

# PEACE AND SECURITY ISSUES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA\*

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As with most terms in the political vocabulary concerned with preferred values, "peace" and "security" suffer from a lack of analytical precision due to the myriad usages they have been subject to.

"Security" is often preceded by the phrase "a sense of"; and "peace" is often understood in the negative as the absence of perceived, imminent threat. They therefore reside largely at the level of perception. Social scientific analyses of "peace" and "security" issues have been largely attempts to "objectively" classify and situate essentially *subjective* perceptions.

There are a number of philosophical, analytical and methodological issues that may be raised regarding mainstream studies on problems of "peace" and "security".

We may, for instance, probe along the line indicated by posing the question: Security for whom? Such leads us in many cases to an elaboration of the contraposition between what the governing elite deems as required by "national security" and what the masses perceive as essential to their own well-being.

There is a marked tendency in mainstream studies on peace and security problems to approach issues comparatively on a perspective that puts uniform emphasis on the nation-state across societies. Although that may be necessary for the sake of analytical clarity, such tendency also glosses over the wide disparities in the popular perceptions of the nation-state in the societies being compared as well as the varying degrees of effectiveness at integration of nation-state structures in post-colonial societies. This is particularly so considering the European origins of the idea of a "nation".<sup>1</sup>

There is also a tendency, especially among western analysts, to interpret threat perceptions and conceptions of national security among post-colonial societies according to their own security paradigms and ideological assumptions. For instance, while American and Japanese security concerns are directed outwards, those of the Southeast Asian countries are directed inwards.<sup>2</sup> The geopolitical concerns of the major powers are often superimposed or overemphasized in western interpretations or representations of Southeast Asian security

concerns.

It should be worthwhile to consider and develop the channels for international discourse of an expanded conception of security issues departing from a people's, rather than the predominant statist, perspective. Such an expanded conception of security should, perhaps, include people's perceptions of the impact of the international political-economic order on their daily lives, including such intrusions as imported pollution, socially disorganizing technology and alien value systems.

As it is, the mainstream in peace and security studies tends to be trapped within the nation-state framework. Within such framework, the condition of "peace" is often conservatively conceived as the achievement and maintenance of a political equilibrium between states rather than in terms of the progressive achievement of a popularly desired social arrangement; and "security" tends to be conceived along lines defined by global political fissions arising from big-power competition.

This paper being intended primarily as a backgrounder on peace and security issues in Southeast Asia, the philosophical and analytical considerations raised above shall not be elaborated further, much less resolved. They serve merely to preface a survey of the more prominent peace and security concerns in the Southeast Asian region as indicated by existing studies and commentaries. The issues shall, necessarily given the specification on this paper, be treated in broad strokes and in an overview fashion.

## The Southeast Asian Context

Both in terms of its geography and demographic composition, the Southeast Asian region fosters a broad range of tensions that approximates the abundance of cultural varieties, economic dispositions, political perceptions and vast natural potentials in the area.

Straddling major routes of commerce and possessing rich natural resources, the region has been the site of "tiger economies". Because of its geopolitical particularities, the region has also been the site of major-power confrontation. The uneven economic structures of the various societies composing the region have fostered lingering insurgencies.

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As a cradle of long-standing civilizations, it has also cultivated deep-seated enmities. Composed mainly of post-colonial societies, the countries in the region tend to relate more on a North-South basis with their former colonial masters than they do on a South-South basis with their neighbors. At least two countries in the peninsular section of the region have had to contend with serious communal tensions; and the two archipelagic countries — Indonesia and the Philippines — have had to wage a protracted effort to sustain the effectiveness of the nation-state framework in the face of populations of wide linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity. Both have confronted secessionist movements: the Philippines now confronting one of serious scale, involving the Filipino Muslims.

The demographic diversity of the region is quite remarkable. The original five countries composing the ASEAN (excluding late-entrant Brunei) had an aggregate 1980 population count of 263 million — surpassing that of the United States. Indonesia's largely Muslim Malay population of 152 million is composed of 250 ethnic groups. The Philippines and Thailand each have populations of roughly 50 million — the majority of Filipinos being Catholics and that of the Thais being largely Buddhist. Seventy-five percent of Singapore's 2.4 million population is of ethnic Chinese stock.<sup>3</sup> Although composing a distinct minority of Malaysia's 13.4 million inhabitants, the ethnic Chinese control a proportionally larger section of the economy.

Over the last two decades, the ASEAN countries have experienced remarkably high rates of economic growth based largely on rapid industrialization. Through the Seventies, the annual growth of exports for Indonesia and Malaysia was 6.5% each; the Philippines, 6.2%; Singapore, 11%; and Thailand, 12%. In the decade following 1966, the volume of trade (exports) from the five countries nearly quadrupled and in five years' time, from 1975 to 1980, it more than tripled.<sup>4</sup>

Contrasting with the striking aggregate figures of growth, however, is the widening gap between the modern and traditional sectors of the ASEAN economies. This widening gap is reflected in the rapid decline in real incomes for the majority of the populations trapped in the traditional sectors. In the beginning of the Seventies, the highest 20% of the income groups in Malaysia controlled 56% of the national income and in the Philippines, 54%. The lowest 40% in Malaysia got only 11.6% and in the Philippines 14.2%. In Indonesia, in 1976, the group with the highest 20% of incomes accounted for 49.4% of the national income and the lowest 40% for 14.4%. In the middle of the Seventies, almost 37% of the ASEAN population was estimated to be absolutely poor, lacking the basic necessities for decent existence.<sup>5</sup> There is no indication of this general structural trend being substantially reversed in the Eighties.

Indicative of the predominance of the North-South linkage among the ASEAN countries, 62% of the five countries' exports were delivered to the developed (capitalist) countries (70% if Singapore is excluded). The share of exports to developing countries accounts for 35%, of which approximately half belongs to ASEAN intra-regional trade (accounting for 18% of total foreign trade in 1980). The share of trade going to centrally-planned economies account for a minimal 3%.<sup>6</sup> The foreign policies of the ASEAN countries have clearly followed the patterns of trade.

During the period that the ASEAN economies were rapidly industrializing, the three Indochinese countries were

bogged down in prolonged conflict involving the United States directly. Through the latter half of the Seventies, they continued to be locked in turmoil even as they reconstructed from the ravages of war. Analysts, however, foresee the Mekong Delta area, extending across the three Indochinese states, as the most promising for the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>7</sup>

### Polarization of the Region

The uneven social structures characterizing most Southeast Asian societies and the extraordinarily low level of commercial and cultural interchange in the region are compounded by the widening polarization of the Southeast Asian societies between the pro-western ASEAN bloc, on one hand, and the Indochinese states on the other. The only exception to this disturbing trend is Burma's unsettling isolationism.

Much of the political dispositions in the Southeast Asian region may be traced back to the colonial period. The most preponderant, however, are those dispositions formed in the period after the second world war and entrenched during the Vietnam war period.

In spite of the occasional resurgence of nationalism and neutralism, the countries of the ASEAN bloc have been drawn — through a variety of political, military and economic linkages — firmly into what may be generally termed the "Western sphere of influence". This general disposition conditions even attempts to realize a "Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality" (ZOPFAN), as shall be illustrated in a later section. In contrast, the Indochinese states at the initiative of the Vietnamese have, due to a variety of factors including a virtual economic blockade by her neighbors and the revival of long-standing Sino-Vietnamese animosity, gravitated more decisively towards the Soviet axis.<sup>8</sup>

The fracture of the Southeast Asian region indicated by the regional polarization tendency cannot, however, be expected to be a settled one. Robert Scalapino observes that although there exists no imminent threat of a major-power war, there is evidently an erosion of that "complex network of positive relationships" that in the prior period "seemed to promise a steadily developing regional-international structure of procedure, custom and law". These, according to Scalapino, may be traceable to several interrelated global developments underlying regional trends. Among these developments are: rising nationalism deriving precisely from increased global interdependence; rising economic imbalance not only between North and South but also within both categories of states; the decline of secular ideologies causing both ideological confusion and the rise of religious fundamentalism; the weakness of political institutionalization in many societies where personal leadership remains crucial; the possibility of violence becoming endemic in the form of terrorism, undeclared wars and small-state wars; and, the broad movement from alliance to alignment so that once tight, all-encompassing and fixed obligations have become porous.<sup>9</sup>

It has become almost the norm for professional — particularly American — analysts of Southeast Asian security issues to treat US-Soviet tension as the keystone in the arc of security concerns in the region.<sup>10</sup> The enlargement of the Soviet Pacific fleet, their use of the Vietnamese ports of Cam Ranh and Danang along with the Kampuchean port of Kompong Sam, the deployment of SS-20 missiles, Vietnam's joining the COMECON in 1978 and her intervention in Kam-

puchea have all raised anxieties about a comprehensive Soviet strategy in Southeast Asia aimed at off-setting the political configuration that is implied by Sino-Soviet rapprochement.<sup>11</sup>

With such an interpretation of Soviet design, influential American political scientists have argued for continued US naval and air force presence "as a form of political assurance to ASEAN, China and Japan that Vietnamese and Soviet military activities would not be permitted to dominate the region".<sup>12</sup>

Such principally military form of counteraction results from the perception by American and pro-western Asian political analysts that the essential content of Soviet global strategy is the projection of military power. One analyst, representing a view that enjoys some popularity, argues that "Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and Vietnamese incursion into Kampuchea clearly represent not isolated, regional incidents, but rather aspects of a Soviet global strategy that increasingly involves the projection and use of military power in regions beyond Soviet shores and in pursuit of specific foreign policy perspectives".<sup>13</sup>

On the extreme end of this view are influential political analysts who push for a sustained, belligerent US attitude towards Vietnam.<sup>14</sup> There is also, among those who share this perception, a noticeable resurgence of the "domino theory" that many have thought to have been irreversibly discredited in the period immediately after the close of the Vietnam war.<sup>15</sup>

The view noted above is, on the one hand, sobered by the realization that the Soviets have very little access to the radical left-wing movements in Southeast Asia and that the level of Soviet official assistance — if taken as an indicator of interest in the region — has been minimal if aid to the Indo-chinese states is excluded. Over-all Soviet aid to the capitalist countries of Southeast Asia between 1954 to 1977 was only \$157 million out of a global total aid amount of \$15 billion.<sup>16</sup> Soviet overtures to the Philippine government proposing the development of joint fishing and shipping ventures, as a case in point, was flatly rejected.<sup>17</sup>

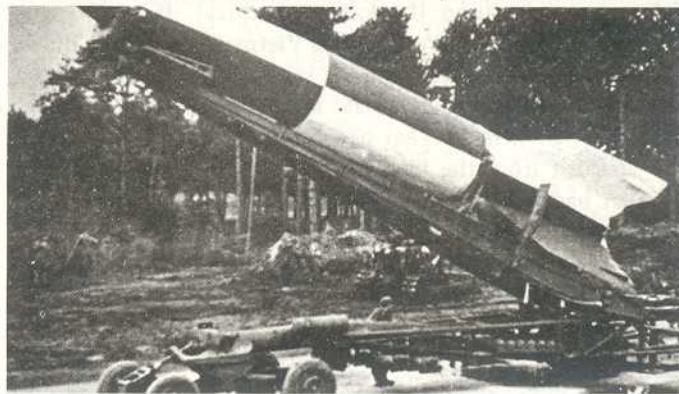
On the other hand, American anxiety over Soviet strategic designs is compounded by the widely held view of China as an uncertain, unpredictable and generally imponderable factor. There is serious doubt among many pro-western analysts about long-term stability of China's internal and external policies — that nation having more frequently and more sharply shifted her political and strategic positions than any other nation in the post-war international system.<sup>18</sup>

Deriving from the perspective very generally described above, the United States has pursued a Southeast Asian policy that appears to heighten rather than abate the polarization of the region into the pro-capitalist ASEAN bloc and the confederated states of Indochina.

Douglas Pike enumerates Washington's perceived national objectives in the region as: 1) To maintain a continued American presence for its own sake, in the context of great power balance; 2) To maintain the peace or confine conflict if it does break out and while measures are being taken to end it; 3) To curtail aggression, defined as altering national boundaries by force, if and when it takes place; to defeat communist insurgencies and to end non-communist insurgencies in non-communist countries; 4) To work for and contribute to regional stability as the necessary prerequisite to creating the proper environment for political and economic

development; 5) To encourage political development based on equalitarian and democratic principles; 6) To foster economic development within an interdependent world economic system, and to assure United States access to resources, markets and major sea lines of communication; and, 7) To promote the development of regionalism in the area, at least among the non-communist nations.<sup>19</sup>

The over-all disposition of US policy towards the Southeast Asian region is clearly in favor of preserving the political and economic status quo. Because of the extraordinary economic and political influence wielded by the US in the region, the policy outlined above becomes a major consideration.



**Southeast Asian Perceptions**

As mentioned at the onset, there is a marked difference in emphasis regarding peace and security concerns between developing nations such as those composing the Southeast Asian region and post-industrial nations such as the United States and Japan. While the latter group tends to put emphasis on external concerns, the former tends to be immersed in pressing internal problems. It is not unusual, as this paper shall try to illustrate, for the Southeast Asian nations to look at regional and international issues through the lenses of domestic concerns. These concerns range from issues surrounding economic development to active insurgencies and secessionist movements that divert not only the attention, but also vast amounts of resources of the national governments in the region.

Many nations in the Third World, because they were artificially formed out of the jurisdictional boundaries of the old colonial administrative systems, have had difficulty achieving a consensus on a set of political practices anchored on the nation-state. The erosion of traditional structures for social stability, gross disparities in wealth, traditional or newborn communal antipathies, and contrary perceptions on the path of development the whole society shall take — all these are expressed in a high degree of social tension that often explodes into violent internal conflict. Governing elites tend to interpret such conflicts as resulting from internal subversion rather than as a glaring agenda of social issues that need to be resolved. This is quite understandable in the many cases where the resolution of these issues threatens the position of the governing elites themselves. Relations at the inter-state level tend to be judged according to how they affect the internal disposition of forces or discourage/encourage internal "subversion". Thus, "danger comes as much from 'friends' and allies as from presumed 'enemies'. Even external threats from adversary nations are felt not primarily as we-they conflicts

but as subversive challenges operating through local agents or clients."<sup>20</sup>

It is worthy of note that the Declaration of ASEAN Concord coming out of the Bali Summit of February 1976 commits each member state "to eliminate threats posed by subversion to its stability, thus strengthening national and ASEAN resilience".<sup>21</sup>

Although most western analysts, as elaborated in the preceding section, put emphasis on what they consider to be the Soviet-Vietnamese threat to the region, many of the policy-makers in the ASEAN states take a sharply different view. For some, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, it is China that constitutes the long-term threat. It is thus considered preferable to have a strong Vietnam serving as a buffer between China and the ASEAN states.<sup>22</sup> Even in Thailand, considered the "frontline" state against Vietnam, it has been observed that general Thai perception of Vietnamese threat has subsided from the high of the 1975-1976 period in spite of what has been going on in Kampuchea.<sup>23</sup> Interviews with ranking military officers among the ASEAN states revealed what from an American point of view was "a striking lack of any perception of the Soviet navy as a specific threat to the Southeast Asian states; the Soviet presence could not easily be linked to any credible danger scenarios".<sup>24</sup>

The minimal concern among the ASEAN states over the possibility of a head-on confrontation with Vietnam is understandable. In spite of the fact that Vietnam has become a world-ranking military power, every indication points to its being principally concerned with growing tensions in her relationship with China. Particularly worrying for Vietnam is the apparent strategic alignment between the US and China. The problems of post-war reconstruction, Chinese hostility and ASEAN pressure on the Kampuchea issue have pushed Vietnam to a politically defensive position in the region.<sup>25</sup>

Malaysia's deep concern over the role of China in the region may be appreciated in terms of the communal tension between Malays and ethnic Chinese that has preoccupied the nation since independence. Particularly disturbing for Malaysia is the fact that ideological divisions tended to follow the lines of communal tensions with every communist group consisting mainly of people of Chinese origin.<sup>26</sup>

The collapse of the insurgency and the eventual Sino-Soviet split served to relax Malaysia's once strident Cold War posturing. Normalization of diplomatic relations with the socialist states accompanied Malaysian initiatives towards seeking recognition for the Southeast Asian region as a zone of neutrality. When the communists rose to power in April 1975 in Cambodia and South Vietnam, Malaysia extended diplomatic recognition to the new regimes within hours of their emergence. Inaugurating the Eighth ASEAN Ministers' Conference on 13 May 1975 — only twelve days after the fall of the US-supported Saigon regime — Malaysia's Tun Razak advised his understandably upset neighbors that "(t)he key to (ASEAN's) future security lies not in outdated and irrelevant attitudes of the cold war but in imaginative and constructive response to the new realities of today".<sup>27</sup>

The dominant perception among Malaysian decision-makers is that tension in the ASEAN region is due to big power politics. A strong ASEAN regional structure is perceived as a form of insulation from the pressures of such politics.<sup>28</sup> Malaysia has been at the forefront of the effort for closer economic integration among the ASEAN countries.

Malaysia has adopted a doctrine of "comprehensive security" that seeks to prevent external aggression by resolving internal security threats and tensions.<sup>29</sup> This doctrine in part justifies the constitutional framework allowing tough internal security laws that make the Malaysian government virtually authoritarian.

The concern over communal tensions arising from economic disparities is a continuing one which the Bumiputra policy seeks to eventually resolve. A fairly recent development related to this concern has been the perceptible spread of Muslim fundamentalism, a development that may grow to such proportion that it once again upsets the uneasy communal balance that the Malaysian government has tried hard to maintain since independence.<sup>30</sup>

The communal tensions in Malaysia have also been viewed with concern by the Singaporeans. With a land area of only 617.8 sq. kms. and a population of only 2,413,945, Singapore is extremely sensitive to developments in the region around her. This is all the more so considering that trade is the lifeblood of Singapore's mercantile economy.

Although there has been a high degree of political continuity domestically coupled with a low level of overt dissent, considering the relative success of Lee Kuan Yew's strongman regime, the Singaporean government from time to time expresses concern over the Communist Party of Malaya's resurging and developing influence among her predominantly ethnic Chinese population. Concern has also been expressed regarding "communal or racial extremists" and "anti-national elements".<sup>31</sup> With Lee's recent announcement that he intends to retire after his current term, there have been ripples of concern regarding stability and succession in a political system that has known the leadership of only one man since its birth. There is little serious doubt, however, regarding the People's Action Party's ability to oversee the transition process, considering that it has been the governing party since Singapore's independence.

Generally disposed towards the maintenance of the political and economic status quo in the region, Singapore has strongly encouraged the US to maintain a strong presence in the area. Over the long term, the Singaporeans worry about the possibility of a racial bloodbath that would imply the development of grave tensions between Singapore and her Muslim neighbors. With Muslim Indonesia, the MRLF in Mindanao, extremist Muslims in the North Sumatran province of Aceh and the fundamentalist Muslim movement in peninsular Malaysia, Singaporeans have now begun to speak of a "Muslim danger".<sup>32</sup>

Although, as pointed out earlier, the general Thai perception of a Vietnamese "threat" has subsided, the continuing conflict between anti-Vietnamese Khmer guerillas and the Vietnamese army — along with the massive influx of Kampuchean refugees into Thailand — have kept the fact of awesome Vietnamese military power at the foreground of Thai attention.<sup>33</sup> Few Thais, however, anticipate a major territorial assault by the Vietnamese.

The armed struggle led by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was once considered the strongest in the ASEAN region. However, it rapidly collapsed towards the end of the Seventies due to serious differences between the old, mainly ethnic Chinese leaders of the CPT and the young cadres who flocked to the countryside after the military coup. Denied their secure bases in Laos and Kampuchea, the pro-Peking CPT

has ceased to be a major military and political threat to the Bangkok government. It has joined the other lingering but minor communist insurgencies in the region (with the striking exception of the quickly expanding Party-led insurgency in the Philippines).<sup>34</sup>

The continuing Muslim separatist movement in southern Thailand has also been a cause for concern. This particular problem is not, however, an urgent one. It must be noted, though, that like most separatist movements in the region, it is as much rooted in economic marginalization as it is in the clash of cultural practices.<sup>35</sup>

The Thai term for security (*kwan maant kong*) connotes strengthening, stabilizing or fortifying.<sup>36</sup> While, in a historical perspective, the Thais have performed exceedingly well in preventing external aggression through the cultivation of good relations, the achievement of a stable domestic political structure remains a distant goal. Deep-set rivalries among the various elite factions have caused the Thai government to be relatively unstable and dependent on authoritarian rule where the military plays a major role.<sup>37</sup>

Along with Malaysia, Indonesia has been a persistent advocate of neutrality for the Southeast Asian region. In part, Indonesia's attachment to neutralism and equidistance stems from a cultivated distrust of the big powers. The major powers share a history of interference in Indonesia's internal affairs. Moscow was behind the Madiun affair in 1948. Washington aided the rebels in 1958. And, the Indonesians believe that Peking has been involved in the affairs of 1965 and beyond.<sup>38</sup>

Although there are lingering fears of Indonesian expansionism particularly among the Malaysians (over the North Borneo question), the thrust of Indonesia's concern has so far been inward. With the size and diversity of its population, the Indonesian government shall have to contend with separatist tendencies, with the problems of minority participation and with the building of the institutions for political integration on a national basis. Problems of political development become more urgent when framed in terms of the concrete problem of political succession within the current governmental framework.<sup>39</sup> Also of serious concern is Indonesia's markedly underproductive economy. While Indonesia has 56.7% of the ASEAN population, it produces only 36% of the region's GNP. Its per capita GNP, the lowest in the region, is only about half of the Philippines' and a tenth of Singapore's.<sup>40</sup>

### Subsidiary Issues

There are a few more issues that ought to be mentioned. Because of their relative insignificance to the general drift of politics in the region, simple enumeration here should suffice.

There has been, as indicated above, an undercurrent of concern about Indonesia's strategic ambitions in the other ASEAN countries apart from Malaysia. Such concern evidently derives from the sheer size of Indonesia's population relative to her neighbors and the military potential that that implies. Although such concern is, without doubt, within the realm of possibility, its probability in the foreseeable future is severely curtailed by the constraints of internal problems enumerated earlier. Fear of Indonesian expansionism is thus as distantly theoretical as Singapore's fear of a possible "Muslim ring" eventually enveloping her.

There have been, in the past, a few instances of tension between the Philippines and Malaysia over the former's re-

talization of its claim to Sabah by virtue of "historic right". With the Philippine government's official withdrawal of its claim, there is little possibility that the issue shall again balloon into a major source of regional tension — in spite of the reassertion of the claim by the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu.

Competing claims of sovereignty over the Spratley islands is a potential, though not imminent, source of tension in the region. The islands are claimed by Vietnam, China, Taiwan and the Philippines. The claimant countries have each stationed garrisons in a number of the strategically situated islands. The Spratleys are located in an area that not only straddles a major sea artery but is also believed to be a potentially rich oil field. At the moment, the contesting countries seem to have contented themselves with the military occupation of an islet each. The situation, however, is further complicated by the ongoing demarcation of exclusive economic zones and claims to jurisdiction over continental shelves by the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. Malaysia's unilateral declaration of its exclusive economic zone includes the Spratley islands.

Because of Japan's powerful economic presence in the region — and the bitter memory of the Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere she once sought to consolidate by the force of arms — there is great sensitivity among Southeast Asians to the prospect of Japanese rearmament. Japan has, over the last few years, been under pressure by the United States to increase its share of the "defense" of East and Southeast Asia. Although Japan currently spends less than 1% of its GNP on its military establishment, it ranks eighth worldwide in terms of its actual military expenditure.<sup>41</sup>

Although the concern over increased Japanese military expenditure expressed by Southeast Asians is generally attributed to the possibility of a resurgence of the Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere project, a number of Japanese analysts have offered an interestingly different interpretation. They see adverse Southeast Asian reactions to increases in Japanese military expenditure as due to the fear that it might "encourage US pullback from the region".<sup>42</sup>

Over the long term, rising domestic tension between authoritarian regimes and democratic popular tendencies may be anticipated. Such tension would have grave implications on the existing governmental processes in the ASEAN countries. Current development programmes and strategic economic policies have been initiated by — and presuppose the continued persistence of — technocracies in the ASEAN countries. Although there are variances from country to country, there is, generally, a close affinity between technocracies and authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia.<sup>43</sup> The contradictoriness between current development strategies designed and implemented by technocratic bureaucracies requiring some degree of authoritarianism and popular pressure for democratization shall be problematic.

### A Weak Link

The serious implications of her current difficulties on the existing configuration of regional stability requires that the Philippine case be treated separately.

Although indications of impending trouble have been evident for years, the depth and magnitude of the national crisis precipitated by the Aquino assassination in August 1983 astounded many. What is often simply referred to as "The

Crisis" is a complex interweave of a seriously underproductive economic structure, a rapidly contracting economy caused by receding exports, a potentially explosive foreign debt situation, the current regime's rapidly eroding legitimacy and increasingly defensive political position, the politically problematic question of succession to the existing authoritarian order, and a rapidly progressing countrywide insurgency indicative of polarization of political forces in Philippine society.<sup>44</sup>

While the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has exerted every effort to prevent the country's debt crisis from precipitating into a general financial breakdown with worldwide ramifications, there are a host of structural problems that would make the debt situation appear merely symptomatic. Influential business leaders have expressed apprehension that the numerous restrictions imposed on the Philippine economy by the IMF may produce a backlash that shall further compound already mounting difficulties.<sup>45</sup>

The Reagan administration has indicated in no uncertain terms its continued support for the Marcos government in the Philippines.<sup>46</sup> Foremost in the minds of American policymakers, quite understandably, is the security of the military bases that the US has maintained in the Philippines. Paul Wolfowitz, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in an official statement described the US bases in the Philippines as playing a "crucial role" to America's strategic disposition in the region.<sup>47</sup> Former ambassador William H. Sullivan, in a widely discussed paper, took a more emphatic position, describing US bases in the Philippines as virtually unsubstitutable. A withdrawal of the bases from the Philippines would cost the US an overly staggering sum if it shall seek to retain its present forward positions in the entire Pacific area.<sup>48</sup> Asian analysts disposed towards the maintenance of the political status quo in the region have warned that the withdrawal of US bases in Thailand in 1976 and continuing negotiations between the US and the Philippines over the bases in the islands have "raised questions about the US 'will' to provide leadership to its allies and friends in the Pacific".<sup>49</sup>

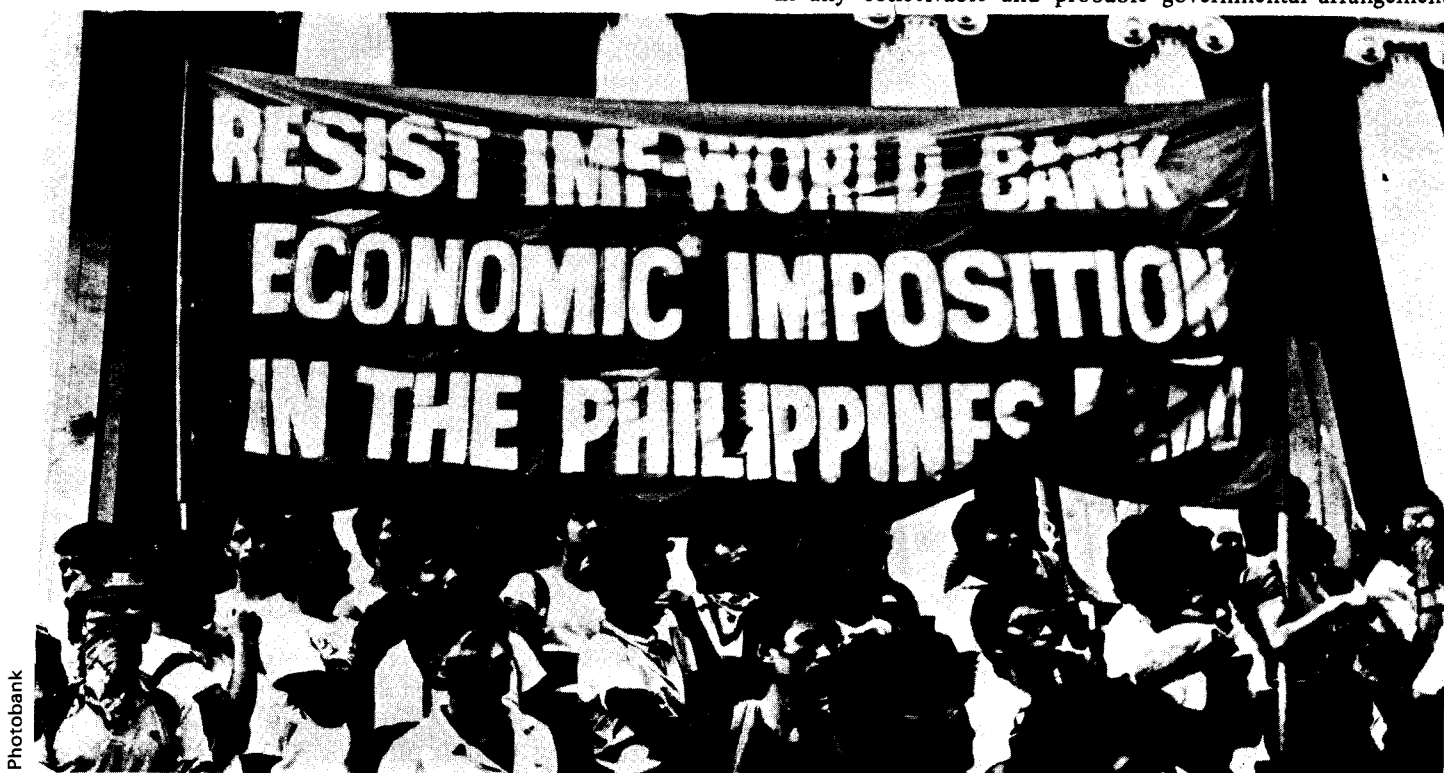
The Reagan government's assurances of support notwithstanding, the prospect of domestic political stability in the Philippines does not appear promising in both the short and medium terms. The Marcos regime is fast losing popularity. Serious economic dislocation is pushing up the level of disenchantment. The moderate opposition to the Marcos regime is bitterly divided along a multiplicity of factional and ideological lines. Consequently, the armed, Left-led revolutionary movement has rapidly advanced over the last few years. Quite a number of analysts have been led to suggest that the Marcos regime hinders rather than advances the achievement of internal stability.<sup>50</sup>

As the Communist Party of the Philippines and its New People's Army expand through the length of the archipelago, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and its Bangsa Moro Army (BMA) continue to tie down a substantial portion of the Philippine military in grinding guerilla war. The political and military strengths of the MNLF-BMA have markedly subsided from a peak around the mid-seventies. Although at a much smaller scale, the revolt is likely to linger on even as its political objectives become more distant.<sup>51</sup>

The Muslim political revolt is due to long-standing communal tensions between the Christian majority and the Islamic minority. These communal tensions pertaining in southern Philippines, like others in the region, are compounded by the economic marginalization of Muslim Filipinos — a problem that can be resolved with finality only with the structural reformation of the whole national society.<sup>52</sup>

The possibility of a Left-nationalist coalition becoming politically ascendant in the Philippines is today the leading source of political anxiety among the country's pro-western partners in the ASEAN.

Such anxiety is not entirely misplaced. The gains made by the Left and by nationalist/anti-imperialist forces in the political arena have been more than significant. The Left is now firmly entrenched as a major, long-term political factor in any conceivable and probable governmental arrangement



## A Zone of Neutrality

in the post-Marcos period. The not-too-unlikely possibility of a coalesced Left-nationalist regime shall result in a drastic reversal of development, trade and foreign policies of the Philippines that would have profound effects on the ASEAN sub-region as a whole. At the very least, a nationalist and protectionist set of policies shall affect the region's common drift at the moment towards greater interdependence on the basis of closer integration with the industrial capitalist economies. A deep suspicion of the ASEAN intermittently articulated by spokesmen identified with the Filipino Left<sup>53</sup> may become predominant and, on the occasion of a Left-nationalist coalition becoming ascendant, may lead to a unilateral withdrawal of the Philippines from the association. In such eventuality, the ASEAN shall most likely go the way of the ill-fated SEATO. And if worst fears are to be articulated, the political center-of-gravity in the region shall shift to the Indochinese states.

The more realistic area of concern among the other ASEAN states regarding the possibility of a Left-nationalist coalition seizing power in the Philippines involves the future of US bases in the archipelago. The Philippine government has, since the last world war, consistently maintained the view that the US bases serve the end of protecting the country from foreign aggression. Such view has been complemented by significant direct and indirect revenues derived from maintaining American bases on Philippine soil.<sup>54</sup>

Of late, the subject of American bases stationed in the Philippines has entered into the impassioned debates between the Marcos regime and emergent opposition groups and tendencies. Among those opposed to the Marcos regime, there is a widely held perception that the present political dispensation has managed to hold on to power because of US support — directly through various forms of financial and technical assistance including military aid coming in the form of “rental” for the bases and potentially in the form of possible American intervention using the bases as launching pads. Anti-American and hence anti-bases sentiment has spread perceptibly among “moderate” nationalist oppositors to the Marcos regime and also among the urban middle classes generally.<sup>55</sup> For an increasing number, particularly among those who identify their politics with the Left or with nationalist political tendencies, the continued presence of the bases are seen as irreconcilable with Philippine sovereignty. There is also widespread belief that the bases constitute “magnets” for attack in the event of an outbreak of nuclear war between the US and the USSR.<sup>56</sup> The official perception that the bases protect the country from external aggression has had difficulty achieving popularity given the absence of any credible scenario of external threat.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of forcing out the Americans from the Philippines, any emergent nationalist regime in the country shall nevertheless make a strong pitch either for the non-renewal of the bases treaty (which is due to expire soon) or at the very least, a substantial scaling down of American military presence in the archipelago. The most likely outcome regardless of the ideological hue of the succeeding regime would be a higher “rental” cost for the Americans who shall be negotiating from a much weaker position once the bases treaty expires and they are forced to deal with a new regime that comes to power in spite of their (US) full backing of the Marcos dictatorship.

On the 27th of November 1971, the five original members of the ASEAN passed a Declaration on the Neutralization of Southeast Asia where they jointly pledged “to secure the recognition of, and respect for, Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers”. The Declaration also called on the Southeast Asian countries to “make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship”.

The resolution of the Indochina conflict a few years later saw the eventual emergence of “two Southeast Asias”. Very little substance, it would seem, has composed the rhetoric regarding a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN).

The sequence of events following the 1971 Declaration puts it in an interesting light. In 1972, Nixon travelled to China and began the process of Sino-American rapprochement. In 1973, the Paris accords were signed. And in April 1975, the communists rose to power in Indochina.

Accounts of the significance of the Declaration at the time it was made, as well as interpretations of its relevance and meaning, vary. The Declaration was immediately useful for Malaysia in her early initiative to seek accommodation with Peking. It is widely believed that the Declaration was principally intended to encourage Hanoi's independence from both Moscow and Peking by allowing a framework for Southeast Asian cooperation on the basis of peaceful coexistence, non-interference and mutual benefit in anticipation of what eventually occurred in Indochina in April 1975. As such, the Declaration may be seen as having been intended for a transient utility: that of containing the “damage” coming after American withdrawal from Indochina and the consequent victory of the communist-led forces.

Succeeding events give this thesis some credence. Manila immediately established links with Hanoi and called for a revision of US-Philippines Defense Agreements. Thailand took immediate steps to expel American bases from her soil and terminate commitments she had made with the framework of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). In July 1976, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Burma received goodwill missions from Hanoi that took home promises of assistance to Vietnam's reconstruction effort.<sup>57</sup>

The ZOPFAN was kept stillborn in the vortex of power politics interlocking in the region. From the onset, Indonesia reacted negatively to the Malaysian initiative for the ZOPFAN to be guaranteed by the big powers. The Indonesians felt it would give the US, the USSR and China a positive role in the region. Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand, on the other hand, thought that creating a framework for peaceful competition among the big powers in the region would serve as a counterfoil to Indonesia's suspected supremacist ambitions. Moscow, in turn, pushed the view that Southeast Asian neutrality meant draining the region of Chinese, US and Japanese presence — specifically, the removal of US bases in the Philippines. Peking saw in the ZOPFAN initiative a counter to what she suspected as Moscow's strategy of building an anti-China collective security arrangement.<sup>58</sup>

The failure to entice Hanoi into closer collaboration

with her neighbors and greater independence from Moscow took away much of the wind from the sails of the ZOPFAN. Adding to this failure was the absence of a common perspective for such a "zone" among the various countries in the region.

The political difficulties accompanying the ZOPFAN project in a way conditioned the drift towards political polarization between the "two Southeast Asias" and closer collaboration between the capitalist economies in the region. The tendency among the ASEAN countries to be preoccupied with problems relating to economic linkages among themselves has been abetted by the fact that the ASEAN countries, along with the East Asian NICs (Newly Industrializing Countries), have formed what has been described as "the last frontier of fast economic growth".<sup>59</sup> Such rapid growth is not without its structural problems and foreseeable difficulties in the long run.<sup>60</sup> As such, problems of economic development and international economic linkages have intensely preoccupied Southeast Asian attention.

Current thinking on the region's security concerns has tended to revolve around the development of trade and investment arrangements conducive to long-term cooperation.<sup>61</sup> A large number of influential Asians from government, academe and the private sector has pushed the idea of an "Asia-Pacific Community" inspired both by the European Economic Community concept and US President Reagan's proposed US-Caribbean Basin Initiative.<sup>62</sup>

Japan has been playing a prominent role in the region in the area of building institutions for more comprehensive intra-regional economic cooperations. The Japanese government has set aside a significant amount of official development assistance to support both Indochinese reconstruction and inter-ASEAN development projects. Partly in response to the criticism that Japan has been a "free rider" in terms of defense, influential Japanese analysts have advanced the concept of "comprehensive security" for the region. This concept proposes that while Japan remains within the restrictions of its war-renouncing constitution, it should enhance its bargaining power through technological and economic cooperation. The object is to achieve "resources security" for Japan and the region.<sup>63</sup>

The relative lack of popular enthusiasm for both the Declaration of Neutrality and calls for more intensive regional cooperation may be explained by the preoccupation of Southeast Asians with issues and problems principally domestic in character.

For the masses in Southeast Asia, the foremost concern is presumably the equity and long-term viability of existing or competing paradigms of development. Here the association of inequitable growth with technocratic authoritarian regimes has invited critical visions of equitable growth with democracy.<sup>64</sup> More and more people in Southeast Asia have begun to evolve models of development premised on "people's power" and have proposed various notions of "participatory development", contraposed against existing patterns of governance that reflect iniquitous social structures.<sup>65</sup>

In the last analysis, no balance of international forces can be truly secure and no transnational configuration of relationship can assure peace if the majority of the people see the existing order to be iniquitous and if the masses find the conditions wherein they must daily struggle for life to be oppressive.

## Postscript

While the investigation of security perceptions of nations *as nations* is a legitimate intellectual concern, the theoretical perils and analytical limitations of such enterprise need to be constantly reflected on.

Conceptual schemes utilizing the "nation" as the operating unit of analysis in appraising security concerns tend invariably to abstract the categories of both the perception of threat and the object of such perception. Conceptions of both threat and the source of threat tend to be extracted from the encompassing logical framework of geopolitics. Such conceptions often do not cohere with actual perceptions and anxieties of real men in the dimension of everyday lived experience.

The real peril becomes palpable when conceptions extracted from geopolitical logic enter the world of everyday lived experience through the various forms of state ideologies that more distinctly function to legitimize domestic policies rather than clarify macropolitical situations. This phenomenon is most poignantly expressed in the various national security doctrines that form the essential components of state ideologies in many underdeveloped countries.

In Southeast Asia, particularly, internally repressive regimes have been assembled, legitimized by a variety of national security doctrines. These doctrines lubricate the process of political and structural integration of the post-colonial societies with the competing blocs of the major powers. They provide the jargon that justifies the conclusion of military alliances at the international level and the consolidation of militarized institutions at the domestic level.



Jobert Bartolome



National security doctrines have been crucial components of authoritarian regimes that have flourished throughout the Third World, especially during the last two decades.

These authoritarian regimes have remained in place partly because of support from the major powers: such support justified mainly in terms of preserving the "balance of power" and, hence, "stability". From the perspective of the major powers, peace hinged on the preservation of current spheres of influence. This in turn translates into preserving existing domestic social structures and power arrangements.

Consequently, through the geopolitical logic and abstracted jargon of national security doctrines, people's responses and national liberation movements are judged as threats to "stability" and, hence, to "peace".

It is the task of concerned intellectuals to critically review the dominant paradigms in peace and security studies. The abstracted geopolitical logic that pervades mainstream studies on the subject need to be tempered by new conceptual schemes that allow people's perceptions to be articulated even in frameworks utilizing the nation-state as starting point. The deployment of geopolitical conceptual schemes to support national security ideologies need to be subjected to intensive critiques.

The abovementioned efforts have not only intellectual but also moral and political urgencies. The surge of people's movements everywhere, particularly those struggling for disarmament, peace and liberation, needs to be more profoundly understood at the dimension of international politics.

#### Notes:

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3. Jun Nishikawa, *ASEAN and the United Nations System*, (New York: UNITAR), 1983, p. 25.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 46, quoting figures from the World Bank, the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex and ESCAP.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
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9. Robert A. Scalapino, "The Uncertain Future: Asian-Pacific Relations in Trouble" in Charles E. Morrison (ed.), *Threats to Security in East Asia-Pacific*, (Lexington: Lexington Books), 1983.
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11. Paul Keleman, "Soviet Strategy in Southeast Asia", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3, March 1984, pp. 335-348.
12. Sheldon W. Simon, "The Soviet Union and Southeast Asia: Interests, Goals, and Constraints", *Orbis*, Spring, 1981, p. 88.
13. Jacquelyn K. Davis, "Soviet Strategy in Asia: A U.S. Perspective" in Morrison (ed.), *loc. cit.*
14. See, for instance, Robert Scalapino, "The US and East Asia: Views and Policies in a Changing Era", *Survival*, July-August 1982, pp. 146-155.
15. See Lim Joo-Jock, "The Indochinese Situation and the Superpowers in Southeast Asia" in Joyce E. Larson (ed.), *New Foundations for Asian and Pacific Security*, National Strategy Information Center, 1980.
16. Simon, *op. cit.*
17. "Philippines Wary of USSR Venture", *Strategy Week*, 28 September-4 October 1981, p. 5.
18. Jonathan D. Pollack, "China's Role in Pacific Basin Security", *Survival*, July-August 1984, pp. 164-173.
19. Douglas Pike, "Southeast Asia and the Superpowers: The Dust Settles", *Current History*, Vol. 82, No. 483, April 1983, p.146.
20. Weinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
21. Quoted in J. Soedjarti Djwardono "Indonesia's Security Concerns and Responses", *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, 1984.
22. Lau Teik Soon, "The Security Situation in the Asia-Pacific Region", *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, 1984.
23. Bernard K. Gordon and Lloyn R. Vasey, "Security in East Asia-Pacific" in Morrison (ed.), *loc. cit.*
24. Weinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
25. Gareth Porter, "Hanoi's Strategic Perspective and the Sino-Vietnamese Conflict", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 1, Spring 1984.
26. Zainal Abidin B. Abdul Wahid, "Malaysian Threat Perception and Regional Security" in Morrison (ed.), *loc. cit.*
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28. Abdul Wahid, *op. cit.*
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30. For an extensive treatment of the various dimensions of the problem from a Malay perspective, see S. Husin Ali, *The Malays: Their Problems and Future*, (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Asia), 1982.
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33. Sarasin Viraphol, "National Threat Perceptions: Explaining the Thai Case", in Morrison, (ed.), *loc. cit.*
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35. Uthai Dulyakasem, "Muslim-Malay Separatism in Southern Thailand: Factors Underlying the Political Revolt", in Lim Joo-Jock and Vani S., *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, *loc. cit.*
  36. Somsakdi Xuto, "Thai Security Perceptions in Historical Perspective", in Morrison (ed.), *loc. cit.*
  37. The various factors making internal political stability problematic for the Thais is perceptibly described in Harold Crouch, *Domestic Political Structures and Regional Economic Cooperation*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), 1984.
  38. J. Soedjati Djiwardono, *op. cit.*
  39. For a brief survey of Indonesia's security perceptions, see Jusui Wanandi and M. Hadisoastro, "Indonesia's Security and Threat Perceptions", in Morrison (ed.), *loc. cit.*
  40. See comparative tables for the ASEAN region in Jun Nishikawa, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
  41. Figures quoted in Carolina G. Hernandez, "Regional Security in ASEAN: a Philippine Perspective", *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, 1984.
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  54. Carlos F. Nivera, "National Threat Perceptions in the Philippines", in Morrison, *loc. cit.*
  55. See Jose W. Diokno, *Anti-Americanism*, (Manila: KAAKBAY), 1984.
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  57. An excellent discussion of the power politics of this period may be found in the concluding chapter of Lalita Prasad Singh, *op. cit.*
  58. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-164.
  59. For a brief but excellent survey of the statistics of growth and the factors influencing them, see "Collect Dust, Make a Mountain", *The Economist*, 13 November 1982.
  60. It has been suggested that the rapid growth now experienced by the Asian NICs can only be tentative. See, for instance, Vera Butler, "Asia's Developing Economics and the World Monetary Crisis", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 1983, pp. 331-339.
  61. See Alejandro Melchor, "Energy Resources, Raw Materials and the Safety of the Sea Lanes of Communication: An Organic Approach Toward a New Security Framework", and Munir Majid, "Regional Security through Trade and Investment", both in Joyce E. Larson (ed.), *loc. cit.*
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IMF to peasant/laborer/unemployed worker: I'm sorry, Sir, but you have to tighten your belt.

Peasant/laborer/unemployed worker: I'm sorry, too, Sir, but I have eaten it already.

— IFDA Dossier