ASEAN, 1985-2000: A US ROLE TO INFLUENCE ITS SHAPE

by

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The role which the United States should play in the region of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—the non-Communist states of Southeast Asia minus Burma[1]—from 1985 until the end of the century will depend upon its interests and conditions existing in the region.[2] The latter will result from a wide variety of factors, the more important undoubtedly relating to internal economic and political developments. However, there will also be important influences from the international system, especially the policies and behavior of the major powers—China, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States—and Communist Southeast Asia.

This being the case, it seems useful to suggest US policy and programs for the area which are likely to contribute to the kind of situation in 1985 and after that will be compatible with US interests, rather than to attempt to analyze possible future shapes of ASEAN. Indeed, the future of the association is virtually impossible to forecast because of the complexity of the variables, and attempting to analyze its possible futures is an exercise that would require projecting US policy in any case. The perceptions of US policy and intentions and the impact of US actions will affect both the ASEAN and the non-ASEAN nations, thus directly and indirectly influencing—but not determining—the shape of the region in the future.

This analysis will assess and evaluate the interests of the United States in the ASEAN region; consider the factors other than US policy which probably will have a major impact on developments in the region; and speculate on how the United States might realistically be able to influence those factors, giving special attention to the use of the military as an instrument of policy. A critique of current US policy is implicit in the analysis.

AMERICAN INTERESTS IN ASEAN

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the United States does have important interests in Southeast Asia, even though the conflict

which was the center of national attention for more than a decade has ended, and the US client, the Republic of Vietnam, no longer exists. During that period, Southeast Asia was often equated with Vietnam, so that when the United States extricated itself from the latter, the assumption was that America had forfeited all interests in all of Southeast Asia. But Southeast Asia is more than Vietnam, and US interests have always existed in the rest of the region, especially in that part encompassed by the nations of ASEAN. A good argument can be made that the non-Indochina US interests in Southeast Asia have always been the more important. At any rate, today, with a world in which the issues of interdependence are moving more and more to the center of international politics, the US stake in the ASEAN region is substantial. Moreover, US interests should become more important in the last decades of the century, as the supply of energy and raw materials for industry and access to the resources of the sea become potentially more contentious issues, and as expanding markets in ASEAN countries increase their value to the American economy.

It is important, even if not vital, for the United States that there be free passage through the various straits in ASEAN waters, especially the Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Lombok, which connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This is true because some US trade would be inconvenienced if passage through these waterways were interfered with, and more importantly, because impeding free passage through the straits would have a significant adverse impact on the economy of Japan, the major Asian ally and the second largest trading partner (after Canada) of the United States. Some 85 percent of Japan's petroleum sails through these choke points (the largest tankers through the Strait of Lombok) together with a large portion of other necessary imports and an increasing volume of exports.[3] Since the existence of Japan as an independent and prosperous ally is the key to US policy in Asia, and since impairment of passage through the Straits of Malacca and Lombok could endanger Japanese prosperity, the United States has substantial indirect interests, perhaps as important as the direct ones, which require that it be concerned with the Southeast Asian waters.

The ASEAN area, especially the insular portion:

> . . . can provide important early warning, basing, staging, logistic facilities, and communication centers to support a variety of military deployments in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In this context, the expansion of the strategic forces on the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf underscores the geostrategic significance of the sea lines of communication through the Strait of Malacca and other straits located within the Indonesian/Malaysian archipelagoes.[4]

Should the deployments or the use of force become necessary, these considerations would become enormously important.

The nations of ASEAN are also valuable to the United States in economic terms. American trade and investment, when compared to similar activities in Western Europe, Japan, or the Western Hemisphere, seem insignificant. Yet there are profitable business ventures from which American citizens benefit, and it is appropriate that the US Government attempt to preserve them. Moreover, in absolute terms, the amount of US-ASEAN trade (about $10 billion in 1976) and investment ($6 billion in 1974) is not inconsiderable.[5] Furthermore, the area is the source of a number of raw materials which are beneficial, even though probably not essential, to the American economy. For instance, the United States purchases 90 percent of all imported tin and at least 75 percent of all natural rubber from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, and 7.5 percent of all imported petroleum from Indonesia.[6]

While the denial or restriction of the commodities imported by the United States from ASEAN countries would not endanger the security or well-being of the nation, it would constitute a serious problem. The economic activity by American business is sufficiently beneficial to the nation and to

American individuals and businesses to justify continuous attention by the US Government. Japan has relatively more trade and investment, is more dependent on the natural resources available from the region, and seems to place a much higher priority on ASEAN relations than does the United States. Fortunately, under existing circumstances, US economic interests and Japanese economic interests in the area are broadly compatible, even if the two allies sometimes compete on specific projects.

Although the United States is without vital interests in the ASEAN region, it is nonetheless true that the political arrangements in the region do make a difference to the United States. The character of governments in all countries of the region could affect the security of American investments and the profitability of American trade. Moreover, it could affect the power relationships of the international system—the traditionally important ones involving the major powers of Asia as well as the increasingly significant confrontation of industrial and less-developed countries—and thereby indirectly affect the nation's security.

United States interests, regional and international, will be better served if the ASEAN states have friendly governments on generally friendly terms with each other rather than unfriendly governments unusually sensitive to the influence of other major powers or preoccupied with intraregional disputes. Also, the way in which the United States responds to crises in the region will affect US influence in ASEAN and will probably have repercussions throughout the international system. Because of American involvement in Southeast Asia in the past and the existence of explicit security commitments to the Philippines and Thailand,[7] observers may well impute more significance to American action in the region than to similar steps in other places. This is not merely a matter of demonstrating national "resolve" or "will," although that seems clearly to be involved, but also of showing that the United States recognizes the legitimate interests of the nations of ASEAN and is prepared to deal with them as independent members of the international community.

The US nonstrategic, noneconomic national interest in expanding the recognition and protection of human rights in the world also is relevant to ASEAN. However, policy designed to support this interest within the region appears to some Southeast Asians and Americans to conflict with many strategic and economic national interests, at least in the short run. In varying degrees, moreover, all of the governments of ASEAN at times commit acts that seem to be violations of human rights, ranging from cruel and brutal methods of torture to subtle infringements of freedom of speech.

These interests, as has been repeatedly noted, are important and significant today. They are also likely to persist far beyond the year 2000. Like most interests pursued by the United States in most areas of the world, they do not seem to involve many of the heroic questions over which wars have historically been fought. They are, however, the stuff of much of today's and tomorrow's international politics.

One major reason why the area of ASEAN appears to receive so little official attention when compared with that given other areas of the world (in addition to the "no more involvement in Asia" syndrome) is that American interests there are presently relatively secure. The military and commercial ships of all nations of the world, including those of the United States and Japan, do enjoy free passage[8] through the strategic straits of the area, limited only by some relatively minor, reasonable regulations designed to control the flow of traffic and to minimize pollution. All of the governments of ASEAN are generally hospitable to foreign investment and foreign business activity, and although all impose restrictions and special obligations on foreigners which are annoying, Japanese and American businessmen are making profits from trade and investment. There are no

immediate external threats to ASEAN governments or American or Japanese interests except for minimal support of insurgents in Thailand and Malaysia by mainland China (PRC) and Vietnam, and Libyan support of Moslems in the Southern Philippines rebelling against the Christian majority represented by President Marcos' martial law regime. While these insurgencies have been troublesome and costly, none now appear capable of defeating any government. The levels of activity of both China and the Soviet Union are probably increasing, but they are still restrained, unprovocative, and primarily directed against each other. Recent problems in Sino-Vietnamese relations seem to have been a catalyst for unusually sharp rhetoric in the cold war between the Soviet Union and the PRC. Predictions that postwar Vietnam would be an aggressive force—perhaps a Soviet surrogate—endangering its non-Communist neighbors have not been confirmed. On the other hand, stubborn internal problems, the running battle with Democratic Kampuchea, and the confrontation with China suggest that it will be some time before Vietnam can divert resources to gain external objectives, whatever they might be. In fact, for the present, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam seems determined to avert trouble with all of its non-Communist neighbors, presumably to gain their support against China and Kampuchea. ASEAN, once generally considered little more than the symbol for an aspiration, has developed a new vitality, complete with concrete projects and a fledgling bureaucracy, and it now provides a framework for intensive and extensive consultations among its five members. The maintenance of US bases in the Philippines, previously under a harsh verbal attack from the Philippine Government, now apparently is secure, at least temporarily. Except for Thailand, the governments of the ASEAN states have been amazingly stable (even for nondemocratic systems) in the sense that the same personalities and political groups have ruled for a number of years. While not necessarily pro-American, they are at least basically capitalistic in economics and anti-Communist. In a contest between the United States and its Communist adversaries, they would have no choice but to remain neutral or to opt for the West.

From the US perspective, then, the situation in Southeast Asia can be interpreted as quite acceptable, considering that the commitment of US resources and energy has not been large since the withdrawal from Indochina.

Other interpretations of the current status of US interest in the ASEAN area are possible, and they lead to less sanguine appraisals. Projections into even the near future, much less to the last 15 years of the century, may lead to quite disturbing forecasts, for an infinite variety of changes in the factors affecting the development of ASEAN are possible, and most of these probably would lead to less satisfactory conditions—from the American perspective—than the status quo. It will be useful to examine some of the prominent variables which could lead to a different environment for the ASEAN region, to appreciate both the potential threats and opportunities which could appear and the demands which could be placed on the United States if it is to protect its regional interests.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE REGION

Probably the most important group of factors which will help determine conditions in the ASEAN region are economic ones. The regimes which can produce or seem to be producing high rates of economic growth have a much better chance of staying in power than those which preside over low or no growth. Noneconomic issues are important in all ASEAN countries, but some apparent success at economic development is the minimum requirement. Fortunately, there should be continuing economic growth, but it will be uneven, possibly less rapid than in the past, and almost certainly inadequate to satisfy the aspirations of important segments of the elites in each ASEAN nation. In all ASEAN states, but especially in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, where investment opportunities are less attractive

than in their richer ASEAN partners, steady infusions of capital from foreign aid and private foreign investment will be required. The serious limits on the scope and extent of development imposed by a shortage of people with technical and managerial skills may be partly corrected by the year 2000, but it will not be overcome. High economic growth rates probably will not be achieved, and, even if obtained, they may fail to have much impact on the standards of living because rates of population growth, in spite of family planning, will remain very high except in Singapore.[9]

Rates of population growth in Indonesia, whose 135 to 140 million citizens account for over half of the population of ASEAN, seem to be declining (although still 2.4 percent) in response to an active family planning program. Almost one-third of those in need of contraceptive devices in Thailand have been reached, suggesting a downturn in the birthrate there in the future. But, partially because of the uncompromising opposition of the Catholic hierarchy to any artificial birth control techniques, the Philippine birthrate remains high, and family planning programs remain undeveloped.

While the governments of the four natural resource producing states (that is, ASEAN minus Singapore) will continue to emphasize the development of manufacturing and will be increasingly successful, they will still be primarily dependent on the export of agriculture and mining products to earn foreign exchange. Current efforts to encourage intra-ASEAN and ASEAN-Common Market trade may diversify the current trading pattern of ASEAN states, but it is almost certain that Japan and the United States will remain, by wide margins, the major customers for ASEAN primary products. In 1976, Japan and the United States together accounted for 42.7 percent of the foreign trade of ASEAN states. Japan's share of that trade will probably increase relative to that of the United States, since Japan is fostering ASEAN trade and the United States is not.

Lastly, barring comprehensive social revolutions, the proceeds of economic growth, whatever their magnitude, will be distributed very unevenly in all ASEAN societies. Urban areas, representing (except, of course, in Singapore) growing but still relatively small proportions of the populations, will generally benefit more than rural areas, which are already less affluent. In the cities, a relatively small upper stratum will gain relatively more than the masses. And smaller elites within that upper stratum, part of or connected with the regimes, will gain great fortunes because of special access, "commissions," and outright extortion.

The safest prediction about political developments in the nations of ASEAN is that there will be instability: intense conflict among uncompromising groups, the inability of government to mobilize resources to implement necessary programs except by the use of force, and/or the absence of legitimacy. A number of disruptive conflicts with roots in fundamental cultural or ethnic divisions now plague the politics of the region. Some of them, such as the Communist insurgencies in Northern Thailand and the rebellion of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) against the Christian Republic of the Philippines Government, now involve military actions. The opposition of conservative Moslem

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groups in Malaysia and Indonesia, the conflict of ethnic Malays and Chinese in Malaysia, and cultural or ethnic disputes in most nations of the area are, for the most part, expressed less violently at present. But nowhere in the region is there a constitutional system which reflects goals supported by most members of most segments of the society and which is so broadly accepted that it seems likely to provide the framework for peaceful political conflict and compromise for the balance of the century—or, for that matter, the balance of the decade.

While the regimes currently holding power have been able to deal with, although not resolve, the various disputes with manageable conflicts and acceptable expenditures of resources, they have had the benefit of relative prosperity—allowing them to allocate economic rewards fairly freely—and the absence of major external interference. Libyan assistance to the MNLF, until recently funneled through Sabah with the blessing of the local government—but not the Malaysian Government—has probably been the most extensive outside interference for several years. In the future, interference and pressure from foreign sources may or may not complicate the tasks of these governments. However, periods with relatively serious economic problems, in which the strains of social and political inequities are exacerbated, are almost inevitable for each nation before the year 2000. And, the range and intensity of demands on each government of the region will almost certainly increase as economic and social development leads to more urbanization, higher educational levels, higher rates of consumption of communication media, and rising expectations. These secular trends of modernization will fuel a resurgence of nationalism which may serve as a desirable stimulus for development, but it may also become harshly anti-foreign, intolerant, and uncompromising.

Very serious strains in all ASEAN governments, then, are virtually certain, and it is not improbable that some or even all might undergo substantial changes or be completely overturned. Even so, without fairly massive outside assistance, the probabilities of successful popular uprisings are extremely low. However, differences among the military, whether based on personal loyalties or (more likely) fundamental disagreements about the appropriate roles and direction of government, could lead to relatively radical governmental changes, and not just palace coups. Almost certainly, military support is likely to be required for all ASEAN governments well into the next century, since the problems which have previously prevented the emergence of regimes whose authority rests primarily on consensus and voluntary compliance will remain largely unsolved.

The difficulty of projecting the shape of ASEAN in the future is increased by the possiblities of changes in the pressures from outside the region, particularly from the PRC, the Soviet Union, and Japan. In the ASEAN area, a Sino-Soviet rapprochement would probably create the greatest uncertainty about US interests. The PRC now exchanges diplomatic missions with Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, and doubtlessly will extend representation to Indonesia and Singapore in the future.[10] Support from the Chinese Communist Party to insurgents in ASEAN states continues, but at a relatively small scale: propaganda broadcasts from Chinese territory and limited material assets. Meanwhile, government-to-government relations have been extremely cordial. Official support of overseas Chinese living in Vietnam seems to have stimulated "Sinophobia" among some ASEAN groups, but PRC assurances that the Vietnam situation is unique have at least partially succeeded in convincing them that China's intentions are basically peaceful. The PRC has not only declined to condemn ASEAN as a front for US imperialism, but at least privately has encouraged ASEAN nations to pursue military interactions with each other *and with the United States*. While Chinese policy aims at increasing its influence in ASEAN capitals and with ASEAN Marxist

movements, if possible, the primary objective appears to be negative: the limitation of Soviet influence.

The Soviet Union pursues basically a subdued policy toward the region, the purpose of which is analogous to that of China's policy. That is, the Soviet Union seems to primarily seek to restrict the influence of China and the United States. Unlike the PRC, however, the Soviet Union has important capabilities which have been partially—and could be more extensively—mobilized to affect developments in the ASEAN region. There is a military presence in the form of about 210 vessels of the Soviet Pacific fleet, some of which regularly sail Southeast Asian waters, including the Strait of Malacca.[11] There are relatively large Soviet embassies in all of the ASEAN nations, diplomatic representation in Manila having been established in 1976. The Soviet Union has provided economic assistance to Indonesia again after a 10-year interim.[12] Lastly, the Soviet Union has a potentially powerful ally—in regional terms—in Vietnam, a putative threat for many ASEAN leaders. Furthermore, in contrast to China's generally supportive position toward ASEAN, Soviet pronouncements toward the association have, until very recently, run from suspicious to hostile. Understandably, then, many ASEAN leaders view the Soviet Union as more of a threat than China. Should the two Communist powers cease to block each other—which is not likely but not impossible—the potential for mischief, if only on the part of the Soviet Union, is obvious.

The Arab petroleum embargo of 1973, dramatically emphasizing Japan's vulnerability to external sources of raw materials, provided the catalyst which caused Japan to expand its concerns and activities in Southeast Asia. Japanese penetration of the economies of ASEAN states, substantial for years, continues to increase as Japanese business captures larger proportions of ASEAN trade and provides larger proportions of their private foreign investment. The "Fukuda Doctrine" seems to presage larger official development assistance transfers, already larger than those of any other donor, and support of collective ASEAN and various national projects. More significantly, it seems to confirm that Japan will henceforth recognize that it has an explicitly political role in the region and not merely economic roles which have been drained of political content. The first priority now, Prime Minister Fukuda likes to say, is for Japan and ASEAN to expand "heart-to-heart" contacts and to foster understanding as a prelude to political cooperation.[13] After years of denying any but an economics-separated-from-politics interest in the area, the assumption of explicit political roles may at least introduce uncertainty into the ASEAN milieu. Fairly widespread hostility toward Japan and Japanese business practices is present in all ASEAN nations, making Japan a frequent target of radical nationalist rhetoric—especially if criticizing indigenous authorities is not allowed, which is often the case—and an easy scapegoat for frustrated ASEAN politicians and officials when their heralded plans fail to provide many tangible benefits. A very active political role by Japan might raise visions of Japan as an imperialist power again, bent on establishing another East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere, in the minds of some ASEAN leaders. Should Japan develop the capability to deploy military forces in the area, such perceptions could become pervasive and important. The assertion of a leadership role by Japan among the ASEAN nations, then, while probably unavoidable and potentially beneficial in most forms for Japan and the United States, may also cause problems which could endanger Japan's access to ASEAN resources, markets, and governments.

US IMPACT ON THE REGION

The United States has been deliberately excluded from the analysis thus far, but US behavior has in fact been a major influence on developments in the region. The leaders of ASEAN nations did not begin to take the organization seriously until after the Nixon visit to China. The increase in the

association's salience in their eyes then seemed to be closely correlated with the Guam doctrine, the various phases of withdrawal from Vietnam, the ascendancy of Congress in the American foreign policy process, and the decision to withdraw ground forces from Korea. ASEAN received the greatest attention from its members in the aftermath of the fall of Saigon and the unceremonious departure of the last Americans from Indochina. The reduction of US involvement seemed to provide the catalyst and opportunity to invigorate ASEAN. On the other hand, more recent developments, which seem to suggest that Vietnam does not constitute an immediate threat to non-Communist Southeast Asia after all, have coincided with an apparent slight loss of élan within the association, and a slightly greater tendency not to interpret individual national interests in the context of the interests of ASEAN as a whole. It would probably be the consensus of observers that, while the reduction of US forces was a stimulus for sometimes difficult foreign policy adjustments—like establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China—the continued presence of ships of the 7th Fleet and aircraft at Clark Air Base has helped sustain the confidence required to make the necessary changes in orientation. These remaining US forces do provide a deterrent against Chinese, Soviet, or regional power adventurism, and they constitute a kind of unspoken guarantee that Japan will have no need to deploy military forces in Southeast Asia, or at most, that Japan will be restrained from taking independent action. The presence of the military forces of the United States appears to be the most effective, unambiguous symbol of US concern and commitment which can be projected.

With the exception of the maintenance of a residual military presence, the roles of the military in US-ASEAN relations have been limited, if varied. Except at Kuala Lumpur, all services have assigned attaches to all ASEAN governments.[14] Military assistance groups still operate in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, although only at a combined strength of 100 personnel, less than half the number previously assigned to Thailand alone. Formal coordination of US defense policies and those of an ASEAN government is only attempted with the Philippines, under the terms of the US-Philippine security treaty. The State Department has requested $125.5 million for the security assistance programs in the four ASEAN countries which are recipients (Singapore is not included). These funds are to finance the three military assistance programs, provide for the education and training of 612 military personnel (all but six in the United States), and provide $101 million for loans and repayment of guarantees for the purchase of military equipment. It is estimated that $170 million will be spent by ASEAN governments, including Singapore's, under foreign military sales agreements with the United States.[15] Other programs designed for regional military cooperation—such as the Pacific Area Senior Officer Logistics Seminars, sponsored by the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), and the Pacific Army Management Seminars, a new program aimed at the unit level sponsored by the US Army CINCPAC Support Group—are available to the armies of all ASEAN nations.

Economic interactions with the US are also important for ASEAN nations, especially Indonesia and the Philippines. The United States accounts for some 18 percent of all ASEAN international trade, and about one-fourth of all trade of Indonesia and the Philippines.[16] In 1974, US businessmen had invested some $6 billion in the nations of ASEAN, about half of which represented capital in Indonesia's petroleum industry.[17] Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand receive development assistance from the United States ($141 million is proposed for fiscal year 1979), and Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand have Peace Corps programs. Indonesia and the Philippines are expected to receive $159.5 million in food under Public Law 480 during fiscal year 1979.[18] Singapore, reported to have a per capita income of $2240 in 1974, is

not the recipient of US bilateral aid. ASEAN nations also received loans from the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and other international lending agencies, all of which are supported by the United States.[19]

The human rights policy of the United States has also had its impact on the nations which make up ASEAN. Perhaps the most obvious development has been a surge of criticism of the program as an unwarranted interference by the United States in the internal affairs of other countries. Beyond that, it is faulted for being too idealistic, for ignoring the conditions of Southeast Asian societies which make the application of liberal democratic standards impossible (as they see the situation), for underemphasizing economic advancements, for being administered with little regard for past achievements or equal applications of standards, and for conflicting with security requirements. Undoubtedly, the manner in which human rights matters are debated in the United States—with elaborate documents prepared by the Department of State, public accusations before congressional committees by individuals considered by their governments as subversives and traitors, and extended and sometimes sensational coverage by the mass media—makes ASEAN officials particularly defensive and sensitive.

On the other hand, the official US concern for human rights, and the resulting wide publicity, has probably had an impact on the behavior of ASEAN governments. Spokesmen have felt compelled to justify the records of their regimes, and at least some of the more visible, objectionable behavior has been curtailed. Cause and effect relationships would be difficult to establish, but it may be noted that the recent period of intensive consideration of human rights by the President and Congress has coincided with the release of political prisoners in Indonesia, the relaxation of restrictions on political discourse during the National Assembly elections and the pardon of many political prisoners in the Philippines, and the generally freer atmosphere of Thailand, among other developments.

There have been conflicting developments also, of course, and it is at least debatable whether there really have been any basic changes, as opposed to superficial ones, or even whether the superficial ones will be allowed to continue. The recent suppression of students in Indonesia and Marcos' retaliation against his opponents in the April election are not encouraging signs.

FUTURE POLICY

It is tempting to prescribe that US policy toward the ASEAN region should remain unchanged so that the relatively satisfactory conditions of today will remain unchanged. However, it is not at all certain that favorable conditions in ASEAN are a result of US policy—some say they have emerged in spite of US policy—or that changes will not demand new US approaches. There are certainly many critics of US policy—citizens of ASEAN states and Americans—who describe post-Vietnam behavior with such words as "inconsistent," "confused," and "ambiguous," or with a question mark.[20] They contend that the decision to withdraw ground forces from Korea and the well-publicized US security emphasis on Europe do not accord with the numerous official protestations that the United States is and will remain a Pacific power. What seems required now is that the United States pursue policies with respect to ASEAN, consistent with global priorities, which will provide the United States with access to as many groups as possible—both actual and potential rulers—and which will also provide the means to influence extraregional actors, so that the United States will be able to adjust to changing conditions without surrendering its own or its allies' interests.

Probable developments in the region from now until 2000 are not likely to reduce the desirability of maintaining the current US military posture in Southeast Asia, for it appears that the functions performed by US forces now will still be required, while conditions will probably remain unfavorable for larger deployments. However, in the unlikely event that unacceptable foreign interference develops, unfriendly regimes

become established in ASEAN capitals, Japan's lines of communication are seriously threatened, or some presently unforeseen crisis unfolds, the US military might have a more active role to play.

The present US naval deployments in the area and military facilities in the Philippines seem excellent to provide an impressive symbolic presence, which apparently will continue to be of major significance to ASEAN's leaders, without presenting the appearance of overwhelming force that would be objectionable. They also are equipped to receive large numbers of reinforcements, including air-transported ground troops, in a short period of time, should that be required. A high priority for the United States, then, should be to conclude a new or amended base agreement with the Philippines to assure the continued use of Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base. Replacing these installations, especially Subic Naval Base, with new bases with comparable facilities in or close to the region probably is not possible, and, if possible, would be prohibitively expensive. While American negotiators have a responsibility in the bargaining over the bases to protect the interests of American taxpayers against exorbitant demands for funds and equipment, they should not lose sight of the value of the bases as guarantors of American support for a peaceful, independent ASEAN, and as a staging point if unforeseen and unacceptable foreign activity threatens US interests.

The position that present basing arrangements with the Philippines are fully acceptable to the United States, and, by implication, that the United States sees no benefit in making major concessions to satisfy Philippine objections, may be a sensible bargaining stance, but it is a dangerously short-sighted policy, for the present arrangements expire during the first third of the 21st century. It could be equally short-sighted to offer the Marcos regime overgenerous compensation for the use of the bases, however, because to do so could identify the United States too closely with a regime whose popularity may become seriously eroded, and because of the negative reaction which could be expected from Congress. To maintain the valuable military facilities now and still retain the flexbility to adjust to changes in Filipino politics, all the while satisfying an inquiring and skeptical Congress, should challenge the wisdom and patience of several administrations before the end of the century.

Aside from maintaining a military presence, current military programs are modest and require relatively little money and personnel. Significantly larger programs giving visibility and prominence to American Armed Forces would no doubt be resisted by the ASEAN governments, which wish to maintain their sometimes tenuous connections with the unaligned nations of the Third World and to appease anti-Western critics within their own populations. However, marginally larger international military education and training programs and foreign military sales credits would be accepted and valued by most ASEAN governments, probably for many years to come. The Pacific Army Management Seminars may provide the prototype for other inexpensive activities through which the US Army could share its technical knowledge on professional questions with the armies of the members of ASEAN. At the same time, such programs should provide a forum through which the army officers of ASEAN and the United States understand and appreciate each other's problems and positions. It probably would be wise to reconsider reducing the size of the military assistance groups in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, as long as they are welcomed by the host governments. These programs provide for regular, routine contact between the armed forces of ASEAN nations and those of the United States, and they need not present, with reasonable leadership, any risk of imposing commitments on the United States which national authorities might otherwise have chosen not to accept.

Continuing security assistance to the states of ASEAN seems to be justified by the

legitimate security needs of the various states. All have significant problems of border security, including smuggling. All have had recent difficulties with successionists or insurgents, although Indonesia's and Singapore's have not seemed to be too serious. Generally, their requests for services and equipment have conformed to their legitimate needs. Certainly no ASEAN state has a military force with the capability for aggressive action against neighboring nations, nor will any of them develop such a force on the basis of assets being provided by the United States.

It seems particularly important that the United States maintain its access to the armed forces, particularly the armies, of ASEAN nations. Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand have essentially military governments, dominated by ground forces. As has been previously suggested, it would be surprising if the armies did not play a crucial role in their nations' political processes throughout this century. In Malaysia and Singapore, also, it is unlikely that any regime will be able to maintain itself without military—again, especially army—support or forbearance. This is not to say that the United States should embrace or extend approval to any of these regimes. On the contrary, there should be care that the United States is not too closely identified with particular factions, or with the military generally, so that a change in regimes will not necessarily lead to the loss of contacts and sources of information. But it will be difficult to understand the internal dynamics of the armies of these nations, and therefore be able to anticipate or attempt to influence developments, without regular contact. In any case, marginal increases in present programs will not give the US Armed Forces great visibility. The US military will still maintain a low profile.

A US policy which encouraged trade with ASEAN countries and facilitated private American investment would not only be valued by the elites of ASEAN for its economic impact, but it would also be seen as a reaffirmation of a strong, general political commitment to the region. Many ASEAN leaders apparently are convinced that the United States will never abandon an area where its citizens have profitable trade and investment. However, it may be extremely difficult for the United States to transmit signals of political commitment through economic measures, because the needs of the American economy may not correspond to ASEAN economic requirements. Decisions of the Carter Administration to make it less attractive for Americans to work outside the United States in nongovernment jobs and to reduce the profitability of many American investments in the Third World (both subsequently reversed) were motivated by the perceived needs of the American economy and announced in spite of an anticipated adverse reaction in ASEAN and the Third World generally. While such decisions cannot be totally avoided, because US and ASEAN interests will sometimes diverge, it is to be hoped that US policymakers will keep themselves aware of the impact of economic policies on ASEAN.

During the next 20 years, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand will continue to require foreign economic assistance. Given the low levels of economic development (per capita income in 1974 was $170 for Indonesia, $330 for the Philippines, and $310 for Thailand),[21] it seems reasonable that larger outlays than the $141 million for bilateral development assistance proposed for fiscal year 1979 might be in order.[22] A higher portion of assistance in the form of grants and very easy terms for loans should also be considered, for these governments already carry a heavy burden to finance debts. Indonesia and the Philippines now allocate 18.6 and 17 percent, respectively, of their foreign exchange earnings for debt service, and the proportions are likely to become larger.[23] It also might be advisable to distribute a larger portion of American aid through international agencies rather than bilaterally. These suggestions do not apply only to ASEAN, of course. As a proportion of gross national product (GNP), the US contribution to official development

assistance is rather meager: 0.26 percent, which is less than 40 percent of the 0.7 percent of GNP recommended by the United Nations, and less than the percentage donated by 11 other industrial nations.[24] Administration requests for support of international lending agencies regularly have difficulty in Congress, and US contributions to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were $850 million in arrears in April 1978.[25]

Providing economic assistance can foster economic development, strengthen the societies to better defend against subversion and external foes, and generally contribute to the emergence of an environment in which US interests are likely to be secure. Unfortunately, official development assistance can also enrich an already privileged elite while providing only limited benefits to the society as a whole. Insofar as it is possible, given the politics of the nations which make up ASEAN, US aid should continue to be directed toward projects designed to benefit the less-privileged members of the societies and withheld, if necessary, to prevent flagrant corruption. Long-term access to the centers of decisionmaking in ASEAN nations will be best served by foreign aid programs which benefit large numbers of the populations and are designed and approved largely on economic and technical—not primarily partisan political—grounds.

The United States should encourage, not only with proclamations of support but also with concrete programs, the development of ASEAN as an effective regional organization. Perhaps the example of Japan, which pledged to provide $1 billion to help finance the five ASEAN regional industrial projects, should be emulated. The emergence of ASEAN as a dynamic political organization with a high degree of unity, providing a framework for settling intraregional disputes and sufficient integration to confront extraregional actors, especially the Soviet Union and Vietnam, will serve the interests of the United States. Its success in enhancing the economic development of its membership should also contribute to the attainment of US objectives.

An overt, structured human rights program, with sanctions and rewards, may no longer be a part of official US policy in 1985, but administration and congressional concern for human rights and the democratic political process is almost inevitable. Should American political leaders choose to continue or expand the program, which well may be desirable in practical as well as ideological terms, its application within the ASEAN region should reflect awareness that the cultural and political environment is very similar to large areas of Africa, Latin America, and other parts of Asia and is significantly different from the West. Somehow, there should also be a greater emphasis on rewards rather than negative sanctions. At the very least, the program will need a rationale which allows the appearance that it is being administered consistently and equitably in accordance with understandable standards. This does not always seem to be the case today. Such a program will still probably appear to conflict with the needs of security in some places at some times. If so, a balance between the human rights and security objectives will have to be achieved.

If US policy, and the way that it is administered, were modified in the ways suggested, the United States should be better able to influence the environment of the ASEAN region, to adjust to changes as they occur, and thus to maintain and to promote its interests. The impact of US actions will be ambiguous, however, and the status of US interests somewhat uncertain, unless a coherent rationale to justify most of the discrete decisions which affect the ASEAN region is developed.

Discussions with US Defense and State Department representatives working in ASEAN countries convey the clear impression that one reason why ASEAN officials fail to understand and appreciate US policy is that it is being interpreted and explained by Americans who do not always understand or appreciate it. For both ASEAN and American officials, the difficulty of comprehension may have its roots in the absence of an approved

conceptual framework—an American foreign policy ideology applicable to Southeast Asia—with which to order the various cultural, political, economic, and military activities of the United States.

Such a framework would not need to be the "all-embracing doctrine" that the Carter Administration has disavowed as inappropriate for the complexities of international politics.[26] An explicit statement of the priorities and interrelationships of US foreign policy would suffice to make it easier for an American representative to explain, and for an ASEAN official to understand, the decisions of the US Government, even if neither approved of what was being done.

NOTES

1. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

2. This essay is a revised version of a paper prepared for the 1978 Security Issues Symposium, held at the US Army War College, 17-19 April 1978, under the sponsorship of the Strategic Studies Insitute. The theme of the symposium, "The Army Strategic Environment, 1985-2000," accounts for the paper's preoccupation with the 1985-2000 timeframe. This version has benefited from comments and criticisms of the participants in Panel I of the symposium, for which the author is grateful.

3. Thomas L. Wilborn, "Japanese-Indonesian Relations: A Case Study on the Scope and Limits of Economic Power in International Relations," *Military Issues Research Memorandum*, US Army War College, 20 January 1978, p. 2.

4. US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, *Army Strategic Appraisal, 1981-88 (U)*, Vol. 2, 30 November 1977, 99.

5. Leslie H. Brown, "American Security Policy in Asia," *Adelphi Papers No. 132* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1977), p. 11.

6. US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Mines, *Commodity Data Summaries, 1974, Appendix I to Mining and Minerals Policy*, p. 174; United Nations, *1969 World Trade Annual*, Vol. 1 (New York: Walker and Company, 1970), I-107; and US Council on International Economic Policy, *International Economic Report of the President*, transmitted to Congress in January 1977 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 183.

7. Based on the Manila Pact, which binds the United States, the Philippines, and Thailand, among others, and the US-Philippine security treaty.

8. The legal status of the straits in question is in dispute. Indonesia, under the archipelago principle, claims the Strait of Lombok as territorial waters, and Malaysia and Indonesia have asserted jurisdiction over the Strait of Malacca. The United States recognizes neither claim and continues to formally treat both straits as international waters. The only practical expression of this position at present is that US warships sail through the Strait of Malacca without notifying the governments of the coastal states.

9. For a discussion of population densities and food supplies in Asia, see *Asia Yearbook: 1978* (Hongkong: Far Eastern Economic Review, Ltd., 1978), pp. 49-54.

10. President Suharto and Indonesia's new Vice President, Adam Malik, have both indicated that Indonesia would reestablish diplomatic representation with the PRC soon, although there is strong opposition within Indonesia's military leadership and Peking's espousal of the cause of overseas Chinese has probably strengthened opponents. Prime Minister Lee earlier had indicated that Singapore would be the last ASEAN state to recognize the PRC.

11. *Asia Yearbook: 1978*, p. 44.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

13. Derik Davies, "Japan's Top Four 'Engine Drivers' Speak," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 10 March 1978, p. 33.

14. There is no naval attache there. The Defense/Army Attache reports on Navy matters.

15. US Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Security Assistance Program; Congressional Presentation, FY 1979*, pp. 48, 60, 68, and 76.

16. International Monetary Fund, Bureau of Statistics, *Direction of Trade*, November 1977, pp. 82, 85, 89, and 91.

17. Brown, p. 11.

18. *Security Assistance Program; Congressional Presentation, FY 1979*, pp. 49, 69, and 77.

19. In the fiscal year ending in June 1977, the World Bank approved $996.5 million in loans to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. The Asian Development Bank, from 30 September to 1 January 1977, expended $1.5 million in technical assistance to these nations, and $205.5 million in loans. See *Asia Yearbook: 1978*, pp. 58, 66, and 67.

20. Some of the impressions related in this paper are based on not-for-attribution discussions with a number of American and ASEAN member officials during a recent visit to the region.

21. *Asia Yearbook: 1978*, p. 14.

22. Brown, p. 11.

23. *Asia Yearbook: 1978*, pp. 201 and 295.

24. *International Economic Report of the President*, p. 32.

25. Hobart Rowen, "Blacksliding on Foreign Aid," *The Washington Post*, 6 April 1978, p. A23.

26. Leslie H. Gelb, "National Security and New Foreign Policy," *Parameters*, VII, No. 3 (1977), 76. While Gelb argues for pragmatism against doctrine which distorts and oversimplifies reality, he holds that there must be, and that the Carter Administration has established, clear priorities. See pp. 76-80.