Alatas' unsuccessful mission to Beijing, Indonesia's President Suharto became responsive to suggestions by Australian Prime Minister Keating for a security agreement between the two countries, which the latter had first suggested in June 1994.¹⁹⁵

In December 1995, coinciding with the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok and a lofty declaration of a Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ), Indonesia and

¹⁹⁴ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 28, 1995, and January 4, 1996.

¹⁹⁵ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, FE /2487 B/2, 15 December 1995, and *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 28, 1995 and January 4, 1996: 18-19.

Australia announced the conclusion of a security agreement that committed both countries to consultations “in the case of adverse challenges to either party or to their common security interests.”¹⁹⁶

Notwithstanding a blatant lack of consultations by Indonesia and despite the contradiction between the principle of regional autonomy inherent to ZOPFAN (and by extension the SEANWFZ) and the Australian-Indonesian security agreement, it appears that the Indonesian step was welcomed in the region. Shortly after the announcement of the agreement, Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating and his Singaporean counterpart Goh Chok Tong proclaimed a new partnership between Singapore and Australia based on the three pillars of political, socio-economic, and security co-operation.¹⁹⁷ While this agreement did not create a new relationship,¹⁹⁸ it extended existing good relations and indicated that an Australian involvement in the region was seen as highly desirable in Singapore.

The Philippines also made known their wishes to sign a security agreement with Australia, enhancing the existing political-military dialogue (Malik, 1999: 182-183) and little resistance would have come from Thailand, given that both Australia and Thailand have been allies of the United States since the 1950s and traditionally enjoyed cordial relations. Although less enthusiastically, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad also conceded that Australia had a role to play in the region, even though he left open the extent thereof.¹⁹⁹ Despite previous misgivings emanating from the Keating – Mahathir relationship, Malaysia's ruling elite clearly welcomed the sign of an Australian commitment (Whiting, 1997: 313).

Security Behaviour

If the response by ASEAN to China's occupation of Mischief Reef conjured up an image of a highly cohesive grouping, the picture of unity was negated somewhat by Indonesia's unilateralism. Nevertheless, the reaction of ASEAN partners indicated that ASEAN as a

¹⁹⁶ Article 2, Agreement Between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on Maintaining Security, December 18, 1995.

¹⁹⁷ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, FE/2512 B/4, January 18, 1996.

¹⁹⁸ Conversation with John Funston, Senior Research Fellow, ISEAS, November 1999.

¹⁹⁹ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, FE/2511 B/2, January 16, 1996.

whole was in agreement with Indonesia's alignment with Australia. Given the previous pro-Western position of the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, it is not surprising that those ASEAN partners approved of Indonesia's policy. However, from the Indonesian perspective, an explicit pro-Western alignment was certainly a novelty. It represented a significant departure from Indonesia's non-aligned stand and its declaratory 'bebas-aktif' (free and active) principle and hinted at a quiet departure from ZOPFAN ideals as the prime reference point for Jakarta's security policy at the very time when SEANWFZ, an embodiment of the ZOPFAN concept, became reality. Furthermore, Malaysia's approval, albeit cautious, requires an explanation in the context of Prime Minister Mahathir's latent anti-Western attitude, a serious personal row with Australia's Prime Minister Keating in 1993 and his former reluctance to allow Australia participation in regional activities.

Problem Representations - Competing Discourses

As outlined in the section on the Mischief Reef incident, initially the leadership in Jakarta had regarded Indonesia as a non-disputant to the Spratlys conflict. Although China's 1992 claims overlapped with Indonesian-claimed waters, Indonesia only took determined steps to clarify the situation after signs of Chinese assertiveness in 1995. The unease in Jakarta after Alatas' failed mission to Beijing in July 1995 translated in a change of Indonesia's security discourse and behaviour that reinforced trends noticeable since 1992. The security agreement used the language of alliances, indicating a balance-of-power mode of thinking which has been depicted as "anathema to conventional wisdom within the Foreign Ministry."²⁰⁰

In conjunction with Indonesia's approval for the ASEAN Regional Forum that sanctioned the involvement of outside great powers, the agreement indicated that the security thinking of Indonesia's leadership has moved towards a more balance-of-power based approach. Additionally, the lack of consultation with ASEAN partners reinforced the impression that Indonesia's leadership had reassessed security needs and concluded that ASEAN's cooperative structures alone could not provide them. Taken together, those developments in 1995 provide evidence that the security discourse in Indonesia

²⁰⁰ *Asia Handbook*, 1998: 196.

shifted from ZOPFAN ideals (which Indonesia as an aspiring leader for the region had most ardently advocated) to balance-of-power concepts, as evident in the security agreement with Australia. Concerned about potential Chinese claims to the waters around the Natuna Island, the Indonesian leadership took steps on the bilateral level to balance a potential threat from China thus introducing a new dynamic to Indonesia's foreign policy.

While Indonesia's concerns were exacerbated by the failure of Foreign Minister Alatas to gain assurances from China, the perspectives of ASEAN partners had not undergone any considerable change between the time of the Hangzhou meeting and the Bangkok Summit. The tacit approval of the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand for Indonesia's policy shift is explained by the fit between the Australian – Indonesian agreement and their longstanding policies towards Western powers. It cannot be determined whether Malaysia's acceptance of the agreement was caused by concern over China or whether, as some have claimed, Malaysian officials together with their Singaporean counterparts regarded the agreement as a welcome sign that Indonesia had come to accept the parameters of the Five Power Defence Agreement. The latter had formerly been a target of criticism from Jakarta, as it was seen as an obstacle to the implementation of Indonesia's vision of regional order (Anwar, 1994: 152). Be that as it may, the Indonesian policy shift and Malaysian approval considerably narrowed the gap between the security perspectives of ASEAN members.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

Measured against the criteria of mutual identification and norm compliance, the security agreement with Australia hardly lends support to claims that ASEAN represented an emerging community. Instead, Indonesia took recourse to bilateral relations and resorted to means of secretive diplomacy that were in contradiction with ASEAN's prescriptions for consultations and consensus seeking. While it might be argued that bilateral agreements were the prerogative of Indonesia, the agreement was in contradiction with ASEAN's previous consensus, the ZOPFAN declaration and the principles enshrined therein. The lack of norm compliance by Indonesia indicated security was not framed in terms of what contribution ASEAN could make and how ASEAN would be affected by

Indonesian policies.

However, the fact that ASEAN partners responded positively to Indonesia's policy change and proceeded to advance their own relations with Australia indicates that ASEAN members had come to agree on the same broad perspective to regional security for the first time since the Cambodia conflict. By December 1995 all ASEAN members shared a preference for balance-of-power principles. This is not to say that the focus of relations in Southeast Asia was on competition. However, the point made here is that at the bottom line security is guaranteed through deterrence not collective security with ASEAN partners. This shared interpretation of problems and strategies was not testimony to a regional community, as it was not based on a sense of collective identity, but it provided a good foundation for further cooperation.

Threat and Interest-Based Accounts

ASEAN security behaviour at this juncture supports the prescriptions of balance-of-interest theory, as ASEAN members welcomed the involvement of Australia as a move that further strengthened the stability of the status quo in the region. The cases of Indonesia and the Philippines are best explained by balance-of-threat theory. Despite comments by Foreign Minister Alatas that the "idea of a China threat is untenable,"²⁰¹ the timing of the security agreement gives credence to the interpretation that Indonesia's interest in the agreement was a function of growing concern about potential Chinese claims of the waters around Natuna Island. Most observers agree that Indonesia's abandonment of its 'bebas aktif' (free and active) principle was induced by anxiety about Chinese assertiveness (Sebastian, 1996: 15; Lim, 1998: 125). The 'personal chemistry' between Keating and Suharto certainly helped²⁰² but it seems doubtful whether the personal relationship can satisfactorily explain an agreement that was at loggerheads with traditional foreign policy prescriptions.

On a broader level, the Australian-Indonesian Security Agreement signified a major shift in Indonesia's security discourse and behaviour. In the period from 1988 to

²⁰¹ *Asian Defence Journal*, 10/95: 8.

²⁰² Interviews with Indonesian officials and regional scholars, Jakarta and Singapore, August/September 1999.

1992 when President Suharto aspired to ASEAN leadership, Indonesia paid attention to ASEAN's norms of consultation and consensus seeking. Furthermore, on the occasion of several initiatives (like the South China Sea Workshop and the debate about AFTA) Indonesia was willing to take a backstage if that helped facilitate an ASEAN solution. Generally, the Indonesian security discourse was conducted in terms of ZOPFAN principles, which epitomized the aspiration for regional autonomy. In contrast, the security agreement was conducted in violation of ASEAN norms and in contradiction with the spirit, if not meaning, of the ZOPFAN principles that require the reduction of outside involvement in regional security. It indicated that Indonesian decision-makers attributed low significance to ASEAN in security matters.

Most importantly, the shift in Indonesia's position was reflected in a higher convergence of meaning structures of ASEAN members and consequently a more cohesive grouping. From the perspective of Singapore and Thailand, the Indonesian agreement with Australia reinforced their designs for an open, inclusive regional order underpinned by a measure of psychological deterrence against any contingencies.

6.6 The Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone

The announcement of the Australian-Indonesian security agreement occurred almost simultaneously with another landmark of ASEAN cooperation that was concluded at the Bangkok Summit in December 1995. On December 15 all Southeast Asian nations, the seven ASEAN members plus Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, signed the SEANWFZ Treaty on the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone in Southeast Asia. The treaty initiative, regarded as an important component of ZOPFAN had been implemented following an agreement at the 1993 Foreign Ministers Meeting.

The main functions of the treaty were to reaffirm the responsibility of Southeast Asian countries for enforcing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), reserve the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and protect the regional environment from dumping of radioactive waste (Acharya and Bouting, 1998: 222). The treaty affects both intra-ASEAN relations and relations with external powers. Within Southeast Asia the treaty prevents a potential future nuclear arms race within ASEAN and obliges those ASEAN countries that have shown an interest in nuclear energy, Thailand, Indonesia, and

Vietnam, to pursue that interest in a transparent way.²⁰³

With regard to outside powers, the treaty contained a protocol for the five (at that time) declared nuclear powers to abstain from the use of nuclear weapons or the threat thereof against any state in Southeast Asia and anywhere within the zone (Acharya and Bouting, 1998: 224). However, China, France and the United States opposed the treaty and refused to ratify it in its existing form. While China objected to the inclusion of territory it claims, the US were worried about freedom of movement for its warships.²⁰⁴

Security Behaviour

Taken together, the events of December 1995 pose a conundrum for security theory, as they combined instruments of security policy of seemingly contradictory thrust. The Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone reasserted the principle of regional autonomy associated with ZOPFAN, whereas Indonesia's agreement with Australia constituted an implicit alliance with an external power, indicating a pro-Western alignment. The implementation of the SEANWFZ that followed the endorsement at the 1993 Foreign Ministers Meeting betokened a significant change in policy by the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. However, at the very time when one element of ZOPFAN was unanimously put into place by ASEAN, Indonesia entered into a security agreement with an external power that defied the very spirit of the ZOPFAN principles, namely the aspiration for regional autonomy. How can alignment with Australia and the concurrent espousal of the SEANWFZ, framed as one element of ZOPFAN in pursuit of regional autonomy, be explained?

Problem Representations

The concept of a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) had first been suggested by Indonesia in 1984. It was regarded by Indonesia and Malaysia as a crucial component of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) that would limit great power involvement in the region. For that very reason, Singapore and

²⁰³ Opinion, *Bangkok Post*, December 16, 1995: 4. The debate about nuclear energy has generally been low-key. However, Indonesia's Minister for Research and Technology, Habibie, claimed that Indonesia's economy would need to use nuclear energy if the economy was to progress, quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 2/95: 84.

Thailand had for many years resisted the establishment of SEANWFZ as it implicitly targeted the United States whose presence was seen by the two countries as crucial for their security (Alagappa, 1991: 279-81). The disagreement had thus reflected the existence of the two rival discourses that envisaged different paths for Southeast Asian security: regional autonomy or great power balance.

The dearth of comments on the SEANWFZ makes it difficult to determine what induced the change of mind in Singapore and Bangkok. Given ASEAN's proclivity towards the incorporation of the great powers into the Post Cold War security structure since 1992, the advancement of the SEANWFZ initiative between 1993 and 1995 was certainly surprising. However, paradoxically it may be best explained precisely by the general tilt towards balance-of-power precepts.

The opposition of the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand to the SEANWFZ prior to 1993 had been informed by the concern of those countries over the impact on the US presence. The creation of the ARF that sanctioned the involvement of the United States in regional security might have mitigated concerns in Singapore and Thailand and would have plausibly opened the way for the conclusion of the SEANWFZ Treaty. While unproven, this interpretation is supported by the fact that a renewed commitment to ZOPFAN and the determination to pursue the goal of a nuclear-weapon free zone were announced at the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Singapore in 1993, at a time when the ARF and hence formal US engagement had been decided. However, it should also be borne in mind that the SEANWFZ Treaty might have very little impact on the United States, despite Washington's complaints about impeded passage for its ships and planes.²⁰⁵

Explanations of Security Behaviour

At first glance, the SEANWFZ episode lends support to the community idea. Firstly, it manifested shared meaning structures among ASEAN leaders, as its implementation embodied the aspiration to enhance the principle of regional autonomy. Secondly, the SEANWFZ Treaty was the result of a long behind-the-scenes process of consultation and

²⁰⁴ *Asian Defence Journal*, 2/96: 114.

²⁰⁵ For details on American concerns, see Acharya and Boutin, 1998: 225-26.

consensus seeking. Thirdly, it implied mutual identifications with the security of ASEAN partners, as the protocol would require them to forego the presence of foreign forces with nuclear armament.

However, the SEANWFZ Treaty and its significance for the ZOPFAN principles cannot be assessed in isolation from cooperation of ASEAN members with external powers, particularly the concurrently publicized Australian-Indonesian security agreement. In this broader context, the events of 1995 are highly instructive as to the trajectory of ASEAN's security policies. At the December 1995 juncture, ASEAN security behaviour and discourse diverged. The SEANWFZ can hardly be regarded as more than a declaratory device whereas operational policies, manifest in the security agreement and the persistence of bilateral alliances and the Five Power Defence Agreement, were determined by balance-of-power considerations. As a matter of fact, the number of security agreements with outside powers increased dramatically in the 1992-1995 period. ASEAN members, including Indonesia, opted for the stability of the status quo, signified by a balance-of-presence of external powers, over the advancement of its own regional order. Nonetheless, it should be noted that one particular event made SEANWFZ possible: the removal of the US bases from the Philippines after 1992 provided the right conditions for SEANWFZ. Given US insistence on not declaring or denying the presence of nuclear weapons, the US presence in the region would have made a mockery of ASEAN claims of the existence of a nuclear-weapon free zone. Against that background, the argument deserves merit that the period from 1992 onwards witnessed the reinstatement of the principle of regional autonomy for ASEAN, after the principle had previously been relegated to a mere declaratory device.

1996 and 1997: Positive Ambiguity towards China

During 1996 the network of cooperation and dialogue in the wider Asia-Pacific expanded further. India and Myanmar were admitted as new members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) bringing it closer towards an all-encompassing security forum for the region. Significantly, given the former pro-Western membership of the Post Ministerial Conference (PMC), China, India, and Russia were all welcomed as new dialogue partners to the PMC. The engagement of China was completed by its admission to the Council

for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) later in 1996.

Those multiple channels of dialogue may have resulted in more open discussions of the Spratlys in the ARF and may have precipitated the publication of China's baselines on May 15, 1996, as a vague potential basis for negotiations (Lee, 1999b: 44-45). Yet, no breakthrough was achieved on the core issues of contention. In February 1997, cooperation with China expanded further when an ASEAN-China Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) was set up to oversee relations (Lee, 1999b: 47).

6.7 The Chinese-Vietnamese Oil Rig Dispute of 1997

Given those encouraging signs of cooperation, renewed tension in the South China Sea came as a surprise. In March 1997, the convergence of strategic outlooks and, by extension, ASEAN's unity were tested again, by events not dissimilar to the Mischief Reef incident in early 1995. This time Vietnam, which had gained membership in 1995, was the target of Chinese assertiveness when China placed an oil rig in the waters of the Gulf of Tonkin, claimed by Vietnam. Faced with China's blatant lack of respect for Vietnam's claims, Hanoi called for an urgent meeting of ASEAN ambassadors to enrol their support (Wurfel, 1999: 159). Subsequently, ASEAN officials started drawing up a joint position and indicated that they might put the issue on the agenda of the upcoming ASEAN-China Senior Officials Meeting on April 17-19, 1997. Apparently, strongly worded confidential diplomatic notes were sent to Beijing from several ASEAN capitals even though only the Philippines released a public statement (Wurfel, 1999: 160). The concerted approach by ASEAN was strong enough to impel Chinese attempts to engage Thailand in a campaign to "create understanding with neighbouring countries."²⁰⁶ China refused to discuss sovereignty issues with ASEAN as a grouping but ultimately withdrew the oil rig from the contested waters before the third ASEAN-China Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in April.

Security Behaviour

Asked by Vietnam for support against Chinese encroachment, ASEAN effectively

balanced with Vietnam against the Chinese challenge. ASEAN's support of Vietnam is remarkable. Firstly, Vietnam had only become a member of the association in 1995 and, secondly, ASEAN risked being dragged into a serious conflict with China, the subject of which was of little apparent interest to some ASEAN members. How can this alignment posture be explained?

Problem Representations

ASEAN officials were unanimous in their criticism of China. Most importantly and in striking contrast to incidents in 1992 and 1995, when ASEAN responses focused on rules of regional conduct, at this juncture comments from ASEAN officials also displayed signs of mutual identifications. Generally, statements from different ASEAN leaders revealed agreement on Chinese wrongdoing as well as a sense of 'we-ness'.

The difference to previous occasions of Chinese assertiveness was apparent in the comments by Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir, hardly an outspoken Sinophobe, who publicly reprimanded China for its actions.²⁰⁷ Public statements also expressed the belief that ASEAN members were involved in this diplomatic confrontation as a collective. This became obvious, when a senior ASEAN official declared, "we don't recognize any Chinese rights to Vietnam's continental shelf, nor do we recognize the right of the Chinese to do what they did. Now we 're all in this together."²⁰⁸

Explanations of Security Behaviour

On this occasion, if ASEAN's response is measured against the three community indicators, there is evidence to suggest that a sense of regional community had a considerable impact on ASEAN diplomacy. Firstly, with regard to norm compliance, both Vietnam's approach to the problem and ASEAN's quiet diplomacy were paragon examples of the 'ASEAN way'. The norms of consultation and consensus seeking were instrumental in bringing about a concerted response and conduct of quiet private diplomacy attested to the preferences of ASEAN members for behind-the-scenes

²⁰⁶ Chinese Defence Minister Chi Hao Tien reportedly told Thai Prime Minister Chavalit that China had no expansionist or hegemonic designs and was hopeful that "Thailand will help create understanding with neighbouring countries," quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 5/1997: 1.

²⁰⁷ Interview in *Asia Week*, May 9, 1997: 34. ASEAN officials were also quoted as saying, "Automatically ASEAN will support Vietnam. It's all for one and one for all," quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 5/97: 1.

negotiations as well as the effectiveness of such conduct.

Most importantly, ASEAN members displayed mutual identifications that were missing on previous occasions when their consensus was limited to expressions of concern about regional norms of conduct. Interestingly, the latter were still at the core of the regional consensus. Taken together, the three indicators provide evidence that the behaviour of ASEAN members was propelled by a sense of common identity. However, identity and interest-based explanations proved complimentary.

In contrast to balance-of-interest theory, threat-based explanations have limited validity. Given the continuously good bilateral relations between China and Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, it seems implausible that a common perception of threat induced ASEAN's posture of alignment against China. ASEAN membership guaranteed some diplomatic support regardless of shared threat perceptions. Vietnam's efforts to be a good ASEAN citizen in the first two years of its membership had obviously borne fruit (Wurfel, 1999: 155-159). Good relations with ASEAN (and possibly the United States) helped Vietnam to shore up its position vis-à-vis China (Ninh, 1998: 462).

6.8 The Informal 9+ 3 Summits

Surprisingly, when the ASEAN-China SOM took place in Huangshan in April 1997, right on the heels of the oil rig episode, cooperation seemed undisturbed by the March events. On the contrary, ASEAN took the step to invite China, together with Japan and Korea, to an informal summit to be held in December. The initiative was formally taken by Malaysia, the host of the upcoming December meeting. The 1997 Foreign Ministers Meeting in July formally endorsed the 9+3 proposal (including Laos and Myanmar after their admission), which was based on suggestions of Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto in January 1997 (Henderson, 1999: 64). However, its basic structure can be traced back to Mahathir's EAEC proposal and was evident for the first time at the inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting in Bangkok in March 1996. The proposal was finally implemented in the first 9+3 meetings in December 1997 when Chinese President Jiang visited Malaysia. Notably, at the summit ASEAN succeeded in obtaining assurances from China for restraint in the South China Sea, reportedly as part of a trade-off that guaranteed

²⁰⁸ Quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 3, 1997: 14.

ASEAN's support for China's Taiwan policy (Wang, 1999: 87).

Security Behaviour

ASEAN's display of unity in support of Vietnam, its newest member, against a Chinese challenge may have surprised observers. However, if this alignment posture was interpreted as a sign of balance-of-threat behaviour, the next sequence of events proved such interpretations wrong. The informal summit marked a new high point in ASEAN-China relations after the precarious state of relations between 1992 and 1995. The establishment of the 9+3 informal summit constituted another building block in the creation of the Post Cold War security structure. Clearly, it is not a security forum but it fulfils political functions that mark it as another institution for confidence building and cooperation.

Problem Representations

The Singapore Summit in 1992 had relegated the EAEC proposal to the backstage, but Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir defiantly continued to promote the idea. Malaysia's main ally was, significantly, the People's Republic of China.²⁰⁹ However, the success of the informal summit idea was a function of changed attitudes in several ASEAN member states: Singapore, the Philippines, and finally Indonesia. In 1992, Singapore had no interest in an East Asian Economic Caucus if that resulted in deteriorating trade relations with countries outside Asia, and most crucially, a diminishment of the engagement of the United States.

However, having secured the continued US involvement in the region through bilateral links as well as institutionalization in the ARF, Singaporean decision-makers became more attracted to the economic opportunities offered by Asian cooperation. The same reasoning would arguably have applied to Thailand, like Singapore well disposed towards China but also a keen proponent of a US presence. At the Bangkok Summit, it was Singapore's Prime Minister Goh who proposed more frequent informal meetings with other Asian countries like China, South Korea, and Japan and received support from

the Philippines that wanted to extend the work of such a forum to the Spratlys.²¹⁰

The change in attitude in the Philippines was noteworthy. Philippine leaders regarded engagement as the best strategy to deal with China. Also, President Ramos was much more inclined than his predecessor to establish close cooperation with Asian neighbours in order to emphasize the Asian identity of the Philippines (Sheridan, 1997). He saw the Spratlys conflict as but a minor obstacle that should not get in the way of good relations with China. When Mahathir announced that the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Bangkok in March 1996 effectively constituted a meeting between EAEC and Europe, he was not wrong, but ASEAN had not formally endorsed the idea.²¹¹ The final obstacle to an all-Asian informal meeting was Indonesia's suspicion of China. In 1996, Indonesia invited fellow Southeast Asian countries Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar as guests of the informal ASEAN summit (Henderson, 1999: 29), but has shown no interest in extending invitations to parties external to Southeast Asia. However, by 1997 Indonesia obviously accepted the idea of another forum for the engagement of China.

Explanations of Security Behaviour

Based on the dearth of substantial statements concerning the 9+3 summit, it is extremely difficult to determine what motives led to its establishment. It appears that ASEAN members shared, arguably for different reasons, a desire to diversify links and establish multiple groups of partners. The 9+3 meetings simultaneously increased economic opportunities and constituted a step towards the engagement of China. They promoted China's integration into a rule-based regional order.

On the other hand, the summits could be seen as a step towards the establishment of a multipolar international order, as envisaged by Mahathir. However, such an interpretation is not very plausible, given the well-known preferences for close relations with the United States in the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Instrumental for the creation of the 9+3 summit were the changes in attitude in both the Philippines and Singapore. However, it is not entirely clear why Indonesia, and also Vietnam, arguably

²⁰⁹ In June 1993 Mahathir headed a large Malaysian delegation to China and gained an endorsement for the EAEC idea from China's Premier Li Peng (Ho, 1998: 64).

²¹⁰ *Bangkok Post*, December 16, 1995: 6.

exponents of balancing against China, were willing to support the venture.

With regard to alignment theories, this case is inconclusive. The behaviour of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam is in contradiction with the predictions of balance-of-threat theory, and in the cases of Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand the notion of threat was irrelevant, given their positive relationship with China. Balance-of-interest is more plausible, as the informal summits can be seen as a step towards the consolidation of the existing status quo in the region, guaranteed by the inclusion of China. Finally, as to identity-based accounts, the identifications inherent to the informal summit point to a stronger emphasis on cooperation with a group other than, although inclusive of ASEAN. This lack of mutual identifications puts into question the relevance of a regional community for this case, despite the apparent convergence of problem representations.

6.9 Expanding ASEAN: The Admission of Myanmar²¹² and Laos

The agreement on the Informal Summit indicated that cooperation with China was making progress, notwithstanding the row with China over the Spratlys. In contrast, ASEAN's relations with Western partners and in particular the United States were measurably strained in mid-1997 in the course of debates about Myanmar's admission to the association.

The admission of Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar had clearly been on the cards since the 1995 Bangkok Summit when Laos and Cambodia attended as observers and Myanmar acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. At this stage, the prospects for an ASEAN-10 looked brighter thanks to a combination of the decreasing importance of Communist insurgencies among ASEAN members and the rise of economic considerations to prevalence in the policymaking of the socialist countries of Indochina, replacing ideology (Snitwongse, 1995: 523). At the Bangkok Summit, ASEAN leaders had reiterated their intentions of bringing all ten states together according to the goals of ASEAN's founders in 1967 and praised the discussions on cooperation towards their

²¹¹ See for example Mahathir's remarks preceding the meeting between ASEAN, its dialogue partners and the European Union, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* FE/2490 B/2, 19 December 1995.

²¹² In order to avoid confusion this study uses the name Myanmar in line with the official usage since 1989.

“shared destiny’ of peace, progress, and prosperity.”²¹³

Despite the avowedly shared vision of regional unity of all ten Southeast Asian states, debates about the admission of the last three members has caused strain within ASEAN. Discussions in 1996 indicated that the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand wanted to delay Myanmar’s admission to ASEAN because of the regime’s human rights record. At the time ASEAN seemed split. However, the debates assumed a different character when Western countries attempted publicly to put pressure on ASEAN not to admit Myanmar.

Those attempts proved counterproductive and in May all ASEAN members decided to include Myanmar in ASEAN together with Laos. However, the admission of Cambodia, scheduled to join at the same time, was deferred by ASEAN members after Hun Sen had ousted the first Prime Minister Ranariddh in what amounted to a coup d’etat. On July 23, 1997, Myanmar and Laos formally joined ASEAN when their respective Foreign Ministers Ohn Gyaw and Somsavat Lengsavad signed their countries’ entry declarations. Bearing in mind that ASEAN’s founding fathers had proclaimed the vision of ‘one Southeast Asia’, membership expansion in itself constituted a success for ASEAN, but it came at a diplomatic price.

Security Behaviour

Initially, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand wished to defer Myanmar’s admission whereas Indonesia and Malaysia strongly supported Myanmar’s admission in 1997. However, the differences within ASEAN became insignificant when the association was confronted with outside pressure from the United States and other Western countries. At this point, ASEAN members aligned against outside interference and pushed ahead with the admission of Myanmar and, without controversy, Laos. The ability of ASEAN members to overcome their differences and arrive at a common position in defiance of Western pressure is remarkable. What explains this alignment posture?

Problem Representations

Indonesia and Malaysia were the ASEAN members most ardent in their support of

²¹³ *Bangkok Post*, December 16, 1995: 6.

Myanmar's admission. Malaysia's Mahathir was said to have been attracted by the symbolism of admitting the new members in Kuala Lumpur, while Suharto was eager to complete ASEAN-10 under his helm (Cribb, 1998).²¹⁴ However, what united Indonesia and Malaysia with other ASEAN members was the determination to defend regional autonomy against Western attempts to meddle with the principle of non-interference in regional affairs.

The common ASEAN alignment posture in favour of Myanmar's admission came about despite or maybe because of opposition from the West, particularly the United States. ASEAN leaders "felt that somehow they had an obligation to reassert their own sovereignty", showing that "this is our region, our part of the world, and we know what to do, what is good or bad, or what is right or wrong, based upon our own interests and calculations."²¹⁵ Following Western pressure, even those ASEAN members that had raised concerns about human rights referred to a shared regional identity and belief in ASEAN's own cultural way of approaching conflicts (Cribb, 1998: 54).²¹⁶ Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon said, ASEAN and Myanmar "have enjoyed a special kinship based not just on our geographic proximity, but on a common purpose, that is, regional development, peace, and security".²¹⁷

Towards the critical Western countries, ASEAN officials provided another rationale for Myanmar's inclusion, namely that Myanmar's leaders would otherwise turn to other countries for allies (Brooke, 1996: 12). Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon specified those reasons by pointing to the alternative of leaving Myanmar only with China as a friend (Brooke, 1996: 10-12). Those statements point to the problems with interpreting this case, as the significance of strategic motives cannot be evaluated vis-à-vis identity considerations.

In several ASEAN capitals functional considerations were at the forefront when the need for concerted regional action was explained. Malaysian Foreign Minister

²¹⁴ *Asian Defence Journal*, 6/97: 1

²¹⁵ Quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 6/97: 1

²¹⁶ Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Anwar was quoted as telling *Bernama* news agency "confrontation and hostility would not help to resolve any problems" and, referring to the example of Vietnam, that ASEAN's best approach "has always been through constructive engagement," quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 9/96: 10.

²¹⁷ *Asian Defence Journal*, 9/96: 10.

Abdullah noted that ASEAN members were free to act in accordance with their own interests, as the organization was not envisaged as a political union. Abdullah's affirmative proclamation that "ASEAN members will eschew any inclination to get short term gains at the expense of their fellow members", as "none of us would want to sacrifice what we have built in ASEAN for some lucrative advantage"²¹⁸ is revealing with regard to ASEAN's rationale. This is clearly a description of rational-functional cooperation rather than an alliance of hearts.

Likewise, the Thai position was informed by an appreciation of functional benefits. Asked about the accession of the three outstanding Southeast Asian countries outside ASEAN back in late 1995, Thai Foreign Minister Kasem stressed the increased bargaining power of the community.²¹⁹ Former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun also pointed to functional benefits, when he called upon politicians to understand Myanmar and Laos as land bridges towards China rather than as buffers.²²⁰ Interestingly, even Myanmar's officials displayed evidence of functional considerations more than of the existence of a shared regional identity when they described Myanmar's self-image as a "natural 'friendship bridge' linking China, India, and ASEAN and providing a channel for trade."²²¹

Explanations of Security Behaviour

From the brief outline of problem representations among ASEAN leaders it is obvious that different motives became inextricably interlinked in debates about Myanmar's admission and it is therefore difficult to attribute alignment to one particular factor. Firstly, it is impossible to determine the influence of strategic considerations. Although there were suggestions that some ASEAN members were concerned about an isolated Myanmar that could become part of the Chinese ambit (Cribb, 1998: 54; Steinberg, 1999: 289), those claims are difficult to substantiate let alone assess vis-a-vis other considerations. The strongest evidence for such strategic reasoning exists for the case of the Philippines, as above statements attest.

²¹⁸ Quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 8/97: 1.

²¹⁹ *Bangkok Post*, November 13, 1995: 4.

²²⁰ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 11, 1996: 25.

The support of Indonesia and Malaysia for Myanmar are best explained by a mixture of identity concerns and personal beliefs of their leaders. Indonesian President Suharto and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir shared both a personal ambition to consummate ASEAN under their leadership and a lack of interest in human rights (Cribb, 1998: 53-54). After the attempted Western intervention those preferences became intertwined with the perceived need to assert ASEAN's regional autonomy. In contrast, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand initially favoured some minimum standard for membership and wished to defer Myanmar's admission until the situation there had improved. However, what was notable was the fact that those countries rallied together in the aftermath of Western attempts to exert pressure on regional leaders. The problem representations above display a clear concern for the principle of regional autonomy.

In so far as problem representations converged on the defence of regional decision-making against outside interference, the membership debate supports an identity account of alignment behaviour. Additionally, all ASEAN members adhered to the principles of consultation and consensus seeking. This was a success, even though Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah conceded that the discussions about new memberships had brought to the fore substantial differences among the member states, putting ASEAN's decision-making procedures to a serious test.²²² However, beyond agreement on regional autonomy and adherence to regional decision-making rules, the basis for concerted action was less clear. Several statements cast doubt on explanations that explain ASEAN cohesion in terms of a shared identity. Instead, they indicated the prevalence of functional considerations.

²²¹ According to one government official, quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 4/97: 60.

²²² Referring to the consensus principle, he said, "events of the past few months have tested the very principles ASEAN has lived with." Quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, August 1997: 1.

Overall, norm compliance and, above all, the identifications among ASEAN members in the face of external pressure, provide support for identity-based accounts. It should be noted that differences in opinion over Myanmar's membership persisted, but they became secondary when the predominant problem representations changed from 'membership criteria and human rights' to the defence of 'regional autonomy'. This case underlines the importance of an exact analysis of what factors are salient in a given decision-making environment.

6.10 Summary: ASEAN Security 1992-1997

How has ASEAN's diplomacy and discourse in security affairs developed since the 1992 Singapore Summit? Chapter 5 pointed out that during the transitional period 1988-1992 the security discourse and behaviour of ASEAN members had been characterized by the contest of two competing interpretations of what objectives and problems were relevant to ASEAN security. Evidence of a regional community had been absent.

In contrast, between February 1992 and mid-1997, ASEAN members repeatedly displayed a common alignment posture towards external parties, particularly vis-a-vis China in the South China Sea, but also against Western countries on the occasion of Myanmar's admission in 1997. At the same time, all three community indicators showed a higher frequency than in the 1988-1992 period. The indicators of norm compliance and shared meaning structures were particularly strong, whereas mutual identifications among ASEAN members were still absent on several occasions.

Change in security diplomacy towards a stronger emphasis on balance-of-power principles was evident after February 1992 when China formalized its claims to the South China Sea. This trend was accentuated in the aftermath of the Mischief Reef incident in 1995. The process of rethinking security, catalysed by the People's Republic's assertiveness in the South China Sea, induced changes in the perspectives of Malaysia's and, most strikingly, Indonesia's leadership that resulted in the adoption of balance-of-power precepts for their policies. As a consequence, ASEAN moved towards the formal incorporation of the United States into the regional security structure by creating the ASEAN Regional Forum. At the same time the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) engaged China in multilateral cooperation to China. Those institutional developments are

significant with regard to Risse-Kappen's (1996) claims that institutionalisation is a crucial process preceding the emergence of a mature security community. As is apparent from ASEAN, the relationship between institutionalisation and common alignment is much more loose than suggested by Risse-Kappen. Interestingly, this period shows a higher convergence of shared meaning structures and norm compliance, which is reflected in a stronger ASEAN alignment posture. However, ASEAN's process of institutionalisation has centred on the creation of fora with external partners whereas the strength of institutions tying together ASEAN members remained virtually unchanged. The number of meetings among ministers and officials expanded but never changed in character as purely intergovernmental meetings. The contrast between enhanced institutionalisation with external partners and effective stagnation internally means that other factors than institutional developments, emphasized by Risse-Kappen, must explain the observable variation in alignment behaviour between 1992 and 1997.

The developments in December 1995 - January 1996 can be seen as the penultimate step in the evolution of ASEAN's Post Cold War security structure. By then ASEAN members had developed a comprehensive network of alignment while maintaining an array of multilateral fora, formal and informal, for dialogue and cooperation as well as confidence building in military affairs. ASEAN partners agreed with the balance between regional autonomy and strategic needs that informed Indonesia's policies with a clear emphasis on the latter and rhetorical homage reserved for the former.

In 1996-1997 the principal pattern of ASEAN's Post Cold War security behaviour became most pronounced. Espousing a dual strategy, ASEAN took significant steps towards engaging China further but still reasserted their interest in the status quo when confronted with Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea. The establishment of the informal 9+3 summits with China, Japan, and Korea brought to a temporary conclusion the evolution of a regional security structure by strongly emphasizing cooperative elements despite the conspicuous lack of conflict resolution. Notwithstanding the importance of relations with China and the United States, ASEAN's expansion to include Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar, was also a highly significant development for the regional organization.

Overall, between 1992 and 1997 the approaches of ASEAN members to security have become more convergent, with more emphasis put on balance-of-power thinking and less on the notion of regional autonomy. However, reservations apply to both generalizations. Firstly, despite behaviour in support of balance-of-power prescriptions, ASEAN at the same time went to great efforts engaging China in a web of multilateral cooperation. Secondly, even though the principle of regional autonomy, epitomized in the ZOPFAN Declaration, was often subordinate to other considerations, it was nonetheless asserted on several occasions, most significantly when ASEAN defended the admission of Myanmar against Western pressure. Throughout this period, the norms of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation were highly influential, providing continuity to ASEAN diplomacy and a rallying point for alignment.

The findings from this period relevant to the two topics central to this study, alignment and the evolution of a regional community, will be discussed in detail in the analysis section below, together with those findings from earlier time periods. This will include a more elaborate analysis of the community idea, measured against the three community indicators, and it will also provide a detailed summary and evaluation as to the validity of alignment theories.

Chapter 7

Analysis and Conclusions

At the outset, this study defined as its objectives the investigation of three interrelated questions. On the theoretical level, it intended to make a contribution to the theoretical debates in security studies about the causes of alignment in international relations. With regard to the study of Southeast Asia, this work aspired to assess whether members of ASEAN, since 1967 the primary regional organization and locus of cooperation, have developed a regional community where a shared collective identity exerts behavioural force on foreign policy. By combining those explorations of international relations in Southeast Asia, this study sought to arrive at conclusions about the nature of state interaction in the region, in particular continuities in security behaviour that have been present since 1967.

This concluding section seeks to provide answers to the three questions raised. The assessment of ASEAN's security diplomacy is divided into five parts that deal with those three distinct but ultimately interrelated topics. Firstly, it presents a brief summary of the evolution of regional security relations. Secondly, it discusses what those patterns of cooperation and conflict reveal about ASEAN alignment and provides an evaluation of balance-of-threat theory, identity explanations, and balance-of-interest theory. What theoretical arguments do the empirical findings support? Thirdly, what conclusions can be drawn from those findings concerning the underlying patterns of international politics in Southeast Asia and what implications do those findings have for security theory? Fourthly, this analysis assesses whether ASEAN diplomacy has amounted to that of a regional community and discusses the prospects for a regional identity to develop. Finally, this section concludes with some thoughts on the nature of state interaction in the region and their possible future trajectory.

However, prior to presenting this study's analysis, this chapter will provide a brief summary of important regional developments between mid-1997 and the end of 1999. When this study was begun in early September 1997 with the intention of providing a comprehensive coverage of ASEAN security behaviour up to mid-1997 nobody could have predicted the flurry of events that were to hit the region over the next two year. The following section (section 7.1) constitutes an attempt to take into account significant

trends that emerged after this study was well under way. However, because the initial cut-off date of this study had been set for mid-1997, no systematic analysis along the lines of previous chapters is provided. Nonetheless, the important developments during this short time period are taken into consideration in the study's conclusions, which follow below.

7.1 Recent Trends in ASEAN Diplomacy 1997-1999

The diplomatic struggle surrounding Myanmar's admission to ASEAN in mid-1997 marked only the beginning of a period characterized by diverse challenges for ASEAN. Although ASEAN finally realized the vision of an ASEAN-10 when Cambodia gained membership in April 1999, this success and ASEAN's proud record of more than 30 years of cooperation have been overshadowed by an array of problems. Most significant for alignment were the economic crisis of 1997-98, the debates over the principle of non-intervention and the East Timor crisis in 1999.

The Economic Crisis and its Strategic Effects

The 1997-98 Asian economic crisis shook the economies of Southeast Asia.²²³ What began as a currency crisis in Thailand in mid-1997 proved to be highly contagious and quickly spread throughout the region, with Indonesia and Thailand most severely affected. The crisis also had political and strategic ramifications and, thus, it is important to examine its potential impact on both alignment and the prospects for a regional community. The effects on ASEAN were manifest on three levels: 1) Bilateral relations within ASEAN; 2) ASEAN multilateral cooperation; 3) ASEAN's perceptions of external powers.

Firstly, the crisis rekindled bilateral tensions between several ASEAN members. Relations between Malaysia and Singapore dipped to a new low in 1998, partly because of disparaging comments in Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs about Malaysian politicians but also because of the imposition of capital controls by Malaysia. In 1998 Malaysia cancelled its full participation in exercises with Singapore within the framework of the

²²³ For overviews of the crisis, see Rosenberger, 1997; Jomo, 1998; Preston, 1998; McFarlane, 1999; Pak and Song, 1999.

Five Power Defence Agreement. The relationship between Indonesia and Singapore also suffered amidst the crisis, when Indonesian expectations of financial support from Singapore were not met (Smith, 1999: 251)²²⁴ and Indonesian-Malaysian and Malaysian-Philippine relations deteriorated in 1998 when Indonesian President Habibie and Philippine President Estrada openly criticized Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir over his controversial ouster of his Deputy Anwar. Habibie and Estrada's open intervention in Malaysian politics was in contradiction with the principle of non-interference.

Secondly, the effectiveness of multilateral cooperation deteriorated during the crisis. The crisis exposed ASEAN's inability to deal effectively with its economic problems. Indonesia and Thailand depended on external partners and the international financial institutions to limit the fallout from the crisis by providing stabilization packages. However, the acceptance of the attached conditionalities, particularly for the sizable IMF package, compromised the notion of regional autonomy. Malaysia chose a different strategy and, contrary to Western orthodoxy introduced capital controls and other regulatory measures.

Thirdly, in addition to bilateral relations and cooperation in the multilateral framework, the economic crisis had an impact on ASEAN's external relations. The behaviour of the great powers towards ASEAN members after the outbreak of the crisis changed regional perceptions of the United States and China. The US came to be seen as exposing its allies and friends in Southeast Asia to the vagaries of the global market without asserting support at a level regarded as commensurate with the longstanding ties (Viviani, 1999: 343). In contrast, China gained accolades in the region for its responsible and supportive behaviour, after it resisted the temptation to devalue its own currency and contributed considerable funds to regional economies without strings attached.

Overall, the Asian crisis had negative ramifications for the idea of regional community. It proved a setback for the proponents of the community idea, with little or no indication that a regional identity existed among the crisis-ridden ASEAN members. Resurfacing bilateral tensions among some ASEAN members exposed the tenuous character of political relations even after long periods of confidence building, whether a

²²⁴ Interview with Dewi Fortuna Anwar, at that stage personal adviser to President Habibie, *Straits Times*, February 24, 1999: 2.

function of personal animosities at a time of leadership transition or not. What became obvious was an apparent lack of identifications with ASEAN partners as well as missing trust.²²⁵ Furthermore, the responses of ASEAN members indicated the absence of shared meaning structures as to how to deal with the economic problems. The economic crisis revealed, albeit did not cause, ASEAN weaknesses, and has made evident that the association lacked both material resources and, on the level of social interaction, unity of purpose (Narine, 1999: 373).

The Emergence of Human Rights as International Issue

The acrimony surrounding Myanmar's admission in 1997 marked only the beginning of a string of disputes between Western states and some ASEAN members on the issue of non-intervention in internal affairs. Between 1997 and 1999 the topic of human rights caused problems with Western partners and gave rise to disagreements within ASEAN on several occasions. The non-interference principle regained prominence on the agenda of ASEAN members when the responses of Indonesia and the Philippines to the 'Anwar case' put a question mark on the meaning of the principle of non-interference and its relevance for ASEAN. Furthermore, US Vice President Al Gore used the APEC Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in November 1998 to publicly intervene in Malaysian affairs by calling for reforms (Sheridan, 1999: 107-8).

At the June 1998 Asia-Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur, Thailand's Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan suggested the adoption of a formula of 'constructive intervention' that would allow ASEAN members to intervene in the affairs of fellow members in cases where domestic developments caused a threat to regional stability (Ramcharan, 2000: 75). When it was formally discussed at the following Foreign Ministers Meeting, all ASEAN partners but the Philippines rejected Surin's proposal of 'flexible engagement'. All new ASEAN members and Malaysia vigorously defended non-interference as a cardinal principle. From their perspective, the principle of non-interference was seen as a constituent element of ASEAN's identity (Haacke, 1999). As a compromise formula, 'enhanced interaction' was accepted.

²²⁵ Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew was quoted, "he would rather the IMF tell Thailand what to do than tell it himself, which might rule out friendship for a very long time" (quoted in Narine, 1999: 372).

In different disguise, the issue of non-interference resurfaced when ASEAN members discussed the pending membership of Cambodia at the Hanoi Summit in December 1998. Cambodia's entry to ASEAN had been postponed in 1997 after Hun Sen's violent ouster of the second Prime Minister Ranariddh. Following ASEAN pressure and mediation from Japan (Henderson, 1999), Hun Sen had agreed to most ASEAN demands including parliamentary elections. However, at the Hanoi Summit, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand wished to defer further Cambodia's membership until all conditions for the restoration of a legitimate government were fulfilled, including the establishment of a senate. This was opposed by the rest of ASEAN, most strongly Indonesia and Vietnam, which wanted to speed up Cambodia's membership (Funston, 1999: 216; Smith, 1999: 252).

Disagreement within ASEAN centred on the desirability of membership criteria. The lack of shared meaning structures was evident. It was made more disconcerting by Habibie's disrespect for ASEAN's norms of consultation and consensus seeking when he prematurely welcomed Cambodia to ASEAN's fold in his opening speech (Smith, 1999: 252). In the end, a compromise was reached according to which Cambodia would become a member but at an unspecified time (Smith, 1999: 252). Cambodia finally became ASEAN's tenth member in April 1999. The Foreign Ministers Meeting and the Hanoi Summit in December 1998 in essence confirmed the status quo of non-interference in political affairs (Ramcharan, 2000: 81). In the end, ASEAN managed to maintain unity towards the outside, but the association was clearly divided into two camps.

The UN Intervention in East Timor

In the context of ASEAN discussions in 1998, which reconfirmed non-interference as a cardinal principle, international events in 1999 were a cause of alarm for those regional leaders who favoured non-interference. Taken together with US attempts to use the economic crisis to enforce regime changes, political and economical, in Southeast Asia (Catley, 1999: 168), the Western War on Serbia was seen as a clear manifestation of US hegemony (Catley, 1999: 174). Worse was to come from the perspective of Southeast Asian leaders when East Timor's independence was enforced by a UN intervention in September 1999. When a referendum on independence found overwhelming support

among the East Timorese in August 1999, pro-Indonesian militias resorted to violence, forcing a large number of people out of the territory and systematically destroying most property across East Timor. Intense diplomatic pressure by the international community, particularly from Australia, led to the dispatch of international troops to East Timor in September 1999 after the Indonesian government initially resisted international intervention.

The developments in East Timor were highly significant for the whole of ASEAN. In terms of policy substance, when the Australian-led UN mission implemented East Timor's vote for independence, ASEAN had to concede one of its crucial principles: the territorial integrity of one of its member states. Even though East Timor's annexation by Indonesia had never been recognized by international law, ASEAN members had acted towards Indonesia as if it had. In September 1999 ASEAN members also maintained solidarity with Indonesia. The initial lack of an ASEAN reaction to events in East Timor indicated that ASEAN members considered the East Timor issue as an internal affair. On this occasion they were determined to defend the principle of regional autonomy against proponents of human rights and democracy. Australian Prime Minister Howard's alleged proclamations of a policing role in the region during the East Timor crisis evoked a riposte from Malaysia and Thailand.²²⁶ Indonesia also received support against a UN war tribunal from the Philippines, amongst others.²²⁷

Security Developments 1997-1999

The multiple crises since 1997 have almost made observers forget that the main issue of contention in the early and mid-1990s had not been resolved. The latest incident in the South China Sea occurred in mid-1999 when Malaysia erected structures on Pawika Shoal. In due course, the Philippines protested and with some time lag Vietnam and China joined in. The Malaysian actions could be seen as a violation of agreements that all disputants would refrain from any actions that compromise TAC norms and, by extension, the status quo. At the insistence of the Philippines, ASEAN members tried to arrive at a draft proposal for a South China Sea Code of Conduct to be discussed at the

²²⁶ *Straits Times*, September 25, 1999: 35.

²²⁷ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 7, 1999: 18-19

upcoming ASEAN and ARF meetings in July 1999 and to be signed by all claimants.

The rekindled dispute brought to the fore differences in strategies that had been papered over in the pro-status quo declarations in previous years. The Philippines favoured settlement in a multilateral forum, whereas Malaysia was ready for bilateral negotiations. However, most worrisome from the perspective of an ASEAN community were not those differences as to conflict management strategies, but the lack of mutual identifications. The episode hinted at alignment patterns that crosscut ASEAN. Sources in the Philippine Foreign Ministry aired suspicions of a putative collusion between Beijing and Kuala Lumpur.²²⁸ On a more positive note, the negotiations over a Code of Conduct indicated that ASEAN norms were exerting compliance pressure and to some degree a learning process is detectable. When the Philippine delegation at the July 1999 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Singapore lobbied for an ASEAN-sponsored code of conduct for the South China Sea, delegates resisted the temptation to propose unilaterally the drafting of a code of conduct because they were aware that Malaysian officials (and possibly others) would deadlock the proposal unless it went through the appropriate channels.²²⁹ However, the fact that Malaysia has breached an ASEAN inspired agreement puts the members of the association in an unenviable position if they have to confront any external transgressors, most likely China. If ASEAN members do not play by their own rules, how could they expect others to follow them?

Overall, between 1997 and 1999 ASEAN had to endure several crises that exposed the limits of confidence and trust among its members. The emergence of the human rights issue as one determiner of relations in the region has given rise to a more complex pattern of cooperation and conflict. The assertion of US hegemony and commensurate attempts to enforce a US vision for international order have at times put the US on confrontation course with those ASEAN members that identify strongly with the principles of non-interference. On the other hand, China has not only adhered to the status quo in the South China Sea, but has also given support to ASEAN members during the economic crisis. The most remarkable development in terms of external alignment is the greater variation among ASEAN members. This applies in particular to the contrast

²²⁸ *Strait Times*, June 30, 1999: 16.

²²⁹ *Straits Times*, July 22, 1999: 27

between the US allies, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand on the one hand and Malaysia, in recent years increasingly critical of the West, and Myanmar, considered an ally of China, on the other hand.

As far as the evolution of community is concerned, the mid-1997 – 1999 period offered little encouragement. The evidence of norm compliance has been mixed. The bilateral tensions during the economic crisis and the recent tug-of-words between Malaysia and the Philippines over the Spratlys have accentuated a lack of mutual identifications among ASEAN members. On the other hand, the principle of regional autonomy has experienced a revival against the backdrop of external pressure. With regard to shared meaning structures, ASEAN has clearly become more divided. ASEAN has undergone substantive debates on the issues of human rights and non-interference. On several occasions two camps have emerged within the association. This trend has been exacerbated by ASEAN's membership expansion, which has tipped the balance within ASEAN towards authoritarian regimes. However, the period may be exceptional in so far as it combined leadership upheaval in several ASEAN countries (Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia in 1998) with external shocks and organizational expansion from seven to ten members.

7.2 The Evolution of ASEAN's Security Relations

From a security perspective what is the substance of the ASEAN phenomenon and what insights does this afford for security theory? Before we evaluate the contribution of different theories to the case of ASEAN alignment, it is important to summarize briefly what type of security behaviour has been prevalent. This analysis of ASEAN security relations highlights four trends that have characterized the evolution of ASEAN diplomacy in security affairs since 1967. Two elements, strong external security links and bilateral confidence building, have provided continuity to ASEAN's security relations since its formation, whereas two other trends have evolved over time, a common ASEAN alignment posture and, more recently, multilateral security cooperation. Given this study's interest in the evolution of regional cooperation and a regional community, this summary puts the emphasis on the Post Cold War period, when the development of a regional identity could be expected to have advanced substantially.

1) The Continued Prevalence of External Security Links

Throughout its existence, ASEAN has co-existed with external alliances of some of its members. At the time of ASEAN's creation in 1967, Thailand and the Philippines were under the security umbrella of the United States. Those security arrangements had a bilateral dimension, the Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951 and the Thanat-Rusk agreement of 1962, as well as a multilateral component, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

By 1999, Thailand and the Philippines still maintained bilateral alliances with the United States. In Thailand's case, this relationship had remained stable since the withdrawal of US troops in 1976. The frequent Cobra Gold exercises between Thailand and the US underlined the value attached to the American commitment by the Thai side.²³⁰ In the case of the Philippines, the US had been required to vacate its bases in 1992 and bilateral exercises were discontinued in 1996. However, the Visiting Forces Agreement of 1999 has restored the former cooperation and facilitated the resumption of joint exercises.

Another external link that has endured throughout ASEAN's existence is the Five Power Defence Agreement (FPDA). The FPDA supplanted the original Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement of 1957 in 1971 when it extended cooperation with Australia, Britain, and New Zealand to Malaysia and Singapore. In recent years exercises under its aegis have grown substantially.²³¹ During the Cold War, Indonesia conformed to the general thrust of those developments too. In keeping with the 'bebas aktif' principle, Indonesia has eschewed formal links with external powers, but the arms trade and training relationship with the United States was close until East Timor gained prominence in the early 1990s.

In the Post Cold War era, ASEAN's external security links have been strengthened further, with the United States at the centre of the regional security structure. Between 1989 and 2000 Singapore has developed increasingly close links with

²³⁰ General Mongkol Ampornpisit affirmed his country's attitude when he said, "Thailand finds it very reassuring to have the United States as a staunch ally committed to protecting her interests in the Asia-Pacific region," quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 6/97: 66.

²³¹ Singaporean decision-makers have also expressed interest to upgrade the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) to some kind of a formal defence pact (Mak and Hamzah, 1996: 142).

the United States, even though they have not amounted to a formal alliance or entailed concrete security guarantees. The regular Cobra Gold exercises with Thailand, the conclusion of a Visiting Forces Agreement with the Philippines in 1999, and the enhanced cooperation with Singapore are testimony of the continuing strength of the US role in the region (Ganesan, 2000: 272-73). Most importantly, since 1992 Indonesia and Malaysia have agreed that a US presence would be beneficial to the region.

While a continued US presence became a pillar of the Post Cold War security structure, ASEAN members have also diversified defence relations. Indonesia's security agreement with Australia in 1995 received attention, because it represented such an evident shift from the previous policy discourse (Dupont, 1996; Sebastian, 1996; Sukma, 1997; Lim, 1998). However, it was by no means the only agreement of its kind that involved ASEAN members. Singapore has topped the list of ASEAN members with a diverse array of bilateral military relations with outside powers. For example, the number of naval exercises with other countries reached twenty-four in 1996, with fifteen different states.²³²

The Philippines and, to a lesser degree, Thailand have also intensified military relations with outside powers. Thailand has extended its search for partners to India and Japan and, more importantly, since the 1980s the anti-Vietnamese alignment with China has evolved into a close relationship that has culminated in a 1998 agreement to draw up a cooperation plan for the twenty-first century as well as a twelve-year military cooperation programme (Morrison, 1999: 175). The Philippines have diversified defence cooperation as a result of the reduced US umbrella. In 1994 the Philippines signed a defence cooperation programme with France, a sign the country was discovering new horizons,²³³ followed by a Memorandum of Understanding on bilateral defence cooperation with the United Kingdom in January 1996 (Whiting, 1997: 300). Recently, Vietnam's commencement of a political-military dialogue with Australia has mirrored the efforts of other ASEAN members, albeit on a lower level (Malik, 1999: 184).

Overall, external security links have been a constant for ASEAN members since

²³² Strategic training partnerships for the navy include not only members of the FPDA, but such diverse countries as the US, Australia, Sweden, and India. Interview with Singapore's Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Richard Lim, *Asian Defence Journal*, 6/97: 14.

²³³ *Asian Defence Journal*, 2/95: 8-9.

1967, with the US performing a pivotal role in the security calculations of the Philippines, Thailand, and recently also Singapore. If ASEAN's role has been enhanced and the principle of regional autonomy has become more important, this is not discernible in the sphere of military cooperation. The end of the Cold War has not resulted in the reduction of external security links, with the exception of the alliance between Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

However, this has not been a uniform and unidirectional process. What should be noted is the persistent, if not growing, discrepancy between the security relations of the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand and the rest of ASEAN. The *de facto* military alliance between Myanmar and China and the close relations of Laos and Cambodia with China may highlight a growing gap within ASEAN. The East Timor crisis in 1999 ended the short interlude of Indonesia's formal security agreement with Australia concluded in December 1995. This has left Indonesia again without any serious formal external security partnership by 1999, an exception in the ASEAN context. In conjunction with other factors to be discussed below, those divergent alignments could become a significant impediment to ASEAN diplomatic cooperation.

2) ASEAN's Bilateral Relations: No Way beyond Confidence Building?

A second continuity concerns the conduct of bilateral relations within ASEAN. When ASEAN was established in 1967, regional reconciliation and confidence building was arguably the association's primary task (Leifer, 1989). At that stage, only the Malaysian-Thai border cooperation provided a good example. In due course, ASEAN members established a broad range of ventures in security cooperation in the early 1970s (see Doesch, 1997: Schema 13 [Scheme 13]), largely in the form of low-key joint exercises. By 1975, Indonesia had established bilateral military exercises with all other ASEAN members (Anwar, 1994: 142-151). Even though most contacts were irregular and limited in scope, they were clear testimony to successful confidence building. However, more comprehensive military cooperation did not even evolve during the Cambodia Conflict, although the initiation of Singapore-Thailand and Brunei-Singapore exercises extended the net of bilateral military contacts.

In the Post Cold War era, particularly since 1992, bilateral links among ASEAN

members have intensified and government officials in the region have referred to the multitude of regional military links as the 'spider web' of defence relations. Links between the arguably closest ASEAN partners, Malaysia and Indonesia, deepened when they announced tri-service exercises in August 1996, which was seen as a move upward from the formerly informal defence cooperation.²³⁴ Brunei and Malaysia also signed several agreements for security cooperation.²³⁵ The first joint army exercises between Singapore and the Philippines were held in 1993,²³⁶ and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on May 5, 1994.²³⁷ Reflecting their trouble-free state of relations, Singapore and Thailand have expanded their good military relations to include Thai-Singaporean navy exercises every three years.²³⁸ However, Singapore's closest defence partnership with any ASEAN member remains the one with Brunei (Narayanan, 1997: 11).

Interestingly, even ASEAN members with a history of tension have developed military ties. The army chiefs of Malaysia and the Philippines, long suspicious neighbours, agreed on widening military cooperation.²³⁹ This network of confidence building has not yet been extended to new members, with the partial exception of modest steps in Thai-Vietnamese relations, for example naval visits. At the same time, even long-standing links within ASEAN clearly lacked the desired depth. For example, even though Malaysia and Singapore have been willing to exercise together within the framework of the Five Power Defence Agreement (FPDA) since 1992, they have been reluctant to display their most advanced assets.²⁴⁰ Tensions in 1998 coincided with the Malaysian cancellation of the annual exercises; however, financial reasons were quoted publicly for the decision (Funston, 1999: 206; Cheeseman, 1999: 339-40).

On the positive side, the dissemination of security cooperation to dyads of ASEAN members previously beset by disputes is a sign of confidence building. Yet, two

²³⁴ *Asian Defence Journal*, 3/96: 82.

²³⁵ *Asian Defence Journal*, 3/92: 83.

²³⁶ *Asian Defence Journal*, 3/95: 86.

²³⁷ *Asian Defence Journal*, 7/94: 84.

²³⁸ *Asian Defence Journal*, 5/96: 52.

²³⁹ *Asian Defence Journal*, 1/95: 90-92.

²⁴⁰ *Asian Defence Journal*, 5/97: 8. However, the Flying Fish FPDA-Exercise in 1997 was the largest joint manoeuvre ever staged in Malaysia, comprising 35 naval ships, 160 aircraft, and 12000 personnel, proving that the FPDA was still seen as relevant, see *Asian Defence Journal*, 5/1997: 1.

problems confront ASEAN. Firstly, problems and tensions still plague several bilateral relations (Ganesan, 1999). The recent squabbling between Malaysia and Singapore as well as Malaysia and the Philippines pales in comparison with problems in Myanmar-Thailand and Cambodia-Vietnam relations, both traceable to ancient antagonisms.

Secondly, the fact that bilateral relations within ASEAN are still weak if juxtaposed with strong external security links, suggests that their prime function has remained confidence building, not an alliance function. Currently, only Brunei-Singapore military cooperation is extensive. However, it is clear that the lack of capabilities would limit effective ASEAN military cooperation even if the political will was there and strategic calculations would deem this desirable (both improbable assumptions). ASEAN's security environment features several greater powers, China, India, Japan, and the United States, the military capabilities of which even a united ASEAN collective could not hope to match, although combined forces would constitute a much improved deterrent.

The lack of both material power and sufficient trust in their social interaction confine the role of military cooperation within ASEAN to that of a diplomatic instrument. Yet, this is not to say that patterns of cooperation in Southeast Asia have not changed since ASEAN's establishment. Two major trends have evolved since 1967, a common ASEAN alignment posture and multilateral cooperation.

3) ASEAN Alignment

In the first years of ASEAN's existence, members did not even coordinate their diplomacy. However, after 1972 ASEAN started to bargain as a collective in economic affairs, and first steps towards foreign policy coordination were taken in the aftermath of Communist victories in Indochina in 1975. Ultimately, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978-79 proved to be a catalyst for ASEAN cooperation. During the ensuing Cambodia Conflict ASEAN displayed a common alignment posture.

Alignment during the Cambodia Conflict signified a qualitative change in cooperation compared to the 1970s. During the Cambodia conflict ASEAN aligned diplomatically behind Thailand despite misgivings by Indonesia and Malaysia about the pro-Chinese stance this alignment entailed. The association managed to overcome

internal differences for the sake of broader shared interests. The maintenance of a common alignment posture constituted a considerable diplomatic success for ASEAN. Although the Cambodia Conflict was resolved because of changes in great power relations, ASEAN behaviour highlighted the benefits of regional cooperation in diplomacy. Starting with the Cambodia Conflict, since 1979 a pattern has emerged that has seen ASEAN members align closely in times of immediate crisis, indicating a proclivity to support the 'frontline' state.

In the Post Cold War era, this pattern of behaviour has continued. It partly explains the variation in ASEAN alignment between two different periods. During the 1988-1992 period ASEAN perceived a benign security environment after the threat from expansionist Communism had dissipated. ASEAN alignment was low with little foreign policy cohesion and considerable disagreement on policies towards the United States.

In contrast, in the 1992-1995 period Chinese assertiveness led to higher cohesion, and positive attitudes towards the United States became more widely shared among ASEAN members. In 1995 and 1997 ASEAN aligned against a Chinese challenge with the respective 'frontline' states, the Philippines and Vietnam. However, most pronounced in 1997, those have been cases of issue-specific alignment that have not impacted upon the general conduct of relations with China. China has been seen as a potential challenger with regard to territorial claims in the South China Sea, but it is at the same time regarded as a partner for trade and in other fields of cooperation.

This ability of ASEAN members to react to challenges from outside powers with a high degree of foreign policy cohesion is remarkable, although ASEAN's common diplomatic alignment has not resulted in a military alliance. Nevertheless, ASEAN's ability to display a common alignment posture towards outside challengers since 1979 has constituted the most significant change in the character of regional relations since ASEAN's formation in 1967.

4) The Advent of Multilateralism since 1992

Another, more recent, transformation of regional security has occurred in the Post Cold War era. Since 1992, multilateralism has left an impressive mark on security in the Southeast Asian region. Prior to 1992, ASEAN had already been engaged in wide-

ranging multilateral cooperation in different functional fields; however, security had only informally been the subject of discussions at the Post Ministerial Conferences with dialogue partners. As has been pointed out, within ASEAN, security cooperation was confined to the bilateral sphere and even that was highly limited.

Taking into account that previously multilateral security cooperation across the Asia-Pacific region had been non-existent the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum with annual meetings since 1994 certainly constituted the most significant change in the regional security structure. The conduct of Senior Officials Meetings with China and the creation of the informal 10 + 3 Summit, including China, Japan, and South Korea underline the advancement of cooperation among Asian nations. Track Two fora for informal dialogue like CSCAP have complemented the formal channels of cooperation. By 1997 a multiplicity of new formal and informal meetings and fora had come into being linking ASEAN with diverse dialogue partners in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Additionally, within the confines of Southeast Asia, ASEAN cooperation has reached unprecedented scope in many issue-areas. The expansion of ASEAN membership to include Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar, and Cambodia represented a remarkable success given the previous enmity between ASEAN and Vietnam, and the armed conflict between Laos and Thailand as recently as 1988.

However, with regard to security cooperation, it should be noted that the primary function of the multitude of new fora has been consultation and confidence building. On the positive side, they have undoubtedly enhanced stability and conveyed an atmosphere of trust. However, three limitations of the current multilateralism, and in a broader context, the concept of common security, stand out. Firstly, there are clear limits to the commitment of regional states to multilateralism in security, as several failed initiatives for deepened security cooperation within ASEAN signify.²⁴¹ Within the ASEAN framework, multilateral cooperation has not progressed to the stage of true military cooperation. This shortcoming would be less serious if it was not accompanied,

²⁴¹ They included the proposal by Malaysian Foreign Minister Abu Hassan for the creation of a 'defense community' of ASEAN members and the call by Thailand's Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan for concerted efforts at defence industry production (Snitwongse, 1995: 526). Proposals by the Malaysian side to create an ASEAN peacekeeping force, seconded by Singapore's Defence minister Lee Boon Yang, were denied endorsement by Indonesia and suggestions for an ASEAN peacekeeping force just for the purposes of UN missions also came to naught, reported in *Asian Defence Journal*, 8/95: 70.

secondly, by the persistence of patterns of competition in the Asia-Pacific. Despite the strides multilateral security cooperation has made, strong elements of conventional threat-centred arrangements persist, largely in bilateral relations. Thirdly, the existing fora in the Asia-Pacific have produced a dearth of tangible results (Lim, 1998; Cheeseman, 1999: 348).

Fusing Cooperation and Competition: Towards a Dual Approach to Security?

Those four characteristics - the continued predominance of external alliances, the expansion of bilateral confidence building, the rise of common alignment against external challenges since 1979, and the evolution of multilateralism since 1992 - summarize the trajectory of ASEAN security diplomacy since 1967. This overview of arrangements is certainly not complete, but for the purpose of this work it is sufficient to convey that ASEAN security relations have become more complex while retaining some common features throughout ASEAN's history. Change and continuity co-exist in the approaches of ASEAN members to security. Despite the persistence of strong external security links, a significant transformation of security relations in Southeast Asia has taken place since ASEAN's establishment, as evident in common ASEAN alignment, multilateralism, and a continuously expanding net ('spider web') of confidence building relations within ASEAN since 1967. Overall, what patterns of cooperation and competition have emerged in Southeast Asia by 1999?

In the changed security environment of the Post Cold War era, ASEAN members have conducted security relations in two different frameworks: on the multilateral level, they have cooperated within an ASEAN framework or a larger group with an ASEAN core as in the ARF; secondly, they have taken recourse to arrangements whose memberships are not congruent with ASEAN's. The latter are largely bilateral, involving both ASEAN dyads and cooperation between ASEAN members and outsiders, but also include the Five Power Defence Arrangement. Singapore's Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Richard Lim, explained this approach to security: "The best approach for achieving regional collective security lies in the implementation of multilateral initiatives undergirded by a web of bilateral relationships."²⁴²

²⁴² Interview with Singapore's Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Richard Lim, *Asian Defence Journal*, 6/97: 16.

However, this depiction disguises that the different forms of cooperation serve different functions. Multilateral institutions promote cooperation and engagement; bilateral relations with outsiders are instruments of deterrence, whereas bilateral relations within ASEAN - the 'spider web' - predominantly serve the purpose of confidence building. Most importantly, although links between ASEAN members have expanded considerably, the bedrock of military relations have continued to rest in cooperation with external powers.

This security structure is explicable in the context of persistent mistrust within ASEAN. Given its emphasis on ASEAN alignment towards external powers, this study has not explored in detail the state of bilateral relations within ASEAN, however it has pointed out above that lingering tensions beset, for example, Malaysian-Singaporean and Myanmar-Thai relations.²⁴³ As a consequence, threat perceptions of ASEAN members centre to a considerable degree on neighbouring countries, which in turn necessitates alignment with outsiders, as ASEAN can only fulfil a diplomatic but not a military function vis-à-vis neighbours. Although ASEAN members have generally been in alignment against external actors, some members have also developed links with external partners, which could potentially serve as alliances against other ASEAN members.

Taken together, the patterns of cooperation and conflict inherent to this organization of security relations defy any easy categorization of what has characterized Southeast Asia's security structure in the Post Cold War period. In their design of a new security structure in the Post Cold War period, ASEAN members have been guided by a dual strategy of engagement and deterrence. The single most pivotal factor for the deterrence aspect of ASEAN security has been the presence of the United States. On both the multilateral and the bilateral level, this has been complemented by preventive diplomacy.

Overall, ASEAN's security structure is underpinned by a proclivity for balancing relations, but in its implementation ASEAN's approach centres on a mixture of psychological deterrence and engagement against uncertainty factors. Maintaining links with many countries decreases the risk of aggression as the aggressor may confront enormous diplomatic costs. However, this complex security structure is not simply a

²⁴³ For a detailed analysis, see Ganesan (1999).

variant of balance-of-power politics. It signifies a different conception of international politics altogether, as will become clear when security theory is discussed below.

ASEAN members have put strong emphasis on good relations with all major powers. In particular, ASEAN has expanded cooperation with China, culminating in the convening of the informal 9+3 and 9+1 summits in 1997 (10+3 and 10+1 after Cambodia's admission), despite the unresolved dispute in the South China Sea. Because of the dual approach of deterrence and cooperation, no neat distinction between balance-of-power approaches and institutionalization of security can be maintained in the Post Cold War period. The most striking observation with regard to this dual track approach to security is the division between diplomatic cooperation, which occurs in multilateral frameworks centred on ASEAN, and military cooperation, which is confined to the sphere of bilateral relationships, with the Five Power Defence Agreement as a mixed instrument for deterrence and confidence building.

The formal security arrangements have changed little since 1979/1980. If anything, the strength of formal external security links has increased in Southeast Asia, evident in the case of Singapore or, with regard to new members, Myanmar's links with China. Only in Vietnam's case has the end of the Cold War resulted in the decline of external links –and this was not of the country's own making. However, a focus on external alliances as the main conduit for security relations ignores a fundamental change in patterns of cooperation and conflict between ASEAN's formative years and the current state of affairs. By 1999 the alignment of ASEAN members does not follow a rigid distinction between allies and enemies, even though certain dyads, for example US-Thai relations have consistently displayed features of alliances.

7.3 ASEAN Alignment: Threat-Induced, Identity-Driven, or Function of Interests?

Notwithstanding the remaining problems mentioned above, patterns of cooperation and competition among ASEAN members have clearly been transformed since 1967, as evident in the common alignment posture of ASEAN members. However, less clear are the causes of their cooperation and alignment. Is alignment a function of external challenges and threats, and hence likely to be transient, or is it identity-driven and thus likely to betoken a profound qualitative change in social interactions? This needs to be

examined in detail.

The above outline of the evolution of ASEAN's security relations, particularly between 1992 and 1997, points to a major paradox for the study of alignment. The emerging Post Cold War security structure entails two coexisting but seemingly contradictory trends. Cooperation with all major regional actors takes place side by side with a deterrence posture that is discriminate in an inconspicuous way. While multilateral cooperation in diplomatic affairs has been advanced significantly, ASEAN members individually have adopted a balance-of-power centred approach to security (with Indonesia and Malaysia between 1988 and 1992 possible exceptions). ASEAN cooperation has clearly progressed and alignment has been close since 1979, but competitive arrangements are extant.

The regional security structure hence simultaneously displays cooperative and competitive elements, posing a conundrum for security theory. If alignment is understood as a positive relationship with somebody, and by implication, against somebody else, how then can states enter into cooperative arrangements with states implicated at the same time as opponents by other, competitive, structures? What insights do those developments allow with regard to alignment theories? The following section assesses to what extent balance-of-threat theory, identity accounts, and balance-of-interest theory can explain those contradictory trends in ASEAN security. Which theory and causal variables are most relevant for the case of ASEAN alignment between 1967 and 1999?

Explaining Alignment 1: ASEAN as a Threat-Driven Alliance?

What contribution can realist balance-of-threat theory make to explanations of ASEAN alignment 1967-1999? Given the continuous existence of competitive relationships in the region, one could expect balance-of-threat theory to have high explanatory power. Yet, this study does not find a clear correlation between alignment and the factors regarded as crucial by balance-of-threat theory, relative power and threat. However, the usefulness of balance-of-threat theory for explaining ASEAN alignment behaviour varies between different periods.

Firstly, at the time of ASEAN's formation in 1967 all ASEAN governments

shared to some degree the perception of a monolithic Communist threat. This shared outlook certainly facilitated ASEAN's establishment. However, ASEAN members did not react with a common alignment posture, as balance-of-threat theory would suggest. Instead, ASEAN members engaged in confidence building with one another but relied to varying degrees on external powers, the United States and Britain, for the provision of security. The choice of allies was certainly a reflection of far superior capabilities, but this would not have compromised the ability of ASEAN members to join Western powers collectively. This did not happen because of the legacy of recent conflict in the region and the need to build confidence first. The historical factor is ignored by realism. If a common threat was sufficient to evoke alignment, the anti-Communism dimension of the Cold War should have provided ample reason for ASEAN alignment. Its absence suggested that regional relations exerted their own dynamics and they were not necessarily subordinated to the global Communism/anti-Communism divide (Gordon, 1966).

For the first twelve years the five countries that founded ASEAN in 1967 did not display common alignment. A common alignment posture of ASEAN materialized for the first time in 1979 after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. In the context of the predictions of balance-of-threat theory that was surprising, because at this juncture ASEAN governments actually diverged in their threat perceptions. Indonesia and Malaysia went along with Thailand's stance despite their fear of China. Other than Thailand, ASEAN members reacted to perceived aggression towards their principles of regional order rather than direct threats to their territories as such. Their calculations included leadership aspirations (Indonesia), functional motives (Singapore), as well as considerations of regional belonging (Philippines). However, strategic beliefs mattered for Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, as their leaders espoused variations of the domino-doctrine, resulting in balancing with Thailand.

This study does not argue that during the Cold War ASEAN security behaviour was not influenced by the international system and the distribution of capabilities therein, nor does it deny that those factors strongly influenced threat perceptions. ASEAN did not escape the global antagonism between the two superpowers at the time, the United States and the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, this study asserts that balance-of-threat theory

cannot fully explain the alignment of ASEAN members during this period.

Relative power is a poor indicator of behaviour. ASEAN did not align when the regional power balance changed measurably, namely after the conclusion of the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance in November 1978. ASEAN members only aligned after this power was used aggressively. With regard to threat as a cause of alignment, balance-of-threat theory has explanatory power as to the broad trends during the Cold War era, but the subtleties of behaviour of ASEAN elude the theory, particularly the complex mixture of motives behind alignment. It has to be combined with complementary theories that can, for example, explain the relationship between Malaysian and Thai security (structural balance theory) or illuminate why Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia was perceived as a challenge to ASEAN's corporate identity, defined in terms of regional norms.

An evaluation of balance-of-threat theory for the Post Cold War era is even less convincing. However, it is highly instructive as it reveals general weaknesses of the realist approach to international relations in the Asia-Pacific. An analysis of problem representations for the two Post Cold War periods casts doubt on threat-based explanations. The link between threat perceptions and alignment patterns is weak. This conclusion may be surprising given that the broad trends of ASEAN behaviour in the Post Cold War era would support claims that ASEAN has followed realist prescriptions.

In seeming support of realist hypotheses, ASEAN's common alignment posture evaporated together with the Vietnamese threat, exposing substantial disagreement about the desirable regional order. However, after Chinese assertiveness gave rise to threat perceptions centring on China from 1992 onwards, ASEAN responded again with diplomatic alignment. One Vietnamese diplomat was quoted as stating, "...the fear of China is a new glue in Asia."²⁴⁴ Those statements were mirrored by the attitude in the Philippines,²⁴⁵ and even in Singapore, Chinese assertiveness caused great concern (Whiting, 1997). Furthermore, Indonesia responded to the uncertainty surrounding Chinese behaviour with a shift in security policies when it entered a security agreement with Australia in 1995 after it had previously eschewed any formal arrangements.

²⁴⁴ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 9, 1995: 22.

²⁴⁵ Jose Almonte, security adviser to the Philippine President opined that how China will use its growing influence would be pivotal for all Southeast Asians "who have historically been the object of its southern expansion," quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 9, 1995: 22.

In the light of recurring diplomatic crises surrounding the Spratlys and ASEAN's concerted diplomatic stand on several occasions since 1992, it has been tempting to paint a picture of a monolithic ASEAN-China antagonism. This has to be put into perspective. From this study it becomes clear that the realist explanation of alignment behaviour distorts the reality of Southeast Asian security relations. Plausible as it may sound, the realist account confuses issue-specific alignment with a general orientation and by doing so confounds specific diplomatic events with a general trend.

Two factors are noteworthy. Firstly, while the Spratlys dispute is a security issue of serious concern for the region, it only forms one segment of a highly complex relationship and has by no means been the most salient one. ASEAN's joint stand against China has been specific to particular incidents. Most importantly with regard to realist theory, it has been determined by regional agreement on norms of conduct, not by shared threat perceptions or changes in power capabilities.

The realist emphasis on relative power is misleading. ASEAN alignment against China in 1995 and early 1997 followed Chinese actions, but it was not precipitated by changes in relative power capabilities and, overall, ASEAN behaviour did not correspond to perceptions of threat. In contrast, when relative power changed in the course of the 1997-1998 economic crisis that substantially weakened ASEAN towards China, there was no change in the patterns of interaction with China.

In the Post Cold War era ASEAN as a whole has reacted to specific diplomatic incidents rather than a consistent image of enemies. Balance-of-threat theory can only explain a very limited number of cases, mostly responses to the Mischief Reef incident in 1995. Most importantly, the theory fails to account for the complex pattern of cooperation and conflict that emerged between 1993 and 1997, manifest in multiple organizations for cooperation. In terms of threat perceptions, China, the most plausible threat, did not evoke a consistent ASEAN alignment posture. Firstly, from the empirical study above, it is clear that threat perceptions differed among ASEAN members. More to the point, there has been no case for clear-cut threat perception. Even the Philippines and Vietnam, arguably the two countries most at risk to suffer from Chinese aggression, have still found considerable common ground with China to cooperate on many issues.

While the China component of Philippine foreign policy is ambiguous, it is not

antagonistic. Bilateral meetings have proceeded in an amenable atmosphere and mutual efforts of confidence building were underlined by the increasing density of visits and discussions, as evident in the first naval tour of Southeast Asia by Chinese ships with a visit to the Philippines (as well as to Malaysia and Thailand).²⁴⁶ However, most instructive for an assessment of the link between threat and alignment was the behaviour of Singapore and Thailand. They aligned with ASEAN partners in 1992, 1995, and 1997, even though they did not hold shared threat perceptions. Instead, their alignment was guided by identification with regional norms of conduct.

The single-minded focus on threats inherent in balance-of-threat theory cannot accommodate the complex patterns of cooperation and conflict. Overall relations in the Post Cold War period have been characterized by mutual benefits. The nature of the 10+3 informal summits as an economic-political forum points to specific features of cooperation in the Post Cold War era that represent a departure from previous, largely bilateral and US centred, undertakings. Firstly, the 10+3 meetings transcend the boundary between economic and security issues. Secondly, the overall security structure cannot be adequately described anymore in dichotomous terms of threat versus opportunity and enemies versus allies.

Even at the time of the Mischief Reef incident ASEAN officials maintained that they would be able to create a constructive relationship with China. Notwithstanding divergent views, senior ASEAN officials approached the Spratlys issue with a more optimistic outlook than many observers outside the region, as evident during a meeting with their European counterparts.²⁴⁷ All parties to the South China Sea dispute seemed ultimately determined to put stability and prosperity of the region first, rendering the Spratlys issue an irritant, a cumbersome one to be sure, rather than a crisis-flashpoint. As a consequence, ASEAN has not aligned against China, but against specific Chinese actions. The association has acted in concert against China when China violated the norms of regional conduct of the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation, but this does not justify a description of China as the 'new glue' for ASEAN. This kind of alignment is qualitatively very different from one that would have focused on a particular enemy in all

²⁴⁶ *Asian Defence Journal*, 5/97: 75.

²⁴⁷ The leader of the Singaporean delegation, Ong Keng Yong, quoted in *Bangkok Post*, May 4, 1995: 9.

interactions, for example 'Communism' in the early Cold War era.

A strong element of uncertainty about China's future behaviour clearly persists, which has contributed to a significant degree to the particular mix of diplomatic instruments that is characteristic of ASEAN's security relations. On the one hand, multilateral institutions and meetings are used to foster cooperation and confidence building with China, conveying that ASEAN does not approach its relations with China in antagonistic terms. On the other hand, ASEAN members are entangled in a network of bilateral and multilateral links promoting military exchanges that collectively serve as a psychological deterrent. China is not the only target of those psychological balancing instruments, as they are directed against any potential aggressor, but the uncertainty emanating from China's behaviour has had a catalysing effect on those arrangements.

This analysis indicated the importance of problem representations for accurate causal attributions of alignment behaviour. In sum, ASEAN security behaviour has not responded to the factors privileged by balance-of-threat theory, although threat perceptions can explain particular instances of alignment by individual ASEAN members (for example Thailand's response to Vietnam's invasion in 1979, the attempts of the Philippines to rally ASEAN behind its position in 1992 and 1995, as well as Indonesia's security agreement with Australia). At important junctures, 1978 and 1997, ASEAN did not react to changes in relative power. However, it did react to signs of aggressive behaviour in 1979 and the Post Cold War era.

Balance-of-threat theory has performed best for situations characterized by immediate crisis, like Vietnam's invasion in 1979 and Chinese assertiveness against Spratlys claimants in 1995 and 1997. From a broader perspective, balance-of-threat theory fails to satisfactorily explain the mixture of cooperative and competitive elements of the Post Cold War security structure. ASEAN diplomacy in response to above ambiguities has emphasized process not substance in contradiction to realist precepts. Assessed against those goals, ASEAN diplomacy, quiet and in Asian style as it might have been, yielded a notable success in 1995 when China readjusted its approach toward the Spratlys issue and equally in 1997 when China pulled back from a confrontation with the association. The contradictions between ASEAN's 1997 diplomatic alignment in support of Vietnam and the complementary broad-based dialogue with China highlight

the problems of realist accounts in dealing with a multi-layered security structure.

Explaining Alignment 2: ASEAN as a Community?

The importance of problem representations for accurate attributions of security behaviour to causal variables is even more evident for an evaluation of identity-based accounts of alignment behaviour. If the trajectory of a regional identity is analysed by measuring ASEAN diplomacy against the three community indicators employed in this study, there is indeed evidence for the evolution of a regional community. However, as will become clear, some important reservations apply to this generalization. In particular, while the findings of this study lend some credence to the idea of community, this cannot be equated with claims that ASEAN behaviour has been guided by a collective identity.

Throughout the first period of its existence, 1967-1975, there was little evidence that an ASEAN identity exerted any measurable influence on its members' foreign policies. The regional climate was not conducive to extensive cooperation, as ASEAN members, in reflection of recent tensions, concentrated on confidence building. The ZOPFAN declaration of 1971 proclaimed an aspiration for regional autonomy. It brought into being ASEAN as an international actor but it did not influence operational policies. During this period, none of the three community indicators was in evidence and there was even a distinct lack of foreign policy coordination until after the Communist victories in Indochina. However, interestingly there were incipient traces of an emerging but diffuse Asian consciousness, expressed in ideas around 1970 to bring Asian states together in some collective arrangements. Again those ideas had no influence on security policy.

From 1975 onwards ASEAN members showed a greater inclination to coordinate foreign policy. This applied in particular to Singapore and Thailand but it was extended to the whole of ASEAN when Vietnam's diplomatic offensive in 1978 tried to swing regional policies in the latter's favour. However, the limited coordination of foreign policies did not reflect an emerging identity, as the practice of consultation was not established and mutual identifications were absent. Up to 1978, ASEAN's main purpose had been confidence building and regional reconciliation. On that account ASEAN was successful and the conclusion of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 1976 codified those regional norms of conduct that have guided ASEAN from its beginnings: respect

for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-use of force, non-interference in internal affairs, and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Those norms could indeed be seen as the nucleus of ASEAN's corporate identity. In that context, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978-79, which violated the very norms ASEAN had advanced in 1976, marked a seminal event for ASEAN diplomacy. Over the next decade, ASEAN managed to forge and, by and large, maintain a common alignment posture, despite divergent threat perceptions among its members. However, was ASEAN's cohesion a reflection of a collective identity?

Measured against the three community indicators, the evidence is not convincing. Between 1979 and 1988 norm compliance varied from high in times of crisis²⁴⁸ to low at other times when Indonesia and Malaysia pursued initiatives unilaterally. Secondly, even though shared meanings converged to a considerable degree on balance-of-power precepts, an aversion to Communism, and the regional code of conduct, only the last could reasonably be considered an element of a regional collective identity. In contrast, the much-trumpeted principle of regional autonomy became completely subordinated to the needs of an operational policy that used external allies to balance against Vietnam. Furthermore, the existing shared meanings were intertwined if not subordinated to the functional needs of ASEAN partners. Most importantly, there was no evidence of identifications with ASEAN partners, Indonesia being the notable exception.

Overall, between 1979 and 1988 ASEAN managed to galvanize its members, because their interests were complimentary and all ASEAN members identified with the norms of regional order enshrined in TAC, not because they identified with an imaginary regional community. Nevertheless, ASEAN's external cohesion during the Cambodia conflict was promising in the context of claims that external challenges can provide the seedbed for the development of a regional identity. After the end of Cold War conflict the question then became whether ASEAN would be able to transform foreign policy cohesion under the condition of external challenges into identity building.

The Post Cold War Era: An Evolving Community?

At first glance, the high degree of external cohesion, in particular vis-à-vis China in the

²⁴⁸ With the notable exception of Thailand's secret conclusion of an alliance with China in January 1979.

South China Sea could be taken as evidence of a strong sense of regional community, as claimed by one observer (Busse, 1999). However, if ASEAN diplomacy in the Post Cold War period is appraised systematically according to norm compliance, shared meaning structures, and mutual identifications, a more complex picture emerges. Table 4 below summarizes the review of ASEAN diplomacy in the Post Cold War era, conducted in the preceding chapters 5 and 6 and provides a systematic analysis of the incidence of the three indicators of community in ASEAN's diplomacy.

Table 4: ASEAN's Diplomacy and Community Indicators in the Post Cold War Era.

Time Period	Event Description		Shared Meanings	Norm Compliance	Mutual Identification
1989 - Jan. 1992	5.1	New Indochina Policy	Yes	No	No
	5.2	Singapore Offer to US	No	No	No
	5.3	Tiananmen Incident	Yes	N/a	N/a
	5.4	SCSW Initiative	No	Yes	No
	5.5	EAEC Proposal	No	No	No
	5.6	Security Debate	No	Yes	No
Feb. 1992 - 1997	6.1	China's Law on SCS	Yes	Yes	No
	6.2	Creation of the ARF	Yes	Yes	No
	6.3	Mischief Reef Incident	Yes	Yes	No
	6.4	Vietnam Admission	No	Yes	No
	6.5	Indon.-Aust. Agreement	Yes	No	No
	6.6	SEANWFZ Treaty	Yes	Yes	Yes
	6.7	The Oil Rig Dispute	Yes	Yes	Yes
	6.8	Informal 9+3 Summit	Yes	Yes	No
	6.9	Admission Myanmar	Yes	Yes	Yes
	1988 – 1992 Period		2 (6)	2 (5)	0 (5)
	1992 – 1997 Period		8 (9)	8 (9)	3 (9)
	Overall		10 (15)	10 (14)	3 (14)

N/a: not applicable

Overall, if measured against the three indicators of community, ASEAN diplomacy in the Post Cold War era provides some support for the idea of a diplomatic community. While all ASEAN members identified their security with that of ASEAN partners in only 21% of cases, in the majority of cases (67%) there was evidence of the existence of shared meaning structures, that is shared perspectives on Southeast Asia's security problems, objectives, and appropriate strategies. Furthermore, norm compliance with the 'ASEAN way' has been modestly high (71%). However, subjected to closer scrutiny, ASEAN's norm compliance and the degree to which ASEAN leaders have shared perspectives on security issues have differed considerably between two distinct periods. In the transitional period from the Cold War to the Post Cold War era (1988-1992) an assessment of all three indicators put into doubt that ASEAN constituted a diplomatic community. Instances of norm compliance (40%) and those when ASEAN leaders shared the same interpretations of problems (33%) were significantly less frequent in the 1988 – 1992 period and events when all members identified with their ASEAN partners were absent. ASEAN's record during this period lends some support to the realist proposition that ASEAN unity had previously been a function of an external threat from Vietnam. In contrast, after the Singapore Summit, ASEAN's security discourse was informed by a considerably higher degree of cohesion in shared meaning structures. ASEAN's record of norm compliance also improved; however, evidence of mutual identifications among ASEAN members with regard to security was still limited. What conclusions can be drawn from those findings, particularly the differing strength of the three community indicators, for the validity of identity accounts of ASEAN behaviour in the Post Cold War era?

Shared Meaning Structures

The prevalence of norm compliance and shared interpretations has increased considerably in the 1992-1997 period, lending support to the idea that ASEAN is evolving into a community. However, the proposition of a diplomatic community becomes more problematic when the notion of shared meaning structures is vetted more closely. Such an evaluation reveals that shared meaning structures among ASEAN members have been based on a narrow foundation of regional norms of conduct and agreement on the benefits

of balancing precepts in security affairs.

Three perspectives have to varying degrees informed the problem representations and, consequently, security dialogue of ASEAN leaders since 1967. It is instructive to trace how their significance has changed from the Cold War to the Post Cold War era. One perspective has focused on the principle of regional autonomy, as expressed in the 1971 ZOPFAN declaration or, more recently, in SEANWFZ. However, this approach to security has had to contend with a second perspective that approached security problems from a broadly defined balancing-of-power standpoint that regarded a great power presence as beneficial for Southeast Asia. The latter point of view gained considerably more currency among ASEAN leaders after Chinese assertiveness in 1992, causing a measurably higher convergence of meaning structures among ASEAN members.

However, although this dualism has informed a large number of policy debates, it is a third discourse that has provided most continuity to the security reasoning of ASEAN leaders. This third perspective has assessed situations against the behavioural norms of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), for example peaceful resolution of conflicts and non-interference. The TAC norms have consistently determined ASEAN's problem representations of diplomatic events. They have constituted a 'shared meaning structure' for ASEAN leaders throughout the Post Cold War period and previously also informed ASEAN's response to the Cambodia conflict (Khong, 1997b: 333; Busse, 1999: 49-50).

The norms of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty informed ASEAN's policies towards China's crackdown on Tiananmen Square in 1989 and tilted the balance in favour of Myanmar's admission in 1997. The clearest examples for the relevance of the norm on peaceful resolution of conflicts are ASEAN's responses to Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea in 1995 and 1997 and, to a lesser extent, 1992, as well as previously Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in the Cold War era. In all these cases ASEAN members agreed on how to interpret events: as violations of the regional code of conduct. In such cases ASEAN has reacted with diplomatic alignment against the transgressor of norms, even if some members generally assessed that particular state in non-antagonistic terms, as Singapore and Thailand have in China's case.

The TAC norms of regional conduct have represented, until recently, the only

uncontested perspective and can, arguably, be seen as the defining principle of ASEAN diplomacy in pursuit of regional stability. In contrast to the TAC norms, ZOPFAN has never been uncontested in its role as a standard of behaviour. The principle of regional autonomy enshrined in ZOPFAN was already contested between 1988 and 1992. While some members, notably Indonesia and at times Malaysia, have conducted the security discourse in reference to the ZOPFAN declaration, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand have repeatedly contested its status as a guiding principle for security decisions.

However, a further shift away from ZOPFAN has taken place in the aftermath of the Singapore Summit and signs of Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea in February 1992, when Indonesia and Malaysia increasingly adopted the balance-of-power approach of their three ASEAN partners. This was apparent in the compromise that established the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Indonesian and Malaysian officials dropped their reservations against the incorporation of external great powers.

In particular after the Mischief Reef incident in 1995, the differences in meaning structures among ASEAN leaders narrowed considerably, and by the end of 1995 a new equilibrium had been achieved that tilted noticeably towards the balance-of-power approach. It was most evident in Indonesia's shift from ZOPFAN ideals, which Indonesia as an aspiring leader of the region had most ardently advocated, to balance-of-power politics, as evident in the security agreement with Australia. The change in the reaction of ASEAN partners to Singapore's offer to the United States in 1989 and the Australian-Indonesian agreement in 1995 is telling. Both initiatives had in common norm violations and the emphasis on external provision of security. Yet, the Indonesian policy in 1995 reflected ASEAN consensus while Singapore's in 1989 had been controversial, betokening the convergence of meaning structures that translated into operational policies.

However, ASEAN's membership expansion and developments since 1997 have reduced the areas of shared meanings. Strategic consensus within ASEAN has weakened, evident in divergent policies towards Western security partners. Non-interference has become contested, even though at this stage it still has to be regarded as a core tenet of ASEAN. The implications of this trend will be explored below when the prospects for community are discussed.

Lack of Mutual Identifications

The emergence of shared problem representations is clearly a positive sign for proponents of the idea of regional community. However, this criterion describes only one aspect of community. As can be extrapolated from Table 4, the higher convergence of problem representations since 1992 has not led to a commensurate focus on the security of ASEAN partners. In other words, while ASEAN leaders have adopted similar approaches to the provision of security – based on balance of power precepts – and have agreed on the shared goal of regional stability as epitomized by the TAC norms, this has not resulted in mutual identifications among them. In terms of close military relations it is evident that ASEAN members see relations with outsiders as more relevant to their security than relations with ASEAN partners, the so-called ‘spider web’ that largely entails the conduct of low-key exercises. At the bottom line, security is guaranteed through outside alliances not collective security with ASEAN partners.

To make this point clear, an association with outside powers does not *a priori* contradict the concept of collective identity, because it would be conceivable for ASEAN to collectively join forces with outsiders. An alliance with the United States is perfectly rational in the context of power capabilities. However, in ASEAN’s case it is clear that intra-ASEAN security relations are subordinate to those with outside powers. Reflecting the dominance of a balance-of-power discourse throughout the Post Cold War period, ASEAN has rarely constituted the prime reference point for security in the reasoning of members. Despite a plethora of new security links, multilateral co-operation in military affairs is shunned by ASEAN and bilateral intra-ASEAN links within the so-called ‘spider web’ are very unevenly developed with confidence building the predominant function.

There are two reasons for the predominance of external military links. Firstly, this preference is explicable in the context of the aforementioned lingering tensions within ASEAN. The deterrence posture of several ASEAN members is directed partially (if not predominantly) against potential threats from ASEAN neighbours. ASEAN is not useful as a military deterrent against threats from regional neighbours, although its diplomatic utility is extremely high. In addition, a military link between ASEAN as a collective and any external power is rendered impossible by the absence of strategic

consensus.

In marked contrast to the lack of intra-ASEAN military cooperation, individual ASEAN members maintain close military relations with different outside powers. Alliances with the United States are by far the most important. The Five Power Defence Agreement still extends cooperation with Australia, Britain, and New Zealand to Malaysia and Singapore. Following the cancellation of the security agreement with Australia in the wake of the East Timor crisis, Indonesia is not aligned with external powers, but President Wahid has re-emphasized Indonesia's desire for balanced relations between all great regional powers, including India.²⁴⁹

This organization of security relations not only represents the *de facto* rejection of ZOPFAN as a guiding principle, but it also has consequences for the concept of community. Effectively, it negates the idea that relations among ASEAN partners are privileged vis-à-vis those with external parties, one crucial element of community. The adoption of balance-of-power approaches does not encourage the development of a shared identity, firstly because of its assumptions of competition, secondly, because the definition of problems and objectives in terms of balancing relations implies the need for a great power presence in Southeast Asia, as ASEAN is neither able nor willing to create a balance by itself.

With regard to the community concept and an evaluation of identity explanations, the combination of shared perspectives and lack of mutual identifications represents a paradox: While ASEAN members by and large had come to share similar approaches to the problem of security by early 1996, those shared perspectives on 'soft' balance-of-power politics did not envisage ASEAN as its reference group. The narrow basis of shared meaning structures and the lack of identifications imply a particular type of ASEAN community, which is not based on a shared identity. The question of how the lack of evidence of a shared identity can be reconciled with an impressive degree of diplomatic cohesion among ASEAN members will be discussed when the development of an ASEAN community is assessed below.

²⁴⁹ President Wahid in an interview with the *Bangkok Post*, February 15, 2000. See http://www.Bangkokpost.net/150200/150200_News21.html, accessed April 2000.

Explaining Alignment 3: Balance-of-Interest Theory and the Status Quo

What elements have provided the foundation for ASEAN's high degree of external cohesion since 1979? Above elaborations have concluded that neither shared threats nor a shared identity can convincingly explain ASEAN alignment. In comparison, how well do the concepts of balance-of-interest theory explain ASEAN security behaviour since 1967?

Balance-of-interest theory posits that alignment is a function of the status quo or revisionist orientation of states with regard to the prevailing international order. However, with regard to the ASEAN collective, how can interests explain alignment and, above all, how were interests defined by ASEAN leaders? Again, the concept of problem representations is indispensable to determine whether status quo / revisionist interests converged to justify a characterization of the ASEAN collective as interest driven.

Based on the narrative of ASEAN diplomacy from 1967 to 1999, this study suggests that in terms of balance-of-interest theory ASEAN diplomacy has been consistently underpinned by a strong status quo orientation, which transcended the Communism/anti-Communism dimension prevalent during the Cold War days. Although the focus of security policies has shifted considerably over the past 32 years, on a fundamental level the pattern of ASEAN alignment has therefore been informed by continuity since 1967. Evidence for this claim can be found if shared meaning structures among ASEAN members are analyzed in terms of their preferences for the prevailing international order.

The analysis of shared meaning structures above has revealed important continuities in the problem representations of ASEAN leaders across time periods. As has been pointed out, shared problem representations were in existence throughout the time of the Cambodia Conflict and for most of the Post Cold War period. They have converged in two areas. Firstly, since 1978-79 the code of regional conduct enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation has been a rallying point for ASEAN members. When outsiders challenged regional norms, common ASEAN alignment resulted. Secondly, problem representations among ASEAN leaders have converged on balance-of-power precepts with the possible exception of Indonesia and Malaysia between 1989 and 1992.

This knowledge is highly relevant for an assessment of balance-of-interest theory. As has been pointed out, balance-of-power thinking cannot be equated with threat-driven behaviour. However, if the agreement on balance-of power precepts and on the defence of regional norms of conduct is interpreted with regard to what preferences for international order it implies, important insights into the underlying foundation of ASEAN diplomacy is revealed. On the surface, the maintenance of a regional balance-of-power and the enforcement of regional norms for state behaviour are mere means and ways for interaction. However, if the two areas of agreement among ASEAN leaders are interpreted on a more abstract level, it can be said that they have centred on one particular goal: the preservation of a balance-of-presence among the great powers and the observance of norms of regional conduct have combined to strengthen the status quo in the region.

This insight supports the basic idea of balance-of-interest theory, which explains alignment in terms of status quo or revisionist interests. Instead of Communism or a Chinese threat, the defining element for ASEAN alignment has been regional stability and the status quo. This general systemic orientation has become manifest in the alignment and security cooperation of ASEAN members, both directed at forestalling any challenge to the status quo in the region. During the Cambodia Conflict and the years 1992-1997, the status quo was predominantly defined in reference to the territorial status quo among sovereign nation states (effectively, internal and external challenges were not clearly distinguishable during the Cold War); during some recent events it has been conceptualised in terms of non-interference.

The preservation of the regional status quo has been the common denominator of ASEAN security behaviour during both the Cold War and the Post Cold War era. It thus has provided continuity to ASEAN's diplomacy despite the profound changes international relations have undergone in the region since 1967. Most importantly, it has transcended the ideological dimension. This study does not deny that throughout the Cold War the most important dimension of international politics for ASEAN members was a Communism / anti-Communism orientation. Leaders in all five original ASEAN members had in common an aversion to Communism, even though their preferences for alignment varied according to threat perceptions. However, as has become clear,

ASEAN has at times aligned with Communist states (with China between 1979 and 1988, and effectively with Vietnam after its admission to ASEAN in 1995).

If ASEAN behaviour in the two periods of the Cold War era is interpreted in conjunction with that in the Post Cold War years, a different rationale is revealed. The crucial point is that ASEAN did not align against Communism per se but against what was perceived as its aggressive expansionist variant. The fact that Communist takeovers in Indochina in 1975 were not opposed more vigorously by ASEAN may also be explained by the perception that those were domestic developments that did not, on a fundamental level, put into question the prevailing regional order. This changed when Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978-1979 ignored regional norms of conduct. Subsequently, Vietnam was perceived as a threat to regional order and ASEAN aligned with another Communist state, China, in opposition to Vietnam.

Whenever Communist countries indicated that they were willing to accept the rules of regional conduct that ruled out interference with the regimes of ASEAN members, ASEAN members were forthcoming with their cooperation. After the link with the Soviet Union, perceived as expansionist, was broken, ASEAN admitted Vietnam in 1995 and Laos in 1997 despite their Communist regimes and there is little indication that the differences are seen as a problematic issue. In a similar vein, ASEAN members have engaged China in a whole network of informal and formal cooperative settings, notwithstanding the continuing rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Irrespective of the Spratly Islands dispute, cooperation between ASEAN and China has progressed well in the Post Cold War era after China indicated in 1989 and 1990 that it was willing to accept ASEAN members as equals and dropped aspirations to meddle in their internal affairs through the conduit of local Communist parties.

Overall, balance-of-interest theory (Schweller, 1994 and 1998) provides the most compelling account of ASEAN security behaviour between 1967 and 1999. Generally, the status quo dimension can predict alignment, however two caveats are apt. Firstly, this endorsement of balance-of-interest theory does not mean that balance-of-threat theory and identity-based explanations are invalid. Instead, they are simply not equally relevant to the case of ASEAN alignment. Furthermore, on many occasions the behavioural impact of threat and interest or interest and identity became indistinguishable.

Secondly, while balance-of-interest theory has proven to be extremely useful for the case at hand, it has to be pointed out that the theory by itself cannot answer one important question: how is the status quo defined? In order to gain insights into the basis of status quo thinking, the problem representations of decision-makers are indispensable. What exactly has been the basis of status quo reasoning in the region and how has this affected alignment?

7.4 ASEAN Alignment: Lessons for Regional Politics and Security Theory

Status Quo Bias and External Alignment

In recent years, challenges to the status quo in the region have come from two different sources and have confronted ASEAN on two different dimensions. Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea has put into question the territorial status quo. However, ASEAN's concept of regional order has not just been challenged by China, but more recently also by the United States. The challenge from the latter is two-pronged. Firstly, the United States has neither accepted the principles for interaction that undergird ASEAN's approach to regional relations (Cheeseman, 1999: 348-49) nor has it accepted ASEAN's proprietary role in the ASEAN Regional Forum (Haacke, 1998: 30-37). Secondly, and, more significantly, the United States is challenging the rules and norms that are integral to ASEAN's corporate identity and is hence not just questioning cultural norms to conflict resolution but posing a threat to the regional status quo. The United States has tried to elevate human rights issues to the status of principles of international law which if violated justify intervention in internal affairs. This can be seen in the context of the US goals in Asia, which have at their core "the pursuit of liberal political and economic regimes better suited to its globalized liberal world order" (Catley, 1999: 169). The policies in pursuit of those goals are seen by some ASEAN members as a clear breach of the principles of non-interference and state sovereignty.

The two issues of territorial sovereignty and non-interference can be linked to the classical notion of two sets of goals in international politics. Those goals can be divided according to possession goals, tangible goods that are exclusively possessed by one actor, and milieu goals, the rules and principles that define interaction (Wolfers, 1962: 73-74). Interestingly, on both dimensions ASEAN members have been status quo actors. For

both spheres, ASEAN members have defined their goals as the preservation of territorial integrity (possession goals) and the maintenance of principles of state sovereignty, including non-interference (milieu goals) in reference to the principles of the Westphalian state system. State practice among ASEAN members has exhibited a strong norm compliance with those behavioural norms that confirm the tenets of the Westphalian system - respect of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force, and peaceful resolution of conflicts - indicating that ASEAN members have had no interest in adventurism or changes in fundamental rules of international law.

Status Quo Orientation and Southeast Asian Politics

This study has focused on foreign policy rather than the domestic arena. However, in connection with the above discussion of status quo preservation as the main driving force of ASEAN behaviour, it should be noted that the status quo orientation has had both an internal and external orientation. Disguised by the notion of comprehensive security, ASEAN members have since 1967 fused state security with regime security. The inclination towards the status quo is explicable in terms of the interests of individual leaders and ruling elites in internal and external stability, as both buttress their political and economic control.

On the level of individual leaders, the continuity in leadership in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore is striking. In Indonesia, President Suharto ruled from 1965/66 until 1998, in the Philippines, President Marcos was at the helm from 1965 until 1986, in Singapore Lee Kuan Yew was Prime Minister from independence (and PAP leader since 1959) until 1990 and has since remained powerful as 'Senior Minister'. Likewise, in Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir has been in power for almost twenty years, since 1981. Out of the old ASEAN members, only Thailand has had frequent changes in leadership.

This continuity is important in the context of this study's claims that ASEAN has aligned towards the defence of the regional status quo. ASEAN cooperation has been elite-driven and important decisions within the organization have been made by the small circle of ASEAN leaders. Undoubtedly, regional cooperation has benefited from the personal trust built among leaders, as the personal rapport allowed ASEAN's informal

approach to cooperation to flourish. On the other hand, given the importance of the non-interference principle for regional conduct, ASEAN cooperation has helped to perpetuate the rule of individual leaders, by shoring up their legitimacy externally and internally. ASEAN has not prevented changes in individual countries, but non-interference implied that the process of change was left to domestic processes. This amounted to a status quo bias, as the domestic power game has regularly been stacked against challengers and ASEAN leaders could reinforce their legitimacy by appearing in the circle of regional leaders. Above all, the stability that resulted from ASEAN's status quo preservation internationally has been one reason for growing prosperity in the region, which in turn has increased regime legitimacy.

The link between status quo bias, economic prosperity, and leadership legitimacy becomes apparent if the effects of the recent economic crisis on ASEAN cooperation are analysed. Tensions within ASEAN in 1998 are explicable in the context of several interlinked challenges to ASEAN leaders. Firstly, the economic crisis was damaging to ASEAN leaders, because it put into question the notion of "performance legitimacy" (Acharya, 1999a: 20) and contributed significantly to Suharto's demise. Secondly, leadership changes in Indonesia and the Philippines resulted in the temporary breakdown of the old personal chemistry among leaders. When personal links between Indonesia's new President Habibie, Philippine President Estrada, and Mahathir's challenger Anwar negated the previous practice of ASEAN leaders to support the incumbent regime, the principle of non-interference and ASEAN's implicit status quo bias were put into question.

However, while ASEAN's cooperation would not have been the same without the personal chemistry among its leaders, it also cannot be understood without reference to the interests of ruling elites within the region. After all, leadership changes, of which there were many in Thailand, and a radical one each in the Philippines in 1986 and in Indonesia in 1999, have not resulted in the breakdown of ASEAN cooperation. ASEAN cooperation and its status quo bias have to be put in context with dominant economic and political interests.

The ruling elites in ASEAN countries have benefited immensely from the prevailing international order. They have been able to use the global dominance of

market economies to increase immeasurably their own prosperity. This is not to say that only elites have benefited. Across ASEAN, prosperity has increased for whole societies. Neither does this study suggest that ruling elites in Southeast Asia are unique in their desire to extract benefits from the existing systems of government (even though the corruption and nepotism of the Suharto regime in Indonesia would be hard to match). However, it is clear that the ruling elites in all ASEAN countries have had a particularly strong interest in preserving the regional order that prevailed since 1967.

The notion of comprehensive security and a dual conception of the status quo is particularly pertinent to Southeast Asia, because some security threats ASEAN members perceived during the last 32 years have not been directed against the nation state but against the prevailing political-economic order therein. In some cases, as with Vietnamese-Soviet expansionism during the Cambodia Conflict, threats to state, principles of international order, and domestic regimes became inseparable.

During ASEAN's formative years, the main challenge originated from Communist subversion and was primarily internal. Then, for two decades the focus shifted towards external challenges. During the Cambodia Conflict, Vietnam was perceived as the embodiment of expansionist Communism and internal and external threats merged. In the Post Cold War period, China posed a purely external challenge in the South China Sea. However, recently ASEAN may have reached full circle, when the security focus shifted back to internal challenges and consequently the principle of non-interference that shields authoritarian regimes in the region. State security conceptualized in terms of non-interference has become equivalent with regime security.

The benefits that ruling elites in Southeast Asia have derived from the prevailing order in Southeast Asia provide a partial explanation for their cooperation within ASEAN. The regional order after 1967 left domestic politics under the auspices of the respective states. This order secured political and economic control of ruling elites domestically while regional stability increased overall prosperity within the framework of a free market system. As elites shared a vested interest in stability, they had a strong motive to cooperate in the framework of ASEAN, because the organization has constituted a vehicle to promote the very regional order that benefited regional elites. In that sense the norms that promote the current regional order, the norms of the Treaty of

Amity and Cooperation have become the focal point of common interest while at the same time defining the regional identity.

Because of the link between regime security and regional cooperation, Southeast Asian regionalism has accurately been described as 'statist', being purported to strengthen state power not reduce it (Jayasuriya, 1994: 419). This description takes into account the dependency and elite-centredness of ASEAN. Contrary claims that ASEAN has been transformed from a 'gesellschaft' (an association, based on rational considerations) to a 'gemeinschaft' (a community, based on a shared identity and emotional ties) by NGO and second-track activities (Wanandi, 1995: 56) are misleading, given the balance of power between government and non-state actors in all Southeast Asian societies, even though the situation may be changing in Thailand and the Philippines.

Yet, as has been pointed out, recently the consensus on the desirable regional order has been put into question. Disagreement has emerged about non-interference and the topic is at the centre of discussions about the basis of ASEAN's corporate identity. This debate has important ramifications for the definition of security. As suggested above, at most times since 1967, regime security and state security have merged for ASEAN elites. The debate about the timing of Myanmar's membership in late 1996 and early 1997 for the first time hinted at a disjuncture between the two. The emergence of two camps within ASEAN on the issue of human rights and non-interference gives rise to the question of whether status quo conceptions still converge to the same extent as they did between 1967 and about 1996.

On one side, the Philippines, Thailand, and at times Singapore, have maintained that minimal standards of governance should apply for ASEAN membership. They have been willing to partially compromise the tenet of non-interference, a cornerstone of regime security. On the other hand, Malaysia and ASEAN's new members have steadfastly insisted on retaining non-interference as a guiding principle for ASEAN. Under Suharto Indonesia was also part of the latter camp. Under President Wahid, conflicting impulses have uneasily co-existed with calls for the protection of human rights and the simultaneous objection to interference in Indonesia's affairs – the two may not be in general opposition, but they are in Indonesia's case given its recent record,

particularly in East Timor.

However, the fronts within ASEAN on non-interference are complicated by crosscutting strategic and economic interests. While some ASEAN members object to US policies because they see them as interference, the United States has been the most important trading partner and primary guarantor of security for several ASEAN members. Most importantly, those ASEAN members that are willing to relax the non-interference principle are most comfortable in general with the liberal order the United States is aspiring to promote globally. In contrast, other ASEAN members do not share the zeal of the United States for unfettered free-market capitalism, as evident in Malaysia's response to the economic crisis and bearing in mind the Communist character of Vietnam and Laos.

Trends since 1997, particularly the different policy preferences of the Philippines and Thailand, suggest that the liberal argument about the effects of democracy on foreign policy may have to be re-examined in the Southeast Asian context. The democratisation in Indonesia will render the interplay between domestic regimes and foreign policy in Southeast Asia an even more intriguing topic. This study has dismissed the liberal argument, because the evolution of ASEAN has taken place largely during periods characterized by the absence of democracies in the region (the only exceptions are the Philippines since 1986 and Thailand since 1992). However, there is another reason for scepticism as far as the impact of democracy on foreign policy is concerned. This concerns the nature of democratisation in Southeast Asia and its relationship to the status quo in the region.

Regime changes in the Philippines in 1986 and Thailand in 1992 are not in contradiction with ASEAN's status quo orientation, because they did not affect the broader socio-economic order. The fact that certain political actors like the Thai army lost political power may be a step towards democracy and the rule of the law, but its impact should not be overestimated. Those transformations constituted a redistribution of political power within small groups of elites, not the opening up of the political system to new political classes. It was "a transfer of power from the bureaucratic forces to the nonbureaucratic ones whose base of power lies in the electorate. However, this does not mean that the people now have real power and influence" (Suchit, 1996: 199). Suchit's

argument about the continued influence of wealth and patronage systems and maintenance of power by ruling elites also applies with minor variation to the Philippines (Kerkvliet, 1996).

Those observations point to a more complex link between democratisation, status quo preservation, and external alignment with the United States. At bottom, support for non-interference may be a function of whether elites perceive United States style elite-centred democracy as an option that helps them accrue or at least maintain economic and political control. Democratisation in the Philippines and Thailand has not substantially changed the distribution of wealth or power within the countries. The outcome could be very different for other ruling elites. In Vietnam, the current political elite may have considerably more to lose from a redistribution of political power, as they could not expect it to remain vested within the small circle of Communist cadres. Similarly, in Malaysia a shake-up of the current governing arrangements would affect the status quo across economic, religious, and ethnic dimensions. In Indonesia, the issue of whether reform will be real and hence produce real losers (most prominently the army) is not yet clear.

Whatever the benefits and shortcomings of elite-centred democracies - they may not bring power to the people, but they generally greatly improve the lot of most people compared to military rule - thus far the evidence that democracy has had a tangible impact on foreign policy is limited. Although intra-ASEAN alignment over human rights issues has pointed to common policies by the two democracies in the region, there are several problems with this argument. Firstly, alignment over non-interference may have been a function of strategic alignment with the United States, an argument supported by Singapore's stance. Secondly, there is no indication that human rights have been particularly important for either democracy. In all cases the Philippines and Thailand have either backed down (in the case of Myanmar's admission, the debates over the non-interference principle, and Cambodia's admission) or put their regional loyalty first and supported regional partners against external interference (as in the cases of Myanmar and East Timor). The nexus between democratic identity and ASEAN corporate identity will be discussed in more detail in the section on community.

Implications for Security Theory

Above elaborations on the interplay of material factors and social interaction have profound implications for the study of cooperation and conflict. The primacy of power over social action or vice versa cannot be claimed. Indeed, some of the surprising conclusions that can be inferred from the findings of this study of ASEAN alignment concern the comparatively low explanatory power of both threat-based and identity-based explanations. In the ASEAN case the impact of both the distribution of power capabilities in its environment and of shared values and identities, whether defined in terms of ideology or in terms of a shared vision, has not been dominant. Both sets of theories suffer from the same shortcoming, namely the assumption that decision-makers define relationships according to only one feature or dimension.

With regard to balance-of-threat theory, its relatively low predictive power is puzzling for two reasons. Firstly, structures of competition were present in the region at all times between 1967 and 1999. Secondly, on the level of perceptions and beliefs, ASEAN decision-makers have consistently displayed a strong affinity to thinking in terms of balance-of-power concepts. Yet, this has not been translated into behaviour in accordance with realist prescriptions. Realist analysts of the region have mistakenly equated balance-of-power reasoning with threat driven behaviour. While ASEAN leaders are cognizant of the importance of material power, with regard to their social interactions they draw conclusions different from realist theories.

While insights from balance-of-threat theory may explain particular instances of alignment behaviour, they are not applicable to the overall configuration of cooperation and conflict that involves Southeast Asian states. Realist reasoning presupposes the existence, or in Walt's version, perception of threat. Instead of engaging in threat-centred alliance politics, ASEAN members have designed their policies around uncertainty. The disjuncture between power-based reasoning and the lack of competitive behaviour points to a different conception of power. For Southeast Asian nations there is no clear antagonism, because they do not treat potential threats as actual threats. Between 1967 and 1999 ASEAN has responded to aggression, not to power, and the perceptual link between power and aggression is more indirect than that assumed by realism. It has to be left to other research projects to explore whether the different

relationship to power is culturally derived.

The recent problems in intra-ASEAN relations and the co-existence of cooperation and competition with China indicate that any interpretation that posits a fundamental distinction between modes of behaviour within a harmonious rule-abiding ASEAN community and that of riotous external powers distorts reality. The regional environment is not characterized by a clear-cut polarization between allies and enemies, but instead by a general recognition of the benefits of stability and peace, despite the persistence of competition over particular issues. The advantages of a wide network of cooperative ties extend beyond benefits from economic cooperation. Simultaneously, the network operates as a balancing instrument, as all parties involved in the network have a stake in stable relations of peaceful exchange. The basic idea has been common to the approach of all ASEAN members to security.

In short, security relations are characterized by ambiguity. The concept of ambiguity is the main problem for existing theories of security behaviour in illuminating ASEAN behaviour. Both realist theories and the literature on security communities posit the existence of one overriding factor that determines security behaviour. However, in the case of Southeast Asia such a simplification distorts reality.

The ramifications of those insights for security theory are noteworthy. Firstly, those findings suggest that foreign policy and alignment cannot be explained from the structure of the international system without knowledge of interests on the unit level and an understanding of human agency. Unfortunately, an account of interest formation on the domestic level has been beyond the scope of this work. To explore systematically the close link between interest formation of domestic elites and their implementation of foreign policy remains a major challenge for research on the Southeast Asian region.

Secondly, those insights cast doubt on the foundations of Western security theory and their conception of alignment. The ontological assumptions of alliance theories are highly Cartesian in structure. That means they do not allow for ambiguity. Other states are either allies or they are opponents. If they are neither at the moment, or both at the same time, then alliance theory attempts at least to predict which side will be chosen in the future. Western alliance theories almost seem to demand the 'creation' of enemies and prefer this mode of thinking to ambiguous relationships. As Snyder has put it,

“because there are few ‘natural’ alignments based on common interests, there is a greater need for explicit contracts that clearly define the enemy, the contingencies that will activate the alliance obligations, and the required responses” (Snyder, 1997: 349).

This is certainly not the point of view subscribed to by Southeast Asian leaders. The twin topics of traditional power-based challenges by China and new, idea or norm-based, challenges by the United States almost guarantee a delicate balancing approach by ASEAN to maintain the status quo in the region in the years to come. The unease evoked by such ambivalent relations will probably be better digested by Southeast Asian leaders than by Western scholars and practitioners who have internalized Cartesian-style reasoning in black and white categories.

Currently, there is no antagonistic relationship ASEAN members feel compelled to respond to and they certainly do not wish to create one. If there was any need to prove the necessity to look at cultural factors in more detail, the security behaviour of ASEAN members is a case in point. The interesting question is whether ambiguity is particularly germane to East Asia and has been overlooked by Western theory for cultural reasons or whether this proclivity was a function of socialization of international relations scholars, explicable in terms of the peculiarities of the Cold War period.

The exception to the criticism that existing theories cannot accommodate ambiguity is the balance-of-interest theory adopted by Schweller’s work (1994 and 1998). If the distinction between status quo and revisionist actors is applied more flexibly, that means context-dependent, this approach can accommodate the changing patterns of alignment that have characterized the international relations of Southeast Asia.

However, it is important to first point out what dimension is important for the categorization of status quo interests. Explanations of alignment behaviour in a given situation have to be underpinned by a detailed examination of what feature of a situation was relevant for decision-makers.

The ambiguities of security behaviour in the Post Cold War period could not easily be explained without looking at problem representations of officials in the region. Based on this approach, this study can make an important contribution to security theory and debates about international relations in Southeast Asia, because its findings enable it to assess the relevance of different theories in the Southeast Asian context. With regard

to patterns of alignment in particular and state interaction in general in the Asia-Pacific, this study has provided evidence that the behaviour of ASEAN members cannot be regarded as derivative of the great power balance. Instead, alignment patterns of ASEAN members follow logically their interests as defined by decision-makers in a given situation.

Decision-makers have interests in several areas and those interests result in behaviour that shows variation in patterns of cooperation and conflict. In the case of ASEAN members, a positive ambiguity towards most parties results from those variations in salient interests. For example, cooperation with China on the issue of non-interference in internal affairs may be followed by conflict over maritime resources. The use of the concept of problem representations can help to explain the multi-layered nature of interests.

7.5 Community Development in Southeast Asia

Assessing the development of an ASEAN community after thirty-two years is not a straightforward task. On the one hand, confidence building has been successful, cooperation has expanded to most issue-areas and around 200 meetings per year, and cohesion towards external parties has been high. On the other hand, those developments look less impressive if examined in detail. Military cooperation has not undergone a significant qualitative change since 1975 (when Indonesia conducted exercises with all ASEAN partners) and many disputes remain unresolved. Mutual identifications are still conspicuously absent.

If problem representations are analysed, the same observation of stasis and change applies. Preoccupation with state-centric principles of regional order has been constant, and explicit since the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. The principle of regional autonomy has hardly ever influenced operational security policies, but the vision of an ASEAN-10 has been realized and between 1992 and 1997 the strategic outlook among ASEAN members by and large converged. How can ASEAN be assessed?

The evaluation of alignment theories has provided only limited support for the idea that ASEAN behaviour has been influenced by a shared regional identity. At the same time, the findings of this study have provided some evidence that ASEAN has

evolved into a community. At least in the 1992-1997 period, two community indicators, shared meaning structures and norm compliance justify talking of ASEAN as a community. The contradiction between the modest to low explanatory power of identity theories and a relatively high incidence of shared meaning structures (1979-1988 and 1992-1997) and norm compliance (1992-1997) requires an explanation. Bearing in mind the paradox between shared meaning structures and lack of mutual identifications, what has been the foundation of ASEAN diplomacy? What is the nature of that limited regional community and how has it evolved since 1967? Furthermore, what are the prospects for ASEAN to develop a shared collective identity?

Evaluation of the Community Idea in the ASEAN Context

The validity of balance-of-interest theory has directed attention to one of the main features of ASEAN cooperation. ASEAN has shown a proclivity to defend the status quo, conceived in terms of regional norms of conduct. If put in context with the community indicators, this insight offers clues about the basis of ASEAN's community action. It can explain why community action by the ASEAN collective has not been mirrored by identity-driven behaviour on the level of individual members.

The absence of 'mutual identifications' in several cases when ASEAN's security behaviour displayed norm compliance and the existence of shared perspectives with an emphasis on regional norms, suggests that ASEAN has constituted a rule-based community rather than a community based on the existence of a collective identity. Rather than explicable in terms of a community identity, ASEAN alignment can best be illuminated if ASEAN is understood as a rule-based community of states whose leaders have had in common an interest in the status quo. What unites ASEAN are the rules of behaviour enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Since 1978-79 the code of regional conduct enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation has been the strongest identity marker to define the ASEAN community, and the patterns of community behaviour suggest that ASEAN functions best as community when regional norms are challenged by outsiders.

The fact that challenges to regional order have helped rally ASEAN together provides support for suggestions that shared threats may constitute one likely starting

point for the emergence of a regional community (Adler and Barnett, 1998b; Acharya, 1998). ASEAN members rarely shared the same threat perceptions, but they have confronted challenges from Vietnam and China to their regional rules of conduct and they have consistently maintained a common alignment posture against such external challenges. However, as evident from this study, alignment cannot be equated with identity-based action. In ASEAN's case, as of 1999 ASEAN members have not transcended the functional sphere to which many cases of alignment behaviour belong. In order to progress from a rule-based to an identity-based community, community members have to transform the focus of their interactions "from shared outcomes to shared identifications" (Wendt, 1994: 388-91). In ASEAN's case this envisaged evolution has not taken place. Since 1967 patterns of self-interest have not been transformed to such intrinsic identification. This may happen one day, but as of 1999 there are few signs this is imminent.

Despite extensive confidence building measures and common alignment on many occasions since 1979 and during the Post Cold War, tensions within ASEAN have persisted. While several disputes have successfully been managed, in particular the demarcation of maritime areas,²⁵⁰ the potential for conflict remains. Recurring recriminations and veiled threats between Malaysian and Singaporean officials and the recent rumours of possible Thai pre-emptive strikes against Myanmar²⁵¹ point to arguably the two most difficult bilateral relationships within ASEAN. In that vein, the admission of new members since 1995 has added a number of problems, despite the exemplary developments of relations between Thailand and Vietnam, traditional competitors for influence in continental Southeast Asia. Moreover, while the focus has been on China's assertiveness, it should not be forgotten that the status quo in the South China Sea has repeatedly given rise to tensions within ASEAN, most recently in the tug-of-words between Malaysia and the Philippines in 1999. Those tensions cast doubt on the extent to which trust, an indispensable element for community (Adler and Barnett, 1998b), has grown among ASEAN members.

²⁵⁰ For example, Malaysia and Thailand are managing areas in the Gulf of Thailand jointly, Thailand and Vietnam have agreed on the demarcation of their sea boundary, Indonesia and Malaysia have referred their dispute over islands near Borneo to the International Court of Justice.

²⁵¹ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 15, 2000.

Nevertheless, the behaviour of the Philippines in 1999 during the debate about a South China Sea code of conduct indicated the power of socialization and learning. Norm compliance creates propitious conditions for extended cooperation and the growth of an atmosphere of trust. As has been rightly pointed out, "the musyawarah principle contributes most significantly to the development of mutual, stable expectations and the predictability of actors' deeds" (Dosch, 1997: 299). This is needed for the prevalence of diffuse reciprocity among partners, indicative of high levels of trust. However, even an atmosphere of trust is not a sufficient condition for the evolution of a true identity-based community. The most serious shortcoming of ASEAN relates to the lack of mutual identifications in security among its members, a feature persisting throughout ASEAN's history. In the absence of mutual identification, norm compliance becomes extremely valuable, as it creates 'stable expectations' of mutually acceptable behaviour – an indispensable prerequisite for any cooperative undertaking.

Future Prospects for a Regional Community

The analysis of ASEAN diplomacy has noted the absence of shared meaning structures beyond TAC norms and a distinct lack of mutual identifications. It then arrived at the conclusion that ASEAN constitutes a rule-based community that lacks a strong identity component. This has major ramifications for ASEAN's relevance vis-à-vis other groupings and the prospects for a true community to emerge. Despite the progress made towards the completion of an ASEAN-10, the idea of a regional community appears possibly more tenuous than ever. There are two main challenges to a regional ASEAN identity as a salient force for the security behaviour of its members. One challenge derives from the emergence of sub groupings within ASEAN that are separated by different orientations towards the global order favoured by Western countries. The second challenge comes from above. A Southeast Asian identity may become subordinated to that of a broader Asian identity.

1) Challenges to Identity from Within

Some observers have previously argued that ASEAN faced significant centrifugal forces and speculated that this could lead to a split between two subregional groupings, a

maritime one with Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore at its core and a continental subregional complex (Simon, 1992; Stubbs, 1992; Ganesan, 1995).²⁵² The emergence of the latter group was seen as an expression of Thai ambitions to create its own sphere of influence (and economic domination) derived from the idea of a "Golden Peninsula" (Buszynski, 1994).

However, such an idea equated identity with geographic proximity. As it has turned out, Thailand's globalist orientation is worlds apart from the attitudes adopted in Myanmar and Laos. Recent tensions between Myanmar and Thailand and the attempt of Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar to establish an informal grouping in defiance of Thai dominance negate the idea that intra-ASEAN alignment is related to sub regionalism. Instead, it can be suggested that conflicts within ASEAN are driven by a growing divide between 'globalists' and 'anti-globalists' over non-intervention in political and economic affairs.

The globalist – anti-globalist split affects security relations, the issues of human rights, and approaches to the organization of economic regimes. This divide is therefore much more consequential for regional relations than a possible division of ASEAN along subregional lines. In security affairs, there has been a split between two camps within ASEAN and the gap between them has widened recently. The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand have consistently identified their security with the United States and have shown a global outlook to international affairs. In contrast, Malaysia has favoured a minimalist presence of the United States and the new ASEAN members have tended to keep distance from alignment with the United States, with Myanmar being outright hostile.

Notwithstanding some agreement among most ASEAN members about the desirability of a US presence in the region, they certainly have not identified their security with the United States. This divide between a globalist and regionalist camp within ASEAN has been exacerbated by recent debates about the issue of human rights and non-interference. It has also influenced regional responses to the economic crisis, as Malaysia and Thailand have adopted opposite policies.

In this context, the expansion of ASEAN since 1995 has adversely affected the

²⁵² *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 7, 1995: 23.

prospects for the evolution of a regional identity. The idea that the expansion of ASEAN has significantly decreased its cohesion is hardly novel. However, given this study's findings on alignment behaviour, this is particularly serious in the context of the divide within ASEAN on the issue of human rights. While, for the time being, non-interference has remained a tenet of ASEAN, the contrast between the democratic values espoused in the Philippines and Thailand on the one hand and the various authoritarian models in Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Vietnam is striking.

Certainly, differences in domestic systems have been considerable throughout ASEAN's history. Thus far those differences have never become a defining dimension of international relations. During the Cold War all ASEAN members shared an anti-communist orientation. In the Post Cold War period ASEAN has prided itself in its ability to accommodate differences in domestic regimes due to its principle of non-interference.

Yet, the debate about the memberships of Cambodia and Myanmar has brought to the fore disagreements about what it means to be an ASEAN member and whether a minimum standard that goes beyond geographic location should be applied to potential members. The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand have indicated a preference for some minimum standards as to regime legitimacy and compliance with human rights. The debate casts doubts on claims that a regional identity can be forged without shared values. If linked with the international dimension of the human rights issue and the strategic implications of a possible China-United States conflict this question has the potential to split ASEAN.

In terms of this study's treatment of multiple identities, it seems doubtful that for the Philippines and Thailand 'democratic state' has become an identity that competes successfully with other identities. In particular, as things stand it has been in contradiction with an ASEAN identity, as the latter has not contained a democratic component and non-interference has been cast in opposition with democratic. This observation casts doubt on the assumption that ASEAN can accommodate all regime types, at least if it is accepted that democracies should reserve the right of intervention.

If the ASEAN identity is redefined to include a human rights or democratic element, human rights may become more salient. However, both cultural factors and the

history of interaction in the region may work against such a redefinition. Firstly, considerations of regional order have been predominant in the calculations of regional actors. The behaviour of the United States and other Western countries has hardly provided a positive example, as human rights considerations have been subordinate to strategic and ideological interests. In that context the recent promotion of human rights and democracy, like in East Timor, may be interpreted as a new theme on an old issue, the perpetuation of an international order that fits particular economic and strategic interests.

It is not yet clear where Indonesia will position itself on this spectrum. Remarks by President Wahid indicate both a proclivity to restore Indonesia's independence in the economic sphere and seek a balance-of-influence among several major powers, including China, India, and Japan. However, Wahid also displayed an inclination for good relations with Western countries and greater attention to human rights.

Yet, whatever way Indonesia swings in the long run, it is unlikely to determine to a great extent the policies of ASEAN partners. Thailand has demonstrated in the past, like during the Cambodia Conflict, that it follows its own policies towards the great powers with or without ASEAN. The country is unlikely to sacrifice vital relations with China or the United States if this does not fit its national interest. In a similar vein, Myanmar has proven remarkably insusceptible to pressure from any side on human rights issues and it will be able to fall back on China if ASEAN shifts too far away from the principle of unlimited state sovereignty.

The above interpretation of ASEAN diplomacy has pointed to the limited foundation of common action as largely confined to the norms and principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Those principles have been useful in defining parameters for acceptable behaviour. What they have not done is to create a vision that unites ASEAN. ASEAN membership does not embody any particular shared vision beyond a general preference to maintain a regional status quo that benefits stability and economic development. The aspiration of regional autonomy, manifest in ZOPFAN and the SEANWFZ Treaty, has lost significance since 1992, even though the cases of Myanmar's admission and the East Timor crisis indicate that the desire for regional autonomy has not ceased to exert some behavioural force.

2) Challenges to Identity from Above

The minimalist consensus ASEAN is based on constitutes its strength and weakness at the same time. It allows for cooperation between regimes that have otherwise nothing in common. On the other hand, it does not give impetus to the development of a regional identity. Ironically, the compatibility of the underlying foundations of the ASEAN identity with other Asian fora casts doubt on the continued relevance of the former. From the conceptualization of ASEAN as a rule-based community there is no inherent reason why larger fora, for example the 10+3 summits, could not supplant ASEAN.

Important for the creation of a regional identity will be to what extent ASEAN members share core values with one another more than with outsiders. However, this requirement is in contradictions with the implications of the rule-based foundation of ASEAN diplomacy. The ASEAN identity has been defined by the regional norms of conduct. However, if this is the case then there is no reason why ASEAN's function cannot be subordinated to that of a larger forum. This interpretation is supported by the idea of membership espoused in Singapore. Comments by Singapore's Prime Minister Goh about a possible ASEAN membership of Australia and New Zealand belie a conception of ASEAN as based on a regional identity but reveal functional considerations.²⁵³

What then is its likely relationship with more comprehensive Asian fora, for example the 10+3 informal summits? Cooperation in the latter framework has recently given rise to the notion of an East Asian regionalism that, by implication, may one day replace ASEAN as the pre-eminent locus for cooperation. This idea is obviously in contradiction with the idea that ASEAN cooperation is based on a shared identity, in which case it would be less likely to be supplanted by institutions with broader membership.

However, if, as this study suggests, ASEAN cooperation is not based on a collective identity, but primarily on the acceptance of a regional code of conduct, there

²⁵³ After a meeting with Prime Minister Keating in January 1996, Singaporean Prime Minister Goh said, "Australia and New Zealand may one day join ASEAN. I would say that both countries are small enough to be considered as possible member some of these days[sic]. But it depends again on coinciding interests. If there is more trade between Australia and New Zealand with ASEAN countries, more investments, more to-ing and fro-ing culturally, people to people, then it is an idea which is thinkable...to be put into the debate" (in *Asian Defence Journal*, 3/96: 82).

would be no reason why the focus of cooperation could not shift to a larger forum. This is effectively what has happened with the admission of Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and recently Cambodia. If the corporate identity is understood in terms of principles, the grouping may submerge in a larger Asian grouping. This is provided countries like China have indeed understood the norms ASEAN has espoused and are willing to respect them on a permanent basis and not just for tactical reasons. Whether this will be the case is, of course, anyone's guess.

In practical terms, lingering suspicions of China's Middle Kingdom mentality (Whiting, 1997) and fears of resurgent militarism in Japan may hinder comprehensive cooperation within a broader forum. But then the problem of mistrust may equally affect the relationships between Malaysia and Singapore and Myanmar and Thailand within ASEAN and, besides, the integration of Vietnam has shown that previous enmities need not be insurmountable obstacles to cooperation.

7.6 State Interaction in Southeast Asia: The Road Ahead

There are several reasons to be sceptical about the idea that a Southeast Asian identity can become a considerable influence in foreign policy. Firstly, the organization lacks values that unite its members and at the same time set ASEAN apart from other groupings. The lack of shared values is discouraging for the evolution of a regional identity. It may also highlight the true causes of ASEAN cooperation: the convergence of interests in stability and increased bargaining power as a means to achieving economic prosperity.

Despite the great strides of ASEAN cooperation since 1967, particularly since the end of the Cold War, there is little indication that ASEAN is able to transcend the realm of functional, self-interested cooperation. As the analysis of the three indicators of regional identity has suggested, there is little evidence of mutual identifications among ASEAN members. The ASEAN-10 has become a community that is held together by the necessity of geographically contiguous states to get along for the sake of mutually beneficial stability and prosperity.

Secondly, suspicions within the region linger. This state of affairs and its consequences not only for military cooperation but generally patterns of alignment is

exemplified by comments by Malaysian officials:

*Malaysia does cooperate militarily with its ASEAN neighbours, but lingering mutual suspicions and a lack of strongly-held common threat perception serve to limit such interaction. National self-reliance is thus a central theme in Malaysian defence policy.*²⁵⁴

For those reasons, ASEAN has not operated as a security community, defined as a group of states that have accomplished a high degree of interdependence and have foregone the use of force or the threat thereof as a means to conduct relations with one another.

On the other hand, the prospects that ASEAN will be able to maintain good neighbourly relations and a high degree of foreign policy cooperation are good, despite lingering suspicions. While suspicions impede cooperation, the general status quo orientation will help maintain the peace and stability that has benefited all regional actors. The high degree of norm compliance and fundamental agreement on the desirability of a stable and peaceful environment provide a good foundation for continuing cooperation. However, this is not tantamount to the evolution of a regional community. In order to attain the latter, shared values and mutual identifications are crucial. As things stand, it is difficult to see what the pivot for community could be.

The lack of a shared political vision for the future distinguishes Southeast Asia from the European Union and its project of a common Europe. Combined with the residual suspicions this is the main reason why a regional identity-based community has remained an elusive ideal and an instrument of discourse rather than operational policy. On a fundamental level, this may confirm cultural arguments that a common culture increases the likelihood for cooperation (Wang, 1997). In the case of ASEAN, there are no comparable shared roots, as there are in the case of Western Europe with its shared historical and religious heritage, which includes Greek culture, the influence of the Roman Empire, and Christianity with the unifying force of the papacy for many centuries. However, beyond the lack of a shared cultural heritage, one more immediate problem stands in the way of closer cooperation.

One reason why it is difficult to see a similar vision emerging in Southeast Asia is linked to the prevalence of regime security over societal security in most ASEAN states.

²⁵⁴ Quoted in *Asian Defence Journal*, 4/96: 62.

This has started to pose problems for ASEAN, as two contrasting visions have emerged with competing guidelines for the conduct of regional politics. For a long time, policies in Southeast Asia have put considerations of order and stability above those of justice and human rights emphasized in Western discourses. However, in recent years the salience of human rights and democratisation has begun to drive a wedge into ASEAN. This development not only affects discussions about the norms applicable to ASEAN relations but also threatens to pull the association in two different directions on foreign policy issues. What are the likely implications of recent trends for ASEAN security relations and alignment?

Since 1992, ASEAN's approach to regional security has been remarkably ambitious. ASEAN has expanded its model of security and commensurate mode of behaviour, emphasizing gradualist, informal, and consensual practices, to the wider Asia-Pacific region. The jury on the success of this ambitious effort is still out (Haacke, 1998; Narine, 1999); however, ASEAN has surprised critics twice before, when the association transformed patterns of competition into relations of cooperation. Firstly, during the Cold War era, ASEAN succeeded to bring about regional reconciliation among its members in an (from the ASEAN perspective) externally given international environment characterized by competition and conflict. Secondly, during the Post Cold War era, ASEAN members managed to integrate their rivals during the Cambodia Conflict into the association within a decade after the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, during the Cold War ASEAN had failed to reach accommodation with its Communist neighbours. During the Cambodia Conflict externally determined material structures had trumped ASEAN's attempt to socialize the Communist neighbours according to its vision for social interaction in the region.

Of crucial significance for alignment patterns and the prospects of peace and stability in Southeast Asia will be whether other parties in the region are willing to accept ASEAN prescription for regional order. As Narine stated, "ASEAN's ability to affect the Post-Cold War regional security environment lies in its capacity to define the norms and rules governing the conduct of international relations in Southeast Asia" (1998: 212). The problem is that ASEAN does not seem to be able at this juncture to define its own rules and norms let alone prescribing them for external actors. At this juncture regional

debates about non-interference become interlinked with broader patterns of alignment, as, for different reasons, elements in both China and the United States cannot be expected to acquiesce to the current status quo in the region.

Recent evidence suggests that two issues will continue to dominate the agenda. Firstly, old-fashioned disputes over territory, and by extension, resources. Secondly, the debates over the primacy of principles of state sovereignty over human rights, whether defined as societal or individual is a separate issue. Nonetheless, perceptions of which threat to the status quo constitutes the more serious challenge certainly vary among ASEAN members.

The primary function of the current mix of co-operative and competitive elements might increasingly shift from reassurance against China (reflecting ambivalent attitudes) to becoming a basis for a stance of flexible equidistance, or issue-specific alignment. In a similar way to the current division of labour between multilateralism – with a function of engagement – and bilateral military relationships - aiming at deterrence, the two pillars of the regional security structure can be used to fend off the dual challenges of Chinese ambitions and American policing.

Multilateral institutions in the Asia-Pacific are in the foreseeable future likely to comprise a majority of states committed to the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, hence providing some reassurance for regional leaders against the excesses of US attempts to rewrite the rules of international law to fit its own ideas of international order. Given this configuration of perceived threats and interests, the mix of engagement and deterrence that pervades ASEAN security relations can be regarded as a rational response to the ambiguities that arise from the foreign policies of both great powers.

However, the more the issue of human rights gains prominence, the more ASEAN is in jeopardy of losing cohesion. In the Cold War era, systemic orientation and regional partnerships were in congruence. In the Post Cold War era, Communism lost its meaning as yardstick for relationships, but ASEAN members still have had in common an interest in the status quo. Areas of disagreement, for example the question of whether China was a threat, did not put into question ASEAN's general systemic orientation. With human rights at the centre of international politics, primary international orientation and regional

partnerships could become delinked. The strategic outlook may change and patterns of alignment may undergo fundamental change. It remains to be seen whether non-interference will become the battleground between pro-democracy and authoritarian regimes or between globalists and anti-globalists or whether a threatening China pushes the divergent regimes together in defence of the territorial status quo.

It is impossible to predict the effect of greater democratisation in the region on alignment behaviour and cooperation within ASEAN. Most scholars acknowledge that current cooperation has been the product of close ties between leaders (Snyder, 1996: 563. Acharya, 1999). While this study suggests that regime security has been an important element, this should not lead to the conclusion that greater influence for civil-society will automatically translate into greater cooperation or agreement on the issue of non-interference. The example of Indonesia's nationalism in the course of events in East Timor – despite the leadership of the moderate President Wahid- serves as a warning to equate democratization with greater agreement within the region.

What is the ultimate evaluation of the ASEAN experience after 32 years? Clearly, ASEAN has been successful as a forum for regional cooperation. However, as this study has pointed out this cannot be equated with a triumphant exercise in identity building. ASEAN's prime security function throughout the thirty plus years of its existence has been its confidence building function. While ASEAN has been able to extend this function to cover relations with Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos, the admission of Myanmar has posed serious problems. The tensions in the Myanmar-Thai bilateral relationship provide a test of the limits ASEAN's ability to soothe differences between members with fundamentally different political systems. ASEAN's limitations in exerting influence towards the broader Asia-Pacific region stem partly from the absence of a basis of community.

On the positive side, the ASEAN example suggests that regional peace and far-reaching cooperation can be accomplished in the absence of a shared identity, although not in the absence of a shared general commitment to maintain the status quo combined with a willingness to gradually accommodate changes. This is good news for the Asia-Pacific and encouragement for all those who emphasize consensual and inclusive practices in international relations.

To sum up, this study has examined the security behaviour of ASEAN members between 1967 and 1999 with the goal of establishing which factors have been most important for determining patterns of cooperation and conflict in the region. Central to this study's approach is the concept of problem representations that allows an evaluation of which factors have been important for decision-makers in a given situation. The notion of regional community is subjected to critical analysis by measuring ASEAN diplomacy against three indicators that are used to operationalize the concept of regional identity: shared problem representations, mutual identifications and norm compliance with the 'ASEAN way'.

The study has pursued three goals. Firstly, on the theoretical level, it aimed at making a contribution to debates in security studies about the causes of alignment. Based on the systematic analysis of ASEAN's diplomacy in security affairs, this study has assessed the relevance of three different explanations of alignment in the Southeast Asian context: balance-of-threat theory, identity-based accounts, and balance-of-interest theory. Secondly, it aspired to evaluate to what extent ASEAN has developed into a regional community, based on the existence of a collective identity. Thirdly, concerning the study of international relations in Southeast Asia, it intended to provide insights into the nature of state interaction in the region.

What factors have guided security policies of ASEAN members between 1967 and 1999? The findings of this study are threefold. Firstly, they provide only very limited support for the arguments of both threat-based and identity-based explanations of ASEAN alignment. In contrast, ASEAN diplomacy supports the argument of balance-of-interest theory. On a fundamental level, ASEAN behaviour since 1967 has been characterized by continuity: security behaviour has been in support of the status quo. Secondly, with regard to the idea of regional community, the analysis of ASEAN diplomacy suggests that ASEAN has constituted a rule-based community, not one based on a shared regional identity. Thirdly, concerning the nature of state interaction in the region, the recognition of the status quo bias in regional relations constitutes the most fundamental finding of this study. However, importantly, security and the status quo have to be conceptualized on two levels, as elites in Southeast Asia have fused state and regime security. Furthermore, security relations in Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-

Pacific have been characterized by a high degree of ambiguity, reflecting the emergence of multiple issues affecting security (territorial/normative). Neither this ambiguity nor the multidimensional nature of security in the region have been adequately accounted for by Western security theory.

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