Chapter III

MALAYSIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD: POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC ASPECTS
Chapter III

MALAYSIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD: POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC ASPECTS

Malaysia's geo-strategic situation in Southeast Asia and the overall environment of its national security are extremely important from the point of view of its relations with its neighbours. As instability and uncertainty in its immediate neighbourhood is sure to affect its own security environment, Malaysia has always sought for great understanding and co-operation with its neighbours. It has explored every avenue of establishing peace in the region and at the same time maintained a measure of defence-preparedness.

Malaysia and Indonesia

In the pre-colonial period, Malaysia and Indonesia shared with their neighbours the heritage of Indian cultural and religious influence for a number of centuries. The boundaries obtaining between these two neighbours were not there in the past. Beneath the political surface of today flow the historical currents that have influenced the character and destiny of the people of the region.

Malaysia and Indonesia are situated at a point where land and sea routes meet. Between them lies the Strait of Malacca flanked by Southern Malaya and Northern Sumatra. The huge island of Borneo, the world's third largest, is situated across the equator at the very centre of Southeast Asia. I are the East Malaysian States of Sarawak and Sabah and the Sultanate of Brunei share their frontiers with the Indonesian territor
Kalimantan. The southern two-thirds of the island constitutes Kalimantan; and the northern one-third comprises Sarawak and Sabah. Many Indonesians take advantage of this geographical contiguity and cross the border in times of peace to work as seasonal labourers. Whenever the relations between the two countries run into rough weather -- as, for example, during Konfrontasi (1963-65) -- guerrilla and subversive activity is common along the sensitive border. Even during peace-time the border is not free from such activity. Both Governments are faced in normal times with the problem of smuggling.

A brief look at the ethnic background of Southeast Asia would help us in understanding the problem of unity and diversity of the region. Centuries of migration from the Asian mainland into and through the Indo-Pacific peninsula and archipelago has made the ethnological composition of the region complex. The present population of the region, predominantly Indonesian (Malays) or Austronesian, is the result of two major waves -- the Proto-Malays (Early Malays) and Deutero-Malays (later Malays) between B.C. 2500 and B.C. 1500. The national languages of Malaysia and Indonesia -- Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia respectively -- are both based on a Malayo-Polynesian foundation and are similar in many ways. The indigenous people of both countries are Malay. In East Asia


2 Brian Harrison, South-East Asia: A Short History (London, 1983), P. 5.
and Southeast Asia there are the two countries with sizable Muslim populations. And yet, in spite of having many things in common, the Malaysians and the Indonesians have displayed mixed feelings towards each other from time to time. One author has described this as follows:

... pride in their common Malay cultural heritage yet at the same time mutual suspicions; admiration tinged with apprehension on the Malay side, disdain spiced with both envy and contempt on the Indonesian - are a complex amalgam derived from both recent experience and folk memories of the past which we find embodied in their myth and legends. 3

For generations the tranquil Java Sea has served as the main communication link between the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian islands. In the past, control of the seas in this region was considered to constitute the key to empire. The Malays have inhabited the areas on either side of the Malacca Straits for long. Until 1870 there was hardly any clear-cut division between Sumatra and the Malay peninsula. As for the Malay world, it was more or less a confined one except for the link it had with Madagascar (now Malagasy).

The glory of the ancient Malay-Indonesian kingdoms influences and inspires the Malays and the Indonesians equally, and they take pride in Srivijaya, in Majapahit, and in the Kingdom of Malacca. There is, however, a difference in emphasis: the Malays look back to the Malacca Sultanate for inspiration whereas the Indonesians hark back nostalgically to Majapahit.

In fact, in their recent confrontation with Malaysia, the Indonesian leaders were inspired by the greatness of Majapahit. One characteristic feature of the ancient coastal states was their thousand-year-long rivalry which could be attributed to the traditional geographical and economic factors, which operate to this day.

The colonial Powers too created their own spheres of interest and divided the region into distinct political entities. Singapore, situated between Malaya and Indonesia, was the centre of the British colonial empire in the region. Today's political configuration of the region into Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia is a legacy of Western colonial rule. Though both Indonesia and Malaysia were successors to the colonial empires, Indonesia succeeded to a more or less united state. (The process of unification was complete with the return of West Irian in 1962.) On the other hand, Malaysia, because of the diversified nature of its territories and delayed unification (till September 1963), faced serious problems of territorial and political consolidation which were aggravated by the confrontation with Indonesia.

The two neighbours have, despite their age-old cultural, religious, and linguistic links and their geographical contiguity (which made each country easily accessible to the other) manifested great differences in attitude and behaviour. These differences are the result of their different experiences of colonial rule. (Malaya was under British rule, and Indonesia under Dutch control.)
The independence of Malaya was achieved through peaceful negotiation. The independence of Indonesia came after a struggle. The Indonesians consequently manifest an intense anti-colonial outlook and are distrustful of the Malayan leaders who maintain close links with the erstwhile metropolitan Power (viz Britain).

Any careful observer of the Malaysian-Indonesian scene would be struck by the contrast obtaining between the two neighbours. Indonesia is a major state of the region, with a population of about 137 million. Rich in natural resources and with a sizable military force, it has the potential of a major Power. On the other hand, Malaysia is demographically and territorially much smaller than Indonesia. It is a weak state. Thus the confrontation between them was unequal. A look at the following table would show the strength of the Indonesian armed forces in comparison with that of some other countries of the region.

A full-length chapter on the Indonesian-Malaysian confrontation would, however, be irrelevant, for our discussion. We shall, therefore, briefly recount the story of the confrontation here. On 27 May 1961 Tunku Abdul Rahman, then Prime Minister of Malaya, declared that an understanding with Britain and the peoples of the territories of Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei, and Sarawak would be reached to merge these British colonial territories in the

---

4 Asia Year Book, 1979 (Hong Kong, 1979), p. 205.
### Table

Comparative Military Strength of Indonesia and Some Other Countries of East and Southeast Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>North Korea (Democratic People's Republic)</th>
<th>South Korea (Republic of)</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>139,000,000</td>
<td>115,120,000</td>
<td>960-975,000,000</td>
<td>17,630,000</td>
<td>17,170,000</td>
<td>35,940,000</td>
<td>12,995,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>155,000</td>
<td>3,625,000</td>
<td>330,000</td>
<td>440,000</td>
<td>560,000</td>
<td>52,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air force</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Federation of Malaya. The merger of Singapore and the Borneo territories in the Federation of Malaya was in keeping with the British policy of decolonization and gradual liquidation of the British Empire in Asia.

When the Malaysia proposal was thus mooted, Indonesia's initial reaction to it was far from hostile. On 20 November 1961 Subandrio, then Foreign Minister of Indonesia, said in the course of an address to the UN General Assembly: "Although North Borneo was ethnologically and geographically closer to Indonesia than Malaya, we still told Malaya that we have no objections to such a merger based upon the will of the people concerned." Indonesia, however, changed its stand completely when, on 20 January 1963, Subandrio said: "Now the President Sukarno has decided that henceforth we shall pursue a policy of confrontation against Malaysia."

---

6 Federation of Malaya, Department of Information, Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur), no. 2, April 1962, p. 6.

6 In 1949 Malcolm McDonald, then British High Commissioner for Southeast Asia, indicated the British viewpoint to Dr Hatta, the Vice-President of Indonesia, that Britain's intention was to grant freedom to these three territories not as separate states but as united together in one state. See Mohammad Hatta, "One Indonesian View of the Malaysian Issue", Asian Survey (Berkeley, Calif.), vol. 5, no. 3, March 1965, p. 140.

7 UN Doc. A/FU 1052. Quoted in Peter Boyce, Malaysia and Singapore in International Diplomacy (Sydney, 1963), p. 67. Emphasis added.

8 Straits Times (Singapore), 26 January 1963.
This sentiment was expressed again in 1962, when Tunku Abdul Rahman's offer to mediate in the dispute between the Netherlands and Indonesia over West Irian was rebuffed by the Indonesian leaders. The Tunku was accused of not supporting Indonesia on the West Irian issue. Incorporation of West Irian into Indonesia by threat of arms elevated Sukarno's prestige in the region; it may also have fostered a fear of Indonesia among the people of the Federation of Malaya.

Meanwhile, in June 1962, the Philippines threw a spanner into the works by claiming that it was the rightful sovereign over North Borneo (Sabah). This brought President Sukarno and President Macapagal together in their opposition to Malaysia.

What were the motives behind the Indonesian opposition to Malaysia? According to the Government of Indonesia, the Anglo-Malayan Defence Treaty would also operate for Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah. Indonesia regarded the extension of this pact right across the Kalimantan border as a threat to its security. The strongest Indonesian argument against Malaysia was based on the fear of China and the political potential of

9 Government of the Republic of Indonesia, Why Indonesia Opposes the British-Made "Malaysia" (Jakarta, 1964), pp. 24-25. The failure of the Malayan leaders or the British to consult Indonesia on the formation of Malaysia hurt the pride of the Indonesian leaders, who deemed it an unfriendly act intended to restrict Indonesia's sphere of influence. This view was expressed by Dr Ali Sastroamidjojo, the former Prime Minister of Indonesia, in an interview with P.K. Pant. See Pushpesh Kumar Pant, "The Making of Malaysia" (Ph.D. Thesis, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1970), pp. 106-8.
the world's "largest concentration of overseas Chinese".

Konfrontasi, as the Indonesians called it, gave rise to intense diplomatic activity involving a number of countries like Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, and the United States. Between 30 July and 5 August 1963 President Sukarno, President Macapagal, and Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman met in a summit meeting in Manila. The summit upheld Macapagal's plan for a Greater Malay Confederation and pledged to hold "regular consultations at all levels to be known as Mushawarah Maphilindo".

Despite the opposition of Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysia was formally inaugurated on 16 September 1963. Thereupon Indonesia and the Philippines broke off diplomatic relations with Malaya/Malaysia. Malaysia retaliated by

---

10 G.M. Kahin, "Malaysia and Indonesia", Pacific Affairs (Vancouver, B.C.), vol. 37, no. 3, Fall 1964, pp. 235-70. Mohammad Hatta expressed the same fear. See Hatta, n. 6, pp. 6-7. Indonesian domestic compulsions seemed to offer a likely explanation for Indonesian confrontation with Malaysia. During 1956-63 Indonesian domestic politics hinged on the competition between two political forces - the Army and the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), with Sukarno playing the role of a balancer. The Army took advantage of the confrontation with Malaysia to resist a budget cut which was likely to come after the West Irian crisis was over. See Herbert Feith, "Dynamics of Guided Democracy", in Ruth T. Moevey, ed., Indonesia (New Haven, Conn., 1963), pp. 309-408.

11 Manila Declaration, 5 August 1963. Reproduced in Federation of Malaya, Malaya/Philippine Relations, 31 August 1957 to 15 August 1963 (Kuala Lumpur, 1963), Appendix IX. Cited hereinafter Malaya/Philippine Relations. Maphilindo is an acronym for Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Mushawarah means "mutual consultations".

12 Department of Information, Malaya/Indonesia Relations, 31 August 1957 to 15 September 1963 (Kuala Lumpur, 1963), p. 15.
breaking off diplomatic relations with them the next day. The declaration of Malaysia Day, thus, led to the intensification of Indonesian guerrilla activity across the Bornean borders. Confrontation affected the economies of both the countries. It also brought about a rupture in the entrepôt trade of Singapore. The British Gurkha troops supported by the forces and equipment made available by Australia and New Zealand defended the Malaysian borders against the Indonesian guerrillas. The United States Military Aid Mission in Kuala Lumpur provided further security to Malaysia. In spite of its claim over Sabah the Philippines did not participate in Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia. On the other hand, it endeavoured to bring the parties again together for another summit meeting.

In its confrontation Indonesia received military aid from the Soviet Union. In 1961 the Soviet Union gave Indonesia military assistance worth £400 million. China also supported Indonesia's "Ganjang Malaysia" policy from the very beginning.

Two significant developments, among other things, led to the end of confrontation. First, Singapore's separation from Malaysia, which was by no means due to Jakarta's policy, rendered Sarawak and Sabah no longer vulnerable to Chinese


14 Liu Shao chi, Vice-Chairman of the People's Republic of China, paid a visit to Jakarta. During this visit China and Indonesia agreed to oppose Malaysia. See Antara, 21 April 1964.
influence. Secondly, the 30 September Movement in Indonesia threw up a team of new leaders who wanted to put an end to confrontation. Though the leaders of Indonesia hailed Singapore's separation as a success of their country's "Ganjang Malaysia" campaign, Malaysia did not fall apart.

During this period the general political situation in Indonesia underwent remarkable change. The country's economy reached the brink of disaster. On the night of 30 September 1965 there occurred a coup d'état in Indonesia, now generally known as the Gestapu. Although the coup was crushed, it resulted in far-reaching changes in the domestic as well as foreign policies of Indonesia. One of these changes was the break in Jakarta-Peking relations. The new leaders of Indonesia, i.e., those who came to power in the wake of the coup, embarked upon a policy of systematic persecution of the Communists. They described their rule as signifying the emergence of a New Order (Orde Baru or ORBA) and termed the Sukarno Era the Old Order (Orde Lama or ORLA). On 11 March 1966 a shift in the political power occurred in Indonesia when the three Generals asked Sukarno to sign a Declaration enjoining General Subarto to "take all steps deemed necessary to guarantee the security, tranquility and stability for the smooth functioning of the government and

---


16 "Gestapu" is an acronym for "Gerakan September Tigapuluhan", which literally means "30 September Movement".
the course of the revolution". Next day General Subarto issued on behalf of President Sukarno a declaration banning the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). On 13 March 1966, following the arrest of Subandrio, Adam Malik said at his first major Press conference as Foreign Minister that Indonesia's stand on confrontation would be reassessed and that the country's foreign policy would "be guided by the realities existing in the outside world", which, "whether we like it or not, will have to be faced by Indonesia". In an address to the students Malik remarked that the end of confrontation would provide Indonesia an opportunity for rebuilding the shattered economy and bringing down prices.

The delegations of Indonesia and Malaysia met in Bangkok between 29 May and 1 June 1966 in an atmosphere of cordiality and optimism. Adam Malik indicated his country's desire to have "closer cultural and economic links between these two countries in future". Tun Razak reciprocated the sentiment, saying: "With this both countries, which are brothers, can now march forward to progress and prosperity.... Indonesia now recognizes Malaysia's independence and sovereignty...." He described the Bangkok talks as "opening a new Chapter in Indonesia-Malaysia relations". The delegates

17 Antara News Bulletin (Jakarta), morning edn, 19 March 1966; and Sunday Times (Singapore), 13 March 1966.
18 Straits Times, 5 April 1966.
19 Ibid., 21 May 1966.
20 Ibid., 1 June 1966.
21 Ibid., 3 June 1966.
22 Bangkok Post, 2 June 1966.
agreed in the interest of restoration of friendly relations: (1) to cease all hostilities; (2) to resume diplomatic relations soon after the conclusion of the Bangkok Accord; and (3) to provide a chance as soon as practicable to the North Borneo people to express their views as to whether they wished to remain in Malaysia. On 11 August 1966 Malik and Razak signed a fresh agreement in Jakarta normalizing diplomatic relations between the two countries. The agreement provided that the Government of Malaysia would extend to the people of Sarawak and Sabah "an opportunity to reaffirm as soon as practicable, in a free and democratic manner through General Elections, their previous decision about their status in Malaysia". It may be noted here that during the elections held in Sabah between 5 and 27 April 1967 not even one candidate out of a total of seventy-nine candidates in the field stood for withdrawal from Malaysia.

Following ratification of the Bangkok Accord, an Indonesian goodwill mission led by Malik arrived in Kuala Lumpur to a tumultuous welcome. Giving full expression to the racial affinity between the two peoples, Malik said: "No one has won or lost. Victory goes to the Malay people, the great race in South-East Asia, to which both Malaysia


and Indonesia belong. A feeling grew in Indonesia that the confrontation had drained the resources of the country. The new leaders regarded confrontation as having been a failure and thought desirable to abandon it in the interest of the nation. The policy of confrontation and the defence of the right of self-determination in the territories of North Borneo did fulfil important political purposes for Sukarnoist Indonesia, but in the changed political context they were found to be irrelevant.

The emphasis, therefore, shifted from the pursuit of the policy of confrontation to the task of devising a programme for the amelioration of the people's conditions and stabilization of the economy. The new leaders also saw the need to restore the confidence of the Western countries with a view to facilitating flow of foreign credit into Indonesia. Malik, emphasizing the need for foreign aid to bolster the Indonesian economy, observed that such aid was a matter of life and death for Indonesia. Thus, in the changed situation, confrontation, having lost its raison d'être, was abandoned.

The transition from a period of violent confrontation to a period of peaceful co-operation between Malaysia and Indonesia was a long and difficult process. After giving a decent burial to confrontation the two neighbours decided to pay greater attention to the tasks of building their economies and to nation-building. The resumption of normal

---

relations and the emergence of new political trends opened up new fields of bilateral and regional co-operation.

Both Indonesia and Malaysia pursue an anti-Communist policy. Their approach to problems, global and regional, are in many ways similar. China's attitude to the two regimes is still not friendly. Both countries view the problem of security chiefly in terms of preventing insurgency and subversion from posing a threat to their political systems. Malaysia, which has a large Chinese population, views its security entirely as an internal affair.

In August 1967 President Suharto enunciated a policy of good-neighbourliness. This led to the normalisation and development of ties between the three neighbours - Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. There is at present no significant problem between Malaysia and Indonesia. The two countries co-operate in joint military action against Communist insurgents along the borders of Borneo.

One of the most disturbing problems faced by the two countries in the years following the normalisation of relations between them was the "astonishing traffic" between them. The Straits Times in an editorial on 3 March 1967 wrote: "If 10,000 men can come unchecked into the First and Second Divisions alone in one month, as they did in January, so can the enemy move almost at will." It added: "In Kalimantan the Indonesian army has been busy moving about 6000 non-Indonesian Chinese well away from the Malaysian

27 Straits Times (Singapore), editorial, 3 March 1967.
Joint Security Treaty

With a view to strengthening their military ties, Malaysia and Indonesia agreed to form two border committees, one in the east to co-ordinate efforts to fight against Communist guerrillas along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border and the other in the west to help naval patrol in the Straits of Malacca.

On 11 March 1967 Lieutenant-General Umar Wirahadikusumah of Indonesia, Commander of Kolaga (Alert Theatre Command), and the Secretary-General of the Malaysian Defence Ministry, Tan Sri Abdul Kabir bin Sjamsuddin, signed in Kuala Lumpur a treaty providing for security arrangements between the two countries. According to Lieutenant-General Wirahadikusumah, the arrangements included land, sea, and air operations across the border by both countries to mutual advantage. The two countries agreed to co-operate on security programmes against the Communists, smugglers and subversive elements operating along the Malaysian-Indonesian borders.

On 6 April 1972 Indonesia and Malaysia signed another agreement on security arrangements in their border areas. This agreement, signed by General Panggabean on behalf of

---

23 Ibid.
Indonesia and by Tun Dr Ismail on behalf of Malaysia, was highly significant in the changing political pattern in Southeast Asia. Among other things the two parties agreed to set up a Ministerial committee which would meet twice a year alternately in Jakarta and in Kuala Lumpur to discuss and decide upon "appropriate measures" to fight against the Communists along the borders, as also to consider other matters connected with security in the border regions.

From 15 to 20 March 1970 President Subarto of Indonesia, accompanied by Foreign Minister Adam Malik and some high-ranking officials, paid a State visit to Malaysia. The object of the visit was, according to Adam Malik, to strengthen the "growing friendship and spirit of co-operation" between the two countries. The visit yielded two important treaties, a treaty of friendship and a treaty on the delimitation of the territorial seas of Indonesia and Malaysia in the Straits of Malacca. The Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak, hoped that the treaties would herald "a new era of co-operation, mutual respect, and understanding". The treaty of friendship replaced the one that the two

---

31 The Hindu (Madras), 7 April 1972. In 1976 Malaysian and Indonesian leaders signed an agreement to co-operate on arms production, the idea being to standardize the armaments of the ASEAN countries. Production of arms is confined to light weapons such as rifles and heavy mortars only. Straits Times, 9 December 1976. This was disclosed by Gen. Haraden Panggabean in December 1976. See Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), 24 December 1976.

32 Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 16 to 20 March 1970.

33 Ibid.
neighbours had signed in 1957. It provided that the two
countries would co-operate in such fields as educational,
scientific, and consular relations and extradition of
fugitive offenders. The treaty on the delimitation of the
territorial seas of Malaysia and Indonesia in the Straits of
Malacca was described by the leaders of the two countries "as
a very important milestone in the friendship between the two
countries".

The joint communique issued at the end of the visit
reaffirmed faith in the principles enunciated at the Bandung
Conference of 1955 and the spirit of close regional
co-operation enshrined in the Declaration of the Association
of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) concluded in Bangkok in
August 1967. It expressed the view of the leaders of the
two countries that relations between nations should be on
the basis of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and
territorial integrity and of non-interference in each other's
internal affairs. It reiterated the faith of the two
countries in ASEAN co-operation and called for close bilateral
relations between the various countries of the region in all
spheres to create an atmosphere of regional understanding,
harmony, and solidarity. The President of Indonesia and the
Prime Minister of Malaysia reaffirmed the adherence of their
respective countries to the policy of non-alignment and their
recognition of its importance in international relations.
They also agreed to ensure close co-operation between the

34 Ibid.
Public forces of the two countries and to hold frequent consultations among officials in this and other fields of activity. Their determination to co-operate was apparently reinforced by the ethnic and cultural ties between the two peoples. It may be recalled in this context that the concept of Maphilindo based on the solidarity of the Malay people had raised high hopes in 1963.

Problems of Security in the Straits of Malacca

The geopolitical setting of the Straits of Malacca makes the strategic and political significance of this waterway quite apparent. The straits are flanked by the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra on the east and the Indonesian Riouw archipelago on the south. The waterway thus connects the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. According to a perceptive observer, "the strategic importance of Southeast Asia lies first, in its position between the two Asian oceans, and second, in the narrow natural waterway [the Straits of Malacca]."

35 Ibid.

36 The Philippine President, Ferdinand Marcos, promised "to take steps" to "eliminate" the Philippine claim to Sabah. Asia Year Book, 1979 (Hong Kong, 1979), p. 261. In the changed international context, if the Philippines renounces its claim to Sabah, it might revive the idea of Malay solidarity (as embodied in the Maphilindo proposal). Or it might rouse a consciousness of a Malay zone in Southeast Asia.


The following statistics will illustrate the vulnerability of the Straits of Malacca to accidents. The length of the Straits of Malacca is five hundred miles while that of the Straits of Singapore is just sixty miles. The width of the Straits of Malacca is for the most part about twenty miles, and at one narrow point it measures as little as eight miles. About four thousand ships sail through the Straits of Malacca every month, averaging more than a hundred ships a day. According to an estimate, about 90 per cent of Japan's total requirement of about 200 million tons of oil passes through the Straits of Malacca. A large quantity of the crude oil bound for Japan is carried by supertankers. Thus, in the event of a major oil spill taking place, "it would only require a period of 3 tides or approximately 36 hours for the oil to reach and blacken both shores of the Straits of Malacca".  

The Straits of Malacca fall under the joint jurisdiction of Indonesia and Malaysia as both of them have extended their territorial seas to twelve nautical miles. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore declared on 16 November 1971 that "the safety of navigation in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore is the responsibility of the coastal states concerned", "that the problem of safety of navigation and the question of internationalization of the Straits are two

39 Speech by Y.B.M. Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen, Minister of Information charged with Special Functions for Foreign Affairs, at the Financial Times Southeast Asia Shipping Conference held in Singapore on 19 June 1975, pp. 2-3.
different issues", that "the Governments of the Republic of Indonesia and Malaysia agreed that the Straits of Malacca and Singapore are not international straits, while fully recognizing their use for international shipping in accordance with the principle of innocent passage". Singapore took note of the position of Indonesia and Malaysia on this point. This declaration thus placed the waters of these two straits under the sovereignty of the coastal states so far as Indonesia and Malaysia were concerned. 

The great maritime Powers, viz Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States, have opposed this joint declaration. The Soviet Union and the United States have consistently stood for a policy of free transit through, under, and over all the straits used for international navigation. Being interested in preserving freedom of commerce, they want to retain the right of free movement over the sea and in the air in their "fundamental security interest". They demand unrestricted navigational rights and free movement for their warships and military aircraft as well as for their merchant ships; for, without them, they feel that their international trade would be affected. The national defence and security stakes of the

---

40 Joint statement issued on behalf of the Republic of Indonesia, the Federation of Malaysia, and the Republic of Singapore, 15 November 1971. The author is thankful to Professor Vishal Singh for giving him access to such documents, which are otherwise hard to come by.

member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact in the right of free movement over the sea and in the air are high. Thanks to the latest advances in maritime technology, the navies of these Powers can move faster under water. This means that it is all the more necessary for them to have free access to all major sea areas and sea lanes to protect their military interests and to establish their dominance on the enemy's territory. Strategic use of submarines also calls for command over all the major sea areas.

Strategic considerations are equally important for the United States. It feels that it is extremely important for it to establish its presence in different parts of the world in the interest of maintenance of the strategic balance between itself and the Soviet Union. It also feels that unilateral declarations by the coastal states extending their territorial seas in international waterways impinge on its right to free transit. It, therefore, finds itself unable to accept any restriction on the movements of its naval fleets. Indeed, so far as it is concerned, its right to move freely over the seas is not negotiable.


44 UN Doc. A/AC 138/SC. 11/5R. 6, p. 27.
Japan's economic prosperity is largely dependent on unimpeded flow of oil from the Middle East. Passage through the Straits of Malacca is much more economic than passage through the alternative Straits of Sunda or the Straits of Lombok further south. Japan has, therefore, been advocating for some time now an internationally sanctioned traffic separation scheme in the Straits of Malacca. Indonesia and Malaysia were opposed to the Japanese proposal that they observe a 3-mile territorial limit.

Indonesia and Malaysia are seriously concerned about their security interests in the straits. Events like the activity of the Soviet and American warships during the Indo-Pakistani conflict of 1971 over Bangladesh, the increased naval competition between the Soviet Union and the United States in the Indian Ocean following the US decision to build Diego Garcia as a naval base from which to challenge Soviet supremacy, and the British withdrawal from Malaysia and Singapore have increased the importance of the straits as the inevitable route for ships to pass from one ocean to the other. They feel intimidated by the presence of Soviet and American ships, particularly the passage of submarines within a few miles of their shorelines. The security provided by any imposition of restrictions on such passage is more often than not ineffective in today's world of strategic warfare where an effective strike can be delivered from any part of the world.

45 Straits Times (Singapore), 17 November 1971; and Bangkok Post, 19 November 1971.
Right of passage through the Straits of Malacca has been a controversial issue at the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea. Indonesia and Malaysia argue that the Straits of Malacca form an integral part of their territorial waters inasmuch as they lie within those waters. They contend that the days when the major maritime powers used the straits as though they owned them absolutely are gone. These maritime Powers cannot argue any more that their strategic and security interests are involved; for such an argument tends to ignore fully the changes that have occurred in navigation. In the words of the Minister of Information of Malaysia, Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen:

What we have been stressing and will continue to stress on is that commensurate responsibility must come together with the exercise of such freedom. The concept of freedom without responsibility was propounded by those whose interests it best suited and represented a colonial concept that is no longer in tune with the times. Since the freedom of the waterway was regarded as the primary concern, traditional law favoured users to the detriment of the coastal states. It is only after "Environment" and "Ecology" have acquired a much larger meaning in the waning years of the 20th century that the beginnings of a change of attitude have been possible. It is being increasingly recognised that the existing law is unjust and that there is need to replace it with a new law that will enshrine the concept of freedom with responsibility. It is only after such a law has been enacted that we in Malaysia can feel confident that a just balance can be struck between maritime needs and the interests of coastal states. 46

A large part of today's shipping consists of supertankers of huge tonnage and deep draughts. These supertankers need

46 Speech by Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen, n. 39, pp. 3-4.
large sea areas to be able to move with speed. Congestion might lead to navigational hazards. Indonesia and Malaysia are concerned especially about the movements of those submarines and aircraft which carry nuclear weapons in their coastal waters. They are also interested in preserving their marine environment. The Torrey Canyon disaster of 1967 in the English Channel illustrates the damage that supertankers can cause to the coastline in narrow waters. Leakage of oil also poses a hazard to the inhabitants and the resources of the areas surrounding the straits. In view of this, at the Law of the Sea Conference at Caracas, the Malaysian delegate declared that the Straits of Malacca were "fast becoming one of the world's dirty maritime back-lanes". To ensure navigational safety and to preserve the marine environment in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, therefore, the coastal states of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore established in February 1975 a Council for the Safety of Navigation and Control of Marine Pollution in the Straits of Melaka and Singapore. Speaking on the subject, Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen said: "... among the most important aspects in need of implementation is a Traffic Separation Scheme for the Straits of Melaka and Singapore." Implementation of a traffic separation scheme would, he declared, lead to navigational safety.

47 Ibid., p. 2.
49 Speech by Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen, n. 39, pp. 5-6.
At the Caracas session of the UN Conference on the
Law of the Sea (20 June - 29 August 1974) Malaysia, Morocco,
Oman, and Yemen pleaded for a regime of innocent passage
through straits. On the other hand the United Kingdom sought
to ensure right of access for all states in international
waterways. It described such a right as the right of "transit
passage for all ships and aircraft which shall not be impeded".

In spite of the conflicting interests and competitions
between them, Indonesia and Malaysia have co-operated with
each other in opposing internationalization of the Straits of
Malacca and in upholding the sovereignty of the littoral
states. On 10 August 1972 the two countries signed an
agreement on economic and technical co-operation. This
agreement replaced the 5-year-old agreement of 1967. In
September 1972 the two countries agreed to conduct a joint
naval exercise in the Straits of Malacca with a view to
promoting better relations and co-operation between the naval
forces of the two countries. Such an exercise, code-named
"Malindo Jaya" and commanded by Colonel P.K. Nettur of the
Malaysian Navy, came off in the South China Sea early in
April 1974.

51 UN Doc. A/CONF. 62/C. 2/L, 3. It may be pointed out
here that in the subsequent sessions of the Law of the
Sea Conference the UK proposal for transit passage was
discussed and finally agreed upon. Malaysia's attempt
to force through some amendments so as to preserve the
interests of the littoral states was not accepted. The
littoral states were prevailed upon not to insist on the
amendments. See Sharma, n. 42, p. 135.
52 Asia Research Bulletin (Singapore), vol. 3, no. 11,
May 1974, p. 2736 B. Also see Antara (Jakarta),
16 November 1972; and Straits Times (Singapore),
17 November 1972.
Malaysia's resistance today to the internationalization of the Straits of Malacca seems to derive, not so much from its anxiety to promote or protect its economic interests as from its present foreign-policy concern for the neutralization of Southeast Asia and the safeguarding of its national security. On 10 May 1972 a Member of Parliament, Fan Yew Teng of the Democratic Action Party, asked Tun Abdul Razak whether the Indonesian-Malaysian claim to sovereignty over the Straits of Malacca would not prejudice Malaysia's attempts to make Southeast Asia a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality. Razak replied:

In my opinion Indonesia's and Malaysia's rejection of the internationalization of the Malacca Straits will not be an obstacle to the neutralization of Southeast Asia. Our rejection is based on the fact that a stretch of the Straits is territorial waters shared by Malaysia and Indonesia. One of the cardinal principles of the neutralization of Southeast Asia is respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty and our stand is consistent with this principle. Acceptance of the internationalization would be tantamount to a surrender of our territorial sovereignty over this Straits, 63

The littoral states — Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore — are thus primarily concerned about the security of the Straits of Malacca and their respective national interests. This was again reflected in the agreement concluded between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore in June 1973 "to limit the draught vessels passing through the Straits". Delegates from the three countries agreed on this

63 Foreign Affairs Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur), vol. 5, no. 2, June 1972, p. 113.
occasion that further studies in regard to the formulation of a traffic separation scheme for the two straits should be carried out by experts from all the three countries. They also agreed that the experts should also consider the safety margin in the light of the interests of the littoral states and the interests of others who used the straits.

Besides, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand signed an agreement on the continental shelf in Kuala Lumpur in 1971. This agreement was ratified by the three countries on 16 July 1973. One may recall in this context that Indonesia and Malaysia had signed a friendship treaty and an agreement on their sea boundaries in the Straits of Malacca in Kuala Lumpur on 17 March 1970 (during President Suharto’s visit). The two countries had agreed to limit their territorial waters in the Straits of Malacca to twelve nautical miles. Where the breadth of the Straits was less than twelve nautical miles, they had agreed to draw an imaginary line equidistant from Indonesia and Malaysia.

Both Indonesia and Malaysia pursue an anti-Communist policy. Communist parties are banned in both the countries. In Indonesia the PKI has stood banned since the coup of 1965.

So far as Malaysia is concerned, its anti-Communism, as we have already seen, derives from its historical experience. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) waged a


55 Jakarta Times, 9 October 1971. Also see Antara, 8 October 1971.
a relentless struggle for twelve years to capture political power. This period is now known as the period of Emergency. Malaysia is still confronted with an internal security problem for the Communists are still active in the border areas near Thailand and in Sarawak. Thus both Indonesia and Malaysia view the problem of security chiefly in terms of insurgency and subversion posing a threat to their respective political systems. Malaysia with its large Chinese population regards its security problem entirely as an internal problem. Both countries fear the People's Republic of China's support for the local insurgents. They, therefore, co-operate in taking military action against the Communist insurgents along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border.

The two neighbours also actively participate in regional co-operation through ASEAN. According to the leaders of Malaysia, "regional co-operation is unrealistic without Indonesian participation". They wish the Government of Indonesia to succeed in the political and economic fields.

56 In November 1972, following the settlement in Vietnam, President Suharto warned of a new war in Southeast Asia based on subversion and ideological conflict. See Straits Times (Singapore), 17 November 1972.

57 China differentiates between state-to-state relations and party-to-party relations. For instance, during his visit to Kuala Lumpur, the Chinese Vice-Premier, Teng Tsiao-ping, refused to give any assurance that China would stop giving support to the MGF. He pointed out that party-to-party relations were separate from state-to-state relations, and that it was "a very big principle" which could not be altered without "very serious international implications for China". Asia Year Book, 1979 (Hong Kong, 1979), pp. 240-1.
As early as in 1966 Tun Razak, the then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, said that Malaysia wanted Indonesia to become strong and stable and use its resources and manpower to fight subversive elements in the region. It is implicit in this statement that Malaysia would not be averse to Indonesia's assuming leadership in the Southeast Asian region. The two neighbours, being bound together by racial, religious, and linguistic ties, have closely co-operated in many fields. According to an author, Malaysia's relationship with Indonesia now stands "transformed from one of bitter antagonism to one of de facto alliance".

The elites in both Indonesia and Malaysia belong to the same Malay stock. This is not to say that ethnic and linguistic differences within these countries, such as they are, do not create tension at the popular level. The differences in the outlook and values of the Indonesian and Malaysian elites which resulted in a military confrontation between the two countries in the early 1960s, were due to mutual suspicion arising from the different colonial experiences of the two countries. However, in the post-confrontation period these differences have been papered over, and attempts made to strengthen the relationship between the two countries by underlining the common Malay origin of the elites of the two countries.

---


The close and cordial relations obtaining today between the two countries make it plain that they see the inevitability of peaceful co-existence between them, as also the need for them to seek avenues of fruitful co-operation with their neighbours. With its territories widely scattered and its resources severely limited, Malaysia cannot fight subversion and insurgency on its own. It is, therefore, even prepared to accept Indonesia's primacy or leadership in the region. This is reflected in Tun Razak's statement of 11 August 1966 in Jakarta on the occasion of the conclusion of the agreement which put an end to confrontation. He said: "We are fully desirous of seeing a strong, progressive and stable Indonesia which can rise its vast manpower and resources to prevent threats by treacherous elements in this region." Following the withdrawal of British troops from the region, the question of security has now acquired a special urgency for Malaysia. Malaysia has been feeling increasingly insecure since the victory of the Communist forces in Vietnam. It fears that the Communist insurgents would now continue their struggle with redoubled vigour. Besides, the Philippines has not yet wholly waived its claim to Sabah. Malaysia's international outlook is apparently coloured by these considerations. That is why it is anxious to forge closer relations with its big neighbour Indonesia.

--- Quoted in
60 / Vishal Singh, n. 53, p. 333.
Malaysia and Singapore

The Republic of Singapore, consisting of the Singapore Island and the islets adjacent to it, is situated off the southernmost point of the Malay peninsula. The island is physically connected with the Malay peninsula by a three-quarters-of-a-mile-long causeway carrying a road, a railway line, and water pipelines across the intervening Straits of Johore. The Republic is about 225 square miles (581.5 square kilometres) in area. At the end of 1974 the estimated population of Singapore was 2,236,000. The Republic, being situated thus on the shortest sea-route from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean, possesses immense strategic and commercial significance. It was this significance which made the British occupy the Singapore Island in 1819 and make it the centre of their colonial rule in Southeast Asia. Indeed the British developed the island into a great port and an important centre of entrepôt trade in Southeast Asia under Sir Stamford Raffles.

The geopolitical setting will give an idea of the extent to which Malaysia and Singapore depend on each other strategically, economically, and otherwise. The two countries share a common history, a common experience of British colonial rule, and also a common experience of Chinese economic dominance. Malaysia depends on Singapore for shipping, marketing, and trading; and Singapore depends,
equally on Malaysia for its natural resources and other products. Malaysia is thus practically the hinterland of Singapore.

Besides, the security interests of the two countries are so closely interlinked that it would be impracticable for either of them to plan their strategy and tactics in isolation. In fact, during colonial rule and in the years immediately following independence both Malaysia and Singapore were part of a common British defence and security system.

An analysis of the population structure in the two countries is essential to an understanding of the relations between Malaysia and Singapore. There is considerable difference in the racial composition of the two countries. The Chinese constitute as much as 76 per cent of the total population of Singapore. The Malays form 15 per cent; the Indians and the Pakistanis account for about 7 per cent; and the rest hail from other parts of the world. Singapore is thus predominantly a Chinese state. In Malaysia the Malays constitute 46.8 per cent of the total population; the Chinese 35.02 per cent; and the Indians and the Pakistanis, 10.52 per cent. In West Malaysia the Malays constitute about 50 per cent of the total population.

Not only has this difference in the population structure influenced the political evolution of the two countries, but


it has also been an important factor in determining the relationship between them. The pattern of politics in Malaysia differs from that of Singapore. Until 1969 Malaysia was ruled by an alliance of three political parties — the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), the MCA, and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). Now the Government of Malaysia is in the hands of a coalition of political groups called Barisan Nasional (National Front). Singapore on the other hand has been ruled ever since independence by the multiracial People's Action Party (PAP). The basic fact of Malaysian and Singapore politics is that the Malays dominate the Government of Malaysia, whereas the Chinese dominate the Government of Singapore. The Government in Kuala Lumpur looks upon Singapore as a potential centre of Chinese nationalism, whereas the Government in Singapore regards the Malaysian political system based on racial or communal rather than economic interests as semi-feudal.

The difference in the racial composition of the two countries sometimes complicates the relationship between them. For instance, after the riot in Kuala Lumpur on 13 May 1969, Malaysia came under Emergency rule for some time. The spill-over effects of this riot were felt in Singapore; there was much anxiety there over the future stability of Malaysia; so much so that the Government felt it expedient to safeguard its own internal security by mobilizing its troops.

---

Rajaratnam, the Foreign Minister of Singapore, said on 9 May 1970, about a year after the riots:

In Singapore and Malaysia the races that make up their respective societies are historically associated with three of the most populous countries in Asia—China, India, and Indonesia. An open race war, with all its horrendous implications, will not find these three countries to maintain a judicial and unemotional impartiality before a deadly racial contest for dominance. 65

The riot raised the question whether the Alliance Government was at all capable of resolving racial tensions. It also made people wonder whether any recrudescence of such a riot in Kuala Lumpur would not spread to Singapore.

Do conditions exist in Malaysia and Singapore for a viable system? Malaysia is a country with about 130,000 square miles of territory and a population of 11,759,949. In population and size it thus bears comparison with most of its neighbours and with many other states in the world. In terms of its natural resources too it can lay claim to be a viable state. On the other hand Singapore's population is just over two million, and its territory is a bare 224 square miles in area. No point on the island is more than nine miles from the sea. Both are too small by any standard. Besides, its natural resources are meagre. Its entire economy rests on its position as a harbour and as centre of international trade. Its viability as a state is, therefore, far from being strong.

65 Sunday Times (Singapore), 10 May 1970.
In internal politics both Malaysia and Singapore pursue an anti-Communist policy. They are determined to fight Communist subversion and to have close co-operation with each other in the field of security. It is Communism which Malaysia and Singapore dread most. Singapore’s Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, views the problem of Communism not so much from the point of view of the relationship obtaining between the Chinese and Malay communities in Malaysia as from the point of view of the long-term strategy of Communism.

In answer to a question he said in 1971:

The Communists consider themselves as a Malayan Communist Party (Malaya includes Singapore here). And their strategy is based on a Malay peninsula plus Singapore. As I see it the strategy is first to gain ground and ascendancy in Malay Peninsula, West Malaysia. If because of social, communal, economic and other problems, they are able to exploit these grievances and gain the ascendancy, then later on they will settle Singapore. 66

The main objectives of the foreign policies of both countries are economic development and security. On 16 December 1963 M. Ghazali bin Shafie, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Malaysia, stated in the course of a speech at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs that “Malaysia and Singapore have a common interest in mutual stability and prosperity as well as in the stability and advancement of their neighbours”. 67

66 Straits Times (Singapore), 2 May 1971.
67 M. Ghazali bin Shafie, “Southeast Asia in the Seventies” (speech made at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, 16 December 1963). Also See Rajaratnam in his broadcast on 5 April 1968.
However, the objectives of the two neighbours do not always correspond to actual policies. In pursuing their policies the two countries are affected by mutual suspicion or distrust. Let us briefly survey the areas of this mutual distrust before we pass on to any analysis of its role in vitiating the actual implementation of the policies of the two countries.

The first strain in the relations between the two countries arose when Lee Kuan Yew welcomed the Malaysian Chinese capitalists who had been disturbed by the riot of 13 May 1969 and invited them to invest in Singapore. Tunku Abdul Rahman criticized Singapore's Prime Minister for doing so. He made an indirect reference to Singapore by calling it "a certain neighbouring country" and chided it for taking advantage of Malaysia's problems. On 7 May 1970 Utusan Melayu elaborated the criticism thus in its editorial:

All the people of Malaysia know that the neighbouring country the Tunku meant is Singapore. This is because some time ago ... Singapore tried to persuade the Malaysian investors and intellectuals to go to Singapore by offering various facilities and privileges.... We feel it is our duty to state frankly here that the attempt to reduce the number of Malaysian investors is tantamount to an attempt to damage our national economy and the act of persuading our intellectuals to leave the country and settle elsewhere is aimed at crippling the administration of our country. 69

The newspaper described the Singapore Prime Minister's attempt to attract Malaysian Chinese to invest in Singapore as a sabotage.

68 For Lee Kuan Yew's statement, see A. Josey, Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore, 1963), p. 393.
69 Quoted in Wilson, n. 64, p. 40. Utusan Melayu is a Malay newspaper which reflects UMNO views.
Another crisis in the relations between the two countries occurred in 1970, when the Government of Singapore ordered the capture of some Malay youths of Malaysia at the south end of the causeway and had their hair cut. This was part of the PAP's puritanical campaign against the hippies. The incident and the fuss that both sides made over it illustrate the fragility of Malaysia-Singapore relations.

Again, there was a fracas over the refusal of the Government of Singapore to permit the Utusan group of newspapers (Utusan Malayu, Utusan Malaysia, and Utusan Zaman) to circulate in Singapore unless they brought out separate Singapore editions, covering developments in Singapore. According to Government sources in Singapore, the Kuala Lumpur editions accentuated the communal feeling in Singapore's Malay minority. In May 1971 the PAP Government ordered the arrest of the chief editors and executives of Nanyang Siang Pau (Singapore) for allegedly receiving payment from Malaysia for write-ups calculated to create disorder in Singapore. Shortly after the arrests, Jek Yuen Thong, Singapore's Minister of Culture, stated that Singapore's economic development had aroused envy in certain "foreign economic groups" which

... do not wish to see us progress rapidly for it will only reflect on their own inefficiency. Therefore, they will have to sabotage our achievements in as many ways as possible. One of these will be to sow seeds of hatred and

---

70 Ibid., p. 41.
misunderstandings among our people... And newspapers ... become the most likely target of infiltration. 71

Both Malaysia and Singapore have been pursuing a realistic defence policy. They have been emphasizing the need for self-reliance in the matter of defence resources so as to make aggression from any quarter difficult. Malaysia underwent traumatic experience during the period of its formation, its confrontation with Indonesia, and the separation of Singapore. As noted elsewhere in this study, it was the British forces which guarded Malaysia against Indonesia's "Crush Malaysia" campaign. Although Malaysia was enabled to stand up to Indonesia during the period of confrontation, it was reduced in size owing to Singapore's separation. The leaders of Malaysia realized the need to establish relations with other countries of the world independently of the British connexion. They, therefore, established contacts and later opened diplomatic relations between their country and the countries of West Asia and Eastern Europe. With a view to fostering regional co-operation, they made their country a member of ASEAN along with other neighbours, viz Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. We shall discuss this subject of co-operation through ASEAN in detail separately in the next chapter.

Malaysia and Singapore have both evinced deep interest in the economic development and political stability of the

71 Quoted, ibid.
countries of the region through co-operation. They realize that the best solution for the problems of their countries and their inter-relationship can be found only through effective regional co-operation. Leaders in both countries believe in continued efforts to sustain their search for regional co-operation. Singapore, because of its small size and meagre resources, cannot afford to think in terms of regional defence. Its dominant interests are economic.

The Independence of Singapore Agreement signed between Malaysia and Singapore in 1965 made provision for a Joint Defence Council under which Malaysia undertook to help Singapore in external defence. Singapore allowed Malaysia to use its military base facilities for external defence:

"Each party will undertake not to enter into any treaty or agreement with a foreign country which may be detrimental to the independence and defence of the territory of the other party." 72 This agreement thus clearly pinpointed the interdependence of the defence of Singapore and the defence of Malaysia. This interdependence was stressed further when both Malaysia and Singapore repeatedly expressed in public their faith in the "indivisible defence" of the two countries. In retrospect, it is clear that it was no more than a device to draw the other Commonwealth partners into some kind of a

72 Independence of Singapore Agreement, 1965, Article V. Obtained from the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the Director, Karnial Singh Sandhu, and his staff at the Institute for their help and co-operation during his field work.
new defence arrangement. Such an arrangement came eventually into existence in the form of a five-power defence arrangement. It may, however, be noted here that the Joint Defence Council and the combined Operations Committee set up after separation were finally dissolved. Following this, there arose strains in Malaysia-Singapore relations.

The British decision in 1968 to withdraw militarily from their base in Singapore and from their commitments under the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement before the end of 1971 came about a year after the end of confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. This led to fresh thinking on the alternatives available in the matter of defence arrangements, i.e., arrangements for the defence and security of Malaysia and Singapore and for the protection of British economic interests in the region.

A 5-Power Ministerial meeting took place in London in April 1971. The five Powers -- Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom -- declared in a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting:

... in the event of any form of armed attack externally organised or supported or the threat of such attack against Malaysia or Singapore, their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in relation to such attack or threat. 74

---


A 5-Power defence arrangement thus came into effect on 1 November 1971. This newly formed defence arrangement, although it replaced the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA) was in fact of much less importance than its predecessor. Under this arrangement, the five member countries established the followings:

(a) an integrated air-defence system for Malaysia and Singapore to be controlled by an Air Defence Council;
(b) a 5-Power Naval Advisory Working Group; and
(c) a Joint Consultative Council to provide a forum for regular consultations at senior official level on matters relating to defence.

A communique issued in London on 16 April 1971 after the meeting of the Defence Ministers of the five member countries read:

The Ministers also declared, in relation to the external defence of Malaysia and Singapore, that in the event of any form of armed attack externally organized or supported or the threat of such attack against Malaysia and Singapore, their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures would be taken jointly or separately in relation to such attack or threat. 75

The arrangement, which is still in force, forbids deployment of foreign troops to quell internal conflicts which pose a threat to Malaysia's security. It is based on the assumption that the defence of Malaysia and Singapore is indivisible. Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom are pledged to continue to give assistance for the development

75 Ibid.
of the defence capabilities of Malaysia and Singapore. The five Powers are also agreed about arrangements for the stationing of ANZUK (Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) forces in Malaysia and Singapore. The Malaysian leaders, however, hold that the 5-Power defence arrangement serves the purpose of giving a "psychological assurance to Western investors".

No study of the problems of the national security of Malaysia or, for that matter, of Singapore would be complete without a consideration of the fluid political situation developing in the Straits of Malacca. The rivalry between the Super Powers in the matter of establishing influence on an international scale has brought into focus the commercial, political, and strategic importance of the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean. We have already discussed earlier in this chapter the Japanese, Soviet, and US views on the question of internationalizing the Straits of Malacca as against the insistence of the coastal states, viz Indonesia and Malaysia, that other states can have no right in the waterway except the right of innocent passage. The coastal states, however, are not in full agreement with each other.

The northern part of the Straits of Singapore is connected with the Straits of Malacca. Indeed the Straits of Singapore, about sixty miles long, can be regarded as constituting a continuation of the southern end of the Straits.

of Malacca. In the whole of Southeast Asia Singapore is the largest port. Even though it is not situated on the Straits of Malacca, it is directly affected by developments in and around that waterway. Given the nature of its complete dependence on the Straits of Malacca for its international trade and commerce, the importance of the straits for Singapore can hardly be exaggerated. Singapore is not, therefore, as enthusiastic as Malaysia and Indonesia with regard to the claim of territorial sovereignty that the coastal states have advanced over the Straits of Malacca. Malaysia, although it benefits from the trade and commerce flowing through this Straits of Malacca, has now developed the port facilities at Johore Baru and Port Klang.

Singapore's economy is export-oriented, although it is also concerned with ship-repairing and shipbuilding. Its industry is almost entirely dependent on the import of raw materials. Any disruption of free transit would affect its economy. Free and uninterrupted navigation through the straits is, however, detrimental sometimes to the interests of the coastal states; for they are anxious to ensure navigational safety and environmental integrity, and they cannot do so without some restriction or control on navigation. In this connexion we may mention that a serious accident took place off Singapore in January 1975, when a 237,000-ton Japanese carrier called Showa Maru discharged 300,000 gallons of crude oil in the waterway. Another accident occurred off Singapore in April 1975, when a collision between the 78,000-ton Liberian crude carrier Cactus Queen and the
Tosa Maru resulted in the sinking of the latter.

On 16 November 1971 Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore declared that navigational safety in the Straits of Malacca was the responsibility of the coastal states concerned. Indonesia and Malaysia agreed that straits should be open to international navigation in keeping with the principle of innocent passage, but added that the Straits of Malacca were not an international strait. Singapore only took note of this position.

The strategic perceptions of the littoral states of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region differ from one another. Singapore, for instance, is in favour of a strategic arrangement for counteracting Soviet and Chinese influence. Malaysia, on the other hand, is in favour of cultivating friendly relations with both the Communist countries -- the Soviet Union and China. In May 1973 Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, proposed the establishment of a special task force in the Southeast Asian region consisting of troops drawn from Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, and the United States for checking Soviet and Chinese penetration in Southeast Asian waters. The proposal, however, elicited no response either from Malaysia or from Indonesia.

77 Speech by Tengku Rithauddeen, n. 39, p. 2.
78 Joint statement issued on behalf of the Republic of Indonesia, the Federation of Malaysia, and the Republic of Singapore, 16 November 1971.
Singapore enjoys a kind of special, at times complex, relationship with Malaysia dating back to their common experience of British colonial rule and of Chinese economic dominance. Both countries pursue an anti-Communist policy. The question, therefore, is: Why do the leaders of the two countries not always get on well? To find an answer to this, we shall have to go back to, and analyse, the bickerings that led to Singapore's separation from the Federation of Malaysia. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, was a member of the Malay aristocracy. During the entire period of his leadership he experimented with the formula of letting the Chinese run the economy while the Malays ran the State. He was in favour of giving Chinese merchants and business men a free hand in the country's business and commerce so long as political power remained in the hands of the Malays. When, therefore, Lee Kuan Yew and his PAP colleagues decided to contest elections in 1964 on a "Malaysian Malaysia" platform, Malay politicians (UMNO leaders of the Alliance Party) in Kuala Lumpur construed it as a threat to their position and authority. They felt that Lee Kuan Yew was trying to become not only the leader of all the Chinese in Malaysia but also the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The possibility of a Chinese becoming Prime Minister was anathema to Malay wielders of political power in Kuala Lumpur. This development, _inter alia_, culminated in Singapore's separation in 1965.

Besides, certain events in Singapore during 1964-65 led to a deterioration in relations between the UMNO and the PAP. After the creation of Malaysia in 1963 Singapore became
a part of Malaysia, and the Malays living there felt encouraged presumably by the thought that their isolation had come to an end and that they had been brought under a polity in which real political power lay in the hands of fellow Malays in Kuala Lumpur. They expected the Government to look to their upliftment. The State Government of Singapore, however, did not accord any special treatment to any one community. The Singapore Malays expressed their discontent over an urban development scheme of Singapore which led to their displacement. Malay opposition to the State Government of Singapore was articulated by the various Malay organisations. The UMNO Secretary-General, Dato Syed Ja'afar Albar, accused Lee Kuan Yew of attempting to "break the backbone of the Malay community in Singapore". There occurred communal riots in Singapore, and the PAP was accused of being an anti-Malay party. Differences between the Government of Singapore and the Government of Malaysia thus date back to the days of separation, and they are embedded in the history of the two countries.

Malaysia and Thailand

Statement of the Problem

Thailand is Malaysia's immediate neighbour in the north. The two countries have common borders. Pattani,

---


Yala, Setun, and Narathiwat are the four southern border provinces of Thailand which touch northern Malaysia. Originally these provinces belonged to Malaya but were incorporated into the Thai kingdom during 1785-1838. They are inhabited predominantly by a Muslim population called Thai-Muslim. The Thai-Muslims constitute 4 per cent of the total population.

Apart from close geographical proximity and cultural affinities providing easy accessibility, inter-marriages

---


83 The Thai-Muslims may be divided into two categories — Malays and non-Malays. The Malays are in a majority, while the Thais, the Indians, the Pakistanis, and the Chinese make up about 20 per cent of the Thai-Muslim population. The following table furnishes population statistics (as of 30 December 1973) relating to the four southern provinces of Thailand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Percentage of the Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pattani</td>
<td>387,642</td>
<td>192,728</td>
<td>195,114</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yala</td>
<td>218,546</td>
<td>113,843</td>
<td>104,703</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narathiwat</td>
<td>371,930</td>
<td>188,816</td>
<td>183,116</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setun</td>
<td>125,501</td>
<td>65,003</td>
<td>60,498</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 1,103,819 560,389 543,430 Average 75 (523,150)

Ibid., pp. 197-8.

84 According to the 1973 census, the Muslims in the four provinces account for about 75 per cent of the total local population; they constitute the majority community in Setun (83 per cent), Pattani and Narathiwat (72 per cent), and Yala (61 per cent).
between Malay families on either side of the Malaysian-Thai borders have given rise to the problem of Malay identification with Malaysia. The Thai-Muslims have close family ties with the people of the east coast of Malaysia, particularly with those of Kelantan. Besides, there is the problem of seasonal migration of labourers. These factors constitute the core of a serious minority problem which has engendered racial and cultural tensions between the Malays and the Thai Government. Terrorist activity and Communist insurgency on either side of the Malaysian-Thai borders have further complicated the ethnic-cultural problem.

The people of the four southern Thai provinces, most of whom are Malay ethnically and culturally, have resisted "Thai-isation". They have resolutely opposed attempts to abolish the use of the Malay language and to introduce Thai names. Some of them are frankly secessionists and have formed themselves into a front known as Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Republik Patani (National Liberation Front of the Pattani Republic). The Front attacks police installations to collect ammunition. It distributes pamphlets and newsletters in the villages and tries to indoctrinate the villagers in separatist doctrine. It fosters hostility against the Thai administration.

---

85 The Bangkok World, 2 May 1971.
Threat of Communist Insurgency and Thai-Malaysian Joint Co-operation

This sentiment for separatism among the Thai-Muslims and the ethnic-cultural differences between the Muslims and the Buddhists are being fanned and exploited not only by the Communist insurgents but also by certain ultra-nationalists, particularly the Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS), the erstwhile Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), which preaches pan-Islamic religious ideals. Says Haemindra: "A common interest, a rugged terrain and dense jungles, and close geographic proximity between these groups provides for co-operation and favours subversive activities."

The movements of the Communist insurgents between Malaysia and Thailand have posed a serious border threat to both countries. The two countries have jointly set up headquarters in Songkla for operations against the insurgents. In order to fight Communist subversion and to prevent a Malay-Communist collision, they have also signed a border agreement (March 1965). Apart from fighting the Communists, they

---

86 Haemindra, n. 82, p. 89. In the post-war period the PMIP (now the PAS - Parti Islam Se Malaysia) emerged as the champion of the cause of the Malay minorities in the neighbouring countries. It supported the cause of the Patani Malays in States like Kelantan and Trengganu. It described the Thai Government's language and education policies as discriminatory against the Malays. It alleged that Bangkok had neglected the southern territory. The PMIP had in the past advocated the merger of Patani province in Malaysia. Malaysian-Thai relations ran into rough weather on account of that demand. See R.K. Vasil, Politics in a Plural Society (Singapore, 1971), pp. 163-72; and Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics (London, 1970), p. 229.
organize joint patrolling of the borders and give hot pursuit to guerrillas on either side of the borders. The existence of a guerrilla base in southern Thailand, where the MCP continues its operations against Malaysia, has created serious security problems for Malaysia. The Communist guerrillas belong to the MCP and are mainly Chinese. They had, during the Emergency (1948-60), fought against the British and the Government of Malaya. They are believed to be operating under the directions of Chin Peng. Activists of the MCP have set up their base on Thai territory, particularly in the Betong and Sadao districts in Yala and Songkla, a jungle area full of large rubber plantations owned by people of Chinese origin, in order to engage in guerrilla war.

In view of the threat posed by the insurgents to the security of both Malaysia and Thailand, the two Governments have launched joint military operations against the insurgents along their common borders.

General Border Committee (GBC)

One of the measures taken to fight the insurgents is the General Border Committee (GBC). The GBC consists of the Malaysian and Thai representatives. After its thirteenth

87 Alexander Close, "Thailand Border Alarms", Far Eastern Economic Review, no. 9, 27 May 1966, p. 396. In 1955 the two countries signed an agreement now known as the Sawasdi-Salam Agreement. This agreement serves as the legal basis for bilateral co-operation. Under the agreement Malaysia is permitted to pursue Communist insurgents up to a maximum five miles within Thai territory.
meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on 8 October 1971, the GBC, among other things, declared as follows in a Press release:

In compliance with CPM June 1968 directive calling for a revival of the armed struggle in West Malaysia there has been a noticeable increase in the number of incursions by groups of Communist terrorists into Malaysian territory. They have resorted to some tactics of terrorizing the people along the Northern Border of West Malaysia in order to obtain support. This clearly exposes their bankrupt policy in that they have to resort to intimidation in order to obtain support from the people which is so vital to their survival. The Committee observed that land operations had been intensified by security forces on both sides of the border. These operations continued to be marked by close co-ordination and understanding between the security forces of both countries. The Committee recognized that this close co-operation was a major factor in the successful mounting of anti-terrorist operations.

At the eighteenth meeting of the GBC in Kuala Lumpur on 10 June 1974, Tan Sri M. Ghazali bin Shafie, Minister of Home Affairs, said:

I would like to say here and now that the Malaysian Government has never been ambiguous in its national objectives of restructuring and maintaining a political-legal order as envisioned in, and in accordance with, Rukunegara. Let it not be misconstrued that the sanguine approach in international relations was a sign of compromise with regard to our national ideals and objectives.

Let these mischief-makers be reminded that they would miserably be unfulfilled in their wishdreams /sic/ because the ties of friendship between Malaysia and Thailand are ... enduring. The fate and future of our two countries are intertwined. on our part nothing can disturb this friendship /between Malaysia and Thailand/.

nourished by history and nurtured by the hope of a beautiful future for our two peoples and the peoples of the region. 89

It is worth noting that notwithstanding the changes in the leadership in Malaysia (where Datuk Hussein Omn became Prime Minister following Tun Abdul Razak's death) and Thailand (where a coup led by Admiral Sengad Chaloryoo brought to power a military regime with Thanin Kraivichien, a civilian, as Prime Minister in October 1976) and the hurdles in the way of joint Malaysian-Thai military operations, the two countries continue to work in co-operation to this day. In 1971, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak, assured the then Prime Minister of Thailand, Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, that his country would not interfere in the domestic affairs of Thailand.

However, the repeated agreements for joint co-operation between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur have, instead of reducing guerrilla activity, only increased such activity. The Communists play upon the sentiment of the Muslims in favour of secession and set them up against the Thai Government. The growing link between the Communist guerrillas, the Muslim secessionists, and the bandit gangs very often creates security problems for both Thailand and Malaysia.

Joint Drive Against the Insurgents

On 1 August 1971 Malaysia and Thailand started patrolling their territorial waters jointly and without a stop to check Communist infiltration and smuggling. According to Antara, when such joint patrolling was first undertaken, both Malaysia and Thailand mobilized some thirty armed speedboats and two hundred policemen and officials. Each country allows the other's patrol boats to enter its territorial waters in the course of such joint patrolling. Patrolling is expected to continue until both countries feel that Communist activity and smuggling have ended.

Malaysia and Thailand have, in the interest of eliminating the insurgents, agreed to allow each other's armies to cross the borders while in hot pursuit. In October 1971 the Bangkok Post reported: "At least one Malaysian patrol had crossed the border into Thailand to join the drive. The Thai forces concentrated their campaign on jungle-clad areas along the Mae-ward Betong Highway in the flap of Thai territory jutting into Malaysia."

On 6 September 1972 Enak Salleh bin Abbas, Malaysia's Solicitor-General, and Vijasethaput, Thailand's Under Secretary of State for National Development, signed an agreement which determined the boundaries of the territorial waters of the two countries in the South China Sea. Enak Sallen later remarked that they had agreed to incorporate

91 Antara, 2 August 1971.
92 Bangkok Post, 3 October 1971.
this agreement in the draft agreement on the boundaries of their respective territorial waters in the northern part of the Straits of Malacca.

In 1973 Malaysia increased the strength of its forces on the Malaysian-Thai borders to 16 infantry battalions and 6 units of the paramilitary Police Field Force (PFF). These troops were deployed near the Betong Salient, a small strip of Thai territory bordering Malaysia. The MCP's twelfth regiment (primarily Chinese) operates in the Betong Salient, where Chin Peng is believed to have his headquarters.

Fear of Chinese Aid to the Communists

It is generally believed by the leaders in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur that the Communist parties of Malaysia and Thailand receive aid from China. On 6 September 1972 the Deputy Chairman of the National Executive Council, General Prapass Charusathira, said that in the past three years the Communist Party of Thailand had received six to seven million baht from the Chinese Communists through Hong Kong. He stated that documents seized by the Thai police clearly proved this. He added: "The amount is smaller than one would imagine. It shows that the Communists are trying to finance the activities as cheaply as possible. It also indicates that the Communists probably had local sources of finance."

---

95 Bangkok Post, 7 and 20 September 1972.
Malaysia and Thailand Want Southeast Asia Peace Zone

On 12 June 1975 Malaysia and Thailand reiterated their support for, and commitment to, the establishment of a "Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality" in Southeast Asia -- free from external interference. This, they declared in a joint communiqué issued at the end of a 3-day official visit by the Thai Prime Minister, Kurkrit Premoij, to Malaysia. He and the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, called on the Big Powers to help in the reconstruction and economic development of the countries in Southeast Asia in the interest of promoting peace, progress, and prosperity in the region. The leaders reaffirmed their belief that "enduring peace, progress, and stability could be established through friendly relations among states in Southeast Asia based on mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of one another."

The increase in the Muslim and Communist insurgencies on the Malaysian-Thai borders has given rise to some complex problems. Now and then strains develop in the relations between the two countries over the implementation of the Joint Border Agreement signed in 1965. Kuala Lumpur sometimes has a feeling that the MCP is using Thai territory as a sanctuary for its subversive activities. Bangkok at times suspects that "Malaysian security forces aid and abet Muslim separatists and provide shelter to bandits who escape into northern Malaysia to elude the Thai police". Indeed the

96 Times of India (New Delhi), 12 June 1975.
people of some areas in Southern Thailand have often demonstrated against the presence of Malaysian troops. Under these circumstances, the Thai Government went so far as to demand in 1976 the withdrawal of Malaysian Police Field Force personnel from Betong and called for a revision of the 12-year-old border agreement. It may be mentioned here that Malaysian troops had been stationed for many years under an agreement in the Thai border town of Betong for tracking down the hide-outs of the Communists. The Malaysian Government contended that any country had under international law the right to send its forces into the territory of another country in hot pursuit of bandits or rebels, that it had only availed itself of this right in sending its forces into Thailand in hot pursuit of Communist insurgents, and that such a right had been provided for in the border agreement as well.

Since the Malaysian Communists pose the same threat to the security of Malaysia as the Muslim secessionists do to Thailand, the problem, both Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok realize, is to arrive at a bilateral border agreement so as to counter the common menace of Communism and Muslim irredentism. The present regimes in the two countries are anxious to work out details with a view to making co-operation between their security forces more effective. In fact, their concern to fight the Communists along the border would be clear from the statement made by the Thai Prime Minister, Thanin Karalivichien, during his visit to Indonesia on
12 December 1976. He said: "The Communist threat is imminent, whether internal or external, because they use the tactic that wherever weakest, they would attack that point [sic]." He added: "So if the time comes we will have to join hands and fight to the last."

Malaysia and the Philippines

The Philippines is Malaysia's neighbour on the east. The State of Sabah is situated close to the Sulu Islands of the Philippines. The Sulu Islands can be described as stepping-stones between Sabah and the southern part of the Philippines, for they fringe the northern tip of Sabah. From time immemorial Muslims settled in the Sulu Islands have been visiting their relations living in the northern part of Sabah and vice versa. The Muslims living in the southern part of the Philippines thus have close ethnic and cultural affinities with the Malay people residing in Sabah. As people in both the territories understand Malay and related dialects, there is easy communication between them. The elites in both the countries understand and speak English. Besides, the political systems operating in the two countries are both in accordance with the principles of Western democracy. Thus in form and substance the Malaysian Parliamentary system, which is patterned on the British system, is quite close to the Philippine Presidential system, which is modelled on the

98 New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 12 December 1976.
American polity. Nationalists in both the countries achieved independence through peaceful transfer of power. Since both the countries are faced with the problem of Communist guerrillas, they continue to maintain with their respective erstwhile metropolitan Powers either treaties of mutual defence or other arrangements for defence. Both neighbours fear Communist China and the overseas Chinese living on their respective territories.

Notwithstanding their common interests, the territory of Sabah (known as North Borneo till September 1963) has been an apple of discord between Malaysia and the Philippines since 1962. Since the Sabah dispute has been an important factor in Malaysian-Philippine relations and involves both historical and legal questions, the origin of the dispute should be briefly recounted here.

In 1877 the Sultan of Brunei ceded North Borneo to Baron de Overbeck, an agent of the British firm of Dent Brothers. The following year Overbeck, hearing that the Sultan of Sulu had a claim over North Borneo, entered into a treaty with him. The Malaysian-Philippine dispute over North Borneo (Sabah) now centres round this treaty -- the Philippine Government calling it merely a lease, and Britain and Malaysia interpreting it as cession. When the

99 Malaya-Philippine Relations, n. 11, p. 1.
Philippines first laid claim to North Borneo, it brought together President Sukarno of Indonesia and President Macapagal of the Philippines in opposition to Malaysia. Malaysia, however, rejected the Philippine claim to Sabah. The Philippine claim came at a time when Indonesia was carrying on a policy of confrontation against Malaysia over the question of formation of Malaysia. Despite its opposition to the proposal to create the Federation of Malaysia, the Philippines did not support the military aspects of Sukarno's confrontation policy. On the other hand it preferred to play the honest-broker.

Malaysian-Philippine relations ran into rough weather following the declaration of Malaysia Day in 1963. Diplomatic relations between the two were broken. Diplomatic relations, however, were resumed at the Consular level in May 1964. Though diplomatic relations at the Ambassadorial level were not restored till June 1966, the Philippine Government managed to mediate between Malaysia and Indonesia during the period of confrontation. Malaysia and the Philippines were both anxious to work on some plan of regional association. Together with Thailand, they jointly took the initiative in forming the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) in 1961. Throughout

101 Peter Boyce, n. 7, p. 112.

102 President Garcia announced that Philippine foreign policy was "aimed at uniting the 'free' nations of Southeast Asia within a political, spiritual and economic association". Ibid., p. 110. Also, Manila Times, 20 December 1953. ASA came into being following the Bangkok Declaration of 31 July 1961.
its existence ASA was plagued by the rivalry between Malaya/Malaysia and the Philippines.

Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines concluded an agreement in Manila on 5 August 1963. Under this agreement, known as the Manila Accord, the concept of Maphilindo offered by the Philippine President Macapagal was accepted. The Accord declared that the three countries

... share a primary responsibility for the maintenance of stability and security of the area from subversion in any form or manifestation in order to preserve their respective national identities and to ensure the peaceful development of their respective countries and their region.

It also stated that "as an initial step towards the establishment of Maphilindo", the three countries would hold "frequent and regular consultations at all levels to be known as

Mushawarah Maphilindo". Maphilindo, however, proved abortive. Unlike ASA, which was evolved over a period of time, Maphilindo was sought to be brought into being all of a sudden and in too great a hurry. The idea of Maphilindo was conceived in the context of the Indonesian-Malaysian confrontation and the Philippine claim to Sabah.

Malaysia and the Philippines signed an anti-smuggling agreement on 1 September 1967 to co-operate in stopping the

103 Manila Summit Statement and Declaration in Mezerik, n. 13, Appendix F, pp. 102-8.

the illegal entry of goods into their respective countries. In December 1967 the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, paid a visit to the Philippines. He held discussions there on the implementation of the anti-smuggling agreement signed in September 1967, as also on the Philippine labour problems in Sabah.

In 1966, with Marcos becoming the President, the Philippines restored its relations with Malaysia and joined Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand to form ASEAN. However, no sooner did ASEAN get off the ground than the Corregidor incident occurred. This incident jeopardized co-operation between the two countries by bringing to light the existence of a secret force of Muslims trained by the Philippines to infiltrate Sabah.

The Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, and the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Narciso Ramos, agreed, during an ASEAN meeting in Jakarta in August 1968, to a cooling-off period in the relations between their two countries. The move, however, came to nothing because, in the meantime, the Philippine Congress passed a bill seeking to redefine the territorial boundaries of the Philippines. This bill was, inter alia, an attempt to assert Philippine sovereignty over Sabah. Malaysia reacted by suspending

diplomatic relations with the Philippines and withdrawing its diplomatic staff. It also abrogated the anti-smuggling agreement it had signed with the Philippines on account of Tun Mustapha's opposition to it. Meanwhile it was widely rumoured that Sabah had established active contacts with the Muslim insurgents in the southern part of the Philippines. In March 1970 the Philippine Press carried reports that a number of Muslims trained abroad had returned to the Philippines.

In June 1971 a large number of Filipino Muslims who were returning from a mosque in Mindanao were killed by the Philippine constabulary. The Malaysian Prime Minister condemned the killing at the close of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Conference in Kuala Lumpur in December 1971. Later the Philippine Government allowed envoys from Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, and some other Muslim countries to pay a visit to Mindanao to gain a first-hand knowledge of the situation there. The envoys confirmed the killing but added

---

107 Ibid.

108 Tun Mustapha, the then Chief Minister of Sabah, was born in a Sabah village. He, however, claims to have been descended on his father's side from the Sultan of Sulu. He established contacts with the guerrilla movements during the Second World War through relatives in the Palawan Islands which fringe the Sulu archipelago. Ibid., p. 453.


110 Far Eastern Economic Review, 11 December 1971. The mosque massacre was also condemned by Colonel M. Gaddafi of Libya, who accused the Philippine Government of seeking to exterminate Philippine Muslims.
that it was an "internal problem" of the Philippines.

Philippine officials gave publicity to the statements allegedly made by captured Muslims confessing their receiving military training in Malaysia. Malaysian officials, however, denied imparting any such training to the Muslims of the Philippines.

The Fourth Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference took place between 22 and 26 March 1973. The Libyan Foreign Minister moved a resolution condemning the policy of the Philippine Government towards the Muslims living in the southern part of the Philippines. The resolution called for a rupture of diplomatic and economic relations with the Philippines. Fearing lest the Libyan resolution should make an adverse impact on ASEAN, which stood for stability, peace, and economic development in the Southeast Asian region, the Indonesian and Malaysian delegates in the conference tried their best to diffuse the situation. Earlier President Gaddafi of Libya had sent a special envoy to Jakarta, and Kuala Lumpur as to the capitals of other Muslim countries to urge the Indonesian and Malaysian leaders, to help their fellow Muslims in the Philippines. The Malaysian Prime

111 Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 21 July 1972.

112 According to Noble, "The contrived wording of the Malaysian denials suggest that the spokesmen cannot or do not want to speak for Mustapha. Both the vagueness and the contradictions indicate that whatever Mustapha is doing, he does not want to be publicly identified as giving anything other than refuge to Philippine Muslims." See Noble, n. 106, p. 480.

Minister, Tun Razak, and the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, however paid no heed to the Libyan representative's appeal to them to consider the problem of the Muslims of the Philippines from a purely religious angle. The two leaders endeavoured to moderate the attitude of the conference. Both of them pointed out the risks involved in interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. The conference thereupon resolved

... not to appeal to peace-loving states, religious and international organizations to exert their good offices with the Government of the Philippines to halt campaigns of violence against the Muslim community, to ensure their safety, and realize their basic liberties.

The conference also appointed a 5-member team to visit the Philippines within three months and urged Indonesia and Malaysia to use their good offices through ASEAN in finding a solution of the problem.

On 9 July 1973 Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, in reply to a question in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), said:

In so far as the request for us to use our good offices with the Philippine Government in this regard, within the context of ASEAN, is concerned, we have made our position known to the Philippine Government for which I am happy to report that the Philippine Government has expressed its appreciation and gratitude.


116 Ibid., p. 1699.
A Member then asked him if the Philippines would be willing
to drop its claim to Sabah in the event of Malaysia giving
an assurance that the Government of Sabah would not provide
sanctuary to the rebels from the Sulu Island, Razak replied:

The Malaysian Government has had no formal
proposal of any kind from the Philippine
Government. The question implies that the
Malaysian Government is involved with the
insurgency problem in Southern Philippines.
This is not true. The insurgency problem is
entirely an internal matter of the
Philippines. 117

The Muslims of Sulu defied the authority of the
Philippine Government, which in its turn sought to crush them.
Barring Jolo, the whole area of Sulu was under the control of
the insurgents. In January 1974, therefore, in an attempt to
 crush the insurgency, the Army launched its counter-insurgency
operations in Jolo. On 7 February 1974 the insurgents
retaliated by attacking Jolo City and the adjoining areas.
The rebels succeeded in capturing Jolo and hoisting the
Bangsa Moro flag there. The defence forces of the
Philippines then strafed Jolo by means of F-86 sabre jets
and bombarded the Sulu Sea with the help of gunboats in an
attempt to recapture Jolo. Hundreds of people were killed
or injured in this encounter. Thousands of people were

117 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Affairs Malaysia,
vol. 6, no. 3, September 1973, p. 41.

118 "Strife in Sulu", Straits Times (Singapore), editorial,
13 February 1974, p. 8. Also see Bernard Wideman, "The
South-Love Goes Down with the Sun", Far Eastern
Economic Review, vol. 83, no. 2, 14 January 1974,
pp. 29-30.

119 "Strife in Sulu", ibid.
rendered homeless and were forced to flee Jolo for Zamboanga.

The fighting in Jolo took place at a time when the Second Islamic Summit Conference was in progress in Lahore. The Arab countries and the other Muslim countries were much exercised over what they regarded as persecution of the Muslims of the Philippines. However, the ASEAN partners of the Philippines once again showed much consideration and sympathy to it. On 19 February 1974 Tun Abdul Razak asked the Philippine Ambassador, Jose Evangelista, for clarifications on the fighting in Jolo. The next day, the Malaysian Prime Minister said at a Press conference that he had informed President Marcos of his concern about the recent fighting in the Sulu area. He hoped that the Philippine Government would endeavour to solve the problem. Prime Minister Razak expressed serious concern over the large influx of refugees into the adjoining state of Sabah. He, however, made it clear that it was an internal affair of the Philippines. Thanks to such a sympathetic attitude on the part of Indonesia and Malaysia, the problem of Muslim insurgency in the southern part of the Philippines was not discussed publicly in the Lahore Summit Conference.

120 Ibid.
121 Straits Times, 21 February 1974, p. 7. The number of refugees who fled to Sabah following the fighting in Jolo are reported to have been about 20,000. These refugees, who had, according to the Philippine Government, supported the Muslim rebels, were welcomed by the then Chief Minister and the strongman of Sabah, Tun Mustapha. See Hans Luther, "Background to the Muslim Seccessionist Movement in the Philippines", Asia Research Bulletin, vol. 3, no. 10, 1-31 March 1974, pp. 2519-22.
After the Jolo incident the Philippine Government realized the need to obtain assurances of support from its ASEAN partners. The Philippine Press alleged repeatedly that the then Chief Minister of Sabah, Tun Mustapha, was supporting the Muslim insurgents. The Philippine Government, however, did not give any publicity to the allegation either for lack of adequate proof or for fear of a possible adverse impact on ASEAN. It, however, spoke out on the Malaysian Government's alleged involvement in the Muslim insurgency. This strained the relations between two countries for some time.

However, anxious to ensure that the situation did not deteriorate, the Philippine Government sought Indonesian mediation in the dispute. In April 1974 Foreign Minister Adam Malik charged both Malaysia and the Philippines with "lack of sincerity at finding a negotiated settlement". He said: "It would be better for both to make another step to solve the dispute."

A conference of the Foreign Ministers of Islamic countries took place in Kuala Lumpur in June 1974. Prior to the inauguration of the conference, the Malaysian Government affirmed that the conference would discuss plans for economic co-operation among the Islamic countries, as also matters


123 Straits Times (Singapore), 5 April 1974, p. 28.
concerning Islamic solidarity. Prime Minister Razak opined that the problem of Muslim insurgency in the southern part of the Philippines should not be discussed in the conference because, according to him, the problem was best tackled by ASEAN. The Arab delegates, however, insisted that their first concern was the problem of Muslim minorities all over the world. And yet Tun Razak made no reference in his inaugural speech in the conference to the Muslim disturbances in the southern part of the Philippines. He thus tried his best to diffuse the issue, not allowing it to jeopardize regional cooperation. The Libyan Foreign Minister nevertheless raised the issue in the conference. The Malaysian Government once again endeavoured to counteract the Arab move and to play down the issue. It worked behind the scenes for a resolution purporting to give President Marcos another opportunity to demonstrate his sincerity with regard to the problem of Muslim insurgency. Being seriously concerned with the prospects of ASEAN, Prime Minister Razak of Malaysia and Foreign Minister Adam Malik of Indonesia contended that the settlement of the problem of the Muslim minority in the Philippines was best left to ASEAN. Razak publicly commended President Marcos's sincerity and praised his attempts


125 Straits Times (Singapore), 22 June 1974.

to integrate Filipino Muslims into the Philippine body politic. He thus facilitated the adoption of the resolution.

When Malaysia came up with its proposal for the neutralization of Southeast Asia, President Marcos of the Philippines, briefing Press correspondents in Manila, said that the Philippines had to choose between two options, viz faith in the United States and the SEATO on the one hand and neutralization on the other. He called neutralization a novel concept to the point where it is an experiment. The Philippine Foreign Secretary, Romulo, characterized the Kuala Lumpur Declaration as a long-range program which will take some time to put into full effect. He further said that such agreements as existed for the settlement of problems between the ASEAN partners would not be disturbed or affected by neutralization. He made it clear in this statement that the Philippine claim to Sabah still stood and that the Philippines was not willing to abandon its alliance with the United States.

Malaysia and Vietnam

Malaysia has learnt from the Vietnam War that the rivalry between the Great Powers is a contributory factor...

---

127 Ibid. Also see Harvey Stockwin, "Marcos Gains Time from the Muslims", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 85, no. 27, 8 July 1974, pp. 10-12.


to regional instability and that, therefore, security and economic co-operation should be the basis for regional co-operation. It is interested in the Great Powers accepting the neutralization proposal.

Malaysia received the Communist victory in Vietnam with joy since it meant the end of the era of war and the establishment of peace in the region. And yet since the Communist victory, the ASEAN states have been interested in seeking a regional instrument with which to meet the Communist challenge. They still regard Communism as posing a threat to the security of ASEAN. The recrudescence of Communist insurgency at home has serious implications for regional security.

Ever since the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) emerged as one of the strongest and most important military forces in the region, a kind of fear psychosis has gripped some of the ASEAN states. This fear of Vietnam is because of its strength and ideology. As early as May 1976

130 This is not to say that there are no internal conflicts in the region. In fact, many localized and historic conflicts are endemic in the countries of the region. But the participation of the Great Powers adds a new dimension to the conflicts.

131 ASEAN's total military strength is less than the SRV's. It captured military hardware worth approximately US $3 billion. Not only does it have the best modern weapons, but its military forces are the largest in the region (as of 1975). Before the Communist victory, the strength of the North Vietnamese forces was 750,000. As against this, the strength of ASEAN's forces was only 622,000. The strength of the military forces of Indonesia, the largest ASEAN Power, was only 266,000. See Military Balance, 1974-75 and 1975-76 (London: Institute of Strategic Studies), pp. 54-60.

132 Most of the insurgencies in the region are ideologically supported by China. No insurgency in the region is reported to have been supported by the SRV.
Malaysia, along with its ASEAN partners, expressed its willingness to co-operate with the SRV and other Indo-Chinese states, so that an atmosphere of peace and co-operation might prevail in the region.

Here it would be relevant to take into account the policy and attitude of the SRV towards the Southeast Asian states. The SRV has made a pragmatic approach to the problem and has behaved in a nationalistic manner. It has made its priority clear, viz. to reconstruct its war-ravaged economy. In pursuance of this policy, the Deputy Foreign Minister of the SRV, Phan Hien, visited the ASEAN countries in July 1976 and declared that the SRV would not export revolution. He also expressed his country's desire for formal bilateral relations with the ASEAN states.

133 Datuk Hussein Onn, Prime Minister of Malaysia, made this appeal in the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Conference in Kuala Lumpur on 14 May 1975. See Asian Almanac (Singapore), vol. 13, no. 32, 9 August 1976, p. 7175.

134 The conditions laid down for such relations are:

(i) Respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence; (ii) pledge not to allow any foreign country to use one's territory as a base for direct and indirect aggression and intervention against other countries in the region; (iii) establishment of friendly and good-neighbourly relations, economic co-operation, and cultural exchange on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, and settlement of disputes among the countries in the region through negotiations in a spirit of equality, mutual understanding, and respect; and (iv) development of co-operation among the countries in the region for the building of prosperity in keeping with each country's specific conditions and for the sake of independence, peace and genuine neutrality in Southeast Asia, thereby contributing to peace in the world. See Straits Times (Singapore), 7 July 1976.
The SRV is also interested in inviting foreign investors to launch joint ventures and to develop its natural resources to mutual advantage. It, however, differentiates between state-to-state relations and party-to-party relations.

Malaysia is interested in improving its relations with the SRV and extending help and co-operation to the SRV in the task of reconstructing its economy. It has been in the forefront in offering co-operation in replanting and rehabilitating the SRV's rubber and palm-oil industries. A number of visits have been exchanged by the two Governments. Malaysia opened its diplomatic mission in Hanoi in February 1976, and its first Ambassador arrived in Hanoi in November of the same year.

Relations between the SRV and the ASEAN states were strained as the result of the former's activities in Kampuchea in 1979. The ASEAN states made no secret of their deep disapproval of Hanoi's intervention in Kampuchea. Hanoi also verbally attacked ASEAN.

Vietnam and the Soviet Union violated the doctrine of neutralization of Southeast Asia when they signed a military agreement with each other late in 1978. The Soviet Union did not observe the essence of the neutralization doctrine when it provided military support to Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea in 1979.