Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION
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It is one of the most respected axioms of foreign policy that the relationship between the two countries is governed primarily by the mutuality of their interests. But who gets what, when and how out of this relationship depends on their respective capabilities, which in turn are affected by several other factors. The United States is a global power and has the power-projection capability. Its policies are buttressed by its military, economic, and political power. In contrast, Indonesia is a smaller country which is at best a regional power. This asymmetry has marked their relationship. The US has during the period under study viewed Indonesia as an important player in the regional context of its new post-Vietnam policy.

The collapse of the United States and its humiliating withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975 concluded one important period of its policy in Southeast Asia. The active and direct strategic involvement of the United States ended with the defeat in Vietnam.

Numbed and disoriented by the sudden turn of events, the United States looked at the region with "psychological disgust". Defeat in the Vietnam war gave a heavy blow to the United States' world prestige. The end of the war was described by the former National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger as "a great national
tragedy for the United States. President Nixon characterized it as a "traumatizing experience for Americans, a brutalizing experience for the Vietnamese and an exploitable opportunity for the Soviets".2

American interest in Southeast Asian affairs remained low after the war ended as the scars on the American psyche needed time to heal.3 American bases in Thailand were closed. The US dominated Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was dissolved, and the Carter Administration evidenced an almost total disinterest in the region as a whole.4

In a major foreign policy speech on 20 February 1977, President Carter outlined the US intentions and goals in the world's then current troubled areas.5 The

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President stated specifically that the US would not intervene directly in Southeast Asia. According to him:

The United States had learned the lessons of the Vietnam War: that it could not always impose its will on other countries, that cooperation won more international support than confrontation, and that the world's most powerful democracy should lead by example.\(^6\)

For a brief period, end of the hostilities in Indochina seemed to augur well for Southeast Asia. Because people generally believed that it marked the end of a long period of external intervention in the region. They did not suspect that peace in the region would be broken again. But Vietnam’s occupation of Kampuchea, beginning in late 1978 made the region once again more confrontationist.

During the second half of the Carter Administration, the politico security environment of Southeast Asia began to change rapidly with the coming of yet another round of conflict. The simmering enmity between Vietnam and Kampuchea ultimately took the shape of a full fledged war in December 1978,\(^7\) Vietnam, with the support of the Soviet Union, invaded Kampuchea, thus, driving the infamous and brutal regime of Pol Pot from

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\(^6\)Congress and the Nation, (1977-80), vol.5, p.32.

Phnom Penh and setting up a regime under Heng Samrin, a former Khmer Rouge military commander. The mainland Southeast Asia again became a quagmire of conflict. The Vietnamese invasion altered the strategic balance in Southeast Asia even more drastically than the events of 1975 in Indochina. It was the Chinese support for the Kampuchean forces opposed to the Vietnamese that turned out to be a catalyst to this change. 8 The Vietnamese action earned the hostility of the People's Republic of China which was friendly to the tyrannical Pol Pot government. Therefore, in order to take punitive action against the Vietnamese, China, after repeated warnings to Vietnam that it should withdraw from Phnom Penh (some of which were made by Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping while on a visit to the United States on 29 January 1979), 9 launched a full scale military onslaught into the region on 30 January 1979, with the declared objective of teaching Vietnam a "lesson". 10 The battle

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8 M.S. Turley and J. Race, "Third Indochina War", Foreign Policy (New York), no.38, Spring 1980, p.94.


10 Meeting with 85 US Senators at Capitol Hill on January 30, Deng left open the possibility of China's use of force against Vietnam to settle a dispute stemming from Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia and Chinese-Vietnamese border tensions. One Senator quoted him as having said that to safeguard China's border, "we need to act appropriately, we can not allow Vietnam to run wild everywhere", Vietnam, Deng said, was (continued...)
lines were now clearly drawn, with the USSR and Vietnam on one side, and the United States and China on the other.

China, supported by ASEAN and the United States, insisted that Vietnam must leave Cambodia. Vietnam, on the other hand, backed by the Soviet Union, demanded that unless and until it gets two guarantees from Cambodia that the Khmer Rouge would play no part in any future Cambodian government, and an end to threat from China, Vietnam would not leave that country. However, the convergence of these factors, introduced to the Indochina conflict the classic formula for "explosive international politics", in which external states had a greater impact on developments than those directly involved.\[1\]

Thus, the region was suddenly transformed into a zone of conflict, changing the strategic environment significantly. Though the conflict did not greatly

affect the economic development and co-operation in Southeast Asia, it created an atmosphere of unease and tension especially in countries nearer to the Indochinese border. They believed that if the tension would continue for a long-time then it would endanger their security. The conflict also prevented the establishment of peaceful relations and cooperation among the ASEAN countries and practically destroyed their hope for the establishment of ZOPFAN (Southeast Asia As a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality).\(^\text{12}\)

\(^\text{12}\)In order to keep the Southeast Asian region free from Super Power intervention, the ASEAN members advocated the idea of ZOPFAN. It was put forward for the first time by Malaysia's Tun Dr. Ismail Abdul Rahman in 1968 as part of his "peace plan". The Ismail plan called for the neutrality of Southeast Asia to be guaranteed by the Big Powers including China and the signing of non-aggression treaties among the countries of the region. The plan was launched in the Kuala Lumpur in 1971 by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers and was reaffirmed in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation signed at the Bali summit of February 1976.

The idea of ZOPFAN was a framework for peace and security in Southeast Asia founded on national and regional resilience. It was a response to the kind of threat commonly perceived by the ASEAN countries. The prime intention of this idea was to prevent Southeast Asia from becoming an arena of international conflict, and its realization required the acceptance not only by all the countries of the region but also by the external powers particularly the great powers. The ASEAN countries believed that the idea of ZOPFAN would reduce great power influence in the region and the regimes of the region would be stabilized and there would be no intervention in their internal affairs by the external powers. For a detail study of ZOPFAN see: M. Ghazali bin Shafie, "The Neutralization of Southeast Asia", Pacific Community (Tokyo), vol.3, no.1, October 1971, pp.110-17; Justus M. Vander Kroef, "ASEAN (continued...)"
Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea also gave the Soviet Union opportunity to build up its military power and expand its influence in the region. The entire strategic equation of the region altered when Vietnam and Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on 3 November 1978. For the first time in the history of the Soviet Union, it succeeded in establishing a military foothold in Southeast Asia through its treaty rights to use the Vietnamese Air and Naval bases at Danang and Cam Ranh Bay. The Soviet presence in the region was not only a challenge to America's Seventh Fleet in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean but also perceived as a threat to the strategic international sealanes that connected the two oceans.

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12 (...continued)


It also increased the Soviet capability to intervene in the domestic affairs of the countries of the region. Thus, the conflict altered the geo-political reality of the region drastically by bringing back the spectre of outside interference so long feared by the ASEAN countries. With the coming of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union into the Southeast Asian forefront, the United States no longer remained the principal guarantor of peace and security of the region.\textsuperscript{16}

The developments following the Vietnam War in the Southeast Asian region aroused concern among the American policy makers, and they felt that it was necessary for the United States to regain its previous prestige and influence in the area. Therefore, the Carter Administration which had shown its total disinterest in Southeast Asia and declared that the United States would not be involved in the internal affairs of the region, soon changed its position. This approach was articulated on 16 June 1978 by the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Richard Holbrooke in an address before the Western Governors Conference, Honolulu. He said,

\begin{quote}
The face of Asia has changed, and the US role must change as well...US policies and
\end{quote}

actions seek to maintain the current equilibrium and not allow any single power to achieve a preponderance or influence or military superiority in the region. A new role has been defined -- one that does not return us to the inappropriate level of earlier involvement of internal affairs of the region and yet does not constitute a confusing and destabilizing "abandonment" of Asia.17

This then was the crux of the new policy: neither inappropriate level of involvement nor abandonment of the region. This necessitated more active support from within the region to maintain an "equilibrium", a balance of power in other words.

It was not in the case of Kampuchean conflict alone where the United States witnessed a Soviet expansionist move, the same year it also saw similar things happening in other parts of the world. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, after only eight months of the Sino-Vietnamese war; the success of a fundamentalist revolution in Iran, the rise to power of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the Communist successes in Cuba and Angola, all appeared to give the indication of a world-wide communist offensive.18 The incursion of


the Vietnamese forces into Thailand in June 1980, and the border clash with that country further worsened the matter. The series of so-called communist successes throughout the world were seen as reverses for themselves and democracy by the Americans. They came to believe that their nation had lost power and stature in the world and felt the need to recapture their old glory. The "Vietnam Syndrome" was pushed to the background as the new feeling surged forward.

Therefore, during the elections in the United States in 1980, the public generally believed that the new administration should strive to restore a strong American role by countering the Soviet drive towards expansion. This was evident from the opinion polls conducted by CBS News/The New York Times, ABC News-Harris Survey, Gallop Organization, Market Opinion Research, California Pool, Time Survey, Newsweek Pool and the nationwide survey conducted by the US News and World Report on the eve of 1980 Presidential elections.

On the question of whether the American public would like to stick to the old policies pursued by the Carter Administration or a new, aggressive and

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assertive foreign policy in order to restore the lost prestige of the United States, a survey conducted by the CBS News/\textit{The New York Times}, \textit{Newsweek} Poll, the ABC News-Harris Survey, \textit{Time} Pool, Gallup Organization, Market Opinion Research, California poll and the US \textit{News and World Report} survey -- between October 16 and October 20, showed the Republican Candidate Ronald Reagan running ahead with 40\%, 39\%, 42\%, 61\%, 41\%, 43\%, 39\%, 61\% popular support respectively in comparison to the Democratic candidate President Jimmy Carter getting 28\%, 35\%, 39\%, 33\%, 36\%, 34\%, 32\%, 46\% support in the same order.\textsuperscript{20}

It was against the background of these developments that the American public voted to power a super cold warrior Ronald Reagan in the 1980 Presidential election. His accession to power marked turning point in America's declining world prestige. The Reagan Administration was determined to make the United States a major Pacific power and to prevent further communist expansion in the region. It wanted to recover, the American prestige in the world by challenging the Soviet Union on almost every front.

On assuming office in January 1981, the Reagan Administration adopted such Cold War policies that had been used by the Soviet Union during the prolonged first Cold War period. President Reagan began to support rightist rebels fighting the leftist governments as the Soviet Union had backed the leftist rebels fighting against the rightist governments in various parts of the world. Again, in order to consolidate the US position in Southeast Asia, the US President Ronald Reagan enunciated a new Asia-Pacific policy that was based on six principles:

- US-Japanese strong relationship as the centrepiece of this policy;
- strong ties with the People's Republic of China;
- enduring relationship with the Republic of Korea;
- continuing commitment to relations with the People of Taiwan;
- strong ties with ASEAN and its individual members;
- and
- maintaining ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand and the United States) effectiveness.\(^{21}\)

Important for our analysis here is the point that the United States wanted to maintain strong ties with ASEAN and its individual members.

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The US policy was still being guided by its determination to contain any expansion of Soviet influence in the region. It focused its attention on the non-communist Southeast Asian states. Most of these states, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, leaving out only Burma, were grouped together in ASEAN. This Organization had been founded on 8 August 1967 following the end of the Sukarno regime and Jakarta's "confrontation" campaign against neighbouring Malaysia. ASEAN's importance to the United States was many-sided, comprising of economic, strategic and political dimensions.

On economic dimension, the ASEAN states constituted precisely the kind of market oriented, modernizing politico-economic systems that the United States hoped to see in most of the Third World countries. Grouped together, the countries of ASEAN constituted the fifth largest trading partner of the United States (following behind the European Economic Community, Canada, Japan and Mexico). ASEAN captured 17.2 per cent of America's East Asian trade, 10.4 per cent of all trade between the United States and developing countries, and 4.2 per

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cent of America's total world trade. The ASEAN region was also a rich reservoir of raw materials and manpower, and constituted a vast outlet for marketing finished products and investing surplus US capital. In direct investment, America had US$3.5 billion invested in the ASEAN states, and this represented 21 per cent of all East Asian direct investment and 2.3 per cent of the United States' total world investment. An economically successful ASEAN was seen by Washington as both an illustration of the advantages in following international trade and investment-oriented development policies, and an antidote to the failures of more radical "autarkical" system like Vietnam and North Korea.

On the strategic dimension, the ASEAN states were situated astride the waterways that were important to the United States and crucial to America's most important ally, Japan. The ASEAN region falls in the centre of an island chain, next to the Asian mainland,


extending from Japan to Australia and New Zealand. The United States considered this chain as a defence perimeter, essential to its national security, especially the security of its Pacific territories and West Coast. In the perception of some US strategists, the Indonesian archipelago, stretching for some 3000 miles, and Malaysia sitting atop a series of relatively narrow straits could be used as important choke points both to monitor and to interdict ships moving between the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean. It was in this context that ASEAN was considered even more important.

In addition to ASEAN's strategic geography, the United States was also interested in its military growth. By 1975, the military expenditure of the five nations of ASEAN had increased enormously and major weapon systems of increasing destructiveness were being imported at a great rate. The expenditure of five ASEAN countries solely for the import of arms in 1975 was

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27Robert C. Horn, "US-ASEAN relations in the 1980s (based on Seminar presentation)", Contemporary Southeast Asia, vol.6, no.2, September 1984, p.188.
amounted to US$2971 million. The ASEAN states were among the leading importers of major arms and ammunitions from the United States. According to one estimate, by 1975, the five ASEAN states had already spent US$240 million for the purchase of American weapon systems alone. US Foreign Military Sales and credits to ASEAN were around US$4 billion for the acquisition of American hard-ware, and US military assistance was around US$300 million.

One report stated that in 1975 the United States had supplied arms and ammunitions worth US$960 million to the countries of ASEAN regional organization through its Foreign Military Sales and Credits programmes which included 750 tanks, 145 Anti-Air Artillery, 415 Field artillery, 170 Armoured Personnel Carriers, 29 major surface combatants, 203 other surface combatants, 390 combat aircraft; supersonic, 145 combat aircraft; subsonic, 275 other aircrafts, 170 helicopters, and 655

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Surface to Air Missiles. Thus, rapid military growth of the five member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations further enhanced the importance of ASEAN in American strategic thinking.

During its first decade, ASEAN played a very minor role in the region. But faced with adverse developments in the area in the mid 1970s, particularly in Indochina, the grouping began to adopt a much more explicitly political focus. This was clearly seen in ASEAN's first head of the state summit held in Bali in February 1976.

At Bali, the Heads of State of the five nations of the organization signed the ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation. The treaty was the first binding agreement among Southeast Asian countries in the history of the region. There had been many earlier attempts at political co-operation in Southeast Asia, but the Bali Summit was the first to lay the foundation for the forging of a "collective political decision", a measure of the new strength of a political

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32The Indonesian News (Jakarta), 27 February 1976.

33Asia Week, (Hong Kong) vol.1, no.7, 28 February 1976, p.4.
will that had been slowly nurtured with determination by the members over the years.

The Treaty covered current problems and anticipated future possibilities. The member states agreed to set up machinery for settling disputes. The underlying philosophy behind this was that if the members were at peace with one another then there would be no chance for the outside powers to interfere in the region. The events of 1978-1979 i.e., Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia and China's aggression against Vietnam, further galvanized the organization into action and it emerged as the leading spokesman against Hanoi's occupation of Kampuchea. Since 1979, ASEAN's unity and its political profile had grown as it had led the struggle in the United Nations and in the region to force a Vietnamese withdrawal and to assure self-determination for the Khmer people. Since then ASEAN has constantly acted as an important force for peace and stability in Southeast Asia. With clarity of purpose and a strong, unified political will, ASEAN drew the respect and admiration of all who sought a more peaceful and equitable world order. The

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34 Asia Year Book (Hong Kong), 1976, p.121.

United States saw ASEAN's unity and cohesiveness as an example to other free people and hoped that, "the viability and maturation of that vital political and economic group of nations located between East and West Asia, if sustained, would greatly aid the regional stability".  

However, considering the active role played by the ASEAN states in the region, the American strategists thought that the US interests in Southeast Asia could be best served if the ruling elites of those countries remained oriented towards the West. ASEAN states were particularly important in the eyes of the United States because, according to US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, David Newsom, "they were the dominos that did not topple when communist forces took over Vietnam and Kampuchea".

Thus, after closely observing ASEAN's role in the Southeast Asian region, the American policy makers came to the conclusion that by promoting regional stability and security it could best serve the American interest.

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in the area. Besides, the United States desired to test the viability and effectiveness of its new post Vietnam policy whose success required the full co-operation of the ASEAN states. If the policy worked, it could be applied to other regions and contexts. Therefore, support for and co-operation with ASEAN became the cornerstone of US policy in Southeast Asia.

In a Congressional hearing before the subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs John H. Holdridge stated on 8 June 1982 that, "the progress and stability of our friends and allies in ASEAN are the heart of our policy since they form the foundation for the favourable trends we have, thus, far witnessed in Southeast Asia". 38

In another Congressional testimony of 15 July 1982, Holdridge again emphasized that, "the United States sees ASEAN as the central element in our policies in Southeast Asia". He expressed confidence that "in difficult times as in good, ASEAN will have no

cause to doubt US support." In a similar vein, the US Secretary of State George P. Shultz stated at the US-ASEAN dialogue meeting in Washington, D.C., on 13 July 1984:

Our relations with the ASEAN countries are the cornerstone of our policy in Southeast Asia. As the United States develops and expands its relations with other countries, both large and small, in Asia and around the world, we will very much keep in mind our strong ties with the ASEAN region. We do not intend to subordinate our interests in ASEAN to the pursuit of better relations elsewhere. From these statements one is led to believe that the United States regarded ASEAN to be main instrument for achieving US foreign policy goals in Asia-Pacific.

SPECIAL ATTENTION TO INDONESIA

Of all the members of ASEAN Indonesia drew special attention. One may ask why this was so? This was because Indonesia was important in the emerging Southeast Asian constellation of forces as well as a

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40 Department of State Bulletin, vol.84, no.2091, October 1984, p.16.
test for US policy towards the region that had lost their influence in the aftermath of the defeat of American military withdrawal from Vietnam.\textsuperscript{41}

Though there were several reasons as to why Indonesia was considered important for the United States, three specific reasons deserve special notice. First was its strategic location, second was its physical and geographic wealth, and third was its potential for regional leadership.

\textbf{Strategic Location}

The Indonesian archipelago stretching from mainland Southeast Asia to the South West Pacific functioned as a geo-strategic bridge connecting the East Asian region with the Pacific Ocean, the Persian Gulf area, or as a potential barrier separating these two naval domains. It was the largest archipelagic nation of the world and its 13,500 islands largely sat atop one of the two large continental shelves, "the Sunda" stretching down from the Asian mainland reaching upto Australia.\textsuperscript{42} Indonesia guarded one side of the

\textsuperscript{41}Donald E. Weatherbee, "The United States and Indonesia: New Realities in Southeast Asia", \textit{Strategic Review} (Washington, D.C.), vol.8, Fall 1980, p.62.

strategically important straits of Malacca that was Southeast Asia's main thoroughfare between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. It was the second busiest straits in the world. According to one report, twice the number of ships passed through the Malacca straits than the Suez and Panama canals. By the beginning of the next century the number of ships passing through this straits was expected to go up to 110,000.\(^4\) With Pacific region emerging as the power house of the next century, the demand of these routes would continue to grow substantially.

Another important island of Indonesia, Java, constituted the last defensive barrier from the northern Australia. Its numerous islands offered highly strategic land and air bases which were of vital significance from the point of modern warfare. Its far flung chain of islands were near all the main deep water straits (the Sunda Strait with a governing depth of 120 feet and a minimum width of 12 nautical miles; the Lombok Straits, depth 600 feet and width 11 nautical miles; the Ombai Wetar Straits depth 600 feet

and width 12 nautical miles) used by the Soviet and American warships and submarines to pass between the Pacific to the Indian Ocean. Through the application of "Archipelagic Principle" (WAWASAN NUSANTARA - the Indonesian term for archipelagic principle), Indonesia declared all the straits as its territorial waters. Therefore, ability of the United States or any other maritime powers to send warship through the vital Southeast Asian straits in crisis depended ultimately on the consent of Indonesia. Therefore, any rift with Indonesia would have denied the United States and other major powers the use of those critical water ways. The use of alternative routes would have posed serious military and economic problems for the great powers like the United States of America.

Thus, Indonesia had a very real ability to disrupt the international economy and effect major changes in world power applications. Among other effects such as closure of the waterways would have:

- prevented the United States from moving the 7th fleet between the Pacific and Indian Oceans;

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posed major difficulties for the Soviet Union in moving supplies to its increasingly strong Indian Ocean fleet, which was then largely supplied from bases on the USSR's Pacific Coast;

paralysed the Japanese economy and the economies of other nations closely tied to Japan (including the United States); and

destabilized Southeast Asia and caused particular problems to Malaysia and Thailand.46

**Economic Importance of Indonesia**

The second important factor which stimulated the US interest in Indonesia was the country's rapid economic growth and the availability of abundant natural resources. Indonesia had been endowed with rich economic potentialities. It was a rich country, ranking third (after the USSR and the United States) in its potential wealth and natural resources.47 The country was a major producer of copper, sulphur, nickel, diamonds, gold, quinine, coffee, tea, copra, kapok, natural gas, tin, coal, timber, uranium and numerous other mineral and agricultural resources. Perhaps most important to an energy starved world were Indonesia's petroleum reserves, estimated in 1976 at 14 billion


barrels or approximately 2.1 per cent of the world's reserves.\textsuperscript{48} It was a leading oil producing country of the world and provided six per cent of US oil requirement in the year 1982.\textsuperscript{49} Indonesia was also an important market and a region which offered significant investment opportunities. United States was the third biggest foreign investor in that country after Japan and Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{50} It was the fifth largest trading partner of the United States. In 1977, for the second consecutive year, the overall balance-of-payments surplus was about US$1 billion.\textsuperscript{51} Besides this, Indonesia's economy showed marked improvement since the New Order Government of Suharto took office.\textsuperscript{52} Despite the failure of the government-owned oil corporation PERTAMINA in 1975, the country made remarkable economic


\textsuperscript{50}Department of State Bulletin, vol.82, no.2067, October 1982, pp.32-34.


progress at an annual growth rate of 7.3 per cent. The economy continued to grow at 7 per cent in 1977 and inflation ceased to a fraction over 10 per cent.

Other Important Factors

Indonesia's role in various international organizations was considered as the third important factor for the US interest in that country. It was not only the biggest and most populous country of Southeast Asia but also had an important and powerful voice in various international organizations like the Nonaligned Movement, the United Nations, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and the Islamic Conference Organization. These organizations played a significant role both in preserving international peace and security and building constructive relationship among the Third World countries. Indonesia played an important role in the United Nations and other International Forums in reducing the danger of conflict especially the Big Power conflict. The friendly stand


54 Asia Year Book, 1977, p.205.

of Indonesia in these important international organizations added to the US security interest in that country.

The geostrategic significance of Indonesia's location, size, and its standing as a moderate among NAM nations, said Paul Wolfowitz, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Affairs, "add to the importance of our relationship".56

The fourth factor sustaining US interest in Indonesia, was their common objective. Though the two countries were situated on the opposite sides of the world, with great contrasts in history, geography and culture, for nearly two decades or more both the countries enjoyed close co-operative political and economic relations based on three essential pillars: Common strategic perceptions and interests in Southeast Asia, especially their mutual commitment to the stability and independence of the states of the region; mutual beneficial, multi-billion trade and investment relations; and political dialogue and frequent cooperation bilaterally and in multilateral fora, on

such diverse issues as the Indochinese refugee problem, the situation in Kampuchea and the human rights.  

Indonesia's role in the ASEAN regional organization was considered as the fifth important factor for the US interest in that country. Indonesia, by virtue of its size, population growth, and rich economic potentialities, was the natural leader of ASEAN. Its voice in that organization was considered as a valued one. ASEAN as an organization wanted to coordinate the member nation's policies in political and security areas. Its main purpose was to prevent and contain external interference and to shelve intra-regional conflicts by peaceful means.

Ever since 1967, especially since the Communist victories in Indochina in 1975, Indonesian leaders explicitly and repeatedly defined their foreign policy in terms of ASEAN. Indonesia's active participation made the organization a success. The United States regarded Indonesia as an important force for peace, stability and progress. The US was of the opinion that

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the success which ASEAN enjoyed during the last two decades of its existence would not have been possible without Indonesia's farsightedness and enthusiastic participation. The anti-Communist posture of the Suharto regime, and its key role in ASEAN's resistance to expanding Soviet-Vietnamese influence in the region further added to the US interest in Indonesia.

In addition to its size, population growth, lush tropical wealth, respected and moderate membership of various international organizations, active and independent foreign policy and regional responsible role, what made the United States interested in that archipelagic nation of Southeast Asia was the achievements of the Suharto regime. Unlike his flamboyant predecessor, President Sukarno, who was too much engrossed with the foreign affairs and therefore, neglected the country's domestic needs, President Suharto, on assuming power in 1966, after crushing an abortive Communist coup of 30 September 1965, remained determined to revive his country from the


deteriorating condition and undertook several measures to achieve success.

Achievements

Nearly, two decades of the rule of President Suharto had given 175 million people of Indonesia generally a stable condition to live in. The New Order Government of Suharto had achieved major success both in internal and external matters. Self-sufficiency in food production and dramatic control on population growth -- the two most important and inter-linked issues enabled Indonesia to have a strong footing. In the area of foreign policy too, it had come to enjoy a peaceful and secured relationship with its neighbours. Suharto's sincere commitment to ASEAN made the organization effective and successful. Under his leadership the government assured religious tolerance which in turn guaranteed peace and harmony among different communities.\(^{61}\) The New Order Government also succeeded in forging a sense of Indonesian identity, submerging the separatist tendencies that once threatened to tear the nation apart. Thus, Indonesia under President Suharto had been enjoying a remarkably

stable social and political system and a strong record of economic progress.

The above mentioned factors were some of the prodigious achievements of the Suharto government, which made the United States especially interested in maintaining close ties with Indonesia. Keeping in mind Indonesia's multifaceted role in the region, the American policy makers perceived that the United States would be able to keep its diverse and long-standing interests in the whole of Southeast Asian region intact, if the self-confident, economically dynamic, internally stable and pro-Western government of Indonesia remains unattached to any major power bloc and remains friendly towards the US and its allies. With this objective, the US opted for close-cooperation with Indonesia.

The following chapter would be a discussion of the convergence and conflict over the security issue.