Chapter III

Bilateral Cooperation Among the ASEAN States

The primary victims of the financial crisis besides South Korea, were Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia and to a lesser extent, the Philippines and Singapore, all founding members of ASEAN. For these countries the crisis resulted in a shrinking economy, a weaker currency and reduced purchasing power.\(^1\) On the whole, ASEAN as a body seems to have become considerably weakened. Consequently, bilateral or even multilateral security cooperation efforts have received a major blow. The focus has shifted from that on security to mainly economic regeneration. However despite the prevailing sense of despair about the future of ASEAN, among scholars, observers and leaders of the region, it cannot be ruled out that the earlier bilateral and multilateral cooperation efforts did bind the states in a common strategic perspective and at the same time prevented potential flashpoints from erupting into open hostilities. The economic crisis has created new security challenges for ASEAN members including tensions over illegal cross border migration and political strains in Singapore-Indonesia and Singapore-Malaysia relations. Earlier, defence cooperation amongst the ASEAN member states resulted in the formation of bilateral or trilateral arrangements.

Not all member states were however involved in these bilateral or trilateral arrangements. This was particularly true in the case of Malaysia and the Philippines mainly due to their continued dispute over Sabah. However, despite similar disputes between Malaysia and Singapore and between Malaysia and Indonesia, these three states nevertheless, have

\(^1\) Hazi Ahmad Zakaria and Baladas Ghoshal, “The Political Future of ASEAN After the Asian Crisis,” *International Affairs*, October 1999, p. 759
been engaged in bilateral cooperation, even trilateral arrangements, especially in the form of joint military exercises.

The earlier efforts at security cooperation had definitely helped to keep confrontations at bay. This cooperation which earlier developed in the form of bilateral military exercises later evolved into multilateral efforts at cooperation through preventive diplomacy and confidence building measures as mentioned earlier.

In fact, proposals relating to multilateral defence arrangement within ASEAN were somewhat more fashionable to regional policy makers than those relating to arms control. This was viewed by its advocates as a necessary complement to regional order, both in terms of its expected utility in reinforcing the tradition of cooperation that binds the ASEAN states, and its potential for instilling a greater degree of confidence among members in the face of mutually perceived external threats. Most proposals for a defence arrangement involving ASEAN are not properly defined. Examples include the call for an ASEAN "defence community" made by the then foreign minister of Malaysia, Abu Hasan Omar in 1989 as well as the idea of an ASEAN military pact mooted by the National Security Adviser of the Philippines in 1991. Neither proposal received the full backing of the respective governments and in case of Malaysia the government appeared to distance itself from it.² The reason was the inability of the ASEAN members to agree on a common external threat; the fact that this would lead to ASEAN’s image as an aggressive organisation; the fact that there were bilateral security problems among the members; the fact that the combined strength of ASEAN failed to challenge Vietnam and other leading great powers in the region; and finally, due to Indonesia’s resistance to any

² For details see Amitava Acharya, “A New Regional Order in Southeast Asia: ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era,” Adelphi Papers, No.279, August 1993
attempt of ASEAN to become a military alliance. The former Chief of Staff of Indonesia, Try Sutrisno argued in 1989 that without a military pact the ASEAN states could operate more flexibly. He was more in favour of bilateral cooperation than a pact because “it allows any ASEAN partner to decide the time, type and scale of aid it requires or can provide, and ensures that the question of national independence and sovereignty of its members remains unaffected by the decision of others as in the case of an alliance where members can invoke the terms of the treaty and interfere in the affairs of another partner.”

In fact, as we have mentioned in the introductory chapter, the most important motivating factor behind the bilateral cooperation pacts and exercises was that of border insurgencies which threatened most of these countries to a lesser or a greater degree since border issues needed joint handling. The security scenario remained uncertain mainly because Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines were all plagued by insurgencies of one form or another. There was also the common threat perception arising from Communism. Hence, countries looked to their neighbours as future partners in preserving regional security.

In the early Eighties and till the mid-Nineties, the region seemed to evolve into an interlocking web of security zones. Over the years ASEAN cooperation deepened into security issues and established a positive record of diffusing internal disputes and managing an effective diplomacy on regional matters. Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were initially excluded as backlash aberrations but their progressive transformation (excepting Burma’s violation of human rights, of course) into changing their policies towards their neighbours, paved the way for their inclusion. Vietnam’s

\[\text{ibid, p. 69}\]
invasion of Cambodia and its aggressive backlash strategy had raised the concerns of ASEAN partners, particularly Thailand. But there was a change in Vietnamese policy in the Nineties. After years of deriding ASEAN states as “puppets of Western imperialists” and after a gradual progress towards economic liberalization and in military modernization efforts Vietnam acceded to ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 1992. Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia was another factor. It took away the rationale for opposition to Vietnam. From the ASEAN side also there was a change in the attitude towards Vietnam which was no longer perceived as a threat to the security of the region. As uncertainty increased with China’s assertiveness in the South China Sea, Vietnam was considered by the ASEAN as a prospective ally.

The increase in security cooperation among the ASEAN members was propelled by a number of developments, as mentioned earlier, namely, the end of the Cold War led to a scaledown of the former Super Powers’ military presence in the region leading directly to the greater assertiveness of the Asian powers to play a bigger security role in the region; China’s expansion of its military capability and increase of its power projection capabilities, especially its navy and air force; the sudden reduction and removal of the stabilizing role of the US military presence also forced the adoption of greater regional self-help security measures; withdrawal of the former Super Powers and at the same time the resurfacing of bilateral territorial disputes as well as the intensification of the conflict with regard to the South China Sea.

In a broader perspective, there was a clear awareness that security was both military and non-military in nature and the various “security” measures undertaken involved political, diplomatic, socio-cultural economic and military spheres. Hence the comprehensive
approach to security. The main aim of ASEAN was to boost confidence among its members.

Since the various issues in the region are mainly bilateral, they are not amenable to multilateral solutions, hence bilateral cooperation was the main driving force of the ASEAN states. Consequently regular security dialogues have been held over various bilateral issues in the region over the years. ASEAN’s enlargement promised to extend to the whole of Southeast Asia the peaceful and prosperous culture of cooperation established by the original members. When Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation they committed themselves to preventing disputes from arising with their neighbours, renounced the threat or use of force to resolve disagreements. It offered the promise that ASEAN’s vast range of cooperation exercises would throw open new vistas of communication between countries, benefit bilateral relations and emphasise shared interests. For example, in August 1997 Vietnam and Thailand concluded an agreement on sea boundaries and also reached an agreement to resolve disputed fisheries.

ASEAN attempts at ensuring stability involved cooperation in counter-insurgency arrangements to combat insurgency and subversion in the border regions of the ASEAN countries. In fact, there was a discussion between the ASEAN leaders calling for a “defence community” in the first ASEAN summit held in Bali in 1976 but the alliance was rejected by them for obvious reasons.

Existing bilateral military ties were endorsed by the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. There was an agreement for the continuation of cooperation on a non-ASEAN basis between member states in security matters in accordance with their needs and interests.
The nature of security problems between any two member states of ASEAN in their bilateral relations is almost infinitely different. For instance, Malaysia and Indonesia as well as Indonesia and the Philippines have common problems of illegal border crossing. Notable among these arrangements were those between Thailand and Malaysia\(^4\) and between Indonesia and Malaysia. The former was aimed at wiping out the CPM (Communist Party of Malaysia) which retreated into Thai territory after the British counter-insurgency campaign in Malaysia. Although Malaysia acknowledged Thai concern, it was not prepared to give in to Thai requests to cooperate in suppressing the separatist movements due to its own political considerations. It outrightly rejected the Thai request for “right of hot pursuit” in 1982. As a result some Thai officials advocated cancellation of the bilateral security arrangements instituted in 1948.

Over the years, despite existing tensions, intelligence exchanges, joint counter-insurgency operations, joint exercises as well as socio-economic projects in border areas formed an important part of the agenda of security cooperation between Thailand and Malaysia.

A bilateral security cooperation agreement was made in 1963 between Myanmar and Thailand but it was never implemented due to the tension regarding ethnic insurgency on the Myanmar border. Myanmar was of the firm belief that Thailand provided sanctuary and economic sustenance to the ethnic insurgencies on its border in order to use them as a lever against Myanmar. Even if there were no formal pacts between these two countries

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\(^4\) These agreements are the Thai-Malaysian Frontier Agreement (1949); the Agreement on Border Operations against Communist terrorists between the governments of Thailand and the Federation Of Malay (1959); the Agreement between the government of Thailand and the government of Malaysia on Border Cooperation (1977). Source: Kuntom Roeslan, Bilateral Border Security Cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand, Paper presented at the First Annual Thai-Malaysia Colloquium, Bangkok, 2-3 September, 1987, pp. 2-3
regarding the demarcation of boundaries, they managed to reach some sort of an agreement over their maritime borders.

Accordingly, Thailand and Myanmar signed an agreement on June 23, 1979 on the delimitation of maritime boundary between the two countries.\(^5\)

Laos called on Thailand to cooperate in its efforts to suppress terrorists in the northwestern Laos province of Sayabomy on the Thai border, a Thai military commander revealed on June 15, 1979. He urged cooperation in the suppression of the so-called “terrorists” arguing that they were also “troublemakers” for Thailand. The request appeared to be in line with a Thai-Laos communique signed during Premier Kaysone Phomvihan’s visit to Bangkok in April 1978 which called for cooperation in measures to “prevent and destroy any movements of terrorists who use the Thai-Laos border as a stronghold for agitating and destroying the peace of the people on both sides of the border.” The request also appeared to confirm earlier Thai press reports that Laos was expelling pro-Chinese members of the CPT while allowing sanctuary to those who were pro-Vietnamese.\(^6\)

Indonesia and Malaysia launched a joint border operation on their common land and sea border in the East Malaysia-Kalimantan border. Cooperation between the two armies intensified on the Kalimantan border, though informally, in 1966, and was formalized soon after. As early as 1971, joint military operations were carried out against Communist guerrillas. In 1975 joint operations were no longer confined to border areas; training and intelligence exchanges were undertaken and efforts were made to achieve arms compatibility. During a 1978 visit to Indonesia, the Malaysian chief of armed forces

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\(^5\) SWB, July 3, 1979

\(^6\) quoted in SWB, 18 June, 1979
re-emphasised that efforts should be made to standardise armaments between the two countries. "Because progress towards standardising armaments has been made as a consequence of the fact that the US has become the major source of supply for the ASEAN region, this issue has receded in importance." Exchange of intelligence information on Communist insurgents went a long way in promoting cooperation.

A 1972 agreement between Indonesia and Malaysia created a joint border committee with responsibility to confer on appropriate measures to be adopted with a view to eliminating the Communist threat along the common border of the two countries and also other matters pertaining to security in the border regions.

A regular feature of Malaysian-Indonesian military cooperation were the joint exercises which began in the early Seventies. These included naval manoeuvres and joint air attacks on land targets on both nations. Indonesian and Malaysian military forces cooperated in joint action against Sarawak Communist Organisation remnants in Borneo.

There were only a few hundred poorly armed guerrillas who were almost entirely ethnic Chinese. There was no agreement for border crossing in spite of intelligence being exchanged.

Joint Indonesian-Malaysian manoeuvres at battalion strength were held in Java in March 1979. These exercises were the third so far between the two countries but the first in battalion formation and in an integrated system. The exercises involved one infantry battalion, one tank squadron, one light and heavy artillery support company, one company of Malaysian paratroopers, two bombers and a number of helicopters.

8 Malaysia/Indonesia Security Arrangements, Foreign Affairs Malaysia, vol. 5, no. 2, June 1972, pp. 63-65
9 SWB, March 30, 1979
Indonesian Naval Deputy Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Mustapha while opening the third working conference between the two Navies in March 1979 said that since the Indonesian and Malaysian navies were developing under similar conditions, joint operations could be conducted without difficulty. The Indonesian delegation was led by Col. Sugiatmo while the Malaysian was led by Lt. Col. Awaluddin. The CGS General Tan Shri Ghazali Bin Datuk Mohammad Seth of Malaysia announced later in Jakarta that there would be intensified military cooperation in maintaining security along their common border. He was in Indonesia to witness a joint army exercise (Malindo III) taking place in Batujajar near Bandung. Before this there were similar exercises Malindo I and Malindo II between the two countries.

Military cooperation between Indonesia and Singapore formally began in 1974 with an agreement for joint patrols of the Straits of Malacca against smugglers. Naval exercises were undertaken in 1974 and 1975. These were mainly biennial exercises and were code-named Englek. The airforces of the two nations began exercising together in 1980. After the end of Konfrontasi, there were regular intelligence exchanges between Indonesia and Singapore.

Politically strained relations between Malaysia and Singapore did not prevent them from joining hands against subversive and criminal elements.

An agreement was signed for joint sea patrols in 1975 between Indonesia and the Philippines to deny sanctuary to those involved in illegal activities in either state. Thailand and the Philippines signed an accord in December 1976 "to continue to cooperate in combating internal insurgency and subversions through consultations and

10 SWB, Part 3, January 27, 1979
exchanges of intelligence and views." Intelligence exchanges also took place between Singapore and the Philippines while Bangkok and Jakarta exchanged military information. Indonesia and Thailand also began joint air exercises in 1980. The countries have an agreement to conduct joint naval exercises in the northern region of the Strait of Malacca. Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia also have an agreement to conduct joint patrols against smuggling, gun-running and piracy in the Straits of Malacca.

Thailand and Malaysia began mutual cooperation in 1959 against MCP insurgent activities in the border region. Thai concern over the possibility of irredentism among the large population of Malay-Muslims in southern Thailand hindered cooperation. Moreover, the southern border areas of Thailand where the MCP found refuge in the sixties, was an area of less counter-insurgency priority for Bangkok than northeast Thailand. However, by 1965, a Joint Border Committee was established by the two countries to seek the suppression of MCP activities. In 1969, this committee announced that the security forces of either country would be allowed the right of pursuit as far as five miles into the other's territory. In 1970, this agreement was strengthened to permit regular troops to join police units in the territory for as long as 72 hours.\footnote{Palmer and Reckford, n.7, pp.117-119}

Despite this agreement, in reality, there was limited cooperation. Under the aegis of the Joint Border Committee, around four hundred members of the Malaysian police field force were stationed on the Thai borders but the Malaysian presence became a source of irritation. In May 1976, when bombing and strafing against suspected MCP insurgents were carried out by the Malaysian Air Force in the Betong Salient on the border of the Malaysian state of Perak, Thai residents of the Betong demonstrated against the

\footnote{The Straits Times, 23 December 1976}

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stationing of the Malaysians in the Betong. At the request of the Thais, the Malaysian garrison was withdrawn the following month.

In the second half of 1976, in spite of the Betong incident, there was a new border cooperation agreement to launch unit joint military operations against the MCP and CPT insurgents. The last large scale military action against the MCP took place between October 1979 and January 1980, when 10,000 Malaysian troops marched through the Betong Salient. Subsequently, Thai preoccupation with the threat posed by the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia in December 1979 and Malaysian ambivalence on the question of the activity of Thai Muslim guerrillas reduced the scale and tempo of joint anti-MCP activities. At Thai request Malaysian police force field units, which had been stationed again in Thailand after the 1976 agreement were again withdrawn.

There were complications to the joint operations due to the existence of the 500 or so Thai Muslim-Malay separatist guerrillas who belong to the Pattani United Liberation Organisation, the Barisan National Pembebasan Pattani, and the Barisan Revolusi National. Malaysian ambivalence arose from the fact that Islamic fundamentalist political passions were aroused in Malaysia by Thai anti-Muslim activities. The Thais in turn complained that Malaysia had offered sanctuary and supplies to Thai irredentists and had developed an intelligence relationship with them to obtain information on MCP activities. However, on March 16, 1979 Supreme Commander Gen. Soem Na Nakhon and Interior Minister Gen. Lek N. in his position as the Vice-Chairman of the General Border Committee visited combined Thai-Malaysian task force units which were suppressing Malaysian Communist guerrillas in “Operation 792.” They were greeted by Malaysian Home Affairs Minister Ghazali Bin Shafie, who was chairman of the General Border
Committee, at the combined Thai-Malaysian task force headquarters in Kroh, Perak state.\textsuperscript{13}

The fresh Thai-Malaysian initiative against Malaysian Communist guerrillas began after they were noticed collecting protection money and food in Thailand’s southern provinces. In Sadao, Na Thawi and Saba Yoi districts of Songkhla and in Betong district and Than To sub district of Yala the joint drive put the guerrillas in a difficult position and forced most of them to escape from these areas for lack of cooperation from the local people. Joint sea patrol operations were also carried on in accordance with the agreement concluded at the joint meeting in Kuala Lumpur in April 1978. These operations were successful to an extent in securing both security and socio-economic development along the common border. The joint GBC of the two countries confirmed their determination to cooperate and help each other in all respects to ensure equal socio-economic progress for the people in the common border areas of the two countries. This was a measure to maintain security and stability in those areas. This included the Bang Rang dam project and the Korok river project between the two countries. There was also a suggestion for exploitation of mutual resources discovered in the territorial waters of the two countries in the Gulf of Thailand under the aegis of the Thai-Malaysian GBC. An agreement to this effect was signed by the two countries for the formation of a joint committee.\textsuperscript{14}

Malaysian-Thai air-ground exercises were carried out at Hat Yai, southern Thailand in September 1979. The six-day manoeuvre was aimed at exercising staff procedures, improving liaison within their combined air headquarters and promoting closer understanding and cooperation between the two countries. In July of the same year,

\textsuperscript{13} SWB, March 19, 1979
\textsuperscript{14} SWB, April 9, 1979
Malaysian and Thai police agreed to step up cooperation to prevent smuggling of drugs and other border crimes. They also agreed to keep each other informed of activities by Vietnamese illegal immigrants in both countries.

Muslim guerrilla activities and differing Malaysian and Thai perceptions of counter-insurgency strained relations between the two countries in 1981-83. The Malaysian view was to fight Communists by killing them, if possible. Communists who were captured were provided with extensive re-education. On the other hand, the Thais, according to the Malaysians, had a live-and-let-live philosophy toward the insurgents. Thais emphasized on defections rather than on military operations. The Thais did kill a few Communists but their policy was to capture CPM camps in the jungle and to make life difficult militarily for the insurgents with a view to encouraging them to surrender.

This strategy did not succeed much against the MCP. The CPM camps were better organized with tighter discipline and more thorough and rigorous training than the CPT, making it more difficult for the guerrillas to defect. Meanwhile, Thai forces maintained pressure on CPM camps and demonstrated great persistence and courage in this effort. The Thais regularly suffered casualties, mainly from booby traps, in anti-CPM operations against an organisation sworn to overthrow the government in Kuala Lumpur, not Bangkok. By late 1984, the Malaysian government demonstrated less skepticism toward Thai strategy and tactics. Indeed, the Malaysians were commended publicly by the Thai general commanding in the south, for unofficially helping Thailand against the Muslim guerrillas by trying to persuade Middle Eastern countries (some of whom provided support to Thai Muslim groups) to reduce such support. The Malaysians had acquired
from the Thais the privilege of chasing insurgents across the border. However, the
Malaysians did not reciprocate.

The Thai-Malaysian Joint Border Commission played an increasingly important role over
the years as a forum in which problems were discussed and worked out. The Commission
was normally headed by the Supreme Commander of the Thai Armed Forces and the
Malaysian Minister for Home Affairs (internal security). Insurgency, border security and
narcotics smuggling formed the main topics of discussion. The Joint Commission also
presided over the demarcation of the border.

Just as Malaysian-Indonesian and Malaysian-Thai relations were key elements of
regional military cooperation, Malaysian-Singaporean security interaction was another
important piece in the interlocking bilateral structures of ASEAN. Under the aegis of
FPDA, in the Seventies the Integrated Air Defence System for Malaysia and Singapore
was formed. Joint air exercises were held twice a year. Singapore land forces operated
only once on Malaysian territory during 1965-1971 under FPDA auspices.

The year 1981 was an important year as regards Malaysian-Singaporean military
cooperation. A series of agreements were signed, including a plan for a boundary
agreement in the Strait of Johor, the transfer of a Malaysian military camp on the north
coast of the Island to Singapore, and a grant of additional land for the Malaysian naval
facilities at Woodlands Naval Base, including indefinite access to the base. A number of
significant moves were made to enhance defence cooperation by both Singapore and

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15 FPDA – Five Power Defence Arrangement – It is a series of exchanges of letters spelling out proposed
undertakings by the agreeing parties. The FPDA required the UK, Australia and New Zealand to station
forces of modest size, mostly Australian, in Singapore and Malaysia and to consult with Malaysia and
Singapore in case of an external attack. Source: Ronald D. Palmer, and Thomas J. Reckford, Building
ASEAN –20 Years of Southeast Asian Cooperation (The Washington Papers), CSIS, Washington, 1987,
p.117
Malaysia since 1981. Singapore forces were also guaranteed to use the Johor jungle training school.

In spite of operating under the FPDA framework, Malaysian military aircraft were staged out of Singapore’s Paya Lebar airport in June 1984, the first exercise of its kind since 1965 for combat manoeuvres with Singaporean aircraft. Again in July 1984, there was a joint exercise between Singapore and Malaysia, albeit under FPDA auspices, with ships from only the two countries. However, there have not been as yet, any bilateral exercises. There are complications as regards land operations due to political factors. Even though there is no joint defence agreement with either Malaysia or Singapore, joint manoeuvres have taken place. Cooperation in the utilization of facilities and education, for the sake of the transparency of their armed forces has been established.

Because of its developed arms industry, Singapore plays a significant role in regional military cooperation.

Bilateral military exercises involving the army, navy and airforce were held between most countries with Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia having the most intense and developed bilateral relationship with each other. Bilateral intelligence exchanges have also received a lot of attention. ASEAN-wide intelligence meetings began around the time of the Bali summit which endorsed the right of member states to continue security arrangements outside the ASEAN framework.

Malaysia and Thailand and Malaysia and Indonesia have General Border Committees. The GBCs continued to operate despite the ending of the Communist insurgency in the three countries. With the decline of Communist insurgencies, border security arrangements between ASEAN states lost much of their relevance and began directing
their attention towards problems of smuggling, drug trafficking, and the management of boundary disputes.

The following table illustrates effectively the level of cooperation in armed forces exercises between one or more ASEAN states in the Seventies and Eighties.

**Important intra-ASEAN military exercises**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries Involved</th>
<th>Name of Exercise</th>
<th>Year Started</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Malaysia (Army)</td>
<td>Kekar Malindo</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tatar Malindo</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kripura Malindo</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Malaysia (Air)</td>
<td>Elang Malindo</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Malaysia (All services)</td>
<td>Darsasa Malindo</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Singapore (Army)</td>
<td>Salakar Indopura</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Singapore (Air)</td>
<td>Elang Indopura</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Singapore (Navy)</td>
<td>Engliek</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Biennial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Thailand (Air)</td>
<td>Elang Thainesia</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Thailand (Navy)</td>
<td>Sea Garuda</td>
<td>1975?</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Philippines (Navy)</td>
<td>Philindo/Corphilindo</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Singapore (Army)</td>
<td>Semangat Bersatu</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Singapore (Navy)</td>
<td>Malapura</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Thailand (Air)</td>
<td>Air Thamal</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Thailand (Navy)</td>
<td>Thalay</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Intermittent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia/Brunei (Navy)</td>
<td>Hornbill (and others)</td>
<td>1981?</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Thailand (Air)</td>
<td>Sing-Siam</td>
<td>1981?</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Thailand (Navy)</td>
<td>Thai-Sing</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Philippines (Army)</td>
<td>Anoa-Singa</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Annual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Brunei (Navy)</td>
<td>Pelican</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore/Brunei</td>
<td>Termitei/Flaming Arrow</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia/Singapore (Army)</td>
<td>Latmasaskar Indopura</td>
<td>8/1996</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Amitava, Acharya, A New Regional Order in Southeast Asia: ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era, Adelphi Papers No.279, August 1993, pp.70-71, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, November 1996
It is noteworthy that a comparable degree of intra-ASEAN cooperation has not developed over the suppression of separatist rebellion. On the contrary, these movements have proved to be a highly contentious factor in bilateral relations within the grouping. For example, the rebellion in Aceh has become an extremely sensitive issue in Indonesian-Malaysian relations due to Jakarta's suspicions that the rebels receive moral and material support as well as sanctuary in Malaysia. Similarly, Philippines' worry that the Moro separatists in Mindanao receive support from the Malaysian state of Sabah led politicians in the Philippines to take a hardline stand on the formal renunciation of their country's claim to Sabah.

There were also Memorandums of Understanding with regard to training facilities as in the case between Singapore-Malaysia, Singapore-Indonesia, Singapore-Brunei, Malaysia-Indonesia and Malaysia-Brunei. These MoUs also related to bilateral exchanges at both the middle and senior official level, as well as exchange of trainees at their respective defence academies. Joint commissions were also established to deal with bilateral issues between Malaysia and Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia and Malaysia and the Philippines, as in the Gulf of Thailand in the first case, the ownership of the Sipadan and Ligitan in the second and the Sabah issue in the third.

After the major five-power exercise "Bersatu Padu" in 1971 in which a Singaporean battalion participated, Malaysia did not allow Singapore to exercise its army units in Malaysia till late 1989.\textsuperscript{16} The October 1989 operation was limited in scope. It was held in Sarawak. There were sporadic incidents of troubled Singapore-Malay relationships. Malaysian allegations towards Singapore on its restriction of a Malay's service in the

SAF, and Malaysian limitation of Singaporean army units to exercise in Malaysian soil reflect the mutual suspicions of these two countries. Joint exercises were suspended by Malaysia in 1990. There were joint military exercises between the Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore for the three armed forces (navy, air force and army). Security cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia started only after the end of Konfrontasi, namely in joint security operations in the Kalimantan border regions.

There were joint exercises between the Indonesian and Malaysian armed forces. With Singapore, Malaysia conducted joint naval exercises in 1974, followed by the air force in 1980. In 1982, the Darsaśa Malindo, a spectacular all-services exercises was undertaken between Malaysia and Indonesia. In 1989 a number of unprecedented arrangements were made to upgrade defence contacts, more specifically bilateral military links, particularly between Malaysia and Singapore, and between Indonesia and Singapore. The Semangat Bersatu army exercises between Singapore and Malaysia, and, the Safakar Indopura army exercises between Singapore and Indonesia were launched in 1989. In the same year a weapons-testing range was jointly developed by Singapore and Indonesia in Siabu, Sumatra.

These initiatives were interspersed with periodic calls of varying intensity from these three nations, as well as, from the Philippines and Thailand, for ASEAN members to examine the prospects for a closer, more integrated form of military cooperation on a closer basis.

In 1988 there was an agreement between Thailand and Myanmar that the Burmese military government and the Thai military would cooperate on security matters.

17 Amitava Acharya, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Security Community or Defence Community?" Pacific Affairs, vol. 64, no. 2, (Summer 1991), pp.159-178
Consequently, they entered into security arrangements benefiting the Thai military and the latter cooperated in putting a check on ethnic rebellions.

On 27 January 1989, Malaysian defence minister Tunku Rithauddeen announced that Malaysia and Singapore would conduct bilateral naval exercises in the South China Sea of Sabah and Sarawak under the title *Malapura*. Both nations were in fact willing to carry out a combined army exercise in Sabah, Malaysia. Singapore was also invited by Malaysia to participate in an army exercise in March 1989. Besides these, improved bilateral military contacts with Indonesia, were also advocated by both Malaysia and Singapore.

Singapore also reached an agreement with Indonesia to build facilities for aerial target practice in Riau (to be utilized by both countries), along with a joint manoeuvre centre. At the same time it also acquired the right to utilize the armed forces infantry exercise center in Baturaja. The Staff and Command Schools (SESKO) of the armed forces are attended jointly by officers from both countries.

Indonesia, Malaysia as well as Singapore provide military training assistance to Brunei’s armed forces. The Malay Commander, Lt. Gen. Fakaruddin announced the possibility of combined army, navy and air force exercises in 1991.

Before this in 1990 there was a joint decision by Malaysia and Thailand to extend their combined air exercises beyond the common border region to incorporate areas in peninsular Malaysia and mainland Thailand.

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19 For details see A.R. Sutopo, "Relations Among Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore: From Confrontation to Collaboration and Realliance," *The Indonesian Quarterly*, vol. XIX, no. 4, 1991, p.337
20 ibid
Even outside this framework, some defence relations within ASEAN are developed more than others. A close relationship exists between Brunei and Singapore. Brunei's armed forces hold annual exercises with Singapore called Bold Sabre/Flaming Arrow. The Brunei navy also holds annual exercises with the Singapore and the United States navies, codenamed Pelican and Kingfisher respectively.\(^{21}\)

Thailand has on several occasions sent its troops to Singapore for commando training. Defence relations between Malaysia and Brunei remain limited because of strained relations (due to mutual suspicion and mistrust) in spite of an MOU between the two countries, for joint exercises and cooperation in exchange of personnel and logistics. There is at the same time no cooperation between Malaysia and the Philippines owing to the Sabah dispute.

This was a period which witnessed intense cooperation in spite of existing tensions. Cooperation in regional security fields also prompted a regional response to piracy in ASEAN waters. The most vulnerable region is that extending from the southern tip of Sumatra through the Malaccan and Singapore Straits and the Phillip Channel. In order to counter this threat measures were undertaken on a bilateral basis between Indonesia and Singapore in May 1992. Subsequently, a direct communication link was established between the Singapore Navy's Fleet Headquarters at Palau Brani and the Indonesia navy's base in Tanjung Pinang to facilitate and coordinate anti-piracy patrols along with combined search and rescue operations. In July 1992 there was another agreement between the two states granting their navies and marine police the right to pursue and capture pirates into their territorial waters. The agreement also paved the way for the

\(^{21}\) For details see K.V. Menon, "A Six power Defence Arrangement in Southeast Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 10, no. 3, December 1988, p. 314
exchange of information and coordinated patrols in the Singapore Straits, the Phillip Channel and beyond. Thereafter the first joint anti-piracy patrol exercise was held off the Singapore waters in August 1992.

Indonesia carried out joint patrols with the Philippines and Malaysia aimed at curbing piracy and all other maritime crime on their common territorial waters. Malaysia called for consultations with both Singapore and Indonesia to curb the "lawless" situation in the Malacca Straits and to create a team for maintaining the security of the waterway, the cost to be jointly borne by users of the waterway. Malaysia also suggested the creation of a fund sponsored internationally for "maritime security and maritime conservation" as also the creation of a "maritime surveillance unit" to address issues like piracy. However the proposals are yet to take off. At the same time both Malaysia and Indonesia opposed the proposal to create a Regional Piracy Centre in ASEAN (proposed to be set up in Kuala Lumpur in October 1992) by the International Maritime Bureau. The argument put forth by Indonesia was that since most piracy incidents occur within the territorial waters of the coastal states, unilateral measures by the state concerned would be more effective in handling the problem rather than an extremely sponsored team. In 1990 Indonesia stepped up efforts to reduce incidents of piracy by increasing piracy surveillance by intelligence and security personnel in the Phillip Channel, the Natuna and Anambas Islands, the Riau Province, the Malaccan Straits, southern Sumatra and western Kalimantan. Indonesia also recommended the creation of an ASEAN Maritime Data Base including information on piracy and armed robbery in the region to be located at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. This proposal never really took off.
ASEAN cooperation on security issues not only included joint efforts by ASEAN countries to repress domestic armed insurgencies in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia but at the same time established a positive record of diffusing internal disputes and managing an effective diplomacy on regional matters.

In 1992 Malaysia sought a review of the 1922 agreement between Britain and Thailand which allowed Thai armed personnel to cross over into Malaysian territory for anti-smuggling operations. This was because Malaysia felt that the Thai authorities had used the agreement as an excuse for intrusion by armed Thai uniformed personnel at Padang Besar on anti-smuggling operations on 15th, 16th, 20th and 22nd December. The 1922 agreement allowed Thai armed personnel to cross over into Malaysian territory only at night and also allowed authorities of both countries to use the railway station on both sides of the border for anti-smuggling operations. Malaysia felt that the Thai authorities should have contacted their Malaysian counterparts before entering Malaysia on their anti-smuggling operations. Malaysia felt the 1922 agreement was no longer suitable for the present time. Moreover, it was not made by Malaysia. However, close relations between the two countries would enable the problem to be solved amicably. Thailand expressed regret and apologized to the Perlis state government in northern Malaysia for the shooting and intrusion by anti-smuggling enforcement officers at the border town of Padang Besar in December. The governor of Songkhla province said that the officers had acted on their own in the four border incidents on the all four days. He also said that the Thai officers at lower level had erred when they referred to the 1922 treaty between the Perlis and Thai governments on the common use of the Padang Besar railway station to legitimize their encroachment and seizure of goods belonging to Malaysian traders. Thai
officers manning border areas had been formally instructed to stop referring to the obsolete treaty. He said efforts must be made to ensure that such incidents did not take place in future. This was the second instance when Thai authorities had expressed regret over such incidents and apologized to Perlis.22

President Acquino of Philippines and the Singapore Defence Minister Yeo Ning Hong held a dialogue to continue military relations in January 1992. They discussed the extension of exchanges between the armed forces of the two countries in relation to the military training of its officials. They also discussed the setting up of security relations between the two establishments.23

Singapore established close relations with Brunei extending help in matters relating to defence technology, personnel and logistics management. Defence relations between Malaysia and Brunei remained at a moderate level in spite of a MOU for joint exercises and cooperation in exchange for personnel and logistics. There is no armed forces cooperation between Malaysia and the Philippines due to strained relations over Sabah.

In the Nineties Singapore continued CBMs with Malaysia and Indonesia and paid special attention to cultivating the Indonesian armed forces. It also succeeded in obtaining access at the time to training facilities in Indonesia. In fact the warmth of Singapore-Indonesia ties at the time was reflected in the civil aviation and military training agreements signed in September 1995, which delegated airspace of up to 90 nautical miles south of Singapore to Singapore’s air traffic control, and allowed Singapore’s air force to conduct training over Indonesian airspace.24 A joint military exercise between the armed forces of

22 SWB, January 6, 1992
23 SWB, January 13, 1992
Indonesia and Singapore was held in Singapore in the same year which involved only one company of armed personnel.

Another joint military exercise between the armed forces of Indonesia and Singapore in November 1996 codenamed *Latmasaskar Indopura 8/1996* involved one army battalion from each country. The joint exercise was aimed at not only achieving the annual routine target but also at expanding the participants' horizons and upgrading their professionalism.\(^{25}\)

For Malaysia the launch of the Singapore-Malaysia Defence Forum in 1996 was a good beginning as it was an attempt to cement ties at the top level, and helped to reduce mutual suspicions and provided opportunities for planning joint defence cooperation and training.\(^{26}\)

A network of bilateral security cooperation beyond ASEAN grew over the years.

Indonesia and Papua New Guinea signed a draft agreement on defence and security cooperation in Jakarta on January 7, 1992. According to the Public Relations and Foreign Cooperation Bureau of the Department of Defence and Security the draft agreement stipulated among other things the rights and duties of the two countries' armed forces personnel when they are in one another's territory. The agreement indicated increasingly close bilateral relations for mutual benefit and the widening scope of cooperation beyond their national borders. The agreement was signed by the Indonesian and PNG Ministers of Defence.\(^{27}\) The Status of Forces Agreement was signed on January 14, 1992 in Jakarta by the ministers of defence of the two countries. After the signing ceremony, witnessed

\(^{25}\) SWB, November, 1996  
\(^{26}\) Tan, n. 24, p. 471  
\(^{27}\) SWB, January 9, 1992
by senior officials from both countries, including Indonesia’s Armed Forces Commander,
General Try Sutrisno, PNG’s Defence Minister Benais Sabumei said, “the agreement did
not allow joint security operations along the border. This accord would open up areas
such as joint training, exchanges of personnel and civic action projects in each country.”
Mr. Sabumei predicted the agreement would also lead to PNG purchasing military
equipment from Indonesia in line with Port Moresby’s current policy of diversifying its
defence ties. The Status of Forces Agreement was expected to enable PNG to diversify its
defence needs but it did not allow for joint military operations against OPM guerrillas
who were fighting the Indonesians in Irian Jaya. Agency reports on the agreement cited
Indonesian officials who said that “the agreement covered the rights and obligations of
members of the two armed forces when on the territory of the other,” while noting that a
group fighting for the independence of the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya had been
operating on both sides of the border and incursions into PNG by troops in pursuits of
rebels has been a particular source of tension in bilateral ties.”
Australia engages in bilateral military cooperation with every ASEAN state, including
Vietnam whose armed forces receive training in the English language to enable them to
participate in confidence-building operations.
Australia sent 6 F-111C aircraft to Malaysia to take part in an exercise of the Five-Power
integrated air defence system from 19th March to 22nd March, 1979. Australian Mirage
fighter aircraft based at Butterworth in Malaysia together with Malaysia and Singapore
also took part in the exercise.

28 SWB, January 15, 1992
Singapore and Australia called for China to be integrated into the new Asian security structure and reaffirmed their commitment to a cooperative dialogue with China. A communique issued at the end of two days of ministerial talks in Canberra said it was important for China to be involved in the emerging regional security community. Australia’s foreign minister Alexander Downer said the meeting also reaffirmed the continuing importance and relevance of the FPDA.29

Australia and Philippines also examined new avenues of defence cooperation. In November 1996 it was announced that defence cooperation between the two countries would be expanded previously with around US $ 3 million a year. This would be decided after officials from both countries met to discuss the programme expansion.30

The Indonesian Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force conducted a joint exercise codenamed *Elang Ausindo 196* to exchange experience and give a boost to friendship between the two countries. It was inaugurated by the joint executive director Aviator Col. Joko Purwoko, from the headquarters of the Indonesian Air Force at the Main Ujung Pandang air base. Sophisticated F-18 and F-16 fighters participated in the 5-day exercise. Australia sent six F-18s and Indonesia six F-16s as well as several support aircraft. Indonesia used the exercise to acquire knowledge about F-18. 31

The fact that such bilateral links have been retained and expanded demonstrates the extent to which ASEAN’s operational security doctrine has depended on a supporting pattern of power in which the US has played a critical balancing role. As defence relations evolved and the security outlook remained uncertain, countries in the region

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29 SWB November 1, 1996  
30 SWB, November 14, 1996  
31 SWB December 11, 1996
looked to their neighbours as future partners in preserving regional security. During this period the international order was extraordinarily fluid and hence the need arose for lesser-sized countries in the region to develop what the former Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas referred to as “common perceptions of what constitute a possible threat to the whole region.”³²

Consequently, two important security agreements were concluded by both Indonesia and Singapore with Australia. They marked a new trend in bilateral cooperation. Australia’s agreements with Indonesia and Singapore should be regarded as attempts to maintain stability in the region and secure the foundation for strategic counterweights to any attempts by the Great Powers to interfere in regional affairs. Despite the fact that these security agreements were primarily symbolic and political, the strategic and military factor cannot be ruled out.

The unprecedented security agreement between Australia and Indonesia signed on 18 December 1995 was often referred to as a watershed security treaty. It was the first ever treaty to be concluded between two adversaries and the first ever treaty to be signed by Indonesia with any other state. For half a century Indonesia had rejected any defence pact or formal security agreement with any other country due to its independent and active foreign policy doctrine, its policy of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, and also its activities as one of the founding countries of the non-aligned movement.

This agreement also signified a change in Indonesia’s attitude towards Australia and the security of the region. Both countries accepted a holistic definition of security in which defence against external military attack was but one of a number of possible security

challenges on which they would consult and agree to take appropriate action. A security agreement between Indonesia and Australia was very important for the two countries particularly for Australia. The defence relationship with Indonesia as the most important in the region for Australia and a key element in Australia’s approach to regional defence engagement. It is underpinned by an increasing awareness of the two countries’ shared strategic interests and perceptions. A constructive relationship between Australia and Indonesia would have done much to strengthen the wider bilateral relationship between the two countries.

From the Indonesian perspective, it would have emphasized to the government and wider Australian community that Indonesia had never been and would never be a threat to Australia’s security. It also perceived Australia as a friendly developed country, particularly for military training and technical cooperation. Also, Indonesia wanted to benefit from Australia’s advanced defence industry.

However, there was acute suspicion and hostility from the Indonesian government, military and general public towards Australia’s role in East Timor and the way it has been leading the peace keeping operations. In fact, the cordiality in relations between the two countries had ended with the emergence of the problem of East Timor, which suddenly received an encouragement in the independence struggle from the announcement of President Habibie in January 1999 that East Timor would get autonomy from Indonesia through a referendum. If the Timorese are not satisfied with the


autonomy, they could even opt for independence. This led to the UN-sponsored referendum in September 1999. There was turmoil in Indonesia due to the humanitarian aid provided by Australia. There was acute suspicion in Indonesia about Australia's intentions and this resulted in a deterioration of relations. Australia-Indonesia relations reached an all-time low and the security pact was cancelled.

The Singapore-Australia accord on the other hand was to cover defence and security as well as economic relationship and political cooperation. The agreement will embrace but not displace the FPDA (Five Power Defence Agreement). Although both these agreements do not strictly speaking come under the aegis of intra-ASEAN cooperation they proved yet again the realization by ASEAN member states of the significance of bilateral defence cooperation.

Other examples of bilateral defence cooperation beyond ASEAN include a UK battalion of Gurkha Rifles in Brunei whose tenure was renewed in December 1994, the US annual Cobra Gold military exercises with Thailand, and the continued US commitment to its 1951 mutual security agreement with the Philippines, which it demonstrated with bilateral military exercises in April-May 1996. Singapore provides perhaps the most striking examples of bilateral defence cooperation beyond ASEAN and has used military training facilities in Australia, Israel, Taiwan and the US. The US has entered into limited post-Cold War military access arrangements with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.

Further, “although the engine of cooperation is intra-regional, ASEAN leaders have regarded the US as an important pillar of their internationalist strategy, in both economic
terms as well as that of security, and have sought to strengthen their bilateral ties with it in order to alleviate concerns with its military exit from the Philippines. With all their bilateral or multilateral arrangements, the ASEAN countries still did not feel as secure as they should have because of the close proximity of these countries and their mutual cooperation-conflict syndrome. As a result, it found a distant power, the USA as a more reliable friend despite the uncertainty of its commitment in the post-Cold War period. In the late Eighties, the possibility of the US return of Clark Air Force Base and the Subic Bay Naval Base to Philippine control raised concerns about US disengagement from Southeast Asia. During the course of negotiations, in 1990 with Manila, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew offered the use of Singapore’s military facilities to the US navy and airforce. This was probably in response to the call by the Philippines for greater burden sharing within ASEAN to ensure the continued forward deployment of US forces. In November 1990 Singapore signed a MOU with the US which provided for the redeployment of American aircraft and military personnel in Singapore. In 1992 it allowed a US military logistics facility to move from Philippines to Singapore.

The access agreement with Singapore set a pattern for similar agreements, across Southeast Asia and became the foundation for a “places not bases” US strategy towards the region of obtaining base access arrangements rather permanent, deployed bases. In January 1992 US and Singapore reached an agreement on the relocation of a major naval

35 Etel Solingen, “ASEAN Quo Vadis? Domestic Coalitions and Regional Cooperation,” Contemporary South East Asia, vol. 21, no. 1, April 1999, p. 46


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logistics facility from Subic Bay to Singapore. This facility, the Command Task Force 73 (CTF 73) consists of about 200 personnel and would be responsible for port calls and resupply of US navy ships and would coordinate warship deployments in the Pacific region. Singapore's Air Force Chief Brig. Gen. Bey Shoon Khiang argued that "the reduction of American military presence in the Asia Pacific is likely to be stabilizing." Former Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusummatdja went as far as to suggest that ASEAN might need a formal military alliance in order to cope with the security vacuum after the US leaves the region. 

Malaysia also revived its defence cooperation with the US. In April 1992 it was revealed by media sources that Malaysia and the US had been cooperating quietly on military matters with the framework of an agreement on Bilateral Training and Education Cooperation signed in January 1984 (the agreement had been kept secret at Malaysia's request). During the Eighties the frequency of joint exercises between the two countries involving naval, air and ground forces had reached an average of one exercise per month. After acknowledging the secret arrangement, Malaysia declared that the coverage, frequency and type of assets involved in bilateral military cooperation with the US would be expanded. The status of exercises between Malaysia and the US army units was expected to be raised from command post to field training exercises involving company-sized units. Malaysia also offered facilities for the maintenance of US Air Force C-130 aircraft at Subang airport on a commercial basis. A deal for US navy ships to use the Lumut ship repair facility could be worth $40-50 million. In addition, Malaysia has also

37 Etel, n.35, p. 46
38 ibid
agreed to host joint exercises and to provide sports and recreational facilities for the US navy at Lumut.

Brunei followed suit in signing a MOU allowing for several US warships visits and joint training with Bruneian forces. The scope of Brunei-US cooperation was more limited than that between the US and Singapore due to Brunei’s lack of adequate port and air facilities. Indonesia was also open to Singapore’s offer of military facilities to the US and was not averse to conducting joint naval and air exercises with US forces. Indonesia also offered ship repairing facilities to the US Navy’s 7th Fleet at Surabaya. Thailand, a US treaty ally, has also conducted joint exercises with US forces since the early Seventies. In the recent past Thailand has allowed its airports to be used for refueling and maintenance of US military aircraft. Philippines also was in favour of providing some form of access to US forces in the region on a commercial basis. It is also quite obvious that it will not hesitate to seek US help in case of an attack on its disputed territories in the South China Sea under the mutual defence treaty.

These bilateral arrangements did not compete with; rather, they complemented ASEAN’s brand of multilateralism.

The growth of institutionalism in the form of multilateralism that runs parallel to the continuation of US-led alliances appears to be contradictory in terms of both theory and practice. Unless this fundamental contradiction is resolved at some stage, multilateralism may encounter serious hurdles in realizing its full potential.39

It remains to be seen whether these bilateral alliances which are regarded as the scaffolding on which Asia-Pacific security rests are compatible with the ARF type of

multilateral security institutions. Scholars are divided on this issue but it can be safely concluded that given the right kind of balance and if worked out minutely, both can continue to operate in their respective spheres without encroaching on the other or creating causes for friction. ASEAN diplomacy sought to reinforce US involvement in the region while at the same time attempting to find ways to restrict China and building security institutions as a bulwark against a diminishing US role.

The economic crisis which put on hold increasing arms acquisitions has also resulted in reduced intra-ASEAN defence cooperation. At the same time there is an increase in defence cooperation with the US in the form of joint training exercises and military education. The region's commitment to security cooperation with Washington is best underscored by Malaysia's dual track strategy — even as Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad criticized American values, he has allowed the country's defence cooperation with the US to move ahead. 40

To conclude, ASEAN looked at various ways and means to evolve and expand bilateral cooperation as mentioned above, which, went a long way in promoting moderation of intra-ASEAN tensions and threat perceptions.

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40 Manning and Przystup, n. 36, p. 52