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IS SEATO DEAD. THE FUTURE OF SEATO
UNDER THE NIXON DOCTRINE

Edward S. Basanez

Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

IS SEATO DEAD?
THE FUTURE OF SEATO UNDER THE NIXON DOCTRINE

AN INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Edward S. Basanez
Field Artillery

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Edward S. Basanez, LTC, FA
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The primary question is whether or not the Nixon Doctrine portends the demise of SEATO. Information has been obtained through research of official documents, books and periodicals on the subject and the underlying mandates for US presence in Southeast Asia. Predominate among these is the overpowering threat of Communist China during the 1970's, motivated by a heritage of superiority over the region and revolutionary zeal heavily influenced by an enormous population and growth rate barely capable of sustenance and wielding a nuclear capability. SEATO represents the only significant multilateral defense arrangement and guarantee of United States might in Southeast Asia. Regional organizations are too weak and immature to assume the collective security function. Through economic aid dispersed through multilateral organizations, military aid and an air of partnership using Asian manpower supported by American firepower, collective security, as expressed in the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, is compatible with the Nixon Doctrine. The US should actively foster the interest of outside powers, notably Japan and should seek ways to expand SEATO membership of Southeast Asia nations..

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On 25 July 1969, as part of an around the world trip at the conclusion of the astounding Apollo 11 voyage to the moon, President Nixon announced to accompanying newsmen in a nonattribution conference in Guam a determination to recast United States objectives and actions in the Pacific and Asia. From the scene, Murrey Marder of the Washington Post summarized the President's views:

The United States is a Pacific power and it cannot withdraw from that geographic fact. The question is whether it will play a minor or a significant role in the Pacific and in Asia. He (Nixon) is convinced that the way to avoid involvement in another Asian war is to continue to play a significant role because he believes that the greatest threat to world peace in the years ahead is in this region.¹

The manner in which the United States will play that role, however, will change. Continuing the summarization, he said:

We must avoid a policy that will make Asian nations so dependent upon us that we are dragged into another Vietnam. The United States will keep its present treaty commitments. But except for a nuclear threat by a major power, the United States would encourage, and expect, the Asian nations themselves to handle their own military defense by developing collective security.²

¹Murrey Marder, "Nixon's Zigzag in Asia," Washington Post, 3 August 1969, p. B1.

²Ibid.

Subsequently, President Nixon's statements along with other statements made during the Asian trip became known as the "Guam Doctrine" or "Nixon Doctrine."

The remarks of the President formalized what previously had only been unspecified that the emerging Southeast Asian policy of the United States for the 1970s would undertake no new commitments and would emphasize Asian self-reliance, regional cooperation, and initiative to those Asian states with the will and means to contribute effectively to the security of the region. Viewed in the context of anticipated withdrawal of American forces at the conclusion of the Vietnam conflict, emphasis on Asian self-reliance and regional cooperation caused considerable apprehension in Southeast Asian capitals.³ Precipitous withdrawals would create a security vacuum inimical to the interests of Southeast Asian nations, vis-a-vis Communist China. From a pragmatic standpoint, it is somewhat unclear how the doctrine will modify the US commitment. Subsequent visits by Secretary of State Rogers, Senator Mansfield and Vice President Agnew, listed in the order of visits, and further rhetoric were necessary to allay the fears of US disengagement from Asia. The fact remains that President Nixon has iterated and reiterated that the United States will abide by its commitments, despite diminution

³Takashi Oka, "Nixon Views on Pullback Stir Uneasiness in Asia," New York Times, 30 July 1969, p. 14.

of American presence. This was, indeed, specifically reaffirmed in the President's "State of the World" report to Congress in February 1970.⁴

The security aspects of the US commitment to Southeast Asia is embodied in the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty signed by Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the US at Manila on 8 September 1954. SEATO has endured strong criticism as "a useless alliance from the military point of view and a harmful one politically and economically in that it alienates the broad masses of Asians and imposes economic burdens without benefits"⁵ and, more recently and succinctly, as an "anachronistic relic."⁶ On the other hand, continued existence of SEATO and support of the US during the 1970s seems assured. In his closing remarks at the 15th SEATO Council Meeting in July 1970, Secretary Rogers restated the continuation of strong support by the United States and of SEATO's great importance to Free World security.⁷ At the 33d Conference of SEATO Military Advisers in October 1970,

⁴Richard M. Nixon, US Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace, (18 February 1970), p. 55.

⁵Hans J. Morgenthau, "Alliances in Theory and Practice," in Alliance in the Cold War, ed. by Arnold Wolfers, p. 211.

⁶Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," Foreign Affairs, (October 1967), p. 116.

⁷William P. Rogers, "Points from the Opening Statements by Heads of Delegations," SEATO Record, (August 1970), p. 12.

the US representative, Admiral John S. McCain Jr , reaffirmed that SEATO was an indispensable shield to checkmate the Communist threat in Southeast Asia and is consistent with the Nixon Doctrine.⁸

In a world of superpowers, it stands to reason that a peripheral region of developing nations such as those in Southeast Asia must obtain security assistance from a superpower if the region is going to preclude hegemony from the power of China. This threat, which will be covered in detail in the ensuing chapter, is more relevant today and in the future with Chinese accession of nuclear weaponry and delivery means than it was in 1954 at the beginning of SEATO. Political regional security arrangements; i.e. Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC) or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), minus superpower protection would be incapable of coping with the ambitions of China. Regardless of the lack of Asian participation and bilateral security arrangements between the U.S. and certain SEATO members, the value of SEATO is the principal collective security organization in the region and a stanchion for United States foreign policy in Southeast Asia.

The purpose of this report is to reinforce the validity of SEATO as a defense institution that will permit security and peaceful development in Southeast Asia. To support the hypothesis, the mandates for American presence will be examined. In addition to the Communist Chinese threat, other areas deserving consideration are:

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, "SEATO Military Advisers Review Situation in Southeast Asia," Commanders Digest, 31 October 1970, p. 3.

1. Soviet opportunism,
2. North Vietnamese aggressiveness, and
3. British withdrawal.

We will then look at the SEATO record, its strength and weaknesses, and applicability for the 1970s in view of the Nixon Doctrine.

Completeness of the evaluation necessitates examination of alternatives to SEATO which are popularly postulated by "Asian Watchers" as being most suitable for US and Southeast Asian interests. Such treatment should lead to certain conclusions about SEATO and steps necessary to improve its usefulness as an institution for deterrence in the 1970s.

CHAPTER II

MANDATES FOR US PRESENCE

THE COMMUNIST CHINESE THREAT

Communist China looms as the principle antagonist to peaceful development and to world order in Southeast Asia. Appreciation of the threat can be seen through four juxtaposed realities. First, China has a long heritage of expansionism to possess lands and peoples formerly ruled by Peking and to assert suzerainty over peripheral lands deemed necessary for the security of China. Desire for world power status and Han superiority over Asia are historically ingrained in most Chinese leaders. The second consideration is the revolutionary philosophy and support of subversion characteristic of Maoism. The existence of some 20 million overseas Chinese in Southeast Asian nations presents a third disconcerting means for the thrust of China's expansionism. Finally, the possession of thermonuclear and nuclear weapons in the 1960s and the anticipated development of IRBM in the 1970s offer significant leverage for influencing the power balance in Asia and international behavior of developing nations in Southeast Asia. These factors will be examined more fully in the following paragraphs.

The Chinese Communists inherited a great civilization with a past of imperial grandeur. A. Doak Barnett writes that throughout most of the last two thousand years, Chinese rulers have experienced hegemony over large areas of the Far East, Central Asia, and Southeast

Asia. During the period, Chinese imperialism and colonialism have ascended and descended according to the strength of the government in Peking. Expansionism has taken many forms: the spread of cultural influence, the pressure of population migrations and, in many periods, territorial conquest.¹

Nationalistic spirit and the concept of being the center of the civilized world in China are long-standing and not unknown to present Chinese leaders. Primacy in Asia and superiority amongst Asians are bred into most Chinese.² Since assuming China's leadership in 1949, the dynamism and charisma of Mao Tse-tung have demonstrated for the Chinese masses the propriety and validity of his direction and Marxism-Leninism toward Chinese reemergence as a world power. To have successfully withstood two catastrophic upheavals--the Great Leap Forward of 1958 and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1965--attest the resiliency of Mao and his government.

Territorial unification of China appears to be one of the national aims of Mao. No inhibitions were shown in the use of military force to invade Tibet and completely subjugate the territory despite strong Tibetan opposition and unpopular worldwide reaction. The artillery and air battles against Quemoy and Matsu in 1958 exhibited the territorial unification policy; escalation was imminent had the risk of major conflict with the United States been less portentous.

¹A. Doak Barnett, Communist China and Asia (1960), p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 67.

Against India where the risk of major confrontation was less prevalent, Communist China did not hesitate to employ military force to resolve the border clashes of 1958-1962. The still unsettled Sino-Soviet border and the associated battles along the frontier of the Ussuri and Amur Rivers and in the Sinkiang-Uighur Region further exemplify the temerity of the Communist Chinese to reclaim territories of the past.

Regarding China's boundaries, an early statement attributed to Mao is revealing:

After having inflicted military defeats on China, the imperialist countries forcibly took from her a large number of states tributary to China, as well as part of her own territory. Japan appropriated Korea, Taiwan, the Ryukyu Islands, the Pescadores and Port Arthur; England took Burma, Bhutan, Nepal and Hong Kong; France seized Annam; even a miserable little country like Portugal took Macao from us. At the same time that they took away part of her territory, the imperialists obliged China to pay enormous indemnities. Thus heavy blows were struck against the vast feudal empire of China³

Whether this sense of historical domain and goal of Asian preeminence will materialize in rampant "Yellow Hordes" is conjectural. Exertion of Peking influence, however, is clearly apparent. It seems equally clear that the choice of method for the thrust will be determined by the strength and will of superpower opposition.

³Stuart R. Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung (1969), p. 375.

A more insidious danger to Southeast Asia and world order lies in the revolutionary fervor and violent zeal of Maoism. As Mao wrote in 1936,

War is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions when they have developed to a certain stage, between classes, nations, states or political groups History knows only two kinds of wars: just and unjust. We support just wars and oppose unjust wars. All counter-revolutionary wars are unjust, all revolutionary wars are just A war waged by the great majority of mankind and the Chinese people is beyond doubt a just war, a most lofty and glorious undertaking for the salvation of mankind and China, and a bridge to a new era in world history.⁴

More recently, the Chinese Communists have focused interests in revolutionary struggle against areas of influence of the United States and the Soviet Union. Southeast Asian countries have been specifically identified as targets. At the conclusion of the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, Lin Piao, heir-apparent to rule of Communist China, stated:

The United States and the USSR want to isolate China, but the true Marxist-Leninists throughout the world, first of all in Albania, are united with the Communist Chinese people and support Vietnam and revolution in Laos, Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, India and Palestine, and in general Asia, Africa and Latin America . . . they support . . . all those who are engaged in the just struggle against US imperialism and Soviet revisionism⁵

⁴Mao Tse-Tung, Selected Military Writings (1963), pp. 76, 79.

⁵"The Political Report of Lin Piao," China News Analysis, 9 May 1969, p. 7.

Admittedly, the statement may be more bellicosity than hostility. Professor Halperin writes that despite a long background in revolutionary warfare of all the leaders of China and their view of violence as an inevitable part of domestic and international politics, they expect their adversaries to use force when it is in their interests, and they fear American retaliation. Further, the Chinese leaders share a belief that revolution must be primarily an indigenous effort, and their major pre-occupation is with internal events and with the future shape of the revolution in China.⁶

Nevertheless, there are persistent bodeful recurrences of China's active, though indirect, support of attractive revolutionary situations, primarily in Southeast Asia. Even instances of compromise and willingness to negotiate, i.e. Korea in 1953, Indochina in 1954, and Laos in 1962, do not seem to change the basic Chinese ardor with violent revolution.⁷ They loudly acclaim Marxist-Leninist revolutionary parties and their insurgencies in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, India, Indonesia, and North Kalimantan by acknowledgement and encouragement.⁸ Although the

⁶Morton H. Halperin, "After Vietnam: Security and Intervention in Asia," Journal of International Affairs (1968), p. 240.

⁷Fred Greene, U.S. Policy and Security of Asia (1968), pp. 46-47.

⁸"Flames of Revolutionary Armed Struggle Raging All Over Southeast Asia," Peking Review, 9 October 1970, pp. 35-37.

degree of Chinese support is unclear, political recognition, training of cadres, tactical advice, and logistical support are characteristic. Road construction by Communist Chinese engineer units in northern Laos is a special concern of the Thai and Laotian governments.⁹

The low-risk support of subversive movements permit the potential for direct or indirect removal of American and Soviet influence from China's periphery. Removal or paralyzation of antagonistic sources of competitive power and influence in traditional areas of Chinese influence make it likely that, even after a Vietnam solution assuming that it will not result in a US defeat, will be maintained to exhort the peoples of the area to overthrow their legally constituted governments.

The distribution of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia has definite implications for host countries as they provide a "foot-in-the-door" potential for furthering revolutionary Chinese objectives. They are imperfectly assimilated and available, in some instances, for manipulation by Chinese interests; they are inalienably Chinese by nationality and tend to be modern and to dominate commerce and finance down to village level.¹⁰ The following table shows that, as of 1966, there were approximately 20 million overseas or Nanyang Chinese residing in Southeast Asian countries.

⁹SEATO, "Communist Chinese Road Construction in Laos," Trends and Highlights, 1 January 1970, pp. 4-6.

¹⁰Dennis J. Duncanson, "China's Weight in Southeast Asia," Conflict Studies, (July 1970), p. 5.

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF OVERSEAS CHINESE
IN SELECTED POPULATIONS OF SEA

	<u>Ethnic Chinese</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>% Chinese</u>
Singapore	1,520,000	2,000,000	76.0
West Malaysia	3,340,500	8,500,000	39.3
East Malaysia	4,425,000	1,500,000	29.5
Thailand	3,707,000	33,700,000	11.0
Cambodia	325,000	6,500,000	5.0
Burma	3,495,000	25,300,000	1.5
Laos	360,000	3,000,000	1.2
Philippines	3,685,000	33,500,000	1.1
Indonesia	1,180,000	118,000,000	1.0

Source: Conflict Studies¹¹

Accepting the uncertainties of population data of overseas Chinese, such as type of Chinese, accuracy of census, etc., a relative magnitude of Chinese in Southeast Asia can be obtained and certain conclusions drawn. Singapore is essentially a Chinese city surrounded by heavily Chinese populated Malaysia. Burma, Thailand and the Indochina countries are already engaged as insurgency targets. The remainder though containing smaller percentages of overseas Chinese cannot be ignored considering their economic importance.

Although Peking has carefully avoided demanding the allegiance of Nanyang Chinese, they have encouraged maintenance of family ties through favorable currency regulations on remittance of funds to relatives in China which has obtained return of large financial sums and goodwill. By achieving respect, if not fear, in Southeast Asia,

¹¹Ibid., p. 6.

the subtle Peking arrangements with the overseas Chinese make it impossible to forget the New China and to identify with her influence.¹²

With the exception of Singapore and perhaps Malaysia, the military significance of the Nanyang Chinese rests primarily as a source of agitations, demonstrations, and intelligence. Predicting performance by the overseas Chinese by country would be presumptuous. Conceivably, they could provide a base for subversive activity as was the case in the Malayan Emergency when the membership of the Malayan Communist Party was more than 90 percent Chinese.¹³ Assimilation within the host countries may result in a fortuitous outcome. Yet, the natural spiritual and cultural allegiance to China combined with misunderstanding, divergent purposes, and communal ill-will in their chosen countries do present a "market," particularly amongst Nanyang youth, for the export of Mao's class struggle. For the foreseeable future, the Nanyang Chinese represent a force for instability in Southeast Asia--a fifth column.¹⁴

Turning to the fourth and final reality of Communist China to Southeast Asia, attainment of nuclear power status in the 1970s forebodes that Peking's historical contention to great power rank will be more serious, that bipolar control of nuclear power is

¹²C. P. Fitzgerald, The Third China (1965), pp. 78-80.

¹³Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁴Daugherty M. Smith, LTC, Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia--A Fifth Column (8 April 1966), pp. 38-39.

obsolescent and that China as the only Asian member of the nuclear club can dictate the response of small Asian nations toward Peking. The seriousness of the threat was addressed by Secretary Laird in his Defense Appropriations statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 20 February 1970. He said:

. . . even a small and relatively unsophisticated Chinese nuclear force could make an important difference in the world balance of power, particularly once it includes an ICBM capability. In the near term, the Communist Chinese, with their nuclear forces, could threaten their neighbors and United States forces on Mainland Asia and the Western Pacific. . . . The main problem, therefore, is the potential capability of China to threaten serious damage to a vulnerable US through nuclear attack and thereby reduce the credibility of our Asian commitments.¹⁵

Since 16 October 1964, the first Chinese nuclear detonation, they have conducted an impressive test program of nuclear and thermonuclear devices.¹⁶ On 28 December 1966, the fifth test resulted in the detonation of the first thermonuclear device. Thus, in the short period of just over two years, Communist China was able to overcome a wide range of technical problems in far less time than required by the other four nuclear powers.¹⁷ Besides, the

¹⁵Melvin R. Laird, Fiscal Year 1971 Defense Program and Budget (20 February 1970), pp. 42-43.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁷Michael B. Yahuda, "China's Nuclear Option," in China After the Cultural Revolution, ed. by D. Wilson and J. Simon, p. 199.

necessary raw nuclear materials are available to sustain a large stockpile although production facilities are thought to be inadequate.¹⁸

Delivery vehicle development, testing, and production capacity are equally impressive. Development of a MRBM has been going on for a number of years. Intelligence sources indicate that it is possible for the Chinese to have a force of 80-100 operational MRBMs by the mid 1970s. Such a force would constitute a direct threat against Southeast Asian nations. In addition, it appears that the Chinese are proceeding with their medium range bomber program to provide an immediate capability in the Asian area. The potential threat of ICBMs is also very real. Deployment in the latter half of the 1970s is anticipated.¹⁹

Once China attains a minimal deterrence capability, it is questionable what policy will be followed toward Southeast Asia. Amongst "China-watchers," there are the group that contends China is predisposed to low-cost, low-risk policies in supporting revolutionary struggles without including Chinese manpower on a significant scale. They allow that Maoist doctrine specifies that all revolutionaries must be "self-reliant" and should depend on local resources; it opposes the use of Chinese forces to fight insurgencies for them.²⁰

¹⁸Laird, p. 107.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 108-110.

²⁰A. Doak Barnett, "A Nuclear China and U.S. Arms Policy," Foreign Affairs, (April 1970), pp. 436-438.

A concomitant view is that Chinese development of a nuclear capability is a purely defensive tactic, and above all to break the nuclear blackmail of others.²¹

On the other hand, a credible deterrent may make China more aggressive in areas such as Southeast Asia. More risks could be accepted because of less vulnerability to nuclear counterthreats. China must be viewed as a power committed to territorial acquisition and satisfied to act regardless of consequences.

Probably, the Communist Chinese will follow a course somewhere between the extremes once they obtain a minimal deterrence capability. A nuclear force will simply reinforce China's conventional military power and their ability to support insurgencies. Implied threats of military action would continue against Southeast Asian neighbors, but dependence would be on political maneuvers to bring these nations into her orbit. Employment of nuclear weapons is neither likely nor useful in expanding Chinese influence.²² This view appears more feasible, but the implications for Southeast Asia are ominous particularly when viewed in the perspective of China's colossal manpower and military forces and enormous population pressures.

²¹Han Suyin, China in the Year 2001 (1967), p. 113.

²²Morton H. Halperin, China and the Bomb (1965), pp. 54-55.

SOVIET OPPORTUNISM

At the conclusion of an opening address to the International Communist Conference in Moscow on 7 June 1969, Leonid Brezhnev stated: "We are also of the opinion that the course of events is also putting on the agenda the task of creating a system of collective security in Asia!"²³ The comment appeared almost as an afterthought since the principal thrust of his address was directed toward Soviet proposals for a collective security in Europe, and no elaboration on where, when, and how were provided.²⁴ In the context of Soviet political, military, and economic activities in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, before and after the address, however, the expression was more than an afterthought of Soviet intentions of expanding her influence as a global power and of self-assertion in Asia.

Although the Brezhnev statement heralded the first call by the Soviet Union for a collective security arrangement in Asia, it was not the first sounds of making its presence felt in Southeast Asia. South and Southeast Asia countries are high on the list in Soviet military aid operations. Aid to Hanoi has been a major factor in the prolongation of the Vietnam war.²⁵ Success has been attained

²³Victor Zorza, "Collective Security," Survival, (August 1969), p. 248.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Hanson W. Baldwin, "Soft Words vs. Hard Facts--Can We Trust the Kremlin?," Readers Digest, (March 1970), p. 86.

in establishing diplomatic, trade, and cultural relations with Malaysia and Singapore and in fostering cultural meetings with the Philippines and Thailand. Since 1969, Moscow has been actively engaged in an extensive diplomatic offensive in the Far East, aimed to all appearances at winning allies or, at least, at obtaining neutralization in the area.²⁶ To extend its influence, the Russians are out in force relying on trade agreements and aid programs and concluding deals with Communist, non-Communist, and even anti-Communist governments.

Complementing aggressive Soviet political and economic efforts in Southeast Asia is the growing Soviet Navy and accompanying merchant marine which are progressively increasing activities in the Indian Ocean. The first noticeable venture by Soviet warships into the Indian Ocean occurred in March 1968, after British announcement of plans to reduce military commitments East of Suez. Since that date, 6 to 15 naval vessels have been there regularly.²⁷ Access to ports and dockyard facilities has been obtained in the Persian Gulf area, Vishakapatnam, India and to other key ports such as Mauritius, Singapore, and Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. It is projected into the shipping organizations trading between Europe and the Far

²⁶SEATO, "The Soviet Call for a Collective Security System in Asia," Trends and Highlights, 1 August 1969, p. 4.

²⁷Neil Sheehan, "Soviet Union is Expanding Navy in the Indian Ocean Region," New York Times, 18 October 1970, p. 1.

East. It is involved in extensive hydrographic, oceanographic, and maritime intelligence activities.²⁸ Few ports are barred to Russia.

There has been little public objection to Soviet diplomatic and trade ventures; nor has there been any outcry against Soviet naval penetration into the Indian Ocean. The ambitious Soviet schemes are conducted cautiously to avoid arousal of suspicions in Southeast Asia. Efforts in the economic and commercial fields are mutually beneficial, and the naval activities are legitimate.

Ostensibly, the Russian diplomatic and military activity is working toward a system for the containment of China. But, this only provides a part of the answer. Domination of Mid-East oil movement, particularly to Japan, exertion of political and economical pressures, diminution of Red China's ideological influence on Asian Communist parties and a natural compulsion to expand are logical aspirations of her endeavors.

If there is an intensification of the cold war or a reconciliation of Sino-Soviet relations, the Soviet concept of collective security and efforts in the Southeast Asia area are dangerous although fraught with some potential benefits for the countries in the region. Much will depend on the Soviet's view of her responsibilities as a superpower versus her need to retain ideological leadership of International Communism in the face of Chinese competition. Removal

²⁸T. B. Millar, "The Indian Ocean-A Soviet Sea?" New York Times, 13 November 1970, p. 35M.

of United States presence and support of SEATO would undoubtedly create the void that the Soviet Union would anxiously fill as a counterfoil to Communist China in Asia. Southeast Asian nations would have little recourse in dealing with the greater Red Chinese threat but to obtain the nuclear backing of the Soviet Union in some form of collective security arrangement. As evidenced in Eastern Europe, the price for such an arrangement is inordinately high for developing nations in their pursuit of national aspirations.

The vagaries of Russian moves in Southeast Asia were properly assessed by Lieutenant General Jesus Vargas, the Secretary General of SEATO, in a speech before the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangkok in 1969. In reviewing the various factors affecting the precarious balance of power in Asia for the future, he said:

Following a substantially different approach, but fired by the same long-term objectives, namely the exclusion of Western influence and the creation of Communist States, the Soviet Union has embarked on an intensified programme of diplomatic, economic and cultural activities designed covertly and subtly to introduce personnel adept at propagating the Soviet brand of communism, in fomenting unrest and in undermining national confidence in the government of Free Asia. Indeed, in the context of the Sino-Soviet conflict, the Soviet Union is neither prepared nor expected to write off Asia as a Communist Chinese preserve--an absolute sphere of Chinese influence The distressing fact of the matter is that the two Communist powers are very much in this region, applying their energies not to their own problems at home . . . but to the small nations of non-Communist Asia.²⁹

²⁹Jesus M. Vargas, "Asia's Balance of Power," SEATO Record, (April 1969), pp. 9-10.

NORTH VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS

Assessment of the direction of North Vietnamese aggression in Indochina and its pertinency to orderly development and security in Southeast Asia is fraught with imponderables. Certainly, the reunification of Vietnam as a Communist state is ascertained by the prolonged struggle of the Vietnamese conflict. What is uncertain are the intentions of North Vietnam in the neighboring states of Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. Is the active presence of North Vietnamese forces in Laos and Cambodia merely a prelude toward a grander design of communizing all of Indochina with subsequent inclusion of Thailand under Hanoi leadership or Peking leadership or both? Clarification must await developments in South Vietnam, North-South unification, reconstruction of the North Vietnamese economy after the bombing losses, and actions of the United States. Hence, it is difficult to determine whether North Vietnam aims are directed toward asserting hegemony over Laos and Cambodia and, in a longer run, Thailand, or attempting to develop friendly neighboring governments. What is clear is that there are 50,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos³⁰ actively engaged with the Pathet Lao; that the North Vietnamese control the northeast section of Cambodia and, to a lesser degree, are in strength with the Viet Cong west and

³⁰Richard M. Nixon, "News Conference of September 26," Department of State Bulletin, 13 October 1969, p. 314.

southwest of Phnom Penk;³¹ and, that anywhere between 40,000 to 75,000 Vietnamese emigrants are in northern Thailand³² which pose a potential base for insurgency.

Possibly, the North Vietnamese activities in Laos and Cambodia are primarily supporting South Vietnam operations. In Laos, the North Vietnamese could be willing to settle for peace and return to a neutralist settlement providing they were granted unimpeded use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the US bombing ends. The ease with which the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao overran the Plaine des Jarres in February 1970 suggests the reason Vientienne and Luang Prabang were not subsequently taken was a consequence of political decision despite military ascendancy.³³ Yet, the refusal of North Vietnam to acknowledge its presence in Laos is suspect. In Cambodia, it appears that Hanoi's main aim is consolidation of lines of communication from southern Laos through eastern Cambodia to South Vietnam, recognizing the North Vietnamese will occasionally seize opportunities to apply pressure for psychological warfare

³¹Marshall Green, "US National Security and Assistance to East Asia," Department of State Bulletin, 21 December 1970, p. 759.

³²George Modelski, "The Viet Minh Complex," in Communism and Revolution: The Strategic Uses of Political Violence, ed. by Cyril E. Black and Thomas P. Thornton, pp. 199-200.

³³T. D. Allman, "The First Communist Monarchy?," Far Eastern Economic Review, 26 March 1970, pp. 21-24.

reasons and diversionary purposes.³⁴ In both countries, North Vietnam appears circumspect and anxious to avoid imperialist definition.

From a historical standpoint, there is precedent that the Indochina Peninsula is an entity, rather than a group of small states. This concept found expression in 1930, when the Indochinese Communist Party was founded by a small group led by Ho Chi Minh. Even earlier, there was an era when the Vietnamese monarchy considered Laos and Cambodia as tributary regions. When the ICP reemerged in 1951 in northern Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were no longer considered members.³⁵

The revolution against the French was almost exclusively Vietnamese, whereas the independence movements in Laos and Cambodia were motivated by very diverse forces. In Laos, the Vietnamese revolutionaries were quick to set up calls in the Pathet Lao movement of Souphanouvong. The local revolutionaries in Cambodia, however, operated with a much greater degree of autonomy.³⁶

Further corroboration of Indochina as an entity can be deduced from a conference held in a remote village in southern China on 24 April 1970, attended by Pham Van Dong, Prince Souphanouvong,

³⁴Green, p. 759.

³⁵Greene, p. 226.

³⁶Jean Lacouture, "From the Vietnam War to an Indochina War," Foreign Affairs, p. 619.

Sihanouk, and Nguyen Huu Tho of the National Liberation Front. Jean Lacouture, a prominent French writer who had access to the deliberations, tells that three interesting themes developed. First came the affirmation of the solidarity of the four movements of "Red Indochina"; second, the original nature of the different and diverse struggles; and third, there was the reminder of the "neutralist" themes that were formulated in the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962. As Lacouture points out: militant Indochina is not just a war cry; it can also be a program for peace.³⁷

Although a solid case cannot be made for the imperialistic ambitions of North Vietnam, one can surmise that Hanoi with military and political superiority could easily dominate the countries of the Indochina Peninsula with a favorable outcome in South Vietnam. Exploitation of this strength could materialize in exerting varied forms of pressure on Thailand at very low cost and risk, particularly with Chinese backing. Insurance of friendly neighboring states could be the motivation for such North Vietnamese action.

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

On 16 January 1968, the Labor government of Great Britain announced the gradual pullback of British military forces east of Suez with complete withdrawal in Southeast Asia in 1971. The reduction pertained to approximately 73,000 British and territorial

³⁷Ibid., pp. 626-627.

forces and numerous military bases, including the 130-acre naval dockyard in Singapore and extensive indigenous employment. Although the announcement was favorably received in Britain, the decision was a cause for real concern in the region, especially in Singapore and Malaysia who are affected politically and economically as well as militarily.³⁸ The question arises as to who will fill the "power vacuum" after the British departure.

After numerous meetings between Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore and a change from the Wilson Laborite government to Edward Heath and the Conservatives in June 1970, a formal decision was made on 28 October 1970 to keep British forces in Southeast Asia--but at a level so low that it is generally regarded as inconsequential. Britain will station 2000-3000 troops, plus 1000 to 1200 sailors aboard five frigates or destroyers east of Suez. Also, the former open-ended commitment to defend Malaysia and Singapore if attacked has been modified to a five-power consultative arrangement before commitment of forces.³⁹ Earlier, Prime Minister Gorton of Australia announced the intention of his country to retain a small level of ground, air, and naval forces in Malaysia and Singapore.⁴⁰

³⁸Kierran Broadbent, "East of Suez in the 70's," Far Eastern Economic Review, 21-27 September 1969, pp. 786, 788.

³⁹Anthony Lewis, "Tiny British Force to Remain in Asia," New York Times, 29 October 1970, p. 1.

⁴⁰"Extracts of Statements by Right Honorable John Gorton, Prime Minister of Australia to the House of Representatives, Canberra, 25 February 1969," Survival, (April 1969), pp. 116-118.

Clearly, the onus is on Malaysia and Singapore to allocate limited resources to develop their embryonic military forces and to handle internal troubles.

Despite Tory insistence on maintaining British military presence in Southeast Asia, the reality of British resources has modified their ideas drastically. Continuing balance-of-payments deficits and adverse economic health could ultimately force elimination of even the token commitment. Hence, the vacuum created by British withdrawal still exists, although partial.

China, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser somewhat problematical sense, the North Vietnamese have exhibited a willingness or appear ambitious enough to exploit vacuums created by departure of Western influence. An example of this concern is Australia's increased interest in SEATO, the only remaining multilateral security alliance in Southeast Asia of any significance. SEATO provides the sort of defense arrangement that tempers Communist expansionistic thoughts by the availability of American might.

In the Australian view, negotiation of a modernized regional security treaty to include the US is most unlikely because of American public and Congressional opinion. With the diminished British presence in Southeast Asia, it has become imperative for SEATO members to work harder to fulfill the aims of the treaty. Principally for these reasons the Australians and the Thais have upgraded the validity of SEATO.⁴¹

⁴¹Christopher Beck, "It Takes Five to Tango," Far Eastern Economic Review, 13 August 1970, p. 7.

We will turn our attention to SEATO and determine its capacity to provide regional security in Southeast Asia in the face of the existing threats and mandates for American presence.

CHAPTER III

THE SEATO RECORD

BACKGROUND

To properly evaluate the security value of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, a look at the foreign policy of the principal superpower member and the development of SEATO are imperative.

What is American policy in Southeast Asia and how did SEATO evolve?

In his book, Toward Disengagement in Asia, Bernard Gordon points out that US policy in Asia has been prevention of any one state from achieving East Asian dominance. Notwithstanding shifts in American support, the policy has persisted since acquisition of the Philippines at the end of the 19th Century. The Open Door policy in China, the war with Japan, the Korean War, and Indochina conflicts attest US consistency in policy through the years.¹

In Southeast Asia prior to World War II, all extant countries were under the domination of British, French, or Dutch colonial rule with the exception of Thailand and the Republic of the Philippines. Thailand was an independent nation with close ties to Great Britain and France.² The Philippine Islands were a possession of the United States.

¹Bernard K. Gordon, Towards Disengagement in Asia (1969), pp. 32-43.

²Saul Rose, Britain and Southeast Asia (1962), p. 55.

A new era began in 1945. Efforts to reestablish colonial rule were shattered by the degradation of the European powers from the war, by the breakdown of colonial administrations during the Japanese occupation and by rising nationalism. The United States supported passively the return of colonialism, albeit fundamentally against it. Two reasons account for this support: popular considerations precluded use of military forces in developing trusteeships in the Southeast Asian countries and avoidance of rifts with Britain and France to insure orderly reconstruction of Europe.³ The return of colonial authority to the British, Dutch and French, however, was slow, and nationalistic elements, including Communists, were successful in gaining footholds.⁴ American efforts were largely mediatory between the nationalist groups and the colonial powers.⁵ The exceptions: Thailand regained its independence and the Philippines received independence in 1946 and retained close ties with the United States.

The Communist takeover in China and their participation in the Korean War, the French Indochina conflict, and other subversive activities in Southeast Asia changed the American attitude and ushered in the containment policy. Between 1951 and 1953, security

³Robert C. Good, "The United States and the Colonial Debate," in Alliance in the Cold War, ed. by Arnold Wolfers, p. 227.

⁴Richard Butwell, Southeast Asia Today--And Tomorrow: Problems of Political Development (1969), pp. 25-55.

⁵William C. Johnstone, "United States Policy in Southern Asia," Current History, (February 1964), p. 67.

treaties were signed with the Philippines (August 1951), Japan (September 1951), Australia and New Zealand (September 1951), and Korea (October 1953). The only friendly Pacific areas not included were Nationalist China and the Southeast Asian nations. A defense treaty was signed with the former on 2 December 1954, to protect Taiwan. As a consequence of the disastrous French defeat in Indochina by the Vietminh, a collective security arrangement, the Manila Treaty, was signed on 8 September 1954, which covered the Southeast Asian area. The resultant SEATO pact became effective 19 February 1955.⁶

SEATO emerged as the result of Anglo-French-American negotiations in 1952-1954, which initiated the frequently criticized heavy Western orientation and membership. Both Britain and France had sought to obtain US participation in a similar alliance before the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Britain favored a collective organization that would help secure its diminishing Asian empire and that would reduce its security requirements in the Indian Ocean Basin by bringing in as many of the Colombo members as possible. France was anxious to maintain some influence in Indochina after the Geneva Accords of 1954. Resulting compromises ended in a firm commitment to the defense of Southeast Asia without specification of the precise nature of the pledge. Secretary Dulles, the American

⁶Fred Greene, U.S. Policy and Security of Asia (1968), pp. 72-87.

architect of the treaty, wanted to preclude SEATO from becoming another NATO, but the pact did result in a socioeconomic aspect.⁷

Associated Asian and Pacific nations had varied self-interests for accepting or nonaccepting the treaty. Thailand had a genuine security interest in the territorial protection afforded by SEATO. In Pakistan, the motivation for acceptance was more directed to its security problems with India. Australia and New Zealand were aware of their strategic interests in Southeast Asia. Philippine leaders regarded SEATO as a useful security supplement to their bilateral arrangement with the United States. Pakistani acceptance and US aversion to a colonial characterization dashed British hopes of entering Ceylon and Burma in the former case and Hong Kong and Malaya in the latter. Indian and Indonesian acceptance was obviated by their neutralist stances and conciliatory desires with China.⁸ Therefore, the alliance began with divergent national interests and only one mainland member (Thailand) oriented on the Communist threat. The principal value is best described by a statement from Sir Robert Scott, British High Commissioner for Southeast Asia made in an interview in 1959: "SEATO now constitutes a certain guarantee that if there is an open armed aggression there will be an American reply."⁹

⁷Ibid., pp. 104-106.

⁸Ibid., pp. 106-107.

⁹C. L. Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: An Alliance that Never Was," New York Times, 9 January 1970, p. 32.

SEATO as an alliance has been and is an institution designed to contain Communist expansionism. As such, American participation is consistent with the policy of denying one nation dominance in Asia. After looking at the SEATO performance record, we will examine the applicability of SEATO in the 1970s in view of the Nixon Doctrine.

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE

The treaty encompasses two principal security commitments. There is the case of overt aggression against any of the signatories and the protocol states of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam, if they ask for it, within the treaty area--defined by Article VIII of the treaty as the general area of Southeast Asia, including also the entire territories of the Asian parties, and the general area of the Southwest Pacific, north of Luzon but south of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Each party of the treaty is obligated to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." The other aspect is that the members will meet to determine the measures to be taken for the common defense if the "inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of the Party . . . is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area." The official interpretation of

the United States insofar as overt aggression means Communist aggression and will consult in the event of other aggression.¹⁰

SEATO's primary involvement in mutual security action has been against subversion. Initially, a concern centered on subversion in India and Indonesia where legal Communist parties were attempting to gain popular support. SEATO action was precluded because the targets were outside the purview of the treaty and the avowed neutralism of the leaders negated requesting assistance.¹¹ SEATO also found a limited capacity to act multilaterally in the major insurgencies in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia that have plagued the tranquility of the area since the mid 1950s.

Despite urgings from Thailand and, to a lesser extent, the United States, SEATO refused collective action when the Pathet Lao and rightist forces were fighting in Laos as early as 1955. Bilateral actions were necessitated by the end of the decade through aid and other support because SEATO members were still in disagreement as to the applicability of the treaty. To overcome the intractableness, the United States and Thailand have continuously bypassed SEATO in providing support to Souvanna Phouma.¹²

The SEATO record in dealing with the North Vietnamese incursion in South Vietnam is somewhat more assertive, but collective support

¹⁰SEATO, Story of SEATO (1965), pp. 40-44.

¹¹Greene, p. 112.

¹²Ibid., pp. 112-114.

of all members has never been obtained. The SEATO commitment of the United States toward Vietnam was first mentioned in the Tonkin Gulf Resolution which was overwhelmingly approved by Congress on 7 August 1964.¹³ On 5 May 1965, at the London conference of member nations, a statement emphasized that "defeat of the Communist campaign is essential not only to the security of the Republic of Vietnam but to that of Southeast Asia." Signatories were the US, Britain, the Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand, and Australia. Pakistan refused to sign, and France boycotted the meeting.¹⁴ With the exception of Britain and the nonsignatory members, SEATO has been used as the legal rationale for the employment of forces in Vietnam by the signing nations. These forces, however, have not operated in Vietnam under the auspices of a SEATO headquarters. Also, the nonparticipation by France, Pakistan, and to a degree, Great Britain has weakened the SEATO response and has been a lingering criticism of SEATO ineffectiveness to act as a collective security institution in the face of subversion in the treaty area.

SEATO is useful in other ways which deserve mentioning. Regardless of French abstention and Pakistani reticence, SEATO serves as a working forum for consultations, planning, and exercises between

¹³ Congressional Quarterly Inc., "Tonkin Gulf Resolution," China and US Far East Policy 1945-1966 (1967), p. 143.

¹⁴ Congressional Quarterly Inc., "SEATO Statement," China and US Far East Policy 1945-1966 (1967), p. 158.

Asian and Western powers on the diplomatic, military, and socio-economic levels. A nonmilitary role stresses strengthening of Asian members' institutions through economic, social, and cultural programs. SEATO-sponsored projects consist of the Asian Institute of Technology (a graduate school with curricula in coastal, structural, environmental, soil, and transportation engineering), Pakistani-SEATO Cholera Research Laboratory, Medical Research Laboratory (conducts research on tropical diseases endemic to the area), Military Technical Training School, Military Vehicle Rebuild Depot, Agricultural Research Project, Community Development Activities, and Hill Tribes Research. Cultural programs include student exchange and grants for individual research in scientific, technical, agricultural, and social areas.¹⁵ Although these programs are marginal from a collective security standpoint, they do have indirect value by furthering regionalism and by aiding in the development of participating Southeast Asian nations, thereby raising the threshold for insurgencies.

Overall examination reveals that Communist China has been and is being contained; SEATO can take a large part of the credit. The inability of the members to act with unity in dealing with subversion finds SEATO wanting. Budding regionalism in Southeast Asia, which SEATO has abetted by being an early forerunner, and the Nixon Doctrine appear to rectify the shortcoming of acting against subversion in the future.

¹⁵Jesus Vargas, SEATO Report 1969-70 (1970), pp. 15-36.

SEATO AND THE NIXON DOCTRINE: APPROACH FOR THE 1970s

This is the message of the doctrine I announced at Guam--the "Nixon Doctrine." Its central thesis is that the United States will participate in the defense and development of allies and friends, but that America cannot--and will not--conceive all the plans, design all the programs, execute all the decisions and undertake all the defense of the free nations of the world. We will help where it makes a real difference and is considered in our interest. President Richard M. Nixon.¹⁶

The Nixon Doctrine begins a new era for SEATO, albeit full implementation will await the termination and outcome of the Vietnamese conflict. In many ways, it resembles the Eisenhower policy of a nuclear shield and military and economic aid to the developing nations of the region which was the US Asian policy during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the event of overt Communist aggression, the US will honor its treaty commitment in the light of its own interest, but Asian manpower will bear the burden of action rather than American ground forces. Similarly, in cases involving other types of aggression, i.e. subversion, the United States "shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate, but we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense."¹⁷ The chief difference between the

¹⁶Nixon, US Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace, p. 6.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 56.

two approaches is that the Nixon Doctrine implies greater multi-lateral effort and the political and economical climate of Southeast Asian nations is more favorable for greater assumption of national and regional responsibilities than during the Eisenhower years. There also appears to be acceptance by Asian leaders that partnership under the Nixon Doctrine is the most effective way to meet the military challenges and economic opportunities in Asia and an awareness of the potential for lessening the inflexible containment of Communist China.¹⁸ The Nixon Doctrine is compatible with SEATO. Ostensibly, if successful, the healthier nations of the region will strengthen the alliance and reduce the possibility of external or internal conflicts.

From the standpoint of the new worldwide security strategy of "1½ wars" and the impact of national budgetary pressures on American strategy which were also announced by President Nixon in his "State of the World" address,¹⁹ one must pause to wonder if the risks will not be greater for SEATO. The United States will be supporting the same level of potential involvement with smaller conventional forces. According to one observer, in the event of intervention, the risk of defeat or stalemate will be greater or the nuclear threshold lower.²⁰ Obviously, reliance on Asianization and rapidly deployable

¹⁸Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 115, 129.

²⁰Earl C. Ravenal, "The Nixon Doctrine and our Asian Commitments," Foreign Affairs, (January 1971), p. 201.

US naval and air forces becomes paramount in maintaining escalatory options. US contingency action which has been essentially unilateral in the past will require greater SEATO collective involvement in the 1970s and indicates the necessity for greater Asianization of SEATO to obtain sufficient ground forces.

To meet the demands of the Nixon Doctrine, US foreign assistance is being transformed for the 1970s. One of the reforms is specifically addressed to establishment of the International Security Assistance Program to improve support of the Nixon Doctrine; another is greater use of multilateral institutions, i.e. Asian Development Bank, for providing development assistance. The purpose of these programs is to help countries assume the responsibility of their own defense and thus help reduce US presence and aid in long-run economic and social development.²¹ Pending Presidential submission and Congressional authorization on foreign aid in FY 1972 will determine the effectiveness of these measures in assisting Southeast Asian nations to become self-reliant.

Growing regionalism toward further effective Asian membership in SEATO in the 1970s. Though the extant regional organizations are primarily dedicated towards economic and social cooperation, they indicate a growing Asian political maturity to improve cooperative relations within the region to aid in upgrading national development and economic performance, thereby reducing the potential for subversion.

²¹Richard M. Nixon, "Foreign Assistance for the Seventies," Department of State Bulletin, 5 October 1970, pp. 369-373.

Increasing interest of Japan in the development of Southeast Asian countries and in the concomitant importance of stability in the region is another favorable trend. The principal impact of this interest is in economic areas. Japan is devoting more to economic aid as a percentage of the GNP than the United States; is contributing more to the Asian Development Bank; has almost equaled assistance to Indonesia through the Intergovernmental Committee; and has equaled the American share in paid-up capital of the Private Investment Company for Asia (PICA).²² The significance of Japanese efforts in helping other Asian nations to develop in peace was articulated by President Nixon, when he said: "Japan's partnership with us will be a key to the success of the Nixon Doctrine in Asia."²³

In summary, the Nixon Doctrine and SEATO are compatible for providing collective security in Southeast Asia in the 1970s. American maintenance of its treaty commitments and provision for military aid assistance should enable Southeast Asian nations to develop sufficient military force to have a tolerable front-line defense. Through SEATO, there is an assurance that nuclear attack or coercion will be treated firmly. Ideally, the combination of continued American support and strengthened developing nations will be adequate to deter overt aggression. Insofar as subversion, economic aid from the United States and Japan, regionalism and national attentiveness of Asian leaders offer the prospect of

²²John M. Allison, "Japan's Relations with Southeast Asia," Asia, (Winter 1969/70), p. 49.

²³Nixon, US Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace, p. 58.

reducing the causes of insurgency that have existed since the end of colonialism. As the principal security pact in the region, SEATO will still be needed in the 1970s as long as the danger of the threats of superpowers persists.

Recognition of the continued importance of the US role in Southeast Asia security was succinctly stated by the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Soedjatmoko, in an address before the Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange between East and West in Honolulu on 14 May 1969. He said:

The importance of the power umbrella provided by the nuclear guarantee and naval presence of the United States is beyond question and needs no elaboration.²⁴

Alternatives to SEATO have been set forth by analysts and observers of the Asian scene. In the following chapter, an assessment will be made of some of these possibilities.

²⁴Soedjatmoko, "Southeast Asia and Security," Military Review, (July 1970), pp. 45-46.

CHAPTER IV

ALTERNATIVES FOR ASIAN SECURITY

The high cost of the Vietnam conflict in American lives and resources, the failure to obtain an early settlement, the lack of unified Western support, the concern of becoming the "policeman" in an area of questionable American interests and tormenting domestic pressures have largely contributed to public and legislative efforts to force US disengagement from Southeast Asia. Such circumspection has yielded a demand for drastic changes in the American profile in Asia. Iconoclasts decry SEATO and base a reduction of American political and military presence on growing regionalism and an ameliorating atmosphere of Sino-American relations. Alternatives suggest use of regional alliances, such as ASPAC or ASEAN, with increased Japanese support as the means for controlling subversion in Southeast Asia; another suggests concomitant or independent relaxation of Sino-American enmity.

REGIONAL ALLIANCES

Prominent authors have suggested at one time or other the potential for regional organizations to provide security in Southeast Asia. Prior to election as President, Mr. Nixon advocated the suitability of ASPAC for maintaining security in the region.¹

¹Richard M. Nixon, "Asia after Vietnam," Foreign Affairs, (October 1967), p. 116.

Bernard K. Gordon, a RAND Corporation analyst, postulated the development of an "ASEAN Counterinsurgency Force."² Both concepts envision an enlarged role for Japan, in the former case as the major partner and in the latter as a principal arms-supplier. Efforts to insert security arrangements in either ASPAC or ASEAN, however, have been characteristically thwarted usually by the larger member states.

ASPAC was formed on 16 June 1966, at a meeting in Seoul. The prospects for this regional organization are promising in that it has the advantage of including Japan, Australia, and New Zealand in its membership. Other members are South Korea, Nationalist China, South Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Laos has been represented by an observer. In a joint statement issued at the time of establishment, the nine nations voiced their determination "to preserve their integrity and sovereignty in the face of external threats."³ Nonetheless, efforts to establish a security arrangement have been unsuccessful.

In June 1969, at an ASPAC ministerial meeting at Ito outside Tokyo, South Korea suggested the establishment of a Northeast Asian military organization. Apparently, the item never made the agenda, largely because of Japanese reticence. This could have

²Bernard K. Gordon, Towards Disengagement in Asia, pp. 181-182.

³Congressional Quarterly Inc., "Asian Council," China and US Far East Policy 1945-1966 (1967), p. 191.

resulted from strong attacks before and during the meeting by the Soviet Union, China, and other Communist countries that ASPAC was an aggressive military organization under the auspices of the United States and Japan.⁴ But, in an address delivered at the meeting, Japan's Foreign Minister Kiichi Aichi reiterated that ASPAC is not intended to be a military alliance, which is a principle that was fostered at the beginning of ASPAC by his predecessor, Takeo Miki.⁵ The meeting at Wellington in June 1970 similarly omitted any reference to potential security functions of ASPAC.⁶ Clearly, ASPAC is not presently intended as a security arrangement by Japan, its major member, in deference to regional cooperation in political, social and economic fields and to reliance on and necessity for US nuclear might to maintain balance in the region.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), consisting of Malaysia, Thailand, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia, was formed on 8 August 1967, as a product of ASA and MAPHILINDO.⁷ A portion of the ASEAN Declaration substantiates the promising awareness of regional proclivity:

Considering that the countries of Southeast Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability

⁴"Regional Co-operation: Asia in Flux," Far Eastern Economic Review Yearbook 1970 (1969), p. 37.

⁵Kiichi Aichi, "ASPAC Still Young and Fluid," Pacific Community, (October 1969), pp. 4-5.

⁶"A SPAC: Keeping their Cool," Far Eastern Economic Review, 2 July 1970, p. 8.

⁷Gordon, pp. 111-116.

of the region and ensuring their peaceful and progressive national development, and that they are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation in order to preserve their national identities. . . .⁸

The divergence of views concerning neutrality of Southeast Asia, big-power relationships to the area, extent of a threat to orderly development and nationalistic interests tend to preclude mutual agreement on the need of establishing a regional military alliance through ASEAN by the member states at least for the foreseeable future. Indonesia believes that an immediate threat from a major power is nonexistent; hence, there is no need for a general defense agreement. When Thailand suggested establishment of an ASEAN peacekeeping force to be used in Vietnam after the war, the idea received a very cool reception from the other member countries. Furthermore, ASEAN does not include the Indochina states and Burma, and there is disagreement on their enrollment.⁹ The newness of ASEAN has properly limited undertakings to political meetings and economic cooperation in areas of mutual benefit.

Even though the prospects for ASEAN are bright, the organization should promote practical efforts and not attempt a defense arrangement which is beyond present capacities of member states to realize. Establishment of regional identity and recognition of mutual interests are attitudes that must be consolidated. In the safer area of

⁸"The ASEAN Declaration," Current Notes on International Affairs, (August 1967), pp. 327-328.

⁹Far Eastern Economic Review Yearbook 1970, p. 37.

regional economic cooperation, there are obstructions or impediments caused by nationalism, national economic policies of autarchy, industrialization based on import substitution, and unripened regional identity.¹⁰ To expect more from ASEAN would be unduly optimistic.

There are other examples of Southeast Asian cooperation; i.e. Southeast Asian Ministers of Education (SEAMEC), Southeast Asian Ministers of Transport (SEAMT), Southeast Asian Ministers of Development (SEADEV), ADB, etc., that further indicate the favorable climate for and the willingness of the nations of the region to stand on their own feet to work towards resolution of the development problems endemic to their countries and causes for subversion. These organizations, however, have highly specialized interests and are unlikely candidates for forming a basis for regional military alliance.

When the major threat to Southeast Asia is caused by a major power, i.e. China or the Soviet Union, there is no substitution for balancing Communist moves with Western world support, namely the United States. Perhaps, Japan could fill this role, and advocates of regional military alliance envision greater participation by Japan. Industrially, they are capable, but the development of the political will is questionable. Any Japanese emergence into area defense policy will take considerable time. Having accomplished so

¹⁰T. T. B. Koh, "International Collaboration Concerning Southeastern Asia," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, (July 1970), p. 18.

much in world trade without major defense spending may cause the younger generation to be cautious before embarking on such a course. Yet, the "unarmed neutrality" of the Japan Socialist Party has little support."¹¹ Therefore, one can conclude that the future of Japan's defense policy in Asia lies somewhere between the extremes.

The future military role of Japan as a substitute for American power in Southeast Asia will be predicated by its willingness to obtain a nuclear capability. Such a development seems the only means of countering Communist China's nuclear threat. Although a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, ratification by the Diet remains.¹² Most recently, the possibility of developing nuclear weapons has been mentioned, but such acquisition would undoubtedly be viewed as dangerous and escalatory by the US, USSR, and Japan's Pacific neighbors.¹³

Also, Japan does not appear ready for a simple transfer of security responsibilities in Asia from the US. Foreign Minister Aichi has written: "Japanese public opinion is simply not prepared for such an undertaking; nor, I believe, would the other free nations of Asia welcome it."¹⁴ More rationally, economic assistance

¹¹David K. Willis, "Japan in Asia: Rabbit, Porcupine or Tiger?", Pacific Community, (July 1970), pp. 604-605.

¹²George H. Questar, "Japan and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," Asian Survey, (September 1970), p. 765.

¹³James H. Buck, "Japan's Defense Options for the 1970's," Asian Survey, (October 1970), p. 895.

¹⁴Kiichi Aichi, "Japan's Legacy and Destiny of Change," Foreign Affairs, (October 1969), p. 31.

through aid and private investment will be Japan's principal contribution to the peace and development of Southeast Asia during the 1970s.

REDUCTION OF SINO-AMERICAN TENSIONS

Ideally, reduction of the enmity that has existed between Communist China and the United States since 1949 will lessen and perhaps eliminate the necessity for SEATO. Liberal elements proclaim: adoption of a new American policy toward China; resumption of the Warsaw talks; promotion of personal exchanges and contacts with the Western world; establishment of diplomatic relations; encouragement of Chinese participation in arms control talks and Asian security; and withdrawal of American opposition to Peking's entry into the United Nations.¹⁵ On the other side, restoration of normal relations is affected by China's intransigence in opposing American presence in Southeast Asia and in pursuing a hard revolutionary line.

America's views toward Communist China are directed toward improvement of practical relations. Dramatic gestures have been avoided to forestall dramatic rebuffs.¹⁶ The climate is favorable for compromise, but the intangible remains Peking's desire to do so. Although the Warsaw talks were resumed after the Cultural Revolution

¹⁵Claude A. Buss, "The Post-Vietnam Role of the United States in Asia and the Pacific," Pacific Community, (January 1970), pp. 250-251.

¹⁶Nixon, US Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace, pp. 140-142.

(subsequently, they were cancelled by Peking in May 1970¹⁷), there has been little evidence of moderation in the Red Chinese view of the United States.

Historical examination of Peking's policy toward the United States and Southeast Asia does not support optimism that tensions will be reduced in the 1970s. Unless Peking leaders redefine their ambitions, perhaps the death of Mao may result in such a change, it is doubtful that the Mao-Lin leadership will alter their ultimate objective of Chinese domination in Asia. American efforts should continue to seek initiatives for improvement of relations, but not at the expense of appeasement.

¹⁷O. Edmund Clubb, "China and the United States: Collision Course?" Current History, (September 1970), p. 157.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Dangerous threats to peaceful and orderly development in Southeast Asia will persist throughout the decade of the 1970s. Principal among these threats is the exertion of Communist China influence in the region, nourished by a traditional hegemony and revolutionary zeal which are pushed by the pressures of an enormous population and an infinitesimal growth rate barely capable of sustenance. Abetted by a nuclear capability that will attain a level of credibility in the 1970s and the existence of a sizeable overseas Chinese population in many Southeast Asian countries which is an ethnical irritant of questionable assimilateness and uncertain allegiance, the motivations of Communist China and the directions that may take are disconcerting. This overpowering shadow dictates the importance of a protective shield for peaceful Southeast Asian development in the national quests to become 20th Century nations. Expansive Russian opportunism and assertive North Vietnamese movement, although unclear in extent, in Southeast Asia are further impediments to orderly progress and are demands for continued American presence.

SEATO is a viable organization that will continue to fulfill the protective shield function in Southeast Asia affairs and in superpower actions related to the area during the 1970s. The organization offers the most significant multilateral security

arrangement in the region. In this sense, it represents the irreplaceable American protection for the region against overt Communist aggression or rambunctious imperialism by Communist China, the Soviet Union or North Vietnam or any combination thereof. To look beyond the 1970s in assessing the necessity for SEATO would be too speculative since the dynamics of change in leaders, orientation of political movements, developmental progress or lack of progress, and advancements in science and technology are imponderables to rational prediction.

American involvement as expressed by the Nixon Doctrine is consistent with the continued existence of SEATO. Essentially, the changes in US policy are self-reliance by Southeast Asian nations in dealing with subversion, reemergence of economic and military aid to hasten development processes, and American partnership in alliance functions. Internal problems will be treated by internal decisions and actions from internal leadership using indigenous manpower. One can look at American operations in support of the Lon Nol government in Cambodia as an example of the United States support under the Nixon Doctrine--air and naval support with military aid in arms and equipment--while Cambodian forces assisted by South Vietnamese forces fight the ground battle. Full implementation of the Doctrine, however, must await the conclusion of the American ground forces withdrawal from Vietnam.

The use of American wealth and air and naval power to assist Southeast Asia countries in combatting either overt or covert

aggression appears to be acceptable to Asian leaders as well as US public and Congressional opinion. In conjunction with diplomatic, economic, social, and cultural relations exercised by American public and private sectors in Southeast Asia, US participation in the orderly development of the region satisfies the mandates for American presence. Yet, the US still retains, in the event of conflict, the option of determining the type and amount of reaction under the consultative feature of the Manila Treaty whereby a member nation is not obliged to act without regard to its constitutional process.

Substitution of Asian manpower for American ground forces indicates a need to enlarge Asian membership in SEATO to continue the front-line strategy of countering overt aggression. Unfortunately, the failure of other regional organizations, i.e. ASEAN or ASPAC, to find security agreements implies the discord in assessing the regional threats and the difficulty of adding Asian members to SEATO. To resolve this dilemma will necessitate member Asian states such as Thailand or the Philippines assuming the initiative toward recruiting other Asian members, particularly amongst the ASEAN states, and asserting the necessity for such additions to insure favorable consideration by SEATO members. This will obviously take time and work and may not be realizable in the 1970s.

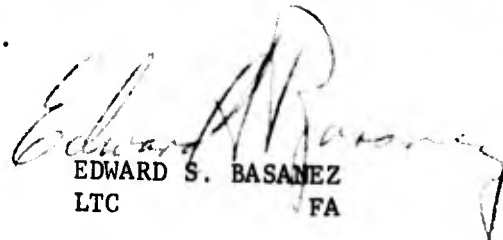
On the other hand, disinterested members in SEATO should withdraw from the organization. France deliberately avoids participation in SEATO affairs. Pakistan, although a limited participant, has abstained from matters directly or indirectly related to the threat

of Communist China. These nations that show so little regional interest serve no useful purpose to SEATO, and the lack of solidarity hinders the effectiveness of the organization in dealing with Communist threats. It is recognized that elimination of French and Pakistani membership in SEATO may not be possible as a practical matter since there is no provision in the Treaty for multilateral removal of a member. At present, withdrawal of membership can only be executed by a member that wishes to withdraw from the Treaty. Hence, removal of France and Pakistan from SEATO must be of their own accord which does not appear to be evident during the 1970s.

The Nixon Doctrine espouses partnership as a tenet for American action in Southeast Asian affairs. Multilateral action will become the modus operandi of US efforts. This perceptive development gives Southeast Asian leaders more responsibility for collective security than in the past. Disappearance of American dominance in defense matters should reduce the dependency of Southeast Asian leaders for complete military support and should provide them with flexibility in international and national affairs, conceivably improving the political climate for enrollment or greater participation of other Asian members in SEATO.

Under the Nixon Doctrine, SEATO will become an alliance for protection of Southeast Asian states while they pursue normal development. In this concept, SEATO will no longer be an organization for the containment of Communist China. If such a concept materializes, direct or indirect participation will be possible

by Japan, Indonesia and perhaps India toward peaceful advancement of the region. SEATO is not dead under the Nixon Doctrine, but has gained a reorientation.


EDWARD S. BASANEZ
LTC FA

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