

ASEAN'S DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY AFTER THE VIETNAMESE INVASION OF  
KAMPUCHEA

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines the diplomatic strategy adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in response to the 1978 Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the subsequent shift in the regional distribution of power with regard to the security of the ASEAN nations. I argue that ASEAN has demonstrated considerable success in preventing a collapse of regional order in Southeast Asia.

It is important to understand that ASEAN is a product and tool of its members' foreign policy and should therefore be assessed in the foreign policy, rather than in the regional integrationist, context. This will be examined from the point of view of a group of relatively weak, insignificant states within the international arena, historically plagued by conflict and intervention by external powers, exacerbated by a history of intra-regional enmity rather than cooperation, military weakness, and no collective tradition of diplomatic expertise. Yet, despite these shortcomings and ASEAN's previous inability to come together on issues of economic integration, ASEAN's response to the Third Indochina conflict has allowed its member nations to maintain their independence, preserve their freedom of action, rally international support, and confront the great powers involved in this issue through the use of a regional organization.

This thesis will also counter the prevailing view that existing intra-ASEAN differences regarding the primary external

threat in the issue (namely Vietnam, China or the Soviet Union) have seriously divided its members to the point of potentially threatening the organization's existence. Instead, I will argue that the combination of ASEAN's curious mode of "conflict resolution" through "conflict avoidance", as well as its diplomatic "division of labour," have effectively incorporated existing intra-ASEAN differences as bargaining assets for the organization's political viability. These internal cleavages have been far from resolved or reconciled, but rather skirted over by a web of unwritten laws, implicit rules and mutual understandings regarding one another's accepted role within the organization. This implicit "regime" has served several purposes: it has allowed ASEAN to sustain its image of unity, boosted its political visibility in the international forum, and prevented the "loss of face" of fellow members on points of contention.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	v
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
ASEAN: A Case Study.....	6
2. ASEAN, 1967-1978: ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS VERSUS POLITICAL REALITIES.....	15
Incentives and Constraints.....	15
The First Decade.....	24
Decision-Making: The "ASEAN" Way.....	38
The Strategic Context: ZOPFAN and the Bali Summit..	41
China's Relationship to the Region.....	47
Conclusion.....	52
3. THE INVASION OF KAMPUCHEA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.....	54
The China Dilemma.....	64
The Soviet Dilemma.....	70
The United States Dilemma.....	74
4. ASEAN'S DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY.....	78
Introduction.....	78
The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea...	84
Maintaining Unity: ASEAN in the International Forum.....	88
Indonesia's "Dual-Track" Diplomacy.....	98
Vietnam: Strategy and Tactics.....	107
The ASEAN Response.....	112
Conclusions: At the Impasse.....	117
CONCLUSION.....	123
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS.....	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	131

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## Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis examines and evaluates the attempt, by a group of small states, to use a regional organization to coordinate their foreign policies in confronting a diverse range of external threats to their individual and collective security. Small nations in a position where they are potentially or actually threatened by Great Powers face a distinct security dilemma. Not only are they not free to choose policies independently of the Great Powers, but the solution to any "security dilemma" must come from an outside source in instances where outside support is often ambiguous. Rarely can small states merely increase their own power to affect the outcome. They may rise by their own efforts, but ultimately they need and desire recognition by the Great Powers before they can become effective members of the international society.

Economically, small nations survive by virtue of trade and specialization, but subject to the vagaries of the international system, these are at the same time their strengths and their weaknesses. Politically, small nations have more difficulty in maintaining a high quality of leadership over a long period, for as Political Secretary (Defence) Brigadier-General Lee Hsieng Loong of Singapore once remarked, "the talent pool is smaller,

and [because of] the danger of mediocracy by default, government by the mediocre is always present."<sup>1</sup>

On matters of national security, there are few policy options and limited choices, and the margin of error is usually small or non-existent. With few resources, uncertain friends and a small area of territory, caution and fear of taking risks characterizes their foreign policy, which is often marked by a preoccupation with short-term concerns to the obfuscation of a long-range perspective. For a small state, the danger of "gambler's ruin" is acutely preeminent in a game which they cannot decline to play.

Maintaining autonomy over one's national decisions, and security from external and internal attack, are important to both developed and developing countries. For the powerful states the logic follows that the more autonomous they are, the more their security is enhanced. Equally, the more secure a nation is, the more is autonomy available. For small states, however, the reverse is often true. Lacking the power or resources to defend themselves against enemies (real or imagined), they are often compelled to sacrifice a portion of their autonomy for external military protection. Whether it is in political, economic or military matters, for a small state an increase in security almost always entails some loss of autonomy or vice versa.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Brigadier-General Lee Hsiang Loong, "Security Options for Small States," Straits Times (Singapore), 6 Nov. 1984.

2. See Marshall R. Singer, "The Foreign Policies of Small Developing States," in World Politics, eds. James N. Rosenau, Kenneth W. Thompson and Gavin Boyd (New York: The Free Press, 1976), p. 289.

Rothstein writes that those small nations not in a politically exposed or strategic area have achieved what one might call a "negative" security by virtue of their own weakness.<sup>3</sup> The lack of an industrial base and governmental framework encourage the small hope that they can be protected by their own insignificance, being too detached, disinterested and powerless to affect issues. Policies of neutrality and non-alignment may be adopted to limit entanglement with the Great Powers, but are sensible only if the small nation is strategically irrelevant and politically non-provocative. For them, the principles of sovereignty and respect for territorial integrity are the essence of survival, which is why a threat by a Great Power constitutes no less than a total threat to their independent existence. On the other hand, their very powerlessness and yet equal right to an audience in organizational forums permit them to be forthrightly critical of Great Power policies. Their insistence on peaceful procedures blurs the distinction between the militarily powerful and the militarily weak, providing a forum for some diplomatic prestige and sophistication. As Liska remarks:

Having quite a special interest in international organization, the smaller states like to visualize themselves as a qualitative and moral factor in world affairs. They stress normative principles against power and excessive political discretion; objectivity, independence, and good faith against opportunism and satellitism. They wish to shape the structural equilibrium so as to maximize their influence and compensate for their weakness.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Robert L. Rothstein, Alliances and Small Powers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 18-22.

4. Liska, International Equilibrium, op. cit., p. 67.

Small states are often also new states whose fragile internal structures make them vulnerable to external exploitation and manipulation. Political institutions such as parties, offices, and elections are at the embryonic stage and often facades for institutionalized personal rule, corruption and nepotism -- Indonesia and Thailand being examples. For others, such as Malaysia, ethnic factions, schisms, class struggles and religious strife constitute fundamental and potentially explosive problems. High rates of economic growth are not accompanied by a corresponding rate of distribution, creating huge disparities in economic wealth and fertile breeding ground for insurgent groups. These weaknesses, in turn, attract external opportunists who will deliberately manipulate or exacerbate existing problems to facilitate their intrusion. It is therefore inappropriate to emphasize the structure of the external environment on small states' foreign policy decisions to the exclusion of domestic considerations.

Given that the foreign policies of states -- and particularly small states -- are affected by their internal and external structural constraints, what strategies are available to small states that are threatened by larger external powers? First, they may be able to manipulate the assets valued by the large power, such as "real estate" for military bases, economic concessions, as well as diplomatic support. In extreme cases, they may engage in "competitive bidding" between the large powers, as North Korea has managed to do for decades vis-a-vis China and the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the small power

may have to bargain from a position of weakness by pleading the inability to do something desired by the larger power due to its economic or political weakness. Other bargaining tactics which may be used are: procrastination, bluffing, manipulating information, staging surprise performances which will implicate the large power, and engaging in what is called "intersecting negotiations," when the advantage goes to the party that can persuasively point to an array of other negotiations in which its position would be prejudiced if it made a concession on this one.<sup>5</sup>

Alliances are traditional balance of power strategies to increase a state's bargaining power by ascribing to a philosophy -- in its simplest terms -- of "one for all and all for one". The goal of a military alliance is to deter potential aggressors by clearly indicating to an enemy that an attack upon any of its members will be countered by combined forces. A political alliance is a strategy of diplomatic support conditioned by the nature of the immediate environment. It is a defence of the status quo against military revision, or against potentially dangerous configurations of power. One should stress that the distinction between a political and military alliance is not clearly drawn nor mutually exclusive. As Rothstein points out, "It is, of course, difficult to find a purely military alliance, without political undertones, as it would be to find a political alliance from which some military benefits were not sought."<sup>6</sup>

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5. See for example, Charles E. Morrison and Astri Suhrke, Strategy for Small State Survival (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), esp. chapt. 1.

6. Rothstein, op. cit., p. 50.

One possible distinction, he suggests, is between those designed to cope with an immediate threat as opposed to a distant or potential threat. If the threat is a potential one, conceivably the alliance must concentrate on political goals until the threat takes form.

The decision to ally, however, rarely stems from principle and is instead a calculation of expediency. To quote Liska: "Alliances are against, and only derivatively for, someone or something. The sense of community may consolidate alliances; it rarely brings them about."<sup>7</sup> States rarely align for the sake of friendship. The system of international relations is motivated by self-interest, suspicion, distrust and fear, and for this reason alliances and regional organizations are only effective so long as they serve the interests of their members. Their value rests on their ability to provide order, predictability and precision to a situation and community of interests. They facilitate common action, and add credibility to threats by ensuring that action will be collective. As will be illustrated by the small states of ASEAN, they may also improve their collective bargaining power, regionally as well as internationally.

#### ASEAN: A Case Study

ASEAN refuses to be referred to as a security alliance and purportedly entertains no intentions of becoming one. Critics

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7. Liska, Nations in Alliance, op. cit., p. 12.

have referred to it as a "gentlemen's tea party," as an acronym for (A)lways (S)ensational (E)xcept (A)fter (N)egotiations, as well as for (A)dhoc (S)trategic (E)ntity of an (A)mbiguous (N)ature.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, according to much of the existing literature on the subject, the climate of cautious skepticism following the creation of ASEAN has progressively given way to one of increasing impatience and skepticism, particularly as the success of its counterpart, the European Economic Community (EEC), is often the implicit yardstick for evaluation. For the six member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations -- Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, and since 1984, Brunei -- the fact that ASEAN has survived as an autonomous regional organization is itself an achievement.

Given Southeast Asia's strategic importance and the unstable political climate of the 1960s, there was understandable confusion around ASEAN's nebulously defined status as a "regional organization." Was it to be a regional political and security alliance like SEATO, the Asian arm of America's post-war foreign policy? Was it an attempt to make Southeast Asia a free-trade area like the EEC? Or was it to be an indigenous, anti-communist front along the lines of its dismally ill-fated predecessors, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) and MAPHILINDO (an acronym of Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia)?

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8. See Guy Sacerdoti, "Philippines: What's in it for us? Not all that much." Far Eastern Economic Review, 13 August 1982; Karl D. Jackson and M. Hadi Soesastro, eds., ASEAN Security and Economic Development (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1983).

The Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN's constitutional mandate at its formation in 1967, briefly defined ASEAN's aim and purpose as being "to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavors..." References to regional integration as an objective, or to political and security concerns in the document were conspicuously absent. Whether the Bangkok Declaration's deliberate vagueness was a sign of prudence and accommodation, or if it was an institutionalized carte blanche to non-commitment and inconsistency, is open to debate. What seems evident, however, is that ASEAN has had to struggle against the legacies of its regional predecessors in striving to assert its own identity. Throughout its development ASEAN has spent as much energy in arguing against what, as a regional organization, it is not rather than what it is. ASEAN's initial ambiguity about itself is evident in a retrospective speech by Singapore's Foreign Minister at ASEAN's annual Ministerial Meeting in 1974:

You may recollect at the first meeting in 1967, when we had to draft our communique, it was a very difficult problem of trying to say nothing in ten pages, which we did. Because at that time we ourselves having launched ASEAN, were not quite sure where it was going or whether it was going anywhere at all.<sup>9</sup>

In its broadest terms, regional integration is based on three factors: political convergence, geographic proximity and economic functionalism. It envisages the harmonization of

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9. ASEAN's Seventeenth Foreign Ministers' Meeting, May 1974 in Jakarta. In K.K. Nair, ASEAN-Indochina Relations Since 1975: The Politics of Accommodation (Canberra: Australia University Press, 1984), p. 2.

interests based on a division of labour, greater specialization and mutual reinforcement, leading theoretically to political and economic union. "Integration" itself is a process whereby political and social actors shift expectations, loyalties and activities to new centers, usually entailing some degree of sacrifice in the national interest for that of the regional collective whole. According to Ernst B. Haas, the study of regional integration is largely normative, "concerned with tasks, transactions, perceptions, and learning, not with sovereignty, military capability, and balances of power...It refuses to dichotomize the behavior of actors between "high" political and "low" functional concerns; it is preoccupied with all concerns of actors insofar as they can be used for sketching processes for adaptation and learning free from coercion."<sup>10</sup>

Examined against this model, ASEAN according to its critics is a weak example of regional integration.<sup>11</sup> After twenty years of defending integration as a "process; not a condition," intra-ASEAN trade remains a sad 15 percent of total trade (in contrast to 60 percent for intra-EEC trade). The region is also plagued by huge disparities in economic and industrial development among its members which effectively stifles agreement on economic cooperation -- let alone hopes for economic integration in the

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10. See Ernst B. Haas, "The Study of Regional Integration: Reflections on the Joy and Anguish of Pretheorizing" in Regional Politics and World Order, eds. Richard A. Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz, (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1973), p. 104.

11. See for example, Susumo Awanohara, "Platitudes, pious hopes and mediocrity," Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 March 1984, pp. 61-63; Paisal Sricharatchanya, "Was ASEAN really planned to move as slowly as this," Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 March 1984, pp. 65-68.

near future. As developing countries, the ASEAN countries are just emerging from an import-substitution policy and still reluctant to force the degree of economic rationalization needed for integration. With regard to ASEAN's achievements in social and cultural integration, mention "ASEAN" to the typical Southeast Asian villager and it will mean little.<sup>12</sup>

It is therefore ironic that where ASEAN as a regional organization has been most active, particularly since the post-1978 events in Cambodia, is in the political and security fields, even though it lacks the formal structure of a collective security organization, and imposes no military obligations on member states. Consequently, ASEAN is not an example of "integration", but neither is it a security "alliance". Nevertheless, as Donald Weatherbee points out, ASEAN is more than a just a "cumulation of ad hoc episodic adventures in cooperation."<sup>13</sup>

The study of regional integration is concerned with explaining how and why states cease to be wholly sovereign. It is concerned with "how and why they voluntarily mingle, merge, and mix with their neighbours so as to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty while acquiring new techniques for

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12. For a quantitative analysis in the transnationalist tradition see H. Monte Hill, "Community formation within ASEAN", International Organization, 32 (Spring 1978), pp. 61-63. Hill argues that community formation within ASEAN is more myth than reality. For a contrary view, see Estrella D. Solidum, Towards a Southeast Asian Community (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1976), pp. 210-211.

13. Donald Weatherbee, "ASEAN Regionalism: The Salient Dimension", in ASEAN Security and Economic Development, eds. Karl D. Jackson and M. Hadi Soesastro (Berkeley, California: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1983), p. 264.

resolving conflicts among themselves. Regional cooperation, organization, systems and subsystems should not be confused with the resulting condition."<sup>14</sup> However, regional organizations of new states usually represent instruments for enhancing national independence, autonomy, bargaining strength, and anti-colonial sentiments, rather than as a vehicle for regional integration in the E.E.C. sense. For example, ASEAN and its developing counterparts, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Arab League provide a forum to settle intra-member disputes and foster a common policy in face of intervention from outside the region.

A regional organization constitutes the institutionalized form of inter-state cooperation. Yet the measure of its "success" is too often evaluated in terms of the organization as the center of concern rather than its impact upon its members. For the role and effectiveness of international organizations stem not so much from their formal-legal covenants as from the changing configurations and distributions of power, systemic issues and forces, and the attitudes and resources of member states.

The approach taken by this study, therefore, assumes the national interests of the member nations as the independent variables, with ASEAN as the dependent variable. ASEAN, with regard to the Indochina issue, constitutes a tool of their foreign policy outputs and must, therefore be examined in the foreign policy, rather than the integrationist, context.

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14. Haas, op. cit., p. 108.

The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchean was significant for three reasons. First, it asserted Vietnam's status as a regional, hegemonic power. Second, the resulting improvement in Sino-Thai relations reintroduced suspicions within ASEAN concerning China's regional ambitions. Third, for the first time the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance has projected the Soviet factor into ASEAN security concerns, and therewith, the spillover into Southeast Asia of existing Sino-Soviet tensions.

The fundamental point of contention among the ASEAN members on the Indochina issue is the differing perceptions over which state constitutes the primary regional threat -- Vietnam at the local, immediate level; or China as a latent, though potentially greater long-term threat. Given this disagreement, and the historical tradition of regional enmity, suspicion and lack of political cooperation, why have the Southeast Asian leaders chosen to speak through the voice of ASEAN rather than to deal with the perceived threats bilaterally and conceivably with greater expedience, at less cost to their individual interests? More specifically, how have the ASEAN leaders manipulated their differences into an equilibrium of complementary diplomatic competence? Far from attempting to resolve or, at a minimum, to reconcile their differing threat perceptions and interests, existing internal tensions are manifested in ASEAN's highly cautious and subtle path of diplomatic maneuvering between its members, Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union. This unconventional strategy of "tip-toeing" around hidden diplomatic landmines has proven surprisingly effective as a model of

regional political cooperation toward conflict resolution. The strategy and its results will be the focus of this thesis.

ASEAN, in this study, will be approached in the foreign policy context of its member nations. On a broader, theoretical level it will be examined in the foreign policy context of a group of small, relatively weak nations that face the dilemma of being directly involved, politically and strategically, in relation to the Great Powers. Chapter two will provide a brief, contextual history of ASEAN as a regional organization -- the political climate which spurred its creation, both at the regional and systemic level, the organization's underlying philosophy and *raison d'être*, and its evolution in face of changing power configurations throughout the 1970s. Chapters three and four will discuss the Vietnamese invasion into Cambodia in 1978, the subsequent shift in the regional balance of power and its impact upon ASEAN, and focus on ASEAN's diplomatic strategy to preserve its regional security and freedom of action in the face of armed aggression. In particular, Chapter four will illustrate ASEAN's demonstration of diplomatic resourcefulness, and tactical maneuvering, while maintaining a unified voice, which would not have been possible if it had become the rigidly structured, highly integrated regional organization advocated by its critics. I will conclude this study by assessing ASEAN's formidable accomplishments in the wake of the Indochinese conflict. This conclusion, however, will also question the prospects for ASEAN's more long-term development as a multi-dimensional regional organization, and whether it will

be able to channel its recent diplomatic and political success into policies which address its more deeply-rooted economic and structural shortcomings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ASEAN, 1967-1978: Economic Aspirations versus Political Realities

#### Incentives and Constraints

Rich in natural resources, diverse in culture, language and religion, boasting a total population of about 200 million, and spanning the strategic Straits of Malacca to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, Southeast Asia has long been an area courted by the large powers. With Indonesia under three hundred years of Dutch rule, Malaysia and Singapore under the British, and the Philippines under the Spanish to be later succeeded by the United States, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country spared the experience of colonialism. This was due in large part to the diplomatic astuteness of Thailand's rulers who were able to balance and accommodate their European suitors.

Like many former colonies, the residue of colonialism in Southeast Asia was manifested in its impeded industrial and economic development, embryonic political institutions, low levels of political socialization, and a distinctly fragile sense of social cohesion and national unity. One of the major themes stressed by many Asian leaders and statesmen who urged various forms of cooperation is that some degree of "Asianess," though

not unity, existed in the region before it was carved and balkanized by the Europeans. This process of balkanization, they argue, exacerbated rather than alleviated pre-existing , intra-regional fears and suspicions.<sup>15</sup>

Structurally, economic ties were more tuned to the respective "motherlands" than with regional neighbours of often similar racial and cultural affinity. Intra-regional communication as a pre-requisite to regional development was so difficult that

it had not been possible to make direct contact between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, or between Saigon and Djakarta, or Rangoon and Manila, for such communications would have to be formally and correctly addressed to some Western capitals and literally transmitted half around the world before eventually reaching their intended destination.<sup>16</sup>

Thanat Khoman, Foreign Minister of Thailand and one of the initial founders of ASEAN, elaborated on the situation as follows:

the motivations which prompted me to push the idea of regional cooperation were less lofty and idealistic but stemmed from more practical and realistic considerations, among them the fact that Southeast Asian nations are comparatively weak and small...Separately, they represent little, if any, significance in world affairs. Politically, they are "balkanized" by prolonged diverse colonial rule which oriented them towards their respective metropolitan centers rather than towards their neighbours in the area...<sup>17</sup>

15. Bernard K. Gordon, The Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 163-164.

16. Prince Wan Waith Yaskorn, Regional Economic Cooperation: ASA-ASEAN and ASPAC (Bangkok, 1968), p. 1. Quoted in Basic Documents of Asian Regional Organizations, Vol. VIII, ed. Micheal Haas (New York: Oceana Pub., 1980), p. 2.

17. "The 'ASEAN' Problems and Prospects in Changing World," in The ASEAN: Problems and Prospects in a Changing World, Sarasin Viraphol et. al., (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1976), p. 4; quoted in Charles E. Morrison and Astri Suhrke, Strategies of

Indeed, the prevailing political climate on the eve of ASEAN's formation was certainly not conducive to regional cooperation. Because of the Vietnam war and as part of its larger policy of containment, the United States drew increasingly closer to Thailand and the Philippines for access to naval bases and other bilateral military cooperation. Indonesia at this time was trying to break out of its regional isolation brought on by Sukarno's "konfrontasi" episode against Malaysia (rallied by the slogan of "Crush Malaysia!").<sup>18</sup> Malay-Indonesian relations reached their lowest point during the period of konfrontasi in 1963, during which "angry verbal exchanges continued between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, with Sukarno and the Tunku apparently vying with each other in their search for the most offensive epithets to hurl across the Java Sea."<sup>19</sup> The konfrontasi incident led to Indonesia's dubious "withdrawal" from the United Nations, while Sukarno's flamboyant anti-colonial rhetoric appealed more to African and communist nations than to Indonesia's Southeast Asian neighbours.

In Singapore, racial tensions between the Chinese and Malay communities led to its expulsion from the Federation of Malaysia. As a tiny, newly-independent city-state sandwiched between two inhospitable Malay neighbours, Singapore had legitimate security concerns though little clout in the

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Survival: The Foreign Policy Dilemmas of Smaller Asian States (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 265.

18. For a discussion on "konfrontasi" see Bernard K. Gordon, op. cit., chapt. 3.

19. J.D. Legge. Sukarno: A Political Biography (London: Allen Lane Press, 1972), p. 366; in Regional Organization and Order in Southeast Asia, Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), p. 172.

international arena. However, Malaysia was perhaps in the most unenviable position, for in addition to the tensions with Indonesia and Singapore, Thai-Malaysian relations were strained over a lack of governmental cooperation to control their insurgency movements. The Communist Party of Malaya guerrillas (who were predominantly Chinese) often enjoyed sanctuaries across Thailand's border because of Thai reluctance to allow their pursuit by Malaysian troops, while the Malaysian government refused to allow the pursuit of Thai Muslim rebels into Malaysian territory because of strong Islamic sentiments in the border states of Kelantan, Kedah and Perlis.<sup>20</sup> Relations between Malaysia and the Philippines were equally strained by the unresolved Sabah issue.<sup>21</sup> Located on the northern tip of the island of Borneo, Sabah was transferred to some British adventurers in 1878 after they had secured rights to the territory from its dual claimants, the Sultan of Sulu and the Sultan of Brunei. The crux of the current dispute lies in the document, signed by the Sultan of Sulu, which concludes with the ambiguous Malay word *padjak*, which in 1878 could have meant either to lease or to cede. The Philippine government claims that this 1878 agreement provided merely for the lease, rather than the cession of the Sabah territory. Sabah came under Malaysian jurisdiction when Malaysia was established in 1963, and has since remained a subject of friction between the two governments.

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20. Rodney Tasker, "ASEAN '82: Musyawarah gets the key to the door," Far Eastern Economic Review, 13 August 1982, p. 42.

21. For a discussion of the Sabah issue, see Gordon, op., cit., chapt. 1.

ASEAN was not the first indigenous attempt to build regional cooperation. The Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) was established in July 1961, setting for itself a similar set of guidelines based on promoting social well-being and regional economic progress. However, Sukarno refused to join, branding the association as "a stooge of SEATO and the American imperialists,"<sup>22</sup> thus limiting ASA's membership to only Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines. Consequently, ASA lapsed into limbo when the Philippines broke off relations with Malaysia over the Sabah issue in 1963. MAPHILINDO, the second attempt at regional cooperation (MAPHILINDO is an acronym for Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia) suffered a similar demise due to the "konfrontasi" between Indonesia and Malaysia and the festering Sabah dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines, which was now backed by Indonesia.

Obviously, more divided the ASEAN nations than united them. At ASEAN's formation, regional integration seemed to be the farthest thought from the minds of ASEAN's signatories; any cooperation would have been a major achievement. What brought the nations together was a shared concern to prevent precious energy and other resources required for national development goals being diverted to avoidable intra-regional disputes. All five nations were staunchly anti-communist in their domestic politics, but faced serious threats from communist insurgencies. Four out of the five had at one time hosted Western military bases, but there

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22. Ghazalie Shafie, "Malaysia in Afro-Asia," in Malaysia: International Relations, M. Ghazalie Shafie, (Kuala Lumpur: Creative Enterprise Sdn. Bhd, 1982), p. 43.

was a growing belief that the support of outsiders could not be relied upon in times of major security challenges.

The greatest security concern facing the ASEAN countries has always been the threat of internal subversion. Direct aggression by a communist power is highly improbable, but given the experience of Chinese insurgent support, externally-backed internal subversion has been, and still is, a constant concern. It was thus imperative that a regional forum be established to discuss political differences, avoid direct military confrontations, and reduce dependence upon external powers. The purpose of regional cooperation was not necessarily to add to the region's military capacity against external enemies, but rather to prevent diplomatic isolation, enhance the region's international bargaining power, and provide a forum for managing local conflicts between member states.

Amid the sensitive political climate of the 1960s, the ASEAN leaders felt it important to avoid being seen as a political or military organization. They therefore emphasised the potential for cooperation in non-political issue-areas, i.e. economic, social and cultural cooperation, with economic cooperation given top priority. Political considerations determined ASEAN's membership, defined its scope of activities and gave it significance, but it was tacitly agreed that political questions were to be discussed outside the formal framework. Military cooperation between members would be on purely bilateral (or trilateral) bases.

It is worth reiterating that one of the foremost misconceptions with regard to ASEAN is the assumption that it was established with regional integration as its aim. ASEAN was created as a vehicle to support its members' national interests. Its purpose was not to create a supra-national institution, but to help resolve regional conflicts and strengthen its members as nation-states through the sharing of benefits, resources and the accommodation of needs. Cooperation, therefore, did not oblige the ASEAN countries to sacrifice their national interests. The Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN's initial mandate, provided no central Secretariat, no treaty basis, and was sufficiently vague to avoid eliciting any legal membership obligations or commitments aside from an endorsement of ASEAN's general aims and purposes.

Southeast Asian nations' previous attempts at regional cooperation had been externally inspired and guaranteed. Their experience with SEATO clearly showed that military power did not in itself define security, nor was it an appropriate response to pressing domestic problems, such as a lack of political and administrative resources, ethnic conflict, communist insurgencies, population pressures and external interference. The Bangkok Declaration of 1967 did not explicitly define security, but President Suharto, in a speech at the First Meeting of ASEAN's Heads of State, remarked that "our concept of security is inward looking, namely to establish an orderly, peaceful, and stable condition within each individual territory."<sup>23</sup> Singapore's

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23. President Suharto, First Meeting of Heads of States of ASEAN, Bali, 23 February 1976. Quoted in Estrella D. Solidum, "Security Perspectives in ASEAN," in Aspects of ASEAN, Werner Pfennig and

Foreign Minister was more explicit in discounting ASEAN's security role:

...security problems...should not and cannot be secured through ASEAN. In any case the security and integrity of the countries of Southeast Asia are more likely to be jeopardized through economic stagnation and collapse...It is economic weakness and political instability which is more likely to tempt unwelcome interference and intervention from the outside.<sup>24</sup>

Since ASEAN was still too weak for any semblance of military defence, security was therefore best served by a "collective political defence", to coin Thanat Khoman's phrase. However, the only mention of defence in the Bangkok Declaration stipulates merely that ASEAN nations "are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation." This was designed to give ASEAN some flexibility since threats tend to take different forms through time. As Adam Malik, Indonesia's former Minister for Foreign Affairs and one of ASEAN's chief architects, explained to a student group in Jakarta in December 1966, the need for a regional grouping was to enhance autonomy and act as:

...a strong bulwark against imperialist manipulations as well as a decisive stabilizing factor in this part of the world...ending once and for all foreign influence, domination and intervention...stemming the "yellow" as well as the "white" imperialism in Southeast Asia.<sup>25</sup>

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Mark M.B. Suh, eds., (Munich, Germany: Weltforum Verlag, 1984), p. 94.

24. Dept. of Information, Republic of Indonesia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Jakarta, 1969), pp. 57-58. In Haas, op. cit., p. 210.

25. Antara News Bulletin, 15 December 1966. In Understanding ASEAN, ed. Alison Broinowski (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), p. 16 (*italics added*).

In keeping with its non-bloc policy, Indonesia favored the inclusion of a clause in the Declaration to end the presence of foreign military bases in the region. However, with U.S. bases already established in Thailand and the Philippines, these states were hesitant to accede to such hasty and abrupt action. Singapore was equally concerned that it might cause Britain and the United States to withdraw immediately, leaving behind a vacuum open to penetration by China or the Soviet Union. Moreover, Thailand and Singapore's foreign policy had been traditionally premised on a balance of power strategy through the use of counterweights and by not relying too much on any one external source.

After intense debate over the document, a compromise was eventually reached.<sup>26</sup> It stipulated that all foreign bases were temporary, established and maintained only with the express concurrence of the countries concerned, and are not intended to be used directly or indirectly to "subvert the national independence and freedom" of the ASEAN states. Furthermore, the organization's principles regarding ASEAN's external relations with the major powers, groups of countries, and international organizations held that: a) cooperation should not be at the expense of existing bilateral arrangements; b) cooperation should complement, not supplant ASEAN capabilities; c) cooperation should be for projects of regional character and benefit all countries; 4) cooperation should be unconditional.<sup>27</sup> It should

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26. For a good discussion of the debate within ASEAN, see Jorgensen-Dahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-41.

27. See Mark M.B. Suh, "Political Cooperation Among ASEAN Countries," in, eds. Pfennig and Suh, *op. cit.*

also be noted that Burma and the Indochinese countries -- Laos, Kampuchea and the two Vietnams -- declined an invitation in 1967 to join ASEAN.<sup>28</sup>

### The First Decade

Initially, the proposal to establish an association of Southeast Asian Nations was not as readily greeted by the five states as one might have expected. Years of mutual fear and suspicion rendered prospects of serious cooperation as just another illusory hope. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was primarily the brainchild of Thanat Khoman and Adam Malik, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Thailand and Indonesia respectively, who were the most eager to see it established. Thailand was anxious to reduce its military reliance on the United States, which was neither permanent nor desirable, and ASEAN was perceived as a useful supplement to its alliance with the U.S. Under Suharto's New Order, Indonesia was equally anxious to reassure its neighbours of its peaceful intentions, despite having the largest army in the region and the largest territory. The Philippines were at first reluctant to join, feeling fairly secure under the United States' protective umbrella. On the other hand, it saw ASEAN as an opportunity to

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28. ASEAN officials concede privately that if a request came from Vietnam now to join the association, it would be "acutely embarrassing." See Inge Soss Bailey, ASEAN: The Nature of Regional Organization for Development and Security M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1981, p. 91. Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea have also placed a request to join ASEAN, but were politely refused. Brunei's membership was granted on January 1, 1984 because of its location, cultural affinity and oil.

reduce its image of total dependence on the United States, and prove its bona fide status as a Southeast Asian state.

Thus ASEAN was not an alliance, but an entente. Through the development of "mutual consultation and consensus," its purpose was to provide a framework within which the leaders could consult one another on individual problems to avoid dangerous misunderstandings and to coordinate collective foreign policy initiatives. Emphasis was placed on avoiding actions which might conceivably increase external or internal political pressure on another member. The mid-sixties was a time of difficult foreign policy adjustments for the small states of Southeast Asia and ASEAN helped to compensate for the decline and uncertainty of support from the United States. Most importantly, ASEAN's loose organizational structure and flexible rules of procedure assured its member states that cooperation would not be at the expense of national interests. For an organization still cultivating cooperation, such flexibility was a source of strength. As Adam Malik remarked,

Although from the outset ASEAN was conceived as an organization for economic, social and cultural co-operation, and although considerations in these fields were no doubt central, it was the fact that there was a convergence in the political outlook of the five prospective member-nations...which provided the main stimulus to join together in ASEAN...There was early recognition that meaningful progress could only be achieved by giving first priority to the task of overall and rapid economic development. It was also realised that, to this end, policies should be consciously geared towards safeguarding this priority objective, not only in purely economic terms but simultaneously also to secure the essential conditions

of peace and stability, both domestically and internationally in the surrounding region.<sup>29</sup>

ASEAN's progress throughout the 1970s was exceedingly slow. Despite hundreds of rounds of meetings at the ministerial, committee and subcommittee levels, only a small percentage of the proposals passed during the first nine years were implemented. The Bangkok Declaration contained no specific political or economic programme to be achieved according to a timetable -- however vague -- and despite a professed agreement to promote economic cooperation, the five member states were remarkably reticent to make concrete commitments and to formulate long term policies and strategies. Little headway had been made in establishing any sort of free trade area and intra-ASEAN trade as a percentage of total ASEAN trade declined from 15.5 percent to 12.6 percent during the period 1970-1975.<sup>30</sup> Donald Crone's excellent study illustrates that through the 1970's, the ASEAN states adopted a global strategy of trade, industrial and investment diversification to decrease their economic dependence on the great powers, but which in effect undermined regional economic interdependence.<sup>31</sup> Today, the vast bulk of ASEAN's trade (roughly 85 percent) continues to be with external nations,

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29. "Regional Cooperation in International Politics," in Regionalism in Southeast Asia (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies), proceedings of a conference held in Jakarta, 22-25 October, 1974, pp. 161-2. Quoted in Broinowski, op. cit., p 14.

30. See Khaw Guat Hoon, "ASEAN in International Politics," in Politics in the ASEAN States, ed. Diane K. Mauzy (Kuala Lumpur: Marican & Sons Sdn. Bhd, 1984), p. 229.

31. See Donald Crone, The ASEAN States: Coping with Dependence (New York: Praeger Pub., 1983).

mainly Japan, the United States and the EEC, in that order of importance.

According to the ASEAN argument, the main reason for this is that the ASEAN states are structurally competitive rather than complementary in trade.<sup>32</sup> As nations just emerging from the import-substitution phase, they are reluctant to force the degree of economic rationalization needed for integration. Export-oriented strategies, they argue, were chosen since their own national markets lack the economic scale to support industrialization. As mainly producers of primary commodities and light manufactured goods (with the exception of Singapore), the ASEAN states require finance, machinery and technology from the West. Moreover, their competition to be the first in the area of technology transfer induces bilateral links with industrial nations in particularly designated industries. As recently as 1984, an ASEAN Task Force report inquiring into the organization's lack of economic progress concluded that:

Intra-ASEAN economic activities could become self-generating when ASEAN economies are more mature and complementary to one another...it has been found that in industry and trade, especially in manufactured goods, cooperation has been slow to materialize because the industrial structures of the member countries are similar. At present they produce similar goods or plan to do so in the future.<sup>33</sup>

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32. See Karl D. Jackson and M. Hadi Soesastro, eds., ASEAN Security and Economic Development (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East Asian Studies), intro. See also Bruce Glassburner, "Southeast Asia: Economic Problems and Prospects," in Economic, Political, and Security Issues in Southeast Asia in the 1980's, eds. Robert A. Scalapino and Jusuf Wanandi, (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1982), pp. 42-43.

33. Susumo Awanhara, "Platitudes, pious hopes and mediocrity." Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 March 1964, p. 64.

Officials argue that the objective of ASEAN is not economic integration, such as a customs union, but instead economic cooperation through the pooling of resources rather than markets. According to A.R. Soehoed, "the criticism often leveled that the progress toward achieving the objectives of ASEAN is too sluggish in comparison with, say, the European Economic Community (EEC) is in fact measuring with the wrong yardstick."<sup>34</sup> Soehoed continues by drawing a distinction between economic cooperation and integration in the ASEAN context:

Economic cooperation, however close, is distinct from economic integration not only in its institutional setting but also in its function. The former can be a loose arrangement and does not require a formal institutional framework whereas the latter depends on it. Economic cooperation includes various measures designed to harmonize economic policies and to minimize discrimination; the process leading toward economic integration entails the unification of economic policies and the complete abolition of discrimination. More importantly, under economic integration, policies and measures are to be subordinated to a generalized market integration strategy. But within the framework of economic cooperation, market integration is a means that may be applied selectively.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, national economic growth and self-reliance continue to be the main goals for ASEAN member states, impeding the growth of specialization and intra-regional trade. For example, Indonesia, well endowed with petroleum and natural gas, is eminently qualified to become a supplier of chemical fertilizers to its neighbours. On the other hand, Singapore offers an abundant supply of capital, excellent trading infra-structure, both physical and financial, a well-developed industrial sector,

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34. A.R. Soehoed, "Economic Dimensions of Security in the ASEAN Region," in, eds. Scalapino and Wanandi, op. cit., p. 53.

35. Ibid., p. 53.

and a large supply of entrepreneurship. However, as B. Glassburner points out, true integration requires the free mobility of labour, financial capital and physical capital, and despite the much-needed capital resources, Singapore is willing and able to offer, protectionism and the preference to foster indigenous entrepreneurship remain serious hindrances.<sup>36</sup> One needs to remember that Singapore's 75 percent Chinese population is still a sensitive issue for the other five ASEAN countries which contain an economically powerful Chinese minority. Just as problematic are the implications of labour mobility. Both Singapore and Malaysia are already experiencing problems with Indonesian labourers seeking work in their countries. No doubt their own workers, as well as those of Thailand and the Philippines, will resist an onslaught of large-scale, imported labour from the most plentiful source in the area.

This is not to say that ASEAN has made no progress in economic cooperation. After the Bali Summit of 1976, intra-ASEAN economic cooperation has taken three forms: 1) the Preferential Trading Arrangements (PTA) of 1977, aimed at expanding intra-regional trade through an item-by-item approach to trade liberalization; 2) ASEAN industrial projects (AIP), wherein one large-scale, mainly Japanese-financed project was designated to each country: a urea project for Indonesia and Malaysia, superphosphate for the Philippines, soda ash for Thailand and diesel engines for Singapore; 3) the ASEAN Industrial Complementation Schemes (AIC) designed for each country to

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36. See Glassburner, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 51.

produce a specific industrial product which will be given preferential treatment within the ASEAN region.<sup>37</sup>

However, with the Preferential Trading Agreement (PTA), the effort thus far has been more apparent than real. Although the agreement involved an impressive 7,500 items in 1980, 6000 were goods worth \$50,000 or less (each) in trade at the time they were listed. In other words, many of the items on the list are marginal to intra-ASEAN trade.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, some economists feel that while tariff reductions are important, there are numerous "nontariff barriers" ranging from import and export quotas to bans on paper processing at ports of entry. These are significant barriers to trade expansion in the region.

Indeed, of the five industrial projects designated in the AIP plan, only the urea project in Indonesia has been implemented. The superphosphate project in the Philippines soon ran into difficulties and Singapore, under pressure from Indonesia was compelled to abandon its diesel project. Indonesia lobbied that the establishment of a regional diesel plant in Singapore would be in competition with its own fledgling diesel industry. At first Singapore suggested changing the status of the plant from that of a ASEAN project to a national project whose goods would be sold on the open (rather than regional) market. But it finally abandoned the project altogether for the sake of "unity". Expressing disappointment at ASEAN's lack of progress, Singapore withdrew its financial support of the AIP

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37. See Khaw Guat Hoon, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-234.

38. Glassburner, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

plan short of a token one percent contribution, instead of the normal 10 percent.<sup>39</sup>

It is not difficult to be critical of ASEAN's excessively slow pace of economic cooperation. As Khaw Guat Hoon writes, "while the Five see the political need to expedite economic cooperation, they at the same time hesitate to give concessions to each other, if by doing so their own economic interests may be adversely affected."<sup>40</sup> Of course, ASEAN's difficulties in its economic joint projects do not mean that it has failed to make progress in economic cooperation. What progress has taken place, however, has been in ASEAN's external economic relations as a regional grouping and in the economic performance of individual countries -- not in intra-regional cooperation. All five nations enjoyed double-digit growth rates in export earnings over the decade of the 1970's, and all but Thailand exceeded 20 percent per annum. All of these rates exceed the world rate of price inflation by a wide margin, thus reflecting rapid export growth. Indonesia displayed the fastest growth, raising its real per capita income 75 percent in fourteen years -- albeit oil played a major role and much of this increase has not been accompanied by a corresponding redistribution of income.<sup>41</sup>

ASEAN has also been quite successful in defending the interests of its members at multilateral forums such as GATT, UNCTAD, the United Nations Development Plan (UNDP), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

39. See Robert L. Rau, "The role of Singapore in ASEAN," Contemporary Southeast Asia, 3 (Sept. 1981), pp. 104-110.

40. Khaw Guat Hoon, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

41. See Glassburner, *op. cit.*

An ASEAN Brussels Committee was formed in June 1982 to coordinate policies and maintain day-to-day relations with the EEC Commission. A similar institutionalization of relations has occurred between ASEAN's economic "dialogue" countries -- Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of their attitudes towards expanding regional trade, Singapore and Indonesia are at the opposite ends of a spectrum which Jorgensen-Dahl describes as ranging "from the most positive and least apprehensive to the least positive and most apprehensive, with Malaysia closer to the Indonesian position and the Philippines and Thailand somewhat nearer to that of Singapore."<sup>43</sup> Singapore, ASEAN's smallest member, is the most economically advanced, while Indonesia, the largest and politically most influential member, is the most economically backward. As a result, Indonesia determines the type and format of any joint project proposal. Singapore, on the other hand, has been the most supportive of the establishment of an ASEAN Free Trade Area, but because Indonesia and Malaysia need to protect their labour-intensive industries, it has to accept selective trade liberalization on a product-by-product basis.

Singapore's main foreign policy concern has always been survival, both regionally and internationally. The internationalization of its economy is part of Singapore's strategy of security. As an ethnically Chinese state, Singapore

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42. For a good discussion of ASEAN's international economic achievements, see Jorgensen-Dahl, op. cit., chapter 6; Donald Crone, The ASEAN States: Coping with Dependence (New York: Praeger Pub., 1983), esp. chapt. 6.

43. Jorgensen-Dahl, op. cit, p. 135.

is sensitive to the fact that it is a small island located in a "Malay sea" of states predominantly or wholly Malay. As Lee Kuan Yew once quipped, "your best friends are never your neighbours."<sup>44</sup> Its fear of being militarily annexed or "swallowed" by these larger countries is manifested in its so-called "Timor complex" and is an important factor in its impatient, though restrained position on ASEAN economic issues. Singaporean officials are inhibited from advancing novel ideas for collective action for fear of being interpreted as "pushy Chinese."<sup>45</sup> National images and cultural stereotypes with negative connotations retain a latent potency. Malays tend to think of Chinese as soulless materialists while the latter regard the former as lazy dreamers.<sup>46</sup> Singapore's impatience with ASEAN is reflected in its hesitation to finance improvements to the Central Secretariat in the absence of cost effectiveness. With a per capita income significantly larger than some of its neighbours, Singapore realizes that prudence means creating interdependence in the global market, and it is resigned to the fact that the pace of regional economic interdependence will be dictated by ASEAN's slowest member, Indonesia.

Indonesia, on the other hand, with its 165 million people and 13,000 islands spanning a distance of 5,000 kilometers, is

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44. Alex Josey, Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore: Donald Moore Press, 1968), p. 486. Quoted in Hans Indorf, Impediments of Regionalism in Southeast Asia: Bilateral Constraints Among ASEAN Member States (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), p. 12.

45. For an interesting discussion, see *ibid.*

46. Stanley S. Bedlington, Malaysia and Singapore: The Building of New States (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978), p. 126.

more than half the size of the whole of ASEAN in both area and population. It is rich in natural resources, has displayed Southeast Asia's fastest rate of economic growth, and has been labelled by some as a rising "middle" power. For these reasons its leaders have felt it only natural that Indonesia play a leading role in regional politics. However, during the 1960s, Sukarno was more concerned with creating a global, rather than regional, emphasis. Consequently, both Singapore and Australia constantly worried about co-existing with a volatile and possibly expansionist neighbour. After Sukarno, the succeeding Suharto government sought to change Indonesia's international image as one that was non-adversarial, pragmatic and non-aligned.

Indonesia's new foreign policy style, though clearly non-expansionist vis-a-vis its external neighbours, did not tame the political and military elites' views on regional political entitlement. As Franklin Weinstein argues, Indonesia's notions of an "independent and active" foreign policy is an integral part of the elite's operational code.

In the view of most [Indonesian] leaders, an active foreign policy was integrally related to independence. In fact, the mere existence of an active, assertive foreign policy was taken as a mark of independence. For many of those who emphasized this, the chief consideration was not so much an expectation of achieving the avowed goals, but more a feeling that passivity connotes acquiescence to circumscribed independence. Partly this was a matter of demonstrating their independence to themselves. The Indonesian leaders often spoke of an active foreign policy as essential to the preservation of their self-respect, national identity and image...a passive

international role conveys a feeling of being taken for granted, of being less than fully independent.<sup>47</sup>

Indonesia's political ambitions, however, are frustrated by its economic inadequacies. The frustration is further aggravated by an impatient neighbour, Singapore, which is ASEAN's smallest and undeniably most dynamic member with a per capita income ten times larger than that of Indonesia. The ASEAN countries recognize Indonesia's latent ambitions, taking care to show it the appropriate deference, while at the same time they are grateful that Indonesia has showed a corresponding (though reluctant) effort at political restraint. The internal equilibrium of ASEAN depends on this tacit understanding, as will be evident in Indonesia's conduct in the Kampuchean crisis.

ASEAN's loose, decentralized institutional structure also does little to offset strong national interests and to facilitate the implementation of proposals. Until 1976 ASEAN had no Central Secretariat (which is now located in Jakarta). Instead, each country had, and still has, an ASEAN National Secretariat which is located in the respective foreign affairs departments. The principal decision-making body, the annual meeting of the foreign ministers, rotates among its members in alphabetical order. The Standing Committee, which coordinates and reviews the organization's activities, also rotates annually, as do the personnel in ASEAN's many committees and sub-committees. The reason for this decentralization was partly due to a reluctance in 1967 inadvertently to give any one state the

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47. Franklin Weinstein, Indonesian Foreign Policy and the Dilemma of Dependence (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), p. 189.

edge in regional status by hosting the Central Secretariat, as well as to avoid the emergence of a supra-national organization which might ignore national considerations.

However, the high degree of decentralization has often proved an to be an obstacle to implementing proposals . Added to the customary sluggishness of large bureaucracies, ASEAN technocrats are not isolated from national political interests or decisions, and no legal structure imposes the regional obligations of members. The frequent rotation of committee staff inhibits efficiency and continuity. Moreover, as final decision-making authority rests with the foreign ministers, many of their decisions on economic matters are merely approvals of policy decisions already made by the economic ministers who meet much more frequently. A problem that has been particularly acute since the recent Kampuchean issue is the fact that ASEAN's structure revolves around the annual meeting of the foreign ministers who tend to be more interested in external affairs and their political dimensions at the expense of economic dialogue.

In the political realm, ASEAN's peacekeeping ability was quickly tested by the Corregidor Affair and the subsequent suspension of relations between Malaysia and the Philippines. Barely a year after ASEAN's establishment, a special force of Muslim recruits was found on Corregidor Island, allegedly to infiltrate and undermine the Malay government in Sabah. A second challenge arose in October 1968 when two Indonesian marines, who had been found guilty of acts of sabotage and murder during "konfrontasi," were executed in Singapore despite appeals from

Indonesia and Malaysia. The Singapore embassy and residences in Jakarta were sacked and relations between the two governments remained distinctly cool for several years after the incident. In both incidents, while diplomatic efforts between ASEAN and the national leaders did not resolve the issues entirely, they were able successfully to defuse political tensions before they escalated to more open violence.<sup>48</sup>

Aside from the containment of these intra-regional disputes, ASEAN's progress during the first nine years was, as Adam Malik describes, mostly "intangible." It was primarily a "period of consensus in consultation, planning and adaptation."<sup>49</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, at the opening speech of the Fifth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in 1972, additionally remarked that "...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."<sup>50</sup> On the same subject in a speech in 1982, Lee Kuan Yew continued by explaining that:

The process of establishing mutual trust and confidence, respect and understanding for each other's position; developing our relations to a point where our Foreign Ministers feel free to consult each other on the telephone -- all these cannot be created by our ordering them so. These relations are the result of nurturing and natural evolution over many years.<sup>51</sup>

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48. Khaw Guat Hoon, op. cit., p. 229.

49. Hans H. Indorf, ASEAN: Problems and Prospects Occasional Paper, no. 38 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1975).

50. ASEAN Secretariat, Ten Years ASEAN (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 1978), pp. 273-274.

51. Newsletter, Bonn ASEAN Committee, No. 4/1983, Nov. 1983, p. 2. Quoted in Suh, "Political Cooperation Among ASEAN Countries," in Pfennig and Suh, op. cit., p. 77.

### Decision-making: The "ASEAN" Way

One must remember that unlike the EEC, ASEAN leaders have no extensive or influential elite groups which support or oppose them on regional cooperation. ASEAN's continued existence depends in large part upon the effort, commitment and cooperation of the exclusive circle of its top leadership. Given this, and the historical and cultural background of the Southeast Asian countries, one cannot underestimate the importance of good personal relations among the leaders of ASEAN in contributing to the success of the organization. In this context Micheal Haas has drawn a clear distinction between how the West and Asia view human and international relations generally, and how this view affects practices and procedures in concrete situations.

There is no acceptance in Confucian doctrine of the Western concept of *raison d'état*, the view that states are not bound by the moral principles applied to individuals. Instead of Westerners' *Gesellschaftlich* penchant for rational and impersonal calculations preparatory to agreements, it is necessary for Asians to develop personal relationships with one another in order to develop mutual trust, whence agreements become possible.<sup>52</sup>

The "Asian way" stresses the value of a non-institutional framework for discussions, such as informal deliberations conducted in private once to establish a foundation of trust. In contrast to what Asians call the West's preoccupation with "business-suit" diplomacy, their own style of "sports-shirt" diplomacy requires no written records until the public session.

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52. Michael Haas, "The 'Asian Way' to Peace," Pacific Community, 4 (July 1973), p. 503.

In this way, the loss of face is softened in times of conflict and everyone shares joint responsibility for what progress is achieved. Haas also points out that the Asian way of decision-making separates matters of principle and ideals from those of implementation. Decisions are prescribed by politicians on the basis of abstract principles; questions of feasibility and the implementation of these decisions are left for the bureaucracy to resolve.

ASEAN's modus operandi is through a process of consensus through mutual consultation, or in its original Malay terms, mufakat-musyawah. At the village level musyawarah means "that a leader should not act arbitrarily or impose his will, but rather make gentle suggestions of the path a community should follow, being careful always to consult all other participants fully and to take their views and feeling into consideration before delivering his synthesis conclusions."<sup>53</sup> Musyawarah, the spirit or conduct of discussion, continued indefinitely until mufakat (consensus) was achieved. Transposed into the international context where, of course, there is no authoritative leader, musyawarah takes place "not as between opposites but as between friends and brothers," where unanimity is the goal of negotiations and temporary compromised deals, trade-offs, power plays and modi vivendi eschewed. By avoiding the risk of confrontation, musyawarah allows discussants to discuss problems until consensus occurs without the constraint of rigid agendas, nor the risk of losing one's dignity.

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53. Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962), p. 40.

Critics of the mufakat-musyawah process maintain that it hinders more than helps ASEAN's progress. It requires that the ASEAN chain is only as strong as its weakest link and can only move as fast as its slowest member. Consensus also promotes a tendency toward postponement or procrastination of controversial issues such as those dealing with industrial complementarity, free-trade and the establishment of a strong central Secretariat. Its preoccupation with preventing one's loss of face means that if there is likely to be considerable friction at a forthcoming meeting that meeting will be indefinitely postponed. Most seriously, it institutionalizes the organization's impotence in achieving conclusive decisions on the premise that more consultations are needed.

Despite its shortcomings, however, ASEAN officials insist on mufakat-musyawah as most compatible with their historical and cultural temperament. Through consensus, the interests of the unit are protected. The ASEAN states had flirted with Western parliamentary democracy during the early days of independence, but for most of them the experiment was a failure; for Indonesia struggling through the '50's, it was a fiasco:

Indonesian democracy, much misunderstood outside our shores, works on consensus, not a show of hands. We could no longer afford this Western democracy with its majority voting, where 51 percent win and 49 percent ends up with a grudge. As we discovered with our 40 political parties, the dissatisfied segment retaliates by sucking the lifeblood of the other. It's a good way for a baby nation to stunt its growth. <sup>54</sup>

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54. Sukarno, Sukarno: An Autobiography, as told to Cindy Adams (Jakarta: Gunung Agung Press, 1960), p. 278.

For the leaders at ASEAN, it was therefore better to move slowly and cautiously than to not move at all. They were content to stay with their own brand of "conflict-resolution" through "conflict-avoidance."

#### The Strategic Context: ZOPFAN and the Bali Summit

The period in which ASEAN was struggling to consolidate itself as a regional organization was also marked by significant global political developments which had regional ramifications, manifested first in the Declaration of ZOPFAN in 1971, and the Bali Summit of 1976.

ASEAN's first major turningpoint was the designation of Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), proposed by Malaysia in response to a number of military changes in the region. Britain's review in 1968 of its military commitments east of the Suez led to the sudden decision to withdraw all its military forces from Malaysia and Singapore by 1971. Having previously assured both countries that no such action would take place until at least the mid-seventies, Britain's announcement came as a great shock to the militarily ill-prepared countries.<sup>55</sup> In the same year, the Tet offensive launched by North Vietnam led to a re-evaluation of U.S. commitments in Southeast Asia. The Guam Doctrine of 1969 restricted the U.S. role in Southeast Asia's security by stipulating that the United States could no longer be expected to

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55. See Jorgensen-Dahl, op. cit., pp. 74-86.

commit its ground forces to assist an Asian ally against external aggression. It did, however, allow air and naval power to be used to interdict aggressors, attack aggressor forces directly, or provide supplies to friendly governments. The Soviet Union subsequently tried to fill the vacuum by proposing to the ASEAN countries its so-called Asian Collective Security sphere. All these events created a sense of uneasiness and vulnerability in the ASEAN countries. As late as November 1967 Britain's Minister of Defence, Dennis Healey, assured Malaysia and Singapore that it would withdraw its military forces by the mid-1970's, thereby giving them a rough timetable to build up their own forces. Britain's announcement in January 1968 was therefore met with great shock and consternation, especially by Singapore, which had little in the way of indigenous defence and had provided the largest British base in the region.

The ASEAN countries agreed that the United States should play a security role in the region but were undecided over what that role should be. They saw the Guam Doctrine as a "device to cover an American abandonment of responsibility in the region," and the United States as a war-weary, uncertain and unreliable ally.<sup>56</sup> Their apprehensions were confirmed by the signs of Sino-U.S. rapprochement which represented a mixed blessing to ASEAN. For the Philippines, it signalled a return to a real "balance of power" in Asia, whereas Indonesia and Malaysia were more

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56. Donald E. Weatherbee, The United States in Southeast Asia: Continuity and Discontinuity. Paper presented at the International Studies Association meeting, March 1982, p. 4. Quoted in Donald G. McCloud, System and Process in Southeast Asia: The Evolution of a Region (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), p. 4.

suspicious of China's intentions. Uncertainty about China led to the cautious establishment of diplomatic relations with Peking by some of the ASEAN countries, first by Malaysia in 1969, followed soon after by Thailand and the Philippines. Diplomatic ties between China and Indonesia were broken in 1967 after Peking's alleged complicity in the GESTAPU coup. Indonesia still persistently refuses to resume relations until a formal apology of its role is offered by the Chinese government as well as guarantees of complete non-interference in Indonesia's domestic affairs, i.e. through Indonesia's banned communist party, the PKI. Similarly, characteristic of its pragmatism, Singapore has stuck by its statement that it will not establish formal diplomatic relations with Beijing until all its ASEAN neighbours, and specifically Indonesia, have done so. This stems not so much out of a distrust of Chinese intentions (many informal ties are maintained), but rather out of fear of Singapore's suspected role as a Chinese trojan horse and the reactions of Indonesia to a Peking embassy next door.

To help prevent diplomatic isolation, the ASEAN members agreed in November 1971 to keep each other informed on the relations with China to prevent competition in evolving relations with the great powers. By coordinating their actions, the People's Republic of China (PRC) could not pursue a divide and rule strategy. This explicit understanding has also worked well in ASEAN's search for a resolution to the Kampuchean issue. Cognizant of Indonesia's fears, "friends in court" such as Thailand, convey the views of their allies to Beijing. Despite

the warning signals around Thailand's de facto alliance with the Chinese, ASEAN is at least assured that the organization still represents a cornerstone of Thailand's foreign policy.

Declaring Southeast Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutralization (ZOPFAN) in 1971 was an effort at maintaining a policy of equidistance from the great powers. Proposed in Kuala Lumpur by Malaysia's Tun Abdul Razak, he envisaged the region under ZOPFAN to reject entanglements or flirtation with any foreign country or power bloc. Tun Razak initially proposed two levels of implementation of ZOPFAN: first, the ASEAN nations must espouse non-aggression principles based on mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and devise a means of ensuring peace and security among themselves; secondly, as the great powers, the United States, the Soviet Union and China would be the prospective guarantors or supervisors of Southeast Asia's neutrality.

The other ASEAN countries did not greet ZOPFAN with any great enthusiasm, feeling that it probably would not prove any more effective in deterring great power interference as their present policy without ZOPFAN. Indonesia's position held that "...the product of one-way benevolence on the part of the big powers would perhaps prove as brittle and unstable as the interrelationship between the major powers themselves."<sup>57</sup> Malik rejected "neutralization" because it still meant that Southeast Asia depended on outside powers, and to depend on external guarantees would be an even greater folly. Instead, ASEAN's

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57. Micheal Leifer, "ASEAN and the Problem of Common Response." International Journal 38 (Spring 1983), p. 319.

security could only be guaranteed if each country concentrated on its own "national resilience", and this in turn would (theoretically) translate into regional resilience vis-a-vis external interference. A distinctly Indonesian philosophical concept, national and subsequently, regional, "resilience" is a comprehensive notion "comprising all aspects of national life, including that of defence and security as an integral and inseparable element...resilience [implies] the principle of self-reliance, without undue reliance on foreign powers."<sup>58</sup> In addition, there was an equally relevant though less articulated consideration: Indonesia was disconcerted at Malaysia's unilateral attempt to prescribe the management of regional order. The provision for external power guarantees clashed with Indonesia's sense of regional leadership.

Singapore also felt ZOPFAN to be a futile exercise, preferring to rely on its traditional policy of balancing the great powers against each other. After much discussion and disagreement, ZOPFAN was eventually watered down into a policy of neutrality, without calling for external power guarantees. The other ASEAN nations accepted it as the organization's common diplomatic response and a symbol of regional purpose, though not entirely out of a firm support for the policy itself. They realized that ZOPFAN was proposed in time for a crucial election in Tun Razak's career. His intention with ZOPFAN was to demonstrate to Malaysia's alienated Chinese community and to the

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58. Soedjati Djiwandono, "The ASEAN after the Bali Summit." Indonesian Quarterly, 4 (Special Issue, 1976), p. 9. Quoted in Bailey, op. cit., p. 288.

MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) that the legitimacy of the Kuala Lumpur government was recognized and endorsed by Peking.<sup>59</sup>

Critics such as Micheal Leifer have labelled ZOPFAN an "exercise in creative ambiguity."<sup>60</sup> Part of its ambiguity stems from the fact that ZOPFAN is less a prescription for action than description of a condition and a policy of denial. ZOPFAN had as its goal "the diplomatic denial of the legitimacy of outside military activity in Southeast Asia rather than the development of any kind of new regional defence arrangement."<sup>61</sup> As Donald Weatherbee correctly posits, a policy of neutrality is difficult to implement because it "depends not only on those who desire it but rather on self-denying guarantees by great powers with respect to their own intentions."<sup>62</sup>

The aim of ZOPFAN was to reassure the communist nations -- China, Vietnam and the USSR -- that ASEAN was not adversarial nor a stooge of the Western nations. It was hoped that through ZOPFAN, a policy of denial would in effect replace that of an alliance with the West. Moreover, ASEAN officials were quick to insist to offshore observers that ZOPFAN is more a process than a goal. Perhaps the most interesting achievement about ZOPFAN was its demonstration of ASEAN solidarity. Although ZOPFAN was greeted courteously and unenthusiastically, each of the ASEAN member nations was -- and still is -- acutely sensitive of its

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59. On this point, see Micheal Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983).

60. Leifer, op. cit., p. 320.

61. Sheldon W. Simon, The ASEAN States and Regional Security (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), p. 13.

62. Donald Weatherbee, "U.S. Policy and the Two Southeast Asias," Asian Survey, 18 (April 1978), p. 412.

own individual internal fragility and realized the need to coordinate foreign policies.

Indeed, ZOPFAN succeeded in winning China's endorsement of both Tun Razak's government and ASEAN's status as a bona fide, non-aligned organization. Upon ASEAN's formation in 1967, China had brandished the new regional organization as "part of the U.S.-Soviet, anti-China ring," a "criminal design," "jointly instigated by the Soviet revisionists and U.S. imperialists."<sup>63</sup> China's attitude abruptly changed after ZOPFAN and ASEAN's rejection of the Soviet Union's regional Collective Security proposal. In addition to suiting ASEAN's security needs, ZOPFAN also suited Beijing's desire to obstruct Soviet designs in the region.

#### China's Relationship to the Region

While China may not appear much of a threatening power in Western circles, from the point of view of the Asian countries co-existing in China's "backyard", it looms as a formidable threat, not in the conventional sense of outright aggression but in terms of access to their ethnic Chinese communities and insurgencies. The ASEAN countries' fear of China's hegemonic ambitions do not go entirely without foundation. Their fears originated centuries ago during the dynastic era of China as an imperial power over its many suzerainties in North and Southeast Asia. The Chinese concept of "Nanyang", or "Southern Seas" encapsulates the territories of Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and

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63. See Bailey, op. cit., p. 169.

Indonesia within its sphere of influence, requiring them to be militarily acquiescent and politically "accessible." Nanyang also refers to the 18 million overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia whose economic predominance vastly outweighs their tiny representation in the total population. The Nanyang philosophy essentially dictates that every Chinese must show loyalty to the motherland.<sup>64</sup>

During Chinese Vice-Premier Teng's visit to three ASEAN capitals in 1978, the leaders of Singapore and Malaysia publicly took a firm stance in stressing to him that the ethnic Chinese in their countries were Malaysians and Singaporeans. To make Singapore's national identity clear, Premier Lee Kwan Yew told his Chinese guest that "Singaporeans have come to realize that just as they cannot afford to sacrifice their national interests for China, so they cannot expect China to sacrifice her national interests for Singapore."<sup>65</sup> However, Yew's assurances to the Chinese Vice-Premier were not always convincing enough to Singapore's Sino-phobic neighbours. Singapore had long advocated a policy of multilingualism because the government felt it unwise to accord the Chinese language predominant status. Thus when a recent "Speak Mandarin" campaign was launched to offset the rising preeminence of local dialects -- and to a lesser extent, English -- as the island's spoken language, it raised eyebrows in

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64. See Peter Lyon, "War and Peace," Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 March 1975, p. 9.

65. See Thakur Phanit, Regional Integration Attempts in Southeast Asia: A Study of ASEAN's Problems and Progress Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1980, p. 229.

neighbouring Indonesia and Malaysia who felt it was an attempt by Singapore to assert its ethnic status.<sup>66</sup>

A further source of irritation with Beijing is China's material and moral support for ASEAN's insurgent communist movements and the their insistence on distinguishing between government-to-government relations and party-to-party relations. Diplomatic relations based on the former, China maintains, should not be prejudiced by the latter which is both separate and distinct. Indonesia is the most adamant in refusing to accept this argument since the distinction quite evidently does not apply to China.

The second major turning point in ASEAN's development occurred after the United States was defeated in the Vietnam War in 1975. Saigon fell to the Northern forces and two more countries, Laos and Cambodia, fell to communism. While others rejoiced, the U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia was met with anxiety and apprehension by ASEAN. The international order prior to 1975 was the basis on which the ASEAN countries had fashioned their foreign policies. But there was now uneasiness with Soviet-American relations, with the open Sino-Soviet conflict and the uncertain roles of China, the U.S., the Soviet Union and Japan. Vietnam proved itself to be a formidable fighting force against the world's most powerful nation, conditioned by decades of war and a potent revolutionary fervour. Most worrisome to ASEAN was that Vietnam was now also in possession of five billion dollars worth of American military equipment. What new international and

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66. See *ibid.*

regional order would replace the old? How would Southeast Asia fit into the new power configuration?

On the one hand, the American withdrawal in 1975 presented an opportunity for the region finally to develop a *modus vivendi* with the Indochinese nations without external intervention. On the other hand, as potential "dominos", the ASEAN states might be vulnerable to the victors - Vietnam, the USSR, and China. In fact, neither happened. This was partly due to internal dissension among the communists in Southeast Asia, but also to the ability of the ASEAN states to cooperate and promote regional security and economic growth. This was achieved in two ways; first, by affirming and formalizing ASEAN's political role at the Bali Summit, and second, by maintaining communication with Vietnam.

First, the seminal Bali Summit of 1976 convened not only ASEAN's foreign ministers, but also the national heads of state to assess recent developments and to determine what measures ASEAN should take. The outcome of the summit was the Declaration of the ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Briefly, the ASEAN Concord resolved to eliminate threats posed by subversion, take active steps toward ZOPFAN, and to rely on exclusively peaceful processes in the settlement of regional differences. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation outlined steps to promote "perpetual" peace, based on:

- a) mutual respect for independence and territorial integrity;
- b) the right of states to lead their existence free from external interference;

- c) non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- d) the settlement of disputes by peaceful means;
- e) the renunciation of the use of threats or force;
- f) effective cooperation.<sup>67</sup>

Both of these documents are significant because they are ASEAN's first explicitly political documents. Having grown out of a concern for the communist victories, the Bali conference established priorities to reaffirm and reinforce relations based on a shared sense of threat, and to use the strengthened relations to initiate a dialogue with Vietnam and establish a set of common assumptions concerning regional order. The ASEAN Concord stipulates that

The stability of each member state and of the ASEAN region is an essential contribution to international peace and security. Each member resolves to eliminate threats posed by subversion to its stability, thus strengthening national and ASEAN resilience.

In other words, the ASEAN Concord asserted that the political stability of ASEAN was indivisible; the presence of instability in one state had repercussions for the region as a whole. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation provided a framework for interstate conduct. It stressed the sanctity of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. It was intended to serve as a political bridge to Indochina by making it clear that accommodation was possible within the existing political framework of the region.

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67. Interview with Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, "Indonesia, ASEAN and Peace in Southeast Asia," Kaleidoscope International, 1984, p. 45.

After the summit meeting, ASEAN resolved not to adopt a hostile attitude towards Indochina, emphasizing non-intervention and potential accommodation. In a joint press statement:

The [ASEAN Foreign] Ministers expressed the hope that these developments [in Indochina] would open up prospects for real peace, progress and stability in the region of Southeast Asia. The Ministers expressed their readiness to enter into a friendly and harmonious relationship with each nation of Indochina.<sup>68</sup>

Thailand and Malaysia had already approached Hanoi in 1975 with an invitation to join ASEAN, but it was rejected along with critical comments of ASEAN as being a "neo-colonialist", U.S. replacement of SEATO.

### Conclusion

The advent of ASEAN was not distinguished by a common perception of external threat, but instead by a common recognition of the potential dangers arising out of continued intra-regional hostilities, lack of economic cooperation, and too great a reliance on outside powers. The ASEAN conception of regional security was conceived in developmental terms, underpinned by political stability to prevent the wasteful diversion of energies from economic development. It was also a prescription for regional order based on mutual respect for one another's national sovereignty. During its evolutionary period throughout the 1970s, ASEAN was less concerned with producing concrete results (such as economic integration) than with

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68. Press Statement, Eighth ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 14 May 1975.

cultivating a durable foundation of trust, solidarity and political goodwill among its members. This was, and continues to be, ASEAN's foremost and ever-fragile priority. In Chan Heng Chee's words:

That ASEAN was conceived primarily as an organization whose major activities lay in economic, social and cultural cooperation, but whose *raison d'être* was political coordination to cope with threats to subregional peace and security, internally or externally, is a revealing statement of the maximal attainment possible in a situation of minimal consensus."<sup>69</sup>

As a regional organization, ASEAN evolved as a forum in which its member states coordinated their policies and national objectives; ASEAN did not coordinate their policies for them.

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69. Chan Heng Chee, "ASEAN: Subregional Resilience," in Security Interdependence in the Asia Pacific Region, ed. James W. Morley (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1986), p. 114.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### The Invasion of Kampuchea and its Consequences

A threat is defined as "any condition that is perceived to reduce or wipe out the enjoyment of values or decrease a feeling of security."<sup>70</sup> In discussing the Kampuchean crisis it is particularly important to keep in mind that it is the strength of the perception that counts, not the degree of its accuracy.

A country's perception of a threat is conditioned by three factors.<sup>71</sup> The first is the nature of capabilities. The more relative capabilities a country possesses the less threatened it will feel. The ASEAN nations are still focusing all their energies on economic development, insurgency movements and widening social inequities pose serious internal security problems, and the ASEAN countries' military forces remain woefully under-trained and ill-equipped to confront any major external threat. The second factor is the consideration of distance. The farther removed a country is from a conflict, the less immediacy the threat will have. Secure in its detached archipelagic status, Indonesia has been the most unruffled by and conciliatory to the Vietnamese threat. Similarly, for the Philippines, the impact of the Kampuchean conflict has been virtually non-existent and what involvement they have in the

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70. Estrella D. Solidum, "Security Perspectives in ASEAN," in Aspects of ASEAN, eds. Werner Pfennig and Mark M.B. Suh (Munich, Germany: Weltforum Verlag, 1984), p. 101.

71. Ibid., pp. 101-102.

issue is by virtue of their membership in ASEAN. The third factor rests on the perceptions of the decision-makers in the policy-making process. Beyond decision-making rules and standard operating procedures, individuals, particularly in the ASEAN countries, are a key factor in foreign policy processes. As individuals, their perceptions are conditioned (or clouded) by past experiences, time constraints, residual suspicions and conditions of ambiguity with little "reliable" information.<sup>72</sup> The resulting situation is that external threats will be perceived differently depending on one or a combination of these factors: some decision-makers will be threatened by potential or even fictitious threats -- what the Asians call "tigers at the doorstep," "tigers in the jungle," or "paper tigers."

The crossing of 120,000 Vietnamese troops across the Cambodian border on December 25, 1978 and the subsequent establishment of the Heng Semrin regime in Phnom Penh a month later, marked a shift in the regional distribution of power and a turning point in ASEAN's development as an organization. The invasion violated ASEAN's principles of respect for national sovereignty and non-intervention. It came as a particular shock after a recent 1978 visit by Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong to the ASEAN capitals, which was supposed to represent a gesture of conciliation and political goodwill.

The ASEAN reaction was swift and uncompromising. A joint statement issued on January 19, 1979 condemned the armed

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72. Robert O. Tilman, Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond: ASEAN Perceptions of External Threats (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), p. 26.

intervention, "affirmed the right of Kampuchea to determine its internal affairs", and called for an "immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces." One notes, however, that by not naming Vietnam directly and by using the term "armed intervention" rather than "aggression," ASEAN's condemnation was explicitly unprovocative. The January joint statement was carefully worded to condemn Vietnam's actions but not to appear overtly anti-Vietnamese.

As Kampuchea's neighbour and the only ASEAN country directly affected by the invasion, Thailand took a tough stance while the others were willing to maintain negotiating flexibility. According to Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila, he was offered a hot line between Bangkok and Hanoi, a measure to prevent troop clashes, and even a non-aggression pact by his Vietnamese counterpart, Nguyen Co Thach. But these offers were rejected by Siddhi: "I just refused to accept that, because if you do so you accept the fait accompli of the presence of Vietnamese troops along the Thai border."<sup>73</sup>

Thailand has traditionally competed with Vietnam for influence in Laos and Kampuchea and these two states have traditionally served as buffer states. In light of Vietnam's historical claim to sixteen Thai provinces as part of its goal of a greater Indochina Federation, Thailand would have preferred a weak Vietnam, divided into North and South, since two Vietnams would have been weaker than one. Despite fears of expansion when the United States withdrew in 1975, the Thai government adopted a cautious, flexible, cooperative policy toward Vietnam. In

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73. Rodney Tasker, "Avoiding Vietnam's Trap," Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 Apr. 1984, p. 16.

keeping with its tradition of seeking a strong external power to provide countervailing force against its main adversary, the Thais tentatively turned to China for added support, taking care to avoid having the relationship labelled as an alliance. When Vietnam's 1978 invasion effectively destroyed Kampuchea's buffer status, it revived Thai fears of Vietnam's expansionist ambitions, which were further reinforced by the Soviet Union's sponsorship role. Bangkok's military-bureaucratic establishment was concerned with the ramifications if Hanoi was to consolidate a position of dominance. A new center of regional power would effectively emerge to which Thailand would be most unpalatably subordinated.

As a front-line state, Thailand also shoulders the huge spin-off costs of armed conflict -- the massive influx of refugees and consequent social disruption, incursions into Thai territory by SRV forces, and the fear that Hanoi could "export" its revolution to Thai territory. Thailand's insistence that ASEAN support its position also stems from its perception of Vietnam's threat not only to itself, but to the region. To quote the Foreign Minister, "Thailand's eastern boundary has become the frontier of the Free World against the control of the strategic Persian Gulf, Thailand is the stronghold against further advance of what Vietnam has euphemistically called 'Socialism's Outpost' in Southeast Asia."<sup>74</sup>

Singapore has adopted, if not surpassed, Thailand's hard-line stance in condemning Vietnam's actions. Singapore is

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74. Tilman, op. cit., p. 72.

ASEAN's strongest and most outspoken critic in the Kampuchean issue, in complete contrast to its low profile in ASEAN's economic discussions. Singapore's customary practice of speaking bluntly and insisting that ASEAN "stay the course" again stems directly from a deep sense of vulnerability as an island-nation, and its extreme dependence on foreign investment which requires regional stability. Thus according to the Singaporean leadership, a threat to Thailand is a threat to ASEAN.

However, support for its front-line neighbour stems not so much out of fear for Thailand's welfare, nor even out of a direct fear of Vietnam. Instead, Singapore feels that the Vietnamese threat is secondary and merely an adjunct or pretext for what are ultimately Soviet designs for Southeast Asia. As Lee Kuan Yew asserted in September 1982, "The main issue was whether the Soviets will become a major power in the region because of Vietnam."<sup>75</sup> Singapore's major fear of the Soviet Union is primarily commercial; it is concerned with the protection of its sea-lanes through the Straits of Malacca upon which its life-blood rests, but also upon which the Soviet Union depends to link its Black Sea and Pacific fleets. Since the 1960s, the foreign policy of Singapore, and specifically Lee Kuan Yew, has been infused with a distinct, ideological distrust of Soviet policy. Addressing two Japanese reporters in 1981, Lee remarked that "Soviet actions and policy have been relentlessly consistent: to

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75. Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, 9 September, 1982. In Hans Indorf, Impediments to Regionalism in Southeast Asia: Bilateral Constraints Among ASEAN Member States (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), p. 36.

secure the Russian heartland from attack, to communize the world, and...to keep it under Communist control."<sup>76</sup>

Compared to Thailand and Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia adopted a "wait and see" attitude immediately after the invasion. Indonesia and, to a less vocal extent, Malaysia, took a diametrically opposite view in comparison to the vehement stance of their two ASEAN neighbours. They feel that ASEAN's main threat is neither Vietnam nor the Soviet Union, but China, and specifically its growing cooperative ties with Thailand in confronting Vietnam. In January 1979, shortly after the fall of Phnom Penh, China launched a military punitive raid across the Vietnamese border to demonstrate its "paternal" discontent with Vietnam's recent actions and aimed also at "teaching it a lesson."

China has also taken measures to "assure the fraternal Thai people" that if Hanoi did not "stop provoking" Thailand, then China "will not stand idly by."<sup>77</sup> Since then, China has supplied Thailand with tanks, anti-aircraft guns and artillery weapons. An operational military link was established in December 1985 between Northwest Thailand and Southeast China.<sup>78</sup>

Indonesia is at the forefront in warning against China's latent ambitions in the region, fearing that the present conflict provides China with an unwelcome "foot in the door" to the

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76. Tilman, op. cit., p. 63.

77. See Justus M. Van Der Kroef, "The United States and Cambodia: The Limits of Compromise and Intervention," Contemporary Southeast Asia, 7 (March 1986).

78. See Lau Teik Soon, "Shifting Alignments in Regional Politics," in Southeast Asian Affairs 1986 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987).

region. Indonesia takes the position that while Thailand's fears of Vietnam are perhaps legitimate, it is an immediate short-term threat. It feels that a modernizing China should be ASEAN's main worry. Both Indonesia and Malaysia suffer problems of ethnic stability, where relations between the ethnically Chinese minority (3% and 35% respectively) and the indigenous population are extremely unstable. China's refusal to sever links with their outlawed communist parties is a persistent irritation which they feel attests to China's ulterior motives in the Kampuchean issue. A survey of Indonesian elites revealed that the Chinese threat is viewed as more nationalistic than ideological.<sup>79</sup> What is meant by this is that the communist ideology plays a secondary role to the views of China as inherently "a hungry giant" and the Chinese people as expansionist by nature. In fact, Indonesia believes that a strong, reconstructed, ASEAN-supported Vietnam would provide an excellent bulwark against any Chinese expansionist designs.

Thailand's front-line status and political reliance on China's threat of the use of force has caused the rest of ASEAN to reluctantly follow its front-line member for the sake of unity. Thailand therefore walks a fine line with its ASEAN friends by informally sanctioning Chinese political and military support, though neither formally acknowledging nor denying it. Despite increased U.S. military assistance since the conflict began, the Thai government is fully aware that China poses an infinitely more effective deterrent against further Vietnamese

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79. Tilman, op. cit., pp. 118-121.

aggression than the United States or, for that matter, ASEAN. As a senior official in the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarked: "With us it is not an academic question, it is a matter of survival. China is on our side, and that is all that matters."<sup>80</sup> In short, the de facto China-Thailand alliance is purely short-term. Moreover, its trust in China is still new and untested, therefore making it unlikely that Thailand will risk offending Indonesia and Malaysia.

ASEAN's diplomatic position in the conflict demands a withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchean territory, but there is disagreement regarding, first, the motives behind Vietnam's actions and, second, the extent to which ASEAN should accommodate a Vietnamese controlling interest in Kampuchea. The prevailing Thai view is that Vietnam's invasion was an outright "act of aggression" in gross violation of one of ASEAN's foremost principles of respect for national sovereignty. To condone such a violation would create dangerous precedents for the future.

The Thai position clearly focuses on reviving the status quo ante, though with Kampuchea under the leadership of the deposed Prince Sihanouk and not the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot. Indonesia and Malaysia, in contrast, are somewhat more sympathetic to Vietnam's security concerns and thus more open to accepting the status quo. They feel that Vietnam's occupation was less an act driven by aggressive or expansionist motives than a means of securing its national sovereignty vis-a-vis an increasingly menacing China. According to this argument, the invasion was not

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80. Ibid., p. 84.

an exclusively bilateral affair between Vietnam and Kampuchea, but drew its roots in large part from the Sino-Vietnamese conflict which, in turn, was perceived in Moscow and Beijing as an adjunct of Sino-Soviet tensions.

Sino-Vietnamese relations, described by the Chinese as once "close as teeth to lips", have, through the centuries of Chinese suzerainty, periodically flared up into contests between a belligerent subordinate and an overbearing, self-assumed mentor. Sino-Vietnamese relations once again deteriorated rapidly in the early 1970s. By 1973, Hanoi was aware that China, like Thailand, did not favor unification of North and South Vietnam, but an independent (and pro-Western) regime in Saigon. This was followed by Vietnam's drift closer to the Soviet orbit, membership in COMECON, the large-scale expulsion of ethnic Chinese Vietnamese and the subsequent influx of the so-called "boat people," culminating in China's abrupt termination of an estimated \$18 billion of aid which left a devastated and impoverished Vietnam crippled. Compounding this was Kampuchea's growing signs of resentment toward Vietnam.<sup>81</sup> Like Laos, Kampuchea was traditionally assumed by Hanoi to be within Vietnam's sphere of influence and any tendency toward Chinese cooperation was perceived as a direct threat to Vietnam's national security. This point shall become clearer later.

Indonesia and Malaysia draw a clear distinction between ideology and Vietnam's security imperatives. Vietnam's resort to

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81. By 1977, Kampuchea was disputing rights over offshore islands, expelling Vietnamese nationals, and harrassing Vietnam on the borders of the Mekong delta.

force, they argue, was due not to expansionist ambitions but to escalating attacks along their borders by Pol Pot and increasing Chinese involvement in Kampuchea. David Elliot sums up their position as follows:

To the extent that Vietnam is an expansionist state, the drive to extend its influence and control is not a simple projection of its ideology, and to the extent that ideology is a factor in its expansionist behavior (specifically the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea), it is not the ideology itself or even the strategic precepts drawn from that ideology which are critical, but the application of the ideology and strategy to specific circumstances.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, the invasion of Kampuchea was more of a strategic necessity, and less a requirement of Vietnam's Communist doctrine. A comment made by Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach during a Bangkok visit in May 1980 made this point clear in relation to ASEAN:

The solidarity of the Indochinese nations is as important to Vietnam as is the solidarity of ASEAN to Thailand. We have no intention of making an ASEAN country as a buffer zone between our countries and we cannot accept the premise that an Indochina country be made a buffer zone between these groups of countries.<sup>83</sup>

For Indonesia, the memory of the Indonesian Revolution against the Dutch is still strong. An occasional point of irritation among Indonesian officials is that Indonesia is alone among the ASEAN states to have actually had to fight for its independence. Reminded of the bitter revolutionary struggle and the military's heroic role during the coup of 1965, many

82. David W.P. Elliot, "Vietnam in Asia: Strategy and Diplomacy in a New Context," International Journal, 38 (Spring 1983), p. 291.

83. Bangkok Post, 22 May 1980. Quoted in Micheal Leifer, "Obstacles to a Political Settlement in Indochina," Pacific Affairs, 58 (Winter 1985-86), p. 633.

Indonesians, particularly in military circles, feel an affinity with Vietnam whom they see as presently engaged in a struggle for its national independence vis-a-vis Chinese dominance.

General Benny Murdani, Commander of Indonesia's armed forces and the most accommodative as well as controversial advocate in the issue, sent ripples of anxiety through ASEAN when he unilaterally announced that Vietnam was not a threat to Southeast Asia.<sup>84</sup> Murdani reasoned that countries such as Israel and Vietnam, which are surrounded by hostile powers, tend to take an aggressive geopolitical stance.

#### The China Dilemma

The primary source of the quarrel in the Kampuchean issue and the most important in seeking a modus vivendi is China. Sheldon Simon aptly describes the region as divided into "Two Southeast Asias" -- ASEAN and Indochina -- wherein the pivotal role of China is important to both.<sup>85</sup> Each relates to the other in terms of China's possible roles, capabilities and intentions. For some, the PRC represents a source of support and guarantor; for others it is a future predator. China has never been invited to any regional conferences hosted by ASEAN or Indochina, and its involvement has generally been informal, off-stage and clandestine. Nonetheless, the prospects of reconciliation or conflict between the "Two Southeast Asias" depends on how each group relates to China and perceives it.

84. Nayan Chanda, "ASEAN's Odd Man Out," Far Eastern Economic Review, 1 March 1984, pp. 8-9.

85. Sheldon Simon, "The Two Southeast Asias and China," Asian Survey, 24 (May 1984), pp. 579-533.

An equally important consideration is how China perceives the situation. The problem for China is two-fold: Vietnam's unsavory alignment with the Soviet Union and its rival designs for regional hegemony. If the 1978 invasion accomplished anything, it introduced for the first time the Sino-Soviet conflict directly into the Southeast Asian theater. The Soviet-Vietnamese alliance, the establishment of naval bases in Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay, and the eventual occupation of Kampuchea sharply reinforced China's perception of encirclement by the Soviet Union. As Martin Stuart-Fox explains, "it is not Vietnamese influence in Laos and Kampuchea per se which bothers the Chinese, nor even the presence of Vietnamese troops in both countries. Rather, it is that since Vietnam is aligned with the Soviet Union, the neutrality of Laos and Kampuchea vis-a-vis China has been undermined."<sup>86</sup> Taking an even more extreme position to that of Thailand, Beijing insists on total Vietnamese withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea as the precondition for any start in negotiations both with Hanoi and Moscow.

Vietnam is seen as an upstart, two-faced, "rebellious tertiary" whose invasion of Kampuchea caused China to lose face. While Hanoi may give signals of accommodation, these are, according to China, merely tactical and unlikely to be genuine gestures toward a political solution to the conflict. Vietnam will continue to follow a policy of "Dam, dam. Danh, danh" (Talk, talk. Fight, fight) as it did during the war against the United

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86. Martin Stuart-Fox, "Resolving the Kampuchean Problem: The Case for an Alternative Regional Initiative" Contemporary Southeast Asia, 4 (September 1982), p. 216.

States. China warns that the only language Hanoi will understand is military pressure; any other approach will be misinterpreted as a sign of weakness. It is for this reason that any prospect for a solution requires a demand for complete withdrawal, since "to condone aggression would only breed aggression." A report issued by the New China News Agency strongly expounded China's fears:

Vietnam's tactics of "cannons plus smiling faces" is meant to serve its strategic goal...that Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea is to wipe out Democratic Kampuchea and form an "Indochina Federation," and then invade Thailand, take a possession of the Strait of Malacca and control South-East Asia. Vietnam will use military pressure, political deception and diplomatic disintegration simultaneously...to obstruct the unity among the ASEAN countries, and the unity between China and Thailand and the other ASEAN countries so that Vietnam can wipe out these countries one by one."<sup>87</sup>

Vietnam's tactics reinforce China's belief that the only possibility for a solution is by "bleeding it white." Vietnam's domestic and postwar reconstruction troubles should be exacerbated not ameliorated, thus external economic linkages should be discouraged. Moreover, Vietnam's financial, industrial and military dependency should be driven closer to the USSR so that the relationship will self-destruct. With troops poised at the Sino-Vietnamese border ready to "teach Vietnam a second lesson," China has indicated it is prepared for a long, drawn-out protracted war against Vietnam, to last several decades if necessary. The important point to remember here is that the focus of China's fear is ultimately the Soviet Union; Vietnam is

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87. New China News Agency, Beijing, 21 Feb. 1982, in British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts, FE/6962/A3/1.

merely a surrogate which could be contained at relatively little cost. In the meantime, China's goal is not to let ASEAN capitulate to Hanoi's ploys, for this would mean a further notch in Moscow's favor. Some observers are even of the opinion that China might accept Vietnamese hegemony if it were not backed by the Soviet Union.<sup>88</sup>

Whereas ASEAN recognizes that Vietnam has legitimate security concerns, there is no corresponding view for China. Within ASEAN circles, there is also disagreement with China's policy of "bleeding" Vietnam. According to Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Dhanabalan in an interview with the Straits Times, "We are not happy with the idea of the Vietnamese being bled in Kampuchea...We never said we want Kampuchea to act as a dam against the Vietnamese, that would be a non-starter."<sup>89</sup> Moreover, China's threat of a "second lesson" is steadily losing credence with ASEAN after at least six major Vietnamese military incursions into Thai territory since the first invasion in 1979 and no signs of reprisal from China. If China continues to lack assertiveness, ASEAN officials are afraid it may appear as a "paper tiger" to Vietnam. On the other hand, China fully realizes the risks involved in such action. Any large-scale attack on Vietnam would abort present efforts toward Sino-Soviet rapprochement and risk a Soviet military response. In addition, Beijing has since 1985 extended more aid for the Kampuchean coalition resistance forces but stops short of promising a

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88. New Straits Times, 12 Aug. 1981, p. 19.

89. New Straits Times, 6 June 1980.

"second lesson", causing ASEAN officials to question China's commitment to Thailand.<sup>90</sup>

Yet even if China did find it in its interests to take more assertive action, one needs to take into account its limited capabilities, lack of expertise in military logistics and the possible repercussions. As Paul H.B. Goodwin points out, "If China's military operations in 1979 were any test, the combination of trucks and human porters used to support the battle areas limits the PLA's speed of advance to the pace of human porters and its range to not much more than 50 miles."<sup>91</sup> Nor were China's aircraft able to achieve air superiority over Northern Vietnam where Hanoi deploys 60 percent of its regular forces. Most disturbingly, China's 1979 border assault provided just the incentive the Soviets required to convince Hanoi to open up the American-built naval and air bases in southern Vietnam to Russian forces. Immediately after, the USSR rushed military aid to Vietnam and stepped up naval surveillance of the South China Seas, their actions justified by China's military pressure at the border. For ASEAN, the fact that China is not yet a major

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90. Lee Kuan Yew once stated: "Our dilemma is acute. If there had been no [Chinese] intervention, we would face Vietnamese supremacy which in this case means Soviet supremacy. If the intervention is over-successful, it means that in ten, fifteen years there will be an assertion of influence...by a Communist power that has influence over all guerrilla movements in the countries of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia." Singapore Bulletin, August 1979, in Micheal Leifer, "The Balance of Advantage in Indochina," World Today, 38 (June 1982), p. 490.

91. Paul G.B. Goodwin, "Chinese Defence and National Security Policies in the 1980's." Paper prepared for the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Mexico City, March 1983, p. 18. In "The Two Southeast Asias and China," Sheldon Simon, op. cit., p. 523.

negotiating player nor an unconditionally welcome one, the prospect of a PRC "lesson" is more alarming than reassuring.

China's greatest political gain in the issue is that now through its alliance with Thailand, it has a foot in ASEAN's door. While it has reduced material support for the insurgent Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), China is fostering links with the more hawkish members of the Thai military, Sino-Thai business in Bangkok, and the Mass Line Party under Sudsai Hasdin (former head of the Internal Security Operations Command). Yet Beijing has continued to insist on its party-to-party and government-to-government distinction with respect to its links with Communist rebels. China's main challenge now is that it must support the rebels enough so that they will not opt for Moscow or Hanoi, but at the same time assure the ASEAN governments not to interfere in quelling domestic rebellions.<sup>92</sup>

Publicly, Thailand prefers to maintain a neutral posture regarding its relationship with China. Thailand has neither rejected nor accepted Chinese aid in the event of a large-scale Vietnamese invasion, but it did reject PRC inducements for it to join the anti-Vietnamese case openly. Among these inducements was a "friendship option" in exchange for much-needed oil, but which Thai officials, acting in the interest of ASEAN, rejected. Although Thailand fully recognizes China is a more credible ally and deterrent, it is not prepared to lose ASEAN support in the

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92. During a visit by a Chinese official, Malaysia was assured that what aid China gave to Southeast Asian insurgents was "purely moral." See Leszek Buszynski, "Thailand: The Erosion of a Balance Foreign Policy," Asian Survey, 22 (November 1982), pp. 1051.

issue. Each step taken by Thailand to move closer to China is an inevitable (and reluctant) step closer by ASEAN. Other ASEAN members such as Indonesia are clearly most anxious not to be identified with any semblance of an anti-Vietnam, pro-China axis. Meanwhile, Bangkok's front-line position in the conflict lends a certain degree of urgency and legitimacy to its precarious diplomatic position. The other ASEAN members, though visibly uneasy about the relationship, are careful not encourage Thailand's friendship with China.

#### The Soviet Dilemma

Unlike China or the United States, the Soviet Union has never played a major role in Southeast Asia. It gives no aid to the region except to Indochina, and maintains no links with the various communist insurgency groups. In the late 1960s, shortly after the Chinese border attack at the Ussuri River, the Soviet Union attempted to put forth its rather vague prescription of an Asian Collective Security sphere through bilateral political ties and new air and naval bases. The scheme had no takers as neither Asian nor Vietnam was willing to be involved in a formal alliance against China.

The Soviet-Vietnamese alliance, however, signalled a sharp reversal; no longer was the Soviet Union a remote power. Not only did Moscow now maintain a direct military presence in Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay, but even more threatening by virtue of having gained an ally on the southern flank of China, it brought

the Sino-Soviet conflict directly into the ASEAN theater. In the ASEAN view, a permanent Soviet presence in China's proverbial "backyard" dramatically increased the chances of an outbreak of conflict between the two powers. Adding to ASEAN and China's fears is that the Soviet-Vietnamese 25-Year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed on November 3, 1978, only one month before Vietnam's invasion of Kamupuchea. Moscow had first approached Vietnam to join COMECON in 1976 but only three years later -- evidently after Hanoi had secured Moscow's guarantee to underwrite the invasion -- did it finally accepted the invitation and agreed to grant rights to its military bases.

The 1978 Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship was similar to that consolidated between India and the USSR in August 1971, which served to neutralize China and facilitated the dismemberment of Pakistan. No doubt one of the main incentives in drawing up the Vietnam document was the recent Sino-Japanese Friendship Pact concluded with an explicit "anti-hegemony clause" which condemned the hegemonial sphere of influence by any single power in the region. Though no names were mentioned, the document's clause was clearly aimed at the Soviet Union as part of China's strategy of encirclement with Japan, the United States and ASEAN.

The Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty, in response, attended to Vietnam's post-war reconstruction and "adventurist" needs (to the tune of an estimated \$5 million a day), and at the same time guaranteed against a tripartite, anti-Soviet, united front. For ASEAN and China, one of the most disturbing clauses of the

document is Article Six which requires each party to aid the other in the event of an attack. The possibility of Soviet military involvement has effectively discouraged the parties involved -- ASEAN, China and the United States -- from countering Hanoi directly.

As Malaysia's former Foreign Minister Tun Sri Ghazali Shafie once pointed out, the USSR is not so much a direct threat to ASEAN as a projection of power to provoke Chinese counter-measures.<sup>93</sup> In fact, continued Soviet-Vietnamese relations would be acceptable to ASEAN as long as it was not for military purposes. Some circles in Indonesia and Malaysia even go so far as to say that a Soviet military presence enhances regional stability by blocking China. However, ASEAN's fears of a long-term Vietnam-USSR alliance are two-fold: first, the eventual control of Southeast Asia's sea lanes (a specifically Singaporean fear); and secondly, the possibility of a Soviet-backed, Vietnamese expansionist drive (a Thai as well as Singaporean fear).

Despite the hefty \$5 million tab and ASEAN's diplomatic overtures, the incentives for the Soviet Union to stay in Vietnam far outweigh the incentives for it to leave. The bases at Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay for the first time provide the Soviets with a warm-water port and a secure station between the Baltic and Black Seas and major Pacific bases at Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk. They increase the capability of rapid deployment

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93. See Chan Heng Chee, "ASEAN: Subregional Resilience," in Security Interdependence in the Asia Pacific Region, ed. James W. Morley (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1986), pp. 111-143.

in the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia, and relieve Soviet perceptions of encirclement while keeping China effectively contained.

Moscow's privileges in Southeast Asia depend largely on continued good relations with the government in Hanoi. It is becoming increasingly evident, however, that tension and at times outright hostility characterizes the alliance. On the one hand, the Kremlin is less than pleased with Vietnam's repeated requests for more aid in light of its appalling record of financial waste and bureaucratic inefficiency.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, the Vietnamese resent the open presence of Soviet technocrats on their soil, which on occasion has resulted in outbreaks of violence.<sup>95</sup>

The Chinese feel that the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship is wholly unnatural. There is no historical or cultural affinity between the two countries and the Vietnamese are a fiercely independent and deeply nationalistic people with whom the Soviets will have to be careful. Moreover, Kampuchea is fast becoming Vietnam's "Vietnam", as well as one for the Soviet Union. A comment in the Beijing Review remarked upon the weak link of commonality between the two countries: "They are together by their common goal of expansion in Southeast Asia."<sup>96</sup>

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94. During Le Duan's visit to Moscow in July 1985, Moscow did not respond positively to the Vietnamese request for more military aid.

95. For an interesting discussion, see Sheldon Simon, "Explaining American Security Interests in Southeast Asia," in International Security in the Southeast Asian and Southwest Pacific Region, ed. T.B. Millar (St. Lucia, Queensland: Univ. of Queensland Press, 1983), p. 61-63.

96. Beijing Review, 29 March 1982, p. 10.

Vietnamese officials are quick to emphasize that the Soviets have "facilities", not bases, although observers doubt very much that Vietnamese are even allowed on the premises.<sup>97</sup> It is therefore curious that in a 1984 interview, Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Van Dong insisted that "we would never...grant any country the right to have bases in Vietnam."<sup>98</sup> The same view was reiterated by Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, who added that "the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship will never become a military alliance in the future."<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps these comments could be interpreted as a ploy or signal to ASEAN and China that the relationship with the USSR is still negotiable. Nevertheless, to ASEAN's detriment, it is clear that the evident tension in the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship has not yet interfered with their practical association.

#### The United States Dilemma

Considerable dissatisfaction exists within ASEAN over the United States' role -- or rather, lack of a role -- in seeking a solution to the conflict. However, the question is not whether the United States should play a role, but what kind of role it should play.<sup>100</sup> With Singapore at the forefront, Thailand and

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97. Robert C. Horn, "The USSR and the Region," Southeast Asian Affairs 1985 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 75.

98. Newsweek (International Edition), 14 May 1984.

99. See Sheldon Simon, "The Two Southeast Asias and China," op. cit., p. 525.

100. Only Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia are non-aligned.

the Philippines would welcome a prominent American profile in the region to maintain the balance of power. Not only did the ASEAN countries encourage President Marcos to renew American rights to Clark and Subic Bay, but Vietnam's invasion also allowed Bangkok to revive the moribund Manila Pact, which rationalized an increase of American military aid to Thailand.<sup>101</sup> It may be recalled that at ASEAN's formation, these three countries were the most reluctant to ban the presence of foreign bases in the region. Wishing to maintain its non-aligned status, Indonesia is the most opposed to a heightened American role, claiming that such a move would increase ASEAN's dependence, create a western-oriented technical elite, and diminish Jakarta's leadership on the issue.

Nevertheless, ASEAN member states recognize that some American influence is necessary to deter the Soviet Union, although they do not want to become pawns in the cold war. In effect, they are caught in a Catch-22 situation. The American military presence is justified by the threat posed by Vietnam and the Soviet Union. However, the latter states insist that cordial relations are possible only if ASEAN abandons the American security umbrella. In sum, neither side accepts the other's non-aligned status, and as a result, American support brings costs as well as benefits. As Bernard Gordon argues,

The common strand in [leadership] views [in the region] is a belief that the United States tends to overestimate the Soviet threat, that it misunderstands the problem posed by China, and that based on overly narrow estimates, it sometimes presses for policies

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101. United States' military aid to Thailand increased from \$40 million in 1979 to \$80 million in 1982.

that aggravate rather than help resolve difficulties in the region. The question increasingly posed by U.S. policy is whether it is part of the solution or part of the problem.<sup>102</sup>

For example, the growing ties between China and the United States are more a source of uneasiness than reassurance. Indonesia's anxiety was made clear when Washington lifted restrictions on the sale of "non-lethal" military equipment and technology without consulting ASEAN. Indonesia's fears were based on the possibility of this equipment finding its way to subversive groups in the ASEAN states. ASEAN also fears that the United States is naively relying on China to become something of a regional "policeman". The United States now urges ASEAN to see China as a friendly state, suggesting that Southeast Asia is of secondary importance and that it should defer to American judgement.

However, states like Malaysia and Indonesia cannot help but fear China's power potential over the next few decades. While the ASEAN nations share Washington's concern of the USSR, they do not want to exclude the Soviet role as a counterbalance to China. If anything, Washington's pro-China tilt shows to ASEAN its weakness in dealing with the USSR. Its military sales to China, coupled by urgings for Japan to increase its defence capability, are seen as potentially destabilizing actions for the region. Nor does Washington's pro-Israel, Mid-East policy do much to boost its credibility in the eyes of the Islamic nations of Indonesia and Malaysia.

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102. Bernard K. Gordon, "The Outdated U.S. Perspective on Asian Security," Asian Wall Street Journal, 11 May 1982, p. 6.

Although Thailand is one of the main advocates of the American presence, it feels that a proliferation of American bases is unnecessary since China represents a more effective deterrent. Bangkok's purpose in inviting Washington to play a role was, in effect, to balance and provide a counterweight to its relationship with China. Equally, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja saw little need for an increase in American military forces, but for different reasons. Instead, he urged the United States to use diplomatic pressure to influence China and the USSR to reduce regional tension. Some circles in Indonesia also criticize Washington's unwillingness to compete with the USSR for Vietnam's affections and for not being able to overcome its post-war "Vietnam syndrome."

American officials feel it would be wiser if ASEAN set -- or be perceived to set -- the pace in resolving the Kampuchean crisis. In a visit with ASEAN's Foreign Ministers in Bangkok in June 1983, Secretary of State George Shultz assured ASEAN officials: "We follow your lead...we know that the chances of persuading Vietnam to change its course are greater if the message comes from its neighbours."<sup>103</sup> Just the same, it would probably be reluctant to have to relinquish its leadership role to the United States. ASEAN's greatest challenge now in assuming a leadership role is in finding a solution which will not forsake its own regional priorities for the global concerns of the great powers involved.

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103. Japan Times (Tokyo), 29 June 1983.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ASEAN's Diplomatic Strategy

#### Introduction

ASEAN's efforts to oppose Vietnam over the Kampuchean issue are an attempt to prevent its occupation from acquiring international legitimacy by default, which might have occurred if it had not been contested so rigorously by ASEAN. Yet as Leszek Buszynski argues, "ASEAN has defined a clear diplomatic position on the Kampuchean issue without, however, any means of implementing that position."<sup>1</sup> The Kampuchean crisis has thus provided a crucial test of ASEAN's political viability. As Indonesia's Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja remarked, "...if we had not taken the stand that we did then it could well be that ASEAN would have gone into oblivion."<sup>2</sup> It was therefore important that ASEAN be able to prove its regional worth as an effective, credible, and cohesive diplomatic vehicle which would not suffer the same ignominious fate of its regional predecessors.

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1. Leszek Buszynski, "ASEAN: A Changing Role," Asian Survey, 27 (July 1987), p. 765.

2. Bangkok Post, 7 August 1985, in *ibid.*, p. 765.

Yet, at least privately, ASEAN members were far from unified on many pivotal aspects of the issue. They were thus faced with a choice. A projection of unity depended upon their ability to agree, compromise and accomodate each other -- a process sometimes entailing a sacrifice of individual members' interests. ASEAN was not a supra-national organization bestowed either with the right or power to impose a decision regardless of a single member's misgivings; the preservation of the national interest was still paramount. ASEAN's solution to the problem is periodically to issue a common joint statement of the "ASEAN response", if all six member nations unanimously agree on an issue or a course of action.<sup>3</sup> When interests diverge, and consensus proves impossible or offers no resolution, the ASEAN members "agree to disagree" and the solution is left to bilateral efforts. This way each nation maintains the prerogative of an "independent" foreign policy while still receiving the benefits of a regional organization through selective cooperation. The only stipulation in this tacit agreement is that the consequences of one member's independent route should not negatively affect the national interest of another member. Further, each member is required to inform the others of any major impending foreign policy arrangements. It is, in effect, an agreement of "divided unity": ASEAN's image of solidarity is in the interests of each member insofar as it contributes to greater collective bargaining

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3. See Khaw Guat Hoot, "ASEAN in International Politics," in Politics in the ASEAN States, ed. Diane K. Mauzy (Kuala Lumpur: Marican & Sons, 1984), p. 226. See also M. Ghazalie Shafie, Malaysia: International Relations (Kuala Lumpur: Creative Enterprise Sdn, Bhd., 1982), pp. 221-222.

power, thus each implicitly understands the threshold point beyond which further division becomes a threat to the collective interest of ASEAN.

The acceptance of ASEAN's somewhat unconventional decision-making process evolved only after an initial period during which a system of standard operating procedures to deal with the crisis had yet to be determined. Since issuing a statement in January 1980 formally condemning Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, ASEAN's diplomatic strategy has been three-fold: first, to "internationalize" the issue and launch a campaign to isolate Vietnam diplomatically from the international community. ASEAN's successes have been in the sponsorship and passage of condemnation resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly and at the 1981 International Conference on Kampuchea in New York. Second, ASEAN has sought to isolate Vietnam economically by convincing the international community to deprive Hanoi of much-needed multilateral assistance. Third, it has made a persistent effort to deny legitimacy to the Heng Semrin regime installed in Phnom Penh by Vietnam, by setting up and supporting the tripartite Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) to represent Kampuchea internationally.

The acceptance of ASEAN's unconventional decision-making process did not materialize overnight, but evolved only after a period of uncertainty and tribulation. By mid-1980, two sets of opinions began emerging from ASEAN: Thailand and Singapore emphasized the role of China in a future settlement at about the same time Indonesia and Malaysia began publicizing China as a

threat. Thailand, Singapore and to a lesser extent, the Philippines, favored a continued strong, unified stance against Vietnam, calling for a total withdrawal of forces. The hope was that if international pressure at the United Nations were sustained, economic aid denied, and anti-Vietnamese resistance forces sustained at the border, along with the threat of a second Chinese attack, then Vietnam would eventually be forced to compromise. It was a view premised on continued good relations with the Sino-American alliance and an opposition to accommodating Hanoi. However, Indonesia, Malaysia and some members of the U.S. State Department felt that ASEAN should not become more closely aligned with China since it would only lead to a protracted war in Kampuchea and create a greater reliance by Vietnam on the USSR. A more flexible posture, calling for a partial withdrawal and therefore partial recognition of the Heng Samrin regime would reduce regional tension and block Sino-Soviet influence. After all, Vietnam's hegemonic ambitions were only limited to Indochina and if its dependence on the Soviet Union were reduced it might have an incentive to resume ties with China.

Issued by Indonesia's President Suharto and Malaysia's Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn, the Kuantan Declaration of 1981 marked the first public manifestation of ASEAN's differing opinions. The Kuantan Declaration was an apprehensive response at the improving relations between China and Thailand (and hence, ASEAN), spurring the leaders of the two countries to seek a tentative bilateral solution to the problem. Essentially, the Kuantan Principle recognized inter alia Vietnam's legitimate

interests in Kampuchea, implicitly accepting Vietnamese hegemony in the region. Rejecting China's policy of "bleeding" the SRV, the Declaration showed a willingness to accept SRV forces in Kampuchea if its ties with the Soviet Union were cut. Further, the Kuantan principle states that Vietnam must remain outside the Soviet Union's and China's spheres of influence. Likewise, the major powers should not intervene in the affairs of Indochina, and both China and the USSR should not interfere in Vietnam.

Not wishing to offend its neighbours' sincere intentions, Thailand did not reject the Kuantan proposal outright. Privately, however, Thai leaders were appalled that a serious regional problem was to be solved through the bilateral initiative of two Muslim states not even bordering Kampuchea! Hanoi rejected the Declaration because it failed to mention the United States presence in the region, but was secretly pleased and anxious to exploit ASEAN's evident cleavage. It was not long before the Indonesian and Malaysian delegates realized that bilateralism without prior consultation was procedurally wrong and potentially divisive. In an attempt to maintain ASEAN's public image of unity, Tun Hussein Onn was quick to add, "...we have agreed to consult the leaders in Bangkok...[and] myself and President Suharto are of the view that there is no urgency for holding an ASEAN summit."<sup>4</sup> The stillborn Kuantan Declaration reaffirmed the implicit understanding that Thailand, as the country most directly affected by the Vietnamese occupation, held

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4. Straits Times, 14 May 1980, p. 77.

the final veto, thereby dictating the pace and timing of ASEAN's course of action whatever the differences.

A similar clash of wills occurred when Singapore unilaterally tried to forge the CGDK tripartite coalition. The CGDK government-in-exile consists of the combined forces of Kampuchea's deposed Prince Sihanouk; Democratic Kampuchea's (DK) former Head of State, Khieu Samphan; former premier Son Sann; as well as the military forces of the Khmer Rouge. As the strongest advocate of the Kampuchean coalition, Singapore led ASEAN's campaign to seat the CGDK in Kampuchea's vacant spot at the United Nations and New Delhi Non-Aligned Meetings, as well as pressuring Japan to withhold further aid from Vietnam. Interestingly, although a great deal of ASEAN's success in the United Nations is attributed to the articulate force and personality of Singapore's Tommy Koh -- ASEAN's official spokesperson -- there is sometimes a feeling within ASEAN that Singapore is too vocal for its small size, taking public stands on issues having no direct concern to it.

Singapore's ASEAN representatives Rajaratnam and Dhanabalan advanced the CGDK proposal in November 1981, prematurely dubbing it an ASEAN proposal. While Thailand and Malaysia agreed with it in substance, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja evidently took offence to Singapore's actions, stating that "unfortunately, Singapore has taken the step without consulting first with the other ASEAN nations."<sup>5</sup> Since the CGDK incident

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5. See Hans Indorf, Impediments to Regionalism in Southeast Asia: Bilateral Constraints Among ASEAN Member States (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984).

Singapore has continued to maintain its blunt diplomatic style, but has refrained from undertaking any initiatives without prior consultation with its partners.

The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea:

The formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) was important because the occupant of Kampuchea's vacant seat in international conferences determined who -- either Heng Semrin or the ousted Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime -- would be considered the legitimate government in Phnom Penh. If ASEAN was successfully to deny Vietnam's claim in the international community, it required an alternative to the stark choices of either Heng Semrin or Kampuchea's former government under the Khmer Rouge. The CGDK was to provide this alternative.

However, twenty years of bitter animosity and bloodshed among the three Khmer groups was going to be extremely difficult to overcome.<sup>6</sup> Prince Sihanouk's unpredictable and flamboyant character made him simultaneously an asset and a liability. Referred to at times as the "unguided missile" of Southeast Asia, Sihanouk's international profile, grass-roots peasant support, and fervent desire to maintain Khmer sovereignty made him the natural choice for the coalition leadership despite the fact that his MOULINAKA faction had the lowest number of troops (approximately 10,000). The 15,000 troops of Sonn Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) is ridden with

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6. A distinction must be made between the Khmers as an ethnic group, and the Khmer Rouge which is a political movement.

internal factions and power struggles between Son Sann and the younger leaders. Repugnance at the Khmer Rouge's bestial record under Pol Pot was enough reason for them to be shunned by their prospective partners. However, as the resistance group's only credible threat to the Vietnamese forces, the Khmer Rouge's 30,000 troops are by far better armed and more capable militarily, although by virtue of this fact provide a rationale for the SRV forces' continued occupation for the sake of Kampuchea's security. Most controversially, the Khmer Rouge receives favored military (and at times, political) support from China and because of their military and numerical superiority, they have repeatedly attempted to dominate the resistance -- sometimes through sheer force. ASEAN is loathe to support such a group, but as Singapore Foreign Minister Suppiah Dhanabalan tried to explain in late 1981, the Khmer Rouge "is the only group that offers resistance at the present moment. One must be realistic and practical. Without the resistance of that group, Vietnam would have consolidated its hold on Cambodia and we would not be talking about a political solution."

A curious menage 'a trois, the structure of the CGDK is less like a government-in-exile than an armed truce. At a press conference in Bangkok, Sihanouk was reminded as having once written that for Khmer nationalists and the Khmer Rouge to join a united front was "tantamount to putting a starving and bloodthirsty wolf in with a lamb." Sihanouk's reply was indicative of his predicament; "but the question is this:

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7. Far Eastern Economic Review, 13-19 November 1981, p. 9. In Hoon, op. cit. p. 247.

whether to be eaten by the Khmers or to be eaten by the Vietnamese."<sup>8</sup>

Politically, the CGDK is a united front; militarily there is little coordination or cooperation. The resistance forces operate in separate border enclaves, distrust each other's political ambitions and often seem to be more interested in fighting each other than the Vietnamese. ASEAN, as the CGDK's international sponsor, recognizes the need to sustain the coalition vis-a-vis Vietnam but finds it increasingly difficult to justify the CGDK's legitimacy, which in some ways appears as hollow as that of the Heng Semrin regime.

According to ASEAN, the purpose of the CGDK coalition is to forge a coalition which the Khmer Rouge cannot dominate, sustain the government of Democratic Kampuchea during the question of representation each year in the United Nations, foster popular support within Kampuchea, and convince Vietnam of the attractiveness of a political settlement if assured that Phnom Penh would not become a client of China.

However, while ASEAN was trying to construct a longer-term path toward a political solution, the irony of the initial situation was that ASEAN was not committed to the CGDK as a future government in Kampuchea, let alone to any one of its factions, given their individual weaknesses. The strategic objectives of the Khmer parties and their ASEAN patrons differed

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8. "Return to Kampuchea: Sihanouk's Unlikely Coalition," Business in Thailand, 8 August 1982, p. 31. Quoted in Donald Weatherbee, "Southeast Asian Affairs 1982: Marking Time," in Southeast Asian Affairs 1983 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1983).

in that the former's goal was to oust and replace the Heng Semrin regime, whereas ASEAN's goal is to provide an interim alternative at the diplomatic level, leaving Kampuchea's future regime as an electoral decision "by the people of Cambodia." ASEAN is faced with the paradox of pushing for the CGDK's legitimate recognition while denying it ultimate rule. Since the coalition's anti-communist forces are too weak, ASEAN realizes that any future government in Phnom Penh will be led by the Khmer Rouge.

Thus far, Malaysia is the only ASEAN country to name an ambassador to the CGDK. In contrast, Indonesia, which is most opposed to the Khmer Rouge, has tried to distance itself from them. During a November 1980 ministerial meeting of the Colombo Plan in Jakarta, the CGDK's representative, Ieng Sary, was not greeted as a formal State representative and was permitted only brief meetings with Indonesia's President and Foreign Minister.

Unfortunately, there is no de facto independent or sovereign government of Kampuchea which can legitimately claim to represent the country: the CGDK is wholly dependent upon China for material support, upon Thailand for sanctuary and upon ASEAN for international recognition; the Heng Semrin regime is dependent on Vietnam. In short, the future of Kampuchea depends on, and will be decided by, foreign powers.

### Maintaining Unity: ASEAN in the International Forum

One of ASEAN's most notable successes has been its lobbying efforts in maintaining the DK seat in the international forum. ASEAN's initial campaign at the Non-Aligned Conference of the Heads of Government in Havana in 1979 was not very fruitful. The Kampuchean seat remained vacant, although this was allegedly attributed to pressure from Cuba, Vietnam and other "non-aligned" nations. ASEAN's record in the United Nations General Assembly has been consistently more successful. This is indicated by the table of UN voting patterns below:<sup>9</sup>

#### United Nations Voting Resolutions to Retain the DK Seat

Year	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
For	91	97	100	105	105	110	114	115
Against	21	23	25	23	23	22	21	21

The first draft resolution in 1979 exceeded the expectations of its thirty sponsors, winning a 91 to 21 victory with 21 abstentions.<sup>10</sup> The Asian countries against the resolution were Vietnam, Laos and Afghanistan. Others opposed included Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Ukraine and the Soviet Union. Those abstaining were mostly Middle Eastern and African countries, and those in favor included Romania,

9. "Biggest majority so far for troop withdrawal from Kampuchea," ASEAN Newsletter, Publication of the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 12(Nov.-Dec. 1985), p. 7.

10. See K.K. Nair, ASEAN-Indochina Relations Since 1975: The Politics of Accomodation (Canberra: Australian National Univ. Press, 1984).

Yugoslavia, China, the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom. Causing some degree of resentment to ASEAN, the only non-aligned nation not supporting the 1980 draft and thereafter was India, which was more concerned with maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union. Other factors which influenced the United Nations voting pattern was the recent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which caused some nations to show their displeasure at the Soviet action by voting for the ASEAN position.

ASEAN's primary burden was in eliciting international support for a government which included Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. The draft resolution drew tepid support from Australia and France due to revulsion at the Khmers' reprehensible record on human rights. At the United Nations, ASEAN representatives argued that they were not in favour of a Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot, but that it was necessary to distinguish between the man, and the territorial entity and sovereignty of Democratic Kampuchea which were the real objects of ASEAN's support. In a speech in October 1980, Singapore's representative to the United Nations, Tommy Koh, argued that "if Democratic Kampuchea were to lose its seat in the United Nations, it would be tantamount to saying that it is permissible for a powerful military state to invade its weaker neighbour, to overthrow its government and to impose a puppet regime on it."<sup>11</sup> Malaysia's permanent representative added that if the international community accepted

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11. United Nations General Assembly, 35th Session, General Assembly Provisional Verbatim Record of the 34th Meeting, 13 Oct. 1980, (A/35/PV34), pp. 27-36. In Hoon, op. cit., p. 246-247.

the principle of foreign military intervention, then no country could be secure. Moreover, although other regimes such as Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 are legally recognized on account of their de facto power, Koh argued that the Heng Semrin case was different. The Heng Semrin regime is a surrogate of Hanoi, backed by the Soviet Union, and wields power only through the assistance of a foreign army of 200,000 Vietnamese. While Vietnam's delegation argued that its intervention was an act of "national salvation" and that the Kampucheans welcomed them as liberators from Pol Pot, ASEAN retorted that the Vietnamese occupation and intervention was not requested by a legitimate representative of the Kampuchean people.<sup>12</sup> (Heng Semrin was a disgruntled member of Pol Pot's faction who ran to the Vietnamese hoping to strike a deal). However, many within the United Nations General Assembly felt that neither of the two governments claiming power truly represented the Kampuchean people and what was needed was a realistic political solution.

Like their initial statement immediately after the invasion, ASEAN's United Nations statement of condemnation was, once again, carefully worded and refrained from conveying an overtly anti-Vietnamese tone to keep open lines with Hanoi. The draft resolution called on all parties fully to observe fundamental human rights, advocated that differences be settled by peaceful

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12. Lee Kuan Yew once remarked, "I am quite sure that in time we will find out the difference between...national liberation and national salvation. Maybe there is a nice distinction: when one subverts a non-Communist neighbor it is called liberation. When one subverts a Communist neighbor it is called salvation." Quoted in Thakur Phanit, Regional Integration Attempts in Southeast Asia: A Study of ASEAN's Problems and Progress Ph.D. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State Univ., 1980, p. 231.

means, and proposed that the Kampuchean people be allowed to choose their own government free of outside interference, subversion or coercion.

ASEAN's second major international undertaking was the International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) convened in New York in October 1981 under United Nations auspices. Vietnam's intransigence over troop withdrawals after repeated UNGA resolutions inevitably drew ASEAN to the Chinese position, a situation it was anxious to avoid. The ICK conference provided an opportunity for ASEAN to disassociate itself from China. ASEAN has persistently tried to project the issue as an international one which would therefore require an internationally supported political solution.

ASEAN's purpose in convening the ICK conference was to present a proposal which had been drafted earlier that month by ASEAN foreign ministers in Manila. At this conference, all the ASEAN countries, including Thailand, agreed that the draft was to be the basis of a comprehensive political solution. The ASEAN ministers were seeking a formula which would make a distinction between their dispute with Vietnam, and the Sino-Vietnamese conflict. They also hoped to incorporate Vietnam's security concerns, permit the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea and provide the external means to ensure that Kampuchea could once again become a neutral, democratic and non-aligned nation. While on the one hand, Vietnam needed to be assured that its withdrawal would not lead automatically to the establishment of a hostile Khmer Rouge regime allied with China, the ASEAN

ministers also needed external means to ensure that the Khmer Rouge would never come to power again. The pre-ICK draft solution in Manila comprised four points: a) the dispatch of a United Nations peacekeeping force to Kampuchea and the establishment of an interim administration, b) the withdrawal of foreign troops under United Nations supervision, c) the disarming of all Khmer factions immediately after the Vietnamese withdrawal; and d) free elections under United Nations supervision.<sup>13</sup>

The ICK conference was attended by 92 countries, although it was boycotted by Vietnam. ASEAN realized that an ICK solution had no basis without Chinese support, so it was crucial that an agreement be reached. The Chinese, however, rejected any solution which would weaken their Khmer Rouge ally. They demanded Pol Pot exempt from mandatory disarmament, insisting that Vietnam's troop withdrawal from Kampuchea be expedited within a designated "time limit," and objected to an "interim administration" which would prevent insurgent allies from moving in once the Vietnamese were out.

Tommy Koh insisted that the ASEAN demand for disarming all factions was "non-negotiable". China argued that the Khmers were the strongest element in the resistance and hence should not be weakened. The acrimonious debate between the two reached such intensity on July 15 that ministerial level meetings had to be arranged between ASEAN and China. Philippine Foreign Minister Carlos Romulo bluntly told Chinese acting Foreign Minister Han

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13. Buszynski, op. cit., p. 1049.

Nianlong that if China held up the working of the conference by its inflexible position it would lose ASEAN sympathy and would be seen as bullying five small states.<sup>14</sup> Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja also warned Han that if China wanted to drag the issue to a vote, it would lose. Quite as disturbing to ASEAN was the United States' willingness to subordinate ASEAN to China in this issue. According to an American observer, "behind the scenes, United States diplomats labored for China's cause, eager to cement the new relationship with Peking."<sup>15</sup>

But what was most disturbing to ASEAN was Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila's eleventh hour role in backtracking from the previously agreed Manila draft in favour of the Chinese and Khmer position. From the Thai point of view "a demonstration of solidarity with ASEAN over an empty formula would not bring pressure to bear upon Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia, nor would it offer reassurance against Vietnamese military retaliation."<sup>16</sup> A possible explanation for Thailand's sudden change in position is that, as mentioned earlier, Thailand's foreign policy historically adapted itself to the dominant power in the region and, when necessary, tilted in the direction in which an expectation of immediate backing was highest. For example, it escaped colonialism by exploiting the differences between the French in Indochina and the British in Burma and

14. Far Eastern Economic Review, 24 July 1981, p. 13.

15. Bernard Nossiter, New York Times, 18 July 1981. In Justus M. van der Kroef, "Kampuchea: The Diplomatic Labyrinth," Asian Survey 22 (Oct. 1982).

16. Leszek Buszynski, "Thailand: The Erosion of a Balanced Foreign Policy," Asian Survey, 22 (Nov. 1982), p. 1051.

Malaya, during the Second World War it refrained from opposing the Japanese, and later Thailand also supported the United States in the Vietnam War. Evidently, ASEAN did not provide enough incentive to abandon a diplomatic strategy which historically had served it so well.

China's position in opposing the disarmament of Pol Pot at the ICK conference was supported only by Chile and Pakistan. The majority of the 92 nations attending the conference determined it was necessary that any document passed had to win the unanimous approval of all participants so as to show no division to Vietnam. To achieve this, the resolution would have to emphasize the principles agreed to and ignore the details on which there were differences.<sup>17</sup> The deadlock was eventually broken by a formula drafted by the French delegation. Written in French, the final communique made no mention of disarming any factions or establishing an interim administration in Kampuchea after the Vietnamese withdrawal -- both of which were the main features of the ASEAN proposal. In lieu of those points, it spoke in vague terms of unspecified "appropriate measures" to ensure no armed factions would coerce or disrupt the holding of free elections.

Although ASEAN did not achieve its goals at the ICK conference, it did succeed in focusing international opinion upon Vietnam's illegal occupation of Kampuchea. For ASEAN, the conference was significant in two respects. First, it showed to Hanoi, Moscow and Phom Penh that ASEAN wanted to be conciliatory. In contrast to the Chinese position which sought a protracted

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17. International Herald Tribune, 20 July 1981, p. 5.

war, ASEAN was willing to compromise with Vietnam, recognizing its legitimate security concerns. Secondly, Thailand's eleventh hour change of heart showed that it could indeed forge an alignment with the Chinese over the Kampuchean issue while retaining the public support of ASEAN. At a time when some ASEAN members such as Indonesia and Malaysia were trying to accentuate ASEAN's differences with China, Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila tried to harmonize them as a "minor misunderstanding."<sup>18</sup>

Thai Deputy Prime Minister Thanat Khoman further denied having veered too close to China, explaining that "the Soviet Union is the key to the solution of the Kampuchean problem."<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, Indonesia and Malaysia both believe that Sino-Vietnamese animosity is the source of the problem and fear that China is using ASEAN as a vehicle for asserting diplomatic influence in the region. On the other hand, "[t]he ineluctable logic of Thailand's security dilemmas has resulted in the apparent concurrence of Chinese and ASEAN interests such that the Kuala Lumpur declaration [ZOPFAN] becomes directed solely against the Soviet Union."<sup>20</sup> Thailand's unenviable dilemma is how to maintain ASEAN solidarity while steering a middle course between China and the Khmers on the one hand, Vietnam on the other -- without provoking either Vietnam or ASEAN.

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18. Buszynski, "Thailand: The Erosion of a Balanced Foreign Policy," op. cit., p. 1051.

19. BBC SWB, 16 Nov. 1981. In Buszynski, "Thailand, the Soviet Union and the Kampuchean Imbroglia," op. cit., p. 72.

20. Buszynski, "Thailand: The Erosion of a Balanced Foreign Policy," op. cit., p. 1052.

Unlike Indonesia, Malaysia has a direct interest in Thailand's stability. With the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) rebels sharing a border with their Thai counterparts, the Kuala Lumpur government is afraid that increased tension might allow the MCP to draw resources from across the border. The apparent Indonesia-Malaysia front in the Kampuchea issue has not been ignored by the Thai press, which accuses Malaysia of blindly following Indonesia's lead. A comment in Bangkok's Nation Review stressed the Malaysian tendency to back "idealistic principles usually in conjunction with Indonesia...[after which] they [would] persuade the other three members to follow...just as in the case of ZOPFAN in 1971."<sup>21</sup>

Malaysia is compelled to tread a cautious path in not pushing its grievances too strenuously upon Thailand. It does not want to see increased Chinese influence in Bangkok, but fears that if it pushes too hard, Thailand may turn towards China. Shortly after the ICK conference, Malaysian Premier Mahathir visited Bangkok from August 23-24, presumably out of concern over the extent of Thai identification with Chinese views. Mahathir emerged from the talks stating that, "I don't think that Malaysia has a very strong view about how close or how distant is Thailand's relationship with China," and expressed the view that Thailand's fraternization with Beijing was an advantage since Thailand could contact China "more freely" for ASEAN's benefit.<sup>22</sup>

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21. Nation Review, 15 May 1980, p. 2.

22. Buszynski, "Thailand: The Erosion on a Balanced Foreign Policy," op. cit. p. 1051.

Indeed, Thailand has taken advantage of its geographical importance by acting as a negotiating "go-between" among ASEAN, Vietnam and China. As mentioned, Indonesia, which has no diplomatic links with the PRC, communicates its views through "friends in court." Similarly, Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi offered Hanoi that if it had a message for Beijing, ASEAN (Thailand) was willing to act as "go-between."<sup>23</sup> Exploiting their historical and cultural links for international support in the United Nations, Indonesia and Malaysia rallied fellow Islamic Countries of the Middle East, Singapore appealed to fellow Commonwealth nations, the Philippines concentrated on the Spanish-speaking countries of Europe and Latin America, and Thailand, the only ASEAN country spared colonial domination, lobbied the EEC countries with whom it has historically enjoyed good relations.<sup>24</sup>

ASEAN's diplomatic "division of labour" also extends to the personal level in taking advantage of the strengths of specific ASEAN officials. Tommy Koh, formerly Singapore's representative to the United Nations, was designated ASEAN's official United Nations spokesperson. Koh's diplomatic skill is in large part accredited to boosting ASEAN's favorable international profile. Another distinguished personality is Indonesia's Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, designated as official interlocutor between ASEAN and Vietnam. But, as I will illustrate below,

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23. See Suthichai Yoon "ASEAN Security and Economics: New Directions for the 1980's," in ASEAN Security and Economic Development, eds. Karl D. Jackson and M. Hadi Soesastro (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1983), pp. 251-255.

24. Far Eastern Economic Review, 10 Sept. 1982, p. 11.

Mochtar's additional responsibility emerged for slightly different reasons from those of Tommy Koh.

Indonesia's "Dual-Track" Diplomacy: Competing Conceptions of Security

Indonesia's two-track diplomacy emerged out of growing impatience with the subordination of their interests to those of Thailand and from a historic, though too often frustrated desire to play a leadership role in Southeast Asia. According to Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, ASEAN and Vietnam have been dancing an "elegant but static minuet." The now dismantled Jakarta daily, Sinar Harapan, elaborated: "It is time for Indonesia to take the floor with the waltz," which "is dynamic, has direction and reaches every corner with stirring music."<sup>25</sup> Another journalist was more blunt: "We've taken such a low profile that people forget that we're a big country and have our own strategic interests in mainland Southeast Asia."<sup>26</sup> If ASEAN was indeed formed "at Indonesia's initiative," as Suharto claimed in a 1968 speech before the People's Consultative Assembly, then, as Micheal Leifer maintains, Indonesia had effectively become its captive.<sup>27</sup> It was hoped that a two-track diplomacy would relieve this sense of impotence.

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25. Susumo Awanohara, "Where there's a will...", Far Eastern Economic Review, 1 March 1984, p. 10.

26. Susumo Awanohara, "A meeting of minds," Far Eastern Economic Review, 9 Feb. 1984, p. 19.

27. Micheal Leifer, "ASEAN under stress over Cambodia," Far Eastern Economic Review, 14 Jan. 1984, p. 35.

Despite its contradictory nature and the disruptive potential it could have on ASEAN's unity, this two-track system has been accepted and absorbed by the organization and its members. Essentially, Indonesia's two-track diplomacy means that Vietnam is dealt with collectively through regular diplomatic channels agreed to by all ASEAN members.<sup>28</sup> The second track is a direct and distinctly Indonesian (as opposed to ASEAN) approach, which refers to the "non-official" talks, or negotiating efforts by individuals outside the President's Office or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs -- usually the army or the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), an academic think-tank in Jakarta. This second track is, as Tilman describes, direct and uniquely Indonesian: "...[it] is direct because important individuals speak as Indonesians directly to their counterparts in Vietnam. It is uniquely Indonesian because their sentiments embody and reflect their perceptions of Indonesia and the world that surrounds it. They do not speak as members of ASEAN; they speak as Indonesians."<sup>29</sup> One might add that only when the direct talks benefit ASEAN as an organization will they claim to act on behalf of ASEAN rather than as individuals.

In discussing the Indonesian perspective, it is important to understand that attitudes regarding Vietnam in Indonesian circles are not unified. There is evident rivalry for influence over policy between the more hard-line, anti-Chinese Indonesian military which retains vivid reminders of China's complicity in

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28. Tilman, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

29. Ibid, p. 77.

the 1965 coup and which plays a predominant role in government, and the Foreign Ministry which is directly concerned with maintaining ASEAN's unity.<sup>30</sup>

The center of the ASEAN controversy is Indonesia's Army Chief of Staff, General Benny Murdani, who has paid three visits to Vietnam in the past seven years and is the most vocal advocate for accommodation with Hanoi. After a visit in February 1984, Murdani caused ripples within ASEAN by stating "it is my firm belief that there will never be a conflict between our two countries. Some countries said that Vietnam is a danger to Southeast Asia but the Indonesian army and people do not believe it."<sup>31</sup>

During an April 1985 visit, Murdani discussed bilateral military issues with Vietnam's Defence Minister, General Van Tien Dung, and added that the Vietnamese were not a threat because "they are so poor."<sup>32</sup> According to Murdani, ASEAN's current policy would -- in face of growing Chinese influence -- force Vietnam and Thailand to rely more heavily on Moscow and Beijing respectively. Accommodation with Vietnam would provide a reliable buffer by the year 2000 against a much-strengthened China. After the 1985 visit, he also suggested possible military cooperation with Hanoi, which was strongly denied by Mochtar upon Murdani's return to Indonesia.

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30. See Andrew J. MacIntyre, "Interpreting Indonesian Foreign Policy: The Case of Kampuchea, 1979-1986," Asian Survey, 27 (May 1987), pp. 515-534.

31. Asia Yearbook 1985, Far Eastern Economic Review, p. 95.

32. Sinar Harapan (Jakarta), 19 April 1985.

Relations between Murdani and Mochtar have been marked by a streak of personal competition, sometimes leaving Mochtar embarrassingly in the dark of Murdani's movements. Liddle has described the Indonesian political structure as a "steeply ascending pyramid in which the heights are dominated by a single office, the president," and the president "commands the military which is *primus inter pares* within the bureaucracy."<sup>33</sup> As Foreign Minister, representing both the Indonesian and ASEAN positions, Mochtar is thus faced with the challenge of soothing Murdani's less tactful actions, while Murdani, as Indonesia's "backdoor" initiative, represents a good indicator of the country's real concerns on the issue. Most significantly, though, Murdani's actions have Suharto's blessing.

Jakarta's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has powerful connections in the Jakarta hierarchy and has been influential in shaping Indonesia's foreign policy in the past. Representatives of the CSIS have participated in two seminars in Hanoi with the Vietnamese Institute of International Relations (IIR), the first just prior to General Murdani's first official visit. Both institutional sides emphasized that the seminars were private and bilateral, whose purpose was to deepen mutual understanding. Yet for an "informal" session, the meeting had an unmistakably official flavour, counting among its participants Commodore Sudibjo Rahardjo and Muhammed Arifin, former deputies of Murdani.

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33. R. William Liddle, "Soeharto's Indonesia: Personal Rule and Political Institutions," Pacific Affairs, 58 (Spring 1985), p. 71. In Tilman, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

In his capacity as ASEAN's interlocutor with Hanoi, Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja's pet project within Indonesia's two-track diplomacy has been his mediating role in the Missing in Action (MIA) issue which prevents a normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam. The motivation behind Mochtar's initiative is his belief that if there is to be a normalization of relations between the two countries, Hanoi would be eligible for American assistance, henceforth reducing its dependence on the Soviet Union. In April 1983, Vietnam's Premier Le Duc Tho was quoted as saying in a French news agency interview that a United States-Vietnam thaw would "contribute to the establishment of stability in the region."<sup>34</sup> Washington's two stipulations for normalization are first, Vietnam's withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea, and second, the handover of the remains of more than two thousand American soldiers missing in action (MIA).

In a letter to Mochtar in 1985, Vietnam's Foreign Minister Co Thach appealed for a "high-level meeting" with American officials. Washington has greeted Mochtar's initiatives with a polite rejection, insisting that the MIA issue has no connection with normalization which, they stress, rests on Vietnam's troop withdrawal. Nonetheless, on July 6, 1985, United States officials were notified that Hanoi was prepared to release the

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34. Agence France Presse despatch, Ho Chi Minh City, 8 April 1985 (FBIS, 9 April 1985). Quoted in Justus M. Van Der Kroef, "The United States and Cambodia: The Limits of Compromise and Intervention," Contemporary Southeast Asia, 7 (Mar. 1986), p. 252.

remains of 26 Americans, the largest handover in ten years which, thus far, has yielded only 99 remains of a total 2,464 missing.

However, critics accustomed to Hanoi's shrewdness argued that the new urgency was because the Vietnamese "now desperately want a spell of intense diplomatic activity with [Washington] to remind Moscow that it has an American option."<sup>35</sup> They also argued that in an effort to upstage an upcoming ASEAN Foreign Minister's meeting, Vietnam was trying to undermine Thai morale and aggravate evident differences in ASEAN. In a bid to relieve Thai fears of ASEAN concerns being forsaken for American interests, Washington officials assured that they will negotiate on the MIA issue without giving political ground on Kampuchea.<sup>36</sup>

Mochtar's individual efforts in seeking a breakthrough to the Kampuchean stalemate have not been spared suspicion among ASEAN ranks.

As ASEAN's official interlocutor with Vietnam, Mochtar has taken his role so seriously that some ASEAN officials are concerned that his actions reflect more of a desire to project Indonesia as the Six's largest power than to be a humble ASEAN servant toiling to implement a joint policy.<sup>37</sup> Thailand, for one, has misgivings of Jakarta's "independent" shift from ASEAN policy, and the evident differences between Mochtar and Murdani. Even after the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty was consolidated in 1978, Mochtar preferred not to "intimate that Vietnam is the proxy of any

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35. Richard Nations, "Hanoi's MIA's card," Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 July 1985, p. 15.

36. Ibid., p. 15.

37. Rodney Tasker, "Stealing the Thunder," Far Eastern Economic Review, 18 July 1985, p. 15.

country." Equating Indonesia and Vietnam's revolutionary affinity, he continued:

I have had many conversations with their leaders and I am aware of their pride and their fears since independence. So the fact that they have signed a treaty and have been obliged to receive aid is I think a result of circumstances. They have tried to obtain assistance from other sources. They have encouraged investment and trade but not much was forthcoming.<sup>38</sup>

With regard to the Kampuchean issue, Thai Deputy Prime Minister Thanat Khoman counters the Indonesian argument that Vietnam is not an expansionist threat by giving a distinctly Thai, front-line view of Vietnam and the situation:

This kind of threat is not imagined nor perceived; it jumps into the eyes of people willing to look. That is why a comparison can be established between tigers which are in or already out of the woods. Vietnam is obviously a tiger which is squatting at our doorsteps backed by another tiger, one not far behind, while the other potential tiger still lies hidden in the woods.<sup>39</sup>

These differences between Thailand and Indonesia stem from two conceptions of security which were initially mutually reinforcing, but since the Indochina issue, have become competing alternatives.<sup>40</sup> The advent of ASEAN in 1967 was not distinguished by the common perception of an external threat. The ASEAN conception of regional security was conceived in two ways: first, it was defined in developmental terms whereby regional

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38. Far Eastern Economic Review, 17 Dec. 1978. Quoted in Chan Heng Chee, "The Interests and Role of ASEAN in the Indochina Conflict," in Indochina and Problems of Security and Stability in Southeast Asia, eds. Khien Theeravit and MacAlister Brown, papers and discussion of the Conference held at Chulalongkorn Univ., Bangkok, 18-21 June 1980, (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Univ. Press, 1981), p. 190.

39. Bangkok Post, 9 Feb. 1982, p. 9.

40. See Micheal Leifer, "ASEAN under stress over Cambodia," Far Eastern Economic Review, 14 June 1984, pp. 34-35, for an excellent discussion on this point.

security was necessary to prevent the diversion of wasteful energies from economic development, though it must be underpinned by political stability; second, it was a prescription for regional order based on respect for national sovereignty.

The Indonesian view maintains that Vietnam is a nationalist, not an expansionist, state which is struggling against subordination to its Chinese neighbour. Kampuchea, like Laos, is essential for Vietnam's security and its political stability. In contrast, the Thai view is premised on a profound distrust of Hanoi's willingness to respect national sovereignty. Vietnam is not perceived as merely a nationalist state. Kampuchea, for this reason, is a crucial buffer between the two countries. Thus Thailand condemns both the procedure by which Vietnam asserted its control over Kampuchea and that control itself. Indonesia and Malaysia are concerned essentially with the procedure and less by the control. They are thus willing to concede a Vietnamese "vital interest" in Kampuchea. ASEAN's two initially complementary conceptions of security have since the 1978 invasion become two distinctly separate principles, the first supported by Indonesia and the second supported by Thailand.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the conflict, the Philippines has been somewhat of an "odd man out." At ASEAN's formation in 1967, the Philippines was the only ASEAN state to be a former colony of a superpower and at that time had the most developed domestic

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41. See Micheal Leifer, "ASEAN under stress over Cambodia," op. cit. pp. 34-35; and Buszynski, "ASEAN: A Changing Regional Role," op. cit., p. 767.

banking and industrial sectors. Today it holds the smallest percentage of intra-ASEAN trade and is the only ASEAN state with major foreign naval and air bases (Subic Bay and Clark Field) on its soil. In 1980, when Singapore exported US\$4 billion, Indonesia \$3 billion, Malaysia \$2.9 billion and Thailand \$1.1 billion to their ASEAN partners, the Philippine share was a meager \$371 million.<sup>42</sup> Fellow Southeast Asians have, perhaps rather unfairly, questioned the Philippines bona fide status as Southeast Asians, describing them as "the strange product of three centuries of life in a Spanish convent followed by forty years in Hollywood."<sup>43</sup>

Among the ASEAN countries in the Kampuchean crisis, the Philippines has expressed no particular strategic preference, rarely takes an initiative, but joined the condemnation of Vietnam for the sake of ASEAN solidarity. No doubt its perpetual preoccupation with domestic problems contributed to Manila's aloofness. Yet as Tom Huxley points out, Manila's "middle-of-the-road" stance conceivably increases its political importance for both Vietnam and China.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps if it came down "off the fence" to take a firm side on the issue (i.e. with Indonesia or Thailand), ASEAN's policy might also have to change.

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42. Guy Sacerdoti, "Philippines: What's in it for us? Not all that much," Far Eastern Economic Review, 13 August 1982.

43. Amry Vanderbosch and Richard Butwell, The Changing Face of Southeast Asia, (Lexington, 1966), p. 44. Quoted in M. Rajendran, ASEAN's Foreign Relations (Kuala Lumpur: Arenabuku, Sdn. Bhd., 1985), p. 19.

44. Tim Huxley, Indochina and Insurgency in the ASEAN States, 1975-1981. The Strategic Defence Studies Center, Working Paper no. 67 (Canberra: Australia National Univ.), pp. 53-54.

Beneath the obvious diversity of ASEAN's perceptions of the Kampuchean conflict, the multiple diplomatic initiatives are working toward a common end: withdrawal. If an independent initiative of one member conflicts with the interests of another, it is not due to an intentional attempt to undermine a fellow neighbour, but reflects a judgemental difference in a delicate situation of uncertain options. According to Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, "there has been no tension within ASEAN over Vietnam and the Kampuchean issue...There is only one stand on Kampuchea. There is no dissension, no difference. What exists is a difference in tactics."<sup>45</sup>

#### Vietnam: Strategy and Tactics

Vietnam has played an equally shrewd game, trying to drive a wedge through ASEAN's solidarity by taking advantage of these "tactical" differences. But every time Vietnam has verged on success with this strategy, ASEAN has closed ranks to ward off the threat. Though part of ASEAN's strategy has always been to maintain an open line with Hanoi, in practice this has mainly been a bilateral channel. Hanoi refuses to attend a regional conference without the participation of the Heng Semrin regime, and ASEAN refuses to participate in any negotiations which would provide the latter any implicit recognition of its legitimacy. As explained earlier, ASEAN has sought to internationalize the

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45. Melvyn Hopper, "An interview with the Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja," Kaleidoscope International, 1984, pp. 39.

issue; Hanoi insists that the issue is strictly an internal affair of Kampuchea and thus needs no regional interference.

Hanoi persistently tries to keep ASEAN members off-balance by carefully planned visits to the more hospitable ASEAN capitals while bypassing the rest, by regular punitive military raids into Thai border territory and by offering proposals under the guise of conciliation, knowing full well they are unacceptable to ASEAN. Hanoi then uses the opportunity to accuse ASEAN internationally of intransigence and unwillingness to negotiate. For example, in 1980, Hanoi proposed a demilitarized zone on both sides of the Thai-Kampuchean border. In a 1984 Joint Statement of the Indochinese States replying indirectly to ASEAN's 1983 Appeal, it proposed: a global solution to all problems in Southeast Asia; a partial settlement, including a termination of the Chinese threat, and the "utilization" of Thai territory by the Pol Pot regime; the establishment of a safety zone on both sides of the Thai-Kampuchean border; the conclusion of framework agreement between the Indochina group and ASEAN governing their relations "pending a global solution of the Kampuchean issue"; and a continuation of the current situation.

Like their other numerous proposals, they skirted the pertinent issue of Vietnam's illegal occupation of Kampuchea, aiming for implicit international recognition and the "irreversibility" of a fait accompli. The proposals treat the Kampuchean situation as only one of a number of issues, whereas ASEAN refuses to see it submerged in a diffuse general agenda on problems of peace and stability. For ASEAN and the international

community, the number one issue is still Vietnam's military occupation and the restoration of Kampuchea's independence and self-determination.

After the Kuantan Declaration, Hanoi realized the potential for accentuating ASEAN's differences and playing on its fears of China. Thailand is isolated for being friendly with China, Indonesia is courted as a possible means of melting ASEAN's rigid stance, although at the same time it receives radio broadcasts from Hanoi supporting the rebels in East Timor. Once resolutions are passed, Vietnam's promises to withdraw their troops are belied by their mere rotation and reshuffling. At Hanoi's request, Australia's Foreign Minister Bill Hayden even stepped in with a proposal to mediate a conference between ASEAN and the Indochinese states in 1984, but ASEAN remained firm, suspecting that Australia had gullibly become an unwitting tool and wedge against ASEAN. It was, in Mochtar's words, "an old Vietnamese ploy."<sup>46</sup>

Just prior to President Reagan's visit to China in April 1985, the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry issued a statement denouncing China's "collusion" with the United States as revealing "all the more clearly the dark scheme of the reactionary forces within the Chinese leadership to further increase their collusion with the U.S. imperialists to oppose the Soviet Union and the three Indochinese countries and undermine peace and stability in Southeast Asia."<sup>47</sup> It is curious that the

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46. Asia 1985 Yearbook, Far Eastern Economic Review, Hong Kong, 1985, p. 96.

47. Issued by the Vietnamese embassy, Kuala Lumpur. Quoted in Robert C. Horn, "The USSR and the region," in Southeast Asian

statement included references to Sino-American efforts "to oppose the Soviet Union", as if to remind Moscow publicly of the direct threat to its interests. The Chinese and Soviets were at this time preparing for the highest level meeting between the two countries in fifteen years, which was coincidentally "postponed indefinitely" at Moscow's request.<sup>48</sup>

After a 1979 visit to Moscow for reassurances regarding Vietnam's recent actions, Thai Premier Kriangsak Chamanan stated that "the Kremlin leaders have assured us that they are closely associated with Vietnam. Thailand need not fear an attack by Hanoi."<sup>49</sup> Yet the total of six major Vietnamese military incursions into Thailand since this statement was issued seems to attest to Moscow's inability to control an equally "belligerent" ally. In the Vietnamese view, the Khmer refugee camps along the Kampuchea-Thai border are anti-Vietnamese, Kampuchean insurgencies which cannot be tolerated. The incursions are ostensibly conducted to break up the camps and force them deeper into the Thai interior so that they will not become Khmer recruiting centers. Another though less important reason is to reduce or halt the distribution of international aid and the rise of black markets which have lured Kampuchean peasants away from the fields.

The continued incursions have, however, affected Vietnam's diplomatic relations with ASEAN, and for Thailand, they constitute the main obstacle to serious bilateral negotiations.

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Affairs 1985 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), p. 76.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

49. Bangkok Post, 28 March 1979.

Despite urgings from the international community to maintain the refugee camps, Thai fears of harbouring Pol Pot forces are well-founded; a sanctuary for overthrowing a neighbouring government may lead to a situation parallel to the Palestinians in Jordan, it may foster a link between the Khmer and Thai communist insurgents, provide an excuse for intensified Vietnamese provocation, or allow SRV forces to occupy pieces of Thai territory as bargaining chips.

On the other hand, Thailand has demonstrated its resourcefulness in the crisis in influencing the timing and nature of the Vietnamese attacks by manipulating border tensions. In 1980, Hanoi had forewarned the Thai government that plans to repatriate the Khmer refugees back to Kampuchea would be "dangerous and unpredictable," implying a provocation for attack. But in June 1980 Thailand went ahead with the repatriation of several thousand refugees. On June 23, Vietnamese forces not unexpectedly responded with an attack into Thai territory. The costs of the attack were relatively low for both sides but Thailand succeeded in rallying ASEAN support against Vietnam in time for the upcoming June 25th meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers.

The statement issued after that meeting identified for the first time Vietnam by name as the aggressor (instead of the oblique referral to "foreign powers"). ASEAN further noted that the "latest acts of aggression against Thailand have further undermined Vietnam's own credibility and have greatly diminished the trust and confidence which ASEAN has patiently attempted to

forge with Vietnam."<sup>50</sup> According to Indonesia's Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, ASEAN could no longer take Vietnam's assurances at "face value." However, while an ASEAN hard-line prevailed, bilateral relations between Indonesia and Vietnam remained good.

### The ASEAN Response

ASEAN's diplomatic strategy in the Kampuchean issue must balance between sending Hanoi tough, unambiguous signals while also leaving the door open to compromise. It rejects Hanoi's proposals for a regional "bloc-to-bloc" conference in an effort to avoid a permanent division which might create two rigid and antagonistic alliances. Moreover, despite the apparent divisions with Vietnam, it is significant that ASEAN avoids a total break. In fact, Hanoi's attempts to drive a wedge between ASEAN members provides the organization with an incentive for greater institutionalization of its consultative and decision-making practices, and greater coordination of its members' "independent" initiatives. For example, Bangkok asked that any visits to Southeast Asian capitals by Indochina be conducted on a country-by-country basis. This way ASEAN would have an opportunity to consult with the other members at the end of each trip and before the next. For example, during Thai Premier Kriangsak's visit to the Soviet Union in March 1979, the Soviets were well aware that Kriangsak was not coming from a position of weakness. Just a

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50. ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement, Bangkok Domestic Service, 26 June 1980, in FBIS, Daily Report Asia/Pacific, 26 June 1980, p. A2.

month earlier he had paid a visit to Washington and received a reaffirmation of Thailand's value to the United States. Thailand's Deputy Suthorn Hongladarom had visited Beijing the previous month when both countries agreed that the Vietnamese invasion "would not have happened without the backing of a big country."<sup>51</sup>

Another area in which ASEAN was able to defuse a potential destabilizing situation by coordinating their policies was the refugee crisis. The massive influx of Indochinese refugees into Southeast Asia and other states began when Laos and Kampuchea fell under communist control in the mid-70's, but did not reach worrisome proportions until 1978, when monthly numbers into Thailand reached 17,000. As the countries nearest to Indochina, Thailand and Malaysia suffered the greatest numbers of land- and seabound refugees. Farther removed, Indonesia and the Philippines were also affected but initially much less so. None of the ASEAN countries was willing or prepared to foot the costs of housing such a large and ever-increasing influx of Indochinese refugees, particularly as most of them were ethnic Chinese capable of disrupting the region's delicate ethnic balance. Indonesia and Malaysia especially feared this, and Singapore flatly refused to become a haven for displaced Chinese, claiming that its country was too small to accommodate them. President Marcos was even reported to have wondered whether the "supposedly

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51. See Buszynski, "Thailand, the Soviet Union and the Kampuchean Imbroglio," op. cit, pp. 66-78.

Vietnamese refugees are actually refugees."<sup>52</sup> On this point, Malaysia's Home Affairs Minister, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, added in November 1978, "one could well suspect that the ejection of overseas Chinese and even Vietnam citizens of Chinese origins from Ho Chi Minh City...might be motivated by the desire of Hanoi to remove the "Wooden Dragon," not just Chinese merchants of Cholon, but Peking-oriented communists."<sup>53</sup>

Some ASEAN countries such as Malaysia adopted drastic measures to reject and discourage the docking of refugee boats, forcing them sometimes at gunpoint elsewhere to Indonesia or to the Philippines.<sup>54</sup> By responding to the crisis individually, one country's success in doing so was always at the expense of another. As the urgency increased, ASEAN recognized the need for a special meeting for a coordinated solution to the severe political, socio-economic and security disruption caused by the refugees.

ASEAN's efforts eventually led to the sponsorship of the Conference on Indochinese Refugees which was held on Geneva under United Nations auspices in July 1979. By giving the issue international attention through this conference, ASEAN was able to obtain aid and resettlement assurances from the Western countries. The conference, however, failed to solve the issue of the land refugees who continue to flock to Thailand, but it did

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52. Barry Wain, The Refused: The Agony of the Indochinese Refugees (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), p. 134. Quoted in Hoon, p.242.

53. Micheal Richardson, "ASEAN and Indo-Chinese Refugees," in Understanding ASEAN, ed. Alison Broinowski (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), p. 105.

54. See Thakur Phanit, op. cit., pp. 235-237.

alleviate pressures on the other ASEAN members. The refugee crisis demonstrated once again ASEAN's ability to achieve a common policy by looking at the source of the problem, internationalizing it, and obtaining outside support.

The United States' reticence or inability to manage the Kampuchean issue on ASEAN's behalf, either through a normalization with Vietnam or through pressure on the Soviet Union, has been an incentive to approach the Soviet Union directly.<sup>55</sup> ASEAN carried a distant hope that perhaps the Soviet Union would be attracted by better relations with the ASEAN countries than by a burdensome Vietnam. But during a visit to Southeast Asia's capitals in March 1987, Soviet Foreign Minister Edouard Shevardnadze responded to ASEAN's overtures by stating: "We have stressed everywhere that the solution to the Cambodian problem is the affair of the Cambodian people themselves."<sup>56</sup>

The USSR is generally skeptical of ASEAN's efforts toward a solution, but it is willing to endorse any solution which is acceptable to both Vietnam and ASEAN. It is significant that neither Thailand nor ASEAN has been condemned outright by the Soviet Union, and while Moscow will not force Vietnam to settle the conflict, it is willing to discuss the issue with countries opposed to Vietnam.<sup>57</sup> ASEAN sees this as a favorable sign, since

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55. See Buszynski, "ASEAN: A Changing Regional Role," op. cit., p. 771.

56. Murray Hiebert, "The subtlest hint," Far Eastern Economic Review, 26 March 1987, p. 17.

57. In an interesting courting bid, the Soviet Union has even proposed to become a formal "dialogue partner" with ASEAN (on par with its present partners). The offer was rejected. As one Western diplomat quipped: "Can you imagine the United States, Australia, Canada and others sitting at the same table with the Soviets and freely taking about security, defence, political and

the Soviets' willingness to talk with countries like China and Thailand must make Hanoi uncomfortable. However, Moscow is cautious in dealing with China. Given the fact that Vietnam still has the prerogative to revoke its rights in the country, Moscow does not want to offend Hanoi unless an agreement with China is certain. According to one senior Third World diplomat, "how far and hard Moscow will press Vietnam depends on its progress with China...They are not confident that if they let go of Vietnam, they will get China."<sup>58</sup>

Some observers disagree with ASEAN's rigid stance for the start of serious talks with Vietnam. J. Soedjati Djiwandono argues that a "political" solution requires a compromise for all parties involved, yet ASEAN has used stick all along but no carrot.<sup>59</sup> It is not that Vietnam is unwilling to negotiate, since it too would like a normalization of relations for economic assistance, but like ASEAN, it wants negotiations only under certain conditions. Considering that the Kampuchean conflict is presently dragging into its ninth year, one wonders if problems of how, when and where negotiations will be held should continue to be so diplomatically crucial when immediate talks are needed. Some observers, including reportedly the Secretary-General of the

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economic matters, as we do now?" See "Soviet proposals spurned," Asian Bulletin, March 1987, p. 31.

58. "Hanoi Link: A Soviet Obstacle or Vietnam?" Asian Bulletin, June 1987, p. 17. According to another diplomat, China is pulling a similar balancing act: "Peking seems to have combined strong material support for the Cambodia resistance to reassure the Thais with a softer public line on Cambodia to probe Gorbachav's position." In Richard Nations, "Khmer Double Talk," Far Eastern Economic Review, 1 August 1985, p. 13.

59. See J. Soedjati Djiwandono, "The Kampuchean Conflict and the Future of ASEAN," The Indonesian Quarterly, 13 (Oct. 1985), pp. 435-440.

United Nations have asked, how do we know what Vietnam wants if we do not talk with it?<sup>60</sup> Has ASEAN pushed Vietnam into a corner, leading to stalemate? Jusuf Wanandi, Director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta has the following view:

Initially, it seemed that ASEAN and Vietnam were coming closer to one another's position on two issues which had until then divided them, namely: the principles on which the solution to the conflict were to be based; and the mechanism by which a solution were to be sought (sic). However, what has prevented them from coming to the conference table was and still is the lack of initiative on either side to take the first daring step. Each time when the positions of the two sides seem to converge and come closer to agreeing on starting a negotiation, the process tends to reverse itself. This seems to be due to the lack of mutual trust between Thailand and Vietnam and the lack of confidence in the willingness of both sides to compromise.<sup>61</sup>

The Malaysian New Straits Times, which is purportedly close to the official view in Kuala Lumpur, printed the following editorial echoing ASEAN's difficulty in maintaining solidarity:

Possession is nine points of the law. The Vietnamese are there in Kampuchea, with Heng Semrin more or less firmly in place. Over time, the thought arises: why not let sleeping dogs lie? It can get to the point where, paradoxically, it is ASEAN [which is] seen as hindering stable regional relations. The appearance of a repetitive, seemingly inflexible ASEAN stand on the conflict can be counterproductive.<sup>62</sup>

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60. Institute of Asian Studies. The Kampuchean Problem in Thai Perspective: Positions and Viewpoints held by Foreign Ministry Officials and Thai Academics (Chulalongkorn University: Asian Studies Monographs, no. 32, Aug. 1985).

61. Jusuf Wanandi, "Zopfan and the Kampuchean Conflict," The Indonesian Quarterly, 13 (Apr. 1985), p. 210.

62. Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 Sept. 1980, p. 13. Quoted in Astri Suhrke, "ASEAN: Adjusting to New Regional Alignments," Asia Pacific Community, 12 (Spring 1981), p. 28.

Conclusions: At The Impasse

The Kampuchean conflict is now entering its ninth year. Vietnam has announced that through gradual withdrawals it will have its troops removed from Kampuchea by the year 1990 whether or not a political solution is found.<sup>63</sup> But given their past record, this remains to be seen. Hanoi has also moved away from an earlier rejection of any future role of the CGDK in Phnom Penh once Vietnamese troops have withdrawn, and it now accepts the participation of Sihanouk and the CGDK within the current constitution and one-party system.

The only problem is that within the past year the CGDK has been at its lowest ebb, with the possibility of the coalition falling apart greater than ever. The KPNLF faction under Son Sann experienced an attempted mutiny, while Khmer Rouge attacks upon Sihanouk's MOULINAKA faction led to Sihanouk's May 1987 announcement to take a year's "leave of absence" from the Kampuchean issue. Stressing that he had not resigned as President of the CGDK, Sihanouk ostensibly hoped that this "leave" would provide more freedom and flexibility to probe new, less formal channels for a negotiated settlement.

ASEAN's main obstacle toward a solution in the Kampuchean crisis is the fact that ASEAN, regardless of what it tries to do, is not directly involved in the issue, and those countries which are -- Vietnam, China and Thailand -- remain adamant in their extreme positions. ASEAN is merely a marginal inducement. If

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63. December 7, 1986, as Thach tells German news magazine, Spiegel.

the the present Sino-Thai alliance is a counterbalance to the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance, there is bound to be rigidity in the respective positions, making it harder to reach a settlement. China has never been invited to any ASEAN-sponsored meeting, yet any negotiated solution needs China's blessing since it must include an end to the Khmer Rouge and the Sino-Vietnamese stand-off.

The present stalemate arises because of the perception by all parties involved that time is on their side. There is no strong disposition within Bangkok to compromise. This is in large part due to Thailand's strong external countervailing support in the issue and the realization that if the conflict was escalated Vietnam is unable or reluctant to exact an unacceptable price upon itself in terms of casualties, financial strain and social disruption. The differences between Thailand and Indonesia have not yet necessitated any agonizing policy choices; an independent Kampuchea is acceptable to both, while the rise in Sino-Soviet antagonism at least assures that Hanoi is not being led to subordination to Peking.

Secure with the Soviet Union looking over its shoulder and the assurance that no one is prepared to drive the Vietnamese out by force, Hanoi is convinced that ASEAN resolve will weaken due to differences over China, accompanied by a gradual loss of interest in the issue in the West. Boosting Vietnam's optimism is India's formal recognition of the Heng Semrin regime which, as a leader of the Non-Aligned movement, represented a huge setback to ASEAN.

The conflict is equally bearable for the external powers. Beijing is counting on Vietnam's eventual war weariness, retardation of economic growth, resentment of the Soviet presence and Vietnamese dependence on it, and the persistence of Kampuchean rebels. China expects neither an end nor a solution to the conflict in the near future. In fact, as Micheal Leifer maintains, China has enjoyed the best of all political worlds:

Assured that superpower collusion remains obstructed by continuing tension between Moscow and Washington, it can draw comfort from Soviet overtures while sustaining fruitful relationships with the U.S. and Japan.<sup>64</sup>

For the United States, the conflict provides a low-risk theatre to challenge "Soviet expansionism." Likewise, the USSR is quite content with being able to maintain military bases in Southeast Asia and a second front vis a vis China. It is indeed an irony that the most gains for least costs of the conflict accrued to the three external powers -- not ASEAN or Indochina. However, one cannot discount that, like China, Vietnam is an experienced political marathon runner which thinks in terms of decades rather than merely years.

Without belittling ASEAN's desire for an early settlement, the present state of protracted war or stalemate ensures that Vietnam is contained at acceptable costs. ASEAN has periodically deplored the United States' disregard of the Southeast Asian conflict, its preoccupation with the NATO theatre, and with countries such as Pakistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. On the other hand, because Southeast Asia is not

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64. Micheal Leifer, "The road to Phnom Penh is blocked by Moscow," Far Eastern Economic Review, 25 Dec, 1986, p. 30.

part of the central strategic balance, external powers have difficulty in defining their interests in the region, thus giving regional states an opportunity to exploit uncertainties and rivalries. While Southeast Asia is no longer the main focus of the cold war, the superpowers do perceive that it is advantageous to control the area. Hence, "maximally the United States and the USSR will each attempt to draw Southeast Asian nations into their orbit and, minimally, prevent these nations from entering the orbit of their antagonist."<sup>65</sup>

The protracted war has given ASEAN opportunities to make new alignments and strengthen its bargaining positions. While on the one hand, ASEAN wants to see a solution to the problem, a radical change may only bring new dangers and uncertain benefits. The possibility of an ASEAN-Vietnamese alignment would only invite a new confrontation with China, as would a Sino-Vietnamese normalization. ASEAN does not necessarily want to see the Communist countries on good terms, for the "fraternal" conflicts between them have thus far been to the benefit of ASEAN. There is a feeling that if ASEAN can stand firm without unduly antagonizing Vietnam, relations might improve to everyone's advantage. An article written by Kishore Mahbubani, Singapore's minister and counsellor in the Washington embassy expressed the following view:

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65. Lie Tek-tjeng, "Southeast Asian Regional Security in the 1980's: A View from Jakarta," in International Security in the Southeast Asian and Southwest Pacific Region, ed. T.B. Millar (St. Lucia, Queensland: Univ. of Queensland Press, 1983), p. 271.

It may be useful to attempt new diplomatic initiatives [by ASEAN] from time to time, but there is also the danger that such moves could be interpreted by Vietnam as a sign of weakness. The ultimate message that has to be conveyed to Vietnam is that this time around time is not working on Vietnam's side. If this message is sent in clear and sustained fashion, the ASEAN states can call upon their friends to wait and see the fruits of one of the oldest Asian values: patience.<sup>66</sup>

ASEAN now seems to realize that if the Soviets cannot be persuaded to withdraw voluntarily, only the Vietnamese can get them to leave. Hence, ASEAN diplomacy should be directed at convincing the Vietnamese it is in their best interest to reduce their dependence on the Soviet Union -- militarily, economically, diplomatically and ideologically. This can only be achieved if ASEAN creates the necessary conditions. After all, influence depends largely on two factors: needs and options. At present, Vietnam has too many needs and too few options.

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66. Rodney Tasker, "Our functioning power is only five-and-a-half," Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 March 1984, p. 60.

### Conclusion

ASEAN's handling of the Kampuchean crisis demonstrates the flexibility, resourcefulness and diplomatic skills of a disparate group of states faced with a threat to their security. After a prolonged identity crisis throughout most of the 1970's, the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in 1978 posed a crucial test to ASEAN's credibility as a viable organization. The invasion represented a shift in the regional distribution of power. ASEAN's response was to deny Vietnam's dominance in Indochina and to coalesce into a united front to strengthen its position to ward off the new threat. However, the only weapons ASEAN possessed were diplomatic.

The Kampuchean crisis also showed that ASEAN's "inert" period of bureaucratic and ministerial consultation provided a valuable and indispensable foundation in a situation of uncertainty. Without this solid base it is unlikely that ASEAN would have been able to weather the multiple diplomatic faux pas that it did without disintegrating like its regional predecessors, SEATO, ASA and MAPHILINDO. Nor is it likely that ASEAN would have tolerated its unique brand of regional unity through independent national initiatives, and its resultant instances of diplomatic "toe-tripping."

In all these instances two things remained consistent: first, regional policy continued to be a function of each members' national policy; second, the differences which arose may have posed a temporal threat to ASEAN's unified stance, but they were always defused enough so as not to pose a threat to ASEAN's continued existence as a regional organization. It is important to understand that the partial sublimation of differences and harmonization of political responses was not the result of integrative processes but a "conscious act of political will on the part of the leaders."<sup>1</sup> ASEAN's regional policy took into account the critical need of one (Thailand) while leaving room for others (such as Indonesia and Malaysia) to play out their own initiatives. Through its system of consultations and consensus the collective interests of the unit are protected. Though this means that ASEAN moves at the pace of its slowest member, it does not rule out the possibility for another member to "run ahead" in its individual capacity, because each realizes just how far it may run. No member nation will want to jeopardize what has served it so well. In other words, ASEAN seems to operate at two levels; it is a community speaking with one voice, though not necessarily with one mind. Accommodation rather than reconciliation is characteristic of ASEAN. Accommodation, however, is not the same as reconciliation because it allows for a common response and for "agreements to disagree."

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1. Donald Weatherbee, "Southeast Asian in 1982: Marking Time, in Southeast Asian Affairs 1983 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1981), p. 3.

A large part of this thesis stresses how ASEAN is used as a diplomatic tool or instrument of its member nations, to the detriment of it establishing its organizational status as a viable actor distinguishable from its members. However, the study also demonstrates that despite the numerous tangents undertaken by its members, ASEAN as a distinct and separate entity is always a present consideration among its individual actors. Indeed, for some regional organizations, the institutional framework is so weak that the organization represents little more than the collective wills and activities of its members. ASEAN represents more than this by being something more than merely the sum of its parts. Its member nations achieve much more than if they had acted separately or on an ad hoc basis without ASEAN's institutional framework.

ASEAN is wrought with ironies. It is almost as if what is paradoxical from the Western viewpoint is only natural and expected in the ASEAN view. As Tilman notes, "contradictions are frequently accepted by Southeast Asians in a manner sometimes bewildering to others."<sup>2</sup> For example, the weakness and ambiguity of which ASEAN was accused throughout its development has, during the Kampuchean crisis, become a source of strength. The ASEAN view is aptly reflected in the words of Malaysia's Prime Minister, "ASEAN exists because it serves a need. It continues to exist because it does not demand from us what we cannot give. ASEAN has been able to absorb national differences because it is

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2. Robert Tilman, Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond: ASEAN Perceptions of External Threat (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), p. 78.

a relatively informal organization without rigid rules of procedure and without elaborate structural machinery."<sup>3</sup> In essence, ASEAN functions under a thick operational veil of unwritten laws, implicit understandings and tacit agreements which undergirds a recognized pattern of practices around which expectations converge.

The history of ASEAN is a political response to developments within the regional environment rather than a single-minded pursuit of initial goals. Whether or not ASEAN began as a political organization is not the issue at hand. The challenge ASEAN now faces is whether it can translate its recent political successes during the Kampuchean crisis into economic and organizational strengths. Karl D. Jackson identifies the basic problem as follows: "The real problem with ASEAN is not that the initial motivations were political but that the feedback loop of economic integration reinforcing the original political motivations will remain fairly weak."<sup>4</sup>

ASEAN's success in canvassing international support was no small feat in light of the weak status of its individual member states. Accredited to ASEAN is the sponsorship and successful passage of United Nations resolutions condemning Vietnam, the 1981 International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) in New York, the postponement of multilateral assistance to Vietnam, the formation of the CGDK tripartite, and the mobilization of an international

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3. Statement at opening of Meeting of the ASEAN Heads of Government, 23 Feb. 1976, Denpasar. In Ten Years ASEAN (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 1978), p. 96.

4. Karl D. Jackson and M. Hadi Soesastro, eds., ASEAN Security and Economic Development (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1983), xiii.

effort to deal with the Indochinese refugees. On the other hand, one can easily question ASEAN's real success in the issue by pointing to Vietnam's continued presence in Kampuchea. Pacific settlement, however, must also be judged in qualitative terms which question what kind, rather than merely how many, solutions the organization produces. For example, some of the United Nations' triumphs (i.e. the Kashmir and Palestine issues) were pacific "non-settlements" which may not have entirely resolved the conflict but succeeded in suspending or limiting hostilities. In some cases, the realistic ideal may be not to achieve the permanent settlement of a dispute, but to persuade the parties to settle down permanently with the dispute.<sup>5</sup>

There is a growing opinion that the recent security concerns have been pursued at the expense of intra-associational evolution. Indeed, the Kampuchean issue consumes a large portion of ASEAN Foreign Ministers meetings and talks with their respective "dialogue" partners, to the neglect of pressing economic concerns. Many of the members' lingering suspicions and the region's pre-existing border disputes such as the Sabah issue and have not been resolved. The institutionalization of economic measures and resolving such long-standing disputes will require a "greater degree of vision, political will, idealism, altruism and stamina than currently is the case...What the Kampuchean conflict does is to allow the ASEAN members to disguise their shortcomings in the short run by dramatic demonstrations of regional solidarity and to postpone to the morrow the more mundane but at

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5. Inis L. Claude, Jr., Swords Into Ploughshares (New York: Random House, 1964 [third edition]), pp.216-217.

the same time more critical tasks of long-term organizational development."<sup>6</sup>

In September 1982, Singapore's Prime Minister suggested that perhaps it was time for greater military cooperation in ASEAN, implying the signing of a formal military pact and coordination of multilateral exercises. ASEAN publicly and vigorously rejected the offer, cancelling speculations of the organization becoming a military alliance. As at ASEAN's formation in 1967, organizational members feel that far from enhancing regional security, a military alliance will only have provocative value, inviting undesired counter-alliances.

From the ASEAN perspective, there is little point in provoking Vietnam if ASEAN has not sufficient bite to match its bark. The possibility of joint ASEAN military action is slight. Military forces are unsophisticated and undersupplied; there is no common language, doctrine or equipment standardization, and the member units have no experience fighting on one another's soil. Besides, differences over the long-term threat inhibit security collaboration beyond political consultation. For this reason and also to assure the communist nations of ASEAN's peaceful intentions, the member countries prefer to cope with regional security in an ad hoc, bilateral fashion.

One way of assessing ASEAN's success during the Indochina crisis is by asking what might have happened if ASEAN had not existed and if Southeast Asia, as a group of small, uncoordinated

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6. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, Kampuchea Without Delusion (Malaysia: Institute of Strategic and International Studies, ASEAN Series, 1986), p. 11.

states, found itself submerged in yet another external power conflict. If ASEAN had not acted, it would have implied that the Southeast Asian nations accepted the argument that the presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea was to counter the Khmer Rouge threat and an invitation of "national salvation" by the Kampucheans. It would have recognized the Khmers as the root cause of the problem and not Vietnam's invasion and illegal occupation of Kampuchea.

Would the Southeast Asian nations been able to cope with the challenges posed by the crisis if they had acted independently without the existence of a regional organization? In light of the fact that China and Vietnam were quite clearly wooing ASEAN for its affections, they could have easily accentuated existing differences, played one Southeast Asian country off against another if little or no policy coordination existed and mutual suspicions still thrived. Donald Weatherbee reminds us that "the Kampuchean crisis sharply illuminates ASEAN's political dimension. It did not create it." ASEAN's foreign relations underwent quantitative and qualitative changes at a rate, degree and effectiveness which probably would not have occurred had it not been faced with adversity. Surprising many of its most skeptical critics and even themselves, the ASEAN nations succeeded in accommodating and harmonizing national policies for collective action.

The Kampuchean Issue  
A Chronology of Significant Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Events</u>
29 June 1979	Vietnam becomes a member of COMECON.
3 July 1978	China makes an announcement suspending all aid to Vietnam.
3 November 1978	Signing of the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty between the Soviet Union and Vietnam.
25 December 1978	Vietnam sends its armed forces to seize Phnom Penh.
20-21 July 1979	United Nations International Conference on Southeast Asian refugees, Geneva.
24 July 1979	India makes an announcement of its recognition of the government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (under Heng Semrin).
13 February 1981	Non-aligned Meeting in New Delhi calls for withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and Vietnam. Kampuchea's seat is vacant.
13-17 July 1981	The International Conference on Kampuchea is held in New York. Boycotted by countries of Soviet bloc.
22 June 1982	Formation of the Coalition of the Government of Democratic Kampuchea.
29-30 June 1983	Australian Foreign Minister Bill Hayden visits Hanoi to offer good offices in mediating between Vietnam and ASEAN.
19-21 November 1983	Australia's Bill Hayden arrives in Bangkok for talks to clear up misunderstandings between Australia and ASEAN on the Kampuchean issue.
13-16 February 1984	Indonesian Armed Forces Commander Benny Murdani pays an official visit to Vietnam.
25-26 February 1984	Indonesia's Center for Strategic and International Studies holds joint seminar in Hanoi with the Vietnamese Institute of International Relations.
24 March 1984	The Peoples' Army of Vietnam begins a major military incursion into Thailand.
9 July 1985	U.S. House of Representatives gives approval to the U.S. government to spend US\$5 million to help assist the non-communist Kampuchea forces.
7 May 1987	Prince Sihanouk announces decision take a year's leave of absence.

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