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Title	ASEAN and the management of regional security
Source	http://www.thefreelibrary.com/ASEAN+and+the+management+of+regional+security.-a021159623
Author 1	Narine, Shaun
Author 2	NA
Author 3	NA
Publication/Conference	Pacific Affairs, Jun 22, 1998
Edition	NA
Document Type	Article
CPI Primary Subject	Foreign Relations and Treaties
CPI Secondary Subject	ASEAN; ;
Geographic Terms	ASEAN;
Abstract	This paper is a discussion and evaluation of ASEAN's efforts to manage its regional security environment (i.e., to affect the actors and events shaping security in Southeast Asia). The main argument of this paper is that ASEAN's ability to manage regional security in Southeast Asia has been, and is, limited by two factors: one, the interests and actions of the great powers, which have defined the parameters of ASEAN's security policies; and two, divergent security perceptions and interests within ASEAN, which have defined the limits of intraorganizational cooperation and made it difficult to evaluate the significance of ASEAN's stated security objectives.

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[Print](#)

Title Annotation: [Association of Southeast Asian Nations](#)

Author: *Narine, Shaun*

Date: *Jun 22, 1998*

Words: *9112*

Publication: *Pacific Affairs*

ISSN: *0030-851X*

Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has the reputation of being the most successful indigenously produced regional organization in the developing world.(1) Much of that reputation is attributable to ASEAN's apparent internal cohesion and international effectiveness. In the post-cold war era, ASEAN hopes to build on its success by shaping the emerging security relations of the Asia-Pacific through new mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). However, ASEAN's influence on Southeast Asia's regional security environment during the cold war was both more nuanced than is commonly recognized and dependent on a set of unique circumstances. ASEAN's experiences with regional security in the cold war are not readily transferred to the post-cold war era.

This paper is a discussion and evaluation of ASEAN's efforts to manage its regional security environment (i.e., to affect the actors and events shaping security in Southeast Asia). The main argument of this paper is that ASEAN's ability to manage regional security in Southeast Asia has been, and is, limited by two factors: one, the interests and actions of the great powers, which have defined the parameters of ASEAN's security policies; and two, divergent security perceptions and interests within ASEAN, which have defined the limits of intraorganizational cooperation and made it difficult to evaluate the significance of ASEAN's stated security objectives. ASEAN has improved relations between its member states, but these achievements are contingent on its success as a larger regional actor. The ASEAN member states remain mostly motivated by narrow understandings of their self-interests, which are not always congruent and can undermine ASEAN's unity and ability to function effectively. ASEAN's present efforts to incorporate Vietnam, Burma, Laos and, eventually, Cambodia, may exacerbate this problem.

This paper is broken into five sections. After a brief historical overview, I review ASEAN's stated regional security objectives and the political and historical circumstances informing and moderating those objectives. I then evaluate ASEAN's attempts at achieving its stated intra- and extra-ASEAN security goals. Finally, I use this analysis to assess ASEAN's capacity to shape its regional security environment in the post-cold war period. I argue that the factors affecting ASEAN during the cold war era are still at work today and significantly limit its ability to shape the regional environment.

ASEAN's Security Objectives

ASEAN was created in 1967. Its founding members were Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The states of the region had just gone through the three-year period of Konfrontasi (confrontation), wherein Indonesia had politically (and, on occasion, militarily) challenged the legitimacy of the Malaysian state (and, by extension, Singapore). The Philippines, locked in a territorial dispute with Malaysia, also questioned its legitimacy.

Konfrontasi ended with a change of government in Indonesia, but it left lingering tensions and uncertainties within the region.

ASEAN defined "security" in comprehensive terms. Security consisted of political, military, economic and social factors interacting at all levels of analysis. In keeping with this understanding, its member states hoped that ASEAN would serve three mutually reinforcing security functions: first, by building political and economic connections, ASEAN would mitigate latent tensions between its members left over from Konfrontasi. Second, it would benefit economic development in the member states and, by extension, contribute to political stability by helping to alleviate the domestic social conditions nurturing communist insurgency. At that time, the ASEAN states considered internal communist insurgencies to be their most immediate sources of threat. Third, by promoting internal security, ASEAN would make its members less vulnerable to the machinations of outside powers. ASEAN could be the instrument by which the member states managed their own security environment, to the exclusion of great powers. The ASEAN states generally agreed that external intervention in regional affairs was a major source of conflict. In practice, ASEAN was most concerned about Chinese support for internal insurgencies.(2) To differing degrees, ASEAN's major security initiatives since its formation have reflected these three basic concerns.

Managing Regional Security: ASEAN's Security Initiatives

Five key initiatives form the foundation of ASEAN's vision of regional security. These are the ASEAN, or Bangkok, Declaration of 1967; the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), or Kuala Lumpur, Declaration of 1971; the associated ZOPFAN Blueprint; and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, both ratified at the Bali Conference of 1976. These initiatives articulate a distinct vision of regional security in Southeast Asia. However, ASEAN's declaratory security policies do not represent a genuine organizational consensus on the shape of the regional environment. The ASEAN states agreed on how to approach and enhance intra-ASEAN security; until recently, however, they were unable to reach a consensus on the proper role of external powers in Southeast Asia.

The ASEAN Declaration of 1967 articulates the security objectives described above. It states that, *inter alia*:

the countries of Southeast Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development, and... they are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation.(3)

The mention of "external interference" implicitly addresses ASEAN's concern to ensure that member states respect each others' sovereignty. It is also a rejection of the military activities of external actors. The preamble goes on to "affirm" that "all foreign bases are temporary." The stated goal of excluding all external actors from the region, however, was not shared by all the ASEAN states and was the source of considerable disagreement at ASEAN's founding meeting in Bangkok.

Indonesia, the largest and most powerful of the ASEAN states, was most concerned with denying external powers influence in Southeast Asia. As a general principle, the other ASEAN states agreed with the notion of freeing Southeast Asia from external intervention. They all understood the appeal of being the masters of their own region. However, with the exception of Indonesia, the ASEAN states depended upon alliances with Western states to ensure their immediate security. The Philippines was home to major American military bases and shielded by the United States's protective umbrella. Thailand also had security agreements with the United States. Malaysia and Singapore relied upon British protection. All of them hoped that ASEAN would improve their relations with their neighbours and/or reduce their dependence

on external protectors. However, none of them were willing to lose that protection. The ASEAN states, especially Singapore, were also concerned about the region being dominated by Indonesia if there were no external powers to check Indonesian ambitions. In the end, the ASEAN states agreed to include the statement "all foreign bases are temporary" in the ASEAN declaration out of deference to Indonesia, because they recognized the need to have Indonesia as part of the new regional organization, and because there was no possibility of turning the statement into reality. The objective of removing foreign bases from Southeast Asia stood as a statement of principle, with no timetable for completion.

Between 1967 and 1971, a number of international developments radically altered the regional security environment. In 1968, Britain made a unilateral decision to accelerate its withdrawal from Southeast Asia, forcing Singapore and Malaysia to rethink their security strategies. In 1969, American President Richard Nixon issued the Nixon, or Guam, Doctrine, limiting American involvement in Southeast Asia. The regional states perceived this new policy as indicative of the United States's declining commitment to the security of its Asian allies. Also in 1969, the Soviet Union proposed an Asian collective security system. Other factors - such as the re-emergence of China after the Cultural Revolution, the intensifying Sino-Soviet conflict, the increasing importance of Japanese economic power and the spread of the Vietnam War to Laos and Cambodia - underlined the fact that Southeast Asia was undergoing rapid changes that ASEAN was completely unable to affect.(4)

Malaysia responded by proposing the "neutralization" of Southeast Asia. Neutralization involved obtaining guarantees from the great powers that they would not pursue their disputes within Southeast Asia. The changing regional environment convinced Malaysia that the time was right for its proposal, which it saw as a way of accommodating emerging Chinese interests in Southeast Asia. Such neutralization would also reflect Malaysia's new nonaligned, foreign-policy orientation as well as domestic political factors.(5) Without consulting its ASEAN partners, Malaysia formally presented its neutralization proposal in September 1970 at the Non-aligned Conference in Lusaka, Zambia. The proposal had two distinct components. The first required the United States, the Soviet Union and China to respect Southeast Asian neutrality, to guarantee that neutrality and to agree not to compete in the region. The second component required the regional states to follow policies of non-aggression and non-interference in their own relations, to avoid entanglement in great power rivalries and to seek to exclude those rivalries from Southeast Asia.(6)

The reaction to the Malaysian proposal from the great powers was mostly negative. The United States had no desire to disengage from Southeast Asia, and the Soviet Union was indeed seeking a way to play a more active regional role. Only China agreed with the proposal, largely because its geographical proximity to Southeast Asia meant that it would not be unduly affected by neutralization.

The ASEAN states were also opposed to the Malaysian proposal. Indonesia could not accept the idea that Southeast Asia be neutralized through the guarantees of external powers. Indonesia wanted to exclude the great powers from Southeast Asia, not legitimize their intervention in the affairs of the region. The Indonesian military establishment opposed neutralization because it implied a corporate accommodation with China, which they saw as the main external threat to the region. Indonesia also expressed scepticism about the ability of the great powers to cooperate as guarantors of regional neutrality.

The other ASEAN states also opposed neutralization due to their reliance on foreign powers to guarantee their security. Nonetheless, ASEAN agreed to consider Malaysia's idea, especially in light of two important events in the autumn of 1971: (1) the announcement that President Nixon would visit Beijing, which came as a complete surprise to the non-Communist regional states - as it did to most other countries - and (2) China's assumption of its seat at the United Nations in October, which forced the ASEAN states to decide whether or not to

normalize their relations with the Communist giant.

A special meeting of the foreign ministers of the ASEAN countries was held, outside the ASEAN framework, on November 26-27, 1971 in Kuala Lumpur. The compromise on neutralization that came out of the meeting "did not conspicuously appear to reject Malaysia's initiative."⁽⁷⁾ In fact, however, it reiterated the Indonesian vision of regional order. The meeting produced the Declaration on a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia. The operative paragraphs of the ZOPFAN Declaration were:

1. that Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are determined to exert initially necessary efforts to secure the recognition of, and respect for, South East Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers;
2. that South East Asian countries should make concerted efforts to broaden the areas of cooperation which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship.⁽⁸⁾

Neutralization was mentioned in the preamble as a "a desirable objective" and that the ASEAN states should "explore ways and means of bringing about its realization." However, though the word "neutralization" was used in the preamble, the concept was really that of a political "neutrality." There was no mention of the great powers having any effective role to play in the region, though the preamble strongly implied that they should respect the sovereignty and independence of the ASEAN states.

The ZOPFAN Declaration was, therefore, a political compromise cobbled together to accommodate ASEAN states with strongly divergent strategic perspectives. According to Leifer: "to the extent that a consensus was worked out in Kuala Lumpur, it was based on a refusal to lend corporate endorsement to a Malaysian-inspired regional accommodation to China."⁽⁹⁾ The declaration did not define a common ASEAN vision on the shape of extra-ASEAN security, except in the most general terms. ZOPFAN was meant, at best, to be a long-term goal which would not undermine the existing policies and security arrangements of the ASEAN states.

Following the Kuala Lumpur meeting, the ASEAN states created a Senior Officials Committee (SOC) to draw up a ZOPFAN blueprint to develop a common understanding of the interpretation of ZOPFAN. The SOC did not complete its work until 1976. So long as ZOPFAN was unrealized, the blueprint imposed no obligations on the ASEAN states. However, the blueprint specified that ZOPFAN could only be realized when "the region is free of ideological, political, economic, armed and other forms of conflict."⁽¹⁰⁾ The blueprint was a stronger reiteration of a few basic principles: demands from the ASEAN states for the freedom to exercise unconditional sovereignty and to regulate the affairs of their own region. However, the conditions under which ZOPFAN could be achieved were ideal and represented a lack of commitment to the concept on the part of the majority of ASEAN states.

The reduction of American power in Southeast Asia and the related collapse of anti-Communist regimes in South Vietnam and Cambodia in 1975 forced ASEAN's further institutional development. The ASEAN leaders feared that the new Vietnamese government would provide arms to indigenous Communist movements in their states. Vietnam openly condemned ASEAN as an instrument of Western imperialism that should be disbanded. In response to this regional upheaval, ASEAN convened the Bali Conference in February 1976. This was the very first meeting of the ASEAN heads of state, and it produced two fundamentally important agreements: the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).

The Declaration of ASEAN Concord primarily addressed the economic side of the security

equation. The Declaration mentioned areas of social and cultural cooperation, but its most telling focus was in defining areas of economic cooperation between the ASEAN states. It also encouraged military cooperation between its members, albeit on a non-ASEAN basis.

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) was both a non-aggression pact between the ASEAN states and a code of conduct for state interaction in Southeast Asia. Technically, the TAC was part of ZOPFAN. The SOC recommended that a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation be part of the process of implementing ZOPFAN. However, the TAC has since acquired a life of its own, and is best thought of as separate from ZOPFAN, though related. The TAC's goals were to "promote perpetual peace, everlasting unity and cooperation among the people which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship."⁽¹¹⁾ The TAC explicitly allowed for the accession of non-ASEAN states. It obliged its signatories to settle disputes peacefully through consultation. It aimed to promote cooperation in many different areas, with the objective of furthering "economic development, peace and stability in Southeast Asia."⁽¹²⁾ It also codified "respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations."⁽¹³⁾

This overview of ASEAN's security initiatives underscores two points. First, the ASEAN states developed a consensus on the need for stable and peaceful intra-ASEAN relations. Second, historically, the ASEAN states were unable to agree on the appropriate role of external powers in Southeast Asia. The passages of the ASEAN Declaration and ZOPFAN dealing with this issue represented political compromises, not ideological commitments. Intra-ASEAN unity was limited by practical security concerns. I shall now evaluate ASEAN's efforts at implementing this bifurcated vision of regional security.

ASEAN and the Management of Intra-ASEAN Security

Historically, ASEAN's commitment to its members' sovereignty meant that it explicitly avoided involvement in the domestic affairs of its member states. Nonetheless, ASEAN's members intended the organization to address domestic security concerns indirectly by increasing economic opportunities between the ASEAN states. However, ASEAN has had little success as an instrument of economic interaction. Between 1967 and 1990, intra-ASEAN trade as a percentage of total trade changed very little. The ASEAN states' attempts to cooperate in the creation of industrial projects and other economic endeavours largely failed because the ASEAN economies were either too similar to each other, and therefore competitive, or so different as to make efforts at regional integration politically unpalatable and economically suspect. ASEAN has enjoyed some limited success in economic relations by bargaining as a bloc. As the ASEAN economies change and grow, they may become more closely integrated. ASEAN is currently engaged in trying to create an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). However, ASEAN is clearly not an economic organization.⁽¹⁴⁾

In a different sense, however, ASEAN's indirect contributions to economic growth may be invaluable in enhancing domestic security. Southeast Asia is one of the most economically dynamic regions in the world. ASEAN contributed to this success by alleviating intra-ASEAN conflict, thereby helping to create a politically stable and peaceful environment attractive to foreign investors.

Observers of ASEAN agree that its most important undertaking has been to reduce significantly intra-ASEAN tensions by creating and sponsoring a process of "community-building" between its members. ASEAN's existence ensures government-to-government contact between its member states on a regular basis. Numerous non-governmental organizations are associated with ASEAN and are reinforcing regional social linkages. ASEAN has made it possible for the leaders of its members to meet and develop strong personal relationships. At present, ASEAN intergovernmental organizations hold more than 230 meetings a year.⁽¹⁵⁾

Many observers attribute ASEAN's intra-organizational success to the "ASEAN Way," a particular process of interaction. This is based on the Malay cultural approach to decision making, which requires decision making through consultation and consensus. If ASEAN cannot reach a consensus on a difficult issue, then no organizational stand is taken. Instead, the member states agree to disagree, go their separate ways, and maintain, at least, the illusion of ASEAN unity. The practical effect of this approach is that ASEAN takes positions on the basis of the lowest common denominator on which its members can agree. This approach has enabled the organization to remain unified. Moreover, it may be a realistically modest manner in which to construct relations in a region with a history of political and ethnic division. The states of ASEAN are still in the process of nation-building and are unwilling to sacrifice any significant degree of sovereignty to a regional organization.(16)

Besides social and political interaction, there are numerous bilateral military arrangements between ASEAN states and, sometimes, joint military exercises. None of this military cooperation takes place under ASEAN auspices. Nonetheless, it is probably true that these arrangements have been made possible or been maintained because of ASEAN's conflict-reduction strategies.

Despite these interactions, however, ASEAN is not a Deutschian "security community." Acharya draws on Deutsch's work to define a "security community" as having the following characteristics:

- (a) strict and observed norms concerning non-use of force, with long-term prospects for war avoidance;
- (b) no competitive arms acquisitions and war-planning within the grouping;
- (c) institutions and processes (formal or informal) for the pacific settlement of disputes; and
- (d) significant functional interdependence, integration and co-operation.(17)

ASEAN possesses many of these characteristics on the surface; how deeply they affect ASEAN behaviour is less clear. The ASEAN states seem strongly committed to the non-use of force. On the other hand, there are many outstanding intra-ASEAN territorial disputes. On occasion, these have caused serious escalations in tension. In accordance with the "ASEAN Way," ASEAN has dealt with these conflicts by putting them aside and not letting them stand in the way of political cooperation. Sometimes, these conflicts are addressed bilaterally, outside of ASEAN's framework. Nonetheless, the issues still exist and do run the risk, however small, of becoming active problems in the future, under different circumstances. Similarly, rapid military modernization among the ASEAN states has raised fears of an arms race in the region. This is probably not the case - there are many reasons for the arms build-up that has occurred, such as the appeal of an international buyers' market in sophisticated weaponry and the desire of the ASEAN states to modernize badly outdated militaries - but intra-ASEAN tensions do play a role. ASEAN has a conflict-resolution mechanism that it has never used, and it is certainly not an interdependent or integrated economic organization.(18)

This discussion leads to a fundamental question: to what extent does intra-ASEAN harmony depend upon an extra-ASEAN threat or focus? Throughout the cold war, but especially during its first twelve years, external threat played an essential role in forcing the ASEAN states to put aside their differences and cooperate.(19) Today, it could be argued that intra-ASEAN bonds are strong enough to sustain the organization without an external focus. The evidence supporting this contention, however, is not convincing. The ASEAN states do value the organization for the effect it has had upon their own relations, but there are a number of

barriers to making this the focus of ASEAN's activities. If ASEAN did decide to concentrate solely on its internal relations, it would need to address its many internal conflicts directly. There is little evidence that ASEAN is capable of taking this step at this time.(20) The compromises of sovereignty and territory that resolving these disputes would require are beyond the ASEAN states. An external focus is necessary to keep ASEAN active and distracted from internal disputes. Over time, intra-ASEAN bonds may strengthen to the point where ASEAN can directly address and resolve these issues, but that time has not yet arrived. ASEAN's continued success at managing its internal relations remains dependent upon its successful activities in the extra-regional environment.

ASEAN and the Cambodian Invasion: Managing the Extra-ASEAN Security Environment

In December of 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia and deposed the governing Khmer Rouge. In taking this action, Vietnam violated one of the central tenets of the TAC: the principle that states would not use force to settle their disputes. Its behaviour was a direct challenge to the principles of regional interaction that ASEAN claimed to represent. For the next twelve years, removing Vietnam from Cambodia became the central focus of ASEAN's international diplomacy and internal activities, and the most important test of its ability to manage its regional security environment. From this experience, ASEAN gained a reputation as an important and effective international actor; its member states learned to cooperate at a level they had not achieved before. However, ASEAN's Vietnam experience also indicated the limits of intra-ASEAN cooperation. Moreover, the unique circumstances that permitted ASEAN to be an effective regional actor are unlikely to be repeated.(21)

Besides undermining the TAC, Vietnam's activities had other consequences inimical to ASEAN's interests. Vietnam's security relationship with the Soviet Union allowed that country unprecedented access to Southeast Asia and brought the Sino-Soviet dispute to the forefront of regional politics. More directly, the Vietnamese actions also threatened Thailand, which shared a border with Cambodia.

China responded to the situation by first trying to punish Vietnam militarily, then supporting the displaced Khmer Rouge as an insurgent force within Cambodia. For this strategy, China needed and received the assistance of Thailand, which provided shelter for the Khmer Rouge and allowed supply lines to cross its territory.

ASEAN opposed the Vietnamese action through diplomatic initiatives. It rallied opposition to Vietnam's actions in the United Nations and was largely successful in denying international recognition to the new Cambodian government. It was effective in cutting Vietnam off from economic assistance, especially foreign aid. It created the coalition government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) as an alternative to the Vietnamese-appointed regime in Cambodia. In the late 1980s, ASEAN sponsored the Jakarta Informal Meetings (JIMs), which contributed significantly to building the diplomatic basis for the eventual settlement of the Cambodian conflict. Ultimately, however, the conflict was ended by the decline of the cold war and through the intervention of the great powers.

The experience of opposing Vietnam was enormously beneficial to ASEAN's internal unity and international profile. However, significant divisions in perceptions of the regional security environment prevented ASEAN from being completely united in its approach to Vietnam. Indonesia and Malaysia believed that China, not Vietnam, was the major long-term threat to the stability and security of Southeast Asia. They saw Vietnam as a potential ally against Chinese hegemonic ambitions. Therefore, treating Vietnam as an enemy played directly into Chinese hands. By contrast, Thailand and Singapore saw Vietnam as the most pressing security threat. China was a useful and necessary ally in offsetting Vietnamese (and, by extension, the Soviet Union's) aspirations in the region. These fundamental differences created tensions in the ASEAN united front. ASEAN tried to accommodate these different

perspectives by endorsing "dual-track diplomacy." In 1985, Indonesia was made "interlocutor" to Vietnam, a position from which it could foster connections with Vietnam while maintaining the ASEAN united front. Nonetheless, internal tensions over ASEAN policy continued.

Thailand was the ASEAN state most directly threatened by aggressive Vietnamese actions in Indochina. Thus, the other ASEAN states deferred to Thailand's interests when formulating organizational policy on the Vietnam issue. For Thailand, ASEAN was an important source of diplomatic and political support, but China, as a provider of military protection and support, was a much more important actor in the overall conflict than ASEAN. As a result, Thailand was hardly influenced by considerations of ASEAN solidarity when formulating its own policies. This point is illustrated most dramatically by Thailand's about-face in 1988 concerning Vietnam. At that time, the changing structure of the regional environment had begun to affect attitudes toward Vietnam, though ASEAN's official policy was still firmly against Vietnamese objectives. In Thailand, emerging business interests wanted unfettered access to the entire Indochina market. New intellectual elites agreed that Thailand's Vietnam policy was damaging the country's long-term interests by closing economic and political opportunities in Indochina. The newly elected prime minister, Chatichai Choonhaven, represented these constituencies. Their views supplanted those of the foreign-policy establishment that had been formulating Vietnam policy. Without consulting ASEAN, Chatichai declared his intention of converting Indochina from a battlefield to a marketplace. This meant strengthening economic ties with Vietnam and it was a policy that directly undermined the actions and initiatives of ASEAN. The fact that Chatichai could change this policy without being concerned about how it would affect intra-ASEAN harmony is telling in itself.(22) These events occurred at a time when Indonesia was pursuing its own agenda in relation to Vietnam while trying to maintain ASEAN unity by endorsing punitive actions against Vietnam. Thailand's actions collapsed the ASEAN united front and showed little consideration for Indonesia's efforts or status in the region. Thailand pursued its own narrow interests in dealing with Vietnam. Its policies were dictated by economic interests and traditional security concerns and altered as its perceptions of these issues changed. ASEAN's solidarity and coherence were not significant concerns.

Indonesia took a much different perspective on the Cambodian invasion from the outset. Some observers have suggested that, at first, Thailand needed to convince Indonesia to oppose Vietnamese actions.(23) As a country that had to wage a prolonged anticolonial war before it gained independence, Indonesia was quite sympathetic to Vietnam's security concerns. Indonesia's long-term security perceptions were also distinct from those of Thailand. The Indonesians viewed the entire Cambodian situation, which involved welcoming Chinese influence into Southeast Asia, as unpalatable. Indonesia also resented the ASEAN agenda being set by Thailand.

Nonetheless, Indonesia was aware that it was still under the shadow of Konfrontasi. It had to demonstrate to its fellow ASEAN members that it could be a good neighbour and that it respected ASEAN's principles of nonintervention and the rejection of force. It could not afford to undermine ASEAN, which it saw as a useful instrument for its own initiatives. It also realized that ASEAN was far less important to Thailand, which would probably be willing to abandon the institution if it would not support Thai interests. Therefore, Indonesia put aside its own misgivings about ASEAN's direction for the sake of intra-ASEAN solidarity, recognizing that its own interests were best served by supporting ASEAN. Thus, being part of ASEAN did restrain Indonesia from simply following its own preferences in regards to Vietnam. Nonetheless, Indonesia continued to register its disagreement with ASEAN policy while strengthening its relationship with Vietnam.

ASEAN's diplomatic initiatives kept the Vietnam/Cambodia conflict alive in the international community, defined the terms of the conflict and caused Vietnam economic harm. However, ASEAN did not have the ability to actually force Vietnam's capitulation. The Vietnam/Cambodia conflict came to an end when international circumstances changed. The

Soviet Union wanted to improve its relations with China, and so put pressure on Vietnam to be more accommodating to its Cambodian opposition. The United States, for domestic political reasons, withdrew its support for the ASEAN-backed CGDK and pushed for a Cambodian settlement. With events changing so rapidly, China found that its attempts to prevent Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina were largely successful; it, too, decided to resolve the conflict. The United Nations permanent five members thus took responsibility for forcing a resolution to the Vietnam/Cambodia conflict. Their efforts culminated in the 1991 Paris Peace Conference, which laid the groundwork for the resolution of the international dimension of the conflict. Though ASEAN continued to play an active diplomatic role, it was clear that it had been pushed to the side.

ASEAN had mixed success at asserting its declared extra-ASEAN security objectives during this period. ZOPFAN was seriously undermined by ASEAN's stand during the Vietnam/Cambodia conflict. Technically, ASEAN's encouragement of Chinese and American involvement in Southeast Asia to balance Vietnamese and Soviet activity was not a violation of ZOPFAN. ZOPFAN did not yet exist and so placed no explicit obligations on the ASEAN states to adhere to its principles. Nonetheless, ASEAN's actions were in direct contradiction to its own expressed principle of neutrality. ASEAN's military weakness required it to adopt this position, in order to uphold other important organizational principles. However, the effect was to underline ASEAN's inability to independently manage regional security.

ASEAN's objective during this period was not to assert ZOPFAN, however, but to uphold the principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. In this regard, it was extremely successful. ASEAN kept international diplomatic and economic pressure on Vietnam. Eventually, Vietnam had to withdraw from Cambodia, in part because of ASEAN's efforts. However, ASEAN's successes were inextricably linked to the fact that its interests overlapped with those of the United States and China. While the U.S. did not take an extremely active role in the conflict until late in the game, it was willing to give ASEAN political and military backing. China's military and political support was indispensable to the anti-Vietnamese coalition, and China viewed ASEAN's activities as part of its own larger strategy against Vietnam. Without the support of these powerful actors, ASEAN's diplomacy would have been far less effective than it was. Moreover, in the end, the conflict was resolved due to the efforts of the great powers, who acted for their own political reasons. ASEAN's effectiveness was circumscribed by its relationship to powerful external actors.

The cracks that appeared in ASEAN's facade of regional unity indicate the limits of intra-ASEAN cooperation. For reasons particular to its political and historical circumstances, Indonesia maintained a high degree of ASEAN solidarity. Thailand did not. Evaluating ASEAN's unity on the basis of Thailand's actions may seem unfair. However, ASEAN is only as strong as its weakest link. Thailand's abrupt policy change occurred after almost a decade of being at the forefront of ASEAN, shaping the institution's policies and participating in community-building exercises. The fact that it could act on such a fundamental issue without considering the consequences of its actions for ASEAN is an important indication that ASEAN's ability to function as a unit on questions of regional security is limited by individual state interests and perspectives.

ASEAN has been very successful at improving intra-ASEAN relations. However, the organization is not yet a security community. ASEAN works so long as its member states can see the individual advantages in making it work. A sense of regional interest - that is, a close identification of regional good with the good of individual states - has not yet developed. Intra-ASEAN solidarity remains heavily dependent upon the unifying effect of an external threat. During the Cambodia conflict, ASEAN demonstrated that it can be an important regional player. However, it was unable to enforce its own regional standards by itself; ASEAN's effectiveness was contingent on the support of much more powerful actors. I shall now consider how these factors may affect ASEAN's future development.

ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Period

In the post-cold war period, Southeast Asia's regional security environment has altered dramatically. With the decline of the Soviet Union, the ideological conflict in the region has subsided. Most observers expect convergent economic interests between states to be enough to maintain political stability in the region. Nonetheless, the entire Asia-Pacific is in a state of flux. The uncertainty of the post-cold war situation has reinforced the commitment of the ASEAN states to their institution. They correctly believe that their international political influence is greatly enhanced by being part of a larger organization. ASEAN is attempting to use the present state of regional uncertainty to its own advantage by adopting new policies and creating new structures which, it hopes, will help to shape the emerging order before it hardens into distinct patterns. However, as in the past, the activities of the great powers and divergent interests within ASEAN will circumscribe ASEAN's ability to manage the post-cold war regional security environment. At present, the great powers are in the process of defining their interests and relationships. Once they do so, the strategic environment will begin to solidify. If ASEAN can exercise any influence over this process, it can only do so as a unified bloc. However, the developing economic and security interests of the individual ASEAN states will likely undermine the organization's functional coherence. In the long term, ASEAN's ability to manage regional security may be even less in the post-cold war era than during the cold war.

ASEAN's efforts to manage regional security in the post-cold war era are exemplified by the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). This is a group of twenty-one regional states that meet annually to discuss security issues in the Asia-Pacific. The ARF is modelled on ASEAN and promotes the TAC as the code of conduct for regional state behaviour. It is meant to employ techniques of diplomacy developed within ASEAN to the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF includes all of the great powers and provides regional states with an opportunity to build social and political connections and, hopefully, defuse conflict situations before they become dangerous. However, there are many significant problems with the ARF, and many reasons to believe that it cannot work as ASEAN envisions.

First, the historical and political circumstances that shaped ASEAN and allowed it to function effectively simply do not apply to the larger region. ASEAN is an organization of weak states who learned to practise limited cooperation in the face of external threats. The powerful states of the Asia-Pacific are not similarly threatened; they will have to be motivated to cooperate for other reasons. Second, in keeping with the "ASEAN Way," the ARF is meant to seek consensus and avoid issues of conflict, at least during its formative stages. While there is much to be said for this gradualist approach, it is unlikely that all of the ARF's participating states will be willing to postpone discussing controversial international issues while waiting for social and political ties to develop. This approach also makes it easy for the least cooperative states to be obstructionists. As ASEAN's experience demonstrates, it will be difficult to accommodate the strategic perspectives of twenty-one different states. Third, ASEAN claims a proprietary right to determine the ARF's agenda. However, it lacks the standing to enforce this claim. Already, its attempts to do so have created resentment among other states. Moreover, trying to force the great powers to conform to ASEAN's agenda will only serve to undermine the ARF. ASEAN can play a useful function in bringing the great powers together, but it must recognize its intermediary role.(24)

ASEAN has moved away from the idea of ZOPFAN in the post-cold war era. ASEAN now views ZOPFAN as impractical because international economic interdependence, and Southeast Asia's need for access to the world economy, requires that the region be closely integrated with the rest of the world. It cannot maintain an insular security policy at the same time.(25) Moreover, the ASEAN states now believe their security is best served by pursuing a policy of "equilibrium" between the great powers and themselves. Ideally, this means

establishing a balance between powers in the region; in practice, it means trying to keep the United States reliably engaged in Southeast Asia. To that end, most of the ASEAN states, even Indonesia, have increased their defence cooperation with the United States. Thus, a convergence in strategic perspectives on the role of the United States in the region has finally occurred between the original ASEAN states.(26) However, this may be short-lived. The U.S. constantly reassures its Asian allies that it intends to remain active in the Asia-Pacific. However, Asian states doubt the United States's reliability as an ally in the case of a real conflict. If the Americans pull back from the region or are perceived as reducing their political commitment, ASEAN fears that other states will move to fill the resulting vacuum.(27)

China, Japan, India and Russia are real and potential great powers that may fill any vacuum left by the Americans. The fact that none of these powers can take such an action now does not mean that they cannot in the future, or that they will not feel compelled to act if the U.S. withdraws further. China, in particular, is of major concern to Asia-watchers. Whether China becomes - or even has the capacity to become - an aggressive, hegemonic power over the next few decades, or decides to be a cooperative, "responsible" citizen of the international community is a factor that will shape the responses of the other regional actors. Either way, a reconfiguration of power will likely emerge in the region in the near future; it is unlikely that the present situation of uncertainty will continue indefinitely.(28)

When the new power arrangements begin to solidify, ASEAN may find itself in a difficult position. ASEAN will need a new strategic consensus, which may prove difficult, as individual ASEAN members may assume security perspectives that reflect divergent political and economic interests. This could lead to significant fissures within ASEAN if some members are forced to choose between competing power blocs, or between a fellow member in conflict with an important external economic or security partner. based on past experience, the ASEAN states will not put considerations of ASEAN unity before their own concrete interests. This potential problem of intra-ASEAN division is likely to become worse as ASEAN adds new members. Vietnam joined ASEAN in 1995; Burma and Laos became members in July 1997. These states may bring new strategic perspectives or interests that are incompatible with those of other ASEAN states. Already, observers have suggested that Burma's close ties with China will undermine ASEAN's unity over such issues as China's territorial claims in the South China Sea.(29) Moreover, the patterns of interaction that do characterize intra-ASEAN relations cannot simply be extended to new members; time is needed to build up trust. Such implicit internal divisions will probably weaken ASEAN's corporate solidarity. It is unlikely that internal divisions will ever lead to ASEAN's formal dissolution; however, they may reduce ASEAN's ability to form coherent corporate policies to the point of ineffectiveness.

The July 4, 1997 coup in Cambodia provided ASEAN with a new opportunity to demonstrate its relevance to Southeast Asian security. Though the situation is still evolving, it appears that ASEAN will effectively manage this crisis. This is largely because Hun Sen, the coup leader, wants Cambodia to enjoy the economic and political benefits of joining ASEAN; ASEAN also wants Cambodia as a member. ASEAN will probably end up legitimizing Hun Sen's rule, so long as the new Cambodian regime is not too abusive and returns to the principles of the Paris Peace Agreement. In respect to the management of regional security, the importance of this new Cambodian problem is still unclear and must not be exaggerated. As noted above, both ASEAN and Cambodia have mutual interests in resolving the conflict, so this is not a strong test of ASEAN's capabilities. It is relevant that Hun Sen views membership in ASEAN as important. If he did not, however, or found that other factors mattered more, ASEAN would need to demonstrate its relevance to regional security by compelling Cambodia to comply with its demands. It is unlikely that ASEAN has either the capacity or disposition to force such compliance. If ASEAN failed to manage this situation, its credibility as a security regime would be seriously undermined. In addition, the great powers have allowed ASEAN to take the lead on this issue largely because they have no real interests at stake in the matter. If they did, ASEAN may well have been marginalized.

The greater relevance of the Cambodian situation to ASEAN lies in the weaknesses that it reveals. ASEAN has had difficulty reconciling its actions toward Cambodia with its principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of regional states. By taking a stand on Cambodia, ASEAN has set a precedent that it must now clarify. Why intervene in Cambodia, but not Burma? When is intervention now acceptable? This is a significant concern; internal instability is possible in many of the ASEAN states and could become a critical part of managing the region's security. The Cambodian situation also underlines the danger of ASEAN's rapid expansion. ASEAN has accepted unstable members into its ranks; dealing with potential crises in those states may undercut ASEAN's ability to function as a coherent international actor. This is especially ironic, as a major reason for ASEAN's expansion was to enhance the organization's international stature and effectiveness.(30)

ASEAN's plans for managing regional security in the post-cold war era are based, in part, on an overestimation of its influence over extra-regional actors and events. The great powers are now directly involved in shaping the regional environment of the Asia-Pacific. These powerful actors are the most likely and immediate sources of conflict in the region for the foreseeable future. The coercive diplomacy that ASEAN effectively applied against Vietnam cannot work when dealing with large, powerful states, such as China or the United States. Indeed, as argued earlier, much of ASEAN's success in opposing Vietnam was attributable to the support of these same powerful states. If these states violate the norms of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, ASEAN will have recourse to very few options. The only way it could use sanctions to punish such violations would be through the support of other great powers. Such support is not guaranteed and, even if forthcoming, would again reduce ASEAN to the role of supplicant in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN's ability to affect the post-cold war regional security environment lies in its capacity to define the norms and rules governing the conduct of international relations in Southeast Asia. If the great powers decide to follow ASEAN's lead, they will do so because they recognize the utility of doing so. But they may also be swayed by the moral authority that ASEAN has gained through its activities during the Cambodian invasion, and its establishment of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. However, ASEAN's moral credentials are heavily dependent upon its institutional cohesion. ASEAN cannot exercise whatever limited authority it may possess if its member states do not clearly support the institution's rules and goals.

ASEAN's response to the Cambodian invasion illustrated the limits to intra-ASEAN unity. In the post-cold war period, the reality of continuing intra-ASEAN tensions, the inability of the institution to deal directly with its internal disputes and the continuing reliance of ASEAN on an external motivating focus are all indications of ASEAN's institutional weakness. The support of the member states for ASEAN remains dependent on the utility of the organization for its members. If ASEAN does not prove to be effective in the post-cold war period, it is unlikely that its members will remain committed to it. This puts ASEAN in a catch-22 situation: its ability to influence other actors is contingent on its political unity, yet that unity is contingent on its effectiveness as an international actor.

To develop true durability, ASEAN needs a commitment from its member states that involves more than their immediate and narrow self-interests. If ASEAN can become more unified and if its member states develop a sense of regional interest, the organization may even evolve an internal motivating focus. There are indications that a nascent sense of collective identity is developing between the ASEAN states. However, it is impossible to ignore the many political, cultural and historical barriers standing in the way of such an identity. ASEAN remains an institution driven by the individual interests of its members. This means the organization is much more fragile than it appears. The possibility that it may fracture along the lines of competing member interests increases as the organization expands its membership and great powers become more active - and perhaps more competitive - in the region.

It is not in the interests of any actor to destabilize the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, there are good reasons to believe that ASEAN will continue to operate in an environment conducive to its development. It is important to note, however, that these initial conditions are beyond ASEAN's ability to create. The decisions that the great powers make, for their own reasons, will determine the shape of the regional environment.

Conclusion

Throughout its history, ASEAN has attempted to shape the intra-ASEAN and extra-ASEAN dimensions of regional security. It has proven fairly effective in indirectly managing its internal security relations. However, ASEAN's ability to shape the security of the larger Southeast Asian region has been limited by two factors: (1), the decisive role of powerful states in setting the parameters of regional interaction; (2), the divergent interests of the individual ASEAN states when defining their own regional interests. These factors will continue to determine the arrangement of regional security in the post-cold war era.

During the Vietnam conflict, ASEAN learned to act as a coherent diplomatic unit. Even so, the Vietnam experience revealed significant limitations within ASEAN. Disagreements over security perceptions created internal tensions, and it became clear that ASEAN was largely dependent on external support in order to be an effective regional actor. ASEAN significantly improved its internal relationships, but a strong sense of collective identity still eluded the member states. For the most part, their commitment to ASEAN remained limited by a narrow understanding of their self-interests.

In the post-cold war period, regional uncertainty has created the impression that the region's security environment may be amenable to ASEAN's corporate influence. However, ASEAN's ability to affect regional security may actually be less than in the past. The conditions in which ASEAN now operates are much different than those during its stand against Vietnam. ASEAN must now deal directly with the great powers. Its expanded membership may afford ASEAN greater international political clout; however, expansion may also introduce more competing interests and strategic perspectives into the organization. ASEAN's greatest potential influence lies in its ability to set the rules of international interaction for the region. Exercising this authority, however, will require the member states to make a firm commitment to the organization that transcends narrow self-interest. It is not clear that the ASEAN states are yet ready to make this commitment. In the uncertainty of the post-cold war era, the ASEAN states appear dedicated to the institution. However, this conviction may not last once uncertainty is replaced by more definite configurations of power.

University of Toronto, October 1997

1 The founding members of ASEAN are: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore. Brunei joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, and Burma and Laos in 1997.

2 Tim Huxley, "ASEAN Security Cooperation - Past, Present and Future," in Alison Broinowski, ed., *ASEAN into the 1990s* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 85-95.

3 The ASEAN Declaration, Bangkok, August 8, 1967. Preamble.

4 Heiner Hanggi, *ASEAN and the ZOPFAN Concept* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), p. 12; Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 52-56.

5 In May 1969, Malaysia had to contend with racial riots between ethnic Malays and Chinese. Domestic reconciliation was a pressing political need. By reaching out to Communist China,

the Malaysian government hoped to alleviate tensions with its own Chinese minority and undermine the ethnic Chinese-dominated Malayan Communist Party (MCP) at the same time. Malaysia believed that neutralization would help to create a peaceful environment that would allow it to focus on its own economic development and avoid having to take on an onerous defence burden. See Hanggi, ASEAN, pp. 13-14.

6 Muthiah Alagappa, "Regional Arrangements and International Security in Southeast Asia: Going Beyond ZOPFAN," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 12, no. 4 (March 1991), pp. 272-75; Leifer, ASEAN, pp. 52-60; Hanggi, ASEAN, pp. 12-20.

7 Leifer, ASEAN, p. 58.

8 Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration, Kuala Lumpur, 27 November, 1971.

9 Leifer, ASEAN, p. 59.

10 Alagappa, "Regional Arrangements," p. 274.

11 Chapter I, Article 1, Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

12 Frank Frost, "Introduction: ASEAN since 1967 - Origins, Evolution and Recent Developments," in Broinowski, ed., *ASEAN into the 1990s*, p. 9.

13 Chapter I, Article 2)a, Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

14 In 1967, intra-ASEAN trade was 20.9 percent of ASEAN total exports; in 1994, the figure was 20.8 percent. This represented a slight upturn in intra-ASEAN trade after a slight decline for several years. See John Ravenhill, "Economic Cooperation in Southeast Asia: Changing Incentives," *Asian Survey*, vol. 35, no. 9 (September, 1995), pp. 850-66. The figures cited above are on p. 350.

15 Kusuma Snitwongse, "ASEAN's Security Cooperation: Searching for a Regional Order," *The Pacific Review*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1995), p. 520.

16 Michael Antolik, *ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), pp. 8-10, 156-57; Arnfinn Jorgenson-Dahl, *Regional Organisation and Order in Southeast Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 165-69.

17 Amitav Acharya, "A Regional Security Community in Southeast Asia?" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 18, no. 8 (September 1995), p. 180.

18 Amitav Acharya, *A New Regional Order in South-East Asia: ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era*, Adelphi Paper No. 279 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993); Amitav Acharya, *An Arms Race in Post-Cold War Southeast Asia? Prospects for Control* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994); Panitan Wattanayagorn and Desmond Ball, "A Regional Arms Race?" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (September 1995), pp. 145-74.

19 Shaun Narine, "ASEAN and the ARF: The Limits of the 'ASEAN Way,'" *Asian Survey*, vol. 37, no. 10 (October 1997), pp. 961-78.

20 In 1995 Malaysia and Singapore agreed to send their dispute over the island of Pedra Branca to the International Court of Justice for resolution. In 1996, Malaysia and Indonesia also agreed to refer their dispute over the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan to the ICJ. After more than thirty years, Malaysia and the Philippines seem to have put aside their differences over

Sabah. These may be signs that the ASEAN states are moving toward more accommodative postures regarding their territorial disputes. However, the Sabah conflict is still unresolved, and it may be significant that the Pedra Branca and Sipadan/Ligitan disputes could not be settled within ASEAN.

21 Muthiah Alagappa, "Regionalism and the Quest for Security: ASEAN and the Cambodian Conflict," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 2 (Winter 1993), pp. 439-67; William S. Turley, "'More Friends, Fewer Enemies': Vietnam's Policy toward Indochina-ASEAN Reconciliation," in Sheldon W. Simon, ed., *East Asian Security in the Post-Cold War Era* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 167-93; Carlyle A. Thayer, "ASEAN and Indochina: The Dialogue," in Broinowski, ed., *ASEAN Into the 1990s*, pp. 138-61.

22 The previous Thai prime minister, General Prem Tinsulanond, visited the Soviet Union in 1987 and 1988 and became convinced that it was genuinely trying to resolve the Cambodian conflict. At this time, General Chaovalit Yongchiyudh, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, made diplomatic overtures to the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Chatichai came to power supporting Chaovalit's initiatives, which were opposed by the Thai foreign ministry. See Grant Evans and Kevin Rowley, *Red Brotherhood at War: Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos Since 1975* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 264-65; Khatharya Urn, "Thailand and the Dynamics of Economic and Security Complex in Mainland Southeast Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 13, no. 3 (December 1991), pp. 245-70.

23 Confidential interview with an academic observer in Thailand, January 25, 1995.

24 Michael Leifer, *The ASEAN Regional Forum*, Adelphi Paper No. 302 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996).

25 On December 15, 1995, ASEAN leaders signed the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty. The SEANWFZ idea has long been part of ZOPFAN and may be an indication that the concept is not as moribund as it appears. However, the SEANWFZ has little real substance and remains symbolic. None of the five declared nuclear weapons states have agreed to sign and are unlikely to do so. See "Hang On Tight," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 28, 1995-January 4, 1996, pp. 14-15; Tariq Rauf, "The Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone," *Cancaps Bulletin*, No. 8 (March 1996), pp. 8-9.

26 Acharya, *A New Regional Order*, pp. 54-59.

27 Paul H. Kreisberg, Daniel Y. Chiu and Jerome H. Kahan, *Threat Perceptions in Asia and the Role of the Major Powers* (Honolulu: Center for Naval Analyses, 1993); Martin L. Lasater, *The New Pacific Community: U.S. Strategic Options in Asia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Jonathan D. Pollack, "The United States and Asia in 1995," *Asian Survey*, vol. 36, no. 1 (January 1996), pp. 1-12.

28 Paul Dibb, *Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia*, Adelphi Paper No. 295 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1995).

29 "Fly in the Ointment," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 12, 1997, p. 15. Ironically, one of the reasons that ASEAN rushed to incorporate Burma was to reduce its dependence on China.

30 This discussion is based upon "Law of the Gun," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 17, 1997, pp. 14-15; "Conflict of Interests," *PEER*, July 24, 1997, pp. 18-19; Jusuf Wanandi, "A Lesson for ASEAN," *FEER*, July 24, 1997, p. 34; "All for One," *FEER*, August 7, 1997, p. 26.

SHAUN NARINE is a Fellow at the Centre for International Studies at the University of

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