

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concern of this study is an examination of the concept and phenomenon of regionalism in Southeast Asia as expressed through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). For the purpose of this study, emphasis will be given to the development, structure, activities and finally, the nature of ASEAN as a regional institutional framework, since the Association is the first successful indigenous organisation which now represents a relatively advanced process of international community formation in Southeast Asia. Also, it is a culmination of previous attempts at regionalism. The experience of the Association itself has also been impressive. Until now, ASEAN has demonstrated a vitality and gained international recognition through the co-ordinated foreign policies of its members, although the pace of its intra-regional integration may still be slightly sluggish. In order to understand regionalism in Southeast Asia, ASEAN must be investigated, although ASEAN is not the only regional forum which is open to the member countries.

Definition of Terms

A clarification of what a number of terms, such as regionalism, region and cooperation mean in this study will first be given before an attempt is made to evaluate the empirical

data, as many people have used them differently for different purposes.

The concept of "regionalism" has long evoked interest among national leaders and students of international relations. There are diverse definitions and interpretations in which the concept of regionalism is used - including the geopolitical, practical and organic perspective. According to the geopolitical point of view, regionalism needs to be discussed within a geographical framework. However, from the practical point of view, regionalism may bring together countries that are geographically apart. And again from an organic point of view, it may be seen as a stage of the process from which nation-states try to relate to the world community.¹

The reemergence of a number of independent states after World War II was often accompanied by a new interest among these former colonies to develop a regionalist approach to tackle some of the common problems which they faced: national security, economic development and nation-building. This regionalist sentiment, however, was not expressed in terms of a desire for supra-national integration, but rather as a call for close cooperation and policy coordination whenever possible to facilitate the achievement of the national objectives of each individual state. This kind of cooperation which is based on a subregional or regional basis is generally known as "regional

¹ William Yen Chuko, "Concepts of Regionalism in Southeast Asia", Ph.D. Diss. New York Univ., 1965. see Introduction.

cooperation" or regionalism.² "Regionalism" in this study will be used synonymously with regional cooperation. The term in this study is thus simply used to describe the observable cooperation in domestic and international policy which takes place within an institutional structure, rather than carrying the implication of ultimate economic and political unification.

There have been many definitions of the concept of "region". Bruce Russett's quantitative effort to determine real "regions", through the analysis of data on cultural similarity, common political orientations, institutional memberships, transactional flows and proximity, is impressive but not very helpful in a situation where many of these factors are so changeable.³ Oran Young's incongruities model and his concept of "subsystems" as patterns of substantial interaction in relation to a spatial core of sovereign states are more helpful in facilitating the understanding of the evolution of global and regional relationships, especially since his theory draws attention to linkages between subsystems and to interactions with the global system.⁴

² In line with this, the definition of integration can be brought up. Integration is generally categorized as the more formal, institutionalized type of cooperation among nations. The usual logical assumption is that regional cooperation leads to regional integration in accordance with a logical, step-by-step process. Though this kind of task is relevant to the development of this study, it does not constitute its theme.

³ Bruce Russett, International Region and the International System: A Study in Political Ecology (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1967), pp. 1-7, 167-190.

⁴ Oran R. Young, "Political Discontinuities in the International system," World Politics, 20, 3(1968), pp. 369-392.

But Oran Young's concept of subsystems with its emphasis on political interactions is not suitable for analyzing an organisation like ASEAN which has multi-functions.⁵

In the context of a treaty-based "regional" boundary like ASEAN, the definition of "region" put forward by Smithers who defines it as "a convenient geographical area controlled by sovereign Governments whose interests in the particular subject-matter to be dealt with are sufficiently compatible for them to be able to enter into effective multilateral cooperation"⁶ seems more appropriate.

On the other hand, in practice, regions are really what politicians and people want them to be. Thus, what is a 'region' for one purpose may not necessarily be considered so for another.

For this study, it is felt that a much more realistic approach is needed in trying to define Southeast Asia as a region. It will therefore be simply viewed as a geographical entity. This approach is considered advantageous because it does not unnecessarily delimit the definition of Southeast Asia as a region in a rigid manner. In this context, we can propose the ASEAN-region as a concept of subregion to the Southeast Asian

⁵ Berhanykun Andemicael ed., Regionalism and the United Nations (New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1979) p. 9.

⁶ Sir Peter Smithers, "Towards Great Coherence among Inter-governmental Organization through Governmental Control," in ibid., p. 26.

region, comprising six nations.⁷

In fact, Southeast Asia - at least in the past - was conceived as a unity mainly by outside forces in their own specific interests. The common usage of the term occurred as a result of the Pacific War. From 1943 to 1945 it was the anti-Japanese military elements of the warring powers, USA and Great Britain, who developed the idea of Southeast Asia based on strategic and security considerations. On the other hand, historically the great Asian powers had already built their own concepts. The Chinese, for example, for centuries saw Southeast Asia as "Nanyang" from the viewpoint of the traditional Chinese order based on the tribute system; the Japanese viewed Southeast Asia as "Nanpo" from the perspective of the Japanese order in the pseudo Great Asian Commonwealth; while the early Indians used to think of Southeast Asia as "Suvarnabhumi" or the Land of Gold; and the Arabs used to refer to the region as "Al-Jawi" or the Land of Jawa.⁸

The countries included in this broad frame of reference have on occasions varied. Nevertheless, it is now most commonly agreed

⁷ The five original members of ASEAN are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippine, Singapore and Thailand. Due to the somewhat historical focus of the present analysis, Brunei, the sixth country to join ASEAN with its independence from British in 1984, is systematically excluded from most analysis of regional cooperation before 1984.

⁸ Rüdiger Machetzki, "Intranational and Supranational Problems of Political Regionalism in Southeast Asia," in Politics, Society and Economy in the ASEAN States, eds. Bernhard Dahm and Werner Draguhn (Hamburg: the Institute of Asian Affairs, 1975), pp. 17-18.

that Southeast Asia comprises the six ASEAN countries (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), Myanmar (formerly Burma) and the Indo-Chinese states of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

"Cooperation" may be defined as "the act of working together toward an end."⁹ In the case of regional cooperation, the end can be economic, political or social objectives. This kind of cooperation will be beneficial to all parties concerned, as acting together is more effective than acting alone. Economically, it is believed that the grouping of countries in this manner will accelerate economic growth, especially that of the developing countries. The division of production according to each country's expertise should bring about a strong economic group with increased bargaining power capable of dealing with other external groups, while intra-regional trade will be promoted by free trade between member countries. In political terms, unifying countries in this manner is useful for regional solidarity, enabling them to have a stronger voice in the international political arena. Also, it will oppose or hinder any external threat which may arise and affect regional security. On the social front, cooperation can be effectively used to solve

⁹ Margaret Mead, Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 8, as cited in Estrella D. Solidum, Towards A Southeast Asian Community (Quzon City: University of the Philippines press, 1974), p. 2.

common problems faced by the member countries.¹⁰ Accordingly, "cooperation" is a fundamental concept used in this study because it is employed to explain regionalism which can be observed at the different stages and different levels of the development of the organisation.

In view of the fact that the creation of an international regional organisation constitutes in itself a practical means of implementing the concept of regionalism, a number of attempts were made after World War II to form international organisations among the nations in the Southeast Asia region. Southeast Asia itself was able to demonstrate its consciousness of regional cooperation through these organisations. Among these, historically, ASEAN spans more than twenty years and incorporates many spheres of activity since it was formally established in Bangkok on 8 August 1967. Therefore it should be possible to analyse, assess and study regionalism through ASEAN's experience. As stated earlier, this study places emphasis on the development, structure, activities and nature of ASEAN as a regional institution. The organisation of this inquiry and analysis of ASEAN cooperation is presented in the framework of analysis below.

Framework of Analysis

The framework of this inquiry is designed to serve two

¹⁰ Vinita Sukrasep, ASEAN in International Relations (Bangkok: Aksornsiyam Press, 1989), p. 5-6.

purposes. First, it sets the context for the understanding of the significance of regionalism/regional cooperation for the ASEAN member countries. Secondly, it attempts to assess regionalism in Southeast Asia through the framework of ASEAN.

The general theoretical work on regionalism and previous analyses by observers of ASEAN provide the basis for organising the analytical framework in terms of four research questions:¹¹

1. What preconditions and/or antecedents might be expected to advance or hinder cooperation among ASEAN member countries?

2. What is the nature of the regional institution and the informal cooperative arrangements emerging from the preconditions, and do they serve any political interests to promote or impede cooperative activities?

3. How did the five member countries of ASEAN select a cooperative strategy and formulate an action programme?

4. How did ASEAN proceed to implement the projects that constitute their programme for cooperative action, and what have been the results?

Based on the abovementioned theoretical work, the analytical approach of this study proceeds through three steps. The first step begins with a discussion of the preconditions that help or hinder cooperation in Southeast Asia followed by a brief discussion of the antecedents to ASEAN. The development of regionalism in Southeast Asia is divided into three distinct

¹¹ Marjorie L. Suriyamongkol, Politics of ASEAN Economic Cooperation (Singapore: Oxford University press, 1988), pp. 3-4.

phases. Most scholars studying regionalism in Southeast Asia are of the same opinion in dividing the development into three periods, although it is slightly different from author to author when these phases start and end. For my study, the first stage of regional development covers approximately the period from 1945 to 1959; the second phase roughly occurs from about 1960 to 1967; the third stage covers developments since 1967. The first step is discussed in chapter II of this study, which deals with the first two periods covering the background and antecedents of ASEAN.

The second step is to deal with the historical development of ASEAN in the context of regionalism, with the emphasis on the principles, structures, activities and motivations behind the ASEAN process. This work will be done in a two-way dimension; horizontal and vertical dimensions. The horizontal approach is inspired from the term "regionalism". Therefore, the regionalism of ASEAN will be analysed in the economic, political, and social fields. In the vertical dimension, the history of ASEAN will be divided into three periods. In this study, the first period is from 1967 which is the beginning of ASEAN to 1976, the second from 1976 to 1987 and the third from 1987 to the present. It is appreciated that a lot has actually been written about the history of ASEAN. The chronological division of ASEAN can be based on the particular aspect of cooperation that one wishes to emphasise. But in this study, I will divide the history of ASEAN on the basis of the Summit Meetings of ASEAN, as these Meetings

have tended to demarcate the important phases of ASEAN's evolution. Until now, there have been four Summit Meetings held in 1976, 1977, 1987 and 1992 respectively. But, the second can be said to be an extension of the first. It must be noted that in my discussion, it might be necessary to go beyond the limitation of the periodic division, because the evolution of ASEAN is a dynamic rather than a static process. The second step will be dealt in Chapter III.

The third step which will be attempted in Chapter IV is an evaluation of the problems and prospects of ASEAN regionalism, especially in light of the current changes in the world scene. Finally, Chapter V attempts to offer concluding remarks about the development of the regionalism in Southeast Asia.

Review of Literature

The subject of regionalism is so extensive and diverse that we can cover only its major aspects as they relate to a specific aim. Broadly speaking, studies of regionalism can be categorized into two themes. First, regionalism can be understood as an ideal step beyond nationalism towards the desirable goal of internationalism. In this respect, the phenomena of regionalism have been studied by scholars from the respective regions as they relate to the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of

peace.¹² In view of the skepticism towards the practical chances of the success of globalism, as exemplified in the poor performance of the United Nations, regionalism has been put forward as a practical alternative to globalism.

On the other hand, regionalism can be also understood as the claims of poor nations against rich nations. In this respect, the phenomenon of regionalism reflects the developing states' efforts to press for a restructuring of international economic relations and institutions. They have drawn attention to the disparity of wealth and power among nations, the failure of economic development to reach the very poor, and the complex ways in which interdependence poses risks for weak nations.¹³

In actual fact, many scholars have provided theoretical bases for the understanding regionalism. Economists have been fascinated by the prospects of economy of scale, specialization and division of labour offered by regionalism. Moreover, regional cooperation offers possibilities in accelerating economic development and could perhaps be utilized as a strategy for the industrialization of developing countries. Politicians and

¹² In line with this, various case studies relating to regionalism have been well elaborated in Berhanykun Andemicael ed., Regionalism and the United States (New York: Oceana Publications Inc., 1979); on Asian Regionalism, see, Jun Nishikawa, ASEAN and the United Nations System, Regional Study no. 9 (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 1983).

¹³ A few of theoretical studies of political economy along this perspective on regionalism have been explored. Among them, one of the representative volumes is The ASEAN States: coping with Dependence by Donald K. Crone, who describes ASEAN as "Defensive Regionalism" in the volume.

statesmen embrace regionalism for its obvious internal and external political value: regionalism is useful for political public relations exercises at home and abroad. The strengthening of regional solidarity means a greater voice in world affairs, particularly for a grouping of small powers, and it increases regional security as a deterrent against possible external threat and menace.

As stated earlier, however, when we understand regionalism as regional cooperation for collective action in the resolution of common national problems through an organised institution based on geographical proximity, regionalism tends to show multifaceted features covering the political, economic and socio-cultural aspects. Moreover, a variety of measures and activities of cooperation in a particular region tend to be affected by its regional attributes and changing environmental conditions.

In fact, ASEAN has been in existence for twenty-five years. Numerous studies already exist on the history, development, achievements or failures of ASEAN cooperation. Nevertheless, comprehensive studies encompassing the preconditions, the above-mentioned three aspects, and the problems and prospects of ASEAN's cooperation are lacking.¹⁴ It is therefore deemed

¹⁴ Books comprising articles on these issues can be found e.g. Understanding ASEAN (Alison Broinowski ed., 1982) and Regionalism cooperation in Southeast Asia: Problems, Possibilities and Prospects (Okabe Tatsumi ed., 1988). These books, consisting of works written by a number of writers on specific topics, do not bring out a coherent argument to show a clear overall picture of ASEAN. There were also some attempts in the past to deal with regionalism in Southeast Asia in a broad
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necessary to give equal weight to each of these issues in order to understand the role of ASEAN in the context of the regionalism of Southeast Asia.

An attempt has been made in this thesis to deal with these issues of ASEAN cooperation within the framework of regionalism in Southeast Asia, and finally to examine the nature of the organisation. However, it should be noted that it will be impossible to deal with each and every one of the issues of ASEAN in all their details in such a limited study as this. This is only possible at the expense of such details. Herein lies perhaps the limitation of this study.

Research for this study is based on written sources, both English and non-English. The secondary sources are mainly in English in the form of books, articles, journals and periodicals. A major part of the information for this thesis pertaining to the topic of regional cooperation has been obtained from library materials at University of Malaya and National University of Singapore. Additional information has also been acquired directly from the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Kuala Lumpur and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

¹⁴(...continued)

manner e.g. "Concepts of Regionalism in Southeast" (William Y. Chuko, Ph.D. Diss. New York Univ. 1965) and "The direction of Regional Organization of Southeast Asian States: A Political and Geographic Study" (Manu Walyapechara, Ph.D. Diss. Univ. of Kansas, 1974). But all these studies need to be up-dated today.

Some of the best sources include the following:

1. Literature on Southeast Asia's characteristics

Major sources on the Southeast Asia's Characteristics include: Clark D. Neher, Politics in Southeast Asia; Ashok K. Dutt, Southeast Asia: Realm of Contrast; Lucian W. Pye, Southeast Asia's Political Systems; C. A. Fisher, Southeast Asia: a social, Political and Economy Geography; Joginder Singh Jessy, History of Southeast Asia (1824-1965); and William Yen Chuko, Concepts of regionalism in Southeast Asia. The views of these writers lead us to the conclusion that the region is distinctive and coherent, and that it has an identity that sets it apart from surrounding regions - historically and physically, although there is also a strong argument for ignoring such geographical generalizations.

2. Literature on initial regionalism in Southeast Asia

Some of the most useful works include: Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, Regional Organization and Order in Southeast Asia especially, PP. 9-44; Manu Walyapechra, The Direction of Regional Organization of Southeast States: A Political and Geographic Study, Chapter IV; Bernard K. Gorden, The Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia. All these references tell us that ASEAN did not emerge in a political vacuum. Past experiences in regional cooperation as well as the situation of the mid-sixties did to a large extent determine the shape and nature of ASEAN. This constitutes a strong reason why we should analyse ASEAN in the context of Southeast Asian Regionalism.

3. Literature on ASEAN

As stated earlier, ASEAN has attracted so much scholarly interest especially on its cooperative endeavours in various fields and perspectives that it may be repetitions to cite all the references here.¹⁰ But special mention must be made of two recent books, Vinita Sukrasep's ASEAN in International Relations (1989) and Alison Broinowski(ed.)'s ASEAN into the 1990s (1990), which are in line with the aims of this study and which give a comprehensive insight into the role of ASEAN in Southeast Asia. However, it must be said that the former is rather descriptive and the latter is only a compilation of previous works.

Other than these books, journals and periodicals such as Asian Survey, Indonesian Quarterly, and Contemporary Southeast Asia contain a wealth of information and ideas which are indispensable for a study of this nature.

Facts on ASEAN and ASEAN Document: Agreements and Declarations which are published by the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ASEAN Secretariat, respectively have been extremely useful for this study. Many official documents including various declarations are presented in these volumes.

New Straits Times (Malaysia), Bangkok Post (Thailand) and Straits Times (Singapore) contain a wealth of data pertaining to the everyday events which relate to ASEAN, representing invaluable source of information for this study.

¹⁰ The two-volume ASEAN Bibliography published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies gives an insight to the literature found on ASEAN.