

INTRA - ASEAN DEFENCE CO-OPERATION

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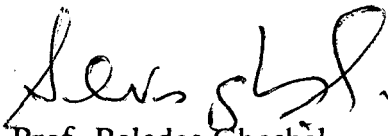
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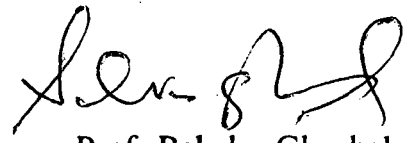
CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled "**Intra ASEAN Defence Co-operation**" submitted by **SEEMA SINGH** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted in part or in full for any degree of this university and is a record of the student's own work carried by her under my supervision and guidance.

I recommend that this Dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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To,

Papa, Mummy, Munna

&

Baby

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Seema Singh
Seema Singh

Preface

In 1967 ASEAN was formed with the view that local disputes were wasteful and self - defeating. Its chief aim was to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in the region, in the process facilitating the development of a "security community" through mutual co-operation. Thus originated the concept of intra - ASEAN defence co-operation.

The end of the Cold War has changed the concerns for security in the region. Defence co-operation is of vital concern to the countries of the region, since the end of the Cold War has merely meant, the disappearance of just one dimension of its security problem. Apart from the Cold War the region has always contained within itself various seeds of potential conflicts, both domestic and regional, and inter-state. The on going conflict situations in Cambodia and Myanmar and the ethnic insurgencies in some ASEAN countries are examples which have survived the Cold War and which are basically domestic conflicts, although the Cambodian conflict has from the beginning involved external powers. And, indeed, examples of inter - state conflicts, actual as well as potential abound.

From the very beginning, ASEAN was preoccupied with security and was sustained by security concerns. Bilateral relations among member states, with a few exceptions, have been considerably strengthened. ASEAN has also helped to prevent the repetition of the fratricidal wars that were witnessed by the Indo-China region.

ASEAN has helped to boost the domestic legitimacy of incumbent regimes during the third summit in Manila, despite the grave concerns for their security.

The Declaration of ASEAN Concord endorsed existing bilateral military ties by calling for the continuation of co-operation on a non-ASEAN basis between member states according to their mutual needs and interests.

ASEAN defence co-operation is well-defined at the bilateral level. There is exchange of military intelligence as well as joint exercises between member countries. Another area of defence co-operation which is often regarded as suitable for greater ASEAN activity, is in weapon standardisation and joint procurement leading towards greater inter-operability. ASEAN leaders do not support the idea of an alliance since they feel that without a formal military pact ASEAN states can operate more flexibly.

Complimentary to these bilateral efforts are the multilateral security activities of ASEAN.

This work attempts to look into the role of ASEAN in promoting security in the region as well as the different levels at which this co-operation works. Hence,

The first chapter takes an overall view of the evolution of ASEAN and the circumstances that helped in the process.

The second chapter explains the challenges faced by ASEAN due to the threats to the security of the Southeast Asian countries.

The third chapter makes an attempt to examine the different levels of defence co-operation amongst the ASEAN states.

The fourth chapter attempts to examine the recent developments in defence co-operation and at the same time includes a discussion on whether or not there is an "arms race" in the region. Chapter five deals with the conclusion.

This study is a preliminary work and there is much scope for an in depth study into the different countries'

defence programmes and the levels of co-operation between them. Much work remains to be done, especially as regards the actual figures for recent arms acquisitions and increase in defence expenditures, and their significance for the future. I have not been able to do much justice to the study, due to the constraints of space and time as well as scarcity of primary sources.

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

In the mid 1960s, the political structures in Southeast Asia were very fragile. There was an apparent stalemate due to the Vietnamese Communist forces battling U.S. and South Vietnamese forces. Malaysia and Indonesia were locked in a bitter political and military struggle called *Konfrontasi* or confrontation. There was very slow progress in Burma as well as periodic and mystifying coups in Thailand. In the Philippines there was internecine, intra-elite scrambling for power following the dynamic Magsaysay era. Maoism was triumphant in China, and revolutionary contagion appeared ready to spread in Southeast Asia.

"And yet, beneath the superficial fragilities of the Southeast Asian political structures, leaving aside Indo-China, it is apparent that these traditional and hierarchical societies were undergoing changes that strengthened them in the 1960s".¹

The Bangkok Declaration of August 8, 1967 was signed by the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, by which the Association of

1. Ronald D. Palmer and Thomas J. Reckford, Building ASEAN: 20 Years of Southeast Asian Cooperation (The Washington Papers), CSIS, Washington, 1987, p.3.

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed. In fact, ASEAN was formed as a result of the successful co-operation of Malaysia and Indonesia under Thai aegis to end Sukarno's "Crush Malaysia" confrontation campaign against the formation of Malaysia.² The purpose of ASEAN was to foster economic, social and cultural co-operation and to promote regional peace and stability.

ASEAN was formed due to the belief that local disputes were wasteful and self-defeating. By 1965 relations between Sukarno and the military had reached a crisis due to his dependence on PKI³ (*Indonesian Communist Party*) support. A coup attempt led by leftist military officers in September 1965, with the direct involvement of PKI activists and at least the indirect involvement of the PKI leadership was crushed by Suharto.⁴ Among the earliest course corrections undertaken by him was bringing the confrontation to an end.

Hence an agreement was reached in August 1966 to end confrontation.

2. Ibid., p.5.

3. PKI - It was founded in 1920. From 1951 to 1965, it grew steadily to become a powerful participant in the domestic politics. Until 1965 when it was destroyed, its strategy of peaceful competition for power and building mass support was generally successful. Source: Mac Arthur F. Corsino, A Communist Revolutionary Movement as an International State-Actor: The Case of the PKI-Aidit, ISEAS, Singapore, 1982.

4. Palmer and Reckford, n.1, p.5.

This desire for regional co-operation had deep roots despite the historic bilateral problems among the Southeast Asian nations. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (*SEATO*) formed in 1954, was the first such effort. Since it was U.S. conceived and U.S. dominated, however, it held little interest for nations other than the Philippines and Thailand, both military allies of the U.S. In 1961 the *Association of Southeast Asia* (*ASA*) was formed in Bangkok by Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand which deliberately focussed on economic, social, cultural, scientific and administrative rather than political concerns. *ASA's* activities were hindered by its limited membership and the worsening relations between Malaysia and the Philippines in 1963 over the Philippine claim to Sabah. The formation of Malaysia in 1963 by the inclusion of the former British possessions in Borneo - Sabah and Sarawak, led to a deterioration of Malaysia's relations with Indonesia and the Philippines.

One doomed effort to tide over the differences among these predominantly Malay states was the formation of the *Greater Malay Confederation* in 1963, which came to be known as *MAPHILINDO* (Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia). The organization became defunct after Sukarno launched his *Crush Malaysia* campaign.

ASEAN was formed after the failure of all these attempts to foster co-operation, with the view that because of fortuitous political changes, the nations that formed ASEAN were at least intellectually and conceptually prepared to co-operate with each other. Although each nation was anti-Communist ASEAN was not conceived to be another anti-Communist organisation. Rather, from the very beginning ASEAN was self-consciously inward looking and "regional" and devoted to individual and regional self-reliance and resilience. It was assumed that national resilience could be achieved through economic development resulting in political and social stability. This would further promote regional resilience.

ASEAN was not conceived as a security organization. Yet, its presence has been regarded as a security buffer by the member states. A common threat perception - that of Communist China, proved to be the rallying point. In 1967, no doubt the major security concern was of an internal nature since most of the member states during the period, were in the early stages of nation building. Their governments were being challenged by armed Communist and separatist movements. Yet, external threats, perceived as indirect, and mainly in the form of a revolutionary China, provided stimuli to the existing destabilising domestic elements.

The ASEAN members realised that unless they ensured a peaceful environment, both within and outside the region, development would not be possible. Such an environment would be possible through consultation in order to remove mistrust, and by playing down the sources of conflict between the countries. To tackle the insurgency emanating essentially from Communist challenge or religious fundamental challenges, they decided to discuss amongst themselves and evolve co-operation to cope with such challenges. Thus, the need for a security organisation arose essentially from the fear that threat emanated from within. These threats could be removed through control of the political system by evolving a strong governmental machinery in their respective states as also by directly controlling the hostile groups through co-operation. Before proceeding any further in our discussion, it is necessary to form an idea of the rationale behind the formation of ASEAN. It would not be out of context here to discuss the challenges to the security of the ASEAN states.

Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines have been plagued by insurgencies of one form or another. Only Singapore can be said to be relatively stable.

So far as Thailand is concerned, three distinct groups can be identified on the basis of religion, namely Chris-

tians, Muslims and Buddhists. Of these, the Muslims are especially distinct for two reasons. Firstly, over fifty per cent of the total Muslim population is concentrated in the four southern most provinces of Pattani, Yala, Naratiwat and Satul where they constitute the majority. Secondly, except for Satul, almost all the Muslims in Pattani, Yala and Naratiwat are ethnically Malay and speak primarily a Malay dialect. Hence the Muslim Malays in these provinces are politically significant since they are the only minority group within the country to have actively and consistently resisted its assimilation policy. "Despite the government's attempts at conscious political integration and cultural assimilation, the Muslim Malays have periodically expressed their demands for self-determination. These agitations for greater political autonomy - and sometimes political independence - have been considered a threat to the national security and unity of Thailand, and consequently the government has put a lot of effort into settling the conflict."⁵ However efforts of the government have not been successful. The socio-cultural and political realities of the Muslim - Malays which prevent their identification with, or assimilation into, the Thai state have not been sufficiently recog-

5. For details, see Uthai Dulyakasem, Thailand - Muslim Malay separatism in southern Thailand: Factors underlying the political revolt, in Lim Joo Jock and Vani S. (eds.), Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia, ISEAS, 1984, pp.218-233.

nized. The conflict between the central Thai government and the Muslim Malays in southern Thailand, are political, and at the same time, a combination of other factors - religious, linguistic, economic and socio-cultural. The support of some Islamic countries to the Muslim Malays in southern Thailand has provided motivation to their ongoing struggle for supremacy. No doubt several organised groups have emerged to recruit members and mobilise the Muslim Malay masses to fight the Thai government, only three - the BNPP (*Barisan National Pembebasan Pattani*), the BRN (*Barisan Revolusi Nasional*) and the PULO (*Pattani United Liberation Organisation*)⁶ have succeeded in perpetuating their organisations. The struggle of the Muslim-Malays continues with the degree of mass support fluctuating with internal and external conditions.

There were other problems as well so far as national resilience for Thailand was concerned. Thai policies were

6. BNPP - It was formed on 10 September 1971 in Kelantan, by a splinter group of the BRN claiming to succeed it. Initially it stressed at Islam and Malay nationalism. It has recently started emphasizing in favour of a thoroughly Islamic platform. Its aim is to liberate all Muslim areas in south Thailand from Thailand, for establishing the sovereign Islamic state of Pattani.

BRN - It was formed in 1960 as the first truly political organization within the Muslim-Malay provinces. It was separatist and had Pan-Malay nationalist aspirations.

PULO - It was founded due to the fact that the foreign trained Malay Muslims wanted a political role to further the cause of Malay-Muslim separatism. It was launched in India in 1967.

Source: Omar Farouk, Thailand - The historical and transnational dimensions of Malay-Muslim separatism in southern Thailand, in Jock and Vani (eds.), n.5, pp.234-257.

volatile in the early 1970s as a result of student activism. The constitutional rule introduced in 1968 ended in 1971. This resulted in a hostile student reaction and led to demonstrations against the military dictatorship on various issues, including corruption, involvement in the Vietnam war, etc. As a result, military rule ended and constitutional rule was re-introduced in the 1973-76 period. Meanwhile there were serious differences along ideological lines between students. This led to violent disturbances in the mid 1970s and "eventually contributed to the formation of another military regime in 1976."⁷

Another complication was the Communist insurgency in the 1970s. It was active on the Laos border among the ethnic minorities.

Thai military expenditures amounted to U.S. \$ 457 million in 1971 and 619 million in 1975. Thai GNP rose from U.S. \$ 12.6 million to 23.9 billion in the period. Military expenditures as a percentage of GNP were 3.0 in 1971 and 2.6 in 1975. Military expenditures as a percentage of central government expenditure were 18.3 per cent in 1971, peaked at 20.1 per cent in 1974 and were 17.2 per cent in 1975.

So far as Malaysia is concerned, the problem of Malay - Muslim separation even in its embryonic form, involved

7. Palmer and Reckford, n.1, p.24.

Malaysia just as much as it did Thailand. There was a general feeling amongst Malay-Muslims that because of common culture, religion, ethnic background and past history, the Malays of Malaya would readily come to their rescue. However, whilst popular Malay support and sympathy from Malaysia played a pivotal role in helping to fuel the political aspirations of the Malay - Muslim separatists, the Malaysian authorities have been, in various ways collaborating with Thailand, to subdue the threat of Malay - Muslim secession. Earlier, Malaysia used to be a relatively safe sanctuary for their political and even military operations. Therefore, although Malaysia might have been the breeding ground for separatist organisations, "it was the attitude and action of the Malayan government towards them which stifled their operations within the boundaries of Malaya."⁸

Relations between the two governments have been extremely cordial. Both countries proclaim to uphold the principles of peaceful neighbourly co-existence on the basis of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of one another.

Malaysian military expenditures rose from U.S. \$ 258 million in 1971 to 724 million in 1975. Central government

8. Farouk, n.6, p.245.

expenditures rose from U.S.\$ 2.2 billion in 1971 to 4.8 billion in 1975. Military expenditures as a percentage of GNP rose from 3.2 in 1971 to 4.9 in 1975. Military expenditures as a percentage of central government expenditures rose from 11.8 in 1971 to 15.3 in 1975.

In Indonesia President Suharto's military dominated New Order was committed to restoring public order and developing an alternative political and economic system to Sukarnoism. "Dwi fungsi" was the concept of national defence based on an army committed to indefinite struggle against an aggressor. The "dwi fungsi" concept was the key to the military's capability to challenge the *PKI* in the Sukarno period. Subsequent to foiling the alleged *PKI* influenced September 30, 1965 coup attempt, the military assumed direct rule and defined its twin functions as national defence and socio-political development. The military's reforms were aimed at reducing factionalism. A number of other problems continued to haunt the Indonesian government. Instances of regional resistance continued throughout the 1960s. Immediately after the Dutch returned West Irian to Indonesia, a group of local people took to arms under the banner of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka in 1963.

Centrifugal forces were reinforced when in 1976 the GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*)⁹ was established by the Acehnese. In fact, regional rebellions in Indonesia have been of two types. The former are similar in character to the *Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia* or the PRRI.¹⁰ They merely challenged the central government at the regional level without attempting to secede from Indonesia. They were concerned with overthrowing or forcing the ruling regime at the regional level to recognise and meet their demands. Although these movements occurred in a number of regions, they identified themselves as 'national movements', retaining the word 'Indonesia' in the name of their organisations. However, the second type of movements proclaimed the independence of their regions from the Republic of Indonesia, namely the RMS (*Republic of South Moluccas*), the OPM (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*),¹¹ and the GAM.

-
9. GAM - Founded in 1969, it proclaimed the independence of Aceh from Indonesia. It had no popular support and its activities were sporadic. The government took no risks and responded swiftly with military operations. Since then, supporters have either surrendered or been killed. Source: Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, *Indonesia - Issues and politics of regionalism in Indonesia: Evaluating the Acehnese Experience*, in Jock and Vani (eds.), n.5, pp.111- 128.
 10. PRRI - a rebellion in which several rich regions outside Java stood firm against Javanese domination in 1958. It was launched in Sumatra and North Sulawesi by civilian leaders and regional military officers. Source: Sjamsuddin, n.9.
 11. RMS - Christian led resistance in the 1950s in Maluku. Better treatment afforded to Muslims aroused dissatisfaction amongst Christians.
OPM - Organisasi Papua Merdeka or Free Papua movement in Irian Jaya in 1963 had very small numbers and was poorly armed. Due to Indonesian military action, OPM guerrillas crossed the border and set up camps in Papua New Guinea. At present it is in considerable disarray.
Source: Peter Hastings, *Indonesia - National integration in Indonesia: The case of Irian Jaya*, in Jock and Vani (eds.), n.5, pp.129-148.

Regional resistance in Indonesia and their expressions are a continuing and historical issue in Indonesian politics which have surfaced as both armed and unarmed movements proclaiming different objectives.

Under the "New Order" government, regional relations assumed high priority. Although careful to avoid being criticised for trying to dominate the region, it began to develop its leadership potential with the ASEAN.

From 1971 to 1975, Indonesian military expenditures rose from U.S.\$ 784 million to 2.1 billion. GNP rose from U.S.\$ 28.3 billion in 1971 to 52.5 billion in 1975 and central government expenditures rose from U.S.\$ 3.9 billion in 1971 to 12.1 billion in 1975. Military expenditure as a percentage of GNP rose from 3.5 in 1971 to 4.1 in 1975 even as such expenditure declined from 24.8 per cent of central government expenditure in 1971 to 17.9 per cent in 1975.

In Philippines, the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the NPA (*New People's Army*)¹² had started with only 60 men in 1969. It successfully identified itself with local agrarian grievances.

12. NPA - In the 1960s there was a revival of a Communist inspired insurgency by the newly constituted Communist Party of the Philippines - the New People's Army. The NPA along with the CPP and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) served as the major focus of left wing opposition to Marcos. Source: Raul Guzman and Mila Reforma (eds.), Government and Politics of the Philippines, ISEAS, Singapore, 1988.

Muslim or Moro violence was also witnessed against the Christian government. However, fighting in earnest against the government troops began in the late 1960s. Political violence began in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago by mid 1972. Conflict reached its peak in 1973-1975 when the military arm of the *Banga Moro Army* fielded its armed fighters. The Philippines focussed on internal security threats rather than the external threat. Expansion of the armed forces was necessary, to cope with the requirements of the martial law and counter insurgency missions.

From 1971 to 1975, Philippines military expenditures rose from U.S.\$ 154 million to 849 million as the size of the military establishment increased. In this period GNP rose from U.S.\$ 14.1 billion to 27.4 billion and central government expenditures rose from U.S.\$ 1.5 billion to 4.4 billion. Military expenditures as a percentage of GNP rose from 1.1 per cent in 1971 to 3.1 per cent in 1975. Military expenditures as a percentage of central government expenditures rose from 9.4 per cent to 19.5 per cent.

Under these circumstances it was but natural that concerns for security would assume paramount importance in the region. The end of the Cold War has merely meant the disappearance of just one form or dimension of its security problem. Ethnic insurgencies in the ASEAN countries are

examples which have survived the Cold War and are basically domestic conflicts, although the Cambodian conflict has from the beginning involved external powers.

The five founding governments of ASEAN began to think in terms of regional co-operation especially after Indonesia renounced a radical nationalism and returned to a conventional diplomatic practice. Regional partnership was intended to control conflict, to ease the management of fragile political systems and thus reduce vulnerability. As ASEAN evolved politically in response to regional changes and challenges, other intra-mural differences served to point out the inter-governmental nature of the association. Internal political disorder would not spill over to affect neighbouring countries nor would it provide external powers with a pretext to enter Southeast Asia. This inference of political prophylaxis contained the idea of the indivisibility of security integral to the original concept of collective security. ASEAN members could not openly declare their intention of forming a security organisation since their association would be termed as an anti-Communist organisation. Hence neither security, nor defence formed an important agenda for discussion during the first summit.

A common approach to all issues reflected a consensus, since a regional association deficient in military capabili-

ty and unable to engage in collective defence might contribute somewhat to regional security. Collective defence was not possible at this stage since four of its five founding governments retained long established security relationships with extra regional powers. The Preamble to the Bangkok Declaration inaugurating ASEAN however, indicated a desire, of the members, to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation in order to preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of the people.¹³

The ASEAN leaders deal security alongside with social, economic and well-being of a nation. It involves the peaceful progress, development and betterment of the states. Since it relates to the quality or condition of being secure, it must be free from exposure to danger and it must be assured of safety and certainty. Security lies not in military alliance but in a broad redefining of security in terms of socio-economic development.

Although within the context of its founding principles, the ASEAN countries have focussed primarily on economic matters, with a secondary accent on political issues, the Indo-China conflict has made ASEAN promote its political and

13. ASEAN Declaration, reprinted in ASEAN Documents series, 1967-1985, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 1985, p.17.

military co-operation.

Defence co-operation is not the prime concern of ASEAN in promoting its security co-operation which could become a barrier to the development of an ASEAN 'defence community'. It could however be viable towards the formation of an ASEAN 'security community'.

In 1971 the principle of ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality) was mooted. This principle excluded any important role for the major powers in the region, and at the same time avoided rigorous stands like neutralisation. The Declaration of ASEAN Concord had made reference to the settlement of intra-regional conflicts by peaceful means. The Communist occupation in the Indo-China countries provided additional stimulus to ASEAN to create a regional order as is evident from the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation, concluded in Bali in 1976.

The significance of the ASEAN concord was that a matter of secondary consideration in the original ASEAN Declaration had been elevated in importance and the security goals of the organisation conceived as complimentary, were reiterated. It was maintained that the stability of each member state of the ASEAN region is an essential contribution to internal peace and security. "Each member state resolves to eliminate threats posed by subversion to its stability, thus

strengthening national and regional resilience."¹⁴ Promotion of regional resilience was the foremost priority of the ASEAN governments in August 1967. At Bali the implicit collective internal security role of ASEAN was explicitly stated. "Within the Declaration of ASEAN concord, one facet of the security role of ASEAN was articulated, albeit in ideal and other than conventional terms."¹⁵ There was a brief but specific mention of defence co-operation in the Declaration. It endorsed continuation of co-operation¹⁶ on a non-ASEAN basis between the member states in security matters in accordance with their mutual needs and interests.

Indonesia's Defence Ministry had earlier tried to make more explicit provision for such co-operation, but a consensus did not exist even for bringing existing bilateral defence co-operation under ASEAN auspices. Military co-operation it was likely, would lead to intra-mural tensions. Hence it was restricted to, bilateral border co-operation control operations begun before the formation of ASEAN, as also to, symbolic naval and air-force exercises. An underlying obstacle to ASEAN moving from collective internal

14. ASEAN Documents series, n.13.

15. Michael Leifer, ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia, Routledge, London and New York, 1989, p.67.

16. Ibid.

defence to collective defence was the absence of a common strategic perspective among ASEAN states.

In pursuing the elusive goal of regional security, ASEAN has moved beyond an initial and continuing practice of intra-mural dispute management. In dealing with the Kampuchean issue, ASEAN has exhibited an evident paradox.

Whenever governments co-operate with security in mind, it is not unusual for their collective enterprise to assume some military form. This is not true for ASEAN. Defence co-operation, beyond exchanges of intelligence does take place among ASEAN states but primarily on a limited basis, and then only outside of the formal institutional structure. The ASEAN summit in Singapore in early 1992 agreed that ASEAN should establish intra-regional security co-operation with the wider Asia-Pacific region.

However, ASEAN leaders continue to resist the idea of an alliance by reiterating that without a military pact, ASEAN states can operate more flexibly. The leaders are at the same time sceptical of the usefulness of intra-ASEAN security commitments. There are also doubts as to whether an ASEAN alliance would really deter any prospective aggressor.

This is indicative of the fact that a full fledged

military pact outlining military arrangements is regarded as unnecessary or unimportant. Hence, the goal of creating 'security community' at a sub-regional and regional level has assumed priority. A "more defined security community" was considered as more appropriate for the regional security concern.

At the moment, it is indeed, the external aspect of security which is dominating ASEAN thinking on security or defence co-operation (as proved by greater intra-ASEAN military co-operation). This thinking revolves around concern about the impact of the reduction of super-power involvement in the region, and, more importantly, the related perception that, a "power vacuum" may occur, which could lead to an increased role for regional powers such as China, India and especially Japan.

The difficulty at present is, regarding the form that future ASEAN security policy should take. It was hoped that the Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) would provide a forum for a political security dialogue which in turn would enhance regional security. However, not much was achieved in this direction, except the institutionalisation of a security dialogue in the form of a meeting of senior officials prior to the PMC.

Hence, one can easily conclude that ASEAN will not find

it convenient to enter into such a broad security dialogue. For the present, at least, intra-ASEAN defence co-operation will continue in much the same way as before. There will be the declaratory policies of ZOPFAN etc. with a continuing pattern (perhaps an expanding one) of bilateral military co-operation, based on joint exercises and shared training facilities. It still seems most unlikely, considering continuing differences in strategic perspectives and limited externally oriented military capabilities, that ASEAN will move any closer to becoming a military alliance.

CHAPTER - II

ASEAN: Challenges and Responses

In Southeast Asia, while some countries have made progress in some aspects of state formation, others, especially Cambodia, Burma and the Philippines, have declined. Thailand, Vietnam and Laos as yet, do not have firm foundations. Many states of the region are still weak. Their fragile nature (political and economic) has resulted in a number of rather complex domestic conflicts centering on authority and legitimacy, political participation, ethnicity, religion, distributive justice and other related issues. These conflicts have not as yet been resolved and as such, make the states concerned, vulnerable to external intervention. The security concerns issuing from these domestic conflicts of the Southeast Asian states are not narrowly military security in nature, but rather broad, encompassing political, economic, socio-cultural as well as military. At the same time a number of conflicts over different issues between the ASEAN states posed a serious challenge to the security environment of the region as well as to the existence of ASEAN.

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Much of ASEAN's credibility stems from its role in dealing with problems of regional order and its response to them.

Domestic conflicts play a crucial role in shaping the Southeast Asian security environment. These conflicts are mainly due to the multi-ethnic, multi-national character of these states. Though they have been largely confined to the local level, in nearly all cases they affect bilateral relations between these countries. Tension and friction has resulted due to domestic inter ethnic conflicts between indigenous and immigrant minority communities. Malaysia experienced the most radical inter-ethnic tension in 1969 with a near crisis situation in 1987. Such tensions also occur in Indonesia and Singapore, though to a lesser degree. External threat perceptions have been influenced by domestic inter-state conflicts, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Armed separatist movements involving indigenous ethnic minorities have challenged the very basis of statehood and national identity in the region. These include the *Pemerintahan Revolusioner Republic of Indonesia* (in Central and West Sumatra), the *Permesta Revolt*¹ (Southern

1. Permesta Revolt - In south Sulawesi, dissatisfactions developing within the local military structure in early 1950 led a group of independence fighters in this region to align themselves with the West Javanese Darul Islam rebellion. Source: Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, *Indonesia - Issues and politics of regionalism in Indonesia: Evaluating the Acehnese experience*, in Lim Joo Jock and Vani S. (eds.), *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, ISEAS. 1984, p.111.

Sulawesi), the *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (Irian Jaya), the *Moro National Liberation Front*² in the Philippines, and the *Pattani United Liberation Organisation* in southern Thailand. Indigenous minority ethnic groups are carrying on armed struggle against the political centre in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. The armed struggle waged by the Malay-Muslim separatist groups in southern Thailand has led to friction in Thai-Malaysian bilateral relations. Thai officials firmly believe that the separatist organisations cannot survive without support from Malaysia and certain Middle Eastern countries. The Malaysian government maintains that, this is an internal matter of Thailand, and that, it provides no assistance to the separatist groups. However, there is popular sympathy for the separatists in certain segments of the Malay community in Malaysia, especially in the north-eastern states which are predominantly Malay-Muslim. Opposition parties which have a strong base in these states have provided sanctuary and material support. Thai cooperation in countering the threat

2. MNLF - It was founded in mid 1971, for liberating the 'bangsa' and their homelands. They believed in two forms of resistance: parliamentary participation and armed struggle. They are active in Mindanao. Military operations launched by the government against the armed MNLF rebels has failed to suppress them. Source: E. R. Mercado, *Culture, economics and revolt in Mindanao: The origins of the MNLF and the politics of Moro separatism*, in Jock and Vani (eds.), n.1, pp.151-175.

posed by the MCP (*Malayan Communist Party*)³ is conditional to Malaysia's non-support for the separatist groups.

Malaysia however, due to its own political considerations has not been prepared to accede to Thai requests to co-operate in suppressing the separatist movements. It refused, for instance, Thai request in 1982 for 'right of hot pursuit'.⁴ Thailand was enraged at this and advocated nullification of the bilateral security arrangement instituted in 1948. Tensions have since cooled down. Both Thailand and Malaysia have since been careful not to allow this issue to sour bilateral relations. Both recognise that they have much to gain by continuing bilateral cooperation within the spirit of ASEAN. Malaysia and Indonesia have advocated moderation in the Organisation of Islamic Conference, and counselled respect for the territorial integrity of Thailand and the Philippines (which is also plagued with demands for secession in the south).

3. MCP - It was formed on 31 August, 1944. It was predominantly Chinese. The remnants of the 1948-1960 Emergency made infrequent forays from their Southern Thailand retreat. They unsuccessfully attempted to infiltrate organisations such as trade unions and political parties. In 1968, 'armed struggle' replaced 'united front' as the party's guiding principle following which it had some success in expanding its activities but still posed no serious threat to the governmental security. Source: John N. Funston, Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., Singapore, 1980.

4. Muthiah Alagappa, "The Dynamics of International Security in South East Asia: Change and Continuity", Australian Journal of International Affairs, vol. XXXV, 1991, p.9.

Like Thailand, Philippines is of the opinion that Malaysia provides sanctuary and material support for the Muslim Moro separatist movements in southern Philippines. However, while it is unlikely that Malaysia has, or would provide support to the Moro separatist movements, there is no doubt that when Sabah was governed by the predominantly Muslim USNO (*United Sabah National Organisation*),⁵ it provided sanctuary as well as financial and military (small arms and ammunition) support. "Unlike the problem of armed separation in southern Thailand, which has remained relatively contained, the separatist problem in southern Philippines has become intertwined with domestic problems in Malaysia and also with other bilateral problems between Malaysia and the Philippines."⁶

When Sabah was controlled by USNO, the Moros were allowed easy entry, which resulted in a large Filipino-Muslim population in that state. The PBS (*Party Bersatu Sabah*), which holds political power in Sabah, has been eager to repatriate the illegal immigrants. The problem of Moro insurgency is further complicated due to the

5. USNO - It was formed in 1963, prior to the formation of Malaysia. Its members are overwhelmingly Muslim. Source: N. T. Madale, *Philippines - The future of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) as a separatist movement in southern Philippines*, in Jock and Vani (eds.) n.1, pp.176-188.

6. Alagappa, n.4.

Philippines claim to Sabah as well as the conflicting territorial claims of the Philippines and Malaysia in the South China Sea.

Difficulties in bilateral relations between Malaysia and Singapore are mainly the result of inter-ethnic tensions between Malay and Chinese communities. Normal relations of Malaysian Malays with Singapore are hampered due to the separation of Singapore from Malaysia under strained circumstances. The delicate racial balance (due to the Chineseness of Singapore), as also the communal character of domestic politics in Malaysia have led to increased animosity and bitterness. However, both countries are aware that they have more to gain through co-operation rather than, conflict.

The presence of rich and prosperous ethnic Chinese elite in Indonesia and the Chineseness of Singapore, dampened Indonesian-Singapore relations in the 60s. Relations have since then improved. External threat perceptions of both Malaysia and Indonesia have developed due to the economically powerful ethnic Chinese communities in Malaysia and Indonesia and the PRC's (People's Republic of China) policies towards them.

Inter-state hostilities are due to the presence of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia

China attacked Vietnam in February-March 1979 due to the expulsion of the Hoa people by Vietnam in 1978.

Vietnam invaded Cambodia due to the activities of the Khmer Rouge against ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia and intense hostility towards Vietnam.⁷ The presence of a large ethnic Vietnamese community in Cambodia is viewed by the Cambodians as reflective of the Vietnamisation of Cambodia and continuation of a historical trend, which if unchecked, will result in the political extinction of Cambodia. Hence Cambodia is in favour of repatriation of all Vietnamese 'settlers'. Vietnam, however, reiterates that, since these people have lived in Cambodia for generations, any international arrangement must provide for their safety. Thus, the issue is very explosive. "It is pertinent to note that in both the above cases, the transnational consequences are more intense because of geographical contiguity and the deep-seated historical animosities between Vietnam and China and between Cambodia and Vietnam."⁸ Despite the presence of such domestic conflicts which are very often intra-ASEAN in nature, ASEAN has managed through its efforts at conflict

7. For details, see Udai Bhanu Singh, "Whither Cambodia", Strategic Analysis, vol.XVI, no.5, Aug.93, pp.577-588; Yoneji Kuroyanaga, "Kampuchean Conflict and ASEAN: A View from the Final Stage", Japan Review of International Affairs vol.III, no.1, Spring, Summer 89, pp.57-81.

8. Alagappa, n.4, p.11.

resolution and confidence building measures, to evolve into a diplomatic community, and, has survived till date, even in the face of great difficulties.

The Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia in 1978 put an end to ASEAN's hopes for a Southeast Asia free of great power rivalry since it had to accept U.S. and Chinese support against perceived Vietnamese (backed by the Soviet Union) expansionism. Until the later part of the 1980s, the prospects for regional order in Southeast Asia remained more closely linked to the dynamics of Sino-Soviet and U.S.-Soviet rivalry than to ASEAN's own concept of peace through neutrality. There was not much choice for ASEAN. It had to be pragmatic and let regional order and conflict resolution become a function of great power priorities and policies, even in the case of the Cambodian conflict which became a focus for its political and diplomatic role in the 1980s.

ASEAN-Indo-Chinese divide was the chief obstacle to ASEAN's concept of regional order based on its principles of non-intervention (by external powers in the region) and non-interference (by the ASEAN states in their domestic conflicts).

In spite of failure initially, Cambodia became a major testing ground for regional approaches to conflict management in Southeast Asia.

A number of alarming developments, especially the conflicting claims to islands in the South China Sea as well as intra-mural territorial disputes within ASEAN ushered in a new phase of regional disorder. A large number of Southeast Asian countries, especially ASEAN members have embarked upon a large scale arms build up, partly, but not entirely, due to intra-mural suspicions and the uncertain strategic environment caused by the retrenchment of super-power forces. In October 1992, the Indonesian Foreign Minister Alatas expressed concern at disturbing reports of increased arms purchases by regional countries, at the same time adding that, ever increasing purchases of arms merely divert sorely needed resources from national development efforts without resulting in greater security.⁹

Armed Communist movements constitute the most serious threat to regime survival in post-colonial Southeast Asia. However, ASEAN governments have succeeded in countering them to a great extent. A massive amnesty campaign launched by the Thai government led to a rapid decline in the

9. Amitav Acharya, "A New Regional Order in South east Asia, ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era", Adelphi Papers, no.279, IISS, August 1993, p.9.

pro-Beijing Communist Party of Thailand (CPT).¹⁰ Subsequently, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) led by Chin Peng, surrendered to Thai and Malaysian authorities and agreed to dissolve its guerrilla army.

In the Philippines, the *New People's Army*, the armed guerrilla movement, capitalising on rising popular resentment in the last years of the Marcos regime had increased its numbers. But under the Aquino regime its numbers declined.

A number of reasons account for the success of ASEAN governments over Communist insurgencies. Decline of external support especially from China (as part of its attempt to cultivate ASEAN's friendship against the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia) was especially important in their success against the Communist insurgencies in Malaysia and Thailand. Withdrawal of Chinese support helped to neutralise whatever support the insurgencies might have derived from the Communist occupation in Indo-China. Factionalism also tended to weaken these parties. Rapid economic growth in Malaysia and Thailand tended to weaken

10. CPT - The Communist Party of Thailand was formed on Dec.1, 1942. It grew rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1965, the CPT launched an armed struggle which lasted till the 1976-78 period. During this period the govt. acknowledged it as a threat to national security. The threat posed by the CPT, is essentially political in nature and is directed at the ideological component of the state. Source: M. Alagappa, The National Security of Developing States: Lessons from Thailand, ISIS, Malaysia, 1987.

the domestic roots of insurgency. In Philippines there were serious internal divisions due to the failure of a combination of political campaign and armed struggle, which was the insurrectionary strategy of the Communist Party. In spite of the fact that the movement is still a force to reckon with, there are doubts as to whether the movement can regenerate itself.

Despite the end of the Communist insurgency, the ruling regimes of the ASEAN states face a number of other threats which would inevitably shape their national and regional security perceptions and policies. These threats arise from a combination of factors like trends in civil-military relations, the issue of leadership succession, the scope for religious extremism and the political implications of rapid economic growth.

In fact, internal political unrest in ASEAN states remains closely linked to the legitimacy of the state as also the regime. While ASEAN members have faced several internal security problems, commonly associated with the politics of new states, the degree of political stability enjoyed by these states is remarkable.

The security dynamics of the region have been altered by a number of other developments as well. A number of territorial disputes have assumed significance for their

potential to disrupt intra - ASEAN relations and regional stability.¹¹ Malaysia and Singapore are engaged in a dispute over the Pedra Blanca island off the coast of Johor. In 1981 an understanding was reached between the two countries which specified that the dispute should be resolved by exchange of documents. Singapore suggested arbitration by the International Court of Justice, in 1989, to settle the dispute, but nothing has come out of it as yet. Tensions have increased due to the construction of a helicopter pad on the lighthouse in Johor, and the chasing away of Malaysian fishermen by the Singapore navy. On many occasions the two countries have put their forces on alert.

Malaysia and Singapore are engaged in a dispute over the Sipadan and Ligitan islands in the Sulawesi Sea near the Sabah- Kalimantan border.¹² Both countries cite maps under Dutch and British colonial administrations, respectively, to put forward their claims. According to the accord of 1982 status quo was to be maintained on the islands. Indonesia protested in June 1991 to attempts by Malaysia to develop tourist facilities on the islands. No final settlement has

11. For details, see Soedjati. J. Djiwandono, "Cooperative Security in the Asia - Pacific Region: An ASEAN Perspective", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol.XXII, no.3, p.207. Bernard K .Gordon, The Dimensions of conflict in Southeast Asia, (New York, Prentice Hall, 1966). Michael Leifer, "Conflict and Order in South East Asia", Adelphi Papers, no.162, 1980.

12. *ibid.*

been reached in spite of both countries agreeing to let a joint committee resolve the dispute.

Between Malaysia and Thailand there is a dispute over border crossing rights.¹³ Malaysia wants the review of a 1922 treaty which allowed Thai military personnel to conduct cross-border operations. In December 1991 a shooting incident in which Thai forces fired shots at the Padang Besar area led Malaysia to level allegations against Thailand, of abusing the provisions of the treaty for frequent intrusion. The matter was referred to the Malaysian-Thai Joint Commission and the Malaysian-Thai General Border Committee for developing a 'constructive mechanism' to deal with future incidents.

The dispute between Malaysia and Brunei over the Limbang territory in Sarawak has not yet been resolved. There are strained relations between Malaysia and the Philippines due to the dispute over Sabah. It was once regarded as the most dangerous bilateral dispute within ASEAN, although it is now considerably muted.

Intra-ASEAN relations are also clouded due to disputes over maritime boundaries. The unilateral extension of exclusive economic zones has also made for disputes relating to jurisdiction and rights to living and non-living

13. *ibid.*

resources in areas of overlap and also in areas which were previously high seas but now under normal control. According to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Co-ordinating Centre, of the 15 maritime boundaries in the South China Sea, (excluding the Gulf of Thailand), 12 are disputed, two have been agreed (one partially) and one resolved through a joint exploitation agreement.¹⁴ Six of these boundary disputes involve ASEAN countries with Malaysia engaged in disputes with all other ASEAN countries - Malaysia and the Philippines have been involved in the most recent heightening of tensions over maritime boundaries, in the eastern Sabah - Sulu Archipelago region.¹⁵ The arrest of 49 Filipino fishermen who allegedly entered into Malaysian waters, by the Malaysian navy caused a lot of tension including military mobilisation by the Philippines.

The Spratlys islands dispute involves China, Taiwan, and four ASEAN members, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. The claims of the ASEAN members are different from the rest in a number of ways. The ASEAN parties to the

14. Acharya, n. 9, p.32.

15. For details, see Hasjim Djalal, "Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea: In Search of Co-operation", The Indonesian Quarterly, Vol.XVIII, no.2, 1990, pp.127-132. Also, B. A. Hamzah, "Jurisdiction Issues and the Conflicting Claims in the Spratlys", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol.XVII, no.2, 1990, pp.133-153.

dispute do not claim the entire Spratlys chain, but only a few islands. The Philippines claims 60 islets, rocks and atolls collectively known as Kalayaan. Malaysia claims three islands and four groups of rock. Brunei claims the Louisa Reef. Vietnam bases its claim on the Spratlys mainly on historical grounds.

The economic and strategic importance of the Spratlys is the major reason for such disputes. Economically, the Spratlys are rich in oil and mineral nodules as well as in fishing grounds. The strategic importance of the Spratlys is due to its location near the major sea lanes in eastern Asia.

The South China Sea could well become a regional flashpoint in the near future which could lead to the involvement of major external powers. Both the Philippines and Malaysia have established a military presence in the Spratlys. Philippines occupies eight of the islands, with an air strip on one of them. Malaysia occupied three atolls between September and November 1983. The conflict has aggravated the already sensitive relationship between the Philippines and Malaysia.¹⁶

The limited prospects for joint development might lead to armed conflict over the islands. Amongst the problems of

16. ibid.

maritime security, those involving piracy in ASEAN waters are of major importance. According to recent reports, there is a decline in the number of piracy attacks in the region which might be due to the success of the joint Singapore-Indonesian patrols. A multilateral approach to countering piracy might prove to be useful in expanding the scope of existing bilateral defence links within ASEAN. Such an arrangement will prove to be a less controversial base for more elaborate forms of regional military co-operation.

In spite of periodic tensions, ASEAN leaders discount armed confrontation in order to resolve territorial disputes. Although ASEAN's existence for most of the late 1960s was under cloud, due to intra-mural tensions between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah, and between Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia, ASEAN survived, due to a sense of common vulnerability in the face of externally backed Communist insurgencies. By the time of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975, ASEAN succeeded in diffusing intra-mural tensions and gradually developed into a limited 'security community'.

Mainly due to the Indo-Chinese conflict and the practice of co-operation developed through regular political, diplomatic, cultural and military exchanges, ASEAN states were faced with a situation where intra-ASEAN

conflicts had either become irrelevant or had eased considerably.

Despite consistent efforts to isolate Vietnam internationally, however, ASEAN pragmatically left the door open for negotiations with Hanoi over an acceptable political formula based on the conviction that no framework of regional order in Southeast Asia would be complete or feasible without the voluntary integration of the Indo-Chinese.¹⁷

Consensus exists against the use of force in the region, including the set of regional norms honouring territorial integrity and the peaceful settlement of disputes as contained in the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation.

Chapter IV, Articles 13-17 of the same treaty also provides for an official dispute - settlement mechanism, called a High Council,¹⁸ consisting of ministerial level representatives from each member state. This council is responsible for taking cognizance of the existence of disputes and situations likely to disturb 'regional peace and harmony' and in case no solution is reached through

17. Acharya, n.9, p.11.

18. Acharya, "A Regional Security Community in South East Asia", in Ball Desmond (ed.), Transformation of Security in Asia Pacific, Journal of Strategic Studies, vol.18, no.3, Sept.1995, pp.175-200.

direct negotiations, to recommend to the parties in dispute, appropriate means of settlement such as good offices, mediation, enquiry or conciliation. But till date, no meeting of the High Council has been convened despite the existence of numerous intra-mural disputes.

ASEAN's approach to conflict resolution rests on an assumed ability to manage disputes within its membership without resorting to formal multilateral measures. Indeed, direct bilateral negotiations have been the preferred mode of resolving conflict in the major inter-state disputes, such as those between the Philippines and Malaysia, Indonesia and Malaysia and Thailand and Malaysia. The Sabah dispute provides one of the best examples of successful informal third party mediation (by Indonesia in May 1969).

ASEAN was previously reluctant to assume a high profile and provocative role in regional security.¹⁹ This explains its approach to conflict resolution. It also explains its general aversion to formal institutions for promoting regional security co-operation, be it the notion of an ASEAN military alliance, or the more recent proposals for a security conference for the Asia Pacific region. Some experts have regarded this as a weak point in regionalism.

19. Bilveer Singh, "The Challenge of the Security Environment of Southeast Asia in the Post Cold War Era", Australian Journal of International Affairs, 1993, pp.263-277.

The protagonists of ASEAN however believe to the contrary, that, the intangible but real spirit of ASEAN has been as effective in sublimating and diffusing conflicts as in actually finding solutions to them. Intra-mural harmony since 1967 testifies to the effectiveness of the 'ASEAN way', the lack of a need for formal measures and mechanisms.

Specific national and regional circumstances after the end of the Cold War led to ASEAN's success in maintaining peaceful intra-mural relations. The absence of a more active role in resolving conflicts undermines ASEAN's claim to be a regional 'security community'. A 'security community' requires the absence of armed conflicts within a regional setting as also the absence of interactive weapons acquisition and contingency planning in anticipation of a possible conflict. While recent concerns about a regional arms race amongst ASEAN members may be somewhat over emphasized (as argued in the IVth Chapter) the unresolved intra-ASEAN territorial disputes cannot be discounted as the most important factor behind the massive increase in defence expenditures and weapons acquisition by its member states.

So far as the maritime disputes are concerned, the perceived strategic importance of the Spratlys, and the desire to prevent the South China Sea from becoming the next flash point in the region, have been cited as reasons by Jakarta for its role in resolving the dispute peacefully,

through a series of workshops. Indonesia's motives should also be considered in view of its dispute with Vietnam over the Natuna islands, which makes it an interested party in the general security environment of the region, as also its desire to assume a leadership role in post-Cambodian Southeast Asia.²⁰ The first workshop consisted of members of ASEAN states only, as delegates, in January 1990 in Bali. This preliminary meeting was held to discuss whether the lessons of the Cambodian conflict as well as those from ASEAN regional co-operation, may prove useful for the resolution of possible conflicts arising in the South China Sea. Subsequently a workshop was held in Bandung in July 1991, which involved the ASEAN members as also China, Taiwan, Vietnam (which was not a member of ASEAN at the time) and Laos. Chinese hostility which was considered as highly provocative by many participants, was the cause of the third workshop held in Yogyakarta from 29 June, 1992 to 2 July, 1992. This was followed by the granting of a three year contract to an American company (The Creston Oil Company) by China to begin exploration for oil in the South China Sea, in an area just 160 km from the Vietnamese coast. However, the contract was cancelled following protests from Vietnam, subsequently.²¹

20. Hamzah, n.15, p.142.

21. Vietnam Information Bulletin, vol.XXX, no.9, 1994, p.2.

In spite of the fact that these workshops were presented by Indonesia as an integral part of ASEAN's general interest in regional conflict management, in reality, there were no votaries for any 'collective' ASEAN position or action on the dispute. The first formal consultations on security organised by ASEAN and based on the Singapore Declaration adopted a collective position. The Manila meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in July 1992, focussed on the South China Sea conflict, which resulted in the 'ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea'. It stressed "the necessity to resolve all sovereignty and jurisdictional issues pertaining to the South China Sea by peaceful means, without resort to force"²² and urged all parties concerned to exercise restraint. The chief virtue of ASEAN's efforts regarding the South China Sea till date has been to bring it into the international limelight and imply a potentially severe diplomatic cost for any party which may consider military action to settle the dispute.

Joint security measures of a military nature, in order to cope with the possibility of armed confrontation involving external powers such as China, are still a distant possibility for ASEAN. One exception to this however, is the understanding between Malaysia and Indonesia, reached

22. Sunday Times of India, April 9, 1995, p.15.

during the 1980s. Joint naval exercises have also been undertaken by other ASEAN states like Thailand and Singapore, and, Singapore and Malaysia. "This accord could be a measure to meet future maritime threats from the South China Sea, but the extent of bilateral security co-operation remains in doubt in view of their above mentioned disputes over the Sipadan and Ligitan islands".²³

Like other areas of intra-ASEAN security co-operation, regional response to piracy is in the form of bilateral measures, mainly between Indonesia and Singapore. Authorities in Indonesia have recommended the setting up of an ASEAN Maritime Data Base²⁴ including information on piracy and armed robbery in the region to be located at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

Thus, within the framework of regional co-operation, with national interest and the pressure of an external threat as driving forces, ASEAN has grown as a political community. However, bilateral disputes among the ASEAN countries remain unresolved, with new disputes arising due to overlapping claims of exclusive economic zones. Philippines' claim to Sabah, one of the most prominent intra-ASEAN disputes, which disrupted the functioning of

23. Acharya, n.9, p.37.

24. *ibid.*

ASEAN in its early years, was about to be resolved before the third ASEAN summit in December 1987. Due to domestic complications in the Philippines, however, this did not happen. ASEAN countries prefer bilateral negotiations in order to retain maximum national control over the issue in question. Good offices and conciliation have been used on a number of occasions but primarily for diffusion of tension and not for conflict resolution. ASEAN states are reluctant to opt for third party mediation in the resolution of disputes. Therefore the pacific settlement provisions have not been put into operation. Even the constitution of the High Council has not been implemented. For ASEAN, it has been more important to avoid conflicts rather than resolve them.

Co-operation through ASEAN has enhanced the security and stability in the region. Many of the member states which were conflict and tension-ridden in the mid-1960s, have strengthened considerably their bilateral relations, mainly due to ASEAN initiative. It has been instrumental in preventing the kind of fratricidal wars that have characterised the Indo-China sub-region. By containing the ambitions of the larger states within the framework and principles of the Association, it has guaranteed the security of small states like Brunei and Singapore. It has

helped in the prevention of interference in the domestic affairs of other states which is of paramount importance in a region where nearly all the states are experiencing domestic conflicts, many of which transcend their national barriers.

ASEAN has also helped to boost the domestic legitimacy of incumbent regimes, as it did, for example, during the third summit in Manila where the heads of government met, despite grave concerns for their security. No doubt, ASEAN has created goodwill, trust and confidence among its member states, thus facilitating the transformation of a sub-region of turmoil into a more stable and peaceful one, in which the use of force has been minimised. The stable environment has boosted the mobilisation of domestic and international resources in the pursuit of economic growth and development. At the same time it should be borne in mind that the compulsions of remaining within a framework act as a subduing effect and prevent the differences and conflicts amongst the ASEAN states to flare up into open hostilities. Periodic interaction between officials as well as non-officials provides scope for discussion for sorting out differences even before the actual measures are defined or undertaken.

CHAPTER - III

BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL DEFENCE CO-OPERATION

AMONGST THE ASEAN STATES.

ASEAN was formed primarily due to political and security reasons even though it was devoid of the trappings of a security organisation. After ASEAN was set up (1967) its member states by and large managed to prevent an escalation of their internal conflicts. At a bilateral level there was some co-operation in the fight against Communist and separatist rebels. However there was "no talk of a security alliance or of multilateral security co-operation. Each ASEAN state continued to try and organise its security on a national basis".¹ U.S. however was the guarantor against global threats as also against Communist onslaught. There was a suggestion that ASEAN should develop some form of military role that is associated to the concept of a 'defence community'. As ASEAN enters an era of uncertainty and change, the call for a 'defence community' becomes more pronounced under the assumption that this will promote political and military co-operation. The ASEAN 'security community' as it stands now, needs to be not only

1. Renate Strassner, "ASEAN - Motor for a New Security System", AUSSEN POLITIK, vol.45, 3rd Qtr., 1994, p.290.

strengthened and secured against a host of potential intermember conflicts, but also broadened by bringing into its fold the Indo-Chinese states and developing a modus vivendi for regional reconciliation between the Communist and non-Communist segments of Southeast Asia".²

"The very idea of an ASEAN 'defence community' implying the need for some sort of trilateral or multilateral military arrangement within the grouping constitutes a markedly different goal than the idea of 'security community'³ which is focussed on co-operation for the resolution of disputes and conflicts within ASEAN member states, 'Defence community' would go beyond existing bilateral co-operation and might possibly involve co-operation on arms manufacturing. In fact, there was a discussion between the ASEAN leaders calling for a 'defence community' in the first ASEAN summit held in Bali in 1976 but the alliance opinion was rejected by them for obvious reasons.

However, existing bilateral military ties were endorsed by the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. There was an agreement

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2. Abdul Paridah Samad and Mokhtar Mohammad, "ASEAN's Role & Development as a Security Community", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol. XXIII, no.1, 1995 Pg.73.
 3. Amitav Acharya, "The Association of South East Asian Nations: Security Community or Defence Community", Pacific Affairs, vol. LXIV, no.2, Summer (1991) Pg.159.

for the continuation of co-operation on a non-ASEAN basis between member states in security matters in accordance with their mutual needs and interests.

Defence co-operation amongst the ASEAN member states has until now resulted in the formation of bilateral or trilateral arrangements. At all events, it is to be promoted outside the ASEAN framework. Not all member states, however, have been involved in these bilateral or trilateral security co-operation. This is particularly so in the case of Malaysia and the Philippines mainly due to their continued dispute over Sabah. However, in spite of similar disputes between Malaysia and Singapore and between Malaysia and Indonesia, these three ASEAN states nevertheless, have been engaged in bilateral security co-operation, even trilateral arrangements, especially in the form of joint military exercises.

"The absence of such co-operation at the multi-lateral level within the framework of ASEAN regional co-operation may be due to these reasons: unresolved territorial disputes between certain member states of ASEAN; probably as a remnant of the Cold War a multi-lateral security co-operation has continued to give the image of a military pact with the involvement and backing of an external great power; member states are usually bound together by a common

perception of an external threat as in the case of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), SEATO, and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War".⁴

However so far as the Southeast Asian countries are concerned, such a common threat perception has never been and will probably never be developed. The nature of security problems between any two member states of ASEAN in their bilateral relations is almost infinitely different. For instance, Malaysia and Indonesia as well as Indonesia and the Philippines have common problems of illegal border crossing. There are common border problems between Malaysia and Thailand just as Malaysia and Indonesia had in the past. Moreover, it is easier to find common problems and common approaches on a bilateral basis between two states than in a multi-lateral framework, in spite of the absence of a common perception of threat.

There are various instances of co-operation in matters of defence amongst the ASEAN members through which these states have managed to promote peace and enhance the security of their countries, even as early as the 1970s and 1980s. The closest military relationship within ASEAN is the one between Malaysia and Indonesia. After the end of

4. Soedjati J. Djiwandano, "Co-operative Security in the Asia-Pacific Region: An ASEAN Perspective", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol. XXII, no.3, 1994, p.209.

Konfrontasi, co-operation between the two armies intensified on the Kalimantan border, though informally, in 1966, and was formalised soon after. As early as 1971, joint military operations were carried out against Communist guerrillas. In 1975 joint operations were no longer confined to border areas; training and intelligence exchanges were undertaken and efforts were made to achieve arms compatibility. During a 1978 visit to Indonesia, the Malaysian chief of armed forces re-emphasized that efforts should be made to standardise armaments by the two countries. "Because progress towards standardizing armaments has been made as a consequence of the fact that the U.S. has become the major source of supply for the ASEAN region, this issue has receded in importance".⁵

A regular feature of Malaysian-Indonesian military co-operation are the joint exercises which began in the early 1970s. These include naval manoeuvres and joint air attacks on land targets in both nations. Indonesian and Malaysian military forces co-operate in joint action against the *Sarawak Communist Organisation* remnants in Borneo. There are only a few hundred poorly-armed guerrillas who are almost entirely ethnic Chinese. There is no agreement for

5. Ronald D. Palmer and Thomas J. Reckford, Building ASEAN-20 Years of South-East Asian Co-operation (The Washington Papers), CSIS, Washington, 1987, p.117.

border crossing inspite of intelligence being exchanged and anti-military actions being co-ordinated.

Military co-operation between Indonesia and Singapore formally began in 1974 with an agreement for joint patrols of the Straits of Malacca against smugglers. Naval exercises were undertaken in 1975 and the air forces of the two nations began exercising together in 1980.

Indonesia and Thailand also began joint air exercises in 1980. The countries have an agreement to conduct joint naval exercises in the northern region of the Strait of Malacca. Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia also have an agreement to conduct joint patrols against smuggling, gunrunning and piracy in the Strait of Malacca.

An agreement was signed for joint sea patrols in 1975 between Indonesia and the Philippines to deny sanctuary to those involved in illegal activities in either state. Joint naval exercises were begun in 1975.

Thailand and Malaysia began mutual co-operation in 1959 against MCP insurgent activities in the border region. Thai concern over the possibility of irredentism among the large population of Malay Muslims in southern Thailand hindered co-operation. Moreover, the southern border areas of Thailand where the MCP found refuge in the 1960s, was an area of less counter-insurgency priority for Bangkok than

northeast Thailand. However, by 1965, a joint border committee was established by the two countries to seek the suppression of *MCP* activities. In 1969, this committee announced that the security forces of either country would be allowed the right of pursuit as far as five miles into the other's territory. In 1970 this agreement was strengthened to permit regular troops to join police units in the territory for as long as 72 hours.

Yet, there was limited co-operation. Under the aegis of the joint border committee, around 400 members of the Malaysian police field force were stationed on the Thai borders but the Malaysian presence became a source of irritation. In May 1976, when bombing and strafing against suspected *MCP* insurgents were carried out by the Malaysian air force in the Betong Salient on the border of the Malaysian state of Perak, Thai residents of Betong demonstrated against the stationing of the Malaysians in the town. At the request of the Thais., the Malaysian garrison was withdrawn the following month.

In the second half of 1976, in spite of the Betong incident, there was a new border co-operation agreement to launch large unit joint military operations against the *MCP* and *CPT* insurgents.

The last large scale military action against the *MCP* took place between October 1979 and January 1980, when 10,000 Malaysian troops marched through the Betong Salient. Subsequently, Thai preoccupation with the threat posed by the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia in December 1979 and Malaysian ambivalence on the question of the activities of Thai Muslim guerrillas have reduced the scale and tempo of joint anti-*MCP* activities. At Thai request Malaysian police force field units, which had been stationed again in Thailand after the 1976 agreement were again withdrawn.

There are complications to the joint operations due to the existence of the 500 or so Thai Muslim Malay separatist guerrillas who belong to the *Pattani United Liberation Organisation*, the *Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani*, and the *Barisan Revolusi Nasional*.

Malaysian ambivalence arises from the fact that Islamic fundamentalist political passions are aroused in Malaysia by Thai anti-Muslim activities. The Thais in turn complain that Malaysia has offered sanctuary and supplies to Thai irredentists and has developed an intelligence relationship with them to obtain information on *MCP* activities.⁶

6. Palmer and Reckford, n.5, p.119.

Muslim guerrilla activities and differing Malaysian and Thai perceptions of counter insurgency strained relations between the two countries in 1981-83. The Malaysian view is to fight Communists by killing them, if possible. Communists who are captured are provided with extensive re-education. On the other hand, the Thais, according to the Malaysians, have a live-and-let-live philosophy toward the insurgents. Thais emphasize on defections rather than on military operations. The Thais do kill a few Communists, but their policy is to capture CPM camps in the jungle and to make life difficult militarily for the insurgents with a view to encouraging them to surrender.

This strategy has not succeeded against the MCP however. "The CPM camps appear to be better organised, with tighter discipline and more thorough training than the CPT, making it more difficult for guerrillas to defect".⁷

In the meanwhile, Thai forces have maintained pressure on CPM camps and have demonstrated great persistence and courage in this effort. The Thais regularly suffer casualties, mainly from booby traps, in anti-CPM operations against an organisation sworn to overthrow the government in Kuala Lumpur, not Bangkok. By late 1984, the Malaysian

7. Rodney Tasker, "Suspicious on the Border", Far Eastern Economic Review, Nov. 10, 1983.

government demonstrated less skepticism toward Thai strategy and tactics. Indeed, the Malaysians were commended publicly by the Thai general commanding in the South, for unofficially helping Thailand against the Muslim guerrillas by trying to persuade middle Eastern countries (some of whom provide support to Thai Muslim groups) to reduce such support.

The Malaysians have acquired from the Thais the privilege of chasing insurgents across the border. However, the Malaysians have not reciprocated.

The Thai-Malaysian Joint Border Commission has played an increasingly important role over the years as a forum in which problems can be discussed and worked out. The commission is normally headed by the supreme commander of the Thai armed forces and the Malaysian minister for home affairs (internal security). Insurgency, border security and narcotics smuggling form the main topics of discussion. The joint commission also presided over the demarcation of the border.

Just as Malaysian-Indonesian and Malaysian-Thai relations are key elements of regional military co-operation, Malaysian-Singaporean security interaction is another important piece in the interlocking bilateral

structures of ASEAN. Under the aegis of the FPDA,⁸ in the 70s the Integrated Air Defence System for Malaysia and Singapore was formed. Joint air exercises were held twice a year. There are complications as regards land operations due to political factors. Singapore land forces have operated only once on Malaysian territory since 1965—in 1971, under FPDA auspices.

1981 was an important year as regards Malaysian-Singaporean military co-operation. A series of agreements were signed, including a plan for a boundary agreement in the Strait of Johor, the transfer of a Malaysian military camp on the north coast of the Island to Singapore, and a grant of additional land for the Malaysian naval facilities at Woodlands naval base, including indefinite access to the base.

A number of significant moves were made to enhance defence co-operation by both Singapore and Malaysia since 1981. Singapore forces are now guaranteed to use the Johor jungle training school.

8. FPDA-Five Power Defence Arrangement - It is a series of exchanges of letters spelling out proposed undertakings by the agreeing parties. The FPDA required the U.K. Australia and New Zealand to station forces of modest size, mostly Australian, in Singapore and Malaysia and to consult with Malaysia and Singapore in case of an external attack. Source: Palmer and Reckford, n.5; pp.121-123.

In spite of operating under the *FPDA* framework, Malaysian military aircraft were staged out of Singapore's Paya Lebar airport in June 1984, the first exercise of its kind since 1965 for combat manoeuvres with Singaporean aircraft. Again in July 1984, there was a joint exercise between Singapore and Malaysia, albeit under *FPDA* auspices, with ships from only the two countries. However there have not been as yet, any bilateral exercises.

Because of its developed arms industry, Singapore plays a significant role in regional military co-operation. There are facilities to produce small and medium caliber ammunition. Grenades, concussion grenades, anti personnel and anti-tank missiles, mortar shells, and bombs are produced. The Singapore Ultimax 100 ultra-light machine gun and SAR 80 assault rifle are much in demand. Singapore Aircraft Industries (SAI) provides repair and overhaul facilities for McDonnell Douglas 1950s vintage A-4 aircraft, which have been reconditioned and are still used by several ASEAN air forces.

The Philippines has the smallest army in ASEAN except for Singapore and Brunei, but its navy can be compared to the Indonesian navy. There is limited interaction between the navies of these two countries. This is the only example of Philippine military co-operation with its ASEAN partners.

There is scope for closer Filipino - Malaysian military and intelligence co-operation due to a lot of NPA activity in the Muslim Sulu archipelago, in spite of the dispute over Sabah.

Thus, in spite of no formal military alliance, intra-ASEAN defence co-operation is an inalienable feature of the security environment in the region.⁹ Malaysia has served as a sort of focal point for co-operation with Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. Whenever it is possible and desirable to co-operate militarily with one another, the ASEAN governments do so.

In Southeast Asia, especially after the withdrawal of the American military basis from the Philippines, pressures mounted for sometime for the promotion of a multilateral defence and security co-operation within the framework of ASEAN. Philippines initiated the convening of two conferences to discuss the issue, the first in Manila, and the second in Bangkok; former foreign Minister of Indonesia Mochtar Kusumaatmadja broached the idea of a unilateral security co-operation in the beginning of the 90s, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia within the framework of ASEAN.

9. For details, see Palmer and Reckford, n.5, pp.116-127, Bilveer Singh, "ASEAN as a Security Organisation: Gearing for Post-Cold War Challenges", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol.XXI, no.3, 1993, pp.250-253.

The conferences, held regularly at the beginning of the 90s between the states involved in the Spratlys conflict, were used as an additional forum of security discussions. In May 1993, high-ranking representatives of ASEAN met representatives of the seven partners in dialogue for a security policy conference before the conference of ASEAN foreign ministers in Singapore, with the purpose of reducing tension and dealing with concrete measures for "defence co-operation". Joint manoeuvres, maritime surveillance, co-operation in the fight against piracy, exchange and co-operation in the training of military personnel, alignment of weapon systems, the fight against proliferation of arms, and the creation of a common information and communication network were discussed, *Confidence Building Measures* (CBMs) and greater transparency were stressed upon, in an effort to reduce mutual mistrust. However there were no concrete results. Yet, it was decided to form an ASEAN *Regional Forum* (ARF) which convened for the first time in Bangkok in summer 1994 along with the ASEAN meeting and which intensified its discussions. The measures discussed, however, have not so far been concretised.

However, bilateral or trilateral manoeuvres are occasionally carried out. In fact, ASEAN defence and security co-operation is well established at the bilateral

level, involving the exchange of military intelligence, sending officers to staff colleges and joint exercises between the ASEAN members. Such co-operation performs a useful, "confidence building role by reducing suspicions concerning the possibility of military adventurism among its members".¹⁰ Bilateral defence co-operation is important since many of the issues in the region are bilateral in nature, and are not amenable to multilateral solutions. These have involved many modalities. Ad hoc political and security dialogues have also been held in the past. Most countries of the region have undertaken bilateral intelligence exchanges. There are *General Border Committees* (GBCs) for Malaysia and Thailand, and Malaysia and Indonesia to co-ordinate their joint operation on their common borders against Communists. GBCs of these countries have continued to operate despite the ending of the Communist insurgencies. Bilateral military exercises have been held between most countries with Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia having the most intense and developed bilateral defence relationship among each other. There have been exercises involving the army, navy and air force. There are also MOUs (Memorandums of understanding) so far as training facilities are

10. Samad and Mokhtar, n.2, p.74.

concerned, between Singapore-Malaysia, Singapore-Indonesia, Singapore-Brunei, Malaysia-Indonesia and Malaysia-Brunei.

To deal with bilateral issues, joint commissions have been established by Malaysia and Thailand (as in the Gulf of Thailand), Malaysia and Indonesia (the ownership of Sipadan and Ligitan) and Malaysian and the Philippines (over the Sabah issue). There are also bilateral exchanges at both the middle level and senior official level, as well as exchange of trainees at their respective defence academies.

Another area of defence co-operation which is often mentioned as suitable for greater ASEAN activity is in the field of weapon standardisation and joint procurement leading towards greater interoperability. Although officials from each state of ASEAN sometimes call for weapon standardisation and joint procurement as budget stretching devices, no such policy has ever been implemented.¹¹

ASEAN militaries follow different doctrines, speak different languages, and for the most part, employ incompatible logistic systems. Those weapons systems which ASEAN armed forces have in common (F5s, A-4s, F-16s and Scorpion Light Tanks) are more a matter of accident than of planning. Joint procurement was not aimed at reducing

11. Simon W. Sheldon, "ASEAN Security in the 1990s' Asian Survey, vol.XXIX, no.6, June 1989, p.114.

costs, since there is no co-ordination among the budget cycles of each country.

Complementary to these bilateral efforts there are the multilateral security activities of ASEAN. As a regional organisation ASEAN was established with the aim of enhancing confidence among its members as well as for the purpose of conflict management and resolution. The ability to prevent a recurrence of Konfrontasi as well as the Sabah issue speaks volumes about ASEAN's security role in the region.

ASEAN's multilateral security efforts are also evident from the ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality) Declaration in November 1971, the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation and the ASEAN Concord in February 1976 as well as the decision in the Manila summit in 1988 to work towards a *Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone* (SEANWFZ). Most importantly, ASEAN's joint efforts to reverse Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia as well as the management of the refugees out flow from Indo-China demonstrated ASEAN's ability to engage in security related activities in order to enhance security in the region. ASEAN has, however, eschewed the idea of developing into a formal military pact. This was because of; the inability of members to agree on a common external threat; the fact that this would lead to ASEAN's image as an

aggressive organisation; the fact that there were bilateral security problems among the members; the fact that the combined strength of ASEAN failed to challenge Vietnam and other leading great powers in the region; and finally, due to Indonesia's resistance to any attempt of ASEAN to become a military alliance.

It is mainly due to the diminishing role of past stabilising mechanisms and emerging new uncertainties that ASEAN has taken various measures to deal with the emerging security concerns in the region. There is an enhanced bilateral defence co-operation between the ASEAN states. ASEAN countries have also undertaken measures to permit the continued military presence of the U.S. in the region through flexible access arrangements, with Singapore leading the way through its MOU in November 1991. Agreement was reached in the fourth ASEAN summit in Singapore in January 1992 for ASEAN to seek avenues to engage member states in new areas of co-operation in security matters. Established fora could be used by ASEAN to provide external dialogue on ASEAN defence co-operation. This resulted in a number of new initiatives. The ASEAN *Senior Official Meeting* (SOM) decided to discuss security and defence matters for the first time. The first meeting was held in May 1993. ASEAN countries agreed to enhance multilateral defence co-operation both in terms of dialogue as well as exercises.

For the first time, a conference for defence and security officials of the Asia Pacific, called the Asia Pacific Security Dialogue was inaugurated in June 1993, Prior to this, ASEAN Defence Officials met in Jakarta to arrive at a common stand. There is general understanding that while top officials of ASEAN do meet often, officials at the General Staff level should meet and interact more regularly so as to realize a multilateral defence co-operation on an ASEAN wide level. There is agreement amongst ASEAN states to push and pursue more aggressively the ASEAN PMC (*Post Ministerial Conference*) as the main mechanism for security framework in the Asia-Pacific region, Agreement has also been reached on the implementation of the West Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) and a Maritime Information Exchange Directory with regard to naval weapons. Along with this, two ASEAN-wide regional security forums have been held, one in Bangkok, and one in Manila each and four workshops on the South China Sea.

To conclude, the main problem for the countries of South east Asia, especially for ASEAN, is not whether defence co-operation is still necessary. The problem is whether the form of defence co-operation continuing at present, should be continued on a bilateral basis so that there will develop in the long run what former Foreign

Minister Tan Sri Ghazalie Shafie of Malaysia has aptly called a "web of interlocking bilateral relationships", or whether such co-operation should be promoted at the unilateral level, within the framework of ASEAN.¹² Another important question is whether or not such defence co-operation, multilateral or bilateral, should be expanded so as to involve the other South east Asian countries that have remained outside ASEAN regional co-operation until now. It is unlikely that all the countries of South east Asia will be involved before the end of the present century. The domestic situation in Myanmar is still strife-torn. The conflict in Cambodia, in spite of the general elections sponsored and supervised by the U.N. which led to the formation of a coalition government, is still not resolved.

It therefore, seems most realistic to expect security co-operation in Southeast Asia to be limited to the ASEAN member states for at least perhaps the next decade. For the present, it is of the utmost importance that defence co-operation on a bilateral basis be strengthened and the framework expanded so as to involve all the states of ASEAN.

12. Djiwandano, n.4, p.204.

CHAPTER - IV

New Trends in Defence Co-operation

The 1990s have witnessed an increase in intra-ASEAN defence co-operation. At the same time, there has been a major increase in defence spending and force modernisation efforts by member states. The foundation of defence links within ASEAN was laid in the 1970s when bilateral border security arrangements and intelligence-sharing were developed to tackle problems of insurgency. The 80s saw the focus of co-operation broadening to include joint conventional warfare exercises, exchanges of training facilities and co-operation as regards 'defence production'.

Bilateral defence links within ASEAN are not uniformly developed. The majority of bilateral exercises have been undertaken by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Joint military operations, so far organised, reflect an ever closer co-operation in the military and security fields among the three nations. While relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as Indonesia and Singapore, are improving, those between Malaysia and Singapore are not without mutual suspicions.

After the major five power exercise in which a Singaporean battalion participated, Singaporean army units were not allowed to exercise in Malaysian soil until 1989.¹ Joint military exercises have been held between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore for the three armed forces (navy, air force and army). Security co-operation between Indonesia and Malaysia started only after the end of Confrontation, namely in joint security operations in the Kalimantan border regions.

There were joint exercises between the Indonesian and Malaysian armed forces. With Singapore, Malaysia had joint naval exercises in 1974, followed by the air force in 1980. In 1982, the *Darsasa Malindo*, a spectacular all-services exercise was undertaken between Malaysia and Indonesia. In 1989 a number of unprecedented arrangements were made to upgrade defence contacts, more specifically bilateral military links, particularly between Malaysia and Singapore, and between Indonesia and Singapore.² The *Semangat Bersatu* army exercises between Singapore and Malaysia, and, the *Safakar Indopura* army exercises between Singapore and

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1. Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia : A Precarious Balance", Pacific Review, vol.4, no.3, 1991, p. 207.
 2. Amitav Acharya, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Security Community or Defence Community?" Pacific Affairs, vol.64, no.2 (Summer 1991), pp.159-178.

Indonesia, were launched in 1989. In the same year a weapons-testing range was jointly developed by Singapore and Indonesia in Siabu, Sumatra.

These initiatives were interspersed with periodic calls of varying intensity from these three nations, as well as, from the Philippines and Thailand, for ASEAN members to examine the prospects for a closer, more integrated form of military cooperation on a regional basis. On 27 January 1989, Malaysian Defence Minister Tunku Rithauddeen announced that Malaysia and Singapore would conduct bilateral naval exercises in the South China Sea of Sabah and Sarawak under the title Malapura.³ Both nations in fact, were willing to carry out a combined army exercise in Sabah, Malaysia. Singapore was also invited by Malaysia to participate in an army exercise in March 1989. Another combined live firing exercise between Malaysia and Singapore, namely, *Semangat Bersatu* took place in Singapore, during which Malaysia announced a reciprocal combined exercise, involving only a company of SAF (*Singapore Air Force*) troops to be held in Sarawak in October 1989.⁴ Besides these contacts, improved bilateral military contacts with Indonesia, were also advocated, by both Malaysia, and Singapore.

3. Philip Methven, "Intra-Regional Military Co-operation", *SDSC Papers*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, no.92 (Canberra: SDSC, ANU, 1993), p.93.

4. Huxley, n.1

Even though there is no joint defence agreement with either Malaysia or Singapore, joint manoeuvres are taking place. Cooperation in the utilisation of facilities and education, for the sake of the transparency of their armed forces has been established. Singapore has also reached an agreement with Indonesia to build, facilities for aerial target practice in Riau (to be utilised by both countries), and, also, a joint manoeuvre centre. Singapore has at the same time acquired the right to utilise the Armed Forces infantry exercise centre in Baturaja. The Staff and Command Schools (SESKO) of the armed forces are attended jointly by officers from both countries.⁵

Malaysia has reached the level where it is in a position to provide military training to defence personnel of other countries. The military training or exercises are sometimes held at a regional level. Indonesia, Malaysia as well as Singapore, provide training assistance to Brunei's armed forces. The Malay Commander, Lt. Gen. Fakaruddin announced the possibility of combined joint army, navy and air force exercises in 1991.⁶ Before this, in 1990, there was a joint decision by Malaysia and Thailand to extend their combined air exercises beyond the common border region

5. For details, see A. R. Sutopo, "Relations Among Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore: From Confrontation to Collaboration and Re-alliance", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol. XIX, no.4, 1991, p.337.

6. Methven, n.3, p.94.

to incorporate areas in peninsular Malaysia and mainland Thailand.⁷

Even outside this framework, some defence relations within ASEAN are developed more than others. A close relationship exists between Brunei and Singapore. Brunei's armed forces hold annual exercises with Singapore called *Bold Sabre/ Flaming Arrow*. The Brunei navy also holds annual exercises with the Singapore and the United States navies, codenamed '*Pelican*' and '*Kingfisher*' respectively.⁸ There are close relations between Singapore and Thailand. Thailand sends its troops to Singapore for commando training. Defence relations between Malaysia and Brunei remain limited because of strained relations (due to mutual suspicion and distrust) in spite of an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the two countries, for joint exercises and cooperation in exchange of personnel and logistics. There is at the same time no cooperation between Malaysia and the Philippines owing to the Sabah dispute.⁹

So far as maritime defence is concerned, there has been a general shift from counter insurgency warfare strategies in the 1970s to the present emphasis on maritime defence.

7. Ibid.

8. For details refer to K. V. Menon, "A Six Power Defence Arrangement in Southeast Asia," Contemporary Southeast Asia, vol.10, no.3, December 1988, p.314.

9. Acharya, n.2, pp.159-178.

Indonesia was involved in joint cooperation in safeguarding the sea lanes in the Straits of Malacca and the Straits of Singapore with Malaysia and Singapore.¹⁰

The process through which these states are increasingly interacting involves the creation of new institutions and customs. It has been agreed that 'multilateral dialogue' enhances security by sharing information, conveying intentions, easing tensions, resolving conflicts and fostering confidence.¹¹ Cooperative security and common security are identical in their approach. While cooperative defence takes note of the primacy of state interests, at the same time, it believes that enhancement of security must not be regarded from the view point of a zero-sum security dilemma. Bilateral relations will remain, at least in the near future, the principle means of states' interaction. In this sense, multilateral activity should be considered as a complement to enhanced bilateral activity. Although there have been calls from time to time for joint procurement and standardisation within ASEAN, joint procurement has never been attempted. In fact, ASEAN arms industries `jealously

10. See J. N. Mak, "ASEAN Defence Reorientation 1975-1992: The Dynamics of Modernisation and Structural Change", SDSC Papers, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, no.103, (Canberra: SDSC, ANU, 1993).

11. Sanjana Joshi, "East Asian Security Environment", p.306. Asian Strategic Review, 1994-95, IDSA, New Delhi.

guard their prerogative'. Common weapons systems such as F-5, F-16 and A-4 aircraft, and Scorpion Light Tanks, were acquired as a result of parallel requirements rather than co-ordinated acquisition.¹²

Keeping in view the increase in arms purchases of the ASEAN states and increase in defence spending, it becomes imperative to discuss here, whether or not there is an arms race in the region.

In 1994, Indonesia signed a contract for purchasing 24 Hawk jet trainers and multi-role fighters from British aerospace at a cost of US \$ 765 million and is reported to be interested in acquiring up to 100 more aircrafts. It also entered into an agreement with the German government for acquiring 39 former East German warships in January 1993. Malaysia ordered 28 Hawk fighters from British aerospace. Thailand and the Philippines also have plans of acquiring the same. Malaysia has signed a deal with Russia for purchasing thirty Mig-29s.

Since the mid-1980s, ASEAN states have begun to acquire sophisticated conventional arms, meant mainly for combating external threat. The weapons acquired earlier, were mainly for fighting internal rebellions and subversion. In the

12. Simon W. Sheldon, "The Regionalisation of Southeast Asia", Pacific Review, vol.5, no.2, 1992, p.122.

recent past the ASEAN states have purchased or negotiated to buy substantial numbers of fighter jets, war ships, submarines, frigates and armoured tanks, to enhance the capabilities of all branches of their respective armed forces.¹³ Recent trends in military acquisitions in the region reveal a mixed picture of weapons proliferation, some of which are relatively defensive, while others, such as maritime strike and other power projection systems are more offensive. Defence forces have been restructured from counter insurgency capabilities to modern high technology conventional forces, with greater emphasis on maritime capabilities. This is the case even in Thailand and Malaysia, where the militaries' traditional perception of threat is, a land offensive across the borders. In Thailand the new emphasis is on maritime capabilities with the acquisition of its first light carrier and other maritime weapons systems. Differences in defence doctrine and language, as also variances in training procedures and logistics systems, limit the benefits to be derived from joint exercises and undermine the possibility of mutual support in contingencies. This is in sharp contrast to -----

13. For details, see Dewi Anwar Fortuna, "The Rise in Arms Purchases: Its Significance and Impacts on South East Asian Stability", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol XXII, no.3, 1994, pp. 247-259.

Singapore's emphasis on forward defence¹⁴ as against Indonesia's emphasis on defence - in - depth and Thailand and Malaysia's focus on maritime security and the safety of the sea lanes of communication. Philippines is faced with the problem of catching up with other ASEAN states, in switching to a conventional warfare orientation, although the removal of the U.S. security umbrella has created an urgent need for it. This also explains the difficulties in inter-operability and integration.

In the past, ASEAN states did not view defence co-operation as a necessary condition for regional order.¹⁵ Instead, such co-operation within the ASEAN framework was rejected due to the fear that it would lead to greater rivalry with Indo-China and negate ASEAN's quest for regional security and order. With the end of the conflict in Indo-China, the desire for greater intra-ASEAN defence co-operation has increased. A major increase in defence expenditure and force modernisation efforts have also resulted in prospects for greater intra-ASEAN defence co-operation.

14. Sheldon, n.12, p.122.

15. Amitav Acharya, "A New Regional Order in South East Asia : ASEAN in the Post Cold War Era", Adelphi Papers, no.279, August, 1993, IISS, p.64.

The pattern of military purchases within the region since the mid 1980s has led many analysts to conclude that the ASEAN countries are engaged in a mini arms race. This observation was first made when sophisticated and expensive American fighter jets, F-16, were acquired by three ASEAN states. In 1986, Thailand acquired a number of F-16/100 Fighting Falcon, the first Southeast Asian country to do so. Indonesia and Singapore followed suit. Similar cases occurred in other instances. Malaysia announced its intention to acquire the E-2C Hawkeye early warning system, when the same was acquired by Singapore in 1983. When Malaysia showed an interest in Tornado jets, its neighbours followed suit.¹⁶ Reliable sources of data on defence spending are scarce. Defence expenditure measured in current dollars and exchange rates appear to have increased significantly for all the ASEAN states. However, constant dollar figures show a more modest rise. (See Table 1).

16. Anwar, n.13, p.248.

Table-1

Military Expenditure in Southeast Asia, 1985-1993

(Constant US \$ m 1985)

Country	Year								
	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Indonesia	2341	1938	1723	1694	1751	1959	1724	1913	1949
% of GDP	2.7	2.1	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.5
Malaysia	1007	1040	857	1640	1418	1539	1670	1685	1650
% of GDP	3.2	3.6	2.7	4.6	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.4	3.2
Singapore	1093	1013	1029	1132	1252	1454	1532	1672	1838
% of GDP	6.1	5.5	5.0	4.8	4.9	5.2	5.3	5.5	5.8
Philippines	409	617	644	794	867	860	808	828	840
% of GDP	1.3	1.9	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.6	2.1	2.2	2.2
Thailand	1626	1525	1509	1508	1551	1647	1813	1925	2060
% of GDP	4.4	3.9	3.5	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.0

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) SIPRI Year Book (London: Taylor and Francis/Macmillan), 1994.

The data shows that except for Indonesia and Malaysia, all the other ASEAN countries have substantially increased their military expenditure in real terms since 1985. For Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, military spending since 1985 has been quite significant. Thailand emerged as the highest spender in 1993 with a total of US \$ 2060 million spent on the military. By 1993, Singapore

emerged as the third highest military spender in ASEAN, outstripping Malaysia,. Until 1990, Indonesia's military expenditure was the highest in ASEAN. Since then it has been relegated to second position after Thailand. Since 1985, the military budget of Indonesia has been on a general decline. Most importantly, the increase in Indonesia's military spending from 1991 to 1993 in real terms has not been substantial. Malaysia has also shown a decline in military expenditure in 1993.

The perception that an arms race in Southeast Asia might be in the offing is fuelled due to this rise in military expenditure. It is equally important to know whether the increase in arms acquisitions by the ASEAN states have contributed to stability in the region in the past few years and are likely to do so in the near future. Before attempting to answer these questions, it is necessary to examine the various explanations given for the rise in the ASEAN states' military expenditure.

The increases in military expenditure amongst the ASEAN states after 1975 were mainly due to, according to some academicians, a direct response to the Communist victory in Indo-China. With the fall of Saigon in April 1975, Vietnam emerged as the most powerful military power in the region. The emergence of Vietnam as a militarily powerful and

ideologically hostile regional power created apprehension amongst the other countries. In spite of Indonesia's support for Hanoi during the Vietnam War, Indonesia was also concerned about the possible aggression by Vietnam against Thailand, which could overturn the regional balance of power. For example, General Widodo, a senior Indonesian general warned Vietnam in March 1977 that, any attack on Thailand would be regarded as an attack on ASEAN as a body.¹⁷

Thailand, as the most vulnerable state to Vietnam's hostility was worried about the possibility of a Vietnamese attack and therefore stepped up its defence to ward off such an eventuality. Singapore, which regarded Vietnam as an immediate threat to the region, also geared its defences, with Malaysia following suit. Malaysia, however, like Indonesia did not regard Vietnam as an immediate threat to its national security. There was, however, a common perception of threat from Communist movements, due to the Communist victory in Indo-China.

The invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam in 1978 increased the ASEAN countries' concern about the threat from Vietnam, since it removed the traditional buffer between Vietnam and

17. David Jenkins, "Suspicion Lingers on", Far Eastern Economic Review, 24 June 1977.

Thailand. The close ties of Vietnam with the erstwhile Soviet Union and an increase in Soviet naval bases in the region , also caused a general disquiet amongst the ASEAN countries.

These two factors, namely, the Vietnamese threat, and the rise in Soviet military presence ,led to an increase in the military acquisitions of ASEAN countries. Super power conflict also had a fall out in the region with American military assistance to Thailand increasing from US \$ 50 million in 1981 to 100 million in 1983. There was an increase in the military budget of all the ASEAN states during this period, in spite of economic recessions limiting the purchases.¹⁸ Although as a whole, the ASEAN countries' armed forces could not match the strength of the Vietnamese land forces, the modernisation of the ASEAN states' navy since 1980 has resulted in a joint naval capability which is far ahead of the Vietnamese ability to control the maritime waters of the region.

Regional tension reduced after the Paris Peace Agreement in October 1990. This led to an end to the confrontation between Vietnam and ASEAN with a subsequent improvement in relations. However, concerns about a "regional vacuum" have been increasing after the

18. Anwar, n.13, p.250 .

disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union as well as the withdrawal of the U.S. military bases from the region. Many smaller countries are concerned about the possibility of countries like China, Japan and India stepping in to fill in the vacuum.

Desmond Ball,¹⁹ Muthiah Alagappa and others highlight the close relationship between economic growth in ASEAN states and defence spending. This stand is also taken by the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Ronald Zlataspa, who, dismissing the idea of an arms race, says, "it is only natural, I think, that as states grow, they also tend to strengthen and upgrade their military,"²⁰ Indonesia enjoyed a windfall in oil prices in the 1970s and the other ASEAN countries, with the exception of the Philippines, also showed remarkable economic performances. In 1985, Indonesia's military expenditure of US \$ 2341 million formed 2.7 per cent of its G.D.P. (Gross Domestic Product). After 1986, the fall in primary commodity prices led to a general decline in Indonesia's military budget. However, in 1990 Indonesia's military budget of US \$ 1959 million only formed

19. Desmond Ball, "The Political-Security Dimension of Australia and the Asian-Pacific Region", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol. XXII, no.3, 1994, pp. 227-246.
20. Udai Bhanu Singh, "Growth of Military Power in Southeast Asia", Asian Strategic Review, n.12, 1994-95, p.325

1.6 per cent of its G.D.P. which showed a rise that year.

The increase in Thailand's arms expenditure reflected its healthy economic performance. In 1985, Thailand spent US \$ 1626 million on arms, which was 4.4 per cent of its G.D.P. In 1990, Thailand's military expenditure rose to US \$ 1647 million but this was only 2.7 per cent of its G.D.P.

Thus, all the ASEAN countries' military budget increases in real terms actually showed a decline as a percentage of their G.D.P..

The increases in arms acquisitions by the ASEAN countries have also been facilitated by the easily available weapons in the international market at bargain prices from manufacturers in the West and the former Eastern bloc who are seeking to offset declining sales in their home countries. Besides, the ASEAN states are also developing their own defence industries. Except for Brunei, all the ASEAN countries have developed a certain level of technology for the manufacture of arms.

There is perhaps also a shift in the defence posture of these states. The ASEAN states are preparing their defences against possible external attacks.

This brings us to the all important question whether or not there is an arms race in the region. An arms race implies that potential rivals acquire weapons as a response

to the military development of the rival side, in order to acquire a strategic advantage over the enemy. This would in turn set into motion a chain reaction and potential enemies would be engrossed in acquiring more and more weapons to outdo each other, in a never ending struggle to win the arms race.

It has been argued by many that the continued acquisition of new weapons capabilities becomes an interactive process and can be termed as an arms race.²¹

However, sections of the Southeast Asian political elite and academia and others argue that nothing like an arms race is underway in Southeast Asia. It is argued that these countries are generally concerned about enhancing national prestige through defence modernisation and the evolution of a "minimum deterrent" against a possible threat by a revisionist power. Graeme Cheesewan and Richard Leaver,²² in their study write that the spending patterns in the region do not show that an arms race is underway. The rise in military expenditure is explained in terms of a general trend towards modernisation after the end of the Cold War arms handouts by the Super Powers.

21. P. Wattanayagorn and Desmond Ball, "A Regional Arms Race?" in Desmond Ball (ed.), Journal of Strategic Studies (The Transformation of Security in the Asia Pacific Region), vol. 18, September 1985, no.3, p. 167.

22. Singh, n.20,p.324.

Hence it is probable that the arms acquisitions are being driven by a mixture of motives, including, intra-regional competition. In fact, the on-going arms procurement process does not confirm to the generally accepted definition of an "arms race". In only a few instances have specific acquisitions by one country led to, counter acquisitions by others. In addition, there is no indication of any ASEAN state acquiring so-called weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and long-range ballistic missiles (with the possible exceptions of Vietnam and Burma). While territorial disputes and political rivalries between some ASEAN are responsible to some extent for the arms build up, these rivalries are not reflected in their bilateral relationships.²³ The ASEAN leadership has raised the concept of "national resistance" to the regional level as "regional resilience". Singapore also adopts the same position. Its defence minister explained in a recent interview: "The region's strength is based on what we in ASEAN have termed 'regional resilience' If each country's national resilience is strong, then collectively, regional resilience will also

23. Acharya, n.15, p.67.

be robust....This means building a strong national defence capability. Our defence modernisation programme is our investment for peace and stability.²⁴

The Malaysian Defence Minister Najib Tun Razab in July 1993, also opined that, Malaysia's purchase of MIG-29s and F-18s would in fact enhance the collective security in the region.²⁵

This discussion aptly demonstrates that most countries in the region are engaging in rigorous arms acquisition programmes and robust defence modernisation programmes. No doubt, local determinants like availability of resources, perceptions of regional threats, self-defence and self-reliance are among the main factors in their procurements. Regional forces as well as international influences provide a further impetus to the arms acquisition programmes. However, the situation has not, as yet, developed into an arms race. This explains why many nations, in particular, some ASEAN states are still sceptical about the rationale for arms control. At the same time there is a general apprehension that the arms acquisition and defence

24. Quoted in Singh, n.20.

25. For details, see J. N. Mak and B. N. Hamzah, "The Maritime Dimension of ASEAN Security" in Desmond Ball (ed.), Journal of Strategic Studies, (The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region), vol. 18, September 1985, no.3.pp.123-146.

modernization programmes could develop into an "arms race" and hence these should be complemented with the institutionalisation of appropriate *confidence and security building measures* (CSBMs) as evident in the first ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Bangkok on 25 July 1994.²⁶ Greater transparency will prevent misunderstanding, miscalculation and inadvertent increase in arms acquisitions and, hence, this, along with Regional Security Fora should be the guiding factors. Greater transparency in arms acquisition programmes should include public discussions and the sharing of information on security and threat perceptions. There should be periodic assessments of general regional security concerns. Official information on major weapons acquisitions programmes, military exercises and forward deployments as well as defence doctrines and operational concepts should also be published. There should also be periodic publications of official statements on these matters by the ASEAN heads of states. The Regional Security Fora would help in dialogues as well as consultations on security issues,²⁷ since there is still, a great deal of mutual suspicion and uncertainty amongst the ASEAN states.

26. Wattanayagorn and Ball, n.21,p.168.

27. Ibid. p.169.

The fact is that the arms build-up by the individual ASEAN states do not constitute a "collective" whole despite talk of "collective strength". In fact, the same argument is often turned around and used for justifying arms acquisitions and weapons modernisation programmes.

The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (ASEAN-PMC) as well as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are regarded by many as mere confidence building measures. It is yet to be seen, how far they will go in promoting regional peace and stability, at the same time, promoting transparency in conventional arms acquisitions. There is at present, an uncertain peace in the region, held together by noble intentions and idealistic professions. An increase in the activities of ASEAN, along with its expansion, might increase the hiatus between the profound idealism and the nationalistic aspirations of the ASEAN states. In this context, it would be well for the ASEAN heads of states to publish White papers which would traverse miles, to enhance transparency in arms production and military capabilities and will promote goodwill and confidence, but only if they reveal more than they conceal.

CHAPTER - V

Significance of Intra-ASEAN Defence Co-operation

ASEAN has developed into a useful forum for the discussion of security issues at both the regional and extra-regional levels. It also functions as a mechanism for the moderating of intra-ASEAN tensions and threat perceptions. Any sign of imminent danger or threat will galvanise the ASEAN governments into a joint and concerted action. Intra-ASEAN defence co-operation, albeit on a limited basis, in the past, is ample proof of it. No doubt, ASEAN has no intentions of developing into a formal military pact. But this is mainly due to the inability of its members to arrive at a common perception of threat, as also the fact that it would result in ASEAN's image as an aggressive organisation. At the same time, a formal military pact is out of the question due to the prevailing intra-mural tensions. ASEAN's failure to challenge the leading great powers in the region as well as Indonesia's vehement resistance to any attempt on the part of ASEAN to take on the role of a military organisation also rules out the possibility of military alliance. ASEAN leaders do not support the idea of an alliance because they firmly believe

that without a military pact the ASEAN states can operate more flexibly.¹

It has to be taken into consideration that ASEAN was founded to foster socio-economic developments, and promote peace and goodwill in the region, in the process taking care of the security needs of the Southeast Asian region, as well as to reconcile the differences between its five original members. According to some experts, "the grouping has very successfully contained but has made little attempt to resolve intra-mural disputes."²

It is important to examine the truth behind the statement, particularly with regard to the future of intra-ASEAN defence co-operation.

ASEAN was founded with the aim of resolving intra-ASEAN disputes. ASEAN's success is due to the fact that it had limited aspirations - to ensure that bilateral tensions and disputes were not allowed to go out of control. The main dilemma of ASEAN seems to be identifying and prioritizing common military threats. Since there are pressing external military threats at the moment, apart from some discernible

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1. Abdul Paridah Samad and Mokhtar Mohammad, "ASEAN's Role and development as a Security Community", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol. XXIII, no.1, 1995, p.74.
 2. J. N. Mak and B. N. Hamzah, "The Maritime Dimension of ASEAN", in Desmond Ball (ed.) Journal of Strategic Studies, (The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region) vol.18, Sept.95, no.3, pp.123-146.

lower level threats, there is no need for the ASEAN members to close ranks. In spite of various forms of intra-ASEAN defence co-operation and attempts at confidence building, there is still some amount of mistrust between Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia for a number of reasons. There is a certain degree of vulnerability so far as Singapore is concerned, caught as it is, between two populous Malay neighbours. In 1991 Singapore raised a hue and cry over a ten day Malaysian-Indonesian military exercise in Johor and accused Malaysia of insensitivity for holding such major manoeuvres close to the republic without prior notification.³

The thorny issue of Singapore's "forward defence" doctrine has not been resolved as yet while the relations between Indonesia and Malaysia are strained due in large measure, to the regional policy initiatives of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir, which is regarded by Indonesia as a challenge to its leadership role.⁴ These are probably the tensions which contributed to Malaysia's stand against the formation of trilateral or regional military alliances.

In the absence of either common political aims or defence objectives, the old intra-ASEAN rivalries are -----

3. ibid.

4. ibid.

beginning to re-surface despite the primacy of economic growth and development objectives in the ASEAN countries, there are problems even as regards economic co-operation. In order to remove mistrust and misconception and to give a boost to confidence building and 'preventive diplomacy', the ASEAN *Regional Forum* (ARF) was set up, which met for the first time in July 1994. The ARF's substantive achievement in that meeting and also in the second one in Brunei Darussalam was modest. The ARF, together with the expansion of ASEAN membership and the declaration on the South China Sea, constituted another significant step in the process of transforming the Association's role as a diplomatic community: firstly, from being the organiser of collective political defence in a single issue area to being the manager of region wide order in South East Asia, and secondly, from being the host to a variety of conversations, often disjointed and patternless, to being the hub of the Asia-Pacific region's confidence building and preventive diplomacy activities.

The habit of co-operation, cultivated during the process of constructing and maintaining collective political defence against common threats, provided the appropriate psychological environment for enhancing both the scope and the quality of bilateral collaboration among member states.

There is no doubt that this collaboration had a "regional spill-over", for it served to strengthen ASEAN's intra-mural co-operation and its solidarity vis-a-vis the outside world.

In spite of the existing consensus therefore, against the use of arms in the region, there is also agreement as regards the role of existing forms of security co-operation within ASEAN in promoting confidence-building. There is also a strong feeling that 'strong ties' among defence heads in ASEAN has helped to foster greater mutual confidence and trust while bilateral military exercises among ASEAN states have helped to build links with neighbours, overcome suspicions and promote co-operation. Regional policy makers regard the proposals for a multi-lateral defence arrangement within ASEAN as more fashionable than those relating to arms control. "Such an arrangement is seen by its advocates as a necessary complement to regional order, both in terms of its expected utility in reinforcing the tradition of co-operation that already binds ASEAN states, and its potential for instilling a greater degree of confidence among members in the face of mutually perceived external threats".⁵

5. Amitav Acharya, "A New Regional Order in South East Asia: ASEAN in the Post Cold War Era", Adelphi Papers, no.279, Aug.1993, IISS, pp.69.

There is no precise definition for the proposals for defence arrangements within ASEAN. The then foreign minister of Malaysia, Abu Hasan Omar, in 1989, gave the call for an ASEAN defence community. In 1991, the National Security Advisor of the Philippines mooted the idea of an ASEAN military pact. However, the respective governments did not support any of the proposals, with the Malaysian government distancing itself from it.

The opposition to an ASEAN military pact therefore remains. Indonesia's former defence chief, General Try Sutrisno went so far as to maintain that without a military pact there can be more flexible co-operation between the ASEAN states. He was of the opinion that bilateral co-operation was favourable to a military pact because it would allow the ASEAN countries to decide the type, time and scale of aid it required or could provide and at the same time ensure that the question of national independence and sovereignty of members would remain unaffected by the decision of others as in the case of an alliance where members can dictate the terms of the treaty and interfere in the affairs of another partner. The preparatory meeting of the ASEAN Foreign and Economic Ministers before the Singapore summit confirmed this stand. They affirmed that ASEAN is not and should not become a military alliance; each

member country must always assume primary responsibility for its own defence and security.

With the end of bipolarity, ASEAN is confronted with the loss of a familiar, if not fool proof structure of regional security. The optimism which was generated initially after the end of the US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rivalries is gradually declining. There are too many strategic uncertainties and potential flashpoints for the ASEAN leaders not to feel troubled at the moment. The end of Communism no doubt removed one of the major threats to the regime survival of the ASEAN states but at the same time it also removed a principal basis of unity within the association. Military control over the political process in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand may have declined, but this might well prove to be short-lived and civil-military tensions will continue to plague regime stability in all the three countries for some time to come. The status of the overseas Chinese majority in Malaysia and Indonesia continues to be a long-standing problem.

There are demands for greater openness from different sections of the population in some ASEAN countries. The authoritarian political structures are finding it difficult to cope with such problems. Political violence resulting from such demands for greater political participation,

autonomy and leadership cannot be ruled out in some of these states, especially in Indonesia in Aceh and East Timor.⁶ Western propaganda regarding human rights abuses related to the suppression of ethnic and religion-based rebellions might provide encouragement to such groups and thus threaten the stability of these governments.

Tensions connected with territorial disputes and exclusive economic zones strain bilateral relations as well as encourage military modernisation programmes of ASEAN states, at the same time undermining ASEAN's credibility as a regional security community.

A regional power vacuum also seems to have been created in the region, especially after the withdrawal of the American bases in the region. This is increasingly important to the security thinking of ASEAN. Acute strategic uncertainty therefore might prove to be a unifying factor for ASEAN. At the same time it might also heighten the already existing differences in threat perceptions within the ASEAN member states. These differences are already magnified due to suspicions harboured by Malaysia and Indonesia, due to the closer economic and political relations between Singapore and China.

6. Renate Strassner, "ASEAN - Motor for a New Security System", AUSSEN POLITIK, vol.45, 3rd Qtr., 1994, pp.291.

The regional arms build up, unless backed by a system of greater transparency and confidence-building measures might increase the already existing suspicions. The rationale for an ASEAN military pact simply does not exist, due not only to the reluctance of the ASEAN members to engage in multi-lateral defence co-operation, but also due to the inclusion of Vietnam as a member of ASEAN, withdrawal of the U.S. security umbrella from the region, as also the diplomatic engagement of the extra-regional powers to explore the possibility of a multi-lateral security framework. No doubt, bilateral defence links within ASEAN may be strengthened and regular meetings held, between its security officials, these would not be able to match the importance of national defence capabilities and the extra-regional security links in the security postures of the countries of the region.

Therefore, ASEAN, for the first time since its inception is moving into the realm of positive security co-operation (with the establishment of the *Post Ministerial Conference* and the *ASEAN Regional Forum* to discuss military and defense issues), without attempting a military alliance.

The present ASEAN defence modernisation programme has been viewed as a positive development by the defenders of the arms build-up, especially regional military and

political elites. It has been viewed as contributing to ASEAN regional resilience and collective strength. This should not however be confused with an ASEAN military pact or even defence community. While there have been suggestions that the defence build up by the individual ASEAN countries will eventually result in the aggregation of ASEAN military strength to the extent that it will eventually become a defence community of significant military power, through the creation of a web of bilateral and trilateral defence linkages, this is still a long way off. Multi-lateral defence co-operation would not only take time but would still be outside the ASEAN framework, (even if undertaken by the armed forces of the ASEAN countries), although the demise of bipolar Cold War blocs and military alliances would make it more convenient for ASEAN to establish or engage in a multi-lateral defence co-operation.

Despite the talk of 'collective strength' the individual parts do not constitute a corporate or collective whole since the ASEAN arms build-up is quite discrete. A common direction, as well as a common enemy needed by the ASEAN defence community are lacking at the moment.

Another important view that has been put forward is that ASEAN, and indeed Southeast Asia is developing into sub-regional security blocs, with Thailand dominating the

continent and maritime ASEAN forming another nexus. Though this is not entirely true, the fact remains that ASEAN has yet to find a common focal point where defence is concerned. This glaring shortcoming of ASEAN was clearly discernible when during the Vietnamese aggression ASEAN could not finalise a common defence agenda for arms acquisitions, as also defence planning.

Since the disappearance of the Vietnamese threat, ASEAN's common security focus of the 80s has disappeared. As such, the present arms build up is only contributing very indirectly to ASEAN defence resilience.

In the meanwhile there have been attempts to develop multilateral co-operation. The structure for this sort of multilateral co-operation is being provided by third parties, mainly Australia since it is making attempts to engage itself comprehensively in the region with its new defence emphasis on Southeast Asia. The 1993 Defence Review reasserts the belief that Australia's future belongs with Asia.⁷

The future of ZOPFAN is uncertain especially in the decade of the 90s, due to very different attitudes of Indonesia as compared to Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand.

7. For details see Desmond Ball, "The Political-Security Dimension of Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region", The Indonesian Quarterly, vol.XXII, no.3, 1994, pp.227-246.

After the annual foreign ministers' meeting in Brunei in July 1995, ASEAN's week-long agenda culminated in a one-day meeting of the ARF on security, attended by 19 countries. Security issues discussed in the meeting included tensions on the divided Korean peninsula, French and Chinese nuclear testing and political developments in Burma. The Spratlys islands was "one issue talked by almost everybody", according to Datuk Ajit Singh, ASEAN's Secy. Gen.⁸ Security concerns about the Spratlys had increased abruptly earlier in the year, after China built outposts on Mischief Reef, a tiny island claimed by the Philippines. China's move prompted ASEAN as a group to criticise Beijing's policies in the South China Sea. The exact shape of the new security arrangement is still being hammered out.

A great deal of uncertainty marks the security environment of the region today. There is a sense of pessimism what with a region wide military build up, in spite of the talk of transparency and confidence building measures. The developments in the region have ushered in a period of dramatic and profound changes in the security predicament of the region.

8. Far Eastern Economic Review, Asia 1996 Yearbook, A Review of the Events of 1995, p.67.

The regional security system in Southeast Asia has not yet fully developed into a 'security community.'⁹ For political and strategic reasons, ASEAN has explicitly and repeatedly rejected the need for a multi-lateral military alliance within the grouping. Although cross-cutting bilateral defence links within ASEAN have been compared to a 'defence spider's web', these links are not uniformly developed. There is a clear lack of interest in weapons standardisation and cost saving joint purchase of weapons, differences in defence doctrines, absence of inter-operability (despite the wide-ranging bilateral exercises) among ASEAN members' armed forces, as well as differing conceptions of defence self-reliance within the region. These combine to virtually prevent the emergence of a defence community in Southeast Asia, in spite of limited multi-lateral military exercises. Concurrently, in spite of the rejection of a formal defence pact, a sort of de facto 'defence community' has emerged, within ASEAN, based on what some ASEAN leaders prefer to call, a 'spider web' network of defence links undertaken bilaterally by the ASEAN states. ASEAN might not become a formal military alliance or pact. However, as a group of countries aspiring towards regional

9. Simon Sheldon, "The Regionalisation of Defence in South East Asia", Pacific Review, vol.5, no.2, 1992, p.122.

peace and stability, there is scope for greater co-ordination in defence matters. Within ASEAN the concept of comprehensive security goes beyond counting military hardware. In the absence of a common threat, contingency planning by the ASEAN states has resulted in the introduction of sophisticated hardware. Although there is no arms race as such in Southeast Asia, the development of such hardware could create complex problems of insecurity between the member states of ASEAN as well as their neighbours who as yet have not been included within ASEAN. Defence expenditure in the region will continue to grow as it is more resource driven than motivated by threats. Successful indigenous military industrialisation programmes will give a boost to defence spending resulting from increased capital investments.

With the end of the Cold War, in Southeast Asia there emerged prospects for regional peace and stability. However, this cannot be taken for granted due to the new developments in the region. In order to transform the somewhat peaceful inter-state relations into "long term", ASEAN leaders must take into consideration the requirements of a regional security community. These should include among others, the reduction of the prospects for intra mural conflicts through the development of dispute settlement

mechanisms. Attempts should also be made to keep the arms build-up in the region under check, as well as to prevent it from developing into an arms race, through transparency and arms control measures. Stronger institutions and processes should be evolved for consultations and action on multi-lateral security. Attempts should be made to reduce the conflicts emanating from regional economic interdependence and problems of integration. In the long run, if meaningful and sound defence co-operation is undertaken, it will be a positive step towards regional co-operation. The robust development of defence co-operation which exemplify significant possibilities for regional co-operation might well result in the emergence of a high-level regional security community.

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