

SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGIONALISM: AN OVERVIEW

To understand the motivational forces which brought together the ASEAN countries especially the founding five member countries - the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore into a cooperative venture, it would be helpful to briefly review the historical background of these states and the evolution of the idea of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia.

The World of Southeast Asia

The term "Southeast Asia" is used to describe the group of states which lie between the great land masses of India and China. This group includes, on the one hand, the countries of mainland Southeast Asia (Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, West Malaysia and Singapore) and, on the other, the island-nations of the Southeast Asian archipelago (Indonesia, the Philippines and the territories of East Malaysia). Although this area does not form a natural geographical entity (there are considerable variations, for example, in climate and terrain), the people of Southeast Asia do share, to a considerable extent, a common way of life, in that rice-producing village communities still form the basic social unit, even though modern economic and political changes helped bring about the transformation of the traditional scene. In most parts of Southeast Asia, industriali-

zation is also in steady progress and can be expected to make great strides forward in the near future.¹

One scholar refers to Southeast Asia as a region of "Diversity and Commonality".² The themes of diversity and commonality in Southeast Asia might well be introduced with comparative statistical data that cover a wide spectrum of information. This data would show that individual societies in the region are so culturally diverse and politically and economically varied that serious doubts sometimes arise as to whether the area could constitute a meaningful cohesive entity at all. Table 1 presents the demographic, economic, and political data that are important for assessing similarities and differences in Southeast Asia. It makes clear that a proper analysis of Southeast Asia must include a separate treatment for each individual nation.

Nonetheless, certain similarities can also be enumerated. With such a variety of races living in Southeast Asia today that the area has been described as "an anthropologists' paradise" and "an ethnographical museum"³. In a broad sense, two main groups can be distinguished in Southeast Asia: in Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, the majority of the people are of

¹ Joginder Singh Jessy, History of South-East Asia (Kedah, Malaysia: Penerbitan Darulaman, 1985), Introduction.

² Clark D. Neher, Politics in Southeast Asia (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1981) pp. 3-10.

³ Joginder Singh Jessy, op. cit..

TABLE 1

	Pop. (m.) 1990	Area (km ²)	GNP(\$) Per cap 1990	Political System 1980	Ethnic Groups (% of total population)
Brunei	0.2	5765	17900	Sultanate	Malays 65; Chinese 28; Ibans, Dusuns, other indigenous races; 7.
Burma	40.3	678030	200	Military Authoritarian	Burmese 75; Indians 9; Karens, Shans, Kachins 7; Chinese 5.
Cambo- dia	7.9	181035	110	Communist Authoritarian	Khmers 85; Annamese 10; Laos, Chinese 5.
Indo- nesia	182.3	1904769	520	Military Authoritarian	Javanese 45; Sundanese 17; Madurese 10; Others 2.
Laos	4.1	236800	170	Communist Authoritarian	Laos 95; Others 5.
Malay- sia	17.8	239746	2050	Democracy	Malays 47; Chinese 34; Indians 9.
Phili- ppines	61.3	300000	727	Democracy	Filipino 95; Chinese 2; Others 2.
Singa- pore	2.7	580	10521	Controlled Democracy	Chinese 79; Malays 12; Indians 9.
Thai- land	56.5	514000	1194	Military Authoritarian	Thais 85; Karens, Khmers 3; Malays 3; Chinese 9.
Viet- nam	66.0	329566	175	Communist Authoritarian	Annamese 88; Khmers 4; Chinese 6; Others 2.

Language	Religion	Chief Products
Malay	Islam,	Agriculture: Rubber, rice
Chinese	Confucianism, Buddhism	Mining: Oil, gas
Burmese	Theravada Buddhism, Islam, Christianity	Agriculture: Rice, jute, sesame, ground nut Industries: Food processing, textiles wood products, petroleum refining
Khmer	Theravada Buddhism	Agriculture: Rice, rubber, sugarcane Industries: Textiles, cement
Indonesian	Islam(major), Christianity, Hinduism	Agriculture: Rice, rubber, cassava Industries: Textiles, cement, light manufacturing
Lao, Pali	Theravada Buddhism	Agriculture: Rice, corn, coffee Industries: Tin, lumber
Malay*, English, Chinese, Tamil	Islam(major), Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism	Agriculture: Rubber, palm oil, pepper, rice Industries: Steel, tin, electronic, automobiles
Pilipino*, English, Spanish	Christianity, Islam	Agriculture: Rice, corn, sugar, copra Industries: Food processing, tobacco, cement, textiles
Malay, Chinese, Tamil, English	Confucianism Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism	Agriculture: Tobacco, vegetables, rubber, coconut Industries: Petroleum refining, rubber processing
Thai	Theravada Buddhism, Islam	Agriculture: Rice, rubber, tapioca Industries: Food processing, textiles, wood, cement
Vietnamese*, Cantonese	Confucianism Buddhism, Christianity	Agriculture: Rice, sugarcane, tea, Industries: Phosphate fertilizer, cement, food processing

* is official language.

Source: Clark Neher, op. cit. pp. 4-5.; Ashok k. Dutt, Southeast Asia: Realm of Contrasts (Westerview Press, 1985) pp. 1-19;
Asiaweek, July 20, 1990, p. 10.

Malay stock; in mainland Southeast Asia, the inhabitants are, despite their own differences, generally not of Malayo-Polynesian background. Differences in language provide the basis for another division of Southeast Asian countries. Languages of the Malayo-Polynesian family are spoken by the dominant peoples of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The languages of parts of Burma, Thailand and Indochina have an Austro-Asiatic basis, while Burmese and Siamese may be included in the Sino-Tibetan group.⁴

The position of Southeast Asia is at the crossroads of the various transoceanic routes between the heavily populated Indian Subcontinent and the Chinese mainland; and, between Europe and Australia. This geographic situation makes Southeast one of the most strategic shipping areas of the world. The advent of the aviation age has not diminished the region's importance but has in fact reinforced its locational advantages, for the region still forms the focus of important transit points for the world's major inter-continental air routes.

The geographical position of Southeast Asia had rendered the area particularly vulnerable to external influences, both cultural and economic, which had culminated in the coming of the westerners. Southeast Asia has deep historical and cultural bonds with both India and China because they were not only geographically nearest, but had also been trading with each other for at least 2500 years. There is no doubt that in this respect the

⁴ Ibid..

Southeast Asian realm has enjoyed an intermediate locational advantage. It was on account of this factor that Southeast Asia was able to absorb through time a whole range of religious ideas, literary treasures and agricultural techniques from the ancient civilizations of China and India. For brief periods of time, Indian kingdoms had even extended their rule to Burma. China on the other hand had made North Vietnam a part of its empire for over a thousand years. Vietnam inherited its Confucian traditions from China. In all of mainland Southeast Asia except Malaya Theravada Buddhism, originating from India and Sri Lanka, made its influence widely felt. The accessibility of Southeast Asia by sea and its situation between the two great oceans affected the present religious pattern of Southeast Asia. The coming of Islam during the thirteenth century created greater religious diversity in the region, for, while the peoples of Malaysia and Indonesia were attracted to the new and dynamic religion, their counterparts on the mainland clung to their older faiths. In the Philippines, Catholic Christianity became the cultural legacy of Spanish rule.⁵

The Europeans, by the end of the 19th century, had subjugated all the countries of Southeast Asia, except Thailand, and made them colonies. For these European imperialist countries

Britain, France, The Netherlands, Portugal and Spain - the Southeast Asian countries became their major the suppliers of

⁵ Ashok K. Dutt, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

specialized raw materials (spices, minerals, food products, timber and etc.) and the manufactured goods from Europe found a new outlet in the colonies. Thus, a true classical form of colonial exploitation had emerged.

The United States, which was a late entrant in the colonial race became a major colonial power in Southeast Asia after taking over the Philippines in 1898 from the Spaniards.

When Japan entered the second World War, one of its objectives was to establish a colonial empire like its European counterparts. This was the background for occupation of Southeast Asia for almost four years (1941-45).

Going through the period of colonies of Westerners followed by Japanese occupation, the Southeast Asia region was recognised as a strategic realm which was amply illustrated during the Pacific War and since then, its individuality has been clearly acknowledged.

Despite the broad range of historical influences that Southeast Asia was exposed to, the region has managed to maintain its own cultural uniqueness and identity. The Southeast Asian peoples had absorbed all kinds of ideas from all sides but were still able to jealously safeguard their respective national identities, which became the new political rallying point, under the banner of nationalism, in their struggle for freedom and independence.

In the post-independence years, the Southeast Asian countries were faced with all kinds of problems which had emerged

in the course of their search for their political viability. Since there are similarities in their problems, these states have tried to adopt common formulas toward solving these. Such similarities can provide a general framework for analysing Southeast Asia as an entity. In general these problems may be identified as follows: the search for internal stability and political viability; the search for national identity; problems of socio-economic development; and, the external threat to national security.

The Background of ASEAN Regionalism

ASEAN is composed of the nation states that share common economic, political and ideological traits, marked by their capitalist and anti-communist structure. This common factor helps unify ASEAN, but the different ethnic, cultural and historical factors that shaped the history of each nation. These dissimilar factors have brought about varying degrees of differences in attitude and perception between these states in resolving problems confronting them individually and collectively.

It will be very helpful to take note of the differences and similarities that characterize the ASEAN countries.

Physical and Cultural Aspects

Geographically, ASEAN comprises the peninsular and the archipelagic parts of the broadly defined historical Southeast Asia. All are located in the tropical monsoon zone and collectively

straddle the equator. Since all of the ASEAN countries have coastlines, seas and waterways are important as Sea Lanes of Communications between the South China Sea and Indian Ocean or between the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. The land masses of ASEAN are also crucial for warm water sea bases and air bases.

However, there exists a glaring disparity between the member countries in respect of physical area and population size. The Philippines and Indonesia are both archipelagic countries. Each consists of many big and small islands scattered over a wide area. The Philippines, with a combined land surface of 300,000 square kilometres, has a population of 61.3 million; Indonesia with 1,904,769 square kilometres has a population of 182.3 million; Singapore, an island state with a territory of 580 square kilometres, has a population of 2.7 million; Brunei Darussalam with a land area of 5,765 square kilometres has a population of about 0.25 million; Thailand with a compact territory of 514,000 square kilometres has a population of 56.5 million; and, Malaysia, a peninsular land including two states in the island of Borneo, with a total land area of 239,746 square kilometres, has a population of 17.8 million. The Philippines and Indonesia are separated from the rest by great bodies of water such as the South China Sea, the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean and may, in a way and to a certain extent, be isolated from developments in the other three states.

Against the background of this basic feature, special characteristics of ASEAN could well be seen in the following.

(1) Ethnicity

ASEAN is scarcely a homogeneous group. This problem is particularly complex because it is related to the overlapping religious and ethnic composition of each state, which is derived in part from the arbitrary political boundaries that were drawn during the colonial era. ASEAN's predominant ethnic group is from the Malay stock, which comprises approximately 78% of the ASEAN population. Likewise, another striking feature of the ethnic pattern of ASEAN is the cross-regional existence of ethnic Chinese. Although the number of the ethnic Chinese accounts for a small percentage of the region's population, the Chinese community in ASEAN countries has by and large become a wealthy, culturally distinct group (though class and income differentiation within the Chinese community also exists) often in friction with the host society. It has often been claimed that the ethnic Chinese control the economy and the "indigenous" ethnic groups control the military and government. In Thailand, and to some extent in the Philippines, a symbiotic relationship has developed between the ethnic Chinese and the indigenous groups, and ethnic frictions have declined accordingly. In Indonesia discriminatory measures against Chinese education and business have been applied with little resistance from the Chinese community because of the relative smallness of this community. But it is in Malaysia, where the Chinese population is a substantial minority, that the legacies of colonial immigration policy have caused the most friction. Even today, the

scars of the 13 May 1969 racial riots remain indelibly imprinted in the national psyche, and every governmental policy - social, political, economic, educational - seems to reflect both the pre-existing ethnic anxieties and the urgent need to strike compromises.⁶ Besides ethnic Chinese, other ethnic groups do not seem to exist cross-regionally in ASEAN, except for a small number which could be regarded as communities, such as Indians and Sri Lankans.

(2) Language

Malay is spoken in both Indonesia and Malaysia. While English and Mandarin Chinese are spoken in Singapore, Tagalog is spoken in the Philippines. Thailand uses Thai as the official language. But within each national community, every country in ASEAN without exception, has a pluralistic language situation. Nonetheless, during meetings of ASEAN members, English is used as the medium of communication.

(3) Religion

There are marked differences between the countries of ASEAN: Islam is the dominant religion in Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia; Theravada Buddhism is the official religion in Thailand, Roman Catholicism is the principal religion in the Philippines; and all the religions are represented in Singapore. Therefore, Religion has not been a common denominator of identity between the ASEAN

⁶ Ho Kwon Ping, "ASEAN: The Five Countries", in Alison Broinowski ed., Understanding ASEAN (Hong Kong: the Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 197-98.

countries as it has been in many Western societies. In addition to this, Islam is actually the major religion of southern Philippines and southern Thailand, rather than their national religions and both countries have had to countenance the problem of Muslim separatism. The Islamic fundamentalist resurgence, as it affects Malaysia, Indonesia, southern Thailand and the southern Philippines, has also threatened to undermine ASEAN political solidarity. However, in all of the ASEAN countries, freedom of religion is guaranteed.

(4) Historical Legacy

Historically, the peoples of ASEAN have been subjected to the common influences of the various cultures and empires that controlled them from time to time.⁷ All, except for Thailand, have a common history of being under western colonial rule. The member countries differed in terms of their specific colonial heritage: Indonesia was under the Dutch, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam were under the British, the Philippines were at first under the Spaniards and later, the Americans, while Thailand was a buffer state. All these states too shared the experience of being occupied by the Japanese during World War II. All the ASEAN nations faced common post-war independence problems associated with the question of the development of national identity.

⁷ See, Estrella D. Solidum, Towards A Southeast Asian Community (Queson City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1974), p. 15.

This relatively brief survey shows that although the ASEAN states have some common characteristics they are still many differences that divide them. ASEAN today is essentially heterogenous region in terms of culture, history, religion and ethnicity, although Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Indonesia may have a greater degree of commonality between them.

Socio-Economic Aspects

All of the ASEAN states except for Singapore have a large rural population which is primarily engaged in agriculture, especially wet rice cultivation and traditional kinship.⁸ Urbanization is still very much a fairly recent phenomenon in these states. The rural populations in these countries still remain basically traditional, conservative and poor, although there has been some evidence of their social transformation lately. The elites, who are virtually concentrated in the cosmopolitan urban areas, have generally been exposed to western lifestyles, education and thinking. Their social interests, economic status and patterns of thinking appear to be slightly different from the majority of the population which is still rural-based. The population of the urban poor, partly as a consequence of the rural-urban migration, has been steadily growing lately. Since the elites are the people involved in decision making, tensions and conflicts

⁸ For details, see, Lucian W. Pye, Asian Power and Politics, pp. 90-95.

over the issue of what should constitute the priorities of the national cultural and economic aspirations have often arisen.⁹

National development strategies, which are aimed at rapid economic growth with the emphasis on urban-based industrial development and the adaptation of advanced technology in the context of a free enterprise system, have, to a certain extent, widened the gap between urban and rural areas, although there is already an increasing trend toward capitalist intrusion into the countryside. Landlordism is an important problem in the Philippines and a growing problem in Thailand, while land fragmentation, partly the result of Muslim inheritance laws, is a problem in Indonesia and Malaysia.¹⁰ Landlords still maintain feudal practices in dealing with their workers and the Islamic religious leaders still exercise a considerable influence over the ordinary masses. The problem of the unequal distribution of wealth and development has occurred not only between the urban and the rural masses but also within the rural area itself.

The ASEAN countries suffered from high population densities which neutralized the blessing of large territories that all, except Singapore, possess. All of them also have high population growth rates. Generally, in the field of economic development, the ASEAN region is considered a high-growth area, based both on

⁹ Paridah ABD. Samad, "The Source of Threats to Domestic Order in the ASEAN States," The Indonesian Quarterly, vol. XVIII, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter, 1990), p. 333.

¹⁰ Diane K. Mauzy, Politics in the ASEAN States (Kuala Lumpur: Maricans & Sons Sdn. Bhd., 1984), p. 3.

performance and potential. The average annual growth rate for the decade 1970-80 was uniformly high in all of ASEAN, with Singapore topping the list with an average growth of 10% and the Philippines at the bottom rung averaging 6.2 %. Generally, the region offers much opportunity for profitable investment and rewarding cooperation between the Southeast Asians themselves and with the industrialized nations. Economically, the member countries appear to be at different stages of development: Singapore occupies the top end of the scale with a per capita income of US\$ 10,521 a year (except for Brunei's US\$ 17,000); Malaysia ranks second with a per capita income of US\$ 2,050 a year; Thailand and the Philippines follow with a per capita income of US\$ 1194 and US\$ 727 respectively, while Indonesia remains at the lowest end of the scale with an annual per capita income of US\$ 520.

As far as the natural resources and manpower of ASEAN are concerned, the ASEAN region has tremendous economic significance with lots of opportunities for profitable foreign investment and export of natural resources.¹¹ The total population of 320.8 million in ASEAN countries should be able to offer the manpower capacity of cheap labor. But again, except for Singapore, the

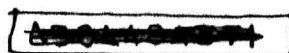
¹¹ The ASEAN states produce a major portion of some of the world's most essential natural resources. These states provide 82 per cent of the world's production of natural rubber, 70 per cent of tin, 70 per cent of copra and coconut products, 56 per cent of palm oil and 50 per cent of hard wood. The region's seas and rivers account for a significant share of the world's supply of fish and other marine products.

economies of all the ASEAN states are very dependent upon trade in primary products although manufactures now account for a growing proportion of ASEAN exports, and are therefore dependent upon the fluctuating world market prices for these commodities.

The ASEAN states' relationships with major economic powers, and their geographical location in relation to areas of political and economic importance to the great powers, complicates their internal economic situation. The welfare and well-being of the economies of these states are largely dependent on the development of satisfactory relations with the major economic nations. According to David Vital, unsatisfactory relations between the states in a region and the major economic powers can lead these economic powers to employ economic pressure on them.¹²

As a result, this factor has enhanced the complexity of the ASEAN states' international trade. The employment of economic pressure by developed nations, has often been used as a political instrument in forcing a change in the attitude and the direction of the foreign policies of these states. It is especially aimed at states that have conducted their foreign policy in a manner

¹² David Vital, The Inequality of States, A Study of the Small Power in International Relations (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1967), p. 95, quoted in Paridah ABD. Samad, "The Source of Threats to Domestic Order in the ASEAN States," p. 335. These economic pressures are applied by limiting the markets of the ASEAN states' exports, denying of shipping and other transport facilities, blocking accounts, freezing credits, withdrawing technical assistance, banning investment, applying embargoes on supplies and prohibiting travel and communication.



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regarded as detrimental to the interests of the major economic powers.

Despite the great economic and social diversities together with other obstacles that characterise ASEAN, there is however a sufficient common ground and rationale for these states to come together for closer cooperation in the various fields. The mutual desire of the ASEAN countries to pursue rapid economic growth has persuaded each and every country to cooperate collectively and bilaterally in order to achieve a common goal. The recognition that this can be achieved only through their own efforts rather than by relying on external economic aid from the industrially advanced countries has also brought them closer together. If national "self reliance" cannot ensure rapid economic growth, then "self reliance" on a regional basis becomes an immediately acceptable alternative. This approach too, seems to be currently gaining ground rapidly in the Third World.¹³

Ideological and Political Aspects

The different members of ASEAN countries have adopted different systems of government: Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore have Republican structures; Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with a political system that wavers between participatory democracy and the bureaucratic polity; Malaysia is a federation

¹³ John Wong, ASEAN Economies in Perspective (Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), p. 3.

with a parliamentary form of democracy; while Brunei is a Sultanate practising royal absolutism.

All of the ASEAN states claim to believe in and to adhere to some democratic principles, but none appears to be completely democratic.¹⁴ Though the formal institutions of government resemble Western structures, partly because they were inherited as colonial legacies, the actual style of government, reflecting deeper social traditions, is authoritarian, ranging from paternalism to outright military rule. Singapore is effectively a one-party state with the interface between the bureaucracy and the ruling party barely distinguishable. And Malaysia is run by a coalition of political parties each exercising paternalistic control over its own communal constituency and resolving problems at the top.¹⁵ The democracies in Malaysia and Singapore do not guarantee full freedom of speech and rights of organisation like western democratic systems, but nonetheless the governments there are elected by popular vote and are subject to change as a result of any shift in electoral preferences. Indonesia and Thailand are basically led by generals. In the case of Thailand, the military takes control of the government whenever it feels that its absolute power is in danger. In Indonesia, the military has organised its own political wings and has sustained its power by suppressing any viable signs of opposition. The Philippines in

¹⁴ Diane K. Mauzy, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁵ Ho Kwon Ping, op. cit., p. 201.

January 1981 had ended eight years and four months of martial law, without significantly diluting the powers of the president. In 1987, The Philippine voters ratified a new democratic constitution followed by a civilian-backed military revolts of 1986, but the supporting basis for the constitution is very still fragile.

In relation to their authoritarian systems, almost all of the ASEAN states have been confronted with the problem of political succession, often caused by the virtually life-time rule of the contemporary leaders of these states. The problems of political succession exists when leaders are reluctant to relinquish power to their successors and thereby cling on to power by manipulating the democratic procedures.¹⁶

The long-standing rule of strong leaders may, on the one hand, make some contribution to maintaining political stability. Due to their long stay in power these leaders have the advantage of experience, especially in handling their political opponents and coping with problems related to attempts to overthrow their governments. With strong economic backing, these leaders have often been able to increase the number of government supporters and to consolidate their grip on power. The popularity and credibility of these leaders have also sometimes been strengthened by the establishment of a good economic and political relationship with the neighbouring countries.

¹⁶ Paridah ABD. Samad, op. cit., p. 340-41.

On the other hand, the permanent rule of strong leaders may also unwittingly make the leaders of the ruling government more despotic. Overwhelmed by their own power, such leaders like to promote domestic, economic and social policies for their selfish interests which unavoidably create popular irritation against the government. A strong anti-government feeling could lead the people to demand for political reform and a change of leadership, which can lead to revolutionary social challenges. When strong leaders who are associated with authoritarian systems tend to discard Western-style procedural safeguards and resort to military power to keep their power in hand, their permanent rule complicates the problem of political succession.

The role of the military is an important element in the political life of the ASEAN countries. Generals have often intervened in the political arena and stayed there for good. This is certainly the case in Thailand and Indonesia where ex-generals with military backing rule as heads of government. In the Philippines, the potential for military intervention to fill the vacuum which might occur in the event of an unresolved political succession problem, remains real. In Singapore and Malaysia, the socio-political roles of the military have been strictly circumscribed; but soldiers in the other ASEAN countries certainly do not simply command ships and planes, pursue insurgents and play war games. They see themselves as indispensable agents of modernization, bringing new values of discipline, organisation,

efficiency and technical knowledge to tradition-bound societies.¹⁷

Abuse of democracy by some governments as a means to maintain power has caused protests from international human rights bodies and from the mass media which have affected their image to some extent. In such circumstances, political disruption can cause capital flight if the key foreign economic actors reverse their decision to take an part in the economic activities of ASEAN states. On the other hand, external intervention in certain circumstances might lead to the creation of an authoritarian regime. For example, The United States has often sought to prevent the overthrow of pro-American governments whatever their internal characteristics are, in order to prevent those leaders from turning to Communist powers for similar aid.

As a result of their multi-ethnic populations, the ASEAN states have been confronted with problems of national unity. The division of the population of ASEAN states into various cultural, religious or ethnic groups creates domestic strife especially during periods of economic failure and political disruption. In the process, ethnic political extremists might be tempted to seek foreign help, especially where ideological issues are involved, and thus domestic conflicts can have international ramifications. In states which have Muslim minorities, for example, Islam has become a source of identity and strength for

¹⁷ Ho Kwon Ping, *op. cit.*, p. 206-07.

Muslim separatist movements. Their struggles for self-determination have been morally and financially supported by Islamic nations. Also, the ideological competition amongst the major powers might fan and magnify these local conflicts even to the point of generating insurgency.

One of the most striking features of the ideological pattern of ASEAN is the anti-communist stance that has been persistently adopted by all the ASEAN states. In this regard, it should be noted that there have been active communist movements in all five ASEAN states, and there are communist insurgency groups operating in the Philippines (New People's Army - NPA), Thailand (Communist Party of Thailand - CPT), and Malaysia (Malayan Communist Party - MCP or CPM).¹⁸ Malaysia fought its prolonged "Emergency" against the MCP from 1948-1960 and the Philippines did likewise against the *Hukbalahap* after World War II. In Indonesia, the Phoenix-like PKI (Communist Party of Indonesia) was legal until it became embroiled in the events surrounding the downfall of Sukarno in October 1965, after which its ranks were decimated. In Singapore the pro-communist faction of the People's Action Party nearly seized control of the party, and later emerged as the *Barisan*

¹⁸ In late 1989 the signing of the agreement between the Government and the Communist Party of Malaya brought to an end of the longest communist insurgencies in history, soon after the CPM which had waged a war of violence with the Malaysian authorities decided to bid a farewell to arms. However, it is widely believed that the CPM guerilla remnants still are feebly in activity in the Malaysia-Thailand frontier area.

Sosialis which, briefly, became a genuine contender for power through the ballot box in the early 1960s.¹⁹

In the political domain all the ASEAN countries share various problems which can be commonly found in many other Third World countries - authoritarian regimes and the problems these regimes created such as unresolved political legitimacy, political instability and the crisis of political succession. However, these common concerns can bring about a mutual concern for greater mutual physical security, which demands internal stability as well as a new regional socio-political equilibrium to guarantee it. The security motive has therefore been a strong incentive for the ASEAN countries to subordinate their diverse national priorities and interests to effect mutually beneficial joint actions.

With the above points in mind, it should now be possible to analyse how these states have tried to cooperate with one another within the framework of regional associations.

Development of Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia

The earliest major attempt at regionalism involving Southeast Asia was probably the Japanese policy of uniting the East and Southeast Asian nations under the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Plan". This Japanese plan was envisaged as an economic union, perhaps something like an Asian Common Market, under

¹⁹ Diane K. Mauzy, op. cit., p. 5.

Japan's hegemony.²⁰ However, the defeat of the Japanese in the War also meant the collapse of the plan before it could really take off.

There is little doubt that regional consciousness was very much alive after the Second World War. It was, however, merely restricted to calls by nationalist leaders in some Southeast Asian nations urging for regional cooperation to further their common cause of either achieving independence or trying to maintain it. Generally pre-ASEAN efforts at regional cooperation met with failure. Nevertheless, the belief in the ideals of regionalism has remained alive.

We can divide the development of regionalism in Southeast Asia into three distinct phases:²¹ 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.

1. The first stage of regionalism

In the first phase, three major trends can be discerned.²² First,

²⁰ Chong Li Choy, Open Self-Reliant Regionalism: Power for ASEAN's Development, ISEAS Occasional Paper no. 65 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1981), p. 55.

²¹ See Peter Lyon, "ASEAN and the Future of Regionalism," in Lau Teik Soon ed., New Direction in the International Relations of Southeast Asia: The Great Powers and Southeast Asia (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1973), pp. 156-64.

²² Bilveer Singh, Soviet Relation with ASEAN, 1967-88 (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1989), p. 14.

a number of Southeast Asian leaders put forward a variety of proposals for regional cooperation and unity. However, nothing concrete emerged out of this exercise. Among these proposals, was a call by General Aung San of Burma for an Asian Conference to be held to plan "a united campaign to achieve freedom in the shortest time possible,"²³ especially when he made it known in April, 1947 that he would also favour a Southeast Asian Economic Union consisting of Burma, Thailand, the Indochinese states, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaya, which would represent a truly Southeast Asian outlook. There were also a few other plans for closer cooperation proposed by other leaders in the region. These included a Thai proposal for the formation of a Pan Southeast Asian Union in 1947 and a Filipino sponsored Baguio Conference in 1950.

Secondly, a number of Pan Asiatic Conferences were convened in this period but no organisational framework was established as a result. Following this trend, the first period began with the Asian Relations Conference in 1947, which brought together representatives from eighteen Asian countries in New Delhi, to seek lasting regional cooperation. Southeast Asia was represented by delegations from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, North Vietnam, Cochin China, Laos and Cambodia, even

²³ Amry Vandenbosch and Richard Butwell, The Changing Face of Southeast Asia (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 341, as cited in Danai Pechkam, "Regional Organization and Integration in Southeast Asia," Ph.D. Diss. Claremont Graduate School, 1974. p. 12.

though only the first two had been granted formal independence (Thailand, of course, had never been colonized). An Asian Relations Organisation and an Institute of Asian Studies were set up, but they failed to live up to their expectations, mainly because of the rivalry between the then two Asian giants, China and India.

There was another conference attended by Southeast Asian nations which may be worthwhile mentioning. In 1949, Prime Minister Nehru of India called for a conference to be held in New Delhi in order to marshal support for the Indonesians in their struggle against the Dutch. Representatives from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Burma attended this conference, and a Vietnamese was present in an unofficial capacity. Out of this conference emerged a recommendation to the Security Council of the United Nations to settle the dispute between the Dutch and the Indonesians promptly. The conference also urged the participants to keep in touch with one another for the purpose of cooperation on the Indonesian question through regular diplomatic channels or at the United Nations.²⁴ However, nothing to this effect took place.

In the same year, the People's Republic of China (PRC) emerged victorious in the revolution on the Chinese mainland. It was impossible to see any regional relations developing without taking into account the ascendancy of communism there. Meanwhile,

²⁴ Danai Pechkam, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

the United States was frantically looking for allies as the Cold War had commenced. Consequently, there was a realignment of forces in Asia into neutralists, pro-communists and anti-communists. In line with this, there was an important evolution of the so-called "Colombo Powers" based on the two meetings of the five Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, and Ceylon in 1954, which helped create closer contacts among Southeast Asian nations. Its primary purpose was to call for a policy of peaceful coexistence with the newly formed PRC, as well as to oppose the development of great power polarization. An important consequence of these meetings was the launching of the next major conference, namely, the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in April 1955. This was in many ways the forerunner of the non-alignment movement. The Conference was attended by 29 countries with the biggest ever single gathering of Southeast Asian leaders. The region sent representatives from Malaya, Burma, British Borneo, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, South Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia.²⁵

Besides this kind of conference, there was also the Asian Socialist Conference held in Rangoon in early 1954, while the Simla Conference met in India in May 1955 to discuss the utilization of the US proposed regional aid programme. The attempts to convene these Pan Asiatic conferences demonstrated

²⁵ Bilveer Singh, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

an improvement insofar as the actual meeting of Southeast Asian personalities took place, although this was not necessarily a meeting of minds. Nevertheless, these moves marked a vital watershed in the development of regional cooperation because the leaders of the region actually sat down together to tackle common problems.

Finally, several regional organisations had also evolved but these were largely set up by and worked in conjunction with the external powers, mainly the US and British. More often than not, these organisations were intended to serve the interests of these extraneous powers. In relation to this trend, the most significant economic organisation which was able to attract Southeast Asian membership, was the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE)²⁶, formed in 1947 with headquarters in Bangkok, and the Colombo Plan, which started as a Commonwealth undertaking with an initial membership of seven. Both these had the support of the United States and Britain.

In the military and security field the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) was launched in 1954 largely on the initiative of the United States. However, within Southeast Asia only Thailand and the Philippines joined this organisation. Another significant security arrangement during this period was

²⁶ The Commission was renamed as the Economic and Social Commission for the Pacific (ESCAP) in 1974 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, upon the recommendation of ECAFE.

the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA) which came into effect upon the independence of Malaya in 1957. This agreement ceased to function in November 1971 when it was replaced by the Five-Power Defence Arrangement (ANZUK) involving Malaysia and Singapore as well as Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

All in all, during this first period, the founding of these functional organisations and associations was crucial to the future of the region in spite of the fact that these organisations were actually by-products of the West-East Cold War and therefore hardly Southeast Asian in terms of initiative. Nonetheless, these attempts provided important initial lessons that were useful in the setting up of later regional groupings. Secondly, the development of Southeast Asia as a regional or sub-regional community had its roots in these humble beginnings and these experiences continued to have an impact on the future course of regional organisations.²⁷

2. The second stage of regionalism

The second phase, covering the period from about 1960 to 1967, saw the formation of politically-oriented organisations as well as the flowering of a number of functional organisations. Among these, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) established in 1966, with headquarters in Manila was probably the most important. Others established with membership from Southeast Asia included the Asia

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Productivity Organisation(APO) in 1961 and the Asian Institute for Economic Development Council(AIDC) in 1966. Still others were established on a Southeast Asian regional basis such as the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation(SEAMEO) in 1965 which promoted cooperation among the member countries through education, science and culture; the Southeast Asian Central Bank Group(SEACEN) in 1966, an annual conference of governors to discuss monetary policies, banking, capital market developments and the like; and the Ministerial Conference for the Economic Development of Southeast Asia(MCEDSEA) in 1966 which holds annual meetings to discuss economic progress and regional problems.²⁰

On the other hand, this period also saw some notable initiatives on the part of one or more Southeast Asian countries, of which, by 1960, all save Singapore and Brunei had achieved independence. Of these, the Association of Southeast Asia(ASA) and Maphilindo were the results of attempts to develop an indigenous Southeast Asian regional organisation, i.e. one organised by the nations of the region without external involvement.

There is a need to scrutinise these two organisations which represented the concept of regional cooperation before the establishment of ASEAN, since these were also the direct

²⁰ Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, Regional Organization and Order in South-East Asia (Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), P. 11.

antecedents of ASEAN.²⁹

ASA was officially founded on July 31, 1961 through the Bangkok Declaration. In reality, it was only a sub-regional grouping, comprising the three Southeast Asian states of Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand. It was, however, important in that it was the first indigenous grouping formed to bring about some form of institutionalized regional cooperation.

ASA originated in late 1958 when the Prime Minister of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, called for the setting up of a Southeast Asian Friendship and Economic Treaty. Soon after that, the Malayan Prime Minister met with President Garcia of the Philippines in Manila. The two leaders then expressed their mutual interest in the idea of regional cooperation. They tried to interest the other Southeast Asian countries. However, for a long time, little was achieved. They caught only the attention of the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs-Thanat Khoman who simultaneously attempted to attract the cooperation of several other states in the region. This effort was unsuccessful since Burma, Cambodia, and Indonesia gave unenthusiastic responses. It is probable that the spirit of Bandung - the non-alignment policy - had caused these states to refuse participation in the proposed organisation which was viewed as unfavorable to their national

²⁹ Most of the discussion of these two organisations is based on Bernard K. Gordon, The Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), esp. pp. 22-40 and chap. 5 and 6 and also Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, op. cit., pp. 10-44.

interest; for Malaya, the Philippines, and Thailand were all pro-Western nations.³⁰

The main goal of ASA was to concentrate on cooperation in the economic and cultural fields among the member countries. The objective of ASA appeared in the Bangkok Declaration. (See Appendix 1) The Declaration stated that ASA was "essentially a free association" of Southeast Asian countries whose purpose was to promote the well-being and progress of the region in the economic, social, and cultural fields through joint endeavours. It went on to make clear that the organisation was "in no way" associated with any external power or power bloc and was not directed against any other country.

ASA's machinery was relatively simple: it included an annual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of ASA; a standing committee which consulted on policy while the Foreign Ministers were not in session; three permanent committees composed of experts in the economic, socio-cultural, and technical cooperation and research fields, and national secretariats; an international secretariat was never established.

ASA became ineffective when Malaysia and the Philippines suspended diplomatic relations in 1963 because of the Filipino claims to Sabah. However, even during this period, ASA was not entirely inactive. The various ASA projects continued to operate

³⁰ In many ways, Indonesia was overtly hostile towards ASA, for it was described as a "small SEATO" or, as Subandrio, the Indonesian Foreign Minister labelled it, a "front for SEATO". Bernard Gordon, ibid., p.167.

between Thailand and the Philippines on the one hand and between Thailand and Malaysia on the other. Throughout this period of suspended animation of the Association of Southeast Asia, Thailand kept the ASA line of communication operational between the other ASA nations.³¹ This contribution in itself proved very constructive. When relations improved in 1966, ASA activities were revived and a third meeting of Foreign Ministers was held in Bangkok in August 1966. This also created a momentum for the foundation and model for a wider regional cooperation organisation, such as ASEAN.

However, since ASA was so short-lived, it was largely unsuccessful in meeting its stated goals; many economic cooperation projects remained uncompleted.³² But ASA succeeded in creating a sense of solidarity and a spirit of active cooperation among the diverse nations involved in the Association of Southeast Asia.

Maphilindo was created in August 1963 and was a stillborn association composed of the three "Malay" nations: Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. Hence the word "Maphilindo" was coined by combining the first syllable of the three member countries (Malaysia + Philippines + Indonesia). The Manila Declaration

³¹ Manu Walyapechra, The Direction of Regional Organisation of Southeast Asian States: A Political and Geographic Study (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974), p. 143.

³² This was also mainly because the three economies were competitive rather than complementary. See, Bernard Gordon, *op. cit.*

dated August 5, 1963 establishing Maphilindo declared that

"The three nations shall be determined, in the common interest of their countries, to maintain fraternal relations, to strengthen cooperation among their peoples in the economic, social and cultural fields in order to promote economic progress and social well-being in the region, and to put an end to the exploitation of man by man and of one nation by another."

"The three nations shall combine their efforts in the common struggle against colonialism and imperialism in all their forms and manifestations and for the eradication of the vestiges thereof in the region in particular and in the world in general."

"The three nations, as new emerging forces in the region, shall cooperate in building a new and better world based in national freedom, social justice and lasting peace."³³

With regards to Maphilindo, it should be noted that it signified a regional attempt to settle the conflicts between the states which had Malay ethnic populations, more than to promote regional cooperation for tangible results. Actually, Maphilindo was formed as a result of the search for the best solution to the disputes between Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia concerning the proposed establishment of the Federation of Malaysia, which would take place in the following month (September 1963). President Macapagal of the Philippines took the first step by assigning the University of the Philippines to study the concept of "Greater Malaya" in 1963. The result was the proposal to form the "Greater Malayan Confederation" by combining Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines together. This

³³ Quoted in Vinita Sukrasep, ASEAN in International Relations (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Univ. ISIS, 1989), p. 17.

proposal resulted in President Macapagal's suggestion to establish Maphilindo in 1963.³⁴

However, when the Federation of Malaysia was officially established in September 1963, incorporating Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore, Maphilindo became defunct.³⁵ Diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Malaysia were severed, when Indonesia adopted the policy of "Confrontation" to "crush" Malaysia. Diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Malaysia were also suspended. Nevertheless, although Maphilindo was considered a failure in terms of regional cooperation, it marked an important turning-point as Indonesia made its first move towards accepting the concept of Southeast Asian regionalism.

Apart from these unsuccessful attempts at regional integration, the countries of Southeast Asia joined various other organisations with an Asian, and sometimes wider, base. Thus Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and South Vietnam joined the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC) in 1966 together with Taiwan, South Korea and Japan and the non-Asian powers, Australia and New Zealand. Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia opted for observer status only. The common ground that brought this group of countries together was their anti-communism, in particular their anti-PRC attitudes.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 17-18.

All in all, the second phase is significant in that, first, the countries of Southeast Asia had in this period started to involve themselves in an international area on a broad scale. Secondly, despite the failures, the period was also significant in that the Southeast Asian countries themselves started to take the initiative towards marking out some form of regional cooperation. Thirdly, and most significant, attention began to be focused on the region itself; that is to say, the countries of Southeast Asia began to think in terms of their purely regional context and priorities. Especially significant, was the budding involvement of Indonesia in the affairs of the region.³⁶

3. The third stage of regionalism

The third phase in regional cooperation covers development since 1967. This stage is marked by the formation of the most successful regional organisation in Asia to date, namely, ASEAN. This organisation will be analysed in detail in the next chapter under the framework of regional cooperation. Hence, it is proper that the background of the formation of ASEAN should be briefly mentioned here.

ASEAN is a regional organisation which was formally established in Bangkok on 8 August 1967, upon the signing of the Joint Declaration by the Foreign Ministers from the five

³⁶ Arnifinn Jorgensen-Dahl, op. cit., p. 11.

Southeast Asian countries, that is, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. (The complete text of the ASEAN Declaration is given in Appendix 2) ASEAN did not emerge in a political vacuum. From the extra-regional background, we should first consider the weakness of the external powers' commitment towards this region (mainly the US and Britain which had continued to enjoy their influence over this region even after the independence of the countries in the region). Great Britain had discovered that her economy could not back up a military presence in Asia any longer, and by the mid-1960s she had declared her intention to withdraw her military power from "East of Suez", including Malaysia and Singapore, thus affecting directly the international balance of power in Southeast Asia. People were talking of a "vacuum" in Southeast Asia and in the Indian Ocean, which was allegedly to be filled by Soviet naval power. War was raging in Vietnam, while public opinion in the United States began to mount against the over-whelming American military involvement, which by 1967 had reached some half a million soldiers. In Communist China, turmoil dominated the country as a result of the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao in 1965, subsequently followed up by the recall of practically all Communist Chinese Ambassadors from countries recognised by Communist China.³⁷ Hence, the leaders of Southeast Asian

³⁷ Edward Janner Sinaga, ASEAN: Economic, Political and Defence Problems, Progress and Prospects in Regional Cooperation with Reference to the Role of Major Powers in Southeast Asia (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974), p. 1.

countries felt a power vacuum in their region and regarded these events as making it more essential for them to foster close relations with each other through regional cooperation.

From the intra-regional background, an important factor was the much improved climate of relations among the countries of the region. The year 1965 was a watershed in this regard. In August 1965 Singapore separated from Malaysia, and in September of the same year the abortive coup took place in Jakarta. The Jakarta situation was critical, for it led to the termination of *Konfrontasi* and set the stage for improved relations between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur on the one hand, and between Kuala Lumpur and Manila on the other.

The new Indonesian leadership was keen on participating in a Southeast Asia-wide regional organisation,³⁸ but was not willing to apply for admission to ASA. Although Indonesia was interested in regional cooperation, asking for entry into the

³⁸ A scholar claimed that the idea for a new Southeast Asian group can be traced primarily to the new Indonesian government - in particular, to Foreign Minister Adam Malik. He writes that: "As soon as he came to power as part of the triumvirate led by General Suharto, he was inclined to achieve a relatively sharp break from Indonesia's policies of the immediate past. As part of this inclination, Malik was in the forefront of those urging President Sukarno's removal from power, and he was anxious to bring about a quick end to President Sukarno's "confrontation" instead of creating Maphilindo. The final element in his desire to reshape the foreign image of Indonesia has seemed to be Malik's strong personal interest in the concept of Asian - especially Southeast Asian - regional cooperation"

See, Manu Walyapechra, op. cit., p. 152.

organisation, which it had formerly accused of being a neo-colonial instrument and an anti-communist front, would be tantamount to losing face before the world and the parties concerned. Accordingly, it proposed that a new group be formed to replace ASA. However, because of its bitter experience in connection with Maphilindo, Malaysia maintained that if Indonesia was really interested in Southeast Asian regionalism it should apply for ASA membership.

A solution was found, thanks mainly to the negotiating ability of the reconciliator, the Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman. Toward the end of summer, 1966, he visited Jakarta to hear the views of both the Indonesian and Filipino Foreign Ministers. By the end of the year, he took the initiative of preparing a "Draft Joint Declaration," which, it was hoped, would be signed shortly afterwards by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in each of the states involved. The draft was, in fact, largely taken from ASA.

There was no immediate agreement. It took all of 1966-7 for Thanat Khoman to break through Malaysian equivocation about a new organisation, mainly caused by her questioning of Indonesia's sincerity. Thanat was able to work closely with Adam Malik in order to get full Indonesian support for the new regional organisation. Through his endeavours, agreements were finally reached, and a new organisation was established. Meanwhile, ASA, which in 1963 had ceased to function because of the break in relations between Malaysia and the Philippines over

Sabah, had not ceased to exist. In March 1966 the association was reactivated, together with many of the recommendations and projects proposed and initiated between 1961 and 1963. Shortly after ASEAN was founded in 1967 ASA was dismantled, but most of its ongoing activities were incorporated into ASEAN. In retrospect, the fact that ASEAN is basically of the same structure as ASA and is, by and large, a new name for the old one, not only brought about satisfaction in Kuala Lumpur but also provided the pretence to avoid the necessity of Indonesia entering ASA.

ASEAN was formed at a time when the ASEAN founding countries had their respective political and economic reasons to make use of this organisation for regional cooperation.

Indonesia was trying to end its international isolation imposed during the rule of President Sukarno and project a new image as a peace-loving nation. The *coup d'état* attempt backed by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) on October 1, 1965 caused political changes in Indonesia. The replacement of President Sukarno, known for his aggressive political stance, a foreign policy which tended to favour the Republic of China, and preferring global activities rather than regional ones, to President Suharto was the most important change. This leadership change influenced Indonesia's world perception, turning its interest to the Southeast Asia region and away from the Sukarno focus on the Afro-Asian Groups. Indonesia started to take a

"leading role" in the region from this point onward.³⁹ In fact, Indonesia, by virtue of its geographic size, population, resources and national tradition, had long perceived itself to be the potential regional leader. Furthermore, Indonesia recognised that in joining this group of countries from the region which had no attachment to outside power, as in the case of ASEAN, would enable Indonesia to adopt a real independent and active foreign policy. It could then enter the era of "New Order" of President Suharto. Under the new policy, Indonesia would show Western and Communist countries its attitude of non-alignment. From the economic point of view, Indonesia felt that cooperation among countries of the same region was important to the promotion of its own economic development. Although it has the largest area and population, it had the lowest per capita income country among ASEAN members. Indonesia also believed that economic stability would lead to political stability which in Indonesia's view, meant a state with no outside intervention. Indonesia had after all, once joined the regional association Maphilindo for this same reason.⁴⁰

Malaysia was the only country of the founding members that had disputes with every other ASEAN country since its independence in 1957.⁴¹ It had acrimonious disputes with

³⁹ Vinita Sukrasep, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

⁴⁰ Ibid..

⁴¹ Ibid..

Indonesia that led to confrontation since the establishment of "Malaysia." It had quarrels with Singapore between 1963 and 1966, the period following Singapore's separation from "Malaysia." In 1965, border friction with Thailand erupted, and friction with the Philippines ensued after the latter laid claim to Sabah (North Borneo). Consequently, joining ASEAN was seen as a means for Malaysia to develop better bilateral relations with the nations of the region. Moreover, Malaysia looked upon Indonesian participation in a regional organisation, as being for the first time both beneficial to itself and the region in general since Indonesia could possibly become the prime mover in promoting the policy of the region as a zone of neutrality without outside interference, a policy which Malaysia supported.⁴²

Singapore became independent only a few years before the establishment of ASEAN and was thus preoccupied with the question of its "survival", economically, politically and militarily. Economically, with a limited domestic market and no natural resources, Singapore had few options to maintain its affluence. Participation in ASEAN gave Singapore a way to gain access to sources of raw materials and also to larger markets for its products. Politically, Singapore had a strong desire to be internationally recognised as a Southeast Asian nation. In this respect, Singapore's membership in ASEAN would give it

⁴² Ibid..

additional prestige as it would be participating as an equal partner in the ASEAN community, and it would also be a means of balancing Singapore's relations with Malaysia and with the other ASEAN states.⁴³

Thailand's interest in ASEAN was chiefly founded on its security concerns. Because of its proximity to Vietnam, Thailand feared an expansion of the Vietnamese conflict to its borders.⁴⁴ The Thai leaders then had envisaged that the Major Powers, including the US with which Thailand had strong ties through its Security Treaty, might have to readjust their position in Southeast Asia in accordance with changes in the international political situation. Thailand's growing fear of communist influence made the Thais the more ardent proponents of regional integration among the five ASEAN nations, seeing in that organisation the potential for assistance in their security problems. There was also a feeling that regional conflict must be resolved through closer cooperation among the member states in order to stave off the Big Power's intervention.

The Philippines' desire for participation in ASEAN was essentially motivated by its need to be identified as a part of the Southeast Asian Community.⁴⁵ In effect, the Philippines

⁴³ M. Rajendran, ASEAN's Foreign Relation: The Shift to Collective Action (Kuala Lumpur: Arenabuku sdn. bhd., 1985), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

seemed to be the country that had the least attachment to the other Southeast Asian countries, due to its geographical location and its history. Accordingly, the new Marcos administration sought to establish the country's identity as a Southeast Asian state.

The establishment of ASEAN represented a development of major significance in Southeast Asian affairs. First, Indonesia's membership in ASEAN brought about a substantial change in its foreign policy towards its neighbours. It marked Indonesia's acceptance of its neighbours, and the latter of Indonesia as first among equals. Secondly, in addition to the scope of cooperation of ASEAN, which is similar to that of ASA, the wording establishing the organisation states that "the members are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation in order to preserve their national identities. Such wording represented the desire of Southeast Asian leaders for "national integrity". The economic and cultural cooperation envisaged by ASEAN was generally interpreted as an indispensable contribution to the region's political stability and security.

Apart from ASEAN, functional groupings continued to proliferate as Table 2 shows. These groupings can be divided into two categories: purely Southeast Asian initiatives, and those involving themselves in extra-regional organisations. The former included the Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDC) of 1970, located in Bangkok; the Committee for Family and Population

TABLE 2

FUNCTIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA SINCE 1967

Organisations	Year Established
Coordinating Committee of Southeast Asian Senior Officials on Transport and Communications	1967
Press Foundation for Asia	1967
Private Investment Company for Asia	1968
Registry of Scientific and Technical Services	1968
Cultural and Social Centre	1968
Asian Coconut Community	1969
Food and Fertilizer Technology Centre	1970
Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries	1970
Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre	1970
Study Group for Asian Tax Administration and Research	1971
Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development	1971
Southeast Asian Cooperation in Family and Population Planning	1971
Economic Cooperation Centre	1972
Southeast Asia Promotion Centre for Trade, Investment and Tourism (disbanded in 1978)	1972
Asian Vegetable Research and Development Centre	1972
Pepper Community	1972
Association of Science Cooperation in Asia	1972
Taxation and Custom Cooperation in Asia	1972
Southeast Asian Agency for Regional Transport and Communications	1972
Asian Rice Trade Fund	1975
Asian Clearing Union	1975
Asian Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development	1977
Asian Reinsurance Corporation	1978
Southeast Asian Tin Research and Development Centre	1978

Source: Bilveer Singh, op. cit., p.22.

Planning (SEARCFPP) of 1971, and the Agency for Regional Transport and Communications (SEATAC) of 1972, set up to serve the Coordinating Committee of senior officials on Transport and Communications (COORDCOM) set up in 1967. The latter contains the Asian Coconut Community (ACC) and Asian Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC), with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, and Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand, respectively.⁴⁶

Besides this, non-governmental associations with links to ASEAN began to be formed. These included the Confederation of ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI), the ASEAN Parliamentary Conferences, the ASEAN Council of Petroleum (ASCOPE), the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Association (FASA), the ASEAN Trade Union Council, the ASEAN Bankers' Council, the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists (CAJ), the ASEAN Federation of Cement Manufacturers, and the ASEAN Automotive Federation (AAF).⁴⁷

To summarise, the trend towards increasing involvement in international organisation, which began in the second phase continued throughout the third phase, thus linking the countries of Southeast Asia more firmly to the global network of governmental and non-governmental organisations.⁴⁸ One crucial

⁴⁶ Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, op. cit., p. 12-13. See Lau Teik Soon (ed.), op. cit., pp. 507-10 for a comprehensive list of Asian regional organisations.

⁴⁷ Arnfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, op. cit..

⁴⁸ Ibid.

point needs to be mentioned in relation to these developments, that is, the involvement in international organisation was by no means uniformly spread throughout the region. Some countries such as Laos, Burma, Cambodia and Vietnam had on the whole been considerably less involved than the others. In this respect, the conflicts in Indochina have played an obvious role,⁴⁹ while the separate colonial experiences, the fear of regional hegemony, the different systems of governments and values and the historical animosities have also influenced the situation. Whatever the explanation, this uneven involvement has had the effect of dividing the region into two camps, as it were, of states with a high level and a low level of participation and involvement, which also led to the failure of developing a truly Southeast Asian regional organisation. This fact sets a limit to the scope of this study of Southeast Asian regionalism which will in the main deal with relations among the countries with relatively high involvement - ASEAN states and their organisation - ASEAN.

⁴⁹ Ibid..