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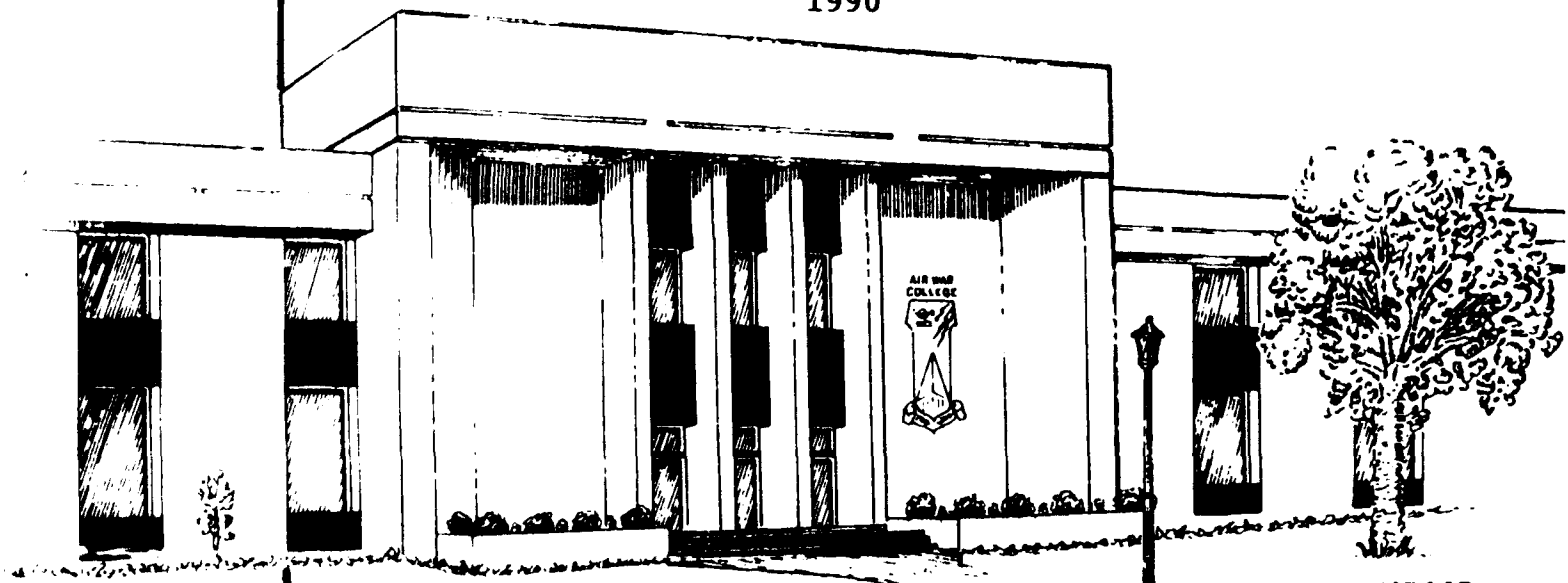
WILL IT BECOME A FORMAL SECURITY ALLIANCE?

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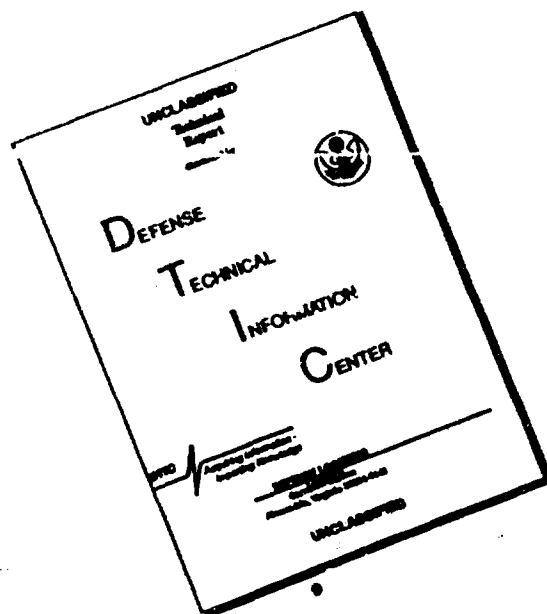


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ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN):
WILL IT BECOME A FORMAL SECURITY ALLIANCE?

by

Brian A. Erickson
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF



A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Colonel David Kimball

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

May 1990

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):
Will It Become a Formal Security Alliance? AUTHOR: Brian A.
Erickson, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has distained from forming a formal defense or security alliance to meet external threats confronting the Association and its members. ASEAN was formed in 1967 to promote economic, cultural and political cooperation among the member states of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Burnei (who joined in 1984), Singapore, and the Philippines. This paper analyzes those external threats and several potential flashpoints facing the ASEAN region and its members, and reviews the current defense arrangements of the individual member states to meet the potential threats. An assessment of the threats indicates that ASEAN does not require a formal defense alliance to insure regional security.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Brian A. Erickson enlisted in the Air Force in August 1965. In 1971, while assigned to HQ Strategic Air Command, Offutt AFB NE, he completed his bachelor's degree through the University of Nebraska at Omaha and received his commission from Officer Training School. He earned his master's degree from the University of Northern Colorado in 1978. He has served as a personnel officer, missile launch officer, executive officer (to the Vice Commander, Air Force Military Personnel Center and the Commander, Air Training Command), recruiting squadron commander and chief of training for Air Force Recruiting Service. Colonel Erickson is a graduate of Squadron Officers School, the Air Command and Staff College, and the Air War College, class of 1990.

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INTRODUCTION

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN):

WILL IT BECOME A FORMAL SECURITY ALLIANCE?

This paper will explore the historical, current and projected security threats that collectively and individually affect the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). From this study, I will analyze the requirements for ASEAN to form a mutual defense alliance to meet their common security threats. I will also analyze current bi-lateral and multi-lateral defense agreements that are in force among ASEAN states and with other nations. From these analyses, I will assess the potential for ASEAN to bring the Association into a formal defense alliance posture.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was formed in 1967 with the Bangkok Declaration of five Southeast Asian nations (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Republic of the Philippines) to enter into an organized forum for discussion of and consensus on regional issues. ASEAN is and was intended to promote social and economic cooperation among the member states. There were several driving forces behind formation of the Association: concern for the spread of Communism and Communist-inspired insurgencies throughout the region; confrontation between superpowers (the United States, Soviet Union, and People's Republic of China) in Indochina and their potential to manipulate and/or dominate the region; the final withdrawal of Great Britain as a colonial power in the region; the wishes of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore to redirect the energies of Indonesia to maintain a regional balance of power; and, the desire of all members to enhance national and regional security through economic and social development (8:194).

The primary focus of ASEAN was, and has continued to be, on economic, social and cultural cooperation. A sense of togetherness has formed a bond between the member states that has resulted in the formulation of consensual agreements on diverse regional questions and provided strategic direction individually and collectively for the members. In all their endeavors, it is important to note that the establishment of a formal defense alliance within the ASEAN framework has been specifically discounted. There are numerous bi- and multi-lateral defense arrangements throughout the region and these are discussed in Chapter Five, "Current Security Linkages". Although there is reference to "regional security" in the Bangkok Declaration, the reference relates to a region free from external interference. The Declaration includes the provision that foreign military bases within member states, for example, are acceptable but must not be of a permanent nature. (8:195-196) This statement of policy directly affects the continuing presence of United States forces in the Philippines, a question that will come to the table in 1991 as the Philippine-U.S. basing agreements are reviewed by the Philippine government.

Each member state joined ASEAN for their own national reasons. Some (Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei--who joined as the sixth member in 1984) joined as newly independent countries. Free from colonial rule and struggling to establish viable governments to solve internal economic, political and cultural problems, these countries were looking for regional stability--a reduction of external threats from their more powerful, established neighbors--while finding their place on the world's political and economic stages. Thailand was in the midst of the Second Indochina War, threatened by Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and was looking for reassurance that it would have some "friends" in the region. Indonesia, the largest, most populous member state, was searching for opportunities to gain influence in the region and in the world as it moved to develop its immense natural resources and exploit its strategic position astride critical commercial and military lines of communication. The Philippines, protected for decades from external threats by its relationship with the United States, was driven by domestic economic and political issues and has looked to ASEAN for stability and assistance in entering the world marketplace.

The glue that holds ASEAN together is anti-Communism; concern that Communist-backed insurgencies within each member state would grow strong enough to disrupt movement toward viable political and economic growth. The diversity of cultural, ethnic and religious factions within each member state is a rich target of opportunity for exploitation by the Communists. Additionally, most members have significant Chinese minority populations (especially Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia). Fear of Chinese influence over these segments of the population, and the resultant Communist takeover of societies, has led to varying degrees of mistreatment of ethnic Chinese within the member states.

ASEAN is not the first attempt at organization within the Southeast Asia region. The United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) was established in 1947 to promote regional economic and cultural cooperation. The Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), encompassing the Malayan Federation, the Philippines and Thailand, was begun in 1961. MAPHILINDO (Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia) was established in 1963. Each of these loosely defined organizations helped shape the cooperative efforts that lead to the formation of ASEAN in

1967. Broinowski, in his "Foreword" to UNDERSTANDING ASEAN, asserts that "From ASEAN's earliest days, it has had its share of admirers and detractors..(sic) and even whether it has a future." (1:X) ASEAN, now in its third decade, appears to have "staying power" as it continues to meet the needs of its members through its direction by consensus as opposed to majority rule. While consensus has its drawbacks--leveling each action to the lowest acceptable common denominator--it has served to defuse significant interstate conflicts, most notably the Philippine and Malaysian joint claims to Sabah, Thai-Malaysian border disputes and Indonesian-Malaysian territorial disputes. (13:17)

CHAPTER TWO

DECLARATIONS REGARDING REGIONAL SECURITY

During the 1970s and 1980s, ASEAN took several stances regarding regional security that affected not only the member states, but the world as well. Tim Huxley capsulizes ASEAN's security ambitions in four dimensions.

1. the building of national (and ultimately regional) "resilience" through socio-economic development;
2. the maintenance and enhancement of close political links (including bilateral military co-operation) and economic relations between the members of ASEAN;
3. the construction of peaceful and co-operative relationships with the rest of Southeast Asia; and
4. the exclusion of unwelcome great power influence (especially in military terms) from the region. (8:199-200)

The Kuala Lumpur Declaration of November 1971 espoused the concept of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The ZOPFAN goal is a neutral Southeast Asia that remains out of the great powers' disputes which were perceived to have contributed to and would survive the Second Indochina War. ZOPFAN has been pushed by Malaysia and remains the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

(8:196-197) Other member states do not embrace ZOPFAN with

the same intensity because of their perceptions that a strong United States presence in the region is vital to a stable security environment. During a recent visit with members of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta, the concept of ZOPFAN was discounted as "pie in the sky"--a utopian concept that would never come to fruition because its cornerstone would have to be a "guarantee" of neutralization from the major external powers. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, set forth in 1976 at Bali, established the mechanisms to peacefully resolve intra-ASEAN disputes. It is a non-aggression pact for the Association, stating the "inviolability of national sovereignty and territorial integrity." (8-197) This treaty also provides for the addition of new members into ASEAN (e.g., Vietnam and Cambodia) should they desire to conform to the Association's rules.

A newcomer to the ASEAN political agenda is the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ), postulated as a natural first step toward ZOPFAN. Indonesia and Malaysia have been pushing the NWFZ since 1984, and Indonesia drafted a proposal in 1987 that was not adopted by ASEAN at the Third ASEAN Summit in December 1987.

Indonesia is pushing for a Southeast Asia nuclear-weapons-free zone (SEANWFZ) as an intermediate step toward this goal (ZOPFAN)--a step opposed by Singapore and Thailand who fear its potential disruptive impact on US military flexibility and the current regional security balance. (17:2)

The subject of a NWFZ is divisive within the Association as the members struggle to find the advantages to the NWFZ, define what would be included (e.g., nuclear-powered vessels, weapons, etc.), who would be the enforcers of the Zone and how would they do it, and would the superpowers agree to comply with the Zone. The Association is watching closely the developments of the New Zealand declaration of a nuclear-free zone within its territorial boundaries and may very well take its lead from the results.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMON CHALLENGES

The ASEAN states face many common challenges. Economically, the development of internal and external systems to bring each country into the world marketplace is a primary focus. The region is rich in natural resources, spread throughout virtually all member states. The development of these natural resources for export, especially the export of "processed" raw materials, requires capital investments that must be secured from outside investors. The growth of agricultural efforts from subsistence to the production of exportable commodities is also of paramount concern. Politically, the extension of democratic, socialistic systems must be continued in as peaceful an atmosphere as possible. Quality of leadership in the member states' political systems will be critical to success as they strive to continue a forward movement toward stability. The preeminent role of the military in government must be addressed and controlled. (18:24-25)

The governments must also step out and act positively on resolution of historical challenges surrounding the cultural, racial, and religious diversities of their

populace. Population density is also a concern, especially in Indonesia and Singapore.

Historical differences/conflicts between member states must continue to be peacefully overcome. ASEAN has proven to be an effective forum for resolution of some very delicate negotiations, including the border tensions between Thailand and Malaysia, the Indonesian-Malaysian confrontations, and the Philippines dispute with Malaysia over Sabah. New confrontations are indeed possible as Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines continue to press their claims to territories within the South China Sea that are also claimed in part by Taiwan, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Vietnam. (5:7) These historical differences coupled with the perceptions of possible superpower intervention in the region form the basis of any requirement for a formal ASEAN security arrangement or defense alliance over and above the existing bi-lateral, mutual defense arrangements currently in being. While the presence and/or intervention of the superpowers in the region provide possible impetus for a formal security alliance, the intra-Association differences provide a negative influence for the creation of such an alliance.

CHAPTER FOUR

THREATS

Taken individually or collectively, the external threats to the continued growth and eventual prosperity of ASEAN are potentially significant. The reasons are basically twofold--ASEAN's rich natural resources and ASEAN's geographic location astride strategic sea lanes of communication (SLOC). The straits of Malacca, Lombok-Makassar, and Sunda form the crossroads of shipping traffic between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Let's look briefly at each potential external threat to ASEAN and discuss current efforts by member states to counter these threats.

INDIA is rapidly becoming a major power, especially in the South Asia region. Military equipment procured from the Soviet Union is clearly front-line, including new aircraft (e.g., MiG-29 FULCRUM), T-72 tanks, and a CHARLIE-1 SSGN submarine that adds to an Indian fleet that already possesses 2 aircraft carriers, 29 destroyers, and 13 submarines. With this significant naval force available--a force that "...goes well beyond local defence

requirements...."--India must be considered a potential threat to the SLOC because "...possession of military capability may sometimes mould the political will to use that capability." (8:206) The potential for an Indian threat to the SLOC, then, is based on "capabilities" rather than intentions--which are unknown. While not yet a belligerent in the Southeast Asia region, India does have historical ethnic and religious ties to Indochina and did speak out in support of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. This support may well have been India's opportunity to show public agreement with its major military sales partner--the Soviet Union--and to cast its shadow back onto the Indochina region. This recasting of Indian influence may indicate a future Sino-Indian conflict in the region--the two countries fought a bloody border war in 1962 and the main issues remain unsettled.

JAPAN is a resources poor, technology and capital rich nation that is being pushed by the United States to buy into a larger portion of its defense costs (and abilities). Current agreements between Japan and the United States call for Japan to assume protective responsibility for the sea lanes of communication (SLOC) out to 1000 miles from her home islands. It is this growing naval power projection

capability that places Japan high on the threat list of ASEAN and its member states. (18:49-50) The SLOC and resources of ASEAN are critical to the continued growth and power of Japan. Notwithstanding the conduct of the Japanese in Southeast Asia during World War II, and the continuing feelings of distrust on the part of the peoples within the region, Japanese capital is necessary to secure economic growth if the ASEAN states are to emerge from the twentieth century as important players on the world stage. The influx of Japanese capital and its potential for control of individual nations' economies gives Japan tremendous leverage in the region. As Japan gains military strength, future threats to her access to and use of the strategic straits could cause Japan to consider use of her forces to insure regional stability either through direct intervention--a remote possibility given current Japanese laws and politics--or in concert with other major powers with similar concerns.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC) must be considered in any discussion of threats to Southeast Asian stability. Historical ties with the region, through culture, religion and race, have resulted in each ASEAN state establishing its own position regarding relationships

with and views of the PRC. Indonesia, for example, fought a bloody war in 1965 against the PRC-backed Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) that resulted in more than 100,000 deaths and became an anti-Communist crusade. (16:41) Indonesia continues to harbor deep suspicions about China's intentions in the region. Singapore and Thailand, on the other hand, have a completely different view of the PRC. Singapore's population is composed of a significant ethnic Chinese core (85 percent) and, while it fears a long-term potential threat from the PRC, it is more concerned with the immediate threat posed by the presence of the Soviet Union. Thailand is closely tied to the PRC through military sales programs resulting from the Thai fear of a Vietnamese push through Cambodia into Thailand. The Sino-Thai linkage has also resulted in the PRC withdrawing its support of the Communist Party of Thailand's revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, a growing Chinese blue water naval capability (to include a growing amphibious landing capability), coupled with an historical interest in the Southeast Asia region, clearly places the PRC on the list of potential threats to ASEAN stability. (12:101)

VIETNAM'S invasion of Cambodia proved to be a rallying point for ASEAN. The member states showed a united

front in objecting to the invasion and have worked publicly and behind the scenes to resolve the situation. Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia and the future composition of the new Cambodian government--who will lead Cambodia, and with what outside support--will influence ASEAN views of Vietnam's intentions regarding regional stability. ASEAN, for its part, has kept the door open for eventual Vietnamese membership in the Association under the terms of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (see Chapter Two, "Declarations Regarding Regional Security", page 8).

THE SOVIET UNION (USSR) poses a significant military and political threat to ASEAN as long as it maintains a naval and air presence in Vietnam and is linked with India. The Soviet threats to ASEAN remain real to the member states notwithstanding the current political and economic turmoil within the USSR. Resolution of the continued Soviet naval and air presence in Vietnam, notwithstanding recent Soviet reductions in forces stationed at Cam Ranh Bay, will also provide ASEAN with the answer to whether the Soviets will continue to present a threat to the region. Should they totally abandon their base at Cam Ranh Bay, their power projection capabilities in the region will be reduced to long-range aviation and submarines. A

unilateral withdrawal of Soviet forces from Vietnam may also affect the continued presence of United States forces in the Philippines. Only time will tell, and the actions of the other major powers (India, PRC, Japan and the United States) will play a significant role in shaping the Soviet restructuring effort within Southeast Asia.

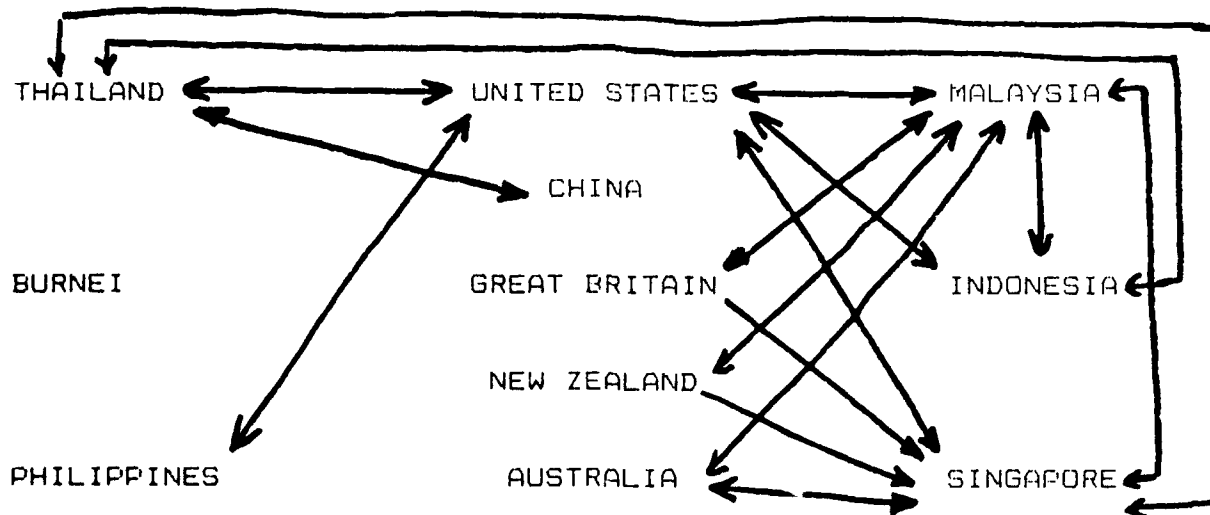
THE UNITED STATES could also pose a potential threat to ASEAN stability. The United States has historical ties to the region based on its relationship with the Philippines and its involvement in World War II and the Second Indochina War. The United States is also dependent on the natural resources that flow from and through the region and on the free transit of other resources through the strategic regional SLOCs. America maintains significant bi- and multi-lateral defense and/or security assistance arrangements with most ASEAN member states, and is an economic partner with all of them. The United States is also seen by most member states as a stabilizing force in the region; the only viable counterforce available to counter current Soviet, PRC, and Indian threats. However, the United States should not be alarmed if ASEAN perceives it as a potential future threat to stability in the region, especially if its (U.S.'s) national interests, such as

unrestricted access to the SLOC, are threatened by other major powers. When the U.S. withdraws from the Philippines, its forces will no longer be concentrated within the ASEAN region as they are now. The U.S. will maintain a force projection capability in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean areas but the forces will not be as visible as they are now. This dispersion of forces should help reduce the "perception" of a U.S. threat within ASEAN.

CHAPTER FIVE

CURRENT SECURITY LINKAGES

To counter external threats, real and perceived, the individual ASEAN states have formed security linkages with each other and with outside powers.



Thailand, as stated, opened a relationship with the PRC to secure military hardware to protect itself from threatened Vietnamese expansion through Cambodia and Laos. The PRC has also withdrawn its support of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) to ease Thailand's concern regarding a Communist-backed insurgency. Thailand also maintains a strong relationship with the United States that encompasses military and economic assistance and relies on the U.S. to

provide a protective umbrella against an attack by any major power. Thailand cooperates with Malaysia in dealing with insurgents along the Thai-Malay border and has assisted Malaysia in its continuing efforts to eliminate the Chinese Terrorist Organization (CTO), remnants of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), and Malaysia has refrained from supporting a Muslim separatist movement active in southern Thailand.

Malaysia, in addition to its links to Thailand, is a member of the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) that includes Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, and Singapore. The FPDA was established in 1971 when the British left Malaysia and Singapore, and is designed to provide a mutual defense arrangement for the members.

That Malaysia and Singapore will help each other if either is attacked is not in doubt as defence and security of the two countries is indivisible. But with FPDA, any potential threat has also to take into account the reaction and involvement of Australia, Britain and New Zealand. (15:18)

FPDA members conduct coordinated, joint military exercises within each country; although, until recently, Malaysia and Singapore did not participate at the same time. Malaysia is also tied to the United States for military sales and training.

The Philippines is tied only to the United States and relies on the U.S. to provide protection from external threats regardless of the source while they concentrate on internal problems. The ability of the United States to locate significant naval and air forces within the Philippines provides forward basing for continued U.S. projection of power throughout the region and into the Indian Ocean. The ultimate result of the Philippine-U.S. bases agreement negotiations will most certainly require a review and possible realignment of the United States' ability to maintain a continued presence not only in the Philippines but in the Southeast Asia region.

Singapore maintains security linkages with Malaysia and the other members of the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) as well as Thailand and the United States. Their relationship with Thailand is the result of Thailand's position vis a vis Vietnam and its occupation of Cambodia. Singapore's relationship with the U.S. is basically through military sales and training and it has begun to produce U.S. weapons such as the M-16 rifle. Should the U.S. be forced to abandon its facilities in the Philippines, Singapore has offered to provide additional naval rest and repair facilities to the American fleet. (14:37) Although it has

not offered to allow the building of new U.S. bases similar to Clark Air Base and Subic Bay (the total size of the Philippine bases exceeds the total area of Singapore!), Singapore has offered to expand those services already offered/provided to the U.S. fleet.

Indonesia receives limited military assistance sales from the United States and has built the region's first aircraft industry that produces aircraft with military capabilities. Indonesia sees itself as an island nation--an archipelagic country--that has no direct, external security threats. (13:22) It has no individual security (defense) agreements--notwithstanding some military arms purchases--with outside powers and is working to become a self-sufficient military power that can look to its neighbors if assistance is needed. During my discussions with the staff of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta in March 1990, it was stated that "regional resilience" was a more realistic goal than any military alliances for Indonesia. This regional resilience is a concept of security proposed by Indonesia's President Suharto that is based upon strong nation states that possess economic, political and cultural infrastructures that are "...so strong and mutually reinforcing that they...develop a

powerful, self-protecting national resilience; this would prevent subversion from within and thwart predators from without." (17:7) Regional resilience, according to the CSIS staff, should be built on economies of scale within ASEAN and the interoperability of ASEAN forces and equipment. Indonesia believes that it has a central place in global politics because of its strategic location, population, and abundant resources. To this end, Indonesia has attempted to assert itself in international forums, especially the United Nations and the Nonaligned Movement, as a spokesman for the nonaligned world and for Southeast Asia. However, Indonesia's takeover of East Timor in 1975 has continued to dilute its influence among nonaligned nations. (6:143)

Borneo, the newest member of ASEAN, joined the Association to protect its territory from possible interest on the part of the other ASEAN members. Malaysia and Indonesia, by virtue of their common borders, could pose a threat to the stability of Borneo. Membership in the Association and use of the Association's forums for open discussion has provided Borneo the necessary security from this perceived threat.

CHAPTER SIX

FLASHPOINTS WITHIN THE REGION

Some additional threats to the ASEAN countries, and the Association itself, are those potential flashpoints that could result in strategic confrontations between/among the member states and outside adversaries or between world superpowers with the Association caught in the middle. Dr Singh Bilveer, writing in the ASIAN DEFENCE JOURNAL, outlines the two flashpoints that he believes to be the most probable--the South China Sea and the "struggle for influence taking place in the Southwest Pacific." (5:6) I would add to that list the strategic straits of Malacca, Lombok-Makassar, and Sunda--straits "controlled" by at least one ASEAN member state. While straits are not usually considered "flashpoints", Dr Bilveer's argument that "...various agents ...may impede the free flow of ships and seaborne traffic..." through the straits is persuasive. (4:18) Indochina, specifically Cambodia, remains a potential flashpoint notwithstanding the Vietnamese pledge to totally withdraw forces and allow formation of a new government.

SOUTH CHINA SEA. Sheldon Simon, writing in the Journal of International Affairs, asserts that:

The South China Sea is rife with conflicting jurisdictional claims growing out of overlapping 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), the potential involvement of external powers as backers of one side or another, and the reported existence of vast quantities of undersea mineral and energy resources. (13:27)

Claims to portions of island groups within the South China Sea are made by the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The Paracel Islands have been the focus of conflicts between the PRC and Vietnam since 1974. The Spratly Islands are claimed, in part, by Vietnam, the PRC, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The Natuna Islands, located between East and West Malaysia, are jointly claimed by Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the PRC. (5:7)

SEA LANES OF COMMUNICATION--THE STRATEGIC STRAITS.

The strategic location of the ASEAN states assures continued global concern over the Association's security and stability. Singh Bilveer, writing in the ASIAN DEFENCE JOURNAL, highlights the importance of the sea lanes of communication (SLOC).

The importance of controlling the seas in time of war has been demonstrated in the two wars fought this century. But man has not in any way made

their control any less important in time of peace. Because of the growing interdependence of the world and the heavy dependence on foreign trade by all countries, the ability to ensure unimpeded passage of ships on the oceans of the world has become identified with the very survival of the nation states, especially of their economies, which in turn have consequences for the political health of these states. (4:16)

Clearly, control of the straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok-Makassar which pass between and through Malaysia and Indonesia are critical to world commerce. The straits provide the shortest passage points between the northern Indian and northwestern Pacific Oceans. (10:209) The United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the PRC--to name a few--are rightfully concerned about the rights of free passage through these straits. Security of the critical straits is potentially threatened by several sources. These threats could conceivably include policies pursued by coastal states designed to control freedom of passage in the interest of their national security and the naval deployment of external powers to interrupt passage of vessels either into or through the straits. (4:18) Any belligerent disruption of the flow of vital natural resources because of the closure of any of these straits will most certainly result in intervention by at least one of the superpowers.

INDOCHINA. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia was a "stabilizing" event for ASEAN because it united the member states against Vietnam. While only Thailand is threatened by its proximity to Cambodia and Vietnam, the other ASEAN states are concerned about the next step for Vietnam after the Cambodian question is settled. Will Vietnam seek to spread its influence and power throughout Southeast Asia? Vietnam's withdrawal of troops from Cambodia will, for the moment, alleviate many of ASEAN's fears--provided the withdrawal is accomplished as announced. Unfortunately, there has been no outside verification of a total Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. An interesting spin-off from the Vietnamese invasion is the new relationships formed by Thailand and the PRC to counter the perceived threat to the Thai borders. Another prospective action that may influence the eventual "face" of Indochina is the withdrawal of Soviet naval and air forces from its bases in Vietnam--either unilaterally or in conjunction with the United States' "surrender" of Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines. While the Soviet Union has reduced its level of forces deployed in Vietnam, a significant capability remains (see Chapter Four, "THREATS", page 16).

CHAPTER SEVEN

ASSESSMENT

The external security threats to ASEAN, collectively and individually, do not provide the impetus for the Association to assume a formal defense alliance posture. The various threats do constitute reasons for concern by not only the Association, but the world as a whole. However, the individual member states continue to discount the need for a formal ASEAN security alliance as unnecessary. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir, for example, during the Third ASEAN Summit in 1987, rejected the possibility that ASEAN would evolve into a "regional collective security arrangement or military alliance because...to win friends, one should not create enemies." (17:16)

These are changing times and the propensity for armed conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States has been reduced. The withdrawal of significant Soviet forces from Vietnam and Vietnam's willingness to work for a peaceful settlement of the Cambodian situation will go a long way toward stabilizing Indochina. The military presence of the United States in the region will be resolved in 1991, when the Philippine-U.S. basing agreements are

reviewed. A reduced United States presence is predicted, if not in the short term, at least within the next few years. The U.S., however, has a vested interest in the free flow of traffic through the SLOC and will maintain a naval force projection capability in the region.

With the possible exception of Thailand, who is still concerned with the instability of the Cambodian situation, no ASEAN country is overly concerned with a direct, external military threat. Indonesia, for example, can not envisage any country invading its territory and designs its military exercises to counter a "generic" threat that closely approximates the strength and capabilities of the Indonesian armed forces. The threats are to regional stability--"flashpoints" that could explode out of control and disrupt the region either by enveloping the members in armed confrontation against outsiders or inviting extra-regional major powers to flex their muscles--politically, economically or militarily--to restore stability to the region.

The Malaysian dream of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) will become a reality when the United States and the Soviet Union do finally withdraw from their

strategic bases in the Philippines and Vietnam. It will be in their best interests that the Southeast Asian region be stable and their support of the ZOPFAN concept will go a long way toward getting other major powers in line with the proposal. The strategic position of the member states astride the sea lanes of communication vital to world commerce, and the continued economic growth of all Asian nations, will result in a de facto if not de jure defense alliance of all the major powers should the SLOC be threatened by any other power or by regional instability. No single nation can afford to upset the stability of the ASEAN region without risking direct confrontation by other nations that have vested interests in the continuation of the status quo.

Peaceful resolution of the conflicting territorial claims to the various Spratly and Parcel Islands by ASEAN members will be accomplished through the proven political mechanisms in being within the Association that have already resulted in the amicable settlement of other disputes among the members. The resolution of other conflicting claims (e.g., the PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam) to these strategically located islands will require an

international forum such as the United Nations or, perhaps, an individual third-party nation as arbitrator.

ASEAN will pursue its goals of economic, social, and political cooperation among the member states with an eye toward moving the Association and the individual members onto the world stage as industrialized nations, exploiting the vast natural wealth of the region, and embracing any other Southeast Asia nations, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, that may wish to join the Association.

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