

of government and a style of life indigenous and appropriate to the conditions of the country. Being a part of South East Asia, the problems posed by these challenges are compounded by the interests and involvement of powers external to the region.

## CHAPTER I

### INVOLVEMENT OF EXTERNAL POWERS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

South East Asia because of its strategic and economic importance has been and will continue to be the subject of competition for influence between the foreign powers. In the past this competition has developed into a confrontation with disastrous consequences for the countries in the region. The competition in the future may be waged in a different form but its effect on the security and stability of the region to be sure will remain much the same.

South East Asia has a long history of involvement of external powers. Mainly due to the economic and strategic value of the region this involvement has assumed many forms and has undergone great changes with one or other reason being emphasised at different times. The earliest involvement began as trade relations which developed into the creation of settlements and finally into total occupation and colonisation of the countries in South East Asia. The colonisation of Britain, the Netherlands, France and the United States was replaced by that

of Japan during the Second World War. The defeat of Japan saw a temporary return to the prewar order which ended with the independence of Indonesia, the Philippines, Burma and later Malaysia. The form and features of the involvement of external powers today could be usefully considered in turn.

(a) United States of America

Until the Second World War, except for the colonisation of the Philippines, the United States had little interest and was only marginally involved in South East Asia. World War II, the Korean War and the War in Indonesia were the major milestones that marked the entry of the United States into the affairs of South East Asia.

United States's interests in South East Asia could be viewed from two aspects, one as a part of her anti-communist campaign and two as part of her Big Power role in the global power structure. With the increasing nationalism of the South East Asian countries, the end of a monolithic communist ideology followed by a new attitude towards communism and the debilitating effects of her involvement in Vietnam, the United States is now slowly changing the nature and the basic of her commitment to South East Asia. The Nixon Doctrine if vague and obscure in many respects is clear in one aspect which is a reduced United States presence in South East Asia with the countries themselves playing a major role in any fight against subversion. The United States' interest apparently will in

future therefore essentially be concerned with, if not the maintenance of a preponderance of influence, the prevention of any one-nation dominance in the region. Though the basis of hereconcern may be different from what it was twenty years ago, the interest throughout is similar in that it is fundamentally a strategic interest.

(b) Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R.)

Until quite recently it can be said that Soviet interest in South East Asia was part of her global interest to encourage the creation of governments socialist or communist in inclination if not in fact, and in the context of the Cold War with the United States to compete for influence. Her early explicit involvement with countries in this area was with Indonesia and with North Vietnam which she continues to support to this day in the latter's struggle with South Vietnam.

Soviet accession to Big Power status, her ideological dispute with the People's Republic of China which may be as more than a conflict of national interests between Big Powers, the PRC's ground reproaching with the United States and the urge and impulse to play the role of a Big Power which these considerations create have of late seen an increase and introduced a degree of specificity in her interest in South East Asia. Her concern at one time to bring the Vietnam War to an end and her proposal for the creation of an Asian Collective Security System presumably stems largely from her fear of and desire to contain a pre dominance

of the People's Republic of China's influence in the region. Soviet interests like that of the United States is again essentially a strategic one.

(c) The People's Republic of China

South East Asia being a part of the peripheries of the People's Republic of China obviously has and undoubtedly will continue to have a particular relevance and be of vital concern to the People's Republic of China. It has been more so by the fact that through SEATO and other forms of bilateral arrangements countries in this area have aligned themselves with the United States and adopted a hostile posture towards the People's Republic of China. If the theory is accepted that Big Powers have a tendency to create a backyard wherein they may exercise their influence to insure that no country becomes to them then, just as Latin America is the backyard of the United States and as Eastern Europe of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, so may South East Asia be turned into a backyard of the People's Republic of China.

The apparent Soviet attempt to encircle the People's Republic of China, as manifested by the former's firm support of India against Pakistan, her vague suggestions for an Asian Collective Security System and the reactivation of the Soviet-Japanese relations, which is likely to heighten the People's Republic of China's fears of insecurity could well induce the People's Republic of China towards such an inclination. The

People's Republic of China interests in South East Asia will continue to be as it has been in the past to have countries in South East Asia, if not subservient, at least not hostile to her, to reduce United States' influence and to stem any Soviet's attempt to increase her influence.

In conclusion a consideration of the interest of the three Big Powers in South East Asia suggests the following features:-

- (i) that their interests are in essence strategic and in a sense negative.
- (ii) that it is a part of the classical Big Power game to establish spheres of influence, their desire only to ensure that countries in the region if not hostile to the others would be friendly to them so that they would not be denied the raw materials with which the region is richly endowed.

(d) Other Powers

It may be pertinent also to consider the interests of the other major powers, powers who, while not having the military capacity to exercise and exert a direct influence in the affairs of this area, nevertheless, have had or may have other forms of interest in this area. The countries that would immediately spring to mind here are Britain, France and Japan. Britain and France are both major powers in this region and, given a United Europe, their political and economic interests in this area quite

likely to be increased.

Japan's interest in South East Asia as in many other parts of the world contains a large economic element Japan's presence dependence on oil from the Gulf means also that she has interest in ensuring a safe and free waterway through South East Asia.

On the whole it can be seen that external powers still insist that South East Asia is a strategic area in the furtherance of their foreign policy. It is quite unlikely that this will change in the near future.

Therefore it is essential that in order to not to be too heavily involved either in highly visible or in covert operations in these areas, these powers need to converge their interests to a point where there is some kind of a detente. An available solution would likely be a neutralisation of the region.

Part II of this paper will investigate the possible extent of their participation in a neutralisation arrangement, either as guarantors or as passive observers. Needless to say, any neutralisation scheme of the region which exclude considerations of their interests will ultimately fail.