

THE AMERICAN PERCEPTION  
OF  
ASEAN *2*

*by*  
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New Delhi,  
December 31, 1982.

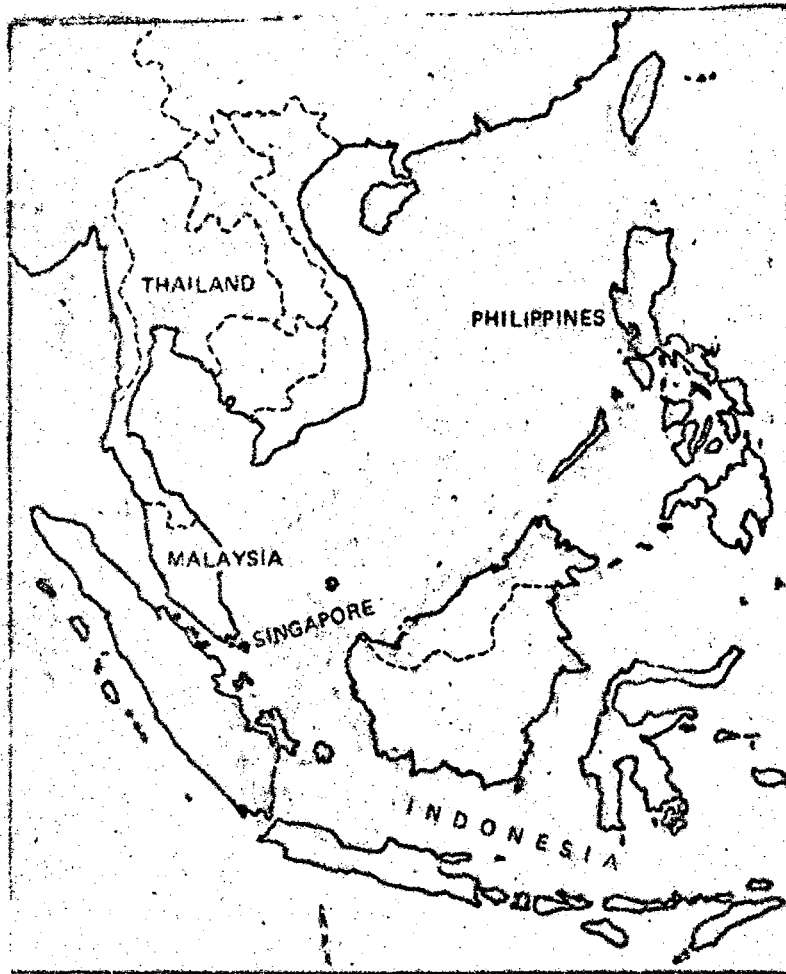
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## C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	***	***	1
INTRODUCTION	***	***	1 - 6
CHAPTER I	THE ORIGIN OF ASEAN AND THE AMERICAN ROLE, IF ANY		7 - 36
CHAPTER II	FACTORS INFLUENCING US ATTITUDE TO THE EMERGENCE OF ASEAN		37 - 64
CHAPTER III	ASEAN IN THE AFTERMATH OF US PULL-OUT FROM VIETNAM		65 - 89
CHAPTER IV	THE NEW INDOCHINA CONFLICT AND THE AMERICAN RESPONSE		90 -110
CONCLUSION	***	***	111-123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	***	***	124-132

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## **INTRODUCTION**



The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

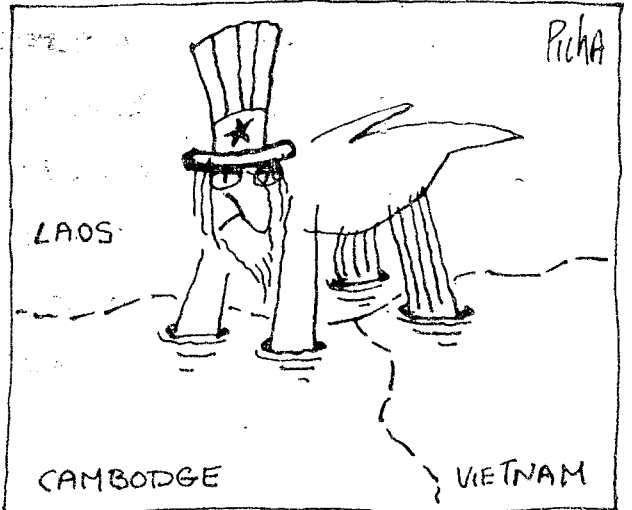
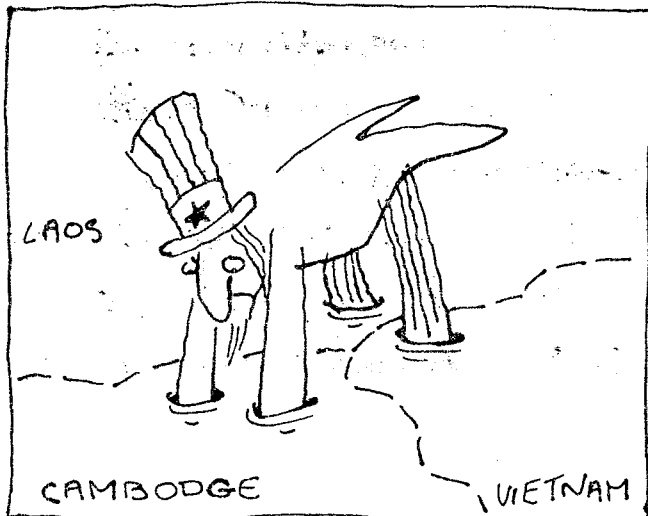
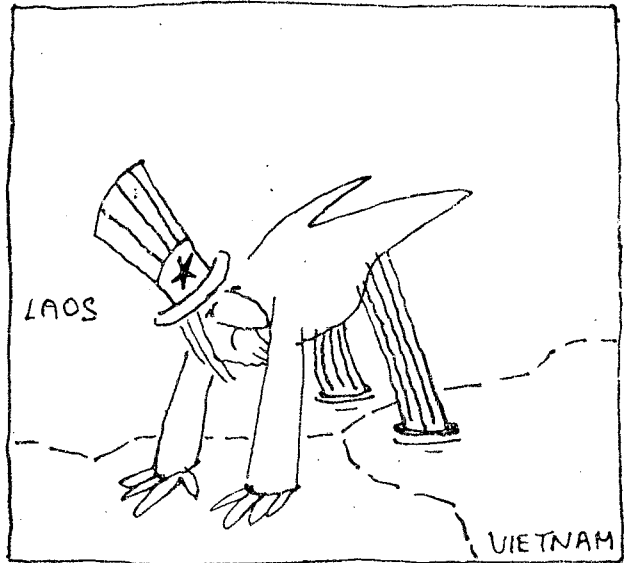
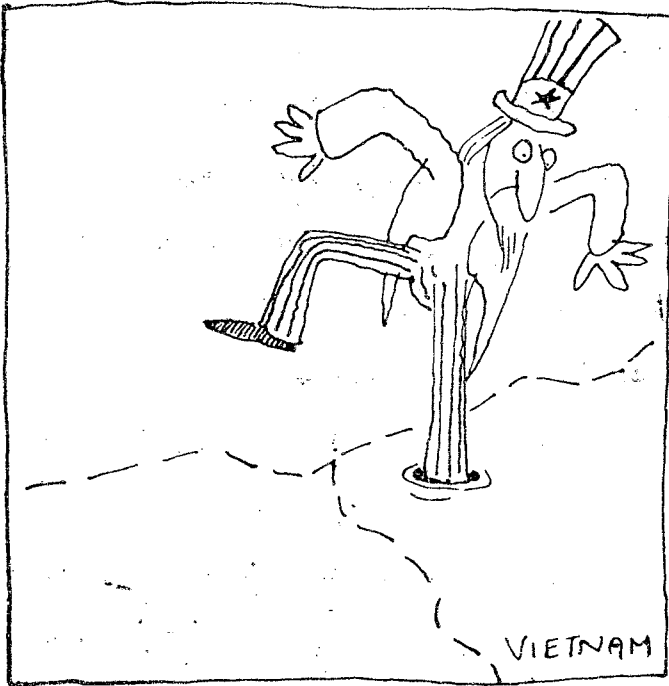
## INTRODUCTION

The geographical classification of the world into various regions and sub-regions is more or less arbitrary and hence there exist differences in the definition of a region by the scholars of different nations. The term "Southeast Asia" came into vogue during World War II, when the territories south of the Tropic of Cancer were placed under Lord Louis Mountbatten's South-East Asia command.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier writings of British, French and Indian writers this region was called "Farther India" or "Greater India". The Chinese scholars, on the other hand, preferred to call it Kun Lun or Nan Yang, meaning "Little China".

This region had played an insignificant role in the history of pre-World War II world affairs. A series of events beginning with the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia during the Second World War, subsequent nationalist movements for independence, rise of decolonization and the emergence of Communist China in October 1949 transformed the region into one of the sensitive areas of the world. The two Super Powers, China and Japan began to play their role in the politics and economics of Southeast Asia. A prolonged and pathetic war in Vietnam grabbed world attention. Active and

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<sup>1</sup> J.N. Sar Desai, Southeast Asia: Past and Present (New Delhi, 1981), p. 3.



direct military involvement of the Americans in Vietnam began soon after the defeat of French forces in the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Gradually but steadily the American military involvement extended up to Laos and Kampuchea (see the cartoon). But this involvement proved to be a sad, costly and traumatic experience for the Yankees.

When the war in Indochina was at its climax, the other five countries of this region were making hectic efforts to group together and achieve a sort of "Asian identity" and regional resilience. They were Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. This effort at regional cooperation was overshadowed by the fateful events in Indochina and could not draw the world attention much. However, these five countries, through the Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967, announced the birth of an "Association of Southeast Asian Nations", popularly known as the ASEAN. It represented an attempt at unity in diversity. Indonesia, the largest member nation, has an area of 1,906,240 square kilometers. The Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, however, are smaller than the Indian states of Maharashtra, Rajasthan and the Union territory of Delhi respectively. Thailand is not bigger than Assam and Madhya Pradesh taken together. While Indonesia is predominantly a Muslim country with 90 per cent of Muslim population, Christians constitute 93 per cent of the population of the Philippines. Singapore and Thailand are Buddhist nations, whereas Malaysia has a mixed



population of 38 per cent Muslim, 17 per cent Christians and 45 per cent others.<sup>2</sup> All the member countries except Thailand had long history of colonialism. The Philippines was under the Spanish rule from 1571 to 1898 and under American rule from 1898 till 1946. Indonesia was a Dutch colonial territory and Malaysia and Singapore were part of the British colonial empire. Despite different historical experiences, diverse social structures, differential stages of economic development as well as political breakthroughs, these five countries formed an association with definite political and economic objectives. How ~~is~~ was this possible during a period of unfavourable regional and international environment? What was the attitude of the United States, the architect of many a regional organizations, towards this pan-Asiatic tendency? What role, if any, did it play in the origin and development of the ASEAN? These issues of hows and whys of the origin of an indigenous regional organisation in Asia have been studied in the First Chapter of the present work.

The Benthamite hedonistic principle of utility is the bed-rock of international relations and world politics. The theorists of international relations have given a technical name to it - the "National Interest". This principle of hedonism works within a world system which is much akin to the Hobbesian "State of Nature". The actors of international

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2 Defence and Foreign Affairs Handbook (Washington, Copley and Associates, S.A., 1978).

politics, on the other hand, are invariably Machiavellian in nature as well as in their deeds. They profess the principles of the "sovereign equality of nations" but intentionally perpetuate the existing gross inequalities among nations. They stress the need for a stable world order but they fish in troubled waters. They talk of peace but wage wars, open and covert. They swear "non-interference", but indulge interventions. They uphold international law, but observe it more by violation than by obedience. Consequently, any study of international relations will be meaningless without exploring and expressing the aims, objectives and interests of the nation-states in their dealings with one another. The second and third Chapters of this study make a historical analysis of the American interest in Southeast Asia in general and portrays a picture of the American interest in the ASEAN countries in particular.

After about four years of the end of Vietnam war, the region witnessed another spate of mini-wars. This time the war was not between the so-called protagonists of "international proletarianism" and the votaries of "open society", but among the so-called vanguards of the proletariats. ASEAN apprehended a possible "spill over" of the conflict. And the conflict appeared to be a challenge for the US policy makers. What were perceived to be US interests and how did the United States respond to such a new kind of war? How did the ASEAN nations react to it? Was there any difference

in perception between the ASEAN and the American policy makers? Did ASEAN have the wherewithal to make Washington to see things in its way, or was it the other way around? These are the obvious questions that would arise as one thinks of the ASEAN region and the Indochina war of 1979. The <sup>Fourth</sup> ~~Third~~ Chapter of this dissertation is devoted to this issue.

The concluding part is an attempt to find out a general pattern of relationship between the ASEAN and the United States, on the basis of the discussion attempted in the preceding ~~three~~ chapters. The conclusions are drawn primarily on the basis of historical-analytical method. Aspects of the currently held theories of international relations have been briefly discussed in an attempt to understand the nature and type of the relationship. No melting pot is otherwise available which can bring out a new theory by putting all the existing theories together. Any attempt simply to combine the theories together would produce a grotesque, obscure and bizarre theory. Studies on the American policy toward regional organizations like ASEAN are not many. Further, ASEAN is yet to evolve into a full-fledged regional cooperative mechanism. It is still in an experimental stage of its evolution and development. Material concerning the Organization and the attitude of the United States towards it, available in this country, is very scanty. The present writer is also quite conscious of the fact that he is at the very preliminary stages of acquiring the grasp

of the intricacies of contemporary world politics, national security, policy-making in the United States, and other complex motivations of the diverse countries of Southeast Asia. The dissertation is thus a modest preliminary exercise by one who seeks to learn to examine the diverse facets involved in a complex issue of contemporary world politics.

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**CHAPTER I**

## CHAPTER I

### THE ORIGIN OF ASEAN AND THE AMERICAN ROLE, IF ANY

#### Regionalism

The international system, which has emerged after the Second World War, is a strategically bipolar system dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. Another landmark of the post-war period is the establishment of the United Nations which is the meeting place of almost all the free nations of the world, with nearly all the great issues of peace-keeping, economic and social co-operation, or human rights brought into its councils, commissions and committees. Along with the development of this international organisation there has proliferated a host of regional, political, economic and security organisations.

Unlike the utopian United Nations, regional arrangements are formed purely to preserve, protect and promote the national and regional interests of the member countries. Regional organisations have, by their very nature, no uniform characteristics. Some regional organisations are by-product of the cold war and the handiwork of the Super Powers. Some of them owe their origins to economic nationalism. While some self-styled regional organisations include a few extra-regional members, others are purely regional in composition.

However, the fact remains that no regional organization can claim to be entirely immune from extra-regional influences, especially emanating from one or the other, or both the Super Powers. Some regional organizations are virtually created by them, some are tacitly influenced by them and some others are provided with the propitious atmosphere for their origin as well as subsequent evolution. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, for example, is undoubtedly an American creation. The attempts at European integration and the culmination of several European organisations have profusely been influenced by the policies and programmes emanating from Washington. H.F. Haviland, Jr. observes: "The quest for European unity has been by no means confined to Europe. It has taken hold in important aspects of American policy, at times to such a degree as to cause European opponents of particular measures for European unity to attack them as essentially American proposals."<sup>1</sup>

The attempts to set up regional organisations by Third World nations have largely been an imitation of institutional structures pioneered by the West. The earliest endeavour to adapt such West European experience was in Latin America. The establishment of institutions in that area in turn gave rise to the demand for setting up of similar

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<sup>1</sup> H. Field Haviland, Jr., The United States and the Western Community (Pennsylvania, 1957), p. 5.

institutions in Africa and Asia. The example of the Inter-American Development Bank, for instance, clearly influenced the subsequent creation of Asian and African Development Banks.

In the Rio Pact the dominance of the United States was a reality that all Latin American countries were conscious of. Thus, the Latin American integration movement is largely a product of a wider movement for the solidarity of the region and parts thereof to promote their concerns and reduce the dominance of external factors, particularly, the United States.<sup>2</sup> But the emergent regional arrangements in Latin America could by no manner of means remain uninfluenced by the policies of the United States. At the beginning of the Kennedy Administration a rethinking took place in regard to the United States policy concerning aid to Latin America. Till that time the United States had resisted Latin American demands for a Marshall Plan-type aid programme. The Alliance for progress announced with great fan fare by President John F. Kennedy was a far cry from the Marshall Plan and it did not amount to much in the years that followed. The United States continued "to harp on security matters while Latin America was concerned about economic issues".<sup>3</sup> But one lesson learned by the United States was the inevitability of regionalism in a

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\* 2 Vasant Kumar Bawa, Latin American Integration: An Asian View (New Delhi, 1980), p. 83.

\* 3 Ibid., quoted in p. 84.



world in which trade, aid and politics simply would not remain in tight and separate compartments. Washington deemed it expedient to accept the concept of free trade areas and common markets in Latin America as proper and legitimate methods of industrialization.<sup>4</sup> Opposing them would only have stirred up animosity against the United States. Washington's objective became one of carefully promoting evolution of such organizations on lines that would not impair US objectives and interests in the region.

#### Attempts at Regional Co-operation in Asia

Several efforts were made in Asia to promote regional political and economic organizations. Some of them died before their birth, some collapsed in the egg, and a few of them continued for a considerable period of time. In the post-war period the Western countries, India and Japan made vigorous attempts to organise the Asian countries under their leadership. The first Asian Inter-governmental organization, the Colombo Plan of 1950, and the South East Asia Treaty Organisation established in 1954 were the off-shoots of Western efforts at bringing about regional co-operation in Asia. The then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, was an ardent advocate of an Asian Relations Organisation which failed to materialize. The Asian Legal Consultative

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<sup>4</sup> Ernst B. Haas, The Web of Interdependence: The United States and International Organizations (New Jersey, 1970), p. 76.

Committee (1956) which subsequently became Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, and the Afro-Asian Rural Reconstruction Organisation (1952) are the two instances of Indian efforts at regional co-operation. Japan played a prominent role in the formation of Asian Productivity Organisation in 1961, the Asian Parliamentarians' Union in 1965 and the Asian Development Bank in 1966. In addition to these, Japan convened a series of yearly Ministerial Conferences for Economic Development of South East Asia (SEAMEQ) beginning in 1966.

Not all these regional experiments, however, could stand the test of time. The newly independent countries viewed any venture promoted by Western countries, or even by India and Japan with some suspicion. As Michael Haas put it: "These efforts for Asian regional leadership, however, were not accepted by the post-colonial regimes in Asia, which did not want to trade one set of international hegemomists for another".<sup>5</sup>

In the subsequent period Asia in general and South-east Asia in particular witnessed the emergence of many regional cooperative institutions which were based on the principle of egalitarianism. There was no member to act as an overlord over other members of the organisations. Some of these regional organisations are the Association of South

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Haas, "ASEAN : The Formative Years", in R. P. Anand, ed., Cultural Factors in International Relations (New Delhi, 1961), p. 164.

East Asia (ASA) established in 1964, Asian and Pacific Coconut Community formed in 1969, the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries set up in 1970 and the Pepper Community organized in 1972.

However, the most important among them and relatively more successful experiment of regional co-operation in Southeast Asia is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN. It came into existence on 8 August 1967, through a Declaration made in Bangkok by the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

#### Birth of ASEAN

The ASEAN took birth during a period of intensive cold war between the two Super Powers. The People's Republic of China was in the throes of a cultural revolution and was apparently on the verge of exporting it. The United Kingdom had declared its intention to withdraw the military forces from areas east of Suez. The Sino-Soviet rift was becoming crystal clear with an increasing amount of verbal accusations by one against the other using the prolix jargon of Marxist polemics. Southeast Asia was going through a terrible war between the North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese backed by the Communist powers and the United States respectively. Unlike the Soviet Union and China, US involvement in the area included heavy commitment of manpower of the army, navy, air-force and the marine.

In the mid-sixties Malaysia and the Philippines could not see eye to eye on many issues and had ultimately suspended diplomatic relations over the incorporation of Sabah into the Federation of Malaysia. President Sukarno of Indonesia had laid a strong claim over Sarawak, another part of former British North Borneo, that had been added to Malaya to form the new Malaysia. The Government in Kuala Lumpur expelled Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia just after two years of its formation in 1963. Insurgents were active in border areas of Thailand. Other developments in the region in 1965 and 1966 paved the way for the formation of ASEAN. The unsuccessful coup of 1 October 1965 in Indonesia led to the political demise of President Achmad Sukarno who had adopted an approach of confrontation toward the newly formed state of Malaysia. President Ferdinand E. Marcos's election in November 1965 resulted in the soft-peddling of the Sabah claim by the Philippines. Malaysian and Indonesian officials began discussion in late 1965 to end confrontation and make way for co-operation. This discussion led to formal talks between Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak and Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Adam Malik in May-June 1966. The talks were hosted in Bangkok by Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman of Thailand. Malaysia and Indonesia finally reached an agreement in August 1966 and put an end to "confrontation". Henceforth Foreign Minister Malik remained at the forefront of subsequent diplomatic

endeavours to achieve regional co-operation. The leaders of Southeast Asia realized that they had more to gain through solidarity than by fighting among themselves. Thanat Khoman visited other neighbouring countries and held discussions about the formation of a regional organization. Finally, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand met in Bangkok and a declaration by them on 8 August 1967 heralded the birth of a new regional organization - the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. ASEAN, thus, came into existence during a troubled international situation, regional political pandemonium and rising bilateral animosities.

#### Factors Giving Rise to ASEAN

ASEAN served well the foreign policies and style of diplomacy of the member countries. The very basis of the organisation was the sovereign equality of the nations. There was no preponderant member to dominate the organisation from within or to use it for the fulfilment of its narrow self-interest. There were differences in the political institutions, historical experiences, level of economic development and types of social systems among the member countries of ASEAN. But the differences were not powerful enough to deprive the organization of its egalitarian nature.

The Indonesians found ASEAN to be fully in keeping with their long-time foreign policy objectives. Indonesia

saw ASEAN as an institution which might gradually reduce its dependence on foreign economic aid and help improve the national economy. Sukarno once said in 1963 that "prosperity which is the result of begging is meaningless".<sup>6</sup> By 1964, when it had become clear that Western aid was tied to termination of Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia, Sukarno declared that the imperialists were trying to make the Indonesians flunkies. "... Economic aid, economic aid, economic aid, economic aid, always economic aid is made a threat, a weapon, so that we will follow their desires...".<sup>7</sup> he said. Sukarno once ridiculed the idea that resource-rich Indonesia could collapse economically. He stated, "we receive aid from many countries, and we are grateful for such aid. But we will never accept aid with political strings attached. When any nation offers us aid with political strings attached, then I will tell". He paused a moment then burst out in English, "go to hell with your aid".<sup>8</sup> The outburst was mainly intended for domestic consumption but it did indicate the exasperation of leaders of new nations over their level of dependence on external powers and the persistent efforts of those powers to exercise influence

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6 Quoted in Franklin B. Weinstein, Indonesian Foreign Policy and the Dilemma of Dependence: From Sukarno to Soeharto (Ithaca and London, 1976), p. 213.

7 Ibid., p. 215.

8 Quoted in Howard Palfrey Jones, Indonesia: The Possible Dreams (Singapore, 1975), p. 321.

over aid recipients. Thailand had long felt the need to have broad and divergent interests so that the country's foreign policy might not be unidirectional aiming at Washington. By the mid-sixties Thailand was beginning to harbour misgivings over its total pro-Western posture vis-a-vis Vietnam and SEATO paper tiger.<sup>9</sup>

The Philippines, similarly, wanted to join ASEAN so that all its eggs might not be placed in the SEATO basket under the overlordship of Uncle Sam. The Philippines was anxious to establish itself as a bona fide Asian power and to dissipate the general impression that its foreign policy was dictated from Washington.<sup>10</sup> The new entrepreneurial elements, economically conservative and normally apolitical with respect to foreign policy, coalesced with the ideological nationalists once their insecurities and fears of American economic dominance were aroused. Among the results of this coalition was the well-publicized demonstrations before the American Embassy in late 1964 and early 1965.<sup>11</sup> Although it would be naive enough to exaggerate the breadth and permanence of the coalition of nationalist forces which produced the

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9 Michael Hass, n. 5, p. 171.

10 Ibid.

11 Frank H. Golay, "Economic Collaboration: The Role of American Investment", in F.H. Golay, ed., Philippine-American Relations (Manila, 1966), p. 119.

demonstrations before the American Embassy, the latter are symptomatic of an undeniable decline in American political influence.<sup>12</sup> There had also been an increasing amount of awareness among the Filipinos that its particularly close alignment with the United States had not brought it the expected dividends. The United States-oriented policy only hindered the Republic from playing a suitable Asian role. The Philippines realized that it had not received any larger quantity of US aid than those countries which had declined to forge "special relations" with the United States.<sup>13</sup> Malaysia thought that membership in ASEAN might help bridge over its political differences with Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore. The emergent detente would further facilitate the tempo of economic development. As a major trading partner of both Indonesia and Malaysia, Singapore had a tremendous stake in the creation of any new arrangement for economic co-operation in the area. Indeed, in her historic role as an entrepot, she had been more extensively involved in intra-regional trade than any other centre in Southeast Asia.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Frank H. Golay, ed., Philippine-American Relations (Manila, 1966), p. 3.

13 Man Mohini Kaul, The Philippines and Southeast Asia (New Delhi, 1978), p. 183.

14 Frances L. Starnes, "Singapore and Regional Cooperation: Once Bitten, Twice Shy", Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), vol. 57, no. 3, 20 July 1967, p. 151.



In addition to all these national-interest-serving causes of the birth of ASEAN, another important reason could possibly be the gradual development of a consciousness among the leaders of the Asian countries that the problems of the continent could well be solved by an "Asian Way" of crisis-management mechanism. They thought that applying the western institutions and value all along in order to apply them to Asian conditions would be like round peg in a square hole. The leaders who had perceived the phenomenon in these terms were mainly the Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, the Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik and the Secretary of ECAFE (1959-74) U Nyun. However, it was U Nyun who first articulated the term "Asian Way" and was the most persistent votary of the concept.<sup>15</sup>

Thus ASEAN was the first general, indigenous, and politically neutral effort in Southeast Asian regional cooperation.<sup>16</sup>

#### External Influences on the Origin of ASEAN

It is a truism that no country, let alone a regional organisation, can avoid the influence of extra-regional forces on its politico-economic and military processes,

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15 Michael Haas, n. 3, p. 169.

16 Bernard K. Gordon, Toward Disengagement in Asia: A Strategy for American Foreign Policy (New Jersey, 1969), p. 119.

especially under an international strategic system with a clear-cut hierarchical power structure. Ever since the French defeat in Indochina and the growing involvement of the United States in the Indochina crisis, direct American involvement in Southeast Asia has become substantial with resultant counter-pressures from the Soviet Union and China.

The dominant configuration in Southeast Asia until mid-1971 was the conflict between the United States efforts to contain Chinese expansionism and the Chinese efforts to leap across any American-built barricades. As far back as in 1965 Mao Tse-tung had said:

We must have Southeast Asia, including South Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia and Singapore. This region is very rich, there are a great many natural resources there, and it is well worth the effort to gain possession of it. In the future it will be of great use for the development of Chinese industry. All losses can be made good in that way. After we get that region, the wind from the East will prevail over the wind from the West. 17

Even if Mao had said nothing of that kind but had professed only peaceful intentions, the American view was clearly formed before Pearl Harbor that the domination of Southeast Asia by any power hostile to US interests would be unacceptable. It was the perception of Vietnamese communists

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17 Quoted in Xuan Thuy, "Chinese Expansionism in Southeast Asia", World Marxist Review (Prague), vol. 24, no. 3, March 1981, p. 15.

serving as proxies of Moscow and Peking that led the United States to involve itself even more deeply into the civil war in that country. To prevent the "Domino effect" of the "loss of Vietnam to communism", Washington had initially brought about the "Americanization" of the war. Deeply committed as the United States was to achieving its objectives in the region, did Washington play any role in conceiving or promoting the establishment of ASEAN? The present writer did not find, in the course of his admittedly narrow research on US documents and newspapers available in India, any evidence indicating a direct and active American role in the formation of ASEAN.

American economic investment in this region was very small. Prior to World War II, the United States had little business activities in Southeast Asia, except for the special case of the Philippines. The trade and investment of this region was controlled by the European colonial powers. Even though a vacuum was created in the post-World War period, the United States did not rush into it. Overseas investment opportunities were abundant in Europe and the Yankees were in no great haste to tread in the exotic, troubled and distant Southeast Asia.

As a result, the United States commitment in Southeast Asia was not based on concern about important American economic interest.<sup>13</sup> In the late sixties the Philippines alone

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<sup>13</sup> Alvin Roseman, "US Economic Commitment in Southeast Asia", Current History (Philadelphia), vol. 54, no. 37, January 1963, p. 8.



accounted for one-half of the region's exports to the United States and about one-third of the imports from the United States. Southeast Asian nations did not even supply commodities important to the US economy or essential to its strategic material requirements. Rubber, tin, and copper were exceptions, yet the United States did have adequate alternative sources for these commodities and minerals. By and large, this was the principal reason why the United States was not seriously concerned with the emergent institution of economic cooperation in Southeast Asia. The United States unambiguous role in European Economic Integration was direct and enormous simply because Europe's economic recovery and subsequent military co-operation were very much in keeping with the US national interest. The Marshall Plan was an economic programme (among other things) to maintain Europe's financial, fiscal and political stability; to stimulate world trade; to expand the American market, to forestall an American depression, to maintain the open door policy, and to create multilateral trade world.<sup>19</sup> No such far-reaching objectives were involved in a venture for regional co-operation in Southeast Asia.

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<sup>19</sup> John Gimbel, The Origin of the Marshall Plan (California, 1976), p. 1.

It is to be noted that Marshall Plan has been interpreted by different historians differently. The Orthodox Cold War historians like Herbert Feis, J.W. Spanier and Arthur Schlesinger as well as the New Left historians like Gabriel Kolko, L.C. Gardner and others view the Marshall Plan in the context of cold war. John Gimbel, however, does not see it as a plan conceived by long-range planners or, as a response to the Soviet Union and as an element in the cold war.

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The United States policies vis-a-vis Southeast Asia were directed primarily toward a containment policy against the People's Republic of China. Throughout nearly the entire post-war period the United States placed overwhelming stress on the military aspect of her containment policies. The result was the emergence of a US-inspired collective defense mechanism like SEATO rather than ASA or ASEAN. ASA, the predecessor of ASEAN, would not seem to have been assigned any role whatsoever in the Southeast Asian strategy of the United States. The Kennedy Administration appears to have given some encouragement to and placed some hope in Maphilindo (a regional organization formed by Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia in 1963). The rationale was its perception that it would help Indonesia to steer the forces of its nationalism to constructive channels, to turn toward economic development and, by implication, to prevent it from turning to communism.

#### Indirect Influences exerted by the United States

At the present stage of my enquiry, it appears that the United States did not unilaterally initiate a policy aimed at bringing into existence an organization for the region like ASEAN. But it would be inappropriate to conclude that there was no influence whatsoever of the United States on the origin of ASEAN. About two years before the birth of ASEAN, President Lyndon B. Johnson inaugurated a new trend of the United States support for regional co-operation in Asia

in a speech delivered at Johns Hopkins University. Of course, the undeniable fact is that the Regional co-operation was perceived by Washington as a means of fostering unity and cohesion among the countries bordering on/or near China with a view to building barricades against the Chinese expansionist designs. In the period that followed, other administration officials reiterated the themes of support for regional co-operation throughout non-Communist East and Southeast Asia.

ASEAN came into existence on 8 August 1967. Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey of the United States visited South Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia in November of that year. The joint communique issued in Djakarta expressed full agreement on "the importance of the regional co-operation undertaken by the countries of Southeast Asia in fields of economic and social development...."<sup>20</sup> Perhaps, the reference was made to the newly established ASEAN without naming it. So it would be pertinent to attribute Washington's policies as one of encouragement rather than initiative. As Walt Rostow phrased it, "it means that the United States increasingly will lead from the middle, not from the front".<sup>21</sup> To be

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20 The Department of State Bulletin, vol. 57, 11 December 1967, p. 792.

21 Quoted in Arfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, "Extra-regional Influences on Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia", Pacific Community (Tokyo), vol. 6, no. 3, April 1977.

"in the middle" is to be in the centre of things. Rostow's casual use of the expression may, perhaps, be taken as a rather unconscious expression of hope that if the regional organization evolved, the United States might eventually attain a capability to "lead from the middle". American policy-makers appear to have believed that despite the growth of Asian nationalism, the desire to develop an "Asian Way" of thinking and growing reservations over the American intentions, ASEAN was not conceived to work as a bulwark against the American and Western influences. Notwithstanding the legitimate yearning for an indigenous "development-model", all five member nations of ASEAN had opted, ideologically and structurally, for the capitalist or "free market" model of development.<sup>22</sup>

The economies of ASEAN countries are highly integrated with the world economic system dominated by Brother Jonathan. ASEAN countries depend, for their survival as well as prosperity, on foreign markets, loans and investments. The European Economic Community has had long-standing relations with most of Southeast Asia, first, in their capacity as colonial masters and later as significant trading partners as well as aid donors. Britain has retained relatively strong military and defence links with Malaysia

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22 Jose V. Abueva, "Alternative Perspectives in Development in ASEAN Countries", Contemporary Southeast Asia (Singapore), vol. 1, no. 2, September 1979, p. 144.

and Singapore in a network of defence arrangements which provided for a British military presence in the area. Even after the military withdrawal, significant economic, commercial and political contacts have been continuing. The United States has also provided many Southeast Asian countries the "security" that they sought both by its very presence as a significant Pacific Power and by means of its containment strategies, and aid programmes.

It can be maintained that the US military presence and strategic objectives in the region as well as economic involvement in the region of Washington's West European and Japanese allies had a considerable, if not decisive, impact in bringing about an atmosphere where local initiatives for the formation of a regional institution like ASEAN was possible. Washington's perception of the existing and potential political and ideological stance of the ruling groups of these countries in terms of its own objectives would be the determining factor in US policy. <sup>23</sup> A brief assessment of the bilateral relations of the United States with each of the member countries of ASEAN attempted in the following section leads to the conclusion that even if the United States did not engineer the birth of ASEAN, it indirectly influenced the origin and evolution of the organization.

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23 Arfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, n. 21, p. 427.



The Philippines, the American Surrogate

The United States and the Philippines are bound together by a set of obligations under the Military Assistance Agreement of 1947, the Military Bases Agreement of March 1947, the Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951, and the Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty of 1954.

The commitment to the Philippines' security and independence has been reaffirmed by every American Administration since the signing of the treaties. Secretary of State Dean Rusk announced on 9 October 1964, that "our own defense arrangements with the Philippines are very far reaching ... if there is an attack on the Philippines from any quarter, that is an attack on the United States...."<sup>24</sup> On 2 November 1964, President Johnson assured the Filipino President on the occasion of latter's visit: "I pledge again the full and continuing support of the United States to the Philippine Republic...."<sup>25</sup> Filipino critics had publicly questioned the failure of SEATO to intervene through collective military action in the Vietnam War. In April 1964, almost ten years after its establishment, seven SEATO members issued a strong joint declaration supporting the people of

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<sup>24</sup> George E. Taylor, "The Challenge of Mutual Security", in Frank H. Golay, ed., Philippine-American Relations (Manila, 1966), p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

South Vietnam in their struggle for political security.<sup>26</sup> SEATO was still regarded as a useful security bulwark which might not be a cast-iron guarantee, but was certainly a workable one. At least Washington strove hard to convince each of SEATO's members that it was committed to come to their aid in case of attack by the Communist Powers.

The Philippine Trade Act (1946) had many provisions which enabled the United States to exercise pressure on the Philippines. The Philippine peso was tied to the American dollar. The Act provided for a transitional period of free trade both ways up to 1959. Under "parity Rights" of Section 341 of the Act the Americans and the Filipinos exercised equal rights in the exploitation and development of natural resources and in the operation of public utilities of the Philippines. The United States President also retained the rights to suspend the Philippine Trade Agreement in the event of his finding that the Philippine Government was discriminating against the American citizens and business enterprises.<sup>27</sup>

This type of relationship with the United States made the Philippines nothing more than a virtual factotum. The Filipinos danced to the American tune in the foreign policy

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26 George E. Taylor, n. 24, p. 71.

27 Man Mohini Kaul, n. 18, pp. 41, 42.

area. The desire to have an independent foreign policy and maintain an Asian identity could hardly fructify when Uncle Sam saw himself the real patron of the Filipinos and Filipino ruling elites were content to accept the position. Thus if the Manila Government showed a keen interest in associating the country with a regional organization, it will not be rash to make the inference that the course could not have been one considered undesirable by Washington.

#### Thailand, the Virtual Protectorate

Early in 1950 the security situation in Asia crystallized, and the Thai Government decided to join the Western bloc led by the United States. The ruling elites of Thailand appeared to have been convinced that a Communist China would be completely antagonistic toward them. The outbreak of the Korean war was a turning point for both the United States and Thailand, in so far as the security aspect of the region was concerned. Thailand soon became a key country in the strategic calculations of the United States. In September 1950, the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement was concluded between the Thais and the Americans. In the following month a Military Assistance Agreement was also signed. The coming into existence of a Southeast Asian Collective Defence mechanism in 1954 marked the high point in Thailand's efforts to acquire from the Western powers a guarantee of military assistance in the case of an attack by Communist China or any other Communist force in the area. The

intense desire to secure such a Western military commitment for Thailand's security was reflected in the statement made by the Thai Foreign Minister, Prince Wan Waithayakon, in the meeting of Foreign Ministers of SEATO countries in Manila in 1954 itself. He said: "The Government and people of Thailand are anxious to have as strong a pact as possible.... My Delegation would desire to see a commitment which in substance is as near as possible to that of NATO."<sup>28</sup> The United States was not prepared to give the same guarantee to SEATO, probably because it feared that the Senate might refuse to ratify a treaty that committed the former to treat an attack on any member of the treaty as an attack on itself.<sup>29</sup> When Marshall Sarit Thanaratthata carried out his bloodless coup against the Pibun Songkhram government on 17 September 1957, many Thai and Western observers seriously questioned where he stood on such questions as SEATO and relations with the United States. However, he took immediate steps to reassure the United States and other SEATO nations that there would be no change in Thai foreign policy. He sent his personal aide to the British and American Embassies to reassure the ambassadors and to make his policy one of even firmer support to Washington's course.

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<sup>28</sup> Donald E. Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia (New York, 1965), p. 115.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

At the end of February 1962, Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman was invited to Washington to discuss with President Kennedy and top American officials ways in which Thailand's security could be ensured within the SEATO framework. On 6 March 1962 Khoman held a forty-minute discussion with President Kennedy. The President assured Thailand of full support for its political independence and territorial integrity. He pledged American determination to meet any Communist attack on Thailand without requiring the prior agreement of other SEATO members. This assurance was formalized in a joint statement issued the same day by the Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Foreign Minister Khoman. The Secretary of State reaffirmed that the preservation of the independence and integrity of Thailand was vital to the national interest of the United States. He also assured the foreign minister that "in the event of such aggression, the United States intends to give full effect to its obligation under the treaty to act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional process."<sup>30</sup> Thailand's rulers argued that with a hostile communist neighbour and a crisis-ridden Indochina on the borders, the country had no option except to depend on Washington for its security. Elements of Thai ruling groups found the American connection politically and financially advantageous. They were ready

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Donald E. Hucbterlein, n. 23, p. 230.

and often eager to "sign on the dotted line", on most occasions when Washington asked for such action. In virtually the same fashion as the Filipino leadership, their posture on an issue could indicate whether Washington favoured or opposed it. The Thai leadership would not have moved towards the ASEAN concept during the period under review if Washington had viewed it with disfavour.

#### Malaysia, the British Client

From 1957 to 1962 the overall external relations of Malaysia were that of a country leaning toward one side: firmly West-inclining and strongly anti-Communist. Although Malaysia was not a member of SEATO, it had signed a mutual defence treaty (Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement) with Great Britain, indirectly making her an adjunct of the Anglo-American alliance system. Malaysia's initiative in forming ASA with Thailand and the Philippines, two devout SEATO members, definitely gave the impression of a country increasingly becoming a party to the overall containment strategy of the United States. One of the crucial determinants of Malaysia's foreign policy was the uncomfortable domestic experience with the Communist insurgency. The Malaysian Communist Party was to a large extent Chinese in composition. Naturally the government could not afford to open its window toward the Communist countries. Another

important factor leading to pro-Western policies was the economic dependence on the West that made any manoeuvrability in foreign policy difficult.

Indonesia's confrontation with the Federation, the severance of diplomatic ties with the Philippines, the open antagonism of China and the anti-Malayan diplomacy, at the United Nations by the Soviet bloc threatened the existence of the new state and forced a reappraisal of Malaysia's foreign policy subsequently. All these factors moved Malaysia ideologically closer to the West and made it severely dependent on British support.<sup>31</sup> Its inclination was strong to seek greater security through a reduction of friction with regional entities and possible help to counter future insurgency situations. Malaysia was interested in enlisting US support in pursuance of these objectives.

#### Indonesia, the Benevolent Rebel

Indonesia was not an American surrogate like the Philippines, a virtual protectorate like Thailand, or, a British client like Malaysia. Nonetheless the American economic aid and military sales were factors that Djakarta had to take into account. In 1950 the US State Department put strong pressure on Indonesia to recognize the Bao Dai government in Vietnam. The leaders of Indonesia were convinced that American

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31 Stephen Chee, "Malaysia's Changing Foreign Policy", in Young Mun Cheong, ed., Trends in Malaysia II I Proceedings and Background Paper (Singapore, 1974), p. 42.

financial assistance, especially the implementation of the promised Export-Import Bank loan, was being delayed pending Djakarta's acquiescence. It was similar fear of losing American aid that led Djakarta in 1951 and 1952 to reject Soviet offers to buy Indonesian rubber at ten per cent above the world market price. The United States had concluded a "Mutual Security Assistance Agreement" with Indonesia on 5 January 1952, which was replaced by a new agreement in early 1953. At that time, American technical and economic assistance to Indonesia totalling about \$16 million, was distributed over a variety of technical projects such as food production, industrial engineering and educational and vocational training.<sup>32</sup> At a point of time, when Sukarno was asserting that "prosperity which is the result of begging is meaningless", the Indonesian Government was engaged in a serious effort to get major economic aid from the West.<sup>33</sup> In spite of the indignation expressed at foreign aid, Sukarno continued through 1965 to speak of the need for additional aid. The discussion of a proposed 'Three Year Plan' to run from 1966 to 1968 acknowledged this need. The aid figures for 1965 suggest that as much as \$470 million in new foreign credits were secured during the said period, though many of them were never realized.<sup>34</sup>

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32 Jayashri Deshpande, "Indonesia: The Impossible Dream", United States and 1958 Rebellion (New Delhi, 1981), p. 25.

33 Franklin B. Weinstein, n. 6, p. 28.

34 Ibid., p. 220.



The economists of Indonesia were fully conscious of the influence of foreign aid in the decision-making process of their country. They were equally aware that they did not have enough capability to avoid this inevitable. One of the most influential economist once complained, "People don't realize how weak our bargaining position really is".<sup>35</sup> The charismatic Sukarno underestimated the effort made by Washington to establish contacts in the higher echelons of the Indonesian military services and civilian bureaucracy. The American role in the anti-Sukarno rebellion of 1958 was not properly appraised by Sukarno in view of his success in quelling the rebels. But important elements in the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA had made the determination that "Sukarno must go". In September-October 1965 Sukarno was overthrown in a military take-over. The military regime put an end to the anti-American rhetoric that had emanated from Djakarta. It also ended the strong tilt towards China that Sukarno brought about. Djakarta became strongly anti-communist and anti-Chinese, in its posture. It was a major shift to Washington's advantage. The new military regime was more receptive to, friendly and discreet collaboration with Washington's security objectives in the region than Sukarno had ever been.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

Singapore, the Important Entrepot

Singapore's survival depended on trade - an area in which Washington and its European and Asian allies called the tune. Singapore reaped a rich harvest from the war in Vietnam through a substantial amount of trade with South Vietnam, financed by the United States. The British military bases in Singapore also provided a safe and secure atmosphere for the acceleration of the tempo of economic prosperity. The shrewd political leadership of the tiny island nation saw positive advantage in adopting a strong pro-Western posture.

When the issue is approached from the angle of the level of dependence of the ASEAN countries and the orientation of their political elites, it is no longer possible to sustain a contention that ASEAN was totally the product of spontaneous indigenous initiatives reflecting a deep urge to evolve an "Asian Way". The little Southeast Asian brothers were even conscious of the fact that Big Brother was watching. They were in no position to move vigorously in a direction that Washington would discountenance. The leaders of these countries too had no inclination to do so. On the other hand, they saw their own interests as essentially tied up with the Washington connection. ASEAN provided them with a mechanism that could promote at least some limited common objectives and enable them to project themselves as countries beginning

to assert their individual and collective entities more independently than before. In time it might even enable them to bargain for better terms from the West. But in the formative stage it was important for them to proceed with the tacit concurrence of Washington and its allies for their venture.

It is noteworthy that the Soviet Union and China did not welcome the advent of ASEAN with enthusiasm. Izvestia commented that the new association was "cause for serious concern in Asia".<sup>36</sup> The Soviet Union depicted the move as inspired by Washington. The Chinese viewed both the ASA and ASEAN as part of a broad-based 'plot' directed at them. When ASEAN was formed China's reaction was unequivocally hostile: "...Jointly instigated by the Soviet revisionists and US imperialists Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia" formed an "Association of Southeast Asian Countries as part of the US-Soviet anti-China ring."<sup>37</sup>

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36 Arfinn Jorgensen Dahl, n. 21, p. 415.

37 Ibid., p. 418.

**CHAPTER II**

## CHAPTER II

### FACTORS INFLUENCING US ATTITUDE TO THE EMERGENCE OF ASEAN

In 1852, much before he became Secretary of State under Abraham Lincoln, William H. Seward declared that he foresaw the day when the Atlantic interests of the United States would "relatively shrink in importance, while the Pacific Ocean, its shores, its islands and the vast region beyond would become the chief theater of events... for America".<sup>1</sup> It was after Seward's declaration, in the second half of the nineteenth century, that the United States gained territories in the Pacific Ocean region and grew into a Pacific power. American supremacy was established over Hawaiian Islands, Eastern Samoa, Wake, Midway and Guam Islands and the Philippines, the largest Pacific ocean territory. Some of the acquisitions were the product of the accident of events and some were acquired to support expanding American interests in China, Japan and Korea.

The whole of Southeast Asia was, however, virtually insignificant for the traders, tourists, businessmen or even missionaries till 1941. Between 1851 and 1941 the Americans focussed their major attention on China. The teeming millions of China were viewed as potential "customers" by the American

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Johnstone, "The United States as a Pacific Power", Current History (Philadelphia), vol. 58, no. 344, April 1970, p. 193.

businessmen and future "converts" by the American Christian missionaries. Japan came to be viewed, after the Russo-Japanese war, as a potential challenger. China and Japan, and not Southeast Asia (with the exception of the Philippines), became the focus of American concern in the Far East. It was only on the eve of US entry into the Second World War that Washington, opposing Japanese aspirations to expand in Southeast Asia, voiced its strategic interest in the resources of this region and its stake in preventing it from coming under the domination of a hostile Power.

American civilian and military leaders gave the highest priority to the reconstruction of the war-devastated Western Europe. They were prepared to pay any price to insulate this region from the Soviet influence. Southeast Asia did not figure significantly in the calculations of American policy makers. While determined to draw the line against "Soviet expansionism" in Western Europe, the Truman Administration deemed it advisable to "let the dust settle" in Asia.<sup>2</sup> However, casting aside the promise of the right of self-determination contained in the Atlantic Charter and its confirmation in the UN Charter, the United States came round to the conclusion that in the interests of ensuring

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2 M.S. Venkataramani, "The United States and Thailand: The Anatomy of Super-Power Policy Making, 1948-1963", International Studies (New Delhi), vol. 12, no. 1, January-March 1973, p. 59.

France's co-operation in Europe, it should support the French effort to combat Ho Chi Minh's challenge in Indochina.<sup>3</sup> The Truman Administration thus accorded diplomatic recognition to the Indochinese states in 1950, based on the formal establishment of the state of Vietnam, the kingdom of Laos and the kingdom of Cambodia as independent states within the French Union. On 17 December 1952, the NATO Council by resolution acknowledged that "the resistance of the free nations in Southeast Asia as in Korea is in fullest harmony with the aims and ideals of the Atlantic Community; and therefore agrees that the campaign waged by the French Union forces in Indochina deserves continuing support from the NATO governments."<sup>4</sup>

The above NATO resolution, however, extended the United States commitment from Far East to mainland Southeast Asia. After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, a ceasefire agreement was signed at Geneva in 1954. It provided the elaborate regulations for withdrawal of armed forces from Indochina and international supervision of these regulations. Disregarding this ceasefire agreement of 1954, the United States began supplying military assistance to the government of South Vietnam and got involved in the Indochinese tangle which later left an indelible scar on the post-war American history.

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3 Ibid.

4 Department of State Bulletin, 5 January 1953, p. 4.

Thus the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war, the Korean war and the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu constituted the watersheds in the history of American foreign policy towards this part of the world.

Aims, Objectives and the Strategy

Ever since the emergence of Communist China in 1949, the principal policy of the United States toward Asia was characterized as "containment" of the Communist expansion. The American policy makers were anxious that every effort should be made to prevent the emergence of "Moscow-oriented" regimes in Southeast Asia.<sup>5</sup> A statement of policy by the National Security Council in early 1952 on "United States objectives and courses of action with respect to Southeast Asia" described the US objective as:

To prevent the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the Communist orbit, and to assist them to develop will and ability to resist communism from within and without and to contribute to the strengthening of the free world. 6

The avowed aim of the United States was, however, not only opposing the "communist control" of the Asian countries but also to take issue with "anti-Western, Pan-Asiatic

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5 Venkataramani, n. 4, p. 28.

6 The Pentagon Papers, as published by The New York Times (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1971), p. 28; henceforth referred to as the Pentagon Papers.



tendencies". Secretary of State George Marshall thought that what was good for America and the Southeast Asian countries would be "a continued close association between newly autonomous people and powers which have long been responsible [for] their welfare".<sup>7</sup> The United States policy had thus a positive aspect as well, in so far as it attempted to create "non-neutral" and "pro-Western" regimes in Southeast Asian countries which would be strictly aligned in policy with the United States.

Washington justified its policy of containment by the general consideration that the Communist victory in any single country would lead to relatively swift submission to communists by the rest of the countries of the region. Gradually the alignment might spread through India to the Middle East and thus endanger the stability and security of Europe.<sup>8</sup> Other considerations were that -

- (a) Communist domination of Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short-term, and critically danger in the longer-term, the United States security interests. It would render the American position in the Pacific off-shore islands chain precarious and would jeopardize fundamental US security interests in the Far East.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Quoted in Venkatesanani, n. 4, p. 28.

8 The Pentagon Papers, p. 28.

9 Ibid.

- (b) It would markedly reduce the Americans' ability in limited war by denying it air, land and sea bases.<sup>10</sup>
- (c) The communist victory in the Mainland Southeast Asia would have critical psychological, political and economic consequences. All of the Indonesian archipelago could come under the domination and control of the Soviet Union and would become a communist base pointing a threat against Australia and New Zealand. The Philippines and Japan could be pressurised to assume at best, a neutralist role, thus eliminating two of "our major bases in the Western Pacific".<sup>11</sup>
- (d) Another important goal of the containment policy was to restrict the power and influence of the adversary and to rapidly strengthen the allies. The purpose of this policy was also to confine and weaken the overall Communist political influence. American leaders believed that increases in Peking's prestige and political and economic influence would facilitate its support of communist insurgents in Southeast Asia.<sup>12</sup>
- (e) The fundamental purpose of the containment policy was, however, to protect the American interest in Japan. The United States had obtained base facilities in Japan

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10 Ibid., p. 158.

11 Ibid., p. 159.

12 Ralph N. Clough, East Asia and U.S. Security (Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 9.

proper and Okinawa. And the containment policy grew out of fear that Communist gains elsewhere might undermine the vital United States relationship with Japan, a relationship not always spelled out by the American spokesmen.<sup>13</sup>

It is thus evident that protecting and enhancing strategic interests was the core purpose of the American foreign policy toward this region. At the very minimum, security interests refer to the protection of physical security. But preponderant military superiority over the adversary is likely to lead to the definition of interests beyond mere physical security to the wielding of active influence and domination over others.<sup>14</sup> Washington began to engage in building an international environment in Southeast Asia which would be favourable to the promotion of immediate as well as broader national objectives.

In justification of this course American policy makers laid stress on the economic consequences of the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Statement of policy by the National Security Council in early 1952 on "United States objectives and courses of action with respect to Southeast Asia" mentioned that:

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13 Ibid., p. 21.

14 See Baldev Raj Nayar, American Geopolitics and India (New Delhi, 1976), p. 2.

Southeast Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin, and a producer of petroleum and other strategically important commodities. The rice exports of Burma and Thailand are critically important to Malaya, Ceylon and Hong Kong and are of considerable significance to Japan and India, all important areas of free Asia. 15

But recognition of this economic importance did not mean that Southeast Asia was important for the health of the US economy. Washington was much more concerned about the strategic requirements than the economic one. The economic commitment of the United States was primarily based on programmes of economic and technical assistance designed to strengthen the indigenous non-Communist governments of the area. On 27 February 1950 a hastily-assembled United States Economic Survey Mission to Southeast Asia left San Francisco for a visit to Indochina, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma, Malaya and the Philippines. The leader of the mission was R. Allen Griffin, Publisher of the "Monterey" (California) Peninsula Herald. The State Department directed Griffin to determine the projects to be financed in each of the countries to be visited "which will have immediate political aims".<sup>16</sup> The Griffin Report on Thailand was an example of the political objectives of the economic activities of the United States in Southeast Asia. The Report stated:

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15 The Pentagon Papers, pp. 28-29.

16 See Venkataramani, n. 4, p. 66.

....There is hardly any economic urgency in Thailand. There is a political urgency. A quick gesture calculated to impress Government leaders and the people - particularly the educated elite in Bangkok - may produce much more desirable political results than a large range economic project.... 17

Thus strategic and political interests were the infrastructure and economic commitment was the superstructure of America's Southeast Asian policy. Even strategically the region was not regarded as important enough to obligate the United States to commit forces to ensure its survival.<sup>18</sup> The European theatre was still the area of first priority and the oil-rich Middle East still <sup>ca</sup>entranced Southeast Asia as an area to be defended in the event of war. A National Security Council Staff Study entitled "United States Objectives, Policies and Courses of Action in Asia" stated:

Chinese Communist conquest of Indo-China, Thailand, and Burma by military force and internal subversion would seriously threaten the critical security interests of the United States. However, in the event of overt Chinese aggression, it is not now in the overall security interests of the United States to commit any United States armed forces to the defense of the mainland states of Southeast Asia.... 19

Thus before the direct American involvement in the Indochina war, the United States did not even consider the importance of

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17 Quoted in Venkataramani, n. 4, p. 66.

18 Clough, n. 12, p. 133.

19 Quoted in Venkataramani, n. 4, p. 66.

Southeast Asia, strategic or economic, to be so vital to merit the use of American forces to protect these interests.

American Economic Commitment in Southeast Asia

Prior to Second World War, the United States had little economic involvement in Southeast Asia, except for the special case of the Philippines. The trade and investment was mainly controlled by European colonial powers. Burma, Malaysia and Singapore were parts of the British empire. Indonesia was a Dutch possession and French ruled in Indochina. Thailand, though politically independent, was strongly influenced by European economic interest. The post-war period witnessed the breaking up of the colonial system and the economic weakness of the European metropolises. There occurred a power vacuum in Southeast Asia. Neither the United States nor its private investors came forward to fill up the vacuum. As overseas investment opportunities were plentiful in Europe, they did not like to tread on the exotic and troubled land of Southeast Asia.<sup>20</sup> The first governmental interest in the economic progress of this region was, however, demonstrated through modest technical assistance activities inaugurated under the "Point IV" programme in 1950.<sup>21</sup>

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20 Alvin Roseman, "U.S. Economic Commitment in Southeast Asia", Current History, vol. 54, no. 317, January 1963, p. 7.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The United States economic policy and commitment toward Southeast Asia can be broadly divided into three categories:

- (a) Support for regional economic cooperation,
- (b) Establishment of Asian Development Bank,
- (c) Economic Assistance Programme.

(a) Since the region was not a fertile field for profitable US private investment, Washington saw economic assistance as an instrument to stem the growth of Communist influence and to promote a Western orientation among the ruling groups of Southeast Asia. The United States encouraged the countries of the region to strengthen their economies through regional co-operation, though it was not an active participant in the regional co-operational efforts. It endorsed such a development, leaving the initiative to the Asian nations themselves. Speaking before the US-Japan Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs in Kyoto in 1966, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said:

We are heartened by the increasing sense of community among the nations of Asia. Japanese initiative have played a significant role in stimulating this growing regional economic cooperation.... Economic progress in this region also requires the cooperation and support of the developed countries both Asian and non-Asian. We stand ready to help in terms of President Johnson's pledge of April 7, 1965. 22

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22 Department of State Bulletin, vol. 55, no. 1414, August 1965, p. 178.

It is noteworthy that the Secretary of State <sup>had</sup> led stress on two aspects. He spoke of the development as the result of a Japanese initiative. He also indicated his clear expectation that "developed countries expected to have a significant role to play in the cooperative venture that was in this age. While the Secretary did not specifically say so, it was evident that his concept of developed countries encompassed Western nations and the Soviet Union. That is, Secretary Rusk indicated that a regional organization, if it developed on what he would regard as the desirable ideological line, could expect the cooperation of Japan, Western Europe and the United States itself.

The fifth meeting of the Joint Japan-United States Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs took place on 5-7 July 1966. The Committee welcomed evidence of growing interest in regional co-operation among the countries of Asia and the Far East. The Japanese delegation reported that in the Ministerial Conference for Economic Development in Southeast Asia held in Tokyo in April 1966, the participating countries expressed their strong desire to make further efforts toward their economic development. The Committee agreed that "lasting peace in the Asian region, particularly in Southeast Asia, depends upon cooperation of the developed countries in initiatives taken by Asians to improve the welfare of the people...."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 179.



The evolution of the American attitude in this respect would have to be seen in the context of the growing direct involvement of the United States in Vietnam following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964. Since cooperation in various degrees with countries in the region became desirable, it would have been an important consideration for US policy makers both in terms of promoting goodwill in these countries and diverting some attention from the military operations aspect of the American course to support what would appear to be constructive efforts to promote economic developmental co-operation. In that endeavour, given the nature of US relations with Japan at this point Tokyo would be the obvious choice for encouraging the process with Washington, indicating its approval and support.

(b) Besides tendering verbal supports to then emerging efforts of regional economic co-operation, the United States had also taken the initiative in establishing an Asian Development Bank for the economic advancement of the Asian countries. Asian Development Bank represented the realization of a proposal which had its origin in ECAFE in 1963. The United States support for the ADB first became apparent on 7 April 1965 when President Johnson announced the appointment of ex-World Bank President Eugene R. Black to head a "special team" to "inaugurate" US participation in multilateral aid programme to Southeast Asian countries.<sup>24</sup> Representatives

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<sup>24</sup> Facts on File (New York), 1965, p. 399.

of 31 nations, including the United States and Soviet Union, met in Bangkok from 21 October to 1 November 1965 and reached an agreement on a draft charter for a projected \$1 billion Asian Development Bank. Under the terms of the projected Charter the ADB would provide funds and guarantees for investment, and its staff would advise participating countries on development plans. After that Representatives of 21 nations met in Manila and signed on 4 December 1965 a charter formally establishing the Asian Development Bank. The Soviet Union did not send a representative to Manila Conference. Izvestia charged on 2 December that "United States and Japan had more votes... in the Bank than all the developing countries ... taken together." "The USSR would not participate ... in international organisations built on a basis of inequality which enable economically stronger countries to impose their decisions on weaker countries."<sup>25</sup> It was indicated that the US invitation to Soviet Union to participate in the ADB was intended as a means of inflaming the antagonism between the Soviet Union and China.<sup>26</sup>

(c) with the exception of the obligations involved in the membership of ADB, none of the relevant treaties on international agreements legally committed the United States to take specific actions to support the economies of the

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<sup>25</sup> Facts on File, 1965, p. 484.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 399.

Southeast Asian countries or to supply aid for their economic development. The United States did have a widespread foreign assistance programme. But it did not represent a continuing commitment since, under the American constitutional system, there could be only year by year Congressional authorization, under which the United States annually entered into agreements with individual countries.

American planners took note of the fact that the area as a whole was handicapped by basic problems of underdevelopment which thwarted economic growth and discouraged investment. Export earnings were subject to the vagaries of the world market prices and unfavourable terms of trade. High rates of population growth, lack of trained manpower and a traditional and agrarian social structure were the distinct characteristic features of these countries. Governments and other institutional structures essential for growth and development were not well developed. It was believed in Washington that a mitigation of some of these problems through assistance and aid would promote stability.

The United States provided economic assistance, because it was conducive to the promotion of stability and maintenance of non-Communist, pro-Western regimes. The United States signed an "Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement" with Thailand on 19 September 1950. The key motivating factor was the appraisal that in the years ahead

Thailand could play useful role "as an accessory and as a potential base of operations".<sup>27</sup> Although countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand received economic aid, assistance to South Vietnam after it came into existence in 1954 was the largest single operation in the American foreign aid programme. Almost half of all overseas personnel of the Agency for International Development (AID) were working in Vietnam and more than 20 per cent of the world-wide total of economic assistance fund was being expended annually for AID's work in Vietnam.<sup>28</sup> This was because Vietnam was the main testing ground of American "containment" policy. Thus the distribution of economic aid in Southeast Asia was influenced by politico-strategic considerations.

#### Politico-Strategic Objectives

According to pronouncements by American leaders the United States wanted a world "that is in a very real sense a pluralistic society, a mosaic, in which the beauty of each stands out because it is in contrast to others."<sup>29</sup> But at the same time they disclaimed any desire to infuse a US model on other countries. Vice-President Hubert H.

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27 Venkataramani, n. 4, p. 59.

28 Alvin Roseman, n. 20, p. 9.

29 Department of State Bulletin, vol. 57, 11 December 1967, p. 791.

Humphrey declared during his visit to Southeast Asian countries in 1967 that "our mission in the world today is not to remake the world to our own design". "We did not want a Vietnam that was stamped "made in U.S.A.", he said.<sup>30</sup> References to the Soviet Union and China implied that the objectives of the two communists were the opposite of what the United States sought. They were depicted as promoters of a "totalitarian ideology" and perpetrators of a "new form of imperialism". The "enemy" according to the DSB was not a "man peddling his ideology, handing out leaflets, hoping to win power through peaceful parliamentary methods. His chosen instrument was not the handbill but the handgrenade."<sup>31</sup>

In pursuance of its military requirements and objectives the United States had maintained naval and air bases in Okinawa, Japan, Guam, the Philippines and in Thailand. The Clark Air Base in the Pacific was the largest overseas military base of America. The Subic Naval Base, a major station in the Pacific for servicing the Seventh Fleet, was the most important American Naval Base west of Hawaii. The United States military strategists considered the bases indispensable to a continued military presence in

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30 Ibid., pp. 790-1.

31 Ibid., p. 789.

the Western Pacific.<sup>32</sup> The United States and the Philippines signed the base agreement in 1946. Apart from setting up military bases, the United States also concluded a number of bilateral military agreements with the Philippines and Thailand.

On 29 April 1954, with the imminent collapse of French control in Indochina, John Foster Dulles sent the following message to the State Department:

The decline of France, the great weakness of Italy, and the considerable weakness in England create a situation where I think that if we ourselves are clear as to what should be done, we must be prepared to take the leadership in what we think is the right course, having regard to long-range US interest....<sup>34</sup>

This was the precursor of future American policy in the Southeast Asian region. The Geneva Conference Agreements were concluded in July 1954. The United States seeking to retain the freedom of action in the future, declined to be a party to the action. It only promised to "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb" the agreements. But Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith stated in the plenary session of the Conference that

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32 See the Report by Senator Mike Mansfield to the Committee on Foreign Relations of United States Senate, entitled "Charting A New Course: Southeast Asia in a Time of Change" (US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1976), p. 6. Henceforth referred to as "Report to Foreign Relations Committee of US Senate". *The Report.*

34 Quoted in Venkataramani, n. 4, p. 73.

the United States would view "any renewal of aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements ... as seriously threatening international peace and security."<sup>35</sup>

Dulles took the initiative in creating an eight-power regional defence agreement, the SEATO, signed on 6 September 1954. The United States, however, expressly identified SEATO as an organization aimed at containing communism by appending to the treaty an understanding that its provisions referring to armed attack applied only to "Communist aggression". The Treaty envisaged -

The United States in executing the present Treaty does so with the understanding that its recognition of the effect of aggression and armed attack and its agreement with reference thereto in Article IV, paragraph 1, apply only to Communist aggression.... 36

In the autumn of 1964, following an alleged attack on two American destroyers by North Vietnamese vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin, the Congress passed an important resolution which regarded the maintenance of peace and international security in Southeast Asia as vital to its essential interests. It went to the extent of recommending the use of force and said: "The United States is therefore prepared as the President determines to take all necessary steps, including the use of

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35 Ibid., p. 74.

36 Thomas P. Brockway, Basic Documents in United States Foreign Policy (New York, 1957), p. 184.

armed forces to assist any member or protocol State of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty requesting assistance in defense of freedom."<sup>37</sup>

However, long before the United States committed its own troops to fight in South Vietnam, it began looking towards the use of the Philippines and Thailand in respect of military operations in the region. Soon after the beginning of Korean war President Truman had ordered immediate "acceleration" in the despatch of military assistance to the forces of France and the "Associated States" in Indo-China. In 1950 itself an "Agreement respecting Military Assistance" was signed between the United States and Thailand. As the United States came to be increasingly committed to the support of the French in Vietnam, the question of Thailand continued to engage the attention of American planners.<sup>38</sup> A Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was also established in Thailand. Over the years the American role was manifest in virtually every segment of the Thai military system and even the police. While authentic documentation is hard to compile in the limited source material available in India, stray references in the Pentagon Papers furnished examples of areas that indicate wide range of American activities.

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37 Quoted in Dexter Perkins, The Diplomacy of a New Age: Major Issues in US Policy since 1945 (London, 1967), p. 116.

38 Venkataramani, n. 4, pp. 69-70.



A Special Forces type unit, Royal Thai Army Ranger Battalion (Airborne), had the stated mission to organize and conduct guerrilla warfare in areas of Thailand overrun by the enemy in case of an open invasion of Thailand.<sup>39</sup> The Battalion had four command detachments and twenty-six operation detachments, trained and organized along the lines of US Special Forces in strength, equipment, and rank structure.<sup>40</sup>

Police Aerial Resupply Unit (PARU) had a mission of undertaking clandestine operations in denied areas. Ninety-nine PARU personnel had been introduced covertly to assist the Meos in operations in Laos, where their combat performance had been outstanding. This was a special police unit, supported by CIA.<sup>41</sup>

Thai Border Patrol Mission was to counter infiltration and subversion during peace-time, in addition to normal police duties. In the event of an armed invasion of Thailand, this force was to operate as guerrilla forces in enemy-held areas, in support of regular Thai Armed Forces.<sup>42</sup>

Reference has already been made of the American facilities in Clark Air Field and Subic Bay of the Philippines.

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39 The Pentagon Papers, p. 137.

40 Ibid., p. 138.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

As of 30 June 1969 the book value of US capital investment at Subic Bay Complex, according to Defence Department figure provided to a Congressional Committee, were \$ 214.6 million.<sup>43</sup> An amount of \$ 330 million was expended in connection with the US Air Force Construction Programme in the Philippines up to the same period.<sup>44</sup> A wide range of military equipment was supplied to the Philippines. The items provided during 1963-68 included F-5A, F-5B Fighter Aircrafts, helicopters, naval vessels including Destroyer Escorts, Patrol Crafts and ground force equipment including Rifles, Recoilless Rifles and Armed Personnel Carriers.<sup>45</sup>

Besides, in the Philippines an Eastern Construction Company was started in 1954 as Freedom Company of the Philippines, a non-profit organization, with President Magsaysay as its honorary president. Its charter stated plainly that it was "to serve the cause of freedom". It was actually a mechanism to permit the deployment of Filipino personnel in other Asian countries for unconventional operations, under cover of a public service organisation.<sup>46</sup>

43 Statement by Leonard Unger, in US Senate, Congress 91, session 2, Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad (Washington, D.C., 1971), vol. 1, p. 77.

44 Ibid., p. 106.

45 Ibid., p. 317.

46 The Pentagon Papers, p. 141.

Operation Brotherhood was another private service organisation, capable of considerable expansion in socio-economic-medical operations to support counter-guerrilla actions. It began in 1954 and it had also a measure of CIA control. The Security Training Centre was a counter-subversive, counter-guerrilla and psychological warfare school overtly operated by the Philippine government and covertly sponsored by the American government through CIA.<sup>47</sup> It was located at Fort McKinley on the outskirts of Manila.

Indonesia under President Sukarno disagreed with the American policies. It faced certain compulsions in its approach towards the United States and other developed countries in respect of trade and economic aid. However, Indonesia sought and received military assistance from the United States even during the Sukarno era. In 1970, following President Nixon's visit to Indonesia and Indonesian support of the American policy in Cambodia, the US military assistance multiplied and changed its character. American firms had invested approximately \$2.5 billion in Indonesia, primarily in oil and mining.<sup>48</sup> Oil was the dominant factor in the Indonesian economy and the American oil companies dominated the oil production. The American companies were producing about 90 per cent of oil in Indonesia by 1976.<sup>49</sup> Japan was

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47 Ibid., p. 142.

48 See The Report, p. 98.

49 Ibid., p. 9.

a major recipient of Indonesian oil and certain raw materials. Thus the United States and Japan had a shared interest in ensuring the continuance of a cooperative attitude in Indonesia.

Relations between Washington and Kuala Lumpur were cordial, though not intimate. The United States had no major programme in Malaysia. There had never been an aid programme, a military assistance agreement or base agreements. This was probably because fourteen military installations in Thailand and military bases in the Philippines were sufficient enough for the United States to execute its military policies in this region and that Malaysia itself had also close relations with America's ally, Great Britain. Secondly, the United States had another means of influence on Malaysia. It imported about 40 per cent of Malaysia's most significant export item, natural rubber. Bilateral trade in 1975 involved exports to the United States of rubber, tin, palm, oil and timber products amounting to \$536 million. Malaysia imported \$394 million worth of American military machinery, transportation equipments, manufactured goods, chemicals and other products during the same year.<sup>50</sup> There was no serious misgivings in Washington over orientation of Malaysia.

Singapore's vulnerability, especially to external economic pressure, required the government to exercise

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50 Ibid., p. 12.

adequate care in not antagonizing other countries unnecessarily. The Chinese leadership in the Singapore itself had evinced no softness towards the People's Republic of China despite its large ethnic Chinese population. It believed that the Soviet Union would not voluntarily stay out of the area, and that there <sup>is necessarily</sup> ~~should be no~~ pressure on the United States to <sup>military</sup> ~~maintain suitable~~ presence in Southeast Asia. American private investment in Singapore also stood at nearly \$1 billion during 1975.<sup>51</sup> It constituted the Island's single largest source of private foreign investment.

The brief survey given above indicates the substantial "presence" of the United States in the affairs of Southeast Asia even as the unpopular and costly war in Vietnam was attracting growing discontent within the US itself and widespread criticism world-wide. The following tables indicate the status of one significant area of American relationship with Southeast Asian countries - the area of military assistance.

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51 Ibid., p. 14.

(1) Foreign Military Sales Agreement - FY 1955-1969  
(Dollars in Thousands)

Indonesia	***	***	649
Malaysia	***	***	4,014
Philippines	***	***	5,775
Singapore	***	***	5,081

(2) Foreign Military Sales Deliveries - FY 1955-1969  
(Dollars in Thousands)

Indonesia	***	***	647
Malaysia	***	***	3,949
Philippines	***	***	5,316
Singapore	***	***	792
Thailand	***	***	1,583

(3) Foreign Military Sales Financing Programme - FY 1955-69

Indonesia			-
Malaysia	{ DOD Direct { DOD Guaranty	***	15,633
		***	8,157
			7,495
Philippines			-
Singapore	{ DOD Direct { DOD Guaranty		17,221
			17,221
Thailand	***	***	-
			-/-

(4) Military Assistance Programme Deliveries/Expenditure  
FY 1955-1969

(includes Military Assistance Service Funded and  
Excludes Training) Dollars in Thousands

Indonesia	...	...	62,207
Malaysia	...	...	-
Philippines	...	...	373,560
Singapore	...	...	-
Thailand	...	...	683,836

(5) MAP Excess Defence Articles Delivered - Acquisition  
Cost (includes Military Assistance Service Funded -  
FY 1953-1969) Dollars in Thousands

Indonesia	...	...	6,340
Malaysia	...	...	-
Philippines	...	...	63,918
Singapore	...	...	-
Thailand	...	...	79,750

(6) International Military Education and Training  
Programme Deliveries/Expenditures (includes  
Military Assistance Services Funded) FY 1959-1959  
Dollars in Thousands

		No. of personnel
Indonesia	... 8,296	... 2,967
Malaysia	776	189
Philippines	27,079	13,246
Singapore	-	-
Thailand	54,356	12,197

Notes: These tables have been drawn from Foreign Military  
Sales and Military Assistance Facts, December 1979  
(published by Data Management Division, Comptroller,  
DSAA).

Implications of US Policy

Given continuing American security requirements in the region and the likelihood of forced withdrawal from South Vietnam, Washington had to concern itself seriously with the issue of what came to be called in inter<sup>2</sup> circles as "Post-T Day" planning with "T" standing for "Termination" of the war in Vietnam. In view of Domestic sentiment, clearly Washington confronted the need to de-emphasize the military role. Secondly, some formulation needed to be offered to the American people to deflect their discontent over the enormous financial expenditure that had been infructuously incurred in that distant region for military purposes. With SEATO's utility as an instrument of American policy having become seriously eroded, some new instrumentality was called for that would not evoke negative reactions initially but that could, in time, serve purposes similar to that of SEATO. The objective would not be served if the new arrangements were to be regarded as anything other than a spontaneous and indigenous effort to promote regional co-operation. In a transitional period when the United States might have to adopt a somewhat low profile, it might also be advantageous to encourage Japan to take public interest in such a development. Viewed along these lines, it is the conclusion of the present writer that when ASEAN came into existence it represented a development acceptable to Washington and regarded by it as desirable.



**CHAPTER III**

## CHAPTER III

### ASEAN IN THE AFTERMATH OF US PULL-OUT FROM VIETNAM

The <sup>Bangkok</sup> ~~Bangladesh~~ Declaration of 1967 laid the foundation of an Association for Regional Cooperation among the countries of Southeast Asia, known as the ASEAN, without much fanfare and press reaction. The stated aims and purposes of the Association were acceleration of economic growth, social progress and cultural development through joint endeavours, promotion of active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields; and promotion of regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of the member countries assigned top priority in their listing of aims and purposes to co-operation in the socio-economic and cultural fields. Although political and security concerns were upper-most in the minds of the leaders, political considerations and security aspects were played down in the Declaration.

The principal objective of establishing the Association appeared to be achievement of national as well

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<sup>1</sup> See The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration, 1967), in Alison Broinowski, ed., Understanding ASEAN (London, 1982).

regional resilience through mutual cooperation. Despite the avowed aim, the human diversity of the area—ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural — cannot be denied. It was a fundamental factor leading to poor development of regional consciousness. Eight regular ministerial meetings of ASEAN countries were held between 1967 and 1975, with none in 1970. Old animosities and rivalries often cropped up in these meetings and threatened the viability of the association. The enmity between the Philippines and Malaysia over Sabah in 1968 and 1969, and another regional quarrel between Indonesia and Singapore in late 1968, practically brought the work of the organisation to a standstill.<sup>2</sup>

However, ASEAN survived these fateful disputes. The member countries signed the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on 27 November 1971 and again indicated their interest of maintaining Asian identity by limiting the outside powers' presence in the region. Reduced to fundamentals, the five leaders agreed that the "neutralization of Southeast Asia" was a suitable objective and that they should "explore ways and means" of realizing it. They went on to state that they were "determined to exert initially necessary efforts" to bring about the "recognition of, and respect for, Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality".<sup>3</sup> It came

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2 Russel H. Fifield, National and Regional Interests in ASEAN Competition and Cooperation in International Politics (Singapore, 1979), Occasional Paper No. 57, p. 10.

3 Ibid., p. 13.

to be called ZOPFAN. It was, however, easier to state than implement. Their political systems, foreign policies, national security outlooks, and power potential were disparate and inhibited quick implementation.

Speedy measures for economic co-operation could not materialize because of differential stage of economic development of the member countries. (See Tables 1, 2 and 3) for physical and economic size of ASEAN countries, patterns of growth performance and relative shares of trade and capital formation in GDP at market prices respectively). The more developed nations, Singapore and Philippines, were in favour of a regional free trade policy in which they saw themselves as the bankers and manufacturers for the rest of the area. The less developed nations, led by Indonesia, tried to protect their own developing industries and were wary of penetration by multinational corporations, which tended to be dominated by overseas Chinese.

ASEAN was also not a "natural regional market". It was a combination of numerous "distinct national markets". The economies of the region were competitive for external capital, skill and markets. Intra-regional trade among the member nations was relatively a minor proportion of the total trade. Despite many a year of regional efforts, the total intra-ASEAN turnover for 1975 amounted to only US \$6,600 million, or 15 per cent of the total ASEAN trade.<sup>4</sup>

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4 John Wong, ASEAN Economies in Perspective: A Comparative Study of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand (London, 1979, reprinted 1980), p. 21.

**(1) Physical and Economic Size of ASEAN**

	Land Area 1975 Km	Population 1975 million	Constant GDP 1975 US \$ million
ASEAN	3,048,682	234.6	424,500
Indonesia	1,904,345	136.0	17,490
Malaysia	329,749	11.9	6,130
Philippines	300,000	42.5	7,030
Singapore	588	2.3	3,520
Thailand	514,000	41.9	8,230

**(2) Growth Performance of ASEAN Countries**

ASEAN	GDP Growth rate	Export growth rate %	Period
Indonesia	25.3	60.0	1969-74
Malaysia	16.2	25.9	1970-74
Philippines	24.2	25.9	1969-74
Singapore	20.4	39.1	1970-74
Thailand	13.7	36.6	1970-74

**(3) Relative Shares of Trade and Capital Formation in  
GDP of ASEAN at Market**

	Gross Fixed capital for- mation %	Exports of goods and services %	Imports of Goods and services %	for 1974
Indonesia	19.3	31.6	23.3	
Malaysia	25.3	52.0	55.1	
Philippines	18.5	22.3	25.1	
Singapore	38.1	-	-18.8	
Thailand	22.1	23.3	25.4	

**Note:** The Tables are drawn from the Tables given in John Wong, ASEAN Economics in Perspective: A Comparative Study of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand (London, 1979).

The single most important feature in the external trade relations of ASEAN was its over dependence on the industrialized market economies, particularly those of Japan and the United States. <sup>It is noteworthy that</sup> As shown in table 2.8, 71 per cent of the region's exports in 1964 went to the developed nations, which in turn supplied 66 per cent of the region's total imports. By the year 1975, these percentages had been somewhat reduced, but the reduction was insignificant.

Since the region exported mainly primary products (~~see Table 1.2~~) and the industrial economies of the West and Japan happened to be the biggest consumers of the world's primary commodities, close trading ties between ASEAN countries and these developed countries were the natural outcome. The very pattern of industrialization had so developed as to require from the West and Japan a continuous inflow of capital and technology. Consequently, the structure of ASEAN economies was found to be much more complementary with the industrialized market economies than with any other.<sup>5</sup> Such a high degree of economic integration resulted in a high degree of dependency on the part of the ASEAN. And since ASEAN countries were not the only source of primary commodities, the one-sided dependence was a situation whose implications could not be lightly ignored by the ASEAN countries.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

"Fall" of Indochina and its Impact

In the security area, ASEAN countries reviewed with anxiety the implications of the failure of the United States to prevail in the Vietnam war as well as the anti-war and anti-interventionist mood in the US, and their likely impact on the level of US "commitment" to their defence. When Lyndon Johnson bowed out of a Presidential race and when the successful Republican challenger, Richard Nixon, too had promised to end the war, Southeast Asian leaders could no longer doubt that the American effort in Vietnam would inevitably wind down. Though in his quest for ending the war with "honour", Nixon prolonged the hostilities for four years, ASEAN leaders had no reason to doubt that America's Vietnam adventure could have but one culmination - total US withdrawal from Vietnam and the establishment of Hanoi's control over the reunited country. The possibility increasingly appeared to be likely that the other two countries of Indochina, Laos and Cambodia, might come under the influence of a victorious Hanoi. However, Saigon "fell" on 30 April 1975 and the Indochina war came to an end. The North Vietnamese victory in the war had a multi-dimensional effect on the non-communist countries of the region and on the American foreign policy as well.

ASEAN countries began a major reassessment of their relationships with the external powers. Nationalism and neutrality, mixed with a budding interest in regional co-operation, were the driving forces at work. The impact

was greater on the countries which had much closer relations with the United States. Obviously, they were the Philippines and Thailand. They were most anxious to give some evidence of their misgivings by actions calculated to give an impression of seeking greater independence of action vis-a-vis Washington. The actions were, at the same time, aimed at getting from Washington some clear statements concerning its future intentions towards the region and individual countries therein.

The Philippines announced on 12 April 1975 that it was reassessing its defence agreements with the United States in view of Washington's <sup>new</sup> nuclear course. It was stated that the agreements relating to the Clark Air Base and the Subic Naval Base were to be reviewed. A government official said that Manila was "disturbed by an emerging view that commitments made by U.S. Presidents are nothing more than statements of intent that do not bind the American people or Congress".<sup>6</sup> President Ferdinand E. Marcos on 16 April reaffirmed that his country's defence agreements with the United States, as well as its economic accords called for revision for "reasons of survival" because the "balance of quadrilateral power" in Asia between the United States, China, the Soviet Union and Japan has been disturbed" by recent events in Indochina.<sup>7</sup>

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6 The New York Times, 13 April 1975.

7 Ibid., 17 April 1975.



Manila reacted angrily when President Gerald Ford on 21 September 1976 tripled the duty on imported sugar in order to give domestic producers "some protection" from cheaper imports. On 13 January 1977, the Philippines reached an agreement with the Soviet Union for export of 600,000 metric tons of sugar to Moscow during the first six months of 1977. The Philippine government deported two American missionaries on 13 November and 20 November 1976 respectively in a crackdown on activist church groups. The Reverend Edward M. Gerlock was ousted on 13 November "for having shown an undue interest in the political process and affairs in the country". The second missionary was Reverend Albert Booms, deported for political activity.<sup>8</sup>

The American-Philippine negotiations over retention of American military bases in the country collapsed when Marcos rejected Washington's offer to give the Philippines \$1 billion in economic and military assistance for continued American use of installations. Henry Kissinger had said on his return to Washington from Manila on 1 December 1976 that an understanding had been reached with Carlos P. Romulo, Foreign Minister of the Philippines. But Romulo on 5 December denied that any agreement had been reached. He said that the State Department was attempting "to pressure" his government

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<sup>8</sup> The New York Times, 21 November 1976.

into signing an agreement on military bases.<sup>9</sup> While the actions evoked some irritation in Washington, it appears that the reasons for Filipino behaviour were understood. There was no evidence indicating that Washington believed there was any serious danger of the Manila regime turning against the United States. Improved terms and assurances, it was hoped, would eventually turn the situation around.

The situation in regard to Thailand was not very different. The impact on Thailand was equally powerful. Militant university students staged an anti-American demonstration in Bangkok on 4 July 1975. The rally demanded the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand since 1967 and virulently criticized the American investment there. Premier Sanya Dharmasakti met American ambassador William N. Kintner and told him "the dissatisfaction of the students and people" with the "CIA's interference in internal affairs of Thailand".

The United States ended all operations at its military bases in Thailand on 21 March 1976 and later closed its last two important military establishments - the U Taphao Air Base on the Gulf of Thailand and the Runassan *RAMASUN* electronic monitoring station in the north-east. The United States also turned over to Thailand on 19 May 1976 a

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9 The New York Times, 6 December 1976.

satellite tracking station at Koh Kah in the north. It was in accord with an agreement providing for closing of bases and the withdrawal of all American military officials except the military advisors. Shutdown of the military bases in Thailand coincided with a demonstration by several thousand students before the American Embassy.

The formal demise of SEATO took place when on 30 June 1976 the flags of its members were lowered at the Pact's headquarters in Bangkok. And another gesture of "independence" that was made by the ASEAN countries was to establish friendly contacts with Peking, Moscow and Hanoi itself. Mrs Imelda Marcos, wife of President Marcos, of the Philippines visited Peking in September 1974 to explore the possibility of resuming diplomatic relations with China. During this visit China agreed to purchase raw materials from the Philippines and sell it under terms of a trade accord negotiated in Peking on 23 September 1974. Nine months later China and the Philippines established diplomatic relations under terms of an agreement signed on 9 June 1975 in Peking by President Marcos and the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai. China had already established diplomatic relations with Malaysia on 31 May under an agreement signed in Peking by Chou En-lai and Prime Minister Abdul Razak of Malaysia.

Vietnam also agreed to establish diplomatic relations with the Philippines and Thailand. Under an accord

contained in a joint communique issued in Manila on 12 July 1976, Vietnam and the Philippines pledged "not to allow any foreign country to use one's country as a base for direct or indirect aggression and intervention against the other country or other countries in the region".<sup>10</sup> A joint Thai-Vietnamese communique signed in Hanoi on 6 August announced the establishment of diplomatic relations. In an informal joint statement released on 5 August, Vietnam pledged "in principle" not to assist communist insurgents in Southeast Asia.

In July 1976 the Filipino President Marcos and Nikolai Podgorny of the Soviet Union signed a communique in Moscow establishing diplomatic relations. The joint statement also said that an agreement had been signed providing for the expansion of trade, scientific and technical co-operation and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

The most important trend was the renewed emphasis put on intra-regional co-operation and diversification of trade to lessen their dependence on the United States, Japan and the EEC. Among the ASEAN countries, the Philippines was the one country which, on account of historical, geographical and economic factors, had the lowest level of trade integration with the region. And the crowning irony was that the Philippines had shown the greatest

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<sup>10</sup> The New York Times, 14 July 1976.

enthusiasm towards greater intra-ASEAN economic co-operation.<sup>11</sup> In 1964 ASEAN countries had virtually no direct trade links with the Soviet Union and other East European countries. Only Malaysia/Singapore and Indonesia had maintained a somewhat tenuous and precarious trade relations with the People's Republic of China. In 1975 ASEAN's total trade with the Socialist countries was \$13 million, about 3 per cent of ASEAN's total world trade.<sup>12</sup> In the same year, Australia and New Zealand's relative share in the region's trade was 3.7 per cent and it was 5.7 per cent viewed from Australia and 4.3 per cent from New Zealand.<sup>13</sup>

In May 1975, with a background of momentous events in Indochina, the decision of Ministerial Conference reflected the conviction that ASEAN must speed up economic co-operation in terms of real achievements, as a means of bolstering national resilience. Foreign Ministers of the five ASEAN nations agreed at a meeting in Phattaya, Thailand, on 9-10 February 1976 on the broad outlines of a treaty of friendship and co-operation. Just after a fortnight of this meeting was held a summit meeting for the first time at Bali. A communique said that the five Presidents and Prime Ministers "reaffirmed the determination of their respective governments

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11 John Wong, n. 4, p. 21.

12 Ibid., p. 44.

13 Ibid., p. 50.

to continue to work for the promotion of peace, stability and progress in Southeast Asia",<sup>14</sup>

With the signing of the Declaration and the Treaty, ASEAN, hitherto an economic and social grouping, formally transferred itself into a political organisation. It was the first treaty which provided a legal foundation to the ASEAN countries ever since it came into existence. An ASEAN Secretariat was created for proper coordination of their work. A Treaty of Amity and Cooperation was signed which provided for a "High Council of Ministers" that would act as a committee of mediation, enquiry and conciliation "to settle disputes through regional processes". In regard to economic co-operation, a joint communique issued at the end of the summit listed certain industrial projects which could figure in measures to initiate co-operative action towards eventual establishment of large-scale ASEAN industries. The economic Ministers of ASEAN met in Kuala Lumpur on 8-9 March 1976, barely a fortnight after the Bali summit, and agreed in principle that the ASEAN countries should each have one basic industry which could have preferential trading arrangements among its members.

The Foreign Ministers of ASEAN signed an agreement in Manila on 24 February 1972 to increase mutual trade through tariff reduction, long-term contracts and low interest financing arrangements. In another summit meeting held in

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<sup>14</sup> The New York Times, 25 February 1976.

Kuala Lumpur on 4-5 August 1977, the ASEAN leaders discussed political and economic co-operation and development of the region. The part of the communique dealing with the political problem pledged to make ASEAN "a strong, viable and cohesive regional organisation". It called on Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to abandon the hostile attitude toward ASEAN. ASEAN wanted to "develop peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with all countries in the region including the three Indochina states."

#### The Magnitude of the Impact

The most significant effect of the debacle of the United States on Indochina was the rethinking and reappraisal by the ASEAN countries of their relationships with Washington and finding a way out to reduce their dependence and evolve new modifications for the relationship. The reaction of these countries to the American policy toward Southeast Asia was to a certain extent emotional, especially in the Philippines and Thailand.

Almost during the same time when President Marcos was most unequivocal in his announcement about the Philippines' reassessment of Base Agreements with the United States, he had said, "Americans will always be welcome in the Philippines as in most of Asia". The last Secretary General of SEATO, Santhorn Hongladarom, a Thai, questioned the rationale for the hasty dissolution of the organization. He said in an interview that SEATO and ASEAN should have





carried on in parallel for a while and later, "when it was safe, the two could have converged or merged." But for Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore very existence of SEATO was hardly of any importance and had not been so in the past. The continuation of it did not cut much rice. And its demise was rarely regretted.

The ASEAN countries gradually built up relations with the communist countries. But the moves used to be reviewed in the context of the US course in that same direction. Washington had established some sort of detente with both the Soviet Union and China much earlier. Indeed, such a detente provided the essential underpinning for the American peace negotiations with North Vietnam. If the cold war between the capitalist bloc and the socialist bloc had not been replaced by moves towards detente, ASEAN countries perhaps might not have ventured to open their own windows toward the communist countries. Again, Washington could see some advantages in China pushing an anti-Soviet line among its new ASEAN friends. China would be even more vociferous than the United States in warning against the spread of Soviet influence in Southeast Asia. At a banquet in honour of Filipino President Marcos's visit on 7 June 1975, the Deputy Premier of China, Teng Hsiao-ping cautioned that Asian nations should avoid "letting the tiger in through the back-door, while repelling the wolf through

the front gate", an apparent allusion to Chinese fears of Soviet designs to supplant American influence in Asia.<sup>15</sup>

Though ASEAN orators talked about the diversification of trade, the potential in that direction was limited. Trade with the socialist countries constituted only 3 per cent of ASEAN's total world trade in 1975. ASEAN's economies were typically very "open", with heavy dependence on foreign aid and investment of their export-led type economic growth. They had provided a great deal of incentives for the free play of private enterprises. The socialist countries had inherent limitation in increasing their share of trade with ASEAN. With their centrally planned economies and limited free play of the market, they tended to de-emphasize the role of foreign trade in their economic growth.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, there was seldom any opportunity for the ASEAN to develop trade relations with the socialist countries, with the single most exception of rubber, the socialist bloc countries had not yet constituted a significant factor in the region's commodity markets.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, socialist countries, lacking consumer-oriented and well-diversified economies, found it very difficult to compete with the capitalist countries. With the growing Japanese economic

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<sup>15</sup> Facts on File, 1975, p. 422.

<sup>16</sup> John Wong, n. 4, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

presence in ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand's relative share in the region's trade was quite small. It was evident that diversification of foreign trade for ASEAN would remain a slow process. There was nothing in the expressed desire of ASEAN countries to diversify their trade with others including the communist nations, nor in the pace of progress that ASEAN was able to accomplish, that could cause any concern to Washington. The broad appraisal of US policy makers that the region's trade will basically be tied up with the West and Japan continue to hold the field.

In the Phattaya meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers broad agreement on a treaty of "Friendship and Cooperation" was agreed upon. But the member nations remained at odds over such key matters as trade, tariff barriers and arbitration of political disputes. The Singaporean Prime Minister Simeathasby Rajaratnam commented: "Regional economic development cannot be realized on the basis of economic nationalism".<sup>18</sup> The rift among the ASEAN members was marked by Indonesian opposition to tariff cuts for fear of possible domination by other advanced ASEAN countries. Malaysian opposition to arbitration or negotiated settlement of territorial disputes was largely because of fear of the Philippine claims to part of East Malaysia.

The Declaration of ASEAN Concord in the famous Bali summit of February 1976 also emerged as an example of

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<sup>18</sup> The New York Times, 11 February 1976.

several divergences of opinion being papered over in the interest of presenting an image of unity within the ASEAN.<sup>19</sup> The finalization of the Treaty took the largest time basically due to mutual distrust and suspicion between Malaysia and the Philippines over the latter's claim to Sabah. The Philippines sought to exclude the activation of the High Council from the "rule of consensus" binding the ASEAN while Malaysia insisted on it. A compromise amendment proposed by Singapore could only save the Treaty.

Again, Indonesia and the Philippines had initiated the summit proposal immediately after the collapse of Indochina with problems of regional security uppermost in their minds. But "regional security" was relegated to the background from the agenda during negotiations. The discussion on security problem was perhaps abandoned to avoid the participants being dubbed as lackeys of the Americans, the criticism invariably levelled against them by the Communist countries. But the problem of security was quite uppermost on the minds of the leaders. Indonesian President Suharto's speech was clearly indicative of the intense desire to consider the question of regional security. Domestic political considerations as well as considerations of "image" with other Third World countries dictated the reluctance of ASEAN leaders to include security publicly

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<sup>19</sup> For comments by Malaysian Prime Minister Onn, Indonesian President Suharto, Thai Prime Minister, Premoj, Singaporean Prime Minister Yew and Filipino President Marcos see The New York Times, 24 February 1976.

as an area of concern for the regional organization. What is noteworthy is that no statement emanated from the meeting calling for the withdrawal of US military presence from Southeast Asia or even any major reduction of such presence. It was evident that while ASEAN countries did have some misgivings over possible danger from external and internal communist challenges, they did not regard American military presence in the area as constituting any threat to their security. Indeed, though they did not say so in exactly those terms, the impression was left behind that they regarded American role in the region as a factor helpful to their own security.

#### Steps taken by the United States

The enunciation of Nixon Doctrine, while seeming to signal the substantial discontinuation of American role in Southeast Asia, was a call to those countries to make their own appropriate initiatives and assume a greater share of security burden. This doctrine can thus be seen as giving encouragement to local initiatives as those represented by ASEAN. It was coupled with assurances given by President Nixon that the United States would continue to have its treaty commitments to Thailand and the Philippines and would respond to developments affecting the security of the region.

Much before the Indochinese war finally came to an end the Vice President of the United States, Spiro T. Agnew, visited Southeast Asia in February 1973. In his departure

statement at Bangkok he assured the non-Communist countries of the region that "the finish to fighting in Viet-Nam [sic] will not end a role for us in Southeast Asia, but only change it."<sup>20</sup> He further emphasized that the end of fighting would allow them to devote increased attention to multilateral social and economic problems. He reiterated his statement in Singapore as well.

President Gerald Ford of the United States ended his ten-day Asian trip on 7 December 1975 in Honolulu and proclaimed a new "Pacific Doctrine" of "peace with all and hostility toward none". He told the audience at the University of Hawaii's East West Centre that "America, a nation of the Pacific basin, has vital stake in Asia, and a responsibility to take a leading part in lessening tensions, preventing hostilities and preserving peace. World stability and our own security depend upon our Asian commitments."<sup>21</sup> He also emphasized that the United States had a "continuing stake in the stability and security of Southeast Asia". The enunciation of such a doctrine which appeared commonplace and cogent was meant to assure the pro-Western countries that the end of Vietnam war did not end, but only altered the American commitment and that the United States still perceived the region as very important, though not vital, to its interests.

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20 Department of State Bulletin, 12 March 1973, p. 296.

21 Editorials on File (New York), 1975, p. 1486.

But the doctrine was basically a "scissors-and-paste job" - a summary of the main lines of policy as had already been laid down previously. It included no new initiatives, and it resolved no old dilemmas.<sup>22</sup> The Miami Herald, published from Miami, Florida, commented that the "new Pacific Doctrine" was "pretty much old hat diplomatically".

There were exercises aimed at keeping up the morale of friendly regimes in Asia. It was understood by the executive branch of the United States and apparently by the ASEAN regimes too that the prevailing anti-interventionists mood in the US might inhibit any early expansion of American military role in the Southeast Asian region. The mood was reflected in a Report presented by Senator Mansfield to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1976. The Report stated:

American policy in Asia is now grounded on the fact that the U.S. is not an Asian power but a Pacific power. The difference is more than semantic. It is the difference between a sensible acceptance of the realities of Asia and dangerous illusions of military omnipotence. What takes place in Asia is certainly of concern to Americans. But concern and control are two different matters. Simply stated, America's principal long-range interests in the Pacific are to discourage domination of the region by any single power, to maintain friendly relations with China, Japan and other nations and to

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<sup>22</sup> The Washington Post, 11 December 1975.

lessen the tension having the seed of great power conflict. 23

The single most positive and tangible fact of American policy in the aftermath of the Vietnam tragedy was that the United States began to deal with the ASEAN countries as a group and formally recognized the existence of ASEAN which took birth almost a decade earlier. For the first time a formal ASEAN-American dialogue occurred in Manila from 8 to 10 September 1977 and subjects of regional interests rather than bilateral concerns were discussed. Among the topics were the development of ASEAN preferential trading arrangements, the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), and questions of special interest, to ASEAN arising in Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

At this point the Carter Administration was not poised for any far reaching moves specifically geared to ensure greater cooperation with ASEAN. It had many other problems on hand and the general posture of goodwill toward ASEAN was all that it could offer at this stage. Naturally, such a posture could not generate great enthusiasm on the part of ASEAN. The inferences <sup>presented</sup> that the Carter Administration was basically indifferent to the genuine importance of the Association and to its economic needs. Vague assurances of support in education and human resources development, health

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23 See The Report, p. 16.



and nutrition, agriculture and rural development, were not adequate to kindle enthusiasm among ASEAN members.<sup>24</sup>

A second session of the dialogue between the United States and the ASEAN was held at a higher level in the first week of August 1978 in Washington. Fourteen cabinet ministers had attended from ASEAN countries, and the Carter Administration headed by the President himself and the Vice-President with an official delegation of five cabinet members and a governor hosted the visitors. Economic matters were discussed in the meeting. A joint statement on 4 August 1978 said that both sides had agreed to establish an "integrated programme of commodities". There would be a common fund to encourage stabilization of supplies and prices of goods produced in developing countries. The ASEAN members indicated that they were especially concerned about regulating prices for such regionally produced products as sugar and rubber. The United States pledged to send a trade and investment mission to the ASEAN states. The consultation would deal with aid, energy, science and technology, food, business affairs and trade. In other directions, the chairman of the Export-Import Bank would visit the ASEAN nations, and the Bank would consider helping ASEAN industrial projects. Also, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation would organize an investment mission of American businessmen to the ASEAN countries. An ASEAN-US Business Council under

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24 Russel H. Fifield, n. 2, p. 69.

the auspices of the ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the US Business Council under the auspices of the ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the US Chambers of Commerce and Industry would be established as quickly as possible. It was clear that business relations and private investments were a major concern for Washington. It was later indicated that as a consequence of the Ministerial meeting, the economic policy of the United States towards Southeast Asia was being shaped to take ASEAN into account.<sup>25</sup>

The Washington meeting did represent some advance in terms of interest in ASEAN. While economic issues were the principal topic under discussion, the ASEAN representatives also stressed political considerations in public statements made at a news conference at the conclusion of the meeting. The officials said that their countries had "good to satisfactory" relations with the Communist nations and the United States generally supported this policy.

The large range of American commitments in Southeast Asia in general and in ASEAN countries in particular shows that the whole gamut of American policy revolved round the fundamental aspect of protecting, preserving and enhancing the American interest in Japan, restraining the tide of communist influence and maintaining its own military presence as a global power. Till the end of the war in Indochina only two member countries of ASEAN (the Philippines and Thailand)

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25 Ibid., p. 70.

were of primary importance to the United States. Ultimately, the ASEAN countries drew the American attention and the recent trends showed that primary importance had been given to the regional economic development and the economic relation between the ASEAN and the United States. The ASEAN countries proved to be reliable allies in both peace and war times. This was partly because of the socio-economic and educational background of the ruling elites who were mostly western-educated. The economic systems of these five countries were also such that they could not but look to the West for their viable and strong economic development.

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**CHAPTER IV**

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NEW INDOCHINA CONFLICT AND THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

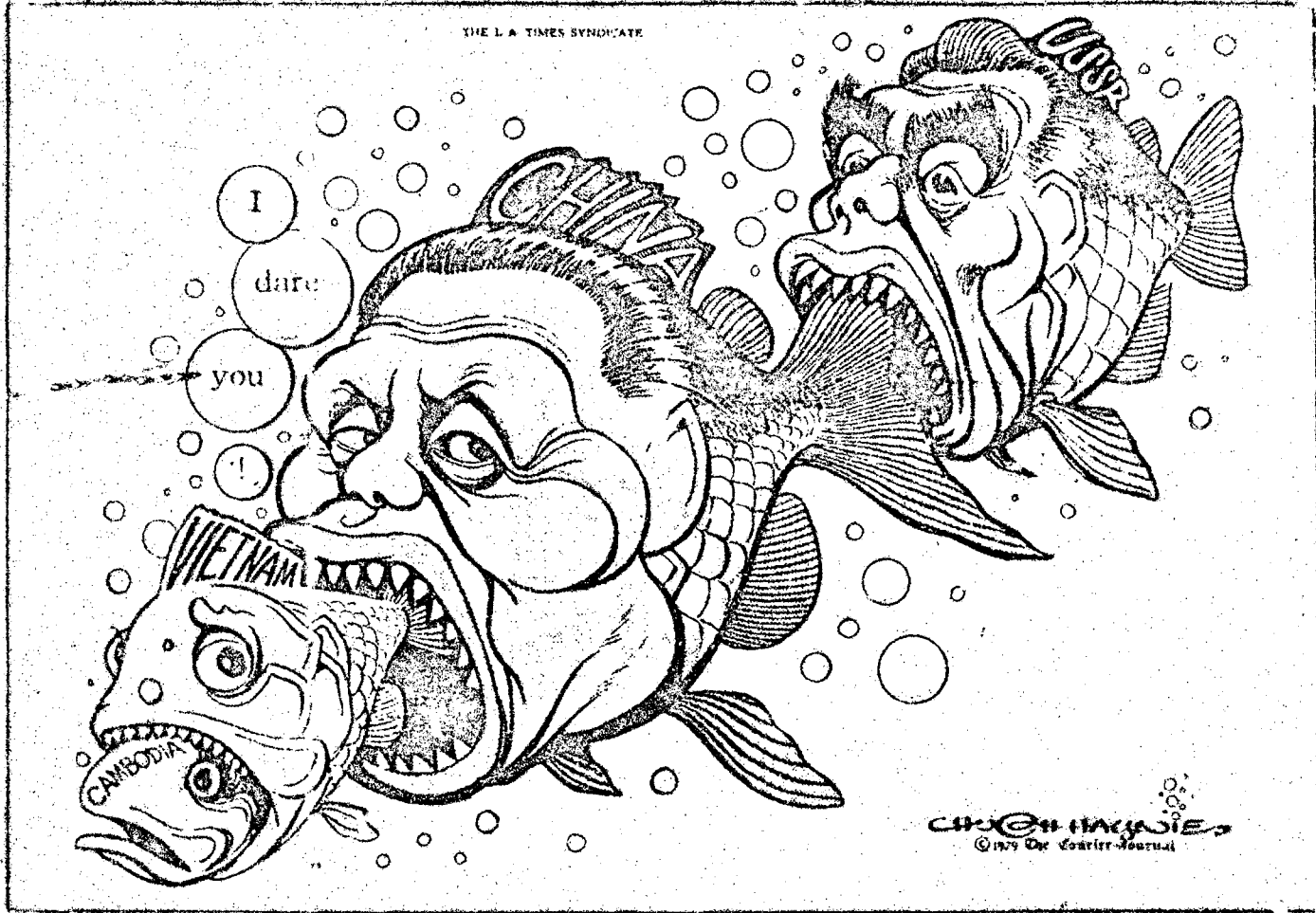
#### Introduction

The end of the Vietnam war did not herald a new era of peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The triumph of Hanoi was not a source of unmixd satisfaction to Peking. Washington weighed developments in the context of changed relationship with China. Hanoi's neighbours were conscious of the military strength of the former. Hanoi, for its part, harboured its own anxieties on Chinese intentions and US activities. In time it was Kampuchea that was to emerge as the bone of contention. By the year 1978, repeated border skirmishes between Kampuchea and Vietnam took place. It was then vaticinated that an invasion of Kampuchea by Vietnam was unlikely, since the Vietnamese had their hands full with their socio-economic problems in the home-front. It had also been forecast in early 1979 that China would not invade Vietnam, because of the risk of Soviet intervention and because they were busy in their new policies of "opening to the West" and "four modernizations". But all these things happened, contrary to conventional wisdom.<sup>1</sup> The Kampuchean

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<sup>1</sup> Bui Dien, "A New Kind of War in South East Asia", Asian Affairs: An American Review, May-June 1979, p. 275.

THE L.A. TIMES SYNDICATE



CHUCK HANLEY  
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Khmer Rouge regime was unfriendly to Hanoi and received Peking's patronage. They skirmished at the Vietnamese border, daring Vietnamese retaliation. Vietnamese troops entered Kampuchea and overthrew the Pol Pot regime, daring Chinese reprisal. The Chinese attacked Vietnam, daring the Soviet requital.<sup>2</sup> The Soviet Union sent two warships to Southeast Asia, put its troops on standby alert, supplied military equipment to Vietnam and gave a serious warning to China demanding a speedy withdrawal. It appeared as if a new kind of "domino theory" was operating, this time involving the communist countries instead of non-communist countries.<sup>3</sup> (see the cartoon)

The United States once claimed to play the role of international policeman, "protecting the good guys from the bad guys". But it had a traumatic experience in Vietnam while playing the role of a "policeman". The Atlanta Constitution commented: "It did not work in Vietnam for a number of reasons, one of which was that there were no good guys worth protecting."<sup>4</sup> However, Indochina became a "no-win situation" for the United States. So it withdrew itself and learned a lesson that might be summed up in the solemn resolve "never again!"<sup>5</sup>. What could then have been the American

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2 The Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, California, 23 February 1979.

3 Dien, n. 1, p. 273.

4 The Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Georgia, 20 February 1979.

5 Arkansas Gazette, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 January 1979.

attitude to this "new kind of war"? Did the United States wish "plague on both the houses"? What was its response and what was ASEAN's reaction? Did the United States desire or work for a common response to the new problem? The situation in Indochina, in fact, became a fresh challenge for the post-Vietnam foreign policy of America towards Southeast Asia.

### Genesis of the Conflict

The Kampuchean government of Premier Pol Pot was overthrown by a combined forces of Kampuchean rebels and Vietnamese troops who captured Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979. The Soviets, backers of Vietnam, immediately hailed the "liberation of oppressed Kampuchean people". But China, ally of the Pol Pot regime, denounced the aggression and invaded Vietnam on 17 February 1979. Chinese Deputy Premier Teng Hsiao-ping characterized the military incursion as a limited "counter-attack", teaching Vietnam a "lesson".

The new conflict in Indochina was not an accidental misfortune, but a clear-cut man-made outburst. It appeared to be a well-planned and premeditated adventure. The events of preceding months of this conflict reveals a bizarre cold war among the communist countries. At the same time a process of normalization of relations was on between Vietnam and ASEAN, the United States and Vietnam and China and the United States.

Deputy Minister Phan Hien of Vietnam visited Thailand in July 1978. The visit showed an encouraging

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movement of Vietnam toward accepting the position of ASEAN that the region should be one of peace, freedom and neutrality.<sup>6</sup> Carlos P. Romulo, as a spokesman of ASEAN, said in August 1978 that the Association would weigh the issue of admission of Vietnam to the group. Premier Pham Van Dong of Vietnam paid visits to the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia in the next month. The aim of this trip perhaps included gaining "diplomatic support" or "neutrality" in Vietnam's continuing dispute with China and Kampuchea. The ASEAN countries, however, displayed a "remarkable political cohesion" to avoid siding with Vietnam in its conflict with China and Kampuchea.<sup>7</sup>

Vietnam was also trying to reconcile its differences, normalize its relations and build up friendship with the United States. A visiting American delegation of eight Congressmen headed by Representative G. V. Montgomery received a warm welcome from Vietnam. Premier Pham Van Dong promised the delegation that Vietnam would return remaining eleven American servicemen "Missing in Action" during the war. The delegation, returning from Vietnam, reported "fundamental and dramatic change" in Vietnam's attitude toward diplomatic relations with the United States.<sup>8</sup> The Vietnamese officials

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6 New York Times, 29 July 1978.

7 Ibid., 14 October 1978.

8 Ibid., 25 August 1978.

no longer demanded \$3 million in war reparations as a condition for establishment of diplomatic relations. And the negotiations over establishment of diplomatic relations had reached a point where only time-table and the ways and means were being discussed.

China was quite apprehensive of the Vietnamese move toward a preliminary detente with the ASEAN countries and the United States. This apprehension led to the Chinese Deputy Premier Teng Hsiao-ping's visit to Thailand in the first week of November 1978. Remarkably enough, this was the first visit by a top Chinese official to this country.<sup>9</sup> This was the beginning of a major Chinese effort to counter Soviet and Vietnamese influence in Southeast Asia. At the same time China endeavoured endlessly to establish economic as well as strategic ties with the United States.

The frequent visits by Vietnamese and Chinese leaders to non-communist capitals also coincided with a rising rift between the Vietnamese and the Chinese. Until late 1977, China continued to bulldoze Vietnam into condemning Soviet Union for "hegemonism", but remained unsuccessful.<sup>10</sup> Sino-Vietnamese relations began deteriorating mainly over three issues: the dispute over Spratlys and Paracel Islands, treatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and the "customary" border claims. The Chinese leaders viewed the closeness

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9 Ibid., 6 November 1978.

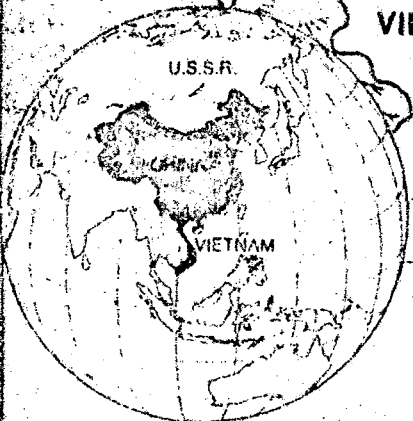
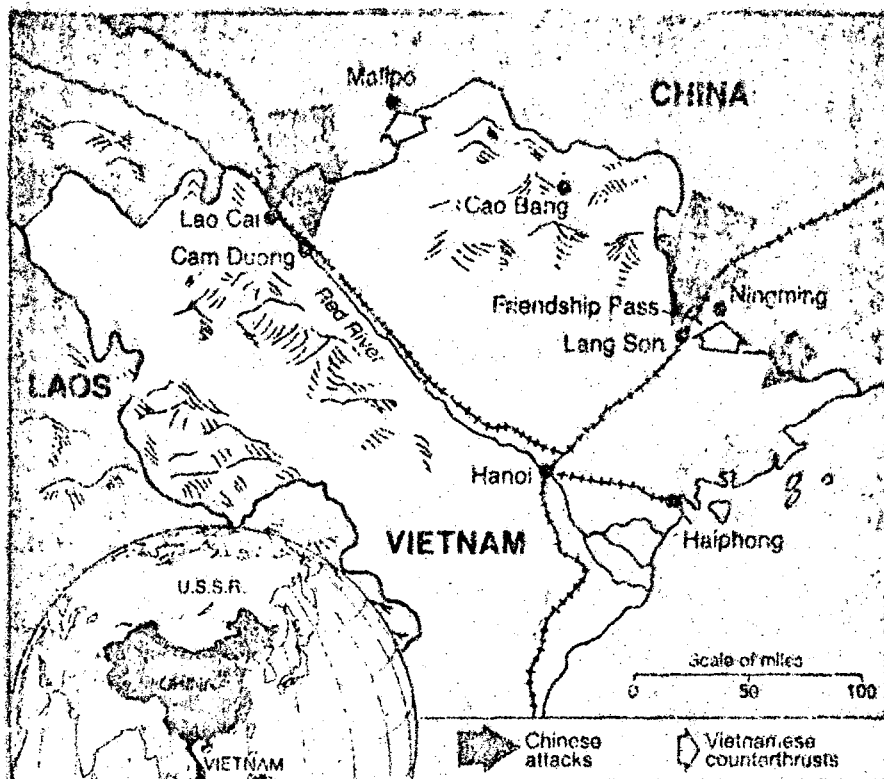
10 D.R. Sar Desai, Southeast Asia: Past and Present (New Delhi, 1981), p. 437.

between Vietnam and the Soviet Union with a jaundiced eye. Vietnam joined the Moscow-dominated COMECON on 29 July 1978. Then on 3 November it signed with Moscow a full-fledged twenty-five-year treaty of friendship and mutual assistance. It was rumoured that Vietnam had agreed to allow the Soviet Union to use the huge former American base in Cam Ranh Bay. All these proved to be bitter pills for the Chinese to swallow. Since May 1978 China had been accusing Vietnam of stepping up the expulsion of ethnic Chinese and subjecting them to harsh treatment. Subsequently, China recalled its ambassador from Vietnam, ordered Vietnam to close its consulates in the Chinese cities of Canton, Nanning and Kunming, and formally announced the end of all economic assistance to Hanoi in July 1978.<sup>11</sup>

The Sino-Soviet rift had been in the air for a long time. Teng Hsiao-ping accused the Soviet Union of trying to use the "Oriental Cuba" to infiltrate all of Southeast Asia. The Soviet Communist party officials, on the other hand, expressed extreme concern over Sino-American co-operation and feared that China would attempt to expand its influence over Southeast Asia. In the midst of this mutual suspicion between the Soviet Union and China, Kampuchea and Vietnam were repeatedly trading charges of "aggression" and "violation" of the border lines. Ever since 1975 the two countries were at odds with each other over border dispute

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<sup>11</sup> New York Times, 20 June 1978.



## How Communist Rivals Compare

<b>Soviet Union</b>	Combat aircraft	5,420
	Tanks	50,000
	Armed forces	3,638,000
<b>China</b>	Combat aircraft	5,700
	Tanks	10,000
	Armed forces	4,325,000
<b>Vietnam</b>	Combat aircraft	300
	Tanks	900
	Armed forces	615,000

ALL THREE NATIONS face two-front military threats. Russia is armed against China in the Far East and NATO countries in Western Europe. China is fighting in Vietnam as well as guarding its Russian border. Vietnam also is combatting guerrillas in Cambodia.

and the decade-old Vietnamese sanctuaries inside Kampuchea. Vietnam had opened an old sore between the two countries by claiming some islands in the Gulf of Thailand in 1975. It had also questioned the entire maritime boundary with Kampuchea which had been "settled" by the Erevic Line in 1939 during the French rule.<sup>12</sup> The Pol Pot regime, on the other hand, was trying to find out a means to get the Vietnamese out of the sanctuaries. Surprisingly, it took the initiative in attacking the border provinces in April 1977.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, Beijing's military and diplomatic assistance to the Pol Pot regime further fuelled Vietnamese anger. Vietnam helped the creation of a Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation by the rebels and along with them overthrew the Pol Pot regime. A Revolutionary Council headed by Heng Samrin came to power in Phnom Penh. This provided an opportunity to the Chinese to attack Vietnam and settle the old scores. The Chinese troops launched a massive attack against Vietnam on 17 February 1979.

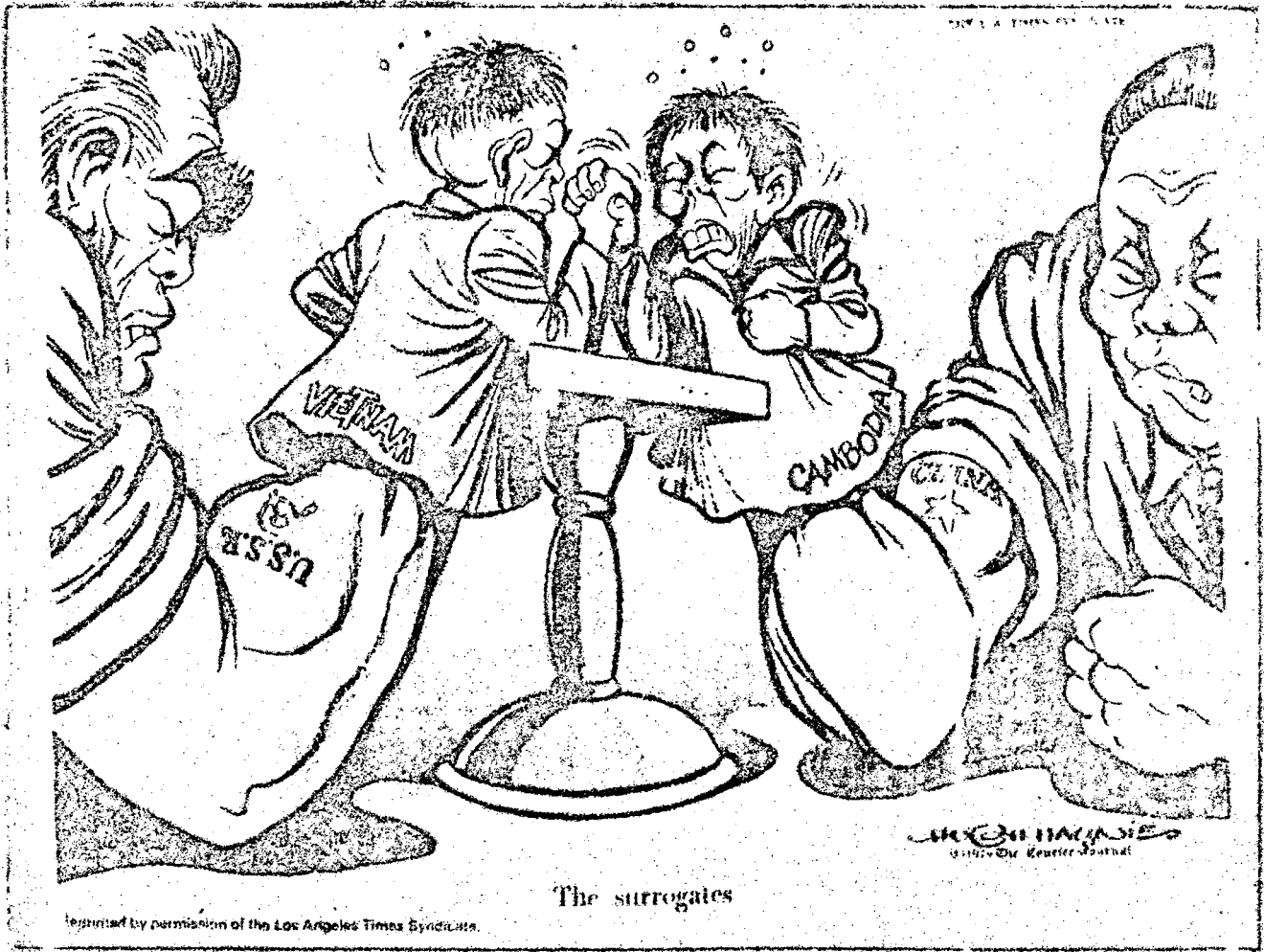
#### Reaction and Response of ASEAN

The support of China to the repressive Pol Pot regime and support to the rebels by a Soviet client appeared to be a fisticuffs between the two communist giants wearing

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12 Sar Desai, n. 10, p. 436.

13 Ibid.



# THE TENNESSEAN

Nashville, Tenn., January 11, 1979

the Kampuchean and Vietnamese gloves (see the cartoon). The ASEAN countries had every reason to see the writings on the wall when the Vietnamese forces successfully installed Heng Samrin government replacing the Pol Pot regime. Thailand has a long boundary with Kampuchea. The fear was that the conflict in Indochina might "spill over". Malaysia and Thailand had been wrestling with the problem of communist insurgencies and they were afraid that the Vietnamese success in Kampuchea might boost the morale of the insurgents and galvanize them into unleashing disastrous subversive activities. The apprehension was that Hanoi might consolidate its position and use Kampuchea as a base for destabilizing the ASEAN countries.<sup>14</sup> These fears were not baseless. Because Vietnam, after 1975, had become the third largest communist state in the world, with substantial natural resources, a confident and cohesive leadership and a population approaching 50 million. It had seized a large quantity of American arms and ammunition during the 1975 fight, possessed a trained and battle-hardened armed force and had become an important power centre in Southeast Asia to be reckoned with. The politico-economic and strategic co-operation between Moscow and Hanoi on the one hand and American military withdrawal from Southeast Asia on the other hand added to the strength of Vietnam.

Consequently, in a carefully worded joint statement

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<sup>14</sup> The Dispatch, Columbus, Ohio, 10 January 1979.

the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN nations demanded the "immediate and total withdrawal of the foreign forces" from Kampuchea and declared that Kampucheans should determine their own future "free from interference or influence from outside Powers".<sup>15</sup> This joint statement was however directed at the UN Security Council debate and did not imply that ASEAN might take joint action against Vietnam. Sinnathasby Rajaratnam, acting spokesman of ASEAN, made it clear that ASEAN was not contemplating any action to compel Vietnam to withdraw. He said: "It is a question of what the United Nations will do."<sup>16</sup> The ASEAN countries knew that any direct confrontation with Vietnam would be costly for them. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore admitted: "The first unhappy admission we must make is that for at least ten years there is no combination of military forces in ASEAN that can check the Vietnamese Army in any conflict...."<sup>17</sup> This ASEAN posture was also necessitated by America's little interest in a fight between the communists. One State Department official declared: "This is not our fight".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Asian Recorder, 1979, p. 14763.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 14924.

<sup>18</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer (Pennsylvania), 9 January 1979.



### The Chinese Assault

After the Chinese offensive against Vietnam, the ASEAN nations called for ending the fight and "withdrawal of all foreign forces" from areas of conflict. They also appealed to outside Powers to refrain from acts that could widen the arena of conflict.<sup>19</sup> The member nations then prepared a draft UN Security Council resolution calling for cessation of hostilities in Southeast Asia. The Soviet Union threatened to veto any resolution that did not specifically condemn Chinese aggression and called for Vietnamese troops withdrawal from Kampuchea. And it did veto the ASEAN resolution in Security Council.<sup>20</sup>

The Chinese onslaught came to an end by early April 1979, but the Vietnamese forces did not withdraw from Kampuchea. In the month of August 1979 the ASEAN Foreign Ministers decided to press for the seating of Pol Pot as the Kampuchean representative at the forthcoming Non-Aligned meeting in Havana. However, this attempt was not successful. The summit conference split on the question of which competing faction should represent Kampuchea. Ultimately, Lisandro Otero, spokesman for the Cuban Foreign Ministry, announced that a committee would be appointed to study the issue and thus none could get the representation.

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<sup>19</sup> The New York Times, 21 February 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 17 March 1979.

The ASEAN countries, however, got a massive victory in the UN General Assembly on an ASEAN-sponsored resolution calling for an international conference on Kampuchean issue. The ASEAN countries again could not come out openly against Vietnam and pointed out that the resolution was not solely pointed at Vietnam. Rajaratnam said: "We would not like however to think of or construe the voting as a victory over Vietnam."<sup>21</sup> An editorial in the New Straits Times of Malaysia said that the General Assembly resolution asked all parties to refrain from "acts or threats of aggression". It concluded: "China is very much a concerned party which has also to answer to these calls."<sup>22</sup> None of these actions was contrary to Washington's course. Indeed, Washington and the ASEAN followed parallel and mutually reinforcing policies. The episode was useful in terms of Washington's larger concern of maintaining pressure in Vietnam and mounting an anti-Soviet propaganda campaign.

#### Border Incursions into Thailand

The situation took altogether a different turn when the Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea crossed the border into Thailand on 23 June 1980 and clashed with the Thai troops. Hanoi said that the attack was provoked by Thai support to the guerrillas of the ousted Pol Pot government.

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21 Asian Recorder, 1980, p. 15274.

22 Ibid.

... A cease fire resolution has been passed ...  
a cease fire resolution has been passed ...  
a cease fire\* ...



KENNETH MAHOOD/Punch, London

It was a kind of development favourable to another US concern - having ASEAN more "spontaneously" towards a consideration of security issues with the threat coming from a Soviet-supported Vietnam. The Thai Government instantly banned the import of all goods by air or sea to Kampuchea. The ASEAN leaders' concern with "security" had been given a push /rival by the continuing fight between the/Kampuchean factions near the Thai border. The Foreign Ministers of ASEAN then had indicated the need for an "increased international presence" in the area. But the direct assault of the Vietnamese on Thailanders brought the matters to a head. In May 1980 Prime Minister Dattak Hussein Onn of Malaysia had reflected the ASEAN's feeling on "security matters" when, in the wake of his visit, he commented in Singapore:

The paramount concern of ASEAN countries is sovereignty, integrity and security of Thailand as it affects Malaysia, Singapore and other ASEAN countries .... Whatever may be the outcome of efforts to find a solution to the Kampuchean problem, uppermost in our mind is the security of Thailand. 23

This time the ASEAN countries did not prefer to depend on the United Nations. The United Nations was, however, not expected to do anything more except reiterating the conventional call for a ceasefire (see the cartoon). But was there any real danger of an invasion of Thailand by Vietnam? It was also no secret that the Pol Pot rebels received aid and

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23 Ibid., p. 15570.

comfort from and through Thailand - a development that Washington and ASEAN chose to soft-pedal. A UN debate under the circumstances might not serve a useful purpose. Thailand protested in the United Nations on 24 June 1980 against "acts of aggression" by Vietnamese and Kampuchean forces. But the Thai delegate, Pracha Gunkasem, did not ask for a meeting of the Security Council. In a letter to the Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim, he wrote that Thailand reserved the right "to take necessary and legitimate measures to safeguard her sovereignty and territorial integrity and to protect the lives and property of her citizens."<sup>24</sup> Such a course for Thailand meant looking to Washington.

#### Reaction and Response of the United States

Vietnamese military action in Kampuchea was a challenge for the American policy makers. The memory of a pathetic experience not long ago in this part of the world was still alive in the minds of the Americans. At this time the Carter Administration was talking very eloquently of "human rights" in its major foreign policy pronouncements. Even the general reaction of the people to the fight among the communists in Indochina was conspicuously circumspect. The American government also exercised an unusual reticence. Most of the US newspapers however commented that the United States had little ability to influence the course of this

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24 Ibid., p. 15702.

conflict and little willingness to meddle in a fight among the "bad guys". For once, the country could enjoy the "luxury" of sitting on the sidelines and witnessing the communist forces dissipating themselves according to a Richmond newspaper.<sup>25</sup> The San Diego Union suggested that the United States, "must keep its mouth shut and its eyes and ears open". The Boston Globe emphasized that American policy must be designed to bolster non-communist ASEAN countries in opposition to Hanoi's Soviet-supported "drive for dominance" throughout Southeast Asia.

The United States government took a very cautious and non-controversial stand. The Assistant Secretary of State Richard C. Holbrooke had said as early as on 25 October 1978 that for the time being the Carter Administration was maintaining a neutral stance in the rivalry among the Indochinese communist states. He pointed out, however, that "the US will view with concern actions in Indochina" which would threaten the stability of the region. In December of 1978 senior sources in CIA were predicting the Vietnamese invasion. These sources, according to Arkansas Gazette, editorial, told a group of newspaper editors on 5 December 1978 that the Vietnamese army would be "wheeling down" the highway to Phnom Penh within weeks.<sup>26</sup>

The State Department spokesman John F. Cannon emphasized American concern after the fall of Phnom Penh.

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25 Richmond Times (Virginia), 9 January 1979.

26 Arkansas Gazette, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 January 1979.

He called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Kampuchea and stated: "Our priority is to bring a local conflict to a speedy resolution and to prevent it from becoming a wider conflict."<sup>27</sup> But at the same time the Administration tried for a while to maintain seemingly even-handed policy, coupling its strong denunciation of the Vietnamese invasion with critical references of Pol Pot's "human rights" record. Subsequently Washington warned Moscow and Beijing not to intervene in the dispute. But the tone of Washington's reaction was sharply critical of Vietnam. The Carter Administration made it clear that Vietnam could not expect to establish diplomatic relations with the United States while its troops remained in Kampuchea.

It is noteworthy that Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Kampuchea, the former Head of the State and a long-time guest of the Chinese, thanked the United States for condemning Vietnamese invasion. He said that Kampuchea was willing to forget the American military role in his country (and his own overthrow) in early 'seventies and be good friends. The ousted Pol Pot regime of Kampuchea also sought to enlist the American support in its resistance to the Vietnamese invasion. The Carter Administration, however, appeared to ignore the overture,<sup>28</sup> since any such action could not produce desired results. Further there would be no

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27 Mary Costello, "Communist Indochina and the Big Powers", Editorial Research Reports, vol. 1, 1979, p. 107.

28 The Chattanooga Times (Tenes), 11 January 1977.

popular or Congressional support for such a course of action. What Washington favoured was to keep the heat on Vietnam and kindle anti-Vietnam and anti-Soviet sentiment in ASEAN and elsewhere. A posture of condemning aggression, a call for the withdrawal of the occupying forces, and the refusal to recognize the puppet regime set up by the occupying forces, met US requirements.

When the ousted Kampuchean government requested for an emergency session of the UN Security Council, the United States lent its support to it. That regime, favoured by China, was the recipient of US support too - an important manifestation of parallel action by Washington and Beijing. Control of a strategically located land by a Soviet satellite meant a "loss of prestige, influence and face" for China, the newest friend of the United States,<sup>29</sup> wrote the Philadelphia Inquirer. Though some US newspapers expressed worry that this new Indochina conflict could trigger war between the two largest communist Powers,<sup>30</sup> Washington did not believe that there was any such danger.

This policy, however, could not escape criticism in home and abroad, especially the espoused<sup>d</sup> of Khmer Rouge of the vicious Pol Pot. Newsday of Garden City, New York, commented that the stance of the United States officials was shocking, placed against the backdrop of the Carter

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29 The Philadelphia Inquirer (Pennsylvania), 9 January 1979.

30 The Houston Post (Texas), 11 January 1979.



Administration's pretension of concern for human rights. It wrote that the United States "should repudiate the Pol Pot government and refuse to support its efforts to bring the issue to the UN."<sup>31</sup> The San Diego Union denounced the American denunciation of the Vietnamese action in Kampuchea. It wrote: "As a violator of those 'human rights' which the Carter Administration still considered the corner stone of its foreign policy, Cambodia clearly ranks with Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China."<sup>32</sup> But Washington simply concentrated on the issue of aggression and said its posture involved no condonation of the crimes of the Pol Pot regime.

Early in February 1979, the United States had expressed concern about a possible attack on Vietnam by China. A State Department official said on 9 February that the United States was "not taking sides in the struggle between the communist states in Asia." The Chinese attack on Vietnam began only hours after Chinese Vice-Premier's return from a visit to Washington. During the visit Teng Hsiao-ping had time and again threatened to retaliate for Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea. This led Moscow to charge that Teng obtained secret commitments from President Carter. It blamed the United States for not warning Teng against attacking Vietnam. An American newspaper called the allegation

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31 Newsday (Garden City, New York), 8 January 1979.

32 The San Diego Union (California), 9 January 1979.

"silly" and asserted that the Chinese played by their own rules.<sup>33</sup> President Carter, however, did call on Beijing to make a "speedy withdrawal" from Vietnam. Treasury Secretary Werner Michael Blumenthal, who was on a trade mission to China, was reported to have with him a personal appeal from Carter asking the Chinese to withdraw from Vietnam. The fact that the trip was made as scheduled and the Treasury Secretary had far more important issues of mutual interest to discuss with Beijing, indicated clearly Washington's priorities in its policy toward this region. It is also noteworthy that the United States confirmed Leonard Woodcock as the American ambassador to China. Of note is the fact that the United States had expressed its inability to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam during the latter's invasion of Kampuchea. Moreover, the visit to Beijing at the height of the war by the British Secretary of State for Industry, Eric Varley, the President of the EEC, Roy Jenkins and other foreign officials was regarded as gestures, if not of approval, at least not of condemnation by the important American allies.<sup>34</sup>

Clearly no American purpose was served by any anti-Chinese statements. On the other hand, Washington too was not unhappy at the spectacle of Hanoi being administered

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33 Casper Star-Tribunal (Casper, Wyoming), 21 February 1979.

34 S. Rodenov, "Disgraceful Adventure Fails", International

Review (Moscow), May 1979, p 97.

a "lesson" by their erstwhile Chinese comrades. Washington did not think that it would have much difficulty in inducing ASEAN countries to follow a course similar to its own. It had for long harped on the size, strength, and expansionist designs of the North Vietnamese military forces. That these forces would for an indefinite period ahead be constrained to a substantial extent in countering a possible Chinese threat was a satisfying prospect both for Washington and for the ASEAN countries, especially those on the Mainland. The strong criticism that the United States voiced against the occupation of Kampuchea by Vietnamese forces, its refusal to recognize the new Phnom Penh regime on the ground that it was controlled by Hanoi, were justified by Washington on high moral grounds and on the basis of the principles of non-aggression, non-intervention in internal affairs of other countries and the right of self-determination on the basis of free elections. These concepts were also agreeable to the ASEAN countries. They had initiated various measures looking towards normalization of relation with China and even Vietnam, but they had to weigh what exactly Washington was doing. They had no incentive to take a point of view different from that of Washington, as it was the United States which could come to their help in case of a communist attack against them. In fact, during this Indochina conflict the ASEAN countries had hoped that like the legendary phoenix,

the dead SEATO might get back its life. Their hope was not belied. President Carter declared on 17 January 1979 that the United States was interested in seeing the integrity of Thailand protected, the borders not endangered or even threatened by the insurgent troops in Thai-Kampuchean border. The United States also speeded up deliveries of weapons, warplanes and other equipment to Bangkok. Besides, the United States came to the help of the ASEAN nations when they were undergoing severe socio-economic dislocations on account of a massive influx of refugees from Indochina. Consequently, the ASEAN countries were prepared to take a softer line toward Beijing and join the United States in continuing the demand that Vietnam should withdraw its troops from Kampuchea.

Moreover, the situation was one that made it more propitious than<sup>2</sup> ever before for Washington to encourage directly ASEAN states to examine security concerns of mutual interests. When the Vietnamese made an incursion into the Thai border, the Pentagon immediately speeded up the delivery of tanks and battle ground equipment. The Secretary of State Edmund Muskie pledged to the Thai Foreign Minister Sitti Savetsila easing of credit terms to allow Thai to purchase more arms and also held out the possibility of further aid. The moves to increase US arms supplies to Thailand and certain other countries of ASEAN and the recent visits of several officials of the US government to many

ASEAN Capitals are an indication that the US hopes that the time is right to be able, as Rostov had stated much earlier, to lead "from the middle". It is likely that the steps taken would be discreet and cautious and Washington seeking a low profile.

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## CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

One of the paradoxes of international politics today is the coexistence of a generally accepted doctrine of equality of states and the obvious inequality of their status, power, role and potentialities.<sup>1</sup> This inequality is entrenched deep in the very structure of the contemporary international system. A small but dominant subsystem today enjoys the monopoly of military capability, finance-capital as well as advanced technology. A large but subordinate subsystem, spanning Asia, Africa and Latin America, plays second fiddle to the dominant subsystem. This is because the powerful subsystem in the "North" had experienced the "Industrial Revolution" about two centuries ago and has now passed through a "Cybernetic Revolution". The social structures of the states of the "South" is predominantly agrarian and "Industrial Revolution" is still an unfulfilled dream for them. This fact of history has led to a high degree of "relational inequality" and submission of the "South" to the hegemonistic politico-economic and cultural policies of the "North".<sup>2</sup> Of course, the countries within the subsystem are

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1 Radharaman Chakrabarti, The Theory and Practice of International Relations (Delhi, 1982), p. 66.

2 For details see Jayantanuja Sanyopadhyaya, North over South : A Non-Western Perspective of International Relations (New Delhi, 1982), p. 2.

not homogenous and a great diversity is marked in their economic developments, political structures and historical experiences.

Apart from this, the world system is hierarchically stratified, in military terms, into Super, Great and Small Powers. The two Super Powers at the apex of the hierarchy have been resolutely striving to maintain and preserve their "relational control" over others. The Great Powers spare no effort to achieve a Super Power status. Each and every small power tries its best to exceed its immediate superior in strength or at best achieve a near parity with it. Each nation wants to achieve an upward mobility in the hierarchical power structure and simultaneously denies the same to its inferiors. The resultant effect of this complex process is co-existence of opportunistic co-operation as well as competition and conflict in the vast and intricate world of sovereign but unequal nations!

Scholars of international relations have constructed many theories and models in order to understand the phenomena of "asymmetrical relationships" between the dominant and dependent actors and international politics. Some of the theories are based on macro-studies and too comprehensive in nature to take note of the particularistic peculiarities of a region, sub-region or an individual nation. Some of them are based on micro-studies and so particularistic that the same theory cannot be applicable in studying other regions and



countries. The theories of imperialism and neo-imperialism, for example, has its own limitations. The whole gamut of international relations cannot simply be reduced into a single-most important formula of imperialistic exploitation of weak countries by strong imperial-cum-industrial nations. For example, it has been estimated by the World Bank experts<sup>3</sup> that 70 per cent of the world's population in the developing countries derive only 30 per cent of the world income though some 25 poor countries possess between 80 and 90 per cent of the total reserve of basic raw materials required by the industries of the rich nations. It implies that more than hundred other developing countries share only 10 to 20 per cent of the basic raw materials necessary for the industries of the industrial states of the North. Even the amount of investment and volume of trade are much more between the OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries than between the "North" and the "South". The purpose is not to derecognize the tremendous disadvantageous position of the South vis-a-vis the North, but to find out and show the other important aspects of this superior-subordinate relationships. It is noteworthy that some early Marxists like Kautsky and Hilferding sought to make a distinction between the political and economic aspects of imperialism, and to portray imperialism as a matter of policy

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<sup>3</sup> C.R.M. Rao, "Towards Economic Decolonization", Radical Humanist (New Delhi), October 1975, p. 13.

rather than as an inevitable corollary of capitalism, although Lenin and other orthodox Marxists differed with this contention.<sup>4</sup> Further, of note is the impact of climate on social and economic development, stressed by Marx and Engels and ignored by the latter Marxist writers.<sup>5</sup> Marx had argued that adverse climatic conditions led to the absence of private property in land in the Orient, which in turn led to the "Asiatic mode of production". Several studies have been made on the "Oriental Societies" and Marxian view has been challenged, yet a recognition of the role of climate on human development can never be lost sight of. Writings on the impact of climate on human society go back to Kautilya and Aristotle. Ibn Khaldun and Montesquieu contributed a more systematic study on the subject. In the first half of the twentieth century Huntington, Mills and Wheeler wrote more extensively on the impact of climate on human civilization and culture. The limitation of the theory of imperialism lies in the fact that it lays cent per cent emphasis on institutional factors of unequal development and neglects other significant factors such as the problem of population explosion, for example. Mountjoy says that Asia can abolish poverty or it can increase its number, but it cannot do the

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4 See Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", in Selected Works (Moscow Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), vol. 1, p. 695.

5 Bandyopadhyaya, n. 2, p. 257.

both at the same time.<sup>6</sup> The unequal development and unequal power-structures among the developing countries and within each of the developing countries also merit adequate attention in studying the pattern of international relations.

Studies analysing integration processes argue that economic exchanges between states are precursors of political co-operation, stimulating or reinforcing amiable relations.<sup>7</sup> Writers belonging to "dependencia school", on the other hand, emphasize the negative or non-cooperative consequences of economic relations and exchanges.<sup>8</sup> While the integration theory has to be accepted with a pinch of salt due to its neglect of some seemingly negative consequences of international economic relations, the "dependencia" theory also over-emphasizes the negative consequences and overlooks the positive outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding a huge literature on "dependency theory", many fundamental conceptual issues remain unresolved.

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6 Alan B. Mountjoy, Industrialization and Developing Countries (London, 1982), edn. 5, p. 233.

7 For details see Donald J. Puchala, "The Patterns of Contemporary Regional Integration", International Studies Quarterly, no. 12, March 1968, pp. 38-91.

8 For details see Ernst B. Hass and Phillippe Schmitter, "The Politics of Economics in the Latin American Free Trade Association after Four Years of Operation" (Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver; Monograph series in World Affairs, vol. 3, no. 2, 1965-66).

9 W. Ladd Hollist and Thomas H. Johnson, "Political Consequences of International Economic Relations: Alternative Explanations of United States/Latin American Non-Cooperation", The Journal of Politics (Florida), vol. 41, no. 4, November 1979, p. 1127.

Is the pattern of dependence of advanced industrial states on one another different in kind or only in degree from the dependence of peripheral capitalist societies on other members of the global system? What are the essential components of dependence that one must identify before constructing an adequate measure of it? Moreover, most of the studies by the "dependencia" school of writers have been made on the Latin American region. Since Latin America has its own peculiar features and uniqueness and its history, this theory cannot be applied wholesale in studying other regions of the world. In fact, analysis of economic data from thirty tropical African states in the middle and late 1960s provide little support for the dependency model, evidence in favour of conventional or even Marxist models.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, every theory may be correct in its own perspective and has something to contribute to the existing knowledge of international relations. There is, however, no gainsaying the fact that an understanding of the American perception of ASEAN countries cannot be possible by the help of any single existing theory, partly due to the lack of conceptual clarity of few theories and partly because of a little agreement among the scholars as to the substance and method of their general applicability. In the present study, it is not possible to construct any new theory because of its

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<sup>10</sup> Patrick J. McGowan and Dale L. Smith, "Economic Dependency in Black Africa: An Analysis of Competing Theories", International Organization, vol. 32, no. 1, Winter 1978, p. 179.

limited nature and scope. So the conclusion is drawn only on the basis of an examination and analysis of the historical facts, figures and processes.

Besides the externally engineered regional organisations (mostly of military nature), the indigenous efforts at regional co-operation by the Asian, African and Latin American countries aim at reducing dependence on foreign powers and by implication, increasing resilience. But due to intrinsic limitations, internal contradictions and external influences these associations including ASEAN are unable to evolve into a full-fledged community like that of European Economic Community. An agrarian social structure, low level of political maturity, half-way and unbalanced economic development hinder them from achieving substantial strength so as to avoid the influence from extra-regional forces on the Association. It is rare, for instance, for more than 10 per cent of a Third World country to consist of manufactures.<sup>11</sup> Most developing economies lack the required capital, technical skill and necessary technology for industrialization purposes. The result is heavy reliance on external assistance. The fact that bilateral aid from developed countries to developing nations accounts for 85 per cent<sup>12</sup> of the total foreign aid speaks volumes of the nature and degree of dependence of the developing nations on

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11 Philip's New Reference Atlas (London: Melbourne and Milwaukee, 1980), p. 20.

12 Philip's Universal Atlas (London, George Philip and Sons Ltd., 1981), p. 1.

the advanced industrial nations and the post-World War economic system. Thus the very structure of the economy of the ASEAN countries make them dependent on the international economic system, which is in turn dominated by the United States and its allies. So the indigenous effort at regional co-operation was heavily influenced by the extra-regional forces, especially by the United States. Besides, the existence of a security environment, more or less hostile to the ASEAN countries, made them dependent on the United States for security purposes. The fear of a Soviet penetration through Vietnam into the region as well as the spread of Chinese influence in Southeast Asia enabled the United States to make the ASEAN countries its stronghold to further its own interests. This was another factor which could not check the American influence in the making as well as evolution of ASEAN.

The interdependence among the near-equals is a reality and interdependence between the "North" and the "South" is largely a myth. The dominant powers most of the time chalk out plans and execute policies with an eye on their interest in some other developed countries. It may take the form of a co-operative venture (e.g. with Japan) or a conflicting issues (e.g. with Soviet Union). And the small countries become conduits or sometimes play the role of sacrificial goats (for the deity) and become helpless pawns. It should be borne in mind that in the post-World War II era the

United States had gradually attained the role as the most dominant, external influence in the Southeast Asian region. In Thailand and the Philippines its preeminence was clearly evident. In the largest entity of the region, Indonesia, the United States had its ups and downs but it was able to sustain a level of penetration and influence that was eventually to bring about a decisive change in the orientation of the country in a direction favourable to the United States. Malaysia and Singapore had all along been "pro-Western", with the United States bound to replace Great Britain as the most influential external factor. Thus it is not surprising that a regional organization emerging in the area would be a matter of considerable interest to Washington. Even though the region was not, in Washington's view, a rating as high a priority as West Europe, Middle East and Japan, the retention of a substantial level of US influence in the region has been regarded by the United States as a desirable objective. The first effort of the United States to take the initiative in the formation of regional organization took the form of a military alliance, SEATO, and its success was very limited. Some of the present members of ASEAN had stayed away from it and Indonesia had denounced it in strong terms. The dominant theme of this era was the spirit of nationalism and anti-colonialism. Despite these negative aspects and the Vietnam war the United States was able to safeguard its level of influence from being

grievously ended. In responding to the post-Vietnam situation and the continuing conflict with the Soviet Union along the continuing conflict with the Soviet Union along with the newly initiative tactic of "normalization" with China, Washington found itself in the situation where, keeping the lessons of the past in mind, it was to respond to indigenous development and whenever possible turn them to its advantage. How Washington had attempted to pursue this policy has been discussed in the present work.

When the war in Vietnam was at its height, five countries of Southeast Asia aspired for an "Asian Way" of thinking and an "Asian identity" and thus ASEAN took birth. The United States did not want to see any pan-Asiatic tendency hostile to its interest cropping up; but Washington did not view the emergence of ASEAN as a threat. So it did not oppose the establishment of ASEAN with a long-term interest in mind, but did not unitedly deal with the group as such. Strategies of fragmentation entails A's use of the relational power to segment 'B', 'C' and 'D' or to deal individually with them, so that the control of 'A' on them remains strong. The United States did not deal with ASEAN as a group till the end of fighting in Vietnam. It is since 1977 that it is dealing with ASEAN as a group on a limited scale.

It has been mentioned that the United States had a little economic interest in ASEAN countries. ASEAN countries



were never significant enough for the economic development, stability or survival of the United States. The United States economic involvement had predominantly political and strategic objectives. The principal objective was to slow down the level of influence of the adversary while continually striving to induce the regimes concerned to make them Western-oriented. Further, a minimum economic involvement from the American side constituted a substantial amount, if seen from the ASEAN side. This fact very well served as an instrument of the United States for the execution of "carrot and stick" policy, where the carrot was frequently and publicly stressed and the stick was discreetly indicated. The United States and its allies remained all along the trade partners as well as the foreign investors of the ASEAN nations. The ASEAN countries did attempt to build up relationship with the communist countries after the end of the Vietnam war. Preliminary trade relations were also attempted upon, but without much consequence. Their patron had established detente with Soviet Union and China before the ASEAN nations did so and the volume of trade between ASEAN and the Socialist bloc was too small to enable the communist powers to exercise any meaningful measure of control on ASEAN countries. On the other hand, while ASEAN's resources were not decisively important for the United States, the same was not believed to be true for themselves as for

the United States was concerned by the governments of the ASEAN countries.

The cold war and hot war among the communist countries of Asia in 1979 appeared to be an acid-test for the American policy makers. But they took a very prudent stand on it. The Nixon Doctrine of "Vietnamization" of war became vivid - Asians might fight the Asian war. Even if the American government wanted to involve on a large-scale, it could not do so because of the possibility of Congress and the public opinion opposing such a move. The United States thus reiterated its commitment to help the ASEAN nations, gave warning to the communist powers, promised unflinching support to Thailand and supplied military equipment. ASEAN's reactions to the "communist war" depended more on the views and actions of the United States than that of their own. As F.J. Galbraith puts it - this was emphasized in private conversations with ASEAN representatives, who made it clear that they were less worried about what they or their neighbours would do to counter Vietnamese aggression than they were about what the United States would do.<sup>15</sup>

ASEAN - singly or collectively - could not stand against Vietnam, China or Soviet Union. They wanted an American military posture in the area that could offset any communist adventurism. They desired quiet diplomatic

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<sup>15</sup> See Francis J. Galbraith, "ASEAN Today: Feeling the Heat", Asian Affairs: An American Review (New York), September-October 1980, p. 37.

reassurance that the United States would support them against aggression, while avoiding the stigma of formal military collaboration or alliance. Contrary to the historical record, many regimes tended to believe that the American connection would be a helpful factor in safeguarding the regime against internal opponents. This factor was a strong card in the hands of the US policy makers. They wanted and tried to cultivate and project a non-aligned image, yet they remained basically free world-oriented in their commitment. They upheld economic self-reliance, but could not form custom union, much less an economic community. Chesterton once remarked - Twenty million young women rose to their feet with the cry "we will not be dictated to" and promptly became stenographers. ASEAN countries unfortunately met this same fate. They rose to their feet in 1967 with the cry of "Asian identity" and identified themselves with the "Free World".

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