

CONCLUSION

Neutralisation as an instrumentality of statecraft has only limited applicability in trying to apply this concept to South East Asia, it has to be stretch to its utmost flexibility. Prevailing changing conditions in South East Asia plus the uncertainty of a global accommodation of Big Power interests, makes it difficult to assess policy considerations as a foundation for a formal legal prescription. Yet the need for some kind of a detente in this part of the world should not be denied. These small newly emergent states must be allowed to proceed with nation-building and join the mainstream of the international community.

Neutralisation is only one of the many options available to remedy a situation of political instability. But in spite of the numerous problems and obstacles mentioned, it is submitted that it is the best as a long term solution. The alternative that is currently employed is the alliance system. Experience has shown that alliances are not only the result of tensions but may be the cause of these tensions. Neutralisation removes all these..

Under neutralisation, the Big Powers simply exchanges the freedom to intervene for a condition which would minimise their

need to counter-intervene in defence of their interests. If the neutralisation arrangement can fully protect, the legitimate interests of the Big Powers, then it will work, and chances are it will stay as a permanent characteristic of South East Asian politics.

The neutralised states have everything to gain under neutralisation. Their obligations to keep away from alliances may very well restore to these countries the full sovereignty expected of an independent state. It is not a sign of weakness for a state to be neutralised, especially if it is the states themselves that want to be neutralised. It is not a desperate remedy but rather an intrinsically desirable one.

Neutralisation will provide the basic first step that will establish a regional framework within which South East Asian problems will be solved by South East Asian states themselves, free from outside interference. It could be the start of the process of building a regional identity, even a South East Asian community in which states not only live in peace but cooperate actively to build a better future for their people.

But the path to this ideal is a long and arduous one. South East Asian leaders are realistic and practical enough to acknowledge this fact. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration, though only a small first step, is an encouraging beginning and as long as there is a prevailing spirit of 'Jayadiri' amongst the South East Asian people, the neutralisation of South East Asia will be a political reality in the not too distant future.