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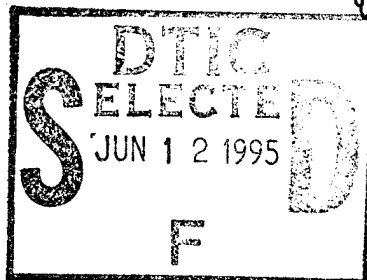


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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA



## THESIS

ASEAN AND SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

by

M. Santoso E. Nugroho

December, 1994

Thesis Advisor:

Edward A. Olsen

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ASEAN AND SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

by

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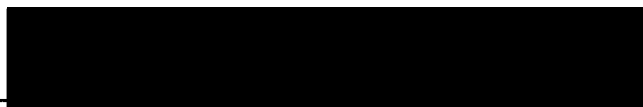
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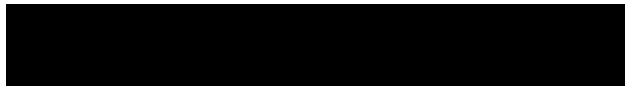


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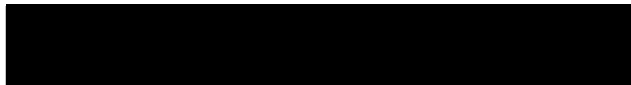
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## ABSTRACT

The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in Bangkok in 1967, by the five founding governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Its sixth member, Brunei Darussalam, joined the Association in 1984, shortly after its independence.

ASEAN stresses its objective in promoting economic growth through regional cooperation, but the facts speak for only modest achievements in this area. On the other hand, ASEAN is known for its political diplomatic achievement, culminating during the Kampuchean conflict.

Established by members as a framework to contain regional disputes, the Association sought an active role in shaping regional order and stability. Despite its lack of a military-security role, ASEAN has been able to coordinate their regional policies with relative harmony and to some political effect.

This thesis examines ASEAN's involvement in the Southeast Asian security issues, from its establishment to present day. The issues cover ASEAN's internal and external relations. Challenges and opportunities faced by ASEAN in the post-cold war era are also discussed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. STEPS IN REGIONAL RECONCILIATION .....	5
A. PRE ASEAN ORGANIZATIONS .....	5
B. BIRTH OF ASEAN .....	6
C. THE AIMS AND PURPOSES .....	8
D. INTRAMURAL TENSIONS .....	10
1. Sabah Claim: Malaysia and The Philippines .....	10
a. Historical Background .....	11
b. The Strained Relationship .....	11
c. The Moro Connection .....	15
2. Between Two Giants: Singapore and Malaysia and Indonesia ..	16
3. Common Border Problems: Malaysia and Thailand .....	18
E. A SECURITY COMMUNITY WITHOUT MILITARY PACT .....	18
F. ASEAN AND NATIONAL SELF INTERESTS .....	20
III. ASEAN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA .....	23
A. SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA .....	23
B. NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA .....	24
C. COMMUNIST VICTORY IN INDOCHINA .....	26
D. ASEAN AND VIETNAM'S INVASION OF KAMPUCHEA .....	29
1. The Players and Their Interests .....	29
a. Vietnam .....	29
b. The Soviet Union .....	30
c. The People's Republic of China .....	30
d. ASEAN .....	31
e. The United States .....	32

2. ASEAN's Diplomatic Efforts . . . . .	33
E. ASEAN AND MAJOR POWERS . . . . .	36
1. Soviet Union-ASEAN Relations . . . . .	36
2. People's Republic of China-ASEAN Relations . . . . .	37
3. United States-ASEAN Relations . . . . .	38
4. Japan-ASEAN Relations . . . . .	39
F. A DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AND THE ASIAN WAY . . . . .	41
IV. ASEAN IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA . . . . .	45
A. POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT: A NEW REGIONAL DISORDER? . . . . .	45
B. SECURITY ISSUES OF ASEAN . . . . .	46
1. Issues of Internal Threat and Domestic Stability . . . . .	47
a. Communist Insurgency . . . . .	47
b. The Armed Separatist Movements . . . . .	48
c. Civil-Military Relations . . . . .	48
2. Intra-ASEAN Territorial Disputes . . . . .	50
a. Malaysia and Singapore . . . . .	50
b. Malaysia and Indonesia . . . . .	50
c. Malaysia and Thailand . . . . .	50
d. Malaysia and Brunei . . . . .	51
e. Malaysia and the Philippines . . . . .	51
3. The Spratly Islands Dispute . . . . .	51
C. ASEAN AND INDOCHINA . . . . .	53
1. A New Relationship . . . . .	53
2. A New Marketplace . . . . .	56
3. A New Security Partner? . . . . .	57



D. APPROACHES AND PROBLEMS TOWARD A NEW REGIONAL SECURITY ORDER . . . . . 58

1. Is ZOPFAN Still Relevant? . . . . . 58

2. Growing External Security Links: Searching for a New Equilibrium? . . . . . 60

3. Regional Dialogues on Security: Developing a New Mechanism . . . . . 62

4. Military Modernization: Arms Race in Southeast Asia? . . . . . 64

5. Arms Control vs Defense Cooperation: Managing Competition . . . . . 66

V. CONCLUSION . . . . . 69

LIST OF REFERENCES . . . . . 71

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST . . . . . 75

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Association of South-East Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established in August 1967 at a meeting in Bangkok by representatives of the five founding governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The membership was hoped to encompass all states of Southeast Asia, but that goal has not been realized. Since its inception, ASEAN's membership has only been augmented by the admission of Brunei in January 1984. Indochina, after the political settlement of the Kampuchean conflict, might find its way into the membership of the Association in the future. In the circumstances, Burma is the only regional state which still keeps its distance from the Association.

Despite its primary goals of promoting economic growth, social progress and cultural development through regional cooperation, ASEAN's achievement is only modest in that area. Intra-ASEAN trade, for example, has generally failed to reach twenty percent of the total overall regional trade over the last two and a half decades. Within that intra-ASEAN trade, Preferential Tariff Arrangements (PTA) has only accounted for about two percent, which shows that the promotion of national interests has continued to be the order of the day [Ref. 1].

Apart from its modest record in economic cooperation, ASEAN has displayed a quality of political cohesion and diplomatic accomplishments unanticipated at the outset. The success has lifted ASEAN's status in the world community, and the Association is frequently cited as a "shining example" of Third World cooperation. Its international reputation as a diplomatic community derives from an evolving practice of bureaucratic and ministerial consultation. This practice has enabled member governments to coordinate their regional policies with relative harmony and to some political effect.

It was ASEAN's established position in the world community which enabled its members to direct their collective energy in the Kampuchean conflict against Vietnam's invasion. An ability to influence international recognition was the major weapon in ASEAN's diplomatic armory. It is perhaps the only diplomatic weapon that ASEAN has,

yet it is effective. The engagement in the Kampuchean conflict itself indicates ASEAN's preoccupation with the problems of regional security. Returning to the establishment of the Association, security was undeniably uppermost in the minds of ASEAN's founding fathers, although it was not conspicuously addressed. Instead, it was put in practical terms as a by-product of institutionalized regional reconciliation. By the time of the Vietnamese invasion to Kampuchea, ASEAN moved beyond the initial and continuing practice of intramural dispute management. Its involvement in the Kampuchean conflict indicated ASEAN's commitment to redressing the regional balance of power, by denying Vietnam's dominance in Indochina.

Wherever governments cooperate with security in mind, it is usual for their collective enterprise to assume some military form. ASEAN is an exception to this rule. Defense cooperation does take place among ASEAN members, but only outside the formal structure of the Association. The restricted nature of that cooperation supports the insistence of its governments that their multilateral arrangements have neither embodied the obligations nor assumed the structure of an alliance. However, as indicated in the Kampuchean conflict, ASEAN has assumed a role which traditionally has required the instrumentality and means of an alliance, although limited to diplomatic measures. Accordingly, a security role has been pursued in informal coalition with extra-regional powers which provide material and coercive capability [Ref. 2]. The net effect of such an enterprise has been mixed because it has exposed differences of strategic perspective among member governments. As a result, the institutional experience of ASEAN comprises both solidarity and strain.

In entering the post-cold war era, ASEAN faces new challenges towards the uncertain future of regional environment which arises from the rapid changes in the old world order. What was an early optimism for post-cold war regional stability generated by the end of the US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rivalries has now been substantially eroded. Major retrenchment in the superpower military presence in the region has been observed with apprehension by ASEAN states for the fear of a possible scramble by regional powers to seek dominance. Several major security problems have also surfaced and

assumed significant position in ASEAN's security consideration. Among these are the factors of domestic stability, intra-ASEAN territorial disputes and the Spratly Islands dispute.

In responding to post-cold war security challenges, ASEAN's guiding principle has been its familiar quest for security autonomy, and a desire to ensure it has a major voice and role in shaping any regional order framework. In the changing security environment, this requires a reconsideration of, and adjustment to, some of the long-held assumptions and principles underlying ASEAN regionalism, especially those related to the ZOPFAN concept, security ties with external powers, security dialogue and specific measures to enhance confidence and cooperation in military-security matters. ASEAN's responses indicate both continuity and change in the search for a new regional order.



## II. STEPS IN REGIONAL RECONCILIATION

### A. PRE ASEAN ORGANIZATIONS

The first regional grouping that emerged as result of pure initiatives by Southeast Asian countries was the Association of Southeast Asia, or ASA. The initial proposal for such a grouping was made by Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman during his official visit to the Philippines in January 1959. Talks and discussions led to the final meeting in Bangkok on 31 July 1961 when ASA was formally established. Its membership consisted of Malaya, the Philippines, and Thailand. [Ref. 2,3]

Unfortunately, the institution did not survive long enough to work on its objectives, which emphasized cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, scientific, and administrative fields. The territorial dispute over part of Northern Borneo, caused by the Philippine's claim over Sabah in June 1962, had contributed to the steady deterioration in relations between Malaya and the Philippines. In addition, opposition by Indonesia's President Sukarno upon the formation of the Federation of Malaysia had made ASA a casualty of wider conflict. By mid 1963, the Association became inactive. [Ref. 2,3]

The conflict between the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia led to a series of conferences in Manila between July-August 1963, in which the three governments agreed to establish a confederal entity of Greater Malay Confederation or MAPHILINDO, an acronym corresponding to the names of its three participants. Maphilindo was a diplomatic device intended to discuss the respective differences over the territorial boundaries and establishment of Malaysia. Genuine reconciliation proved impossible to attain, however. Maphilindo foundered with the formation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963 before it could assume any kind of institutional existence beyond its declaratory establishment. [Ref. 2,3]

The development of events in the region in 1965 and 1966 opened a new way in the efforts to end regional conflicts. The abortive coup of 1 October 1965 by the Communist Party in Indonesia led to the political demise of President Sukarno, whose pursuit of *konfrontasi* in opposition to the formation of Malaysia since early 1963 had

seriously disrupted relations with neighboring countries. Meanwhile, President Marcos' election in November 1965 resulted in the "soft pedalling" of the Sabah claim by the Philippines. The subsequent improvement in relation with Malaysia enabled the revival of ASA in March 1966. [Ref. 2,3]

During the late 1965 and through the early 1966, Indonesian and Malaysian officials met for discussions with the objective of bringing confrontation to an end. These discussions led to formal talks in Bangkok on 29 May to 1 June 1966 between Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, and Indonesia's Foreign Minister Adam Malik. Acting as the host was Thai's Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, who had for some time previously been playing a mediatory role in seeking solutions to the confrontation and the Philippine's claim to Sabah. Finally, in August 1966 Indonesia and Malaysia concluded an agreement that formally ended confrontation. [Ref. 2,3]

## **B. BIRTH OF ASEAN**

During the formal talks in an effort to end the confrontation with Malaysia in 1966, Indonesia's military establishment under General Suharto expressed the desire to start a new regional cooperation through a new organization. The government of Malaysia, in particular its Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman felt there was no need to form a new organization. He proposed continuing ASA, which almost at the same time had been reactivated in March 1966 with a meeting in Bangkok. But the new military ruler in Indonesia argued that ASA had been connotated with anti-Communist and pro-Western groupings whose motivations were primarily political. Joining ASA would give President Sukarno, who was still fighting for his political life, a chance to charge that the new government had allowed Indonesia to be humbled by agreeing to join a tainted organization. [Ref. 2]

In its proposal for the new organization, Indonesia proposed the idea of adopting the concept of Maphilindo, which stressed a regionally self reliant approach to the management of security. An initial draft for joint declaration proposing the establishment

of a new regional cooperation, which was drawn by Indonesia and Thailand, adopted the formulation from Manila Agreement of Maphilindo, that

foreign bases are temporary in nature and should not be used directly or indirectly to subvert the national independence of Asian Countries, and...arrangements of collective defence should not be used to serve the particular interest of any of the big powers. [Ref. 3]

When the draft was circulated among prospective regional partners, strong objections came from Singapore and the Philippines, as well as reservations from Malaysia. For their part, the access to external sources of countervailing power was still regarded as a direct practical relevance to national security [Ref. 2].

With the encouragement from Thai's Prime Minister Thanat Khoman, those prospective regional partners were finally accomodating. Indonesia's insistence on incorporating some of the themes of Maphilindo prevailed. As a result, the conventional wisdom of a regional outlook which spanned both the Sukarno and Suharto administrations was incorporated in the preamble to the ASEAN declaration. The formulation agreed upon stated that

foreign bases are temporary and remain only with the expressed concurrence of the countries concerned and are not intended to be used directly or indirectly to subvert the national independence and freedom of states in the area. [Ref. 3]

The name of ASEAN was coined by Indonesia's Foreign Minister Adam Malik. An initial proposal for a South-East Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SEAARC) was withdrawn in favor of Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), a term which gave the impression of continuity with the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA). Indeed, it is true that in essence, the creation of ASEAN means that ASA rather than disappearing has simply been enlarged and given a new name.



Finally on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia signed a declaration establishing the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

### **C. THE AIMS AND PURPOSES**

In Bangkok (ASEAN) Declaration of 1967, the Association listed its aims and purposes as:

1. To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South-East Asian Nations.
2. To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.
3. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields.
4. To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres.
5. To collaborate more effectively for the greater utilization of their agriculture and industries, the expansion of their trade, including the study of the problems of international commodity trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of their peoples.
6. To promote South-East Asian studies.
7. To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves.

Among these goals, the objective to promote economic growth through regional cooperation was considered to be the most important and given emphasis by its members

[Ref. 2]. But it also cannot be denied that regional security was the prime preoccupation of its founders. The establishment of ASEAN was intended as a mean to expand and institutionalize the process of reconciliation which had paved the way for a political settlement to Indonesia's coercive challenge to the legitimacy of Malaysia between 1963 to 1966 [Ref. 2]. Through developing a structure of special relationships and cooperation, it was argued that regional disputes and more deep-seated contentions could effectively be managed and overcome.

This approach to regional security was then joined to the approach of coping with internal security. In the experience of the governments of post-colonial Southeast Asia, they all had witnessed internal political challenges which had attracted popular support partly because of economic deprivation. And it led to a basic consensus among them that poverty is the prime cause of political discontent because it provides a fertile soil in which revolutionary forces can flourish [Ref. 2]. Thus, fighting internal threats through its economic causes was chosen as ASEAN's primary goal.

Bringing it further, it was assumed that political stability attained in any one member state would contribute to the attainment of such a desirable condition in others. This concept is actually an expanded form of the Indonesian government's national doctrine of *National Resilience*. National resilience is a slogan first employed by President Suharto and became an article of political faith in Indonesia from the late 1960's. As explained by President Suharto:

National resilience means, internally, the ability to ensure the necessary social changes while keeping one's own identity, with all its vulnerability, and externally, it is the ability to face all external threats, regardless of their manifestations. National resilience, therefore, covers the strengthening of all the component elements in the development of a nation in its entirety, thus consisting of resilience in the ideological, political, economic, social, cultural and military fields. Since national resilience emanates from the need to foster continuously the development process of a nation, it naturally follows that the degree of emphasis accorded to particular problems at a given period or stage of development will be determined by the particular condition and requirements of that nation itself. If each member country develops its own national resilience, gradually a *regional*

*resilience* may emerge, i.e., the ability of member countries to settle jointly their common problems and look after their future and well-being together. [Ref. 2]

The founding assumption about the positive relationship between economic development and security was not unique to ASEAN, however. Tunku Abdul Rahman's proposal for ASA represented an attempt to break away from a military approach to regional security, exemplified by the Manila Pact and SEATO\*, which had failed to demonstrate its efficacy. The ideal objective was to confront problems of political stability through collective attention to their economic causes. This became the joint outlook of the three governments - Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, when they decided to establish ASA in 1961. Although ASA foundered politically within two years, primarily because of a territorial dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines, that joint outlook survived when it was superseded by ASEAN.

#### **D. INTRAMURAL TENSIONS**

ASEAN's regional cooperation requires effort by its members to cultivate a habit of harmony within the extended set of multilateral relationship. This proved to be difficult however. During the early years of ASEAN, tensions and mistrust often characterized the relationships between member governments so that at some point, the survival of the Association was threatened.

##### **1. Sabah Claim: Malaysia and The Philippines**

Sabah is a territorial area in Northern Borneo, and has been a member of the Federation of Malaysia since its formation in 1963. The Philippine's claim over Sabah was based on historical perspective and old documents. It was filed for the first time in

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\*SEATO (South-East Asia Treaty Organization) was the organizational structure for the Manila Pact of 1954 designed to contain Communist China. It was inspired by U.S. calculations of interest and backed by U.S. military capability. Member countries were Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Great Britain, and United States. SEATO was disbanded in 1977, although the pact has not been revoked.

June 1962. The continuing claim by the Philippines is the prime cause in the strained relationship between both countries.

*a. Historical Background*

Sabah, in the northern part of Borneo Island, was originally ruled by the Sultan of Brunei. In 1704, the Sultan of Sulu helped suppress an uprising there, and as a reward, Sabah was ceded to Sulu. When the Europeans came to Southeast Asia for valuable minerals, spices, and other rich sources of revenue, Sabah was then leased for 5,000 Malaysian dollars in 1878. The British North Borneo Company held the royal charter for the lease. [Ref. 4]

In the course of laying the groundwork for the Philippine's independence, the U.S. and British governments signed a treaty in 1930 defining the territorial jurisdiction of the Philippine Republic. This treaty did not include Sabah within the boundaries of Spanish, American, or Philippine jurisdiction. After the Philippine was granted independence on 10 July 1946, within a week the British North Borneo Company turned over all its rights and obligations to the British government, which in turns assumed full sovereignty rights over Sabah. [Ref. 4]

During 1946-1962 period, the Philippines apparently conducted investigations on historical documents before filing any such a claim. In April 1950, House Resolution no.42 adopted an explicit statement that North Borneo belonged to the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu, and authorized the president to conduct negotiations for the restoration of sovereign jurisdiction. It was not until June 1962 that the Philippines notified the British governments of its claim over Sabah. But the British rejected the Philippine's claim and incorporated Sabah into the newly formed the Federation of Malaysia in September 1963. [Ref. 4]

*b. The Strained Relationship*

In June 1966, the diplomatic relations which broke off on the establishment of Malaysia were restored. As the formation of ASEAN was on the way, there seemed to be a tacit agreement between Malaysia and the Philippines that the issue be shelved in the interest of regional solidarity. They also agreed that it should be finally resolved

through ASEAN [Ref. 4]. However, in more than a quarter of a century since the formation of ASEAN, the Sabah dispute has not been resolved, yet.

In April 1967, President Marcos refused to send observers to witness the first direct elections in Sabah. This decision was taken on the ground that the presence of the Philippine observers might prejudice the validity of the claim to Sabah. In the event, the elections, attended by Indonesian observers, assumed the character of a plebiscite. The result reaffirmed Sabah's commitment to membership of the Federation of Malaysia. [Ref. 2]

In March 1968, the relationship between both countries deteriorated with an incident to be known as the Corregidor Affair. Although there was, and still is, considerable uncertainty about what exactly happened, it appeared that the incident involved a special military force of Filipino Muslims recruited allegedly to train as insurgents for infiltration to Sabah. A survivor maintained that a number of the recruits had been shot by their officers when they had mutinied in reaction to harsh discipline and non-payment of wages. The Malaysian government announced other evidence of an infiltration attempt of prior arrest of 26 armed Filipinos in Sabah, and lodged a formal protest. In reaction, the Philippine government appeared to try to cover up its political embarrassment at home and abroad by reviving attention to the Sabah claim. [Ref. 2]

In this case, ASEAN was not the first resort of the two government. It was not used either for containing tension or for dispute settlement. Malaysia tried to bring the matter to the United Nations while the Philippines adopted the view that the episode was purely an internal affair. The relationship between both countries was further aggravated when senior officials met in Bangkok in June - July 1968 for further discussions on the Sabah claim. The discussions proved to be fruitless, serving only to exacerbate existing frictions. The delegation of Malaysia walked out of the meeting. The Permanent Head of Malaysia's Foreign Ministry pointedly remarked that the persistent pursuit of the claim to Sabah by the Philippines "will (also) destroy any cooperation in the regional and international spheres such as ASEAN." The Philippine government responded by announcing the withdrawal of its ambassador from Kuala Lumpur. [Ref. 2]

During the second meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers in August 1968 in Jakarta, the organization eventually became involved in the dispute. Indonesia's Foreign Minister Adam Malik seized the opportunity of the ministerial meeting to encourage reconciliation between Malaysia and the Philippines. Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak met in private with Philippine Foreign Minister Narciso Ramos. The outcome was an agreement to have a "cooling-off" period in the dispute between two governments, but apparently without any consensus as to what this meant. [Ref. 2]

Any optimism over the role of ASEAN in helping to reconcile tensions between two of its members proved to be short-lived. In September 1968, President Marcos signed an act passed by the Philippine Congress which defined the baselines of the Republic's territorial sea. It incorporated an amendment to the effect that it had acquired dominion and sovereignty over Sabah. President Marcos made a statement that the Philippines enjoyed sovereignty over the territory. He also pointed out that although his government did not contemplate physical incorporation of Sabah, the Republic's national boundaries would be revised accordingly when the right to exercise sovereignty had received international recognition. Malaysian request for confirmation that the government of the Philippines respects the Federation's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including Sabah as a constituent state, met with a negative response. The response provoked a heated exchange, and matters were aggravated further when a Philippine delegate to the ASEAN Committee on Commerce and Industry meeting in October 1968, questioned the competence of his Malaysian counterpart to represent Sabah. The practice of questioning the competence of Malaysian delegates to speak for Sabah prompted their withdrawal from all ASEAN meetings until it was discontinued. [Ref. 2]

In the third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Malaysia in December 1969, ASEAN once again encouraged both Malaysia and the Philippines to settle their dispute. The Philippine's Foreign Minister Carlos Romulo went to have a private discussion with Malaysia's Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. The result was an announcement that Malaysia and the Philippines had agreed to restore diplomatic relations without any

preconditions. In the joint communique issued by the Ministerial Meeting, it was mentioned that the restoration of diplomatic relations had been agreed "because of the great value which Malaysia and the Philippines placed on ASEAN." Although the statement may be accepted to a limited extent given the fact that the dispute had occurred in a context of disturbing regional order, it served to demonstrate the capacity of ASEAN to keep its corporate house in order. [Ref. 2]

The plan for the first ASEAN Summit meeting in February 1976 in Indonesia was not received with enthusiasm in Malaysia, due to the unresolved Sabah claim. The Summit was convened only after Indonesia's government had secured an assurance from its Philippine counterpart that Sabah issue would not be raised. In the second ASEAN Summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1977, President Marcos made a public statement which gave the strong impression that his government would drop its claim to Sabah in the interest of ASEAN unity. A seeming confirmation of his good intent was followed by his subsequent visit to Sabah, which was widely interpreted as recognition of Malaysia's sovereign position. The Malaysian government then insisted that such recognition be expressed through a revision of the Philippine Constitution, which in its new form had included a statement in its preamble which could be interpreted as claiming jurisdiction over Sabah. President Marcos failed to accommodate Malaysia over this demand. [Ref. 2]

It is important to note that the bilateral relationship between Malaysia and the Philippines did not begin to recover fully until the political downfall of President Marcos in 1986. Also, no Malaysian Prime Minister visited Manila after the Corregidor Affair until the third Summit in 1987. Indeed, the continuing strain in Malaysia-Philippine relations was a factor in delaying a third meeting of ASEAN heads of government. [Ref. 2]

When Mrs. Corazon Aquino assumed presidential office, bilateral discussion were revived at the level of foreign minister to try to settle the claim. In November 1987, President Aquino initiated legislation redefining the archipelagic baselines of the Philippines without reference to Sabah in a deliberate attempt to improve

relations with Malaysia. But unfavorable reaction in Congress made it necessary to introduced revised legislation incorporating conditions to be met by Malaysia before the claim would be dropped officially. [Ref. 2]

*c. The Moro Connection*

For their part, the Philippines cannot just drop its claim to Sabah. In its southern region, the Philippines has been bothered by the separatist Moros from the Sulu Archipelago. Located only 10 miles from Sulu, Sabah is a Philippine security concern. Control of the northern tip of Borneo by an unfriendly power would constitute a serious threat to the country. In this context, Malaysia has been implicated in the Muslim conflict from the beginning, accused of providing aid and facilities for the Moros [Ref. 4]. The inter-relation between Sabah and Moro is thus prolonging the settlement of the dispute and deepening the security concerns of the Philippine government.

During 1970s, the ruler of Sabah Tun Mustapha was suspected by the Philippines of tolerating, even assisting the provision of military supplies to the Muslim rebels and providing sanctuary for Moro fighters. Although his successors showed no indication of following the policy of accomodation, the Malaysian government was repeatedly accused of helping the Moros. In October 1980, Philippine Admiral Romulo Espaldo claimed that the Malaysian government was tolerating secessionist Moro training camps in Sabah [Ref. 4]. In April 1982, a television documentary was aired in Australia which claimed that British and Australian mercenaries were training Filipino Muslim guerillas in Malaysian jungle camps under the financing of Libyan Muammar Ghaddafi [Ref. 4]. Although the Malaysian government denied its involvement in the Moro struggle, it is quite possible that Sabah and other Malaysian Muslim sectors did give assistance to the Moros. Apart from their commitment to religious duty, Malaysia's involvement in the Moro's struggle was to pressure the Philippines over its continuing claim of Sabah.

The complexity of the Sabah claim has contributed to the prolongation of its settlement. While both Malaysia and the Philippines understand that it in no way



serves the long term interests of either country, the prospects are still uncertain. Meanwhile, the strained relationships between the two countries will likely continue.

## **2. Between Two Giants: Singapore and Malaysia and Indonesia**

Another example of intra-ASEAN tensions is the relationship between Singapore and its two Malay neighbors, Indonesia and Malaysia. The tension arose from the related circumstances of its separation from Malaysia and then Malaysia's rapprochement with Indonesia. Singapore's minute scale, circumscribed location, regional entrepot role, and prevailing ethnic Chinese identity gave its government an acute sense of vulnerability. Suspicious of being "consumed" by its larger neighbors and aware of its limitation in defense capability, the government of Singapore decided to adopt an abrasive international posture in order to secure respect, especially from the "potential predators" such as Malaysia and Indonesia in particular [Ref. 2]. Singapore was hypersensitive to any presumed challenges to its independence and sovereignty.

The relationship between Malaysia and Singapore had not fully developed until Mahathir Mohammad became Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1981. Previously, politicians from both states appeared incapable of refraining from commenting publicly on matters within one another's domestic domain. One incident involved the cancellation of the first official visit to Malaysia by Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in August 1970. It started when two Malaysian youths with lengthy hair visited Singapore. In the immigration office, they were ordered to cut their hair, in keeping with the prevailing social ethic in Singapore that long hair was a sign of moral degeneracy [Ref. 2]. The incident provoked a furor across the causeway in a symptomatic expression of resentment. It took two years before Lee Kuan Yew finally visited Malaysia.

A more serious tension occurred between Singapore and Indonesia, in which two Indonesian marines who had been found guilty of committing acts of sabotage (during Sukarno's confrontation era) were hung in Singapore in October 1968. The plea by Indonesia's President General Suharto, augmented by that of Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, went unanswered because of the belief in Singapore that to do so would suggest a willingness to give in to external pressure. The execution of the two

marines provoked a public riot in Jakarta, in which the Singapore Embassy and the local Chinese community were attacked.

Despite popular pressure on the government to take strong retaliatory action, the Indonesian government chose not to sacrifice the bilateral relationship with Singapore in the interest of the development and viability of the newly born ASEAN. Indonesia's Foreign Minister Adam Malik took the view that there were more important issues at stake than the bilateral relationship with Singapore and that the Republic's larger interest would be better served by avoiding a diplomatic breach reminiscent of Sukarno's confrontation [Ref. 2]. A measure of public disorder in Jakarta was countenanced as a mean of satisfying national honor, while the bodies of the two marines were received in Indonesia with full military honors and then buried in the national heroes' cemetery.

The relationship between Singapore and Indonesia soon settled down. When Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew visited Jakarta in May 1973, he made a personal act of contrition by scattering flowers petals on the graves of the two executed marines in Kalibata heroes' cemetery. It indicated a shift in Singapore's view towards Indonesia, which now had come to the seriousness of Jakarta's commitment to ASEAN and regional cooperation. The Indonesian ruling military establishment was gradually viewed as "pragmatists", applying a policy of regional cooperation in the interest of economic development.

In the case of Singapore and Malaysia, the traumatic political event of separation contributed to the slow process of stabilization between both countries. They were bound together within a common colonial structure with a legacy of economic links and personal and family ties. Singapore's inclusion into the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 was viewed as the restoration of a natural unity. But the separation in 1965, less than two years after the merger, left problems of political adjustment on both sides, which caused the tendency to interfere in other's domestic matters.

### **3. Common Border Problems: Malaysia and Thailand**

Although the bilateral tensions between Malaysia and Thailand had considerably been muted in the wake ASEAN's formation (and earlier in the short-lived ASA), differences still occur upon their border problems. Back in 1950's, Kuala Lumpur perceived the Malayan Communist Party in the northern border with Thailand as the principal threat. Operations by British forces caused the guerillas to retreat further to the north into Thailand. An agreement was then made between both governments for joint operations.

Tensions arose when Thailand showed a bit of reluctance to deal with the active remnant of the Malayan Communist Party. Thailand viewed the communists as posing only a minimal threat to its national security because their political ambition was southward. Accordingly, Thai security forces did not approach the communists with the same sense of urgency as their Malayan counterparts. Moreover, the separatist movement of Malay-Muslims, which dominated Southern Thailand was the Thai's greater concern. Although such a movement had never succeeded in posing an effective political challenge, the Thai's suspicion of support from the south of the border served to discourage its government from instructing its security forces to engage in more than nominal cooperation with Malaya. [Ref. 2]

### **E. A SECURITY COMMUNITY WITHOUT MILITARY PACT**

Despite all the disputes and differences that occurred among member states, the conflicts were kept low-key and contained within the ASEAN wall, preventing them from damaging regional order and stability. And as the former Director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies K.S. Sandhu pointed out, ASEAN has been very successful in managing intramural conflict that none of its members have "fired shots in anger toward each other for more than a quarter of a century" [Ref.1]. This fact has also led a scholar to identify ASEAN as a *security community*, following Karl Deutsch's well known formulation, in which expectations about warlike behavior by members of the community toward each other have been virtually eliminated [Ref. 5].

Originally, the concept of *collective security* as adopted by the League of Nations, was meant in application to protect member states from act of aggression by any of their numbers [Ref. 2]. It was intended to do the same for ASEAN, but not through the medium of sanctions. Instead, a more moderate process of reconciliation through regional cooperation was chosen to counter any revival of serious conflicts between member states. ASEAN members even linked their security interests to their national development programs, recognizing the security and economic interdependence.

The reluctance of ASEAN to assume any collective military role for regional security might as well be explained by several reasons. First, ASEAN did not wish to be perceived as a successor of SEATO, which would make it vulnerable to attack by communist countries, such as the Soviet Union and China. Any security role would undoubtedly lead to provocative comparisons with SEATO, given the ASEAN's members' generally pro-Western orientation. Second, Indonesia in particular, did not wish to compromise its non-aligned status. Third, an alliance had been out of question partly because of the members' lack of military capability. Moreover, ASEAN's founding fathers had been only too aware of the danger of provoking a menacing response through a premature attempt to confront the problems at regional security head on in military form. [Ref. 2, 3]

However, security and defense cooperation do exist among ASEAN members. It has been manifested in the forms of bilateral joint training and exchange in intelligence informations [Ref. 2]. These arrangements, as ASEAN has maintained, are conducted outside the formal framework of ASEAN. It exists because of mutual needs and interests of the respected countries, apart from their affiliation with ASEAN.

In the early years of ASEAN however, there were moves to formalize intra-ASEAN defense cooperation into the ASEAN framework, but soon it was dropped from the discussions, partly because such an arrangement would prejudice diplomatic overtures to Hanoi [Ref. 2]. In the opening of the Bali Summit 1976, Indonesia's President Suharto addressed the issue in the following statement:

It must be clear to us and to the world that we have no intention of establishing a military pact, as it was misinterpreted by some people. Cooperation among us in the realm of security is neither designed against other nor certain parties. We have neither the capability nor the intention to have it. Our concept of security is inward looking, namely to establish an orderly, peaceful and stable condition within each individual territory, free from any subversive elements and infiltrations, wherever from their origins might be. [Ref.2.]

As the security role in military form was denied, the "getting acquainted process" and the intensive consultations among member states' officials have proved to play a significant role in smoothing ASEAN cooperation. As Malaysia's Tun Ismail pointed out during the Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in 1971: "The constant contact and communication between our officials has helped to develop a habit of cooperation and a sense solidarity which will inturn help us when we move forward towards wider areas of cooperation." [Ref. 3]. It is in this context that better understanding of each other was developed, and in turn contributed to the conflict management within ASEAN. In Lee Kuan Yew's words: "Perhaps the most valuable achievement of ASEAN since its inception was the understanding and goodwill created at the various ASEAN meetings which had helped to lubricate relationships which could otherwise have generated friction." [Ref. 2].

#### **F. ASEAN AND NATIONAL SELF INTERESTS**

As shown in Sabah dispute case, both Malaysia and the Philippines have agreed not to let the matter worsen (although not necessarily solving the problem) because of "the great value which Malaysia and the Philippines placed on ASEAN." But there are also strong indications that members see the continued existence of ASEAN as in their national self interest. From this point of view, ASEAN is seen by its members both as a means to obtain benefits and a source of benefits and advantages [Ref. 6]. Moreover, these benefits are relatively "cost free" in terms of scarce resources or the sacrifice of national sovereignty. A broader notion of regional interest seems only come into play when ASEAN's unity and cohesion is at stake [Ref. 7].

An example where the membership of ASEAN is deemed very important for the national interest was the joining of Brunei into the Association. Like Singapore, Brunei is also a small state, complete with all the sense of vulnerability and suspicions towards its neighbors. Malaysia's alleged involvement in Brunei's December 1962 rebellion and the annexation of East Timor into Indonesia in 1976 made both countries seem to be menacing neighbors by Brunei's ruling family [Ref. 2]. ASEAN, where Indonesia and Malaysia occupied a prominent place, was thus viewed with corresponding suspicion. Although Brunei kept its distance from ASEAN until the early 1980s, it moved closer politically to Singapore after the separation from Malaysia, partly because of a common sense of vulnerability. Encouraged by the government of Singapore, which had come to regard membership in ASEAN as a political asset, Brunei responded positively to an invitation to join the Association upon its independence. By that time, ASEAN made the sanctity of national sovereignty the centerpiece of its public philosophy, through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation of 1976. From Brunei's perspective, any revealed challenge to the sovereign status of the Sultanate by any member of the Association would be certain to reflect on its international standing and credibility [Ref. 2]. Membership thus served the security interest of Brunei, because the five founding states would be obliged to restrain their political intent towards their new regional partner.



### III. ASEAN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

#### A. SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A series of events that took place during the late 1960s through the early 1970s in the international and regional environment enhanced the value that member countries placed on ASEAN as a vehicle for political cooperation. In January 1968, the British government announced an accelerated timetable for military disengagement from east of Suez. Following the decision was the first appearance in March 1968 of a small Soviet naval flotilla in the Indian Ocean, entering by way of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. The presence of the Soviet ships was widely interpreted as a considered attempt to fill a naval vacuum created by Britain's abdication of a historical role [Ref. 3].

The Tet Offensive in Vietnam in January - February 1968 marked a turn-about in U.S. attitudes towards its involvement in the war. President Johnson's decision not to seek reelection and search for a negotiated solution to the war was then reaffirmed by President Richard Nixon's policy to end the war. In July 1969, President Nixon astounded U.S. partners in Asia by the so called *Guam Doctrine*, in which he announced that the United States would no longer carry the burden of conventional defense against internal communist challenge. Its announcement raised nervousness within ASEAN as it became clear that a major reappraisal of U.S. policy in Asia was underway. A growing antagonism between the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China had encouraged the Sino-US rapprochement, which was followed by President Nixon's visit to Beijing in February 1972. In the preceding event, the United States sponsored the transfer of China's seat in the United Nations to the government of the People's Republic of China, signalling a recognition of a new international and regional role for China [Ref.3].

These developments led to a perception that the old bipolar structure of major power relationships affecting the region had given way to a new multipolarity, in which the United States, Soviet Union, China and Japan -with its rapidly expanding economic presence in the region, would have an important influence upon events in Southeast Asia. This new situation was viewed by ASEAN members with a mixture of hope and



apprehension. It also led to opinion among ASEAN leaders that the new developments presented an opportunity and challenge to ASEAN to take an active role in the management of regional affairs and to exclude the disruptive effects of major powers' intervention and competition.

## **B. NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA**

During the process of ASEAN's formation, Indonesia's initial draft argued for a regionally self reliant approach to the management of regional security. It represented the outlook of the Indonesian government that spanned the Sukarno to Suharto eras. Although the draft met strong objections from the prospective regional partners at first, Indonesia was able to retain the concept in the preamble of ASEAN Declaration.

The development of world events: the Second Indochina War, President Nixon's Guam Doctrine, Sino-US rapprochement and Sino-Soviet antagonism, all contributed to the decision of ASEAN to take an active role in preventing the disruptive effects of major powers' rivalries and intervention in Southeast Asia. In 1970 through 1971, Malaysia initiated a proposal for the neutralization of Southeast Asia. The first statement was made by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, in April 1970 at the Preparatory Non-Aligned Conference:

It is Malaysia's hope that non-aligned countries will be able to endorse the neutralization of not only the Indochina area but of the entire region of the Southeast Asia, guaranteed by the three major powers, the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union and the United States, against any form of external interference, threat or pressure. [Ref. 3]

The similar proposal was then presented in March 1971 at the fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila by Tun Ismail.

In the proposal, Indonesia spelled out its objections, arguing that neutralization as the product of one way benevolence on the part of the big powers, at this stage, would perhaps prove as brittle and unstable as the interrelationship between the major powers themselves, and that the Malaysian formula suggested the future of Southeast Asia to be

determined by the ministrations of major powers [Ref. 2]. Foreign Minister Adam Malik argued in September 1971:

I strongly believe that it is only through developing among ourselves an area of internal cohesion and stability, based on indigenous socio-political and economic strength, that we can ever hope to assist in the early stabilization of a new equilibrium in the region that would not be the exclusive "diktat" of the major powers. [Ref. 2]

Other members of ASEAN had also spelled out their objections. The Philippines and Thailand were far from ready to abandon their security ties with the United States while Singapore saw no realistic prospects for eliminating the great powers' role in the region [Ref.8].

In November 1971, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers met in Kuala Lumpur to review recent international developments and to consider Malaysia's proposal. Despite resentment and skepticism by other members, agreement was made by stating that the neutralization of Southeast Asia is a desirable objective and that ways and means of bringing about its realization should be explored. It further stated that

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are determined to exert initially necessary efforts to secure the recognition of, and respect for, Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers ... that Southeast Asian Countries should make concerted efforts to broaden the means of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer cooperation. [Ref. 2]

The ZOPFAN Declaration however, was not issued as an ASEAN statement. Instead, it was announced in the name of the five governments that "coincidentally" were members of ASEAN. It seemed that they were not ready to identify ASEAN with so openly political a statement. Moreover, the declaration left unanswered a number of questions concerning what steps should be taken to achieve a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. But despite all of its vagueness and the continuing criticism over its impracticability, the ZOPFAN Declaration served useful political purposes. It clarified

ASEAN's integrating political concept and its determination, which in Malaysia's Tun Abdul Razak's words: "This region will no longer be a theater of conflict for the competing interests of major powers." [Ref. 8].

### C. COMMUNIST VICTORY IN INDOCHINA

In the mid-1970's, the developments in Indochina indicated the victory of the communists over Western powers. The emergence of Vietnam as a military power in Southeast Asia and the rapprochement of Sino-US relations which recognized the People's Republic of China's new role in the region had created a mixed feelings among ASEAN members. Thailand had at first adopted a public position of antagonism towards the People's Republic of China. Its conventional wisdom was that the principal threat was posed by a monolithic international communism whose vehicle for expansion in Asia was the People's Republic of China, serving as patron of the Vietnamese communists [Ref. 2]. In other words, Thailand's historical enemy, Vietnam, was placed within a wider context of threat. Thailand's government did not begin to draw any significant practical distinction between threats from Chinese and Vietnamese communism until mid-1970s when tension between Beijing and Hanoi became manifest in the context of Sino-Soviet antagonism and Sino-US rapprochement. It was at this time when Thailand's government changed their opinion to the singular prospect of China serving as an alternative source of external countervailing power against the more immediate external threat posed by a seemingly expansionist Vietnam.

Indonesia, on the other hand, had established diplomatic relations with Beijing early after its independence in 1945. During President Sukarno's era, the relationship with the People's Republic of China developed into a close political alignment. But an abortive coup on 1 October 1965 by the Indonesian Communist Party, which was rumored to be sponsored by China caused the break-off in diplomatic relations. General Suharto who succeeded President Sukarno, became explicit in identifying China as the principal long term source of external threat. Although the military victory of the Vietnamese communists came as a "disagreeable surprise", the conviction that Vietnam's communists

were primarily nationalists, arising from their challenge in 1945 to French colonialism concurrent with that of Indonesia's National Revolution against the Dutch, allowed Vietnam a special position in regional outlook [Ref. 2]. Antagonistic relations between Vietnam and the People's Republic of China strengthened Vietnam's position as a possible barrier and regional partner against any extension of Chinese influence in Southeast Asia in the wake of the United States' apparent strategic decline.

The government of Malaysia adopted a strategic perspective which corresponded closely with that of Indonesia. Although a unilateral initiative to establish diplomatic relations with China had been taken in May 1974, that initiative had been based on the premise that Chinese communism constituted the principle source of an external threat. One objective of establishing diplomatic relations had been to secure public endorsement from the government in Beijing in order to demonstrate both to the Communist Party of Malaya and the resident ethnic Chinese community, that there was no point in looking to China for support. This had been confirmed by the use of photographs of Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak in the company of Chairman Mao Ze Dong during a general election in Malaysia in August 1974 [Ref. 2]. This strategy was only a partial success, however, as the Chinese Communist Party refused to repudiate party to party relations, while the insurgent Communist Party of Malaya engaged in a campaign of armed action during 1975. Regarding Vietnam, Malaysia's foreign ministry sought to promote a special relationship with the country in the expectation that it could secure the kind of political access which would enable the political distance between Indochina and ASEAN to be closed. Thus, while not disregarding the buffer position of Thailand interposed between itself and a communist Indochina, the strategic perspective of Malaysian government was generally similar to Indonesia's.

For the part of Singapore, the military success of the Vietnam communists and their accumulation of a huge stockpile of U.S. arms gave rise to apprehension over support for regional insurgency. Although wary of China and unwilling to establish diplomatic relations, there was little point in highlighting a Chinese threat in the context of the Sino-US rapprochement. Moreover, characteristically, the government of Singapore

was the least inclined of any ASEAN member to appear politically accomodating to any of the revolutionary communist regimes of Indochina in case such a stance might give the impression of appeasement or weakness. It was up to Vietnam, in particular, to demonstrate its regional bonafides.

The Philippines, in its maritime insulation, with a relatively small ethnic Chinese community and protected by a mutual security treaty with the United States, did not exhibit any pressing concern with an immediate threat from either Vietnam or China. Its security problem were primarily internal, with a Muslim rebellion in the southern islands of the archipelago and an insurgency mounted by the communist party.

Meanwhile, the first ASEAN Summit Meeting was convened in the island of Bali in Indonesia in 1976, resulted in the collective initiative to strengthen regional stability. A Treaty of Amity and Cooperation was signed by ASEAN members, and was designed as the "code of conduct" for regional order in Southeast Asia. The Treaty put emphasis on the sanctity of sovereignty, and contained a provision for accession by regional states outside ASEAN. Specifically, it was intended to serve as a political bridge to the United Communist Vietnam, with the hope that Vietnam might be persuaded to endorse in the interests of regional order and accomodation [Ref. 2].

The treaty, however, met with a negative response from the revolutionary governments of Indochina. The Vietnamese and Laotian governments in particular, not only ignored the opportunity to adhere to the treaty (as did that of Kampuchea), but also rejected publicly the credibility of ASEAN and its prescriptions for regional order. The blatant challenge by Vietnam and the Indochinese states to the regional credentials of the Association, in turn had the effect of strengthening corporate solidarity in the later course.

In the event, ASEAN was relieved as it became evident that monolithic Indochinese communism was not in the making. The revolutionary government of Kampuchea declared an independent posture, encouraged by China, denying Vietnam's dominance in the peninsula. Vietnam's inability to assert full dominance in Indochina was welcomed by ASEAN since an inter-communist balance did not pose an imminent challenge to either collective or individual priorities of ASEAN states.

By August 1977 however, the inter-communist balance of power in Indochina had become less stable as the result of the accelerating antagonism between Pnom Penh and Hanoi. Military confrontation was then followed by diplomatic break-off. On 25 December 1978, the military confrontation between both countries reached a climax when the Vietnamese army invaded and occupied Kampuchea, overthrowing its notorious government and replacing it with an administration set up by Hanoi.

## **D. ASEAN AND VIETNAM'S INVASION OF KAMPUCHEA**

### **1. The Players and Their Interests**

One month before the invasion of Vietnam into Kampuchea, Hanoi concluded a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union, signed on 3 November 1978. Its alliance with the Soviets proved to serve Hanoi's regional ambitions and as an invitation to the Soviet Union to become a major security participant in Southeast Asia. This further challenged ASEAN's hopes for creating a regional order, free of great power military activities. Moreover, it allowed the Sino-Soviet rivalry to be played out in ASEAN's neighborhood, which escalated security concerns among ASEAN member states.

#### *a. Vietnam*

Although economically weak, Vietnam was a formidable regional power. Its army was among the largest in the world, estimated at around 1.2 million personnel. To sustain such a huge army despite its almost crippled national economy (partly due to economic opportunity costs, since the military drained 1.2 million men away from the civilian sector and heavily distorted the national budget), Vietnam relied on Soviet's aid, which was estimated at \$ 3 billion annually [Ref. 9].

In Hanoi's perspective, the Indochinese countries (Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea) were security interdependent. Thus, if any one of the three states was subverted by an external adversary, all were threatened. Therefore, an alliance among them was needed to guarantee their independence. China's effort to gain a foothold in

Kampuchea through the Khmer Rouge was seen by Hanoi as the latest in a series of external efforts to annex Indochina, following the French, Japanese and Americans [Ref. 9]. The restoration of Laos or Kampuchea as buffer states would not be acceptable to Hanoi, for that would mean putting Vietnam into a vulnerable position, exposed against China's intention to gain regional dominance.

*b. The Soviet Union*

For the Soviet Union, the alliance with Vietnam provided them with an opportunity to play a more direct role in Southeast Asian affairs. Hanoi had granted Moscow access rights to use the military facilities at Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay, which enabled the Soviet Union to potentially project power into the Southwest Pacific and the Indian Ocean, as well as Southeast Asia itself. These military facilities were important and necessary for an assertive Soviet policy in the region, since military power was the major instrument that the Soviets could utilize in extending their influence into the region, given their limited economic capacities and substantial political liabilities. In the context of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay occupied an important position in the Soviet's strategic encirclement of China, and might as well serve as a useful bargaining point in Sino-Soviet negotiations [Ref. 10].

*c. The People's Republic of China*

In Beijing's perspective, China must play a primary role in determining regional order, particularly with respect to relations with major external players. Neighboring states must at least deny access for those extra regional actors with which China is in conflict [Ref. 11]. Vietnam's alliance with the Soviet Union clearly challenged Beijing's policy. Accordingly, China's primary goals in Southeast Asia were directed to deny any advantage to its adversaries and to establish a position of dominance vis-a-vis its immediate neighbors. These were reflected in China's support for the Khmer Rouge and through China's punitive action against Vietnam in February 1979, where China was prepared to sacrifice men for a limited and temporary territorial gain.

Vietnam's invasion was viewed by China, and also by ASEAN, as illegal. Thus both China and ASEAN demanded the withdrawal of Vietnam's troops from

Kampuchea and to allow for a process of self determination by the Kampuchean people. This coincidence of position did not mean that ASEAN agreed with China's final solution for Kampuchea. ASEAN was concerned about the role of the Khmer Rouge after the conflict resolution, who had been the strongest party in the Kampuchean resistance and were continually supported by China. Indeed China's support toward communist movements in Southeast Asia was what caused China to be viewed as a menacing threat by the anti-communist governments of the ASEAN states.

*d. ASEAN*

To ASEAN, Vietnam's invasion constituted a blatant challenge to the public philosophy of ASEAN, namely the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity as envisaged by the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation of 1976. The involvement of the Soviet Union in Southeast Asian affairs through its alliance with Vietnam and the potential danger of wider Sino-Soviet rivalry had also become ASEAN's major concerns.

The divergence in member's strategic perspective, however, characterized the political disunity in ASEAN that was reflected in member's approach toward the conflict. Thailand, being a historical rival for centuries with Vietnam over the fertile valley of the Mekong River, had become sensitive to the communist's victory in Indochina in the mid-1970s. As the pro-Chinese Kampuchean government took an independent posture to deny Vietnam's domination in Indochina, however, Thailand enjoyed the Kampuchean position as buffer state against Vietnam's regional ambition. The fall of the independent Kampuchea in the invasion of December 1978 presented direct threats to Thailand's security through armed tensions along the Kampuchean border. It even posed a threat to the sovereignty and independence of the Thai state, which could only be removed by challenging Vietnam's assertion of dominance. ASEAN, in Thailand's strategic perspective, occupied a significant but subordinate position. ASEAN could provide collective diplomatic defense in the international arena, but could not act as a countervailing power against Vietnam. The only external power who was willing 'to shed blood' on Thailand's behalf was China, providing Thailand with a supply of military weapons.



However, Thailand's growing reliance toward China was viewed as "undesirable" by other ASEAN members, especially Indonesia and Malaysia. For their part, Beijing was regarded as a principal source of external threat, due to its support for the local communist party and insurgency. The Soviet's presence in the region, was also viewed with uneasiness. In their view, the involvement of great powers such as China and the Soviet Union would only escalate the conflict as it allowed Sino-Soviet rivalry to influence regional affairs. With this in mind, Indonesia and Malaysia independently from other members developed a joint proposal as a first step to the Kampuchean conflict resolution. The proposal, known as the Kuantan Declaration, was issued in March 1980. It was designed to effect an agreement by which Vietnam would cut its ties to the Soviet Union while Thailand gave up its reliance on china. In exchange, ASEAN would recognize Vietnam's security interests in Indochina. The declaration proved abortive however. Thailand strongly rejected it because it conceded Vietnam's entitlement to Kampuchea, removing a historic buffer against a traditional enemy. Hanoi also rejected the proposal, believing that it could not sustain control over Indochina without the Soviet's aid [Ref. 9].

It could also be argued that Kuantan was the first attempt by Indonesia to restore its leading role in ASEAN's diplomacy. Jakarta was frustrated by the fact that its "natural leadership" within the Association had been subordinated to Thailand's need as "frontline state" [Ref. 9]. Despite ASEAN's posture to isolate Vietnam from the international community, Jakarta continued its approach toward Vietnam. The several contacts between Indonesian and Vietnamese officials in 1984 and 1985 reflected Jakarta's search for a special Indonesian role in resolving the Kampuchean conflict.

#### *e. The United States*

Although not directly involved in the conflict, the United States had a traditional role as a "balancing wheel" in the region. Its defense ties with some of ASEAN members provided deterrence against the threat of other great powers' aggression in the region. The role as a guarantor had made the United States the only great power whose military presence in the region was welcomed by ASEAN states.

In the Kampuchean issue, ASEAN had called for greater U.S. action, especially in terms of aid to the non-communist party of the Kampuchean government, which was supported by ASEAN. However, ASEAN also worried about further involvement of the United States in the conflict. ASEAN was concerned that the U.S. would become preoccupied with its global rivalry with the Soviet that its role in Kampuchean conflict might be viewed in that context. As this might happen, ASEAN feared that the U.S. would use the "China card", recognizing China's role in the region to fulfill its interests, thus denying those of ASEAN's [Ref. 12].

## **2. ASEAN's Diplomatic Efforts**

Shortly after the invasion, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja in his capacity as chairman of the ASEAN standing committee issued a statement on 9 January 1979 which deplored the Vietnamese action and calling on the U.N. Security Council to take immediate action. At an ASEAN Foreign Minister's emergency meeting a few days later in Bangkok, this position was endorsed and became the tone for ASEAN-Vietnam relations in 1980s. [Ref. 2,6]

When the Kampuchean conflict was brought into the Security Council in January 1979 at the request of the Pol Pot government, charging Vietnam with an act of aggression, the Soviet Union exercised its veto. The veto prevented the adoption of a draft resolution that would have condemned Vietnam's invasion and demanded the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Kampuchea. When the conflict was again taken up by the Security Council in March 1979, ASEAN presented its own draft resolution. It called on all parties to stop fighting and for foreign troops (i.e., Vietnamese troops) to withdraw from Kampuchea and welcomed the offer by the U.N. Secretary General to use his good offices in finding a solution to the conflict. Again, the draft was vetoed by the Soviet Union. [Ref. 6]

Undeterred by this defeat, ASEAN took its case to the U.N. General Assembly. Despite the opposition by Vietnam and its allies, Kampuchean conflict was included in the agenda of the upcoming General Assembly session by a 19 to 5 vote with one abstention. In the 34th General Assembly meeting, an ASEAN-sponsored draft resolution,

which was virtually the same as the earlier draft that ASEAN had presented to the Security Council, was adopted by a vote of 91 to 21, with 29 abstentions. The support for the resolution increased annually through the 1980's, making it the de facto U.N. position on Kampuchea. [Ref. 6]

Meanwhile, ASEAN's strategy to isolate Vietnam from the world diplomatic community continued. The cohesion of ASEAN, which was once at risk with the Indonesian and Malaysian joint declaration of Kuantan, was strengthened by the firm support of both countries for Thailand after the incursion of Vietnamese troops into Thailand in 1980. In July 1981, an International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) was held in New York under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations. Holding such a conference was a diplomatic success for ASEAN, since a U.N. conference had been a persistent demand of the Association in the year following Vietnam's invasion. As can be expected, however, Vietnam and its allies boycotted the meeting.

In the middle of its success in the world's diplomacy, ASEAN was faced with another problem regarding the Khmer Rouge. So far, ASEAN justified its policy with reference to the sanctity of national sovereignty. Vietnam's invasion was illegal because it violated the sovereignty of Kampuchea. Therefore, ASEAN' effort was directed towards the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. But the fact that the ousted Kampuchean government was the Pol Pot regime made the matter more complex. The Pol Pot regime of Democratic Kampuchea earned its notorious reputation by killing its own people, leaving the rest of the Kampuchean population in fear. Moreover, the surviving military arm of Pol Pot regime was the only significant source of internal challenge to Vietnam's client government. ASEAN was put into a difficult position since, indirectly, its effort in international diplomacy could mean a support for the Khmer Rouge's claim for reinstatement.

As ASEAN was swimming in the dilemma, international support for its diplomatic position was qualified and seemed likely to wane. In December 1979, Great Britain withdrew its recognition of Democratic Kampuchea, followed by Australia in the

following year. In July 1980, India decided to establish diplomatic relations with the Heng Samrin government. Forced to find a solution, ASEAN forwarded a proposal for forming a coalition among Kampuchean factions. It was hoped that the coalition could serve as a political alternative to the Khmer Rouge, with an internal political appeal within Kampuchea as well as external one, especially within the U.N. General Assembly.

The fact that ASEAN governments shared a strong inhibition over supporting a communist insurgent movement, even if against a communist administration, did not prevent the Khmer Rouge from inclusion into the plan. The reason behind such a decision was the dominant role played by the Khmer Rouge in armed resistance to the Vietnamese. Therefore, it was logical to try to promote a political alternative to them through a coalition arrangement. Other candidates were Prince Sihanouk and the non-communist Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), headed by Son Sann. Despite the initial resentment by the non-communist factions to work with the Khmer Rouge, they finally agreed to form a Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), with a view to continuing the struggle in all forms for the liberation of Kampuchea from the Vietnamese aggression. Although the coalition was marked by the fragile nature of the bonding between its elements, it served a useful diplomatic purpose, namely to hold the Kampuchean seat in the U.N. [Ref. 2].

Throughout the 1980s, ASEAN had assumed a prominent political role over the Kampuchean conflict, which registered its standing as a diplomatic community. In the late 1980s, however, the conflict entered a new phase, in which pressure by the Soviets and the Sino-Soviet rapprochement had forced Vietnam to seek political settlement in Kampuchea, albeit on its own terms. Faced with this opportunity, Indonesia revived its role as interlocutor with Vietnam. The softening of the Thais' position, encouraged by Soviet assurances, led to a renewed accord on regional talks. So the Jakarta Informal Talks (JIT) was convened in July 1988. It was the first occasion on which all Kampuchean factions and interested regional governments met. However, the talks made no significant progress. Meanwhile, Kampuchea appeared to be discussed more fruitfully in Soviet-American and Sino-Soviet talks. At the end of 1988, Kampuchea had been

sufficiently set aside as an issue in Sino-Soviet relations for agreement to be reached on holding a summit meeting in Beijing in the first half of 1989 [Ref. 2]. This development prompted Indonesia and Vietnam to press for a second round of regional talks. Their concern was that major power rapprochement might determine a political settlement.

In January 1989, Vietnam announced a complete withdrawal from Kampuchea in the event of a settlement. The statement was renewed in April 1989 that all Vietnamese forces would be withdrawn from Kampuchea by the end of September 1989, irrespective of any political settlement. ASEAN's effort in the Kampuchean conflict reached a success when Vietnam finally agreed to the terms set by ASEAN, including the complete withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea and the replacement of the regime installed by its invasion with a new government resulted from a free election. [Ref. 2,18]

## **E. ASEAN AND MAJOR POWERS**

### **1. Soviet Union-ASEAN Relations**

For the ASEAN states, the Soviet Union was traditionally viewed as a relatively distant power. In 1978, however, the Soviets gained a strong position in Southeast Asia through their alliance with Vietnam. The treaty allowed the Soviet Union to use Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay military facilities, bringing the Soviets closer to ASEAN's doorstep. To some ASEAN states, however, the Soviet Union was still viewed not as a direct and immediate threat to their security [Ref. 13]. The reasons were:

1. Although the Soviet Union maintained its presence in Southeast Asia, they did not maintain a high military visibility in the ASEAN region, e.g. by naval movements. Furthermore, although Da Nang and Camh Ranh Bay facilities would provide logistics sufficient for Soviet's Pacific Fleet vessels, these bases could not repair major battle damage nor provide aircover for Southeast Asian operations. In the case of open war, these bases could be rapidly rendered inoperative by U.S. forces based in the Philippines or Guam [Ref. 14].
2. Unlike China, the Soviet Union did not develop close relations with any insurgent groups within the ASEAN countries.

However, this does not mean that the Soviet Union was viewed with sympathy either. Distrust had been expressed by ASEAN governments as the result of Soviet espionage cases in Southeast Asia [Ref. 13].

After Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea, Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanand visited Moscow in March 1979, asking for Soviet assurances regarding Vietnam's intention toward Thailand. Any assurances by the Soviets proved short-lived, however, as the Vietnamese troops crossed into Thai territory in June 1980, causing a political embarrassment in Moscow. The Soviet discomfort with Vietnam's use of force was reflected in Moscow's diplomacy soon afterwards as they urged regional discussions between ASEAN and the Indochinese to settle the Kampuchean conflict. [Ref. 14]

In general, the ASEAN governments were concerned about the Soviet presence in terms of Sino-Soviet antagonism. As the alliance with Vietnam served Moscow's strategy to contain China, ASEAN leaders feared that the larger the Soviet presence becomes, the more active China's effort to subvert it will be. Malaysia's Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie warned that Soviet moves to develop its own independent position in Laos and Kampuchea "would encourage China to accelerate aid to the resistance movements in both countries, thus insuring constant turmoil involving both the Chinese and the Russians in territory adjacent to Thailand." [Ref. 14]

## **2. People's Republic of China-ASEAN Relations**

China was viewed by the ASEAN states as an actual or potential enemy because of its support for local insurgencies and the association of China with overseas Chinese, regarded as a potential "fifth column" in many Southeast Asian states. Indonesia broke-off its diplomatic relations with China after the 1965 Communist Party coup, which was rumored to be supported by China. Malaysia, although it had established diplomatic ties with China in 1974, was still troubled by the communist insurgency movement supported by China. Singapore, despite its predominantly ethnic Chinese population, stated that it will not normalize its relations with China until Indonesia does [Ref. 13]. Thailand and

the Philippines were also troubled by communist insurgency movements, which as in the case of Thailand, were dominated by overseas Chinese cadres [Ref. 13].

After Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, China became a close ally to ASEAN, especially to Thailand. Both China and ASEAN opposed Vietnam and demanded the withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea. However, being together on the same side did not mean that both would agree to each other's concept of the conflict settlement. In their efforts, the ASEAN states were cautious not to let China be the beneficiary in the event of conflict settlement. ASEAN's proposal to disarm all Kampuchean resistance factions (in which the Khmer Rouge, supported by China, was the strongest) before a free U.N. supervised election could be conducted, was evidence of ASEAN's fear toward China.

### **3. United States-ASEAN Relations**

In general, the United States-ASEAN relations were very good. ASEAN states were viewed by the U.S. as a model of what developing countries should be like: non-communist, trade oriented, relatively stable politically, and engaged in regional cooperation [Ref. 13]. ASEAN, in return, viewed the United States as a supportive superpower. Although the United States established formal security arrangements with only two ASEAN members, Thailand and the Philippines, it was viewed by the ASEAN states as the ultimate external security guarantor of their security.

During the 1980s, the Reagan administration once again viewed the third world as a primary arena of competition with the Soviet Union, and insisted that the reassertion of American power in the third world is essential for restoring the confidence of friends [Ref. 14]. However, the ASEAN states felt that U.S. policy still reflected a tendency toward serving only U.S. interests in its global rivalry with the Soviet Union. As in the case of U.S. policies in the Kampuchean conflict, the ASEAN states feared that the United States would only be interested in improving its relations with China, and neglecting ASEAN's interests.

The growing Soviet military presence during the 1980s and the prolonged Kampuchean conflict led the ASEAN states to seek additional military assistance from the United States. Discussions were conducted for the possibility of purchasing modern

military equipment, including the F-16 fighter bombers [Ref. 14]. Joint naval maneuvers, combining elements of the Seventh Fleet, also engaged naval units from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

The United States is important to ASEAN not only because of the security guarantee that the United States provided. At the same time, the United States is considered as a potential market for ASEAN's goods. Together with the Pacific Basin's community, the United States' trade reached \$ 136 billion in 1982, the largest of any world region [Ref. 14]. Although the ASEAN states still found the trade barriers caused by U.S. protectionist policies, dialogue channels have been established through the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference, in which the United States has become one of ASEAN's *Dialogue Partners*, together with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the European Community and South Korea.

#### **4. Japan-ASEAN Relations**

From the Japanese perspective, ASEAN occupied an important position in their foreign policy directives. The establishment of ASEAN, for example, was regarded by Japan as an illustration of growing Southeast Asian regionalism, thus important to Tokyo's regional development strategy. [Ref. 15]. In the early 1970s, however, Japan's rapid economic penetration of the Southeast Asian region caused a growing fear of Japan's economic domination. On one occasion, ASEAN took a collective action opposing Japan's plan to develop synthetic rubber production [Ref. 6]. Japan's Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's visit to Southeast Asia in early 1974 was then met with anti-Japanese demonstrations as the result of Japan's plan. In the event, Japan agreed to establish a Japan-ASEAN Forum on Rubber in the same year.

With the end of the Vietnam War, Japan formulated a policy which was later called the *Fukuda Doctrine*, composed of three principles [Ref. 13, 15]:

1. Japan would never become a military power.
2. Japan's relationship with ASEAN would be based on "heart to heart" diplomacy.



3. Japan would encourage peaceful coexistence between ASEAN and the Indochinese countries.

The Fukuda Doctrine showed the importance of ASEAN in Japan's Southeast Asian policy. In March 1977, the Japan-ASEAN Forum was established, indicating Japan's intention to pursue a special relationship with ASEAN.

After Vietnam's invasion to Kampuchea, ASEAN urged Tokyo to use its considerable economic power to dissuade Vietnam from aggression [Ref. 16]. Japan gradually took a firm stand of not resuming economic aid to Vietnam until Vietnam withdrew its troops from Kampuchea, and until a comprehensive settlement could be achieved. Many Japanese disagreed with their government's support of the ASEAN stance on the Kampuchean issue, especially that of Japan's freeze of economic aid to Hanoi [Ref. 16].

From the Japanese government's perspective, ASEAN was clearly more important to Japan than Vietnam. Economically, ASEAN accounted for 10 percent of Japan's total trade, while Vietnam and the Indochinese states combined represented less than one percent [Ref. 16]. Politically, the ASEAN countries were important to Japan mainly in the larger context of the Asia-Pacific region and global strategy. In a scholar's words:

With their basically anti-communist governments and with economies well integrated with the non-communist nations, ASEAN countries are likely allies of Japan in the regional balance of power. Their support and cooperation would definitely enhance Japan's position in the international community while their political stability and friendly disposition would guarantee Japan the accessibility to its most vital line, the Straits of Malacca. [Ref. 16]

In the security dimension, some ASEAN countries have shown interest in receiving arms and military technology from Japan in order to bolster their own defense capabilities and to enhance regional security, but Japan refused to sell military hardware to any nation [Ref. 13, 16]. Japan, however, accepted the requests for education and training of military personnel from the region. Between 1975 and 1985, 128 foreign

students attended Japan's military school, of which 80 were from Singapore and Thailand [Ref. 16]. In the context of Japan-ASEAN security cooperation, the Japanese government has repeatedly insisted that Japan would engage in "security-related cooperation" with ASEAN countries only in the economic field [Ref. 16]. They emphasized the importance of Japan's contribution to stability in Southeast Asia through its economic role, rather than by means of direct military assistance.

#### **F. A DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AND THE ASIAN WAY**

Ever since Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, ASEAN has been widely known as a diplomatic community. Its efforts at the U.N. to isolate Vietnam showed the Association's utility as a diplomatic tool to its member states in pursuing their individual as well as collective interests. Yet, while the Kampuchean conflict is perhaps the most widely known, ASEAN's utility as a diplomatic tool could be traced back to much earlier cases.

In an early 1970s case for example, ASEAN expressed their strong concerns to Japan over Japan's plan to increase both its domestic use and production of synthetic rubber. In response to ASEAN's pressure, Japan agreed to set up a forum on synthetic rubber through which a number of arrangements for assistance in technical and marketing research on natural rubber and rubber products were made [Ref. 6]. Japan also expressed its willingness to ensure that the development and expansion of its own domestic production of synthetic rubber would not unfavorably affect the natural rubber market.

In another case, ASEAN rallied behind Singapore on the dispute with Australia over a new Australian International Civil Aviation Policy. The new policy would restrict the ability of ASEAN states' airlines to pick up passengers in mid-route. Although the dispute was really between Singapore and Australia as the other airlines were still too small to be immediately affected, ASEAN viewed the dispute in the broader context of developed countries changing the rules to the disadvantage of developing countries [Ref. 6]. These examples emphasize two important principles in ASEAN's diplomacy, which

are: the value of presenting a united front against a third party, and the utility of agreeing to line up behind the most threatened member [Ref. 6].

In his book, *The Asian Way to Peace* [Ref. 17], Michael Haas described the philosophy of Asian cultures which to a great deal unsurprisingly explained the behavioral pattern in ASEAN's decision making. It consists of six principles, which are:

1. *Asian Solutions to Asian Problems*  
This principle means that Asians prefer to solve their own problems in their own way, rather than inviting Western countries to proffer advice about policies concerning national development and international conflict.
2. *Equality of Cultures*  
This principle emphasizes a spirit of tolerance and partnership, that contrasts sharply with the concept of domination and subjection that typified the imperialist powers in their dealing with Asian people. It is also in this context that it is necessary for Asians to develop personal relationship with one another in order to develop a mutual trust, from which agreement become possible.
3. *Consensus Decision Making*  
Related to the equality principle, it is then understood that a decision is the outcome of a consensus, a flexible accomodation of opposites that is built gradually on the basis of what all parties can endorse. This differs from the Western tendency toward rigid confrontation of divergent positions followed by a compromise. In the Asian Way, no decision is made unless each party can support the decision in principle. Furthermore, the Asian Way is grounded in the belief that no majority has the right to rule or shame anyone.
4. *Informal Incrementalism*  
In this principle, goals are achieved most effectively through small steps rather than by drawing up grand blueprints or timetables. Government should proceed with caution. Care is necessary in order to secure a solid political backing throughout each stage of a project.
5. *Primary of Politics over Administration*  
Matters of implementation are separated from matters of principle. As in the case of ASEAN's concept of the Neutralization of Southeast Asia, diplomats obtain a commitment to abstract goals first, leaving questions regarding the feasibility of putting lofty ideals into practice as a matters to be left out of political discussions. Implementation is assigned to administrative

subordinates, who are not supposed to throttle the attainment of political objectives.

6. *Pan Asian Spirit*

It is this Pan Asian spirit that allows wide latitude for subregional efforts. It is not aimed against any state or group of states, but instead is based on the notion of gotong-royong, an Indonesian term for collective self help at the local level.

These principles, in sum, reflected the reversal of an axiom of how the Westerners might handle public policy matters. It should not be a strange fact, however, since the principles of the Asian Way were developed in the years after World War II, as Western colonization began to fade out and Asian leaders were able to deal directly with one another. In their experience, the Asian leaders gradually learned that the Western system could not be applied satisfactorily in the Asian context. Looking inward to the traditional process of conflict resolution, the Asian leaders invented or rediscovered, and then developed "the Asian Way" to be adapted to the contemporary world.



#### IV. ASEAN IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

##### A. POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT: A NEW REGIONAL DISORDER?

The end of the cold war and superpower rivalries resulted in the reduction of global tensions and the settlement of regional conflicts at the international level. Despite all these, regional policy makers are also aware about the strategic uncertainties and conflict-creation potential of a post-cold war order at the regional level. In the case of Southeast Asia, the end of US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rivalries was marked by major retrenchment in the superpower military presence in the region, which in turn affecting the balance of power.

In January 1990, the former Soviet Union announced its intention to remove all but a small segment of its naval and air units stationed in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. For some ASEAN states, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, the Soviet withdrawal from Vietnam means the disappearing of a useful counterweight against any China's intention to gain supremacy in Southeast Asia [Ref. 18]. In addition, the reduction of Soviet forces along the Sino-Soviet border and the significant build up of Chinese naval power were viewed as effectively enhanced Beijing's capability to dominate the regional maritime environment [Ref. 19].

The United States on the other side, also decided to scale down its own military presence in the Pacific and reduce the stakes in its bases in the Philippines, thereby undermining its role as the regional "balancing wheel". These decisions by the United States raised concerns among ASEAN states, despite repeated U.S. statements emphasizing its intention to remain as a Pacific military power with significant forward-deployed forces. The impact of the reduction on U.S. military readiness and force-projection capability in the region remains uncertain [Ref. 18].

The absence of great powers such as the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the region would also mean a possible scramble by regional powers seeking to step into the power vacuum. Among the regional powers, China, Japan and India to some extent, are generally identified as the three leading contenders for influence, presumably because of their

capability to project power into Southeast Asian region [Ref. 20]. Apart from the question of who might become the regional hegemon, the rivalries among those countries will certainly boost competition which in turn make a multipolar regional order much less stable than the bipolar cold war system.

A potential scenario in which Japan and China will be forced to play greater roles in the region is in part determined by both countries' relationship with the United States. Serious escalation in the trade dispute between the United States and Japan for example, could threaten the fate of the US-Japan security relationship. Similarly, friction between the United States and China over the issue of human rights and Washington's threat of economic sanctions against China would make China "angry and resentful", which will have "serious long term consequences for Asia-Pacific peace and stability." [Ref. 18].

Another concern among ASEAN leaders are a number of recent developments, especially the conflicting claims to islands in the South China Sea [Ref. 9, 18, 21] as well as intramural territorial disputes within ASEAN [Ref. 18]. These are viewed as signalling a new phase of regional disorder. Moreover, a large scale arms build up that occurs within ASEAN as a result of intramural suspicions and an uncertain strategic climate caused by the retrenchment of superpower forces has led a former governor of Indonesia's National Defense Institute to warn of the possibility that Southeast Asia might become the theater of "prolonged, low intensity conflicts without directly involving strong nations", replacing larger conflicts fuelled by superpower rivalry during the cold war [Ref. 18].

## **B. SECURITY ISSUES OF ASEAN**

Security concerns among ASEAN states are shifting as a result of the end of the cold war. In the past, internal security issues such as communist insurgency, ethnic separation, political dissidence and civil-military conflicts preoccupied the minds of ASEAN ruling authorities. Internal threat was arguably more pressing than external ones. In fact, many of the so-called external threats, such as superpower rivalry, communist victories in Indochina and the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea were perceived mainly

in terms of their potential to aggravate existing domestic strife [Ref. 2, 14, 18]. In the post-cold war context, however, interstate and external security issues have become important on their own. Also, the question of internal security in many ASEAN states is now defined in terms of its external and international implications, such as human right issues, which are linked to the suppression of internal dissents and separatist movements by ASEAN's ruling regimes [Ref. 18].

Security cooperation between ASEAN members is also experiencing a change. During the cold war, the notion of "common enemy", i.e., communist insurgency, helped not only to dampen interstate rivalry within ASEAN, but also led member governments to develop cooperative security relationships short of a formal alliance [Ref. 18]. With the diminishing threat of communism, ASEAN now faces other problems of ethnic separatism and territorial disputes, which have a divisive impact on relationships both within the grouping and within the region as a whole. A new security approach is needed to deal with these issues, different from the one when insurgency and subversion were deemed to be the principal threat.

## **1. Issues of Internal Threat and Domestic Stability**

### ***a. Communist Insurgency***

The role of communism as a revolutionary political force has declined in most ASEAN member states. With the exception of the Philippines, communist insurgency no longer poses a credible threat to regime survival in ASEAN states. In Indonesia, the communist party was never allowed to recover from its bloody crackdown in the aftermath of the 1965 coup attempt. In Malaysia and Thailand, amnesty campaigns launched by both governments led to a rapid decline in the number of communist guerillas. The pro-Beijing Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) shrank to a few hundred members in 1987, from a peak of 10,000 guerillas in the late 1970's. Malaysia also witnessed the surrender of 1,100 strong guerilla army of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM). The peak strength of CPM had been recorded as 8,000 members in 1951. In December 1989, agreement was made between Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and the governments of Malaysia and Thailand, ending the 41-year armed struggle against the



Malaysian government [Ref. 19]. In the Philippines, members of the New People's Army had swollen during the last years of President Marcos regime, from around 8,000 in 1980 to about 22,500 in 1985. Recent estimates suggest a number of 15,000. [Ref. 18]

Several factors can be attributed to the success of ASEAN governments over communist insurgencies. The decline of external support, especially from China, was especially important in the success against the communists in Malaysia and Thailand. Also the ability of the government to ensure rapid economic growth and prosperity was important in eliminating the domestic roots of insurgency. In the Philippines, the government is adopting a new strategy called *total programming* in which a military campaign is combined with efforts by local government authorities, civilian volunteers and the private sector to address the insurgents' livelihood problems. The removal of U.S. bases and forces from the Philippines are also hoped to reduce support for the insurgents, since it deprived a major reason for their popular appeal. [Ref. 18]

#### ***b. The Armed Separatist Movements***

Another internal security concern within ASEAN states is the armed separatist movements. Organisasi Papua Merdeka, Aceh Merdeka and Fretilin in Indonesia, Moro National Liberation Front and Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines, and the Pattani United Liberation Organization in Southern Thailand are those who remain active, albeit varying degree in intensity. In general, however, these armed separatist campaigns have not posed as great a threat to stability as communist insurgency. The major reason for this is the lack of significant external support for separatist causes. This, along with effective suppression and or more accommodationist government policies, has led to a decline in separatist movements in ASEAN states in recent years.

#### ***c. Civil-Military Relations***

As in the case of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, the state of civil-military relations has been and remains a crucial factor in regime stability, although the nature and scope of military influence is not uniform in these states. In Indonesia, the doctrine of *dwifungsi* or dual function of the armed forces allows the military to intervene

in the country's politics whenever deemed necessary to preserve social and political stability. The doctrine stated the role of ABRI (Indonesian Armed Forces) as the country's defense force and as a social political force. The role as a social political force was derived from historical perspective that ABRI was essentially the freedom fighters who fought for and defended Indonesian independence. Thus, ABRI is part of a large Indonesian national community with the same rights and responsibility as any other citizens. As a manifestation of the dwifungsi doctrine, Indonesia's armed forces remain deeply entrenched in a wide variety of state institutions, especially those dealing with political, legal and security affairs [Ref. 18, 22, 23].

In Thailand and the Philippines, the military's intervention in politics was driven by the failures of the civilian government in the political and economic arena. Issues of corruption and inefficiency were among the major reasons for a military intervention. But political trends in both countries seem to show increasing constraints on the military's coup-making potential [Ref. 18]. The bloody suppression of a May 1992 demonstration in Thailand, which led to the resignation of army commander Suchinda Krapayoon as prime minister, signalled some fundamental changes in Thai society that might militate against future coup. The rapid economic growth fuelled by foreign investment is the prime cause for the shift. A coup or an attempted coup might cause political instability, which will drive away foreign investors and undermine economic growth. For this reason, the middle class and business groups in Thailand oppose military intervention in politics. A successful future coup in Thailand thus, in order to have public support, would require a strategy of hitherto untried approaches that combine seizure of power with methods to sustain business confidence. [Ref. 18]

In the Philippines, issues of widespread corruption and economic decline during Marcos era have also created a popular revulsion with military rule. Army officers of the ultra right forces are now in a minority and find fewer opportunities to stage a coup. Except when allied with other traditional conservative groups, the dissident military groups are unlikely to gain popular backing for their cause. As also in the case of Thailand, the military establishment in the Philippines has to face the fact that they are

no longer monolithic as a political organization, with interservice squabbles having undermined its cohesion and ability to dominate the political system. [Ref. 18]

## **2. Intra-ASEAN Territorial Disputes**

In the post cold war era, a number of territorial disputes have surfaced and assumed significance for the potential to disrupt intra-ASEAN relations. The following are the existing disputes between ASEAN member states [Ref. 18]:

### ***a. Malaysia and Singapore***

Pedra Branca island off the coast of Johor is disputed. Singapore claims the island on the basis that it has exercised control since 1840's. Singapore, in fact, has been responsible for the operation of the lighthouse on the island. Malaysia, on the other hand, stated that the island belongs to the state of Johor. An arbitration proposed by Singapore in 1989 to settle the dispute has not materialized yet. Tensions occur over the issues of a helicopter pad built by Singapore on the lighthouse and the chasing away of Malaysian fishermen by the Singapore Navy.

### ***b. Malaysia and Indonesia***

Sipadan and Ligitan islands in the Sulawesi Sea near Sabah-Kalimantan border are the center of the dispute. Both claims are based on maps created during the Dutch and British colonial administrations in Indonesia and Malaysia respectively. Attempts by Malaysia to develop tourist facilities on the islands in 1991 invited protest from Indonesia. A joint committee has been formed to settle the dispute.

### ***c. Malaysia and Thailand***

There is a dispute over border-crossing rights. A treaty which allowed Thai and Malaysian military personnel to conduct cross-border operations was signed between both countries. But an incident in December 1991 in which Thai forces fired shots at Padang Besar area (Malaysia) led Malaysia to accuse Thailand of abusing the provisions of the treaty for frequent intrusion. An effort is being made to develop a consultative mechanism to deal with future incident.

#### *d. Malaysia and Brunei*

The dispute over the Limbang territory in Sarawak remains unresolved. Originally, Limbang was a territory under the sultanate of Brunei. In 1890, the chiefs of Limbang, which had been in a state of rebellion against the Sultan of Brunei, asked Sarawak ruler Raja Brooke to take over their district. Limbang was then incorporated as the fifth division of Sarawak. This deprived Brunei of a valuable food-producing area. The British government offered to pay compensation to the Sultan, but the offer was never formally accepted, so that this came to be regarded as a cession by default. In 1916, the United Kingdom formally recognized Limbang as part of Sarawak, but the Sultan of Brunei never acknowledged the cession, and the status of Limbang remained controversial.

#### *e. Malaysia and the Philippines*

Long term dispute over Sabah was regarded as the most dangerous bilateral dispute within ASEAN. Although it is now considerably muted since President Marcos dropped the claim at the 1977 ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, final resolution has not yet been reached. Attempts by the Aquino government to secure the necessary legal basis for dropping the claim was thwarted by the Philippine Senate.

### **3. The Spratly Islands Dispute**

The Spratly Islands group is located in the southern part of the South China Sea. It consists of over 230 islets, reefs, shoals and sand banks. The parties involved in the dispute are China, Taiwan, Vietnam and three ASEAN members: Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines [Ref. 9, 18, 21]. The Philippines is claiming some 60 islets, rocks and atolls collectively called Kalayaan. Malaysia's total claim includes three islands and four group of rocks. Brunei only claims the Laisa Reef [Ref. 18].

Within ASEAN members, Malaysia and the Philippines have established a military presence in the Spratlys. Malaysia put its troops on three atolls since 1983 and is planning to build an airstrip to defend the islands. The Philippines' military presence dates back to 1968 and currently occupies eight of the islands, with an airstrip on one of them. [Ref. 18]

Security concerns about the Spratly disputes are linked to the potential of becoming a source of armed conflict in Southeast Asia. But it is noteworthy citing the fact that the non-ASEAN parties to the dispute have adopted a generally more moderate attitude towards the ASEAN claimants than towards each other. China has shown a degree of restraint in dealing with Malaysia's and the Philippines' claims. Taiwan, too, has shown similar posture, despite the strain on the bilateral relation with the Philippines over the issue of Taiwanese fishermen on the Philippine's water. Hanoi showed willingness for a peaceful settlement with the Philippines and agreed with Malaysia to do joint development of the areas under dispute and share any discoveries pending final settlement. [Ref. 18]

But the prospect of any agreement on the joint development of the islands involving all the claimants has limited plausibility. Obstacles include Beijing's objection to any negotiation involving Taiwan, the unlikely prospect that any of the claimants who already have a military presence on the islands would agree to a withdrawal, and problems in deciding the principles for the fair allocation of rights and profit. [Ref. 18]

When the prospect for joint development fails, the fear for armed conflict over the islands arises. As the armed forces commander of the Philippines, General Lisandro Abadia put it: "There are strong indications that the future area of conflict (in Southeast Asia) may shift towards the maritime area, specifically the territorial dispute of the South China Sea." [Ref. 18]. A major factor behind such concern is the economic and strategic importance of the Spratlys. Economically, the Spratlys are believed to be rich in oil and other minerals, such as manganese nodules, as well as in fishing grounds [Ref. 9, 18]. Strategically, the Spratly islands are located near major sea-lanes in Eastern Asia. Control of the island group could provide a country with staging points for surveillance, sea-lane interdiction and other naval operations that could disrupt traffic from Singapore to Southern China and Taiwan [Ref. 18].

In February 1992, China adopted a territorial sea law which claimed the entire Spratlys and provided for the use of force to back its claim [Ref. 18, 21]. This was

followed by the awarding of a three-year contract to an American company to begin oil exploration in the South China Sea in an area just 160 km from the Vietnamese coast.

The perceived strategic importance of the Spratlys and a desire to prevent the South China Sea from becoming the next focal point of conflict in the region occupied the main agenda of ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila 1992. The meeting produced an ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea, which stressed the "necessity to resolve all sovereignty and jurisdictional issues pertaining to the South China Sea by peaceful means, without resort to force", and urged "all parties concerned to exercise restraint." In this context, ASEAN is successful in bringing the South China Sea dispute to international attention and implying a diplomatic cost for any party which may contemplate military action to settle the dispute. But this may be as far as ASEAN can go, given its lack of leverage on the major actor in the dispute, China. [Ref. 18]

### **C. ASEAN AND INDOCHINA**

#### **1. A New Relationship**

In 1986, the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam adopted an economic policy of *doi moi* or renovation. The policy had the objective of creating a market mechanism economy with the help of foreign investment and export promotion. Apparently Hanoi realized that its occupation of Kampuchea entailed severe economic costs that it could no longer afford. However, the initiative by Vietnamese government to improve the political climate for economic ties with its neighbors was not accepted by the ASEAN members in the first place. Instead, ASEAN chose to focus on Hanoi's continued occupation of Kampuchea. [Ref. 2, 18]

In August 1988, a major shift took place in Thailand when Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan recognized the opportunities offered by Vietnam's reform by declaring that Thai policy would now aim at "turning the Indochinese battlefields into marketplaces." [Ref. 2, 18]. Immediately reactions came from other ASEAN members. Not only was Bangkok accused of seeking unilateral economic advantage by promoting rapid trade and investment links with Indochina, but Chatichai's political initiatives on

the Kampuchean conflict undermined ASEAN's consensual diplomacy, in which not a single ASEAN country is justified to make a commitment directed to help Vietnam before a comprehensive settlement has been found to the Kampuchean problem.

Against this backdrop, Hanoi declared on 5 April 1989 that it would unconditionally withdraw all its troops from Kampuchea by September in the same year. ASEAN on the other hand, chose to wait for clear proof of Hanoi's sincerity in making good its promise before pronouncing an end to the regional rivalry. Meanwhile, doubts and differing views over improved relations with Indochina persisted throughout 1990. On the question of Vietnam becoming a partner in ASEAN's membership upon the withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea, opinions among ASEAN members were divided. Malaysia and Indonesia adopted the view that such a development should not await domestic transformation in Vietnam. In Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir words: "If Vietnam subscribes to the ideas of ASEAN, the system of government it practices should not be something that stands in the way of becoming a member of ASEAN." [Ref. 18]. Singapore on the other hand, stated that the Indochinese countries should change their economic and political systems before being allowed into the Association [Ref. 18].

Despite the cold reactions by some ASEAN members, Hanoi continued its effort to improve the climate for ASEAN-Indochinese relations. From Hanoi's perspective, the relations offered a number of benefits, including the prospect for attracting foreign investment and technology transfers and reducing its independence on the Soviet Union. The normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, marked by Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Beijing in May 1989, had contributed to Hanoi's sense of isolation. Vietnam could no longer count on Soviet backing against China. The withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Vietnam and the cessation of Soviet material assistance to Vietnam estimated at \$ 3 billion a year had also added to Hanoi's insecurity.

ASEAN's posture toward Vietnam took a positive turn after Hanoi expressed its desire to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, which is considered as the regional "code of conduct" on territorial integrity and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In part, the decline of the Soviet-Vietnam alliance and the departure of most of the Soviet forces

from Cam Ranh Bay helped remove ASEAN's long standing suspicions about the threat it posed to the security of the regional sea-lanes.

Similar to the case of Vietnam, the Laotian communist regime launched domestic economic reform in order to ensure its own survival and legitimacy in the face of a declining economy and reduced prospects of aid from the Eastern bloc countries. In this context, its economic links (largely unofficial) with Thailand were now deemed to play a crucial role in the success of domestic economic reform. The withdrawal of Vietnamese combat units in Laos from 45,000 at the beginning of 1988 to some 5,000 in 1989 contributed to the rapid improvement in the relationship between Thailand and Laos. In November 1989, Thailand lifted the ban on the export of strategic goods to Laos, followed by a decision to construct the first bridge across the Mekong River in March 1990. [Ref. 18]

But Thailand was not the only non-communist state with whom the regime in Laos sought an improved relationship. To prevent over-reliance on a single country, Laos also developed closer economic and political ties with other ASEAN states and non-regional aid donors. This move was also helpful to dampen Vietnamese fears of a Thai sphere of influence in Indochina [Ref. 18].

The end of the Kampuchean conflict and the signing of Paris Peace Agreement on 23 October 1991 marked another stage in ASEAN-Indochina relations. The agreement was a success of ASEAN's diplomatic effort. It conformed to terms set by ASEAN from the very outset, including the reversal of the Vietnamese occupation and the replacement of the regime installed by its invasion. Following the Paris Agreement was Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet's tour to all ASEAN states, undertaken between October 1991 and March 1992. Vietnam's effort to cultivate harmonious relationship with ASEAN paid-off with the communique issued at the end of the Singapore Summit. It envisaged that "ASEAN shall forge a closer relationship based on friendship and cooperation with the Indochinese countries, following the settlement on Kampuchea." [Ref. 18].



## **2. A New Marketplace**

The improving relations with Indochinese countries have the primary impact on the economic arena. Singapore has become Vietnam's largest trading partner, with total trade amounting to \$ 1 billion in 1991. Also about 70 percent of Kampuchea's imports come from Singapore, valued at \$ 243 million in 1991. In the case of Thailand, its trade with Vietnam rose sharply from 350 million baht in 1988 to 2863 million baht in 1990. With Kampuchea, the trade jumped from 0.2 million baht in 1987 to 318 million baht in 1990. Thailand's trade with Laos also increased from 1184 million baht in 1987 to 2817 million baht in 1990. And finally, trade between Vietnam and Malaysia has also showed sharp increases from \$ 150 million in 1990 to \$ 250 million in 1991. [Ref. 18]

Rich in natural and human resource base, Vietnam and other Indochinese countries are an attractive target for investments. ASEAN countries as a whole had invested \$ 31 million in Vietnam in 1990. In Laos, Thailand is a major ASEAN investor with a total of \$ 17.2 million in 1990. After lifting its official ban on its companies investing in Vietnam in November 1991, Singapore invested some \$ 20 million into more than ten projects during the first quarter of 1992 only. In Kampuchea, Singapore is also investing an equal amount of dollars into some thirty projects. [Ref. 18]

Undoubtedly, ASEAN has benefited from the economic reconstruction of Indochina. And indeed, ASEAN has now emerged as one of the major trading partners for the Indochina states. To some extent however, the economic reconstruction of Indochina can be a mixed blessing for ASEAN. With a population of 68 million and adult literacy reportedly higher than that of ASEAN states, Vietnam could compete with ASEAN for increasingly scarce foreign investment capital.

One of the important topics on the current ASEAN economic agenda is the plan for creating an ASEAN Free Trade Area or AFTA. This plan of economic liberalization in the region is supposed to take effect by the year 2008. But despite all their enthusiasm for developing trade and investment links with Indochina and the prospect of Indochina as a potential market, ASEAN states do not envisage participation by the Indochinese states in AFTA. AFTA was designed to cover ASEAN member states only. On the

prospect of the Indochinese states becoming members of ASEAN, Singapore's Trade Minister Lee Hsien Loong listed a number of obstacles (in the case of Vietnam), including "differing economic management styles, living standards and integration into the world economy." [Ref.18]. Thus, it seems that accelerated economic development in Indochina supported by the continued commitment of the Vietnamese leadership to market oriented reform remains an essential precondition of ASEAN-Indochinese economic relations. In the meantime, the major contribution of ASEAN-Indochinese economic relations has been to act as a catalyst for political relations and improve the general climate for a security framework for the entire region.

### **3. A New Security Partner?**

In recent years, ASEAN witnessed the change in Hanoi's security perspective. Until recently, Hanoi's approach to security was based on the old conception which advocated that a country should stand with one great power to oppose another one or neighboring countries. This approach conflicted with ASEAN's concept of ZOPFAN, which called for regional non-alignment. The new security approach of Hanoi is described by Assistant Foreign Minister Tran Huy Chung as: "What is most beneficial to the Southeast Asian countries is to have appropriately balanced relationships with great powers outside the region, with a view to resolving disputes for influence between them over the region." [Ref. 18]. It implicitly indicated Hanoi's need for a regional balance of power to offset the perceived threat of Chinese domination. Hanoi's approach however, seemed consistent with ASEAN's recent move to favor a balanced relationship among external powers to prevent any single regional power from filling the power vacuum created by superpower retrenchment.

The recent Chinese policy in the South China Sea has created a common fear shared by Vietnam and ASEAN. ASEAN's call for the parties involved to renounce the use of force, which appeared to have been largely directed at China, was openly welcomed by Vietnam. The "threat from China" is what Hanoi hopes to find common ground with its ASEAN counterpart, especially Indonesia and Malaysia, who hold deep

suspensions of China's naval build-up and its potential to use force in the South China Sea dispute [Ref. 18, 19].

But it is less likely that the process of ASEAN-Indochinese reconciliation is to be governed by a common security imperative than by functional cooperation featuring an incremental and modest approach to institution building. Moreover, a number of factors have been obstacles for a full fledged security partnership between ASEAN and Indochina. The trends toward higher levels of defense spending and force modernization in ASEAN states have invited Vietnam's critics. Singapore's offer of a military facility to the United States has also created Vietnam's suspicion. Within ASEAN, the Thai military remains suspicious of Vietnam's strategic intentions, despite the pragmatic approach of both countries to bilateral relations. [Ref. 18]

The developments in Kampuchea's internal affairs also have the potential to disrupt the process of regional reconciliation between ASEAN and Indochinese countries. The May 1993 election in Kampuchea, supervised by the U.N., did not bring about a comprehensive political solution as envisaged by the Paris Agreement. The refusal of the Khmer Rouge to disarm, as well as its boycott of the election, suggested its determination to continue to seek power by exploiting issues of economic problems and the presence of ethnic Vietnamese in Kampuchea. Failure by the new regime to create a viable constitutional process and ensure economic development might lead to renewed civil war in the country. Prosecution of ethnic Vietnamese in Kampuchea might as well invite Vietnam to intervene.

#### **D. APPROACHES AND PROBLEMS TOWARD A NEW REGIONAL SECURITY ORDER**

##### **1. Is ZOPFAN Still Relevant?**

Consistent with the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 to ensure the region's stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation, ZOPFAN reflected the grouping's desire to insulate the region from the dynamics of great power rivalry. As it turned out, however, the implementation of ZOPFAN was seriously undermined by

several factors. First, disagreement occurred among ASEAN members over how ZOPFAN should be approached. Singapore and Thailand stressed the need for external security links as opposed to the pro-neutralization views of Malaysia and Indonesia. Also, ASEAN failed to secure support for it from the key extra regional powers, the U.S. and Japan. But more importantly, the outbreak of the Kampuchean conflict accompanied by Sino-Soviet rivalry led ASEAN to hold on to the position that the realization of ZOPFAN could only come after the resolution of the Kampuchean conflict.

As the Kampuchean conflict came to an end with the signing of the Paris Agreement and new developments occur in regional and global events, the circumstances which shaped the need for ZOPFAN as a security framework have begun to change significantly. Questions on its continued relevance have also emerged. Is ZOPFAN still a practical notion? Is ZOPFAN desirable as a framework for regional security and order?

Those who argue for the non-practicability of ZOPFAN state that it is almost impossible to insulate Southeast Asia as a region from the interests and interactions of major external powers. Moreover, the facts suggest that ZOPFAN has never been, and is unlikely to be accepted by outside powers. Even if ZOPFAN is accepted by the major powers, a neutral Southeast Asia would require Southeast Asian countries to maintain an insular security posture while at the same time exploiting the pay-offs of closer economic interdependence within the wider Asia-Pacific region where four major powers of the world are located, which is quite a contradiction in nature.

The absence of the super power forces from the region has also created a sense of vulnerability among some ASEAN states. Led by Singapore, they argue for the need to retain the "balancing wheel" role of the United States in the region. Constraining the role of outside powers as prescribed by ZOPFAN, in Singapore's view, would suit the designs of regional power, including Indonesia, to play a dominant role in the region [Ref. 18]. ZOPFAN would thus not only undermine the balance of power among external players, but would also upset the delicate equilibrium in intra-regional relations which has sustained ASEAN for so long.

Does this mean that ASEAN is ready to abandon its ZOPFAN concept? Indonesia is clearly reluctant to do so. ZOPFAN, in Indonesia's Foreign Minister Ali Alatas' view, is "an evolutionary process", representing "the regional, multilateral framework within which it is hoped to promote national and regional resilience and to seek the disentanglement of the region from the contending strategic designs of the great powers." [Ref. 18]. However, Indonesia is also aware that the implementation of ZOPFAN in its original form is not a feasible response to the challenge of the post-cold war regional order. Adjustments need to be made in the light of a changing regional strategic environment. As Ali Alatas conceded, Southeast Asian countries "cannot keep the four powers (the U.S., Japan, China and the former Soviet Union) out of the region." [Ref. 18]. The implication is that regional security would best be ensured not through a framework excluding the great powers as envisaged by ZOPFAN, but through equilibrium among them and between them and Southeast Asia.

## **2. Growing External Security Links: Searching for a New Equilibrium?**

The end of the cold war, followed by a major retrenchment in the superpower military presence in Southeast Asia, have influenced ASEAN's security perspective. Concerns about a possible scramble by regional powers to seek dominance in the region, as suggested by the theory of "power vacuum", have contributed to the increasing degree in external security links among ASEAN members, especially with the United States. The removal of U.S. military bases from the Philippines has encouraged other ASEAN states, including Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia, to increase their defense cooperation with the United States.

In November 1990, Singapore signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. which provided for the deployment of American aircraft (on a rotational basis) and military personnel in Singapore. This was followed by an agreement signed during U.S. President George Bush's visit to Singapore in 1992, in which a major naval logistic facility will be relocated from Subic Bay to Singapore. The facility, known as the *Command Task Force 73*, consists of about 200 personnel and would be responsible for port calls and the resupply of U.S. Navy ships and would coordinate warships

deployments in the Pacific region. Malaysia has declared its intention to expand bilateral military cooperation with the U.S. and has also offered Subang and Lumut facilities for the maintenance and repair of U.S. C-130 aircrafts and ships respectively, on a commercial basis. A similar offer has also been made by Indonesia which allows U.S. Navy ships to be repaired at Surabaya facility. Brunei, although limited in scope, has also signed a memorandum allowing for several U.S. warship visits and joint training with Bruneian forces. [Ref. 18]

Meanwhile, efforts have also been made to strengthen the role of the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) [Ref. 18, 19], whose members include Malaysia, Singapore, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Singapore has proposed a contingency command mechanism within FPDA which will enable "FPDA forces to work together, so that should the need ever arise and should the political will ever direct, the FPDA member countries can combine their military forces together to deal with any threat." FPDA so far, has contributed to the air defense of Malaysia and Singapore through the Integrated Air Defense System (IADS). In addition, FPDA has helped to serve as a highly useful confidence building mechanism between Malaysia and Singapore, despite the problems in their political relations. For these reasons, Malaysia and Singapore would like to see FPDA strengthened. Recent moves include the expansion of IADS to cover Sabah and Sarawak as well, and the possibility to attract Brunei into membership. Indonesia however, has expressed its uneasiness to any further effort to expand the role for FPDA. [Ref. 18]

Despite the increasing degree of external security links among ASEAN member states, they maintain that their moves do not imply the abandonment of ZOPFAN, especially as the new relationships do not permit foreign "bases", but only "access to local facilities". [Ref. 18]. But the greater tolerance for such arrangements suggests ASEAN's shift towards a new security approach that does not necessarily seek to minimize the involvement of external power. As this happen, it might lead to the obsolescence of ZOPFAN as a framework for regional security.

### **3. Regional Dialogues on Security: Developing a New Mechanism**

Since its inception in 1967, ASEAN has been reluctant to engage in formal multilateral security consultations and collaboration. In part, because its founding fathers were cautious not to let it being perceived as a successor of SEATO, a U.S. sponsored military alliance, which therefore would become an easy target to China and Soviet's accusations. Any attack by communist countries might ruin ASEAN's effort to maintain the image of a non-ideological, non-military and non-antagonistic grouping. In the post-cold war era, however, ASEAN feels the need to redefine its security approach as the regional and global environments are changing. Multilateral consultations on security issues, such as Manila Conference on Regional Security in June 1991 and similar conference in Thailand in November 1991 marked a new beginning in ASEAN's attitude towards regional security approach. ASEAN gave its "blessing" as the decision at the Singapore Summit "authorized" ASEAN dialogues on security cooperation [Ref. 18].

In the context of a wider Asia-Pacific level, proposals have been made to create new regional security institutions to replace the superpower alliance systems of the cold war period. The successful Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was initially intended as a model for a similar Conference on Security Cooperation in Asia (CSCA). However, CSCA was dropped later on for several reasons. First, the United States viewed any such institution as a threat to its existing alliance system. In the words of a Bush administration official: "While the United States would adjust the form of its security role in the region (in the post-cold war era), it tends to retain the substance of its role and the bilateral defense relationships which give it structure." [Ref. 18]. Second, in the ASEAN leaders view, Asia-Pacific is too complex and diverse a region for CSCE-type arrangements [Ref. 18]. Third, if regional and external players were to direct their attention and resources to creating an Asia-Pacific security forum, it might cause ASEAN to "lose its identity". In other words, ASEAN's share might become insignificant [Ref. 21]. Moreover, such a grouping might serve the Western members to press ASEAN on the contentious issue of human rights [Ref. 18], which had been a central theme of the CSCE process. ASEAN would strongly reject any pressure from its Western dialogue

partners on human rights or environmental issues as part of their existing consultative agenda.

As an alternative to a formal CSCE-type institution, ASEAN has expressed its preference the use of looser and more consultative mechanism such as the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC), which is a forum of discussion between ASEAN and its dialogue partners. To ASEAN members, the PMC framework offers several advantages. First, ASEAN would have a controlling influence over the agenda of discussions and would not risk being sidelined, as might be the case with any new institution. Second, the PMC would enable ASEAN to pursue a more "inclusive" approach to security in the context of growing security interdependence between Southeast Asia and the wider Pacific region. As argued by a Thai scholar:

(ASEAN's) effort to establish region wide order in Southeast Asia must be related to the larger Asia-Pacific framework of conflict-reduction and cooperation, not only because one needs to recognize the geographical and economic interdependence that exists in this area, but also because one needs to find ways and means of ensuring that extra regional -that is non-Southeast Asian-powers' involvements in this region continue to be "constructive engagements". [Ref. 18].

During the ASEAN Annual Ministerial Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1991, Japan supported the idea of using the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference as a forum for regional security dialogue [Ref. 21]. Despite some initial hesitation and a cool response from the United States, it was endorsed by ASEAN's ministers at the meeting. The subsequent shift in the U.S. attitude towards multilateralism in Asia-Pacific added to the appeal of ASEAN PMC. The fact that this institution has been around for some time enables it to avoid controversy over its structure and function associated with any new institutional framework and makes it more acceptable to countries like the U.S. which are apprehensive about the potential of multilateralism to damage its long-established security structures. [Ref. 18]

Besides the expectation of ASEAN PMC becoming a successful forum for regional security dialogue, its effectiveness is still likely to be constrained by disagreement over



a common security agenda between ASEAN members and their Western counterparts. Attempts by the latter to incorporate such "unconventional" threats such as environmental degradation and human right abuses would certainly meet ASEAN's strong rejection.

#### **4. Military Modernization: Arms Race in Southeast Asia?**

Another aspects of consideration for a peaceful Southeast Asia are the defense spending and force modernization by ASEAN states. The trends towards increasing defense expenditure and the import of sophisticated weapons have in fact led some analysts to conclude that post-cold war Southeast Asia is witnessing a regional arms race among ASEAN members. Indonesia's defense budget has received 18 percent increase in 1993-1994 period, estimated at the total of \$ 1.95 billion. Malaysia took similar move by increasing its defense spending from M\$ 1.5 billion in the 1986-1990 period to a fourfold increase of M\$ 6 billion in the 1991-1995 period. The Philippines has allocated 10 billion pesos to modernize its armed forces. On the other hand, both Brunei and Singapore are likely to maintain a steady rate of increase in their defense expenditure while Thailand's defense spending is expected to stabilize in the view of the recent decline in the armed forces' influence in the political decision making. [Ref.18]

The common features in ASEAN's import of sophisticated weapons include the procurement of advanced aircraft, airborne early warning systems and various naval platforms to create capabilities beyond coastal defense. Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia are acquiring new *Hawk* jet trainer/strike planes from Britain, while the Philippines has bought a mix of Italian (SIAI-Marchetti S-211), Israeli (*Kfir*) and Czech (*Albatros*) aircrafts. In addition, Thailand and Singapore are buying additional units of the F-16 fighter aircraft from the United States. At the same time, the naval force modernization has also occurred in all ASEAN states, marked by the acquisition of missile-equipped large patrol crafts and ships. [Ref. 18]

What drives ASEAN states to purchase those modern weapons? Is intra regional competition going on? The evidence suggests that the motives include, but go beyond, intra regional competition. First, uncertainties about the military position of extra regional powers such as the United States, China, Russia and Japan are the common motivating

factor. Second, the end of the cold war has forced the manufacturers from the Western and Eastern blocs to compete in the world's market. The availability of wide range and large quantities of weapons at bargain prices, combined with the economic prosperity of ASEAN states, has made it an attractive opportunity to modernize their forces [Ref. 18, 24]. Third, above all, those arms purchases reflect the particular needs and national security concerns of the buyer countries [Ref. 18, 24]. Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines for example, are developing capabilities to protect offshore resources. All of them are now engaging in the Spratlys dispute. Indonesia's naval force modernization reflects its position as the largest archipelagic state in the region. Singapore's heavy dependence on seaborne commerce explains the country's move to increase sea-lane security.

Will all these moves in acquiring modern weapons lead to destabilization in Southeast Asia? Perhaps. But there are also a number of factors that are worth considering. First, while the overall spending by ASEAN states has increased, spending in relation to the total GNP has actually declined [Ref. 18, 25]. Second, no weapons of mass destruction seem to be acquired by ASEAN states, which include nuclear, biological and chemical weapons [Ref. 18]. This put Southeast Asia into different set from the "dangerous hot spots", including the Korean Peninsula, South Asia and the Middle East, where the proliferation of "unconventional" weapons dominates the regional arms race. Third, while territorial disputes and political rivalries between some ASEAN states, i.e., Singapore and Malaysia, Malaysia and Thailand might play the role behind the force modernization, such rivalries are not evident in other bilateral relationships [Ref. 18]. Fourth, the shared need for greater self-reliance in the wake of superpower retrenchment from the region, as well as perceived threats from competition among external powers such as China, India and Japan should also be considered, that the interactive dynamic in weapon acquisitions by ASEAN states should not be overstated [Ref. 18, 25].

Nonetheless, concerns have been expressed regarding the current military modernization in ASEAN. Whatever the state rationale behind these force modernization efforts, their actual impact on interstate relations depends on the future of regional

political climate. As the foreign minister of Australia argued: "The sort of precautionary worst case thinking which often characterizes strategic planning (in the region)...could in turn generate a destabilizing arms race." [Ref. 18].

### **5. Arms Control vs Defense Cooperation: Managing Competition**

The current military modernization in Southeast Asia has triggered outside experts to call for arms control and the creation of a regional body to evaluate defense purchases by ASEAN states. Within ASEAN, a similar suggestion has been made by the Malaysian defense minister, that "greater transparency in weapon acquisition should be encouraged through the creation of a regional arms register based on the U.N. model so that suspicions among each other could be minimized and managed." [Ref. 18]. However, no action has been taken to follow the proposal.

On the other hand, ASEAN leaders have argued that arms control may not be a necessary element of regional order in Southeast Asia. As the Singapore's defense minister pointed out, the "strong ties" among defense heads in ASEAN has helped to "foster greater mutual confidence and trust", and the bilateral military exercises among ASEAN states have helped to "build links with neighbors, overcome suspicions and promote cooperation." [Ref. 18].

Although bilateral defense cooperation exists among ASEAN members, a formal military alliance has been rejected from the beginning. Apart from being cautious not to confront regional problems in military form, there are several reasons to put defense cooperation outside the formal framework of ASEAN. As Indonesia's former defense chief General Try Sutrisno stated: "Without a military pact...(the ASEAN states) can cooperate more flexibly." [Ref. 18]. Echoing the statement was Malaysia's former chief of staff's argument that bilateral cooperation still remains preferable to a pact because "it allows any ASEAN partner to decide the type, time and scale of aid it requires or can provide." Moreover, it ensures that "the question of national independence and sovereignty (of members) is unaffected by the decision of others as in the case of an alliance where members can invoke the terms of the treaty and interfere in the affairs of another partner." [Ref. 18].

Bilateral defense cooperation, however, also finds some limitation to its use as an approach to regional order. First, the bilateral defense links within ASEAN are not uniformly developed, with the majority of joint exercises taking place between three countries: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Also, some countries establish closer relations between each other. An example for a particularly close relationship is between Brunei and Singapore, probably because of their shared views and feelings about their positions and relationships with other ASEAN states. On the other hand, defense relations between Brunei and Malaysia remain low-key due to strained political ties, as the result of Brunei's suspicion of Malaysian interference in its domestic affairs. Second, a significant degree of integration and inter-operability have not yet developed. The diversity in defense doctrine, language and strategic priorities limit the benefits to be derived from joint exercises and undermine the possibility of mutual support in contingencies.



## V. CONCLUSION

In its intramural dimension, ASEAN has provided a stable structure of relations for managing and containing tensions among its member states. Yes it is true that the record has indicated some stormy relations among members, and that institutional provision for dispute settlement has not yet been put into effect. However, a collective ability to sustain a working relationships among members is proof of the value placed on continued membership. As Michael Leifer wrote [Ref. 2]: "No member government has found its interests so imperiled by corporate priorities that it has contemplated withdrawal. Correspondingly, nor has any member government been found guilty of so transgressing corporate rules that expulsion has been considered."

In its external dimension, ASEAN has displayed a quality of political cohesion and diplomatic accomplishment. Its efforts in the U.N. to deny Vietnam's dominance in Indochina has earned the Association the status of a diplomatic community. But as Bilson Kurus pointed out [Ref. 6], the evidence, pointing towards such a direction had been obvious since early 1970s. As a diplomatic tool, ASEAN has proved to be useful to its member governments in pursuing their individual as well as collective interests.

The key to understanding ASEAN's mechanism of decision making is well provided by Michael Haas' *The Asian Way* [Ref. 17]. Derived from a shared common culture of Asia, the Asian Way is actually the philosophy of Asian people. With all its merits and limitations such as: time consuming discussion, slow progress, etc. the Asian Way is the way ASEAN is doing its business. As such, it served as a useful tool for better understanding of, and predicting the behavioral pattern of, ASEAN.

In the post-Cold War era, ASEAN is faced with a new challenge as the result of the collapse of the communism. However, the strategic uncertainties derived from global and regional changes has created a sense of insecurity among member governments. In this context, ASEAN has not prepared any blueprint or a masterplan to cope with a new environment. Instead, ASEAN still relies on its own guiding principle of the Asian Way, ensuring that it has a significant voice in determining the future of Southeast Asia.



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